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Translator's Introduction

During my time in graduate school, I happened upon a debate concerning the way that reason is the rule of human actions in matters pertaining to moral cognition. In a now-unknown text—*La raison: règle de la moralité d'après Saint Thomas* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1930)—Fr. Leonard Lehu, O.P. strenuously opposes those who slur together pratico-moral reason and human nature, reducing the proximate rule of natural human morality merely to human nature. At the time, I began drafting a volume to present anew this text, along with certain other texts that might help the reader appreciate what is at stake in the argument, the importance of which echoes certain debates in our own days surrounding the work of Fr. Martin Rhonheimer (the latter of whom recognizes several times the way that his presuppositions parallel many of the concerns voiced by Lehu). Interestingly, also, the work was of influence on elements of the “action theory” held by then- Karol Wojtyła, in his “Lublin lectures,” which at long last are in English translation.

I do not have the time to revisit these drafted translations in detail. Life has moved on, and I have many projects on my plate right now. However, I wanted to dust off these texts to make them available for a colleague and thought that, perhaps, they might be of use to the general reading public. The reader can look over the table of contents above to see the overall structure of the works that I have brought together. My only intention, at this point, is to encourage engagement with this important debate, in the hopes that Thomistic action theory might come to more deeply appreciate the unique character of pratico-moral reasoning and to see how distinguishing *esse naturae* from *esse moralis* does not lead to a kind of mind-body dualism. (Instead, learning how to discuss these two “domains of being” helps us to be far more sensitive to the being of culture and of human freedom...)

A word should be said regarding the subject of the debate, so as to give the reader some sense of the argument at hand. In the 1910s, Fr. Lehu wrote a moral philosophy manual *Philosophia Moralis et Socialis*. The paucity of its discussion on certain points bears witness to the fact that much of the detailed discussion of virtue and morals took place in moral theology. Nonetheless, there are some sections in the text where Lehu strikingly dives deep into technicalities. One such area pertains to the relationship between human nature, reason, the natural law, and the measuring of human acts. The concern is not merely pedantic to him. He is clearly concerned 1° that the very understanding of Thomas's (and the broadly Thomistic) position is being misunderstood and 2° substantively that most accounts of the natural law do not account for the role of human reason in promulgating the natural law (primordially by acts of cognition having their root in synderesis, the *habitus* for the grasping of first principles in the natural moral order).

His account was starkly opposed, at the time, to positions held by Jesuit authors Victor Frins and Victor Cathrein. Over the course of the next decade, it found itself to be opposed to the Louvain historian of medieval moral philosophy and theology (whose works are always a bit questionable in their theoretical interpretations, at least in my experience) Dom Odo Lottin, O.S.B. and another Jesuit writer, Fr. Edmund Elter.

The point of contrast hinges on this question: does Lehu undermine the importance of *human nature* in our knowledge of the natural law? It would seem that the *rule of human morality* should be human nature, not human reason. Is it not a form of surreptitious Kantianism to claim that human reason declares the natural law, in a seemingly autonomous fashion? Thus, in what I like to call the “scholastic bar fight” that is Lehu's book, the latter defends his emphasis on the role of reason in measuring human actions, doing so by way of a series of bombastic

citations from Thomas, followed by a more systematic presentation of practico-moral reasoning which explains why his position is important.

I think that this debate is still important because an immense weakness of many Thomistic accounts of moral reason (and of practical reason more generally) tends to overly liken our apprehension of moral truth to the model of speculative truth. In matters pertaining to the natural law, this leads to a kind of facile deductivism that would have us think that moral objectivity is only a kind of deductive extension from speculative knowledge. It is more complex than that, precisely because even in the knowledge we have through *synderesis* we are already considering not merely moral essences that tell us what the world *is* but also declare *what human acts ought to be but are not yet*, though as posited by virtuous agents. In the moral order, the human person is at once measured (by the natural law known by *synderesis*'s declaration and by the illumination of faith in the order of the law of grace) *and* also is a measure: through the exercise of human freedom, we become the measures of the moral world, stamping our freedom upon things, either for good or for ill. To restate this: we are measured measures. In the words of a very wise Socratic figure whom I know: as intelligent and free agents, we are co-provident (all appropriate reservations made, of course, for our subordination to God, the first cause of all that is positive and good). Or, in the words of Veritatis splendor: our autonomy is, in point of fact, a kind of *participated theonomy*.

This is all at stake in Lehu, and I think in a way that challenges certain persons who fear a kind of Kantianism (or something of the like) in a writer like Rhonheimer. Without judging in one direction or the other regarding Fr. Rhonheimer's overall perspective, he nonetheless seems correct to point in the direction of Lehu, who sees—again, to use the terminology that was classically used by Thomists—the importance of articulating the distinction between *esse*

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naturae and *esse morale*. (As I discuss below in my remarks attached to a selection from Austin Woodbury, however, Rhonheimer tends to be too dismissive concerning the importance of this metaphysical distinction.) Perhaps Lehu could have discussed at greater length the primordial dependence of the latter upon the former; however, he does not deny it, as is clear by the end of his book.

There are, of course, theological addenda that I should like to make to what Lehu writes. (His account is *far too* “purely philosophical” for my comfort in moral matters. But, I am a partisan of Maritain’s position concerning “adequate consideration” of moral matters....) Moreover, I do think that Fr. Lehu tends to underemphasize the role of rectified appetite in moral cognition. (He is not unaware of it. However, at times, *recta ratio* seems, on his pen, to be a process of deduction that, arguably against the very grain of what he says elsewhere, is quite speculative in mode.) Nonetheless, at the level of natural-reason analysis, he has many important things to say and deserves to be heard today.

I welcome substantive discussion about this topic if anyone wishes to reach out to me. But, otherwise, I present these texts *merely as drafts*. I do not have time to deeply check them, though I have undertaken a review of them. They date from well before I had extensive translation experience and, therefore, are not as polished as I would now like. However, if read with a sympathetic eye, they hopefully can afford an opportunity for interesting insights among Thomistic (and Aristotelian) discussions concerning moral action theory.

In this file, I have gathered together translations of the following texts, in the following order:

Lehu, Leonard. *La raison: règle de la moralité d’après Saint Thomas*. Paris: Lecoffre, 1930.
Hamel, Ludovicus N. “Controversia Lehu-Elter, Lottin circa regulam moralitatis secundum S. Thomam.” *Antonianum* 7 (1932): 377-384. (A good overview of the controversy, with interesting observations at the end.)

- Lehu, Leonard. *Philosophia Moralis et Socialis*. Paris: LeCoffre, 1914. (Some, not all, selections related to this controversy.)
- Woodbury, Austin. *Lecture notes on Ethics*. The John N. Deely and Anthony F. Russell Collection, St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA. (Selections related to the metaphysical constitutive of morality and the relationship between the moral rule and the physical rule of beings. I also register some introductory remarks, with extensive citations from the Thomist school. I have hinted at some of this in another work of mine, but in this text, I make some brief critical observations related to Rhonheimer.)
- Lehu, Leonard. “Si la ‘recta ratio’ de S. Thomas signifie la conscience.” *Revue Thomiste* 30 (1925): 159-166; “A quel point précis de la Somme théologique commence le Traité de la Moralité,” *Revue Thomiste* 33 (1928): 521-532. (These are two supplementary texts that touch on relevant issues. The “recta ratio” article bears witness to some of the shortcomings that I mentioned above. However, it does contain a very important appendix discussion that seems to echo certain debates between proponents of “physicalist” and “non-physicalist” accounts of the natural law today.)

Further, Only-Partial Bibliography of Contemporary Discussions that Echo the Lehu-Elter/Lottin Debate

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- Long, Steven A. “Natural Law or Autonomous Practical Reason: Problems for the New Natural Law Theory.” In *St. Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law Tradition: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by John Goyette, Mark S. Latkovic, and Richard S. Myers, 165-93. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004.
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Foreword

The Double Rule of Morality: Man’s Reason and the Law of God

“There is a twofold rule with regard to man’s will. The first is human reason itself, which is its immediate and homogeneous rule. However, the second is the primary rule, namely the Eternal Law, which is, so to speak, God’s own reason.”¹—Such is St. Thomas’s constant teaching.²

The immediate rule of human acts is human reason. What should we understand here by “human reason?” This word—“reason”—is found on each page of St. Thomas’s moral works, but with diverse nuances.

What is meant by “Man’s reason?” Not the faculty, nor the act, but the product of the act, the *dictamen* of practical reason

Sometimes, it will refer to the faculty of reasoning. For example: “The moral virtue of prudence is truly in reason as an accident inheres in a subject.”³ Less frequently, it refers to the operation of this faculty: “Of all the powers [of the soul], it is the concupiscible appetite which participates less in reason.”⁴ Most often, it refers to the *dictamen*, that is, to the product of the operation of practical reason. It is in this sense that we understand St. Thomas’ axiom: “The proximate rule is human reason.” Based on the context of each passage, one can easily

¹ ST I-II q.71 a.6.

² Cf. ST II-II, q.17 a.1: “Now the measure of human acts is twofold; one, indeed, is proximate and homogeneous, namely reason, whereas the other is supreme and excelling [*excedens*], namely God.” *De Virt.*, q.5 a.1: “The good, understood without qualification, is found in human acts in that it reaches the rule of human acts: one of which is, as it were [*quasi*] homogeneous and proper to man, namely RIGHT REASON, whereas the other is, as it were [*sicut*], the first, transcendent measure, which is God.” Cf. ST I-II, q.21 a.1; q.34 a.1; q.63 a.2 and 4; q.72 a.4 and 8; q.74 a.7; q.75, a.1 ad 3 and a.2; q.78, a.1; q.86, a.1 and 2. ST II-II, q.8 a.3 ad 3; q.23, a.3 and 6. *De Malo*, q.1 a.3, q.2 a.2 and 4; q.8 a.2, *et passim*.

³ ST I-II, q.56 a.2 ad 3. [Tr. note—Throughout the book, I am translating Latin texts from the original. When necessary, I will note if Fr. Lehu’s French translation departs from the original in a significant manner. Here, he simplifies the text to, “Prudence is in reason.”]

⁴ Cf. ST I-II, q.66 a.1.

distinguish these three meanings (or, better, these three nuances of meaning—for they are united by the closest of analogies); but whether one takes it in one sense or the other, this word, “reason,” means *reason* and not something else.⁵

In what does this *dictamen* consist?

In what consists this *dictamen*, which is (as we have said), the product of the act of practical reason? St. Thomas explains it to us when he is discussing law, for law too is the rule of human actions. Just as in speculative reason the intellectual operations bring forth a product, the effect of the operation, but which is really distinct as the effect is distinct from the cause—for example, the definition, or the proposition, or the syllogism—so too in practical reason do we find propositions that formulate the sentence pronounced by the judgment of practical reason.⁶ It is the *dictamen*.⁷ This is what constitutes the rule of morality. First of all, there are general propositions—it is necessary to do good and avoid evil; stealing is forbidden; one must honor one’s parents. These are the examples employed by St. Thomas. The laws, being ordered to the

⁵ Nevertheless, we ought to note several other acceptations of this word, “*ratio*,” which do not have any relation with the reason about which we are speaking here. Thus, *ratio* sometimes signifies the essence or the concepts—ST I-II q.60 a.3: “In a certain general notion [*ratione*] of justice... according to diverse notions [*rationes*]... the notion [*ratio*] of what is due... the notion [*rationem*] of justice... it is not of one notion [*rationis*]... the notions [*rationes*] of what is due.” Ad 1: “the perfect notion [*rationem*] of what is due.”

Sometimes, it means “reason” as in the motive of an assertion. Ibid.: “The reason [*ratio*] for which is...” Sometimes, it means the distinction [*différence*] of reason, in opposition to the real distinction. Ibid., ad 2: “... does not differ except by reason [*ratione*], just as it differs by reason alone.” Sometimes, the same “reason” means the intellectual part [of the soul], including the intellect and the will. In *III Sent.*, dist.33, q.2 a.1 sol. 3 ad 2: “*Ratio* includes, at the same time, two powers, namely the cognoscitive power in which prudence is, and the affective power that is called the will.” It is not surprising that beginners experience some difficulty in ascertaining their position concerning this point.

⁶ ST I-II q.90 a.1 ad 2: “Just as in external acts one is to consider the operation and what is produced [*operatum*] (e.g., the act of building and the building), so too in the operations of reason one is to consider the very act of reason, which is to understand and to reason, and something constituted through acts of this kind. With regard to speculative reason, the first such thing is the definition, the second the enunciation, and the third the syllogism or argumentation. And because practical reason uses a kind of syllogism in operations, therefore there is found something in practical reason that is related to its operations, just as the proposition is related in speculative reason to the conclusions [of the syllogism]. Such universal positions of practical reason, ordered to acts, have the notion of being a law.” Cf. q.94 a.1: “The natural law is something constituted through reason, just as the proposition also is some work of reason.”

⁷ ST I-II q.92 a.2: “Just as the enunciation is the *dictamen* of reason in the mode of enunciating, so too is the law in the mode of ordering [*praecipendi*].”

public good, are necessarily general propositions. However, the rule of morality, which is applied to individual actions, will also include particular propositions—for example, the director of conscience who responds to a consultation: “In this present case, you are obliged to make restitution.”

Fr. Elter

Our interpretation has not met with Fr. Edmund Elter’s agreement.⁸ He finds that the Thomists exaggerate the scope of this word, “reason,” and that they do not render to human nature what is due to it. Fr. Elter will repair this injustice. He has read St. Thomas, and he has discovered that the word “*ratio*” does not mean “reason,” but “man’s substantial form.”⁹

Today, St. Thomas is so widely read that an author who is respected can (as in times past¹⁰) be permitted to pass over in complete silence the classical formula so often reproduced in one form or another in the works of the Holy Doctor: “*Regula voluntatis est ratio humana.*” Father Elter therefore accepts this formula, but finding the word “*ratio*”, he renders it meaningless, saying that “*ratio*” means the substantial form of man. This very simple procedure permits him—all the while adopting the *word* of St. Thomas—to preserve the *thing* already written by Fr. Peter Beckx:¹¹ “The rule of morality is human nature *complete spectata* [completely understood]...”

⁸ Edmundus Elter, “Norma honestatis ad mentem Divi Thomae,” *Gregorianum* 8 (1927): 337-357. [Trans. note—See the appendices to this volume for a translation of this article.]

⁹ *Ibid.*, 340 and 342: “Not to reason as a particular power but to reason as the formal principle specifying the nature of man as such.”

¹⁰ Thus, Fr. Cathrein, in the first edition of his text on moral philosophy, believed that he could rely upon the authority of Lessius: “Rightly did Lessius observe that the goodness of the object does not consist in conformity with right reason but with rational nature.” However, in later editions, he judged it to be opportune to free himself from this compromising patronage.

¹¹ [Tr. note—The text is taken from the reformed philosophy studies promulgated by Peter Jan Beckx, the 22nd Superior General of the Jesuits. The text referred to is found in the fourth major item in the prescriptions for moral philosophy. As can be seen the text, Lehu’s rendering is a bit loose, see R.P. Petri Beckx, *Ordinatio pro triennali philosophiae studio ex deputatione congr. gen. XXII*, (1858), 17: “De principio cognitionis [legis naturalis], quod in

Dom Lottin

Fr. Elter had a precursor on this path, namely Dom Odo Lottin, O.S.B. who expressed his thought in these terms: “The moral good is defined, therefore, by the substantial form of man, that is to say, by rationality.”¹² Saint Thomas had said, “*Bonum et malum dicitur per comparationem ad rationem*”¹³ [lit. good and evil are said / designated by means of a comparison to reason]. Dom Lottin translates, “The moral good is defined therefore by the substantial form of man.” An approximate translation...

So long as Dom Lottin alone held this opinion, we believed that we could quite easily leave him to his splendid isolation. However, today, he begins to form a school. Fr. Elter follows suit, indeed, surpassing his precursor, and a serious review opens its pages to this new doctrine.¹⁴ The spring has become a stream! Before the stream turns into a broad river, we believe that we must explain the reasons why this theory seems absolutely inadmissible to our eyes. We will take this opportunity to investigate St. Thomas’s works in order to find the justification for his formula: “The immediate and homogeneous rule of the will is human reason.”

natura rationali complete spectata, de principio obligationis, quod in voluntate Dei, sine qua nulla perfecta obligatio quaerendum est, de ultimo denique fundamento (in quo utriusque principia ratio reperitur), quod est ipsa natura divina.”]

¹² See Odo Lottin, “L’ordre morale et l’ordre logique d’après S. Thomas d’Aquin,” *Annales de l’Institut supérieur de philosophie de Louvain*, 5 (1924): 302–399. [Tr. note: Citation is garbled as 3*2.]

¹³ ST I-II, q.18 a.5.

¹⁴ Elter, “Norma Honestatis,” 337-357.

Chapter One: Some Preliminary Considerations

§1—Man’s Reason and God’s Reason (ST I-II q.19 a.3 and 4)

Commentary on ST I-II q.19 a.3 and 4; cf. q.21 a.1

In *ST I-II* q.19, St. Thomas himself furnished us with a commentary on his formula concerning the twofold rule of morality (i.e., man’s reason and God’s reason).

In article three, he asks if goodness of will depends *upon reason*. To this, he responds:

[As was said earlier,] goodness of will, properly speaking, depends upon the object. Now, the object of the will is proposed to it *by reason*, for the intellectually known good is the object proportioned to the will; however, the good known by the senses or imagination is not proportioned to the will but, instead, to the sensitive appetite. This is so because the will tends to the universal good, which *reason* apprehends; however, the sense appetite tends only to a particular good apprehended by a sense power. Therefore, goodness of will depends *upon reason* in the same way that it depends upon the object.¹

The force of the argument consists in the words *proportionatum ei*—that is, as St. Thomas indicates, proportioned to the will. Fr. Elter has read this as, “Proportioned to reason.”² This reading is faulty. Beyond the fact that this rendering would be grammatically incorrect, St. Thomas on the following line says that the sensible good is not “proportioned to the will” (*non est proportionatum voluntati*). The same language can be found in later on.³ Therefore, it is necessary to read, not “proportioned to reason,” but, “proportioned to the will.”

In what consists this proportion of the rationally known act with the will?

The sensible good, the object of sense knowledge, is proportioned to the sense appetite. It only reaches the will by the intermediary of reason. The role of reason on this point implies two things. First, it strips the sensible object of the conditions of materiality that fasten it to the sense appetite; but, at the same time, reason endows [*revêtit*] it with the relation of fittingness

¹ ST I-II, q.19 a.3.

² Elter, “Norma honestatis,” 340.

³ See ST I-II q.56 a.6: “Whence since, as was said above, the object of the will is the good of reason proportionate to the will...” Moreover, morality is concerned with the object of the will, not the object of reason.

[*convenance*]⁴ or disagreement with the moral rule. It is this relation that constitutes moral good and moral evil.⁵ In this way, reason is the rule of the moral object.

St. Thomas completes this doctrine in his response to the first objection:

The good known from the perspective of the good (i.e., known from the perspective of being desirable) pertains to the will before pertaining *to reason*. But, however, under its aspect of true, it belongs *to reason* even before pertaining to the will as being desirable—for nothing can be willed unless it is first apprehended by reason.⁶

Article four asks if goodness of the will depends upon the Eternal Law. To this question,

St. Thomas responds:

In all subordinated causes, the effect depends more upon the primary cause than upon the secondary cause (because the secondary cause acts only in virtue of the primary cause). Now, *if human reason is the rule* of the human will (i.e., the rule according to which the goodness of this will is measured), it holds this from the Eternal Law, which is identified with Divine Reason. Whence, it is said in Psalm 4:6-7: “Many say, ‘Who shows unto us good things? The light of Your face, O Lord, is signed upon us.’” This is as if the Psalmist said, “The light *of reason*, which is in us, can show unto us good things and rule our will inasmuch as it is the light of your face (i.e., it is derived from your face). Whence it is obvious that the goodness of the human will depends much more upon the Eternal Law than upon *human reason* so that when human reason fails, it is necessary for us to have recourse to Eternal Reason.⁷

It is obvious that the human reason discussed in this two article means reason and not the substantial form (or nature) of man. This doctrine of St. Thomas is confirmed by a remark that we read a little further on in ST I-II q.21, a.1:

But, in those things that are done by means of the will,⁸ the proximate rule is *human reason*; however, the ultimate rule is the Eternal Law. Therefore, when an act of man⁹ is performed in view of an end conforming *to the order of reason* and the order of the

⁴ [Tr. note—At most times in this text, *convenance* and cognate terms will be rendered as “fittingness” in order to highlight the importance of the *bonum honestum*—the “fitting (or, befitting good)”—in Lehu’s own presentation.]

⁵ [Trans. note—On this point, see the text of Cajetan on ST I-II q.58 a.4 and 5, found in an appendix below. Also, see the appendix The Thomist School on the Metaphysical Essence of Morality]

⁶ See ST I-II q.19 a.3 ad. 1. Cf. ST I-II q.13 a.5 ad 1 and 2.

⁷ ST I-II q.19 a.4. [Tr. note—I have followed Fr. Lehu’s rendering, though occasionally altering it in with an eye to the Latin.]

⁸ [Tr. note—Fr. Lehu translates this as “In man, who acts by means of his will.”]

⁹ [Tr. note—Understandably, Fr. Lehu translates this as “human act,” for St. Thomas is not speaking of a mere “act of man” as opposed to a truly human act (as discussed in ST I-I q.1 a.1 and 2). I have retained the Latin’s explicit *actus hominis*.]

Eternal Law, this act is right. However, when it strays from this rectitude, it is designated as being a sin. Now, it is obvious from what was said above (i.e., in q.19 a. 3 and 4)¹⁰ that every voluntary act is bad in that it withdraws *from the order of reason* and of the Eternal Law, while every act good act agrees *with reason* and with the Eternal Law.¹¹

The Parallelism: Man's Reason and God's Reason

Would that one note the parallelism established here by St. Thomas: man's reason, God's Reason. If man's reason means the substantial form, this parallelism is upset. And, this is not a matter of a simple verbal parallelism, for (as St. Thomas teaches here and as we will see again later on), if human reason is truly a rule, it is because it is a participation, a derivation from Divine Reason, the supreme rule; and just as the supreme rule is the law of God (that is say, the *dictamen* of Divine Reason), so too is the immediate rule the *dictamen* of human reason.

§2—Reason, Rule of the Passions (ST I-II q.24 and 39)

Three Observations: 1. The Union of Reason and of the Will; 2. Some prerogatives of reason incompatible with the substantial form; 3. The Judgment of Reason

We will now consider ST I-II q. 24 and 39, concerning which we will make the three following observations: (1) concerning the union of reason and the will; (2) concerning some prerogatives of reason that are incompatible with the substantial form; (3) concerning the judgment of reason.¹²

First, let us note the rapprochement of reason and the will, a point repeated many times:

ST I-II q.24, a.1 Can good and evil be found in the passions of the soul? —*Response*: The passions of the soul can be considered from two perspectives. In one way, they can be considered in themselves. In another way, they can be considered inasmuch as they fall under *the command [imperio] of reason and the will*.

¹⁰ The explicit back-reference reference being added by Lehu.

¹¹ ST I-II q.21 a.1.

¹² [Tr. note—For readability, I have added the summary listing, although Lehu trails off into the direct discussion of the three points.]

Therefore, if they are considered in themselves (i.e., inasmuch as they are movements of the irrational appetite), there is found in them neither moral good nor moral evil, which *depends upon reason* (as was said above in q.19 a.3)

However, if they are considered inasmuch as they fall under *the command [imperio] of reason and the will*, then moral good and evil can be found in them. Indeed, the sense appetite is nearer to reason and the will than are the external members of the body. However, the movements and acts of these latter are good and bad, morally speaking, inasmuch as they are voluntary movements and acts. Whence, it is even more appropriate to say also that the passions themselves, inasmuch as they are voluntary, can be called good or evil, morally speaking.¹³

Text 2: ST I-II q.39 a.2

However, with regard to interior sorrow, knowledge of evil sometimes is due to a right judgement *of reason*, and rejection of the evil is due to a *well-disposed will* that detests evil. Now, every fitting [*honestum*] good results from these two things—namely, from the rightness of reason and the will.¹⁴

Text 3: ST I-II q.39 a.2 ad 2

Just as sorrow concerning evil results *from the will and right reason*, which detests the evil, so too does sorrow concerning the good result *from a perverse reason and will*, which detests the good.¹⁵

Concerning this rapprochement, we can conclude that by these words, “reason and will,” St. Thomas means the two faculties that are properly human. “Reason” does not indicate man’s substantial form.

In these same questions, we find St. Thomas attributing to reason a role that would be quite difficult for one to apply to man’s substantial form. For example: “The passions are

¹³ ST I-II q.24 a.1.

¹⁴ ST I-II q.39 a.2.

¹⁵ ST I-II q.39 a.2 ad 2.

commanded by reason”¹⁶; they are “*moderated by reason*”¹⁷; they are, “*ordered by reason*”¹⁸;
the sense appetite “*obeys reason.*”¹⁹

Consider in detail ST I-II q.24, a.3, “Does every passion increase or decrease the
goodness or badness of an act?” *Response:*

If we give the name of “passions” to all the movements of the sense appetite, then it belongs to the perfection of man’s good that it also be the case that these very passions be *moderated by reason*. For, since man’s good, at its root, consists *in reason*, that good will be more perfect the more that it extends to more things that pertain to man. Whence, nobody doubts that it belongs to the perfection of the moral good that the acts of the external members be DIRECTED BY THE RULE OF REASON. Whence, since the sense appetite can obey *reason* (as discussed earlier in q.17, a.7), it belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions themselves also be *ruled by reason.*²⁰

Finally and above all, St. Thomas writes of the *judgment of reason* in q.24, a.3, ad 1:

The passions of the soul can stand in relation to *the judgment of reason* in two ways. In one way, antecedently; and in this way, since they obscure *the judgment of reason, upon which the goodness of the moral act depends*, they diminish the goodness of the act. For, he is more praiseworthy who does a work of charity based upon the judgment of reason than he who does so solely from a passion of pity. In another way, consequently, and in this way, they stand in two manners. In one way, by way of a kind of overflow, for, namely, since the superior part of the soul is moved intensely to something, the lower part of the soul also follows its movement. Thus, the passion that exists in consequence in the sense appetite is a sign of the intensity of the will; and thus, it indicates greater moral goodness. We can consider a consequent passion in another way, namely by way of choice—namely, when a man chooses *by a judgment of reason* to be affected by some passion in order that he might work more promptly with the cooperation of the sense appetite. In this way, a passion of the soul increases the goodness of the action.²¹

¹⁶ ST I-II q.24 a.1 ad 1: “It must be said that these passions, considered in themselves, are common to man and other animals, but according to that which is commanded [*imperantur*] by reason, they are proper to man.”

¹⁷ ST I-II q.24 a.2: “For the passions are called diseases or disturbances of the soul only when they are not moderated by reason.”

¹⁸ ST I-II q.24 a.1 ad 3: “It must be said that the philosopher says that we are not praised or blamed on account of our passions, absolutely considered, but he does not remove the possibility that they become praiseworthy or blameworthy insofar as they are ordered by reason. a.2 ad 3: “It must be said that the passions of the soul, inasmuch as they are outside the order of reason, incline one to sin; however, inasmuch as they are ordered to reason, they pertain to virtue.”

¹⁹ ST I-II q.24 a.4 ad 1: “But insofar as the sensitive appetite obeys reason, the good and evil of reason are no longer in its passions *per accidens* but *per se*.”

²⁰ ST I-II q.24 a.3. See *ibid.*, ad 3: “A passion tending into an evil *preceding the judgment of reason* diminishes the sin, but *following* it in either of the aforementioned manners increases it or signifies its increase.”

²¹ ST I-II q.24 a.3 ad 1.

Now, the substantial form does not judge. Therefore, we can conclude with certitude that when St. Thomas teaches that “ALL THE PASSIONS OF THE SOUL OUGHT TO BE RULED ACCORDING TO THE RULE OF REASON, WHICH IS THE ROOT OF THE FITTING GOOD,”²² this ought to be understood of reason in the proper sense of the word and *not* as referring to man’s substantial form.

§3—A Collection of Citations

ST I-II q.56 a.4; q.59 a.4; q.60 a.1; q.61 a.2; q.63 a.2; q.64 a.1 and 2; q.66 a.1; q.73 a.1; q.74 a.6; q.75 a.2; q.77 a.8

And it is not only in the passages where St. Thomas treats the question *ex professo* that his intention is obvious with this clarity. On each page, we see him appeal to reason in order to illuminate some point of his doctrine, and although occasional in use, the constant use of this word “reason” nonetheless reveals his thought.

Behold some examples taken from the *Prima Secundae*:²³

ST I-II, q.56, a.4: Can the concupiscible appetite and irascible appetite be the subject of some virtue?

Response: ... These two powers can be considered inasmuch as they participate in *reason*: for they ought naturally to obey *reason*, and in this capacity, they can be the subject of a virtue... Inasmuch as they are moved *by reason*, it is necessary that this perfection that is virtue is found not only *in reason* but also in the same powers... And it is why the virtue that has its subject in these two powers is nothing other than a certain habitual conformity of these powers *with reason*.²⁴

ST I-II, q.59, a.4: Does every moral virtue have the passions for its object?

Response: Moral virtue perfects the appetitive part of the soul and orders it toward *the good of reason*. Now, *the good of reason* is that which is moderated or ordered *according to reason*. This is why all that which can be ordered or moderated *by reason*

²² ST I-II q.39 a.2 ad 1.

²³ [Tr. note—Because of the emphases and phrases that Fr. Lehu uses, I am translating from the French (adjudicating with the Latin if necessary). The Latin is included in footnotes for reference.]

²⁴ ST I-II q.56 a.4: “Alio modo possunt considerari in quantum participant *rationem* per hoc quod natae sunt *rationali* obedire, et sic irascibilis et concupiscibilis potest esse subjectum virtutis humanae... In his igitur circa quae operatur irascibilis et concupiscibilis, secundum quod sunt a *ratione* motae, necesse est ut aliquis habitus perficiens ad bene agendum sit non solum *in ratione*, sed etiam in irascibili et concupiscibili... Ideo virtus quae est in irascibili et concupiscibili, nihil aliud est quam quaedam habitualis conformitas istarum potentiarum ad *rationem*.” We will exposit later in what the conformity of appetite with reason consists.

may be the object of a moral virtue. And now, since *reason* orders not only the passions of the sense appetite but also the operations of the will, which is not the subject of any passion, it results that moral virtue does not necessarily have the passions as an object, but sometimes passions and at other times operations.²⁵

ST I-II, q.60, a.1: Is there only one moral virtue or many?

Response: It is obvious that in the moral order, *reason* is, as it were, what commands and gives movement, and the appetitive power, as it were, that which is commanded and receives the movement. Now, an appetite does not receive the impression of *reason* in a univocal manner, for the appetite does not become *rational* essentially but only by participation. That is why the objects of the appetite, considered inasmuch as they are under the motion of *reason*, are constituted in diverse species inasmuch as they diversely are related to *reason*.²⁶

ST I-II q.61 a.2: Are there four cardinal virtues?

Response: The formal principle of moral virtues is *the good of reason*. This good can be considered in two manners. In one manner, inasmuch as it consists in the operations of *reason*: Prudence. In another manner inasmuch as the *order of reason* is established upon something other than *reason* itself. This thing may be activities: Justice; or the passions, and these require two virtues. For in order to establish *the order of reason* upon the passions, it is necessary first of all to consider their repugnance to *reason*. This repugnance can be manifested in two manners. In the one manner, when passion impels toward something *contrary to reason*, and thus the passion ought to be repressed: Temperance. Or, in another manner, when passion withdraws from what is dictated by *reason*—for example the fear of perils or difficulties—and then man must to be fortified in *the good of reason* so that he not depart from it: Fortitude.²⁷

²⁵ ST I-II q.59 a.4: “Virtus moralis perficit appetitivam partem animae ordinando ipsam in *bonum rationis*. Est autem *rationis bonum* id quod est secundum *rationem* moderatum seu ordinatum. Unde circa omne id quod contingit *ratione* ordinari et moderari, contingit esse virtutem moralem. *Ratio* autem ordinat operationes appetitus intellective, qui est voluntas, quae non est subiectum passionis. Et ideo non omnis irtus moralis est circa passiones, sed quaedam circa passiones, quaedam circa operationes.”

²⁶ ST I-II q.60 a.1: “Manifestum est autem quod in moralibus *ratio* est sicut imperans et movens; vis autem appetitive sicut imperata et mota. Non autem appetitus recipit impressionem *rationis* quasi univoce, quia non fit *rationalis* per essentiam, sed per participationem. Unde appetibilia secundum motionem *rationis* constituuntur in diversis speciebus, secundum quod diverse se habent ad *rationem*.

²⁷ ST I-II q.61 a.2: “Principum enim formale virtutis, de qua nun loquimur, est *rationis bonum*. Quod quidem dupliciter potest considerari. Uno modo secundum quod in ipsa consideratione *rationis* consistit: et sic erit una virtus principalis, quae dicitur Prudentia. Alio modo, secundum quod circa aliquid ponitur *rationis ordo*. Et hoc, vel circa operationes et sic est Justitia; vel circa passiones et sic necesse est esse duas virtutes. *Ordinem* enim *rationis* necesse est ponere circa passiones, considerata repugnantia ipsarum ad *rationem*. Quae quidem potest esse dupliciter. Uno modo secundum quod passio impellit ad aliquid *contrarium rationi*; et sic necesse est quod passio reprimatur, et ab hoc denominatur Temperantia. Alio modo secundum quod passio retrahit ab eo quod *ratio* dictat, sicut timor periculorum vel laborum; et sic necesse est quod homo firmetur in eo quod est *rationis* ne recedat: et ab hoc denominator Fortitudo.”

ST I-II q.63 a.2: Is some virtue produced in us by the repetition of acts?

Response: The rule of the moral good is double, namely *human reason* and the Divine Law. The Divine Law, being a superior law, has a wider field of action; and thus all that which is RULED BY HUMAN REASON is also ruled by the Divine Law, but the opposite is not true. This is why in man, virtue, which is ordained to the good that THE RULE OF HUMAN REASON determines, can be produced by human acts inasmuch as these acts proceed from *reason*, which dominates²⁸ and rules the moral good.²⁹

In ST I-II q.64, St. Thomas begins to study the properties of the moral virtues. The property that comes in first place is the “golden mean” [*juste milieu*]. From the first article, we find these two propositions: “The measure and rule of the movements of the appetites is *reason*... Thus, it is obvious that the good of moral virtue consists in perfect conformity with THE MEASURE OF REASON.”³⁰

But, the second article (ST I-II q.64 a.2) develops St. Thomas’s thought. The proposed question is: “In the moral virtues, must the golden mean be understood in relation to exterior things, *the medium rei*, or by relation to *reason*, *the mean of reason*?”³¹

Response: In all the moral virtues, the golden mean is understood *in relation to reason*, *medium rationis*, for the golden mean in moral virtue signifies conformity to *right reason*. But, sometimes the *medium rationis* is identified with the *medium rei*; this is the case in justice. The matter is not the same in the other virtues that have the passions as their objects: for *the rectitude of reason* in the passions is established in relation to [each of] us, who are not equally affected by the passions.³²

²⁸ [Tr. note—Because of a later reference that Lehu himself makes in French, I am leaving this clause in this form, though it should be rendered “under whose power and rule such good consists.”]

²⁹ ST I-II q.63 a.2: “Oportet quod bonum hominis secundum aliquam regulam consideretur. Quae quidem est duplex, scilicet *ratio humana*, et *lex divina*. Et quia *lex divina* est superior regula, ideo ad plura se extendit; ita quod quidquid REGULATUR RATIONE HUMANA, regulator etiam lege divina, sed non convertitur. Virtus igitur hominis ordinate ad bonum quod modificatur SECUNDUM REGULAM RATIONIS HUMANAЕ, potest ex actibus humanis causari, in quantum huiusmodi actus procedunt a *ratione*, sub cuius potestate et regula tale bonum consistit.”

³⁰ ST I-II q.64 a.1: “Mensura et regula appetitive motus circa appetibilia est ratio... Et ideo patet quod bonum virtutis moralis consistit in adaequatione AD MENSURAM RATIONIS.”

³¹ [Tr. note—One may profitably consult here, also, the remarks found in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “Du caractère métaphysique de la Théologie morale de saint Thomas, en particulier dans ses rapports avec la prudence et la conscience,” *Revue Thomiste* 30 (1925): 352-354.]

³² ST I-II q.64 a.2: “Omne medium virtutis moralis est *medium rationis*, quia virtus moralis dicitur consistere in medio per conformitatem ad *rationem rectam*. Sed quandoque contingit quod *medium rationis* est etiam medium rei; et tunc oportet quod virtutis moralis medium sit medium rei, sicut est in iustitia. Quandoque autem *medium rationis* non est medium rei, sed accipitur per comparationem ad nos; sic est medium in omnibus aliis virtutibus

ST I-II, q.66, a.1: Are all the virtues equal?

Response: It is obvious that all the virtues are not equal. The cause is always superior to its effects, and among the effects, those that are closer to the cause are of greater worth. Now, from what has been said earlier, it is obvious that the cause and root of the human good (of the moral good)³³ is *reason*. This is why prudence, which perfects *reason*, is more excellent than the moral virtues that perfect the appetitive part [of the soul] inasmuch as the latter participates in *reason*. And among the moral virtues, the worthiest are those that are the closest to *reason*. This is why justice, which resides in the will, occupies the first place, then comes fortitude, which resides in the irascible appetite, and in the last place is temperance, which resides in the concupiscent appetite, for this power participates least in *reason*.³⁴

ST I-II q.73 a.1: Are all sins connected?

Response: Let us consider as being different the intention of the virtuous man and that of the sinner. The virtuous man, having the intention of following THE RULE OF REASON, all the virtues tend toward the same end. This is why all the virtues are connected, having their root in *right reason*, which governs the objects of our actions, namely in prudence.³⁵ The intention of the sinner is wholly different. It is true that he departs from the prescriptions of *reason*, but he does not have the intention of doing it. He is attached to a good that he seeks, and it is this good that specifies his act. However, these goods that the sinner pursues when he departs from *reason* are diverse and have no connection among them.³⁶

moralibus. Cuius ratio est quia iustitia est circa operationes quae consistent in rebus exterioribus, in quibus rectum institui debet simpliciter et secundum se; et ideo *medium rationis* in iustitia dat unicuique quod debet et non plus nec minus. Aliae vero virtutes morales consistent circa passiones interiores in quibus non potest rectum constitui eodem modo, propter hoc quod homines diversimode se habent ad passiones. Et ideo oportet quod *rectitudo rationis* in passionibus instituat per respectum ad nos, qui afficimur secundum passiones.”

[Tr. note—Here, one notes that he *has* truncated the text somewhat for his presentation above, which skips to the end of the full passage cited in this note.]

³³ [Tr. note—This is clearly a parenthetical addition by Lehu.]

³⁴ ST I-II q.66 a.1: “Manifestum est quod una virtus est alia maior. Semper enim est potior causa suo effectu, et in effectibus tanto aliquid est potius quanto est causae propinquius. Manifestum est autem ex dictis, quod causa et radix humani boni est *ratio*. Et ideo prudential, quae perficit *rationem* praefertur in bonitate aliis virtutibus moralibus perficientibus vim appetitivam in quantum participat *rationem*. Et in his etiam tanto est una alter melior, quanto magis ad *rationem* accedit. Unde et iustitia, quae est in voluntate, praefertur aliis virtutibus moralibus; et fortitudo quae est in irascibili praefertur temperantiae, quae est in concupiscibili, quae minus participat *rationem*.”

³⁵ [Tr. note—Notice here the Latin: “and on this account all the virtues have a connection to each other in *right reason* concerning things to be done, which is prudence.”]

³⁶ ST I-II q.73 a.1: Aliter se habet intention agentis secundum virtutem ad sequendum *rationem* et aliter intention peccantis ad divertendum a *ratione*. Cuiuslibet enim agentis secundum virtutem intention est ut ipsius RATIONIS REGULAM sequatur, et ideo omnium virtutum intention in idem tendit, et propter hoc omnes virtutes habent connexionem ad invicem in *ratione recta* agibilium, quae est prudentia. Sed intention peccantis non est ad hoc quod recedat ab eo quod est secundum *rationem*, sed potius quod tendat in aliquod bonum appetibile a quo speciem sortitur. Huiusmodi autem bona, in quae tendit intention peccantis a *ratione* recedens, sunt diversa, nullam connexionem habentia ad invicem.”

ST I-II, q.74, a.6: Is the sin that is called “morose delectation” found in reason?

Response: Sin can be in *reason* in two manners: first, in its proper act in relation to the search for the truth; then, inasmuch as it is directive of human acts. First, when it commands illicit passions, for example when man after deliberation, provokes in himself movements of anger or of desire. Then also, when it³⁷ does not repress illicit, passionate movements, if after having in his deliberation noted that the passionate movement that arises is disordered, *reason* nevertheless stops and does not chase it [away]. It is in this sense that one says that the sin of “morose delectation” is *in reason*.³⁸

ST I-II, q.75, a.2: Does sin have an interior cause?

Response: The interior cause of the human act is twofold, the one remote, the other immediate. The immediate cause of the human act is *reason* and the will, the principles of free choice. The more remote cause is sense knowledge and, also, the sense appetite. For just as the *judgment of reason* moves the will toward an object conformed to *reason*, so to following upon sense knowledge, the sense appetite is inclined to something, and this inclination sometimes drags the will and *reason*. Thus is it that one must recognize a twofold interior cause of sin, one proximate, arising from *reason* and the will, and the other, more remote, arising from the imagination and the sense appetite.³⁹

ST I-II, q.77, a.8: Can a sin of passion be mortal?

Response: Mortal sin consists in aversion to the last end, which is God. This aversion pertains to *deliberating reason* to which it belongs to order things toward their end. Every inclination of man toward a thing contrary to the final end will be a mortal sin, unless *deliberating reason* could not intervene, which happens in sudden movements. Generally, when passion conducts one to the act of sin or to deliberate consent, this is not produced suddenly; so, *deliberating reason* can intervene so as to chase away or, at least,

³⁷ [Tr. note—One will note in the Latin that this corresponds to something a little different; his insertion of *raison* below is questionable. The passage reads, “In another manner, when it [reason] does not repress an illicit movement of passion: just as when someone [*aliquis*], after having deliberated that an arising movement of passion is inordinate, nevertheless delays and does not expel it.” Fr. Lehu’s translation does not do excessive violence to the text; however, I wanted to note this here, given that he inserts *la raison* where it does not exist.]

³⁸ ST I-II q.74 a.6: “Peccatum contingit esse *in ratione* non solum quantum ad proprium illius actum, sed quandoque in quantum est directive humanorum actuum. Manifestum est autem quod *ratio* non solum est directive exteriorum actuum, sed etiam interiorum passionum. Et ideo quando deficit *ratio* in directione interiorum passionum, dicitur esse peccatum *in ratione*, sicut etiam quando deficit in directione exteriorum actuum. Deficit autem in directione interiorum passionum dupliciter. Uno modo quando imperat illicitas passiones, sicut quando homo ex deliberatione provocat sibi motum irae vel concupiscentiae. Alio modo, quando non reprimit illicitum passionis motum: sicut cum aliquis, postquam deliberavit quod motus passionis insurgens est inordinatus, nihilominus circa ipsum immoratur, et ipsum non expellit. Et secundum hoc dicitur peccatum delectationis morosae esse *in ratione*.”

[Tr. note—Also, the reader will note some minor elisions by Fr. Lehu.]

³⁹ ST I-II q.75 a.2: “Actus humani potest accipi causa interior et mediate et immediate. Immediata quidem causa humani actus est *ratio* et voluntas, secundum quam homo est liber arbitrio. Causa autem remota est apprehension sensitivae partis, et etiam appetitus sensitives. Sicut enim *ex iudicio rationis* voluntas movetur ad aliquid secundum rationem, ita etiam ex apprehensione sensus appetitus sensitivus in aliquid inclinatur; quae quidem inclination interdum trahit voluntatem et *rationem*. Sic igitur duplex causa peccati interior potest assignari: una proxima, ex parte *rationis* et voluntatis; alia vero remota, ex parte imaginationis vel appetitus sensitivi.”

impede the passion. If it does not do it, there will be a mortal sin, and thus we see that many homicides and adulteries are committed under the influence of passion.⁴⁰

The word “reason” mentioned in all these passages cannot be understood as meaning the substantial form.

And now, I ask, “This reason that *deliberates*, that *judges*, that *dictates*, that *commands*, that *moves*, that *dominates*, that *moderates*, that *ordains*, that *directs*, that *represses*, that is sometimes *pulled along*—is this reason the nature of man; is it not rather reason in the proper sense of the word?”

Perhaps Fr. Elter presented this argumentation when he wrote that those who do not admit his thesis are in opposition, if not with the words, at least with the thought of the Angelic Doctor.⁴¹ What we have come to say shows that we are not in opposition with the words of St. Thomas; what follows will show whether or not we are in opposition with his thought.

§4—A Mystery

How is it that St. Thomas, each time that he treats of the rule of morality, always speaks of the rule of reason, which (according to Fr. Elter) does not rule, and that he never speaks of the rule of the object or of nature, which (so it seems) truly rules?

Fr. Elter speaks elsewhere of authors who, in support of their opinion, present a more or less considerable number of citations of St. Thomas.

⁴⁰ ST I-II q.77 a.8: “Peccatum mortale consistit in aversione ab ultimo fine, qui est Deus. Quae quidem aversio pertinet *ad rationem deliberantem*, cuius etiam est ordinare ad finem. Hoc igitur solummodo potest contingere quod inclination animae in aliquid quod contrariatur ultimo fini, non sit peccatum mortale, quia *ratio deliberans* non potest occurrere; quod contingit in subitis motibus. Cum autem ex passione aliquis procedit ad actum peccati, vel ad consensum deliberatum, hoc non fit subito: unde *ratio deliberans* potest hic occurrere, potest enim excludere vel saltem impedire passionem. Unde si non occurrat, est peccatum mortale; sicut videmus quod multa homicidia et multa adulteria per passionem committuntur.”

[Tr. note—Again, the reader will note some small changes in Lehu’s French that do not change the point of concern for Lehu, though a closer translation of the Latin would be preferable. It is for this reason that in many places below, where continuity with his own words is not made more difficult, I generally choose to translate from the Latin, noting any important differences.]

⁴¹ Elter, “Norma honestatis,” 357: “To refuse to recognize that, would be contrary, if not to the words, at least to the mind of the Angelic Doctor.”

There is here a liberalism that we can accept. Upon the point that divides us, it is not a question of more or less that separates us; it is a question of all or nothing.

And, indeed, behold the mystery that we submit to our adversary: how is it that St. Thomas, when he treats of the rule of morality, always speaks, absolutely always, of the rule of reason, which, according to Fr. Elter does not rule, and that he never speaks, absolutely never, of the rule of the object, or of the rule of nature, which, it appears, truly does rule? The day when Fr. Elter will bring the key to this mystery, the question will make a great step forward. Besides, for our part, we will endeavor to seek on our side the solution of this difficulty.

§5—Does the Rule of Reason Truly Rule?

St. Thomas's Response

And first, does reason rule?

To this question, St. Thomas's response does not offer the least doubt. Two texts among a hundred others: "The measure and rule of the appetitive movements concerning appetible things is *reason itself*."⁴² "The rule and measure of human acts is *reason*."⁴³

Fr. Elter's Response

On the other hand, Fr. Elter's language on this topic is rather loose. On page 343, he seems well to admit that reason is the rule of the will, although it needs an anterior rule. However, on the preceding page, he had denied that reason was truly a rule: "Reason, inasmuch as it is a power, enters into the human act only because it applies and manifests the rule, or as the

⁴² ST I-II q.64 a.1.

⁴³ ST I-II q.90 a.1.

measurer [*mensurator*] (John of St. Thomas)⁴⁴ but not as the measure. The measure is the object.”⁴⁵

Therefore, Fr. Elter presents us here with a distinction concerning the word “reason.” He distinguishes reason, *as a power*, and, taken in this sense, reason *is not the measure*. He fails to give the second term of the distinction; perhaps he wishes to say reason, *as the substantial form*, but it is of little import; it is the first term that interests us.

And first, is it true that we ought to consider reason *ut mensurator and not ut mensura*? Let us recall the three diverse significations of the word “reason” indicated at the beginning of the foreword. Reason sometimes means the power, sometimes the act, sometimes the product of the act, the proposition, the *dictamen*.

The power is the efficient cause of the act, therefore *ut mensurator*. The act is the efficient cause of the *dictamen*, therefore again, *ut mensurator*. But the dictamen, for example, this proposition, “Lying is forbidden,” is in the proper sense the rule and the formal rule of morality.

Two Texts of Cajetan; The “Good of Reason”

In support of his opinion, Fr. Elter presents two texts from Cajetan. Only two remarks are needed in response, for the difficulty is not serious.

In the first place, Cajetan writes that “the (elicited) appetite seeks the good, not for the appetitive faculty itself but for the agent.”⁴⁶—Very well. But reason is not an appetitive power.

The text of Cajetan does not touch us.

⁴⁴ [Tr. note—This is not included in the body but is found only in the footnote containing the Latin, though rendered in French.]

⁴⁵ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 342.

⁴⁶ Cajetan, In ST I q.80 a.2.

Thanks to another text of Cajetan, Fr. Elter believes himself able to make that which obviously was applied to the appetitive power alone bound all the way up to reason. In another place, Cajetan wrote, “Elicited appetite seeks the good that is appropriate not to the particular faculty but to the agent itself.”⁴⁷ There again it is obviously a question of the appetitive power. Fr. Elter tries to make reason pass under the cover of appetite; but uselessly, for elicited (or, animal) appetite is the product of a power—the appetitive power. This is the power Cajetan is speaking of, and, once again, reason is not an appetitive power.

This second text of Cajetan adds, however, something to the first—it is the word *convenit*. Whether it is concerned with an appetitive or not, the good is that which is fitting [*convenient*] not to the particular power, but to all. Consequently, when St. Thomas says that the moral good is appropriate to reason⁴⁸ or again that it is the good of reason, *bonum rationis*, the word “reason” cannot mean reason, a particular power; it means the substantial form or the nature of man.

Fr. Elter has not noted that the relation of fittingness [*convenance*] is understood in many senses.

First, there is fittingness with appetite, which constitutes the formal notion of the good;⁴⁹ and in this sense, it is certain that the moral good is not the good of a particular power; it is the good of man,⁵⁰ the good of the human soul.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Cajetan, In ST I q.19 a.1.

⁴⁸ *De Malo*, q.2 a.5: “Now, it is a given object that conveys something fitting [*conveniens*] to reason.” ST I-II q.18 a.5 ad 2: “A bad act... because it has an object *that is not fitting to reason*.”

⁴⁹ Lepidi, *Ontologia*, l.2, sect.1, c.3, §4: “Therefore, three things must be observed in the good: that it is *perfect*; that it is *fitting to appetite*; that *it is desired*. *Perfectio* constitutes the *fundamental* notion of good and is itself the very *esse* of the thing that is called good; *fittingness* constitutes its *formal* notion according to which the good is distinguished notionally [*ratione*] from being and from the true; but *desirability* is what follows and a kind of sign of goodness.”

⁵⁰ “The good of man is to exist according to reason”—variously cited from [Pseudo-]Dionysius.

⁵¹ ST II-II q.47 a.6: “The good of the human soul is to exist according to reason.”

Next, there is the fittingness of the ruled thing with its rule. The draftsman who has traced a straight line, finds that this line is good because it has a relation of fittingness, i.e., of conformity, with its rule. It is in this sense that we ought to understand that the moral good is fitting to reason.⁵²

Likewise, St. Thomas often gives to the moral good the name of *bonum rationis*. But he himself explains to us what he understands by the word: “However, the *good of reason* is that which is *according to* moderated or ordered *reason*. Whence, concerning all that which comes to be ordered and moderated *by reason*, there comes to be moral virtue.”⁵³

Therefore, the two texts of Cajetan are not opposed to our doctrine.

The Object of the act is not the rule of morality

Fr. Elter, who denied to reason the quality of rule, transfers this prerogative to the object: “Reason enters into the human act measurer [*mensurator*], not as the measure. *The object constitutes the measure.*” Here, again, we cannot share his sentiment.

The object is not the rule of morality. The object is one of the sources of morality, like the circumstances. Like good circumstances, the good object makes the act good, like bad circumstances, the bad object makes the act bad; but the object is no more rule than are the circumstances. And the motive for this is evident: the object indicates that which is; the rule that which ought to be. The rule is essentially normative, the object is not. Therefore, there is a perfect irreducibility between these two concepts of the object and of the rule. We will speak below of the moral rule of the object.

⁵² ST I-II, q.18 a.5 ad 1: “Good, inasmuch as it is *according to reason*...” ST I-II q.21 a.1: “Every good act is *in agreement* [*concordat*] with reason.” In place of saying *conveniens rationi*, Cajetan often says *consonans rationi*. These diverse expressions *conveniens rationi*, *concordans rationi*, *consonans rationi* designate one and the same thing: the conformity of the ruled thing with its rule.

⁵³ ST I-II q.59 a.4.

Moreover, there are bad objects, and if it is the object that makes reason right, what rule will right reason find in the bad object? I see someone who reads a novel of Zola. This novel is the object of the act; it is not the rule of the act. Do we include someone who would seek the rule of morality in *Nana* or *Potbouille*?

§6—Rule and Measure

What is a measure?

It is a word that we have already encountered upon along path thus far, and that we will find more often in what follows. It is the word “measure.”

What is a measure?

The measure makes us know the quantity of a thing. By analogy, the notion of measure is extended to other genera than quantity,⁵⁴ and, behold, how we speak of the measure of human acts.

St. Thomas often brings together the two terms of rule and measure. How are they distinguished?

Ruling measure and non-ruling measure

There is a measure that is a rule, and another measure that is not rule. The rule, we have said, is essentially normative; the measure is not necessarily normative, but it can be, and then it is confused with the rule.

The traveler who, in order to overcome his idleness, climbs upon one of the automatic scales that have been placed in the waiting rooms of stations receives a number. This number indicates what is, not what ought to be: the scale is a measure, it is not a rule.

⁵⁴ *In I Sent.*, d.8 q.4 a.2 ad 3: “Measure is properly said in quantities, for that through which the quantity of a thing is known is called a measure... After that, the name of measure is transferred to all genera.”

The day laborer who cuts the logs for an apartment has received a measure. The hearth to which these logs are destined being 55cm., he has been given a measure of 50 cm. This measure indicates that which ought to be: it is the measure-rule.

“*Regula et mensura*,” these two words appear to us often presented as pair [*gémérés*] under St. Thomas’s pen; in this case, it is obvious that they are synonyms. But, taken separately, they have, generally, the same sense.

The Object is the measure, but not the rule

We have said above that the object is not the rule, can we not concede to it the quality of a measure?

Finding myself in a train, I have before me two young men; the one studies a geology lesson in preparation for an examination; the other reads a novel by Zola. Therefore, we have here two books, two objects, two acts, the one good and the other bad. Do we say that these books are the rule of good and evil? Obviously not. One of these books is good and the other bad because they are, the one in conformity, the other in dissonance, with the moral rule; they are not the moral rule. Nevertheless, as they produce, the one moral goodness, the other moral malice, in the act, one can say that they give us the measure of the morality of the act: measure because they indicate what is; but a non-ruling measure [*mesure non règle*], because they do not indicate what ought to be.

Chapter 2—ST I-II q.18 a.5 and Parallel Texts

I. The Article of the *Summa Theologiae*

The Importance of this article.

Everyone agrees in recognizing the extreme importance of this article;¹ one could apply to it the expression used by Cajetan in another circumstance: “It contains many things.”² Moreover, the reasoning is presented with a conciseness that is rarely encountered to such a degree in St. Thomas’s works.³ Finally, this article is cited by exponents of each opinion, claiming therein to find the foundations for each particular system. There are many motives for studying it attentively, and I would add, for studying in its integrity (without letting ourselves be hypnotized by the few controversial lines) the true sense of this passage before being explaining its contact with what precedes it and with what follows it, especially since we find ourselves before a strongly built construction where all the parts stand closely united. We will apply ourselves to not leaving a word fall away.

The Situation

Let us begin by *situating* this article in the midst of those that surround it. We have explained elsewhere⁴ the distribution of the eleven articles of question 18. We have found two sections in this question: the first, which includes the first four articles; and the second, the seven following articles. In the first section, which one could entitle, “The Principles,” St. Thomas, after having established the existence of morality (article 1), treats of the three sources of

¹ This is not to say that all understand equally the reason for this importance. More than one, I believe, is content with a merely intended admiration [*admiration de commande*], and would be quite embarrassed if one were to ask for the motives for this admiration.

² Cajetan, *In ST I q.23 a.5 ad 3*.

³ The doctrine of this article is explicated with much greater amplitude in the disputed questions *De malo* q.2 a.4. We will return to it soon.

⁴ See appendix, Lehu, “At what precise point of the *Summa theologiae* does the Treatise on Morality begin?”

morality, which are the object, the circumstances, and the end (articles 2-4). The second section could be entitled, “The application of the principles.” St. Thomas takes up each of the three sources of morality—the object (article 5), the end (articles 6-9), and the circumstances (articles 10 and 11)—and develops his doctrine more amply.

The Title

The *title*, “Whether a human action is good or bad in its *species*,” is illuminated by the response given at the end of the body of the article. Taken in isolation, the question, such as it is posed in the title, could have seemed to be confused with the question of indifferent actions, and in fact, in the *De malo*,⁵ it is in regard to indifferent acts that St. Thomas treats the question that occupies us. However, the four objections presented at the beginning, the reasoning that we will exposit, and the conclusion that terminates this reasoning all give us full light upon the Holy Doctor’s intention: he asks himself if solely the difference of moral good or moral evil between two acts will be of such a nature as to constitute them in two different species.

I have said that in this article St. Thomas treats of the object of human acts. Someone will note, perhaps, that the word “object” is not found in the title. That is true; but it is not rare in St. Thomas that the sense of the title is given precision by the content of the article’s body; that is the case here. The body of the article begins by a declaration of principle that reminds us about the role of the object in acts;⁶ and in what follows we find this same word “object” mentioned up to five times. However, this is not to say that the teaching presented here ought to be understood as pertaining to the object to the exclusion of the circumstances. The response to

⁵ See *De malo*, q.2 a.4.

⁶ ST I-II q.18 a.5: “Every act has its species from its object. Whence, it is necessary that some difference of object makes for a diversity of *species* in acts.”

the fourth objection,⁷ confirming the examples already cited in the first article,⁸ proves to us that the same solution will be applied also to the circumstances; but what we ought to retain is that, here, St. Thomas speaks directly of the object.

Behold an objection that has been posed to me in class by a student. It will be useful for us to give greater precision to the question: How can one speak of a specific difference with regard to good or evil? It is not a specific difference, but a generic difference, that separates good and bad acts. The bad act is a genus that includes numerous species: for example, blasphemy, theft, homicide, envy, gluttony, and all these sins differ specifically.—In this article, St. Thomas does not intend to pose the question of good and evil in general. As results from an attentive reading of this passage and of the parallel text in the *De malo*, what he has in view are two acts that are simply different because the one is good and the other evil,⁹ and he asks himself if this suffices for placing them in two different moral species.

In the body of the article, three parts that form a syllogism

We distinguish three parts in the *body of the article*. These three parts form a complete syllogism.

In the first part, St. Thomas shows and explains this proposition: “Specific diversity arises from essential differences.” This will be the major premise of the principal argument.

The second part begins with these words: “In human acts...” St. Thomas establishes in it the minor corresponding to the major that precedes it. This minor is: “Now, in human acts, the difference between good and evil is an essential difference.”

⁷ Ibid., ad 4: “A circumstance is sometimes taken as the essential difference of an object, inasmuch as it is compared to reason; and then it can give the species to the moral act.”

⁸ ST I-II q.18 a.1: “For example if it lacks a quality determined by reason, or a due place, or something of this sort.”

⁹ ST I-II q.18 a.5 ad 3: “A conjugal act and adultery, inasmuch as they are compared to reason, differ specifically.” Cf. *De malo* q.2 a.4.

In the third part, which begins at, “whence it is obvious,” St. Thomas reunites these two premises that he has proven by obtaining a conclusion that is the response to the question posed in the title: “In human acts, the difference between good and evil produces specific diversity.”

First Part

The Major Premise; The Three elements that concur to constitute the essential difference. It is a difference: (1) in the object; (2) essential; (3) taken by relation to the principle of the act

In this first part, St. Thomas establishes the elements that concur in constituting the essential difference in the acts. These elements are three in number.

The first is a difference of in the object.¹⁰ St. Thomas had already sketched this doctrine from the first question of ST I-II where he asked himself, “Whether human acts receive their species from the end,” for the object and the end of the act,¹¹ as we know, are wholly one. I say that St. Thomas had simply sketched this doctrine then, for in the first question, he spoke of the act considered in its physical being; he had not yet embarked upon the Treatise on Morality. Indeed, we will see that the same doctrine will apply equally to the moral act; however, then, this point had been touched upon only incidentally.

In the second article of this question, St. Thomas had entered more profoundly into the heart of the subject. He asked himself if human action takes its moral goodness or malice from its object and, by a response overflowing the question, as often happens with him, he had concluded that the act receives from its object its primary goodness or its primary malice, i.e., what gives the act its species. From this second article, it results that the object gives the act its species; here, one asks oneself if only the difference between good or evil suffices for putting the act into a different species.

¹⁰ ST I-II q.18 a.5: “Every act has its species from its object. Whence, it is necessary that some difference of object makes for diversity of species in acts.”

¹¹ ST I-II q.73 a.3: “The objects of acts are their ends.”

From what we have said, it is obvious that the specific difference of the act must be taken from the side of the object.

The second element to consider is that the difference of the object ought to be essential and not only accidental.¹² The essential difference arises from an essential element, the accidental difference from an accidental element.

This principle is universal: it is understood as much of things as of acts. Of things: thus when we consider the flowers that bedeck a meadow, we see all the colors in them. This difference of color is purely accidental; it will not produce a specific difference. In contrast, when we examine plants that reproduce by seeds and those that reproduce by spores, we are in the presence of a difference based upon the intrinsic constitution of the reproductive organs, essential elements of vegetative life, and this is why these two categories constitute the first great division of the plant kingdom.

Behold the matter at hand as it applies to things. However, in acts, there is a third element that is proper to them.

And, indeed, in the object of acts, it can happen that the very difference considered from one point of view be essential (and, consequently, the principle of specific diversity) and that, considered from another point of view, it be purely accidental.¹³ An example: to know color and to know sound—these are two different acts. Do we find there an essential or an accidental difference? St. Thomas responds by making a distinction. If one wishes to speak of sense knowledge, color and sound being of themselves sense objects, we here have two essentially different objects; this is why these two acts—to see color and to hear sound—specifically differ.

¹² ST I-II q.18 a.5: “Because nothing that is accidental [*per accidens*] constitutes a *species*; only what is essential [*per se*] does so.”

¹³ *ibid.*: “However, some difference of object can be essential in comparison to one active principle and accidental in comparison to another.”

It will be a totally different matter if we speak of intellectual knowledge: color and sound being grasped by the intellect from the point of view of being or of the true do not constitute an essential difference, as to know color and sound intellectually are not two acts of a different species.¹⁴

Thus, in acts, the essential difference of objects is taken in relation to the active principle of the act.¹⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the active principle since it is what must produce the specific difference.

Also, reuniting the three elements that we have explicated, we say: In acts, what diversifies the species is the essential difference of objects considered in relation to the principle of the act.¹⁶

This is the conclusion of the first part.

Second Part

The Text; It is the minor; A two-stage argument

It is here that the two opposed theories clash. We must proceed with the greatest caution as we begin by presenting the contested text in its integrity:

Now, in human acts, good and evil are designated through a comparison to reason because, as [Ps.-]Dionysius says “The good of man is to exist according to reason; however, the bad [of man] is that which is contrary [*praeter*] to reason.” For that which is fitting to each thing on account of its form is good for that thing, and that which is contrary [*praeter*] to the order of its form is bad [for it]. Therefore, it is obvious that the difference of good and evil considered concerning a given object is compared essentially

¹⁴ Ibid.: “Just as to know color and sound differ essentially by comparison to sense, however not by comparison to the intellect.”

¹⁵ Ibid.: “However it must be considered that some difference of object makes for a difference of *species* in acts inasmuch as they are referred to one active principle, which does not make for a difference in the acts inasmuch as it is referred to another active principle.”

¹⁶ Cf. *De malo*, q.2 a.4: “From which it can be admitted that the acts of a given power are specified according to what essentially [*per se*] pertains to that power, not, however, according to what pertains to it only accidentally [*per accidens*].”

to reason, namely inasmuch as the object is fitting or not fitting to it [i.e., to reason].
Now, certain acts are called human or moral inasmuch as they are from reason.¹⁷

I have spoken of the integrity of this text. These words call for some reservations. To speak truly, this passage is not, properly speaking, a text, but a fragment of a text. To find the true sense of the words and of the propositions that compose it, it does not suffice to take them in isolation; it is necessary to study them in their relations with the rest of the article.

The first part had resulted in this conclusion: in acts, what diversifies the species is the essential difference in the objects considered in relation to the principle of the act. This major foreshadows the minor that must follow: Now, in human acts, moral good and evil constitute an essential difference in the object considered in relation to the principle of the human act. The demonstration of this minor fills out the second part of the article.

We find here an argumentation in two stages. The first stage leads us to this proposition: in human acts, good and evil are defined in function of reason. The second conducts to this: in human acts, good and evil constitute an essential difference.

The First Stage: The battlefield

The stake of the fight; the word “reason.” St. Thomas gives two proofs: (1) a proof from authority; the text of the Areopagite; (2) a proof from reason.

St. Thomas begins thus: “Now, in human acts, good and evil are designated through a comparison to reason.” This is the proposition to be demonstrated.

¹⁷ ST I-II q.18 a.5: “In actibus autem humanis bonum et malum dicitur per comparationem ad rationem, quia, ut Dionysius dicit: ‘Bonum hominis est secundum rationem esse, malum autem quod est praeter rationem.’ Unicuique enim rei est bonum quod convenit ei secundum suam formam, et malum quod est ei praeter ordinem suae formae. Patet ergo quod differentia boni et mali circa obiectum considerate comparator per se ad rationem, scilicet secundum quod obiectum est ei conveniens vel non conveniens. Dicuntur autem aliqui actus humani vel morales secundum quod sunt a ratione.” [Tr. note—Because of the importance of the text vis-à-vis arguments to be made below, I have included the original here.]

Here, we are in the middle of the battlefield. At stake in the fight is this word, “reason.” For the Thomist, reason is reason. For Fr. Elter, as for Dom Lottin, reason here means the substantial form of man. Let us see if we do not find in St. Thomas’s argumentation the solution to this controversy.

The Holy Doctor offers two proofs for his assertion: (1) a proof from authority, the text of the [Pseudo-]Areopagite; (2) a proof from reason.

Certain people have believed it possible to reduce these two proofs to a single one: the text of the [Pseudo-]Areopagite proven by the proposition that immediately follows. This opinion, which has no other foundation than the defective punctuation of certain editions of the *Summa theologiae* cannot be sustained.¹⁸ In St. Thomas, a proof from authority is never discussed, neither in order to be supported nor to be attacked. The authority stands by itself. Consequently, the proposition, “To each thing... etc...,” will be will be the proof, not of the text of [Pseudo-]Dionysius [*S. Denys*], but of what immediately precedes. And the interpretation that we combat is even more improbable as St. Thomas cited this text of the [Pseudo-]Areopagite more than twenty times and he has never felt the need to support it.

On the subject of this text of the [Pseudo-]Areopagite, two questions can be posed. The first: what is its true sense in the author’s intention? The second: how was this text understood by St. Thomas?

Upon the first point, the context leaves no doubt regarding the intention of [Pseudo-]Dionysius: “Evil for the demon is to exist contrary to a well-formed [*boniforme*] understanding;

¹⁸ Behold the text presented by Dom Lottin in Dom Odon Lottin, “Les éléments de la moralité des actes chez S. Thomas d’Aquin. (ST I-II q.18-21),” *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie* 24 (1922): 201n3: “Quia ut Dionysius dicit, bonum hominis est secundum rationem esse; malum autem quod est praeter rationem: unicuique enim rei...etc...” This defective punctuation is elsewhere a common enough evil in editions of the *Summa*, and this will not be one of the least of utilities of the Leonine Edition to present us with a correctly punctuated text. Once upon a time, when I taught St. Thomas’s *Summa*, at the beginning of each article, I needed to rectify first of all the punctuation, quite persuaded that a reasonable punctuation is nearly equivalent to a semi-commentary on the text.”

for the soul, it is to exist contrary to reason; for the body, it is to exist contrary to nature.” It is obvious that reason here cannot signify the substantial form of man. We would have a tautology. The substantial form of man being the soul, this interpretation would be the same as saying, “Evil for the soul is to exist contrary to the soul.” “τό παρά λόγον,” ought therefore to be understood in the proper sense – that which is contrary reason.

Upon the second point, let us note that St. Thomas cites it frequently and under multiple forms. In his Commentary upon the *Divine Names*, he is content with a literal translation: *Malum animae esse praeter rationem*.¹⁹ But in the majority of cases, he permits himself a broader transposition, which is in no way illegitimate. The [Pseudo-]Areopagite speaks of evil; St. Thomas applies his adage equally to the good: the reason for it is the same. The [Pseudo-Areopagite] speaks of the soul, St. Thomas understands man, for the soul is the principle part of man, and it is thus that we obtain the text cited here: *bonum hominis est secundum rationem esse, malum autem quod est praeter rationem*. Nothing authorizes us to seek in the word “reason” a sense other than that of the original text.

The proof from reason begins thus: “For that which is fitting to each thing on account of its form is good for that thing, and that which is contrary [*praeter*] to the order of its form is bad [for it]”²⁰

[Fr. Elter, Fr. Frins, Dom Lottin. The search for the implied minor. ST I-II q.13 a.1; q.18 a.10.](#)

Here, Fr. Elter brings himself to a halt.²¹ For him, the affair is concluded: the form of this thing is the substantial form of man. What could be more stunning? Every commentary could

¹⁹ *In Dionys. De div. nom.*, c.4 l.22. Cf. ST II-II q.162 a.1.

²⁰ [Tr. note—I am following my translation from Latin. There are no major divergences in meaning between this and Lehu’s French translation, which appears here for the first time.]

²¹ Elter, *Norma honestatis*.

only weaken this citation.—To that we respond that often the impression received at first sight does not resist a second reading, and this seems to be the case here. If this so simple interpretation—I would say so simplistic—had been St. Thomas’s intention, why does the Holy Doctor not here bring himself to a halt as Fr. Elter has? St. Thomas continues his reasoning: it is an indicator that his argumentation has not come to a close with this first proposition. Moreover, Fr. Elter should have shown us how his interpretation accords with the context, with what follows and with what precedes; and he has not done that.²²

Fr. Frins had shown himself to be more perspicacious; he did not believe it possible to consider the controverted proposition as an erratic block without any attachment to what surrounds it. He finds in this passage the major of a syllogism that should follow. Upon this point, we are wholly in agreement with him (but the agreement will not last long). According to Fr. Frins, “The minor implied and contained in the conclusion is this: now, the form of man is reason. Whence follows the conclusion: therefore reason, since it is the form of man, is the principle according to which one must judge what is truly and properly good for man and what is not good for him.”²³ This minor, I have indeed found it in Frins’s conclusion (Fr. Frins has placed all that he has wanted in his conclusion); however, I have not found it in St. Thomas’s conclusion: “In human acts, good and evil are designated through a comparison to reason.”

²² One should recall here the watchword of Pasteur to his young collaborators: “Above all beware of one thing: precipitation in the desire for a conclusion... One must exhaust all the combinations in such a manner that the mind can no longer conceive any more of them.” René Vallery-Radot, *La vie de Pasteur* (Paris: Hachette, 1901), 674. [Tr. note—Fr. Lehu does not cite the edition or page. He only cites chapter 14. The text presented is actually reversed. The second quote precedes the first in the book. The sense is not altered, though.]

²³ Victore Frins, *De actibus humanis moraliter consideratis* (Fribourg: Herder, 1904), n.75. [Tr. note—The quote opens: “The doctrine handed on is obvious of itself. However, so that it may be more obvious, let us form a syllogism. Without a doubt, the Holy Doctor reasons in this manner: *Uniquique rei bonum est quod convenit ei secundum suam formam.*”]

Dom Lottin²⁴ went to seek his minor in St. Thomas's Commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.²⁵ See the syllogism that he has obtained: "The good of every being consists in this, that its activity be in conformity with the form of this being. Now, the form that defines man is rationality. Therefore, human activity is good in the measure that it is conformed to sound [*saine*] reason."—There, where Dom Lottin says "sound reason," St. Thomas has said "right [*droite*] reason," *rationem rectam*. This word alone suffices to prove to us that it is not a question here of the substantial form. Does one understand a right substantial form or an erroneous substantial form? Therefore, it is necessary for us to search in a better fashion.

But, first, is this implied minor therefore so difficult to discover? It does not seem so. We are in the presence of a syllogism, admittedly an incomplete syllogism since the minor is missing; however, with the major and the conclusion we possess the middle term and the two extremes. In these conditions, seeking the minor is not even a problem for any person who considers the matter; any student of logic whatsoever will give us the solution to the difficulty. The middle term is "form," the two extremes, "human act," and "reason." Let us suppose for a moment the minor as this: Now, the form of the human act is reason. See the syllogism that we will obtain:

[Major]: In each thing the good is that which is fitting to the form of this thing.

[Minor]: Now, the form of the human act is reason.

[Conclusion]: Therefore, the good of the human act is that which is fitting to reason.

The argument is in good form.

Perhaps someone will find this minor surprising. It is not surprising, for it is demanded by the very construction of the Holy Doctor's syllogism.

²⁴ Lottin, "L'ordre morale et l'ordre logique d'après S. Thomas d'Aquin," 332.

²⁵ See Aquinas, *In II Ethic.*, lect. 2.

Above all, it is not surprising for the disciple of St. Thomas, who, having arrived at the 18th question, still remembers the doctrine expounded in ST I-II, q.13, a.1. This article is concerned with choice, but as regards this particular act, St. Thomas develops a general order of reasoning that he applies many times in various matters in what follows.²⁶ The reasoning is this: every time an act is the product of two principles, of two powers or of two virtues (one being the immediate principle, the other being the mediate principle), in this act, which one can consider as being composed of matter and form, the immediate principle furnishes the material element and the mediate principle provides the formal element. The human act is an act that proceeds from the will, the immediate principle, and from reason, the mediate principle. That is why in the human act, the matter is furnished by the will and the form by reason—*materialiter quidem est voluntatis, formaliter autem rationis*.²⁷ This is what we wish to say by these words: “Reason is the form of the human act.”²⁸

This is what St. Thomas means when he writes some lines later on: “Now, certain acts are called human or moral *inasmuch as they are from reason*.”

Moreover, in a.10 of the current question, we have a proof that this is St. Thomas’s intention here. In this tenth article, St. Thomas asks himself if the circumstances of the human act can constitute a specific form of good or of evil.²⁹ In the case where the response would be affirmative, a difficulty jumps immediately to one’s eyes: the human act already being constituted in its species by its object, how can it, at the same time, receive a new specification from the circumstances. It is the difficulty that St. Thomas poses to himself from the first

²⁶ For example, with regard to the command and the act commanded (ST I-II q.17 a.4); with regard to the interior act and the exterior act (ST I-II q.18 a.6); with regard to the act informed by charity (ST II-II q.23 a.8). Cf. ST II-II q.110 a.1; *De malo* q.2 a.2 ad 5, ad 11, etc.

²⁷ ST I-II q.13 a.1.

²⁸ See Cajetan *In* ST I-II q.60 a.1: “For moral things are constituted by their volitional aspect [*voluntario*] as by matter, by reason as by form.”

²⁹ ST I-II q.18 a.10: “Whether some circumstance constitutes a moral act as being good or bad in *species*.”

argument. In the body of the article, he begins by establishing the truly fundamental principle: “Just as the species of natural things are constituted from natural forms, so too are the species of moral acts constituted from forms inasmuch as they are *conceived by reason*.”³⁰ It is always the same doctrine: reason is the form of the human act; and the reason in question here is not the substantial form of man since this reason *has conceived* the form of the act. And the connection that we make here is not arbitrary, it is indicated by the *Summa* itself: “*As is obvious from what has been said in the fifth article of this question*”—which means that from this fifth article (upon which we are commenting now) it follows with evidence that reason is the form of the human act.³¹

From this first difference indicated between physical forms and moral forms, there results another difference:

But because nature is determined to one thing, and there cannot be a process *ad infinitum* in nature, it is necessary to arrive at some ultimate form from which the specific difference is taken, after which there are no further specific differences. And thence is it that in natural things, that which is like a kind of accident to the thing cannot be taken as the difference constituting the species. However, the process of reason is not determined to some one thing, but, something being given, it can proceed further.³²

The passage is to be read in its entirety; we will return to it moreover when we seek the moral rule of the circumstances. For the moment, it suffices for us to note that in this article the term “*ratio*” is mentioned up to nine times and always with a context that absolutely excludes the sense meaning the substantial form.

An objection

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Note, however, that the manuscripts bear only the words *sicut ex supradictis patet* (cf. Leonine edition). The reference had been added in the first printed editions. It is not from St. Thomas’s hand, but it has an ancient tradition reposing upon an attentive study of the first annotators.

³² ST I-II q.18 a.10.

An objection. It is not reason that gives its form to the human act; it is the object.³³

[Response:] It is each, though in different manners. Just as in man we have two forms (a generic form, animality, by which man differs from the plant kingdom, and a specific form, rationality, by which he is differentiated from other animal species) so too do we find a twofold form in the human act—a generic form that separates it from non-human acts, and it is this generic form that we attribute to reason, and the specific form that constitutes human acts each in its own species, and this specific form comes from the object.

Two corollaries

We have arrived at the conclusion of our first stage: “Now, in human acts, good and evil are said by comparison to reason [i.e., defined in function of reason].” This is what we had to obtain. In addition, we will retain two things. The first is that, in this passage, St. Thomas does not speak of man’s form but of the form of the human act. The second is that reason does not here mean man’s substantial form but, instead, reason in the proper sense of the word.

Second stage: St. Thomas’s Argumentation

In the second stage, St. Thomas wishes to arrive at this conclusion: “In human acts, good and evil constitute an essential difference.” He does not explicitly recall the principle obtained in the conclusion to the first part: “In human acts, there is a difference in objects when this difference arises from the proper principle of the act.” Nevertheless, this axiom dominates all the argumentation that follows.

³³ ST I-II q.18 a.2 ad 2: “The object in a certain manner has the notion of form, inasmuch as it gives the *species*.”

Behold how St. Thomas proceeds in his reasoning. He sets forth from the conclusion of the first stage: good and evil in human acts are defined in function of reason.³⁴ It is the major. The minor is this: now, reason is the power in relation to which is taken the essential difference in human acts. *Dicuntur autem aliqui actus humani vel morales secundum quod sunt a ratione.* Therefore, good and evil in human acts are essential differences. And thus do we obtain the conclusion to the second stage, and it is, at the same time, the conclusion of the second part of the body of the article.

It is worthwhile to take a moment to reflect upon this point. We have demonstrated above that in the proposition, “in human acts, good and evil are said by comparison *to reason*,” the term *ratio* means, not the substantial form, but reason. We have demonstrated it by a way that I will call “descending” because it follows St. Thomas’s reasoning. Having arrived at the end, we can take up this reasoning in an inverse sense, by returning to the beginning; like school children who, after having finished an arithmetic problem, give the proof for their operations.

Let us note first that the word *ratio*, the last time it is employed, obviously means reason; indeed, it designates the faculty that is the principle of the human act: “Reason is the power in relation to which is taken the essential difference in human acts.”

This proposition, as we have said, is a minor premise. The major of the syllogism is: “in human acts, good and evil are said by comparison *to reason*,” the middle term is *ratio*; consequently, by syllogistic laws, it must be employed in the same sense in each of the premises. Consequently, when St. Thomas wrote in the major, “per comparationem *ad rationem*,” he wised to say reason in the proper sense, not the nature or the substantial form of man.

³⁴ [Tr. note—This corresponds to Lehu’s French rendering of the Latin.]

We find the word *ratio* a third time. It is in the conclusion of the syllogism; the word *ratio* will have the same sense as in the premises: “It is obvious that the difference of good and evil considered with regard to a given object is compared essentially to reason, namely inasmuch as the object is fitting or not fitting to it [i.e., to reason].” This text establishes the solder between the two parts of this article. The major demonstrated in the first part was this: In acts, that which diversifies the species is the essential difference in the objects considered in relation to the principle of the act. Here, we obtain the corresponding minor: Now, the difference of good and evil considered in the object in relation to reason, the principle of the human act, is an essential difference.

Therefore, the ascending path makes us arrive at the same result as the ascending path, to know that reason here means not the substantial form of man but reason, the principle of the human act.

Fr. Gillet: The Double of sense of the word “reason”

Fr. Gillet finds a double sense to the word “reason” in this article:³⁵ (1) reason, the rule of human actions, means practical reason; (2) reason, rule of the object, means the substantial form of man.

We cannot follow him on this path. First of all, we have explained earlier why the word “reason” employed three times in the second part of the article ought necessarily, from the chain of reasoning, be understood three times in the same sense: “it is obvious that the difference of good and evil considered concerning a given object is compared essentially to reason, namely inasmuch as the object is fitting or not fitting to it [i.e., to reason].” The difference of good and evil in the object is essential if one considers it from the point of view of reason. Let us recall

³⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Les actes humaines: Iae-2ae, questions 6-21*, ed. and trans. M.-S. Gillet (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1926), appendix 1, note 46ff.

the doctrine explained in the first part of the article, touching on the essential difference in human acts: the essential difference in acts is taken in relation to their active principle. Now, the active principle of human acts is reason: “Dicuntur autem aliqui actus humani vel morales secundum quod sunt a ratione.” In this minor premise, reason means reason and not the substantial form. Therefore, in the conclusion, the word will have the same sense.

Next, we do not see any motive for this doubling [of meanings]. (1) One wishes to avoid the *petitio principii* that cannot fail to be the case, so it appears, if one admits that reason ought to be ruled by the object and if the object ought to be ruled by reason.—To this, we respond that there is not a *petitio principii*, for, as we have said above, the rule, essentially normative, indicates what ought to be, the object indicates what is, not what ought to be. It is not the rule. Therefore, there is not a *petitio principii*. Reason, the rule of the object, and over the object that it has ruled, it rules the act.³⁶

(2) One has believed oneself to find support in the proposition that we discussed above: “For that which is fitting to each thing on account of its form is good for that thing, and that which is contrary [*praeter*] to the order of its form is bad [for it].”—We saw above that Fr. Frins had made this proposition an antecedent from which he concluded, “In human acts, good and bad is said in comparison to reason.” Here, this same antecedent would lead us to the following proposition: “It is obvious...” We have said that the form of which St. Thomas speaks here is not man’s form, but the form of the act.³⁷

Third Part: The Conclusion

³⁶ See Cajetan, *In ST I-II* q.60 a.1: “Reason rules the appetite by means of that which is appetible in consonance with reason itself.”

³⁷ And, moreover, the particle *enim* placed at the head of this proposition indicates the connection with what precedes it, not in any way [a connection] with what follows.

Thus do we arrive at the *third part*. We will not be detained by any difficulty concerning it. It is a syllogism. The major was proven in the first part of the article: differences essentially diversify species. The minor had been proven in the second part: in human acts, the difference of good and evil is an essential difference. Conclusion: *it is obvious that good and evil diversify the species in moral acts*. It is the response to the question posed in the title of the article.

Response to objections

Ad 1: Remark of Dom Lottin

In the response to the first objection, we are faced with a remark by Dom Lottin that gives us a jolt. In this response, Dom Lottin has discovered an unnoticed evolution in St. Thomas's doctrine. Up to this text, "Good and evil are not specific differences in beings of nature... Here, on the contrary, the distinction established between natural agents and the moral agent disappears; in natural agents themselves, good and evil have become specific differences."³⁸ If Dom Lottin had wished, there is an avalanche of examples that could fall under his pen: a healthy man and a sick man would make two species of men; a well running horse and a lame horse would make two species of horse; a ripe apple and rotten apple would make two species of apples.

It is useless to prolong this enumeration. Dom Lottin has already understood that St. Thomas's text does not have the universality that he has lightly attributed to it. And his error

³⁸ See Lottin, "Les éléments de la moralité des actes chez S. Thomas d'Aquin. (ST I-II q.18-21)," 302 and 303. And Dom Lottin adds in a note, "One should consider these two solutions given to the same objection. ST I q.48 a.1 ad 1: 'Good and evil are not constitutive differences except in moral things, which receive their species from the end that is the object of the will upon which moral things depend. And because good has the character [*rationem*] of end, therefore good and evil are specific differences in moral things.' ST I-II q.18 a.5 ad 1: "Also in natural things, good... and evil, [the former] which is according to nature and [the latter] contrary to nature, diversify the species of the nature; now, the body of a dead person and a living body are not of the same species. And similarly, good inasmuch as it is according to reason and evil inasmuch as it is contrary to [*praeter*] reason, diversify moral species."

[Tr. note—Fr. Lehu mistakenly has 1925 as the year of the article. Lehu had the original Latin in his footnote.]

arises from an approximative translation, a defect to which he is accustomed. St. Thomas did not say what one has made him say. He said this: “*Etiam in rebus naturalibus*,³⁹ bonum et malum quod est *secundum naturam et contra naturam* diversificant speciem naturae.” It is about a good that is “according to nature” and an evil that is “contrary to nature”, that is, which destroys the nature. A sick man is not different species than a healthy man; this is understood. However, when the sickness brings about death, the soul, the substantial form, has disappeared, and, following the doctrine of the scholastics, it has been replaced by the cadaverous form. That is why the living body and the dead body, which have different forms, are not in the same species. Likewise, the wine that begins to sour is not another species from good wine. However, when the fermentation achieves its work, and all the molecules of sugar have been transformed into acetic acid, the form of “wine” has disappeared and (always following the scholastic theory), it has been replaced by the form of “vinegar.” Wine and vinegar, being two different forms, are not the same species. Therefore, this response to the first objection does not bring any modification to the earlier doctrine of St. Thomas.

As regards the glosses that Dom Lottin made upon this text, it is unnecessary to be detained with them since they likewise are to be judged to be misinterpretations, like what we have already noted.

Ad 2: The nature of moral evil. Reason, rule of morality in the object

The response to the second objection introduces us into the controversy concerning the nature of good and evil. For certain people, moral evil is a simple privation. However, a

³⁹ From the first words, Dom Lottin departs from the Holy Doctor’s thought. St. Thomas had said: *etiam in rebus naturalibus*; Dom Lottin translates, “In natural agents,” applying to agents what St. Thomas had said about things. The example that follows, *corpus vivum et corpus mortuum*, shows that is indeed here a matter of things and not agents, and the commentary that we give proves the same thing.

privation cannot be a specific difference. Good and evil are two different species; they have a common genus, and each of the two species has its specific difference. The specific difference is necessarily something positive. But, if evil is essentially a privation, how could it play the role of a specific difference?

St. Thomas responds that moral evil, in distinction from physical evil, is not a simple privation. It is a positive entity to which is united a privation, and it is in reason of this positive entity that the moral evil is a specific difference, something that is not found in the physical order.⁴⁰

It is upon this doctrine that St. Thomas constructs his thesis touching upon the difference among sins.⁴¹ Sin is not a simple privation. It indeed contains a privative element, namely the aversion from the Uncreated Good; however, it also contains a positive element, namely the pursuit of a created good. Between these two elements, there is this difference, that this positive element is the direct object of the will's intention, whereas the privative is only the indirect object of the will. This is why sins are distinguished in relation to the voluntary act and, consequently, in relation to the object.

It is by the application of this principle that St. Thomas in the *Secunda Secundae* will establish the specific difference between sins.

For the moment, let us retain only what concerns the object of the human act, and, in confirmation of the text that we have encountered in the body of the article, we will say, "One

⁴⁰ ST I-II q.18 a.5 ad 1: "Evil implies [*importat*] a privation, not an absolute one, but one following such a power. For the evil act is said according to its species, not because it has no object but because it has an object that is not fitting [*non conveniens*] to reason, such as to take what is not one's own. Whence, inasmuch as the object is something positively, it can constitute the species of an evil act."

⁴¹ See ST I-II q.72.

calls evil in its species the act whose object is not fitting [*convient*] with reason.” Therefore, reason is the rule of good and evil in the object of human acts.

Ad 3: Reason, the Formal Principle of Human Acts

We find in *the response to the third objection* an interesting example of the improvement found with time in the expression of St. Thomas’s thought. The objection presented here had already been raised in the *Commentary on the Sentences*. In the two texts, the doctrine is the same: the conjugal act and adultery specifically differ from the moral point of view; but in the proofs supporting it, there is an appreciable progress.

In the *Commentary*, in order to prove the specific difference of two acts, St. Thomas starts from the fact that the two acts from the moral point of view have different effects such as merit and fault [*démérite*].⁴² It is a proof by effects; it is a demonstration *quia*, which proves to us that the thing is so, but that cannot penetrate all the way to the foundation of the question in order to demonstrate the reason why and the reason how.

In the *Summa theologiae*, to this proof by effects, St. Thomas adds the proof by the proper cause (a demonstration *propter quid*). He says to us that these two acts, inasmuch as they are human, are acts of reason, and they differ essentially inasmuch as they are in accord or in discord with the rule of reason.⁴³

⁴² *In I Sent.* d.40 a.1 ad 4: They can be considered “either according to what pertains to the genus of morals and thus they have effects differing in species, such as to merit and to demerit [*demereri*], or other such things, and thus they differ in species.”

⁴³ ST I-II q.18 a.5: “The conjugal act and adultery, INASMUCH AS THEY ARE COMPARED TO REASON, differ in species and have effects differing in species... But inasmuch as they are compared to the generative power, do not differ specifically.”

“Secundum quod comparator ad rationem,” there we find the confirmation of what we had demonstrated in the body of the article, to know that reason is the formal principle of the human act.

Ad 4: Reason, Rule of the Morality of the Circumstances

In all of this fifth article, St. Thomas has spoken of the object of the human act. In order to avoid leading one to believe that he has the intention of excluding the circumstances, he had added a fourth objection, the response to which shows that the same doctrine can be applied to the circumstances and that, as in the object, reason is the rule of moral good and evil in the circumstances of the human act.⁴⁴

Summary of the Whole Article

As we detach ourselves from this fifth article, to which we have justly devoted time, let us retain these four points:

1. The formal principle in human acts is reason: *Dicuntur autem aliqui actus humani vel morales, secundum quod sunt a ratione. Ad 3: Actus coniugalis et adulterium, secundum quod comparantur ad rationem, differunt specie.*
2. The rule of the moral good and evil in human acts is reason: *In actibus autem humanis bonum et malum dicitur per comparationem ad rationem.*
3. The rule of moral good and evil in the object of human acts is reason: *Patet ergo quod differentia boni et mali circa obiectum considerate comparator per se ad rationem,*

⁴⁴ Ibid., ad 4: “A circumstance is sometimes taken as an essential difference of an object *inasmuch as it is compared to reason*; and then it can give the species to the moral act. And this must be so whenever a circumstance transforms an act from goodness to wickedness, for a circumstance would not make an act bad except by this, that IT IS REPUGNANT TO REASON.”

*scilicet secundum quod obiectum est ei conveniens vel non conveniens.*⁴⁵ Ad 2: *Dicitur malus actus secundum suam speciem... quia habet obiectum non conveniens rationi.*

4. The rule of moral good and evil in the circumstances is reason: Ad 4: *Circumstantia quandoque sumitur ut differentia essentialis obiecti, secundum quod ad rationem comparatur... non enim circumstantial faceret actum malum, nisi per hoc quod rationi repugnant.*

We will now study parallel *loci*.⁴⁶ Thus will we obtain an overview upon the manner in which St. Thomas envisioned the question every time he had encountered it upon his path.

II. Parallel Texts

These parallel *loci* are the following:

1. *De malo* q.2 a.4
2. ST I-II q.90 a.1
3. In II Ethic. lect. 2 and *In II Sent.*, d.39 q.2 a.1
4. *In II Sent.*, d.40 q.1 a.1; *SCG* 3.9, ST I-II q.19 a.1

§1—*De malo* q.2 a.4

Importance of This Article

With the fifth article in the *Summa theologiae* that we have commented upon, this article from the Disputed Questions *De malo* is the most important text that we have found in the oeuvre of St. Thomas regarding the question that occupies us. In the two articles we have an *analogous* argument. I say *analogous* because it is not absolutely the same syllogism. In the *Summa*

⁴⁵ We will return to this text when we explain the rule of the morality of the object. For the moment, it suffices for us to point out that the object is good or evil inasmuch as it has a relation of fittingness [*convenance*] or of non-fittingness [*disconvenance*] with reason. Therefore, the rule of the morality of the object is reason, and the reason of which it is a matter here is the same as that about which it was a question in all the second part of the article.

⁴⁶ [Tr. note—I will render *lieux* to preserve the sense that one has regarding topical, textual “places” that function as doctrinal sources for a science. It appears that Fr. Lehu is using the term in a manner similar to that used by theologians when they speak of *loci theologici*.]

theologiae, St. Thomas starts with this proposition: that reason is the *formal* principle of the human act. In the Question *De malo*, reason is the *proper* principle of the human act.

The Title

The title of this article is, “Whether every act is indifferent?” We let aside the matter that does not touch us immediately; we retain only three most important points.

*First Point: The Rule of the Physical Good and of the Moral Good*⁴⁷ Dom Lottin’s Interpretation

Dom Lottin begins thus, “Good and evil are defined according to the nature of the agent. In human acts, they are defined THEREFORE according to the nature of man, which is rational.”⁴⁸

I stop him here, and I ask of him where he found this last proposition in St. Thomas’s text. I have searched it in vain. I believe indeed to have found in it, or rather, the contrary: “Good and evil,” says St. Thomas, “In human acts is considered inasmuch as it is in harmony with reason [*concordat rationi*].” Therefore, the moral good consists in conformity WITH REASON. But with what reason is this concerned? Is it a matter of reason, the nature of man, as Dom Lottin thinks, or of reason in the sense of the Thomists? St. Thomas continues *rationi informati lege divina*. Does one conceive of a nature or a substantial form informed by the Divine Law? Therefore, reason here means reason and nothing else.

⁴⁷ *De malo* q.2 a.4: “Now, in natural things the act that is in in harmony [*secundum convenientiae*] with the nature of the agent is good... However, we speak now of human acts. Whence, good and evil in acts according to what we are now speaking is to be taken in accord with what is proper to man inasmuch as he is man. Now, this is reason. Whence, good and evil in human acts is considered inasmuch as the act is in harmony [*concordat*] with reason informed by the divine law, whether naturally or through teaching or through infusion. Whence, [Pseudo-Dionysius said that *evil for the soul is to exist contrary [praeter] to reason, [evil] for the body [is to exist] contrary [praeter] nature...*”

[Tr. note—A supplement to this section can be found in the appendix entitled “The Thomist School on the Metaphysical Essence of Morality.”]

⁴⁸ Lottin, “Les éléments de la moralité des actes chez S. Thomas d’Aquin. (ST I-II q.18-21),” 299. [Tr. note—Fr. Lehu again refers to the article in shorthand, using 1925.]

Continuing my interrogations, I would gladly ask Dom Lottin where he has dug up the THEREFORE by which he attempts to link the two propositions that he has attributed to St. Thomas? Perhaps he will respond to me that he has translated the word UNDE that precedes the text that we have cited: “Unde bonum et malum...” But a simple glance informs us that this UNDE indicates the conclusion of the syllogism that immediately precedes and to which we will soon return. In no way does it establish any relation of dependence of the second proposition upon the first.

St. Thomas places these two rules in opposition

And Dom Lottin would have spared himself this error if had looked over his translation more thoroughly. We have already had occasion to note that he was not close to misunderstanding [*Il n'en était pas à contresens près*]. It is again the case here: “IN NATURAL THINGS, the act is good that is in in harmony [*secundum convenientiae*] with the nature of the agent...” Dom Lottin translates: “Good and evil are defined according to the nature of the agent.” This proposition is not erroneous, but it omits an essential element of the text that it claims to translate: “IN REBUS NATURALIBUS,” that is to say, “In the physical order.” St. Thomas continues: “But we speak of human acts, *loquimur autem nunc de actibus hominis*, that is to say, we speak of the moral order.” And he concludes, “In the moral order, the good of the human acts consists in its conformity *with reason informed by the Divine Law*.” From which it results that this last proposition, far from following from the first by way of consequence, is diametrically opposed to it. St. Thomas distinguishes two rules of good: the rule of the physical good, nature; the rule of moral good, reason.

Fr. Elter's Protest

Fr. Elter does not accept these two rules, and he assures us that, when I have explicated this doctrine, I have done manifest violence to the words of the Holy Doctor. I have adulterated his thought.⁴⁹

Let us take up the foundations of our assertion.⁵⁰

How I have not done violence to St. Thomas's words, nor have I done violence to his thought: *De malo* q.2, a.4; ST I-II q.21, a.1; q.71, a.3. Cf. q.73, a.3; q.34, a.1

In the article that we are in the process of commenting upon, St. Thomas writes, “In rebus naturalibus, actus bonus est qui est secundum convenientiam naturae agentis... Bonum et malum in actibus humanis consideratur secundum quod actus *concordat rationi* informate lege divina...” I translate, “In the physical order, the act is good or bad inasmuch as it is or is not fitting [*convenient*] [*in relation*] to the nature of the agent... In the moral order, the human act is good or bad inasmuch as it is or is not conformed to *reason* informed by the Divine Law.” I ask: in what way have I done violence to the words of the Holy Doctor? In what way I have adulterated his thought?

Elsewhere (ST I-II q.21, a.1), St. Thomas writes, “Regula in his quae secundum agunt, est ipsa *virtus naturae* quae inclinatur in talem finem... In his vero quae agunt per voluntatem, regula proxima est ratio humana, regula autem suprema est lex aeterna.” I translate: “In the physical order, the rule of actions is *the very power [vertu] of nature*... In the operations of the will, the proximate rule is *human reason*.” In what way have I done violence to the words of the Holy Doctor? In what way have I adulterated his thought?

⁴⁹ See Elter, “Norma honestatis,” 347: “He who affirms St. Thomas to oppose reason (the rule or measure of moral fittingness) to nature (which constitutes the measure of physical goodness) manifestly does violence to the words of the Holy Doctor and seems to adulterate his intention [*mentem*].”

⁵⁰ Cf. Lehu, *Philosophia moralis et socialis*, n.155.

Again, St. Thomas has written (ST I-II q.77 a.3): “Sicut partes corporis dicuntur esse inordinate quando non sequuntur *ordinem naturae*, ita et partes animae dicuntur esse inordinatae, quando non subduntur *ordini rationis*; ratio enim est vis regitiva partium animae.”⁵¹ I translate: “Just as in bodies (that is to say, in the physical order) there is disorder when the parts of the body do not follow the *order of nature*, so too in the soul (that is to say, in the moral order) there is disorder when the parts of the soul are not submitted *to the order of reason*.” In what way have I done violence to the words of the Holy Doctor? In what way have I adulterated his thought?⁵²

St. Thomas has borrowed this doctrine from the Areopagite

And St. Thomas has not invented this contrast between the two rules of the good, namely that of the physical [rule] and that of the moral [rule]. He took it from the [Pseudo-]Areopagite whose text I cited above: “Whence, [Pseudo-] Dionysius says that what is evil for the soul is for it to exist contrary to reason, and what is evil for the body is to exist contrary to nature.” Let one remember well the principle that we related to the reader above: “In the physical order, the forms

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, ad 1: “Just the more a movement is stronger in the body *contrary to [praeter] the order of nature* the greater is the infirmity, so too the more there is a stronger movement of passion *contrary to [praeter] the order of reason* the more is there greater infirmity in the soul. Cf. ST I-II q.73 a.3: “Just as the good of health consists in a kind of commensuration of humors through fittingness [*per convenientiam*] *to the nature* of the animal, so too does the good of virtue consist in a kind of commensuration of the human act according to a fittingness [*secundum convenientiam*] **TO THE RULE OF REASON.**”

[Tr. note—The texts are cited in Latin and translated literally by me here.]

⁵² Cf. ST I-II q.34 a.1: “Good and bad in moral matters [*in moralibus*] inasmuch as they are fitting [*convenit*] *to reason* or are unfitting to it [*discordat ab ea*], just as in natural things something is called ‘natural’ because it is fitting *to nature* but unnatural because it is unfitting with regard *to nature*. Therefore, just as in natural things [*in naturalibus*] there is a kind of natural rest, namely a rest on account of what is fitting *to the nature*, as when a heavy body rests downward, and something unnatural this on account of what is repugnant *to the nature*, as when a heavy body rests upward; so too in moral matters [*in moralibus*] there is a kind of good pleasure inasmuch as the superior or inferior appetite rests in that which is fitting [*convenit*] *to reason* and a kind of evil because it rests in that which is not fitting [*discordat ab*] *to reason* and *to the law of God*.” Cf. *In VII Ethic.*, lect.7.

of things are the product of nature. In the moral order, the forms of human acts are conceived by reason.”⁵³

Why the rule of the moral good cannot be confused with that of the physical good

Opposed in themselves, these two principles are equally opposed in their mode of operation. Natural faculties operate in the manner of nature. That is, they are determined to a single end: the eye sees, the ear hears, the stomach digests, all swallows make their nest and all spiders spin their webs in the same manner, as St. Thomas repeats so often, following Aristotle.

The operation of reason is wholly different: “It does not act in the manner of nature, *non agit per modum naturae*.”⁵⁴ Nature, by its form, is limited to a particular and determinate end. Reason, which has for its object universal being, is unlimited in its exercise: “And behold why that which proceeds from reason is not called natural, *et ideo quod ab ea est non dicitur naturale*.”⁵⁵

Thus, we can draw a conclusion: nature is indeed truly the first principle, both in the physical order and the moral order. However, the physical order proceeds from it *naturally*, and the moral order proceeds from nature *in a rational manner*.⁵⁶ Behold why, if the rule of the physical good is nature, the rule of the moral good is reason.

⁵³ ST I-II q.18 a.10. [Tr. note—I am following his French.]

An analogous opposition is encountered if one compares the good in the order of nature and in the order of art. See *De malo*, q.2 a.1: “The due measure or rule in operations, indeed in natural things is the very inclination of nature following some form, but in artificial things it is the very rule of art.” A little later on, we read: “Therefore, this is essential concerning the notion of sin, whether in nature, or in art, or in moral matters [*in moribus*], [namely] that it is opposed to the rule of action.” It is a precious text where St. Thomas clearly distinguishes three different rules of action.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ad 14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ ST I-II q.18 a.10: “Just as the species of natural things is constituted from natural forms, so too the species of moral acts are constituted from forms inasmuch as they are conceived by reason.”

In the discussion that follows, we will return many times to this opposition between the action of nature and the action of reason. St. Thomas often appeals to this doctrine, for it is what constitutes the line of demarcation between the physical and moral orders.

Fr. Elter's thesis is inadmissible: One and the same measure cannot measure heterogeneous quantities

Truth be told, I cannot understand the insistence with which Fr. Elter combats this doctrine of St. Thomas concerning the two rules of the good.

The physical good and the moral good are two heterogeneous goods

And, indeed, for every being the good consists in conformity to its rule.⁵⁷ Where there is only one rule, there will be only one good, for the proximate measure is homogeneous to that which it measures.⁵⁸ Heterogeneous things require different measures. Thus, in a cask of wine, one can distinguish several measurable aspects. First of all, there is the cask's capacity, which is measured by the liter. Second, there is the alcoholic strength, which is measured by the alcoholimetre. Finally, there is its monetary value, which is measured by the Franc. Since these three quantities are heterogeneous, they require three distinct measures. Likewise, in the human act, we distinguish two kinds of good, namely, the physical good and the moral good. These are two heterogeneous goods.⁵⁹ Therefore, we need two different rules. To posit a single rule is to

⁵⁷ ST I-II q.19 a.9: "Each thing is right and good inasmuch as it attains its own [*proprium*] rule."

⁵⁸ ST I-II q.19 a.1 ad 2: "The proximate measure is homogeneous with the measured." Cf. *In X Meta.*, lect.2.

⁵⁹ ST I-II q.55 a.4 ad 2: "The good that we mention in the definition of moral virtue is neither the transcendental good, nor the physical good, but the moral. *Bonum quod ponitur in definitione virtutis, non est bonum commune quod convertitur cum ente, et est in plus quam qualitas; sed est bonum rationis secundum quod Dionysius dicit.*" Cf. *De virt.*, q.1 a.2 ad 2 and ad 6.

[Tr. note—The reader will likely note the liberties Fr. Lehu has taken here to emphasize his interpretation, especially by adding "nor the physical good [*ni le bien physique*]" He does not wholly misconstrue the text, but a more literal translation would read, "The good that is placed in the definition of virtue is not the good in general, which is convertible with being and which extends further than quality, but it is the good of reason."]

hold that the physical good is identical with the moral good. To do this is to establish confusion between the physical order and the moral order.

Fr. Elter does not fear this confusion. He says, “Therefore, St. Thomas assigns no other general principle for the goodness of the human act as such and for the goodness of other acts in the order of nature. (We have just seen what one must think about this assertion.)⁶⁰ This is so because the goodness of the human act is in all cases determined by fittingness [*convenientia*] with the nature of the agent.”⁶¹

Whether the doctrine of St. Thomas is an affirmation *a priori*; whether it breaks the connection to fundamental notions of metaphysics

Rather, what he fears is that in St. Thomas’s doctrine we have implied *a priori* that the moral good is “an irreducible and quasi-miraculous datum.”⁶²—Quasi-miraculous, oh no! Fr. Elter, who has studied his theology and who knows the value of terms, knows well that we do not place the moral good in the supernatural order, next to miracles. However, what is astonishing in the assertion that the moral good is irreducible to the physical good? The word “irreducible” has two senses. Sometimes, it means distinction. At other times, it implies a contradiction or impossibility. Is not man’s intellectual knowledge unable to be reduced to the purely sensible knowledge that is had by animals that lack reason? And this does not prevent us from admitting in man both sensible knowledge and rational knowledge. Similarly, and for the same reason, the moral good is irreducible to the physical good. I say, “for the same reason,” because the moral order is a prerogative of the rational man, a prerogative that is not found in creatures that lack reason. After we have fully explicated⁶³ why, according to St. Thomas, *ratio*

⁶⁰ [Tr. note—The parenthetical remark is Fr. Lehu’s.]

⁶¹ Elter, “Norma honestatis,” 350.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 348.

⁶³ Below, chapter 5, §1.

est regula homogenea, one will understand two points: (1) why our assertion is not *a priori*; (2) how it assures in the most perfect manner the “connection to the fundamental notions of metaphysics.”⁶⁴

Second Point: The Syllogism

First, we have St. Thomas’s text:

Loquimur autem nunc de actibus hominis. Unde bonum et malum in actibus, secundum quod, nunc loquimur, est accipiendum secundum id quod est proprium hominis in quantum est homo. Haec autem est ratio. Unde bonum et malum in actibus humanis consideratur secundum quod actus concordat rationi informatae lege divina, vel naturaliter, vel per doctrinam, vel per infusionem.

Our exposition

Now, this is how we explain this syllogism:

Good and evil in human acts must be understood according to that which is proper to man *acting* as man. Now, reason is that which is proper to man *acting* as man. Therefore, good and evil in human acts will be considered according to the fittingness [*convenance*] of the act with reason informed by the Divine Law.

It will be object to me that I have added in my translation a word that is not in the text, the word “acting.”—This is true, but it is in the sense of the text, and I can support this claim on two heads. First of all, it is required by the conclusion. Moreover, it is called for by the preamble of our syllogism.

In the conclusion, as I have already said, the word “reason” can signify only reason and in no way nature. Does one understand a nature informed by the Divine Law, whether by doctrine or by infused grace? And in order for us to arrive, in the conclusion, at the word “reason,” in the sense of “reason,” it is necessary that the reason in the minor premise have the

⁶⁴ Elter, “Norma honestatis,” 350.

same sense that it has in the major. If it were to signify “nature,” the syllogism would have four terms.

In the preamble to the syllogism, St. Thomas had said, “And we speak here of human acts.” As Cajetan well testifies, St. Thomas has the habit of speaking formally. Speaking of human acts, “*secundum quod nunc loquimur*,” and discussing in this place that which is proper to man inasmuch as he is man, it is natural that St. Thomas has considered man in his activity rather than in his nature. Thus is it the case that only one conclusion is possible: “reason,” since nature is excluded by the context.

Fr. Elter’s exposition

Fr. Elter does not accept our exposition. Moreover, he has discovered in this syllogism an interpretation that is contrary to our conclusion. However, he has only been able to arrive there by an operation which is a most typical manifestation of that which one could call an “adulterated Thomism.”

An adulterated Thomism; First example of adulterated Thomism

By “adulterated Thomism,” I mean the following. First, one takes a major premise from St. Thomas. Second, one then adjoins to it a minor premise taken from anywhere one so wishes. Third, from these two premises, one arrives at a conclusion that is exactly contrary to St. Thomas’s conclusion.⁶⁵ But, as one has placed in a note the indication of the text from which the major is taken, and as at least ninety-nine times out of a hundred the reader sees no need to

⁶⁵ In a general, when interpreting St. Thomas, as well as Holy Scripture, one should guard oneself in the juxtaposition of texts taken from different places. The classic example is well known: “Judas was hung and split down the middle” (Acts 1:18). “Go and do similarly” (Lk. 10:37). Likewise, it does not suffice that each of the juxtaposed texts be from St. Thomas. It is necessary to watch that the reconciliation itself not be in opposition with the doctrine of the Holy Doctor.

control the reference, the entire syllogism passes as though it were drawn from St. Thomas. In this manner does one fabricate the famous doctrine *ad mentem S. Thomae*. And, unhappily, this adulterated Thomism is not a rare thing. Fr. Elter will not delay in furnishing us with a second example of it.

However, so that one cannot not accuse us with exaggeration, let us compare the two syllogisms, namely St. Thomas's and Fr. Elter's⁶⁶ by juxtaposing each proposition.

The major [premise]. St. Thomas: "Bonum et malum in actibus (humanis) est accipiendum secundum id quod est propriam hominis in quantum est homo. [Good and evil in (human) acts must be understood in accord with that which is proper to man inasmuch as he is a man.]" Fr. Elter: Bonum humanum⁶⁷ "est accipiendum secundum id quod est proprium hominis in quantum est homo. [The human good is to be understood in accord with what is proper to man inasmuch as he is man.]"

The minor [premise]. St. Thomas: "Haec autem est *ratio*. [Now, this (i.e., that which is proper to man inasmuch as he is man) is *reason*.]" Fr. Elter: "Illud autem est *natura* humana rationalis. [Now, this (i.e., that which is proper to man inasmuch as he is man) is human *nature*.]"

The conclusion. St. Thomas: "Unde bonum et malum in actibus humanis consideratur secundum quod actus concordat *rationi* informatae lege divina. [Thus, good and evil in human acts is considered from the perspective of whether or not the act is in agreement with *reason* informed by the divine law.]" Fr. Elter: "Thus, St. Thomas assigns no other general principle of goodness for the goodness of a human act as such, and for the goodness of other acts in the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ St. Thomas said, "bonum et malum in actibus humanis." Fr. Elter says, "bonum humanum." It is only a nuance, but this nuance suffices to obfuscate the necessity that we have noted, namely that of considering man's good in the dynamic order rather than in the static order.

domain of nature (in genere naturae); for everywhere, conformity with the *nature* of the agent determines that goodness.” This conclusion is exactly the contrary of St. Thomas’s conclusion, and it is so because in place of St. Thomas’s minor premise, “Now, this is reason,” Fr. Elter has substituted a minor premise of his own making, “Now, that is the rational human nature.”

Third Point: The Good and the Evil, Essential Differences in Human Acts
Reconciliation with the article of the *Summa Theologiae*

We return here to the doctrine that we encountered in ST I-II, q. 18, a. 5. The text is a little long. Although I have added nothing new, I will cite it here in its entirety. Given that the matter is treated more amply in it, certain people will perhaps find the exposition clearer. In any case, this will be of use for all in proving that in our commentary upon the article of the *Summa* we have had not been wrong to dwell upon this question which many will perhaps have been tempted to believe to be idle and outside the present subject.

We will divide this text into two sections. The first will correspond to the first part of the fifth article. The second will correspond to the second part of the article.

First section: What is the source of the essential difference of acts?

The first section is concerned with the issue: What is the source of the essential difference of acts?

Given that the act is specified by its object, it can be the case that the object considered from a certain point of view specifies in relation to an active principle and not specify in relation to another principle. Thus, if one is speaking of sensible knowledge, to know color and to know sound are two specifically different acts, for color and sound are different sense objects. On the contrary, they will not be specifically different if one speaks of intellectual knowledge, for the intellect attains both objects under a common notion, namely the notion of being or the notion of the true. Whence, one can conclude

that the act of a faculty will be specified by the essential object of this faculty and not by a simple, accidental object.⁶⁸

Second sections: Good and evil in human acts constitute an essential and specific difference, for this difference comes from reason

The second section is concerned with showing that good and evil in human acts constitute an essential and specific difference, for this difference comes from reason, the power that is the principle of the human act:

Consequently, if we consider acts whose objects differ essentially in relation *to reason*, these acts will differ specifically as *acts of reason*, although they do not differ specifically as acts of another power. Thus, in a carnal relation with a woman who is one's own or who is not one's own, we have two different objects. Indeed, they are different *in relation to reason*, for that which is mine and not mine is determined according to THE RULE OF REASON. This is a difference that will be purely accidental if we compare it with the faculty of generation or with the concupiscible appetite. And this is why the act of marriage and adultery specifically differ as *acts of reason* and not as acts of the powers of sense life or vegetative life. Now, precisely speaking, acts are human inasmuch as they are *acts of reason*. Therefore, these acts about which we have spoken differ specifically as human acts. Behold why, in human acts, the difference of good and evil is specific.⁶⁹

Is it necessary to remark that in all of this very clear passage, St. Thomas means "reason" in the sense of specifying a power of the soul? He states, "These acts will differ specifically as acts of

⁶⁸ ST I-II q.18 a.5: "Ad cuius evidentiam considerandum est quod cum actus recipiat speciem ab obiecto, secundum aliquam rationem obiecti specificabitur actus comparatus ad unum activum principium, secundum quam rationem non specificabitur comparatus ad aliud. Cognoscere enim colorem et cognoscere sonum sunt diversi actus secundum speciem, si ad sensum referantur, quia haec secundum se sensibilia sunt; non autem si referantur ad intellectum, quia ab intellectu comprehenduntur sub una communi ratione obiecti, scilicet entis aut veri. Et similiter sentire album et nigrum differt specie si referatur ad visum, non si referatur ad gustum. Ex quo potest accipi quod actus cuiuslibet potentiae specificatur secundum id quod per se pertinet ad illam potentiam, non autem secundum id quod pertinet ad eam solum per accidens."

⁶⁹ The text that follows ought to be read with attention, for in many modern editions, a line has been omitted by a typographic error, and this error greatly harms one's understanding of the text. Ibid.: "Si ergo obiecta humanorum actuum considerentur quae habeant differentia secundum aliquid per se ad rationem pertinens, erunt actus specie differentes secundum quod sunt actus rationis, licet non sint specie differentes secundum quod sunt actus alicuius alterius potentiae; sicut cognoscere mulierem suam et cognoscere mulierem non suam, sunt actus habentes obiecta differentia secundum aliquid ad rationem pertinens: nam suum et non suum determinatur secundum regulam rationis; quae tamen differentiae per accidens se habent, si comparentur ad vim generativam, vel etiam ad vim concupiscibilem. Et ideo cognoscere suam et cognoscere non suam, specie differunt secundum quod sunt actus rationis, non autem secundum quod sunt actus generativae aut concupiscibilis. In tantum autem sunt actus humani, in quantum sunt actus rationis. Sic ergo patet quod different specie in quantum sunt actus humani. Patet ergo quod actus humani ex specie sua habent quod sunt boni vel mali."

reason, even though they do not differ specifically as acts of some other power.” He does not say that one is to understand “reason” as though it refers to the substantial form or man’s rational nature.

§2—ST I-II, q.90, a.1.

This is the first article of the Treatise on Law. In this article, St. Thomas asks himself if law is something of reason.⁷⁰

He responds: “The rule and measure of human acts is reason.”⁷¹ This is the proposition to be demonstrated. Behold the reasoning: “Reason is the first principle of human acts, for it is the office of reason to order to the end, which is the first principle in things to be done.⁷² Now, in any genus, that which is the principle is the measure and rule of that genus.” Therefore, the rule and measure of human acts is reason.⁷³

And now in this text, does the word “reason” mean the substantial form? Obviously not. It concerns reason, which *orders*. Now, this axiom, “*rationis est ordinare*,” which is so frequently found in St. Thomas, is always understood as pertaining to reason, the principle of reasoning.

Finally, the ultimate conclusion of this article, “Whence, it remains that law is something pertaining to reason,” cannot be understood as pertaining to the substantial form. Indeed, let us recall that, in this article, St. Thomas establishes the first of four constitutive elements of the classical definitions of law: “Law is a certain order of *reason*, etc...”

⁷⁰ Utrum lex sit aliquid rationis.

⁷¹ ST I-II q.90 a.1.

⁷² [Tr. note—Fr. Lehu has “in human acts” for *in agendis*.]

⁷³ Note that St. Thomas here attributes the quality of first principle both to reason, “*principum primum actuum humanorum*” and to the end “*primum principium in agendis*.” Reason is the first principle in the order of efficient causality; the end is the first principle in the hierarchy of causes considered all together. Cf. ST I-II q.1 a.2.

And nonetheless, Fr. Elter is not convinced. He even believes that he can take from this text an argument in favor of his thesis. However, he only arrives at this result by means of an operation of the adulterated Thomism I denounced above. It is the second case of such an adulterated reasoning. However, it is more inexcusable because it attacks one of the most universally known texts of St. Thomas.

Let us compare Fr. Elter's argumentation with that of St. Thomas by juxtaposing the propositions as we did in the preceding case. However, in this case of adulteration, it is the major⁷⁴ of St. Thomas that forms the pivot point for Fr. Elter's operation.⁷⁵

The Major Premise. St. Thomas: (*Ratio*) “*est principium actuum humanorum*. [(Reason) is the principle of human acts]” Fr. Elter: “Nam res, quae est extra animam, movet intellectum, et res intellect movet appetitum, et appetitus tendit ad hoc quod perveniat ad hoc, a quo motus incepit (*De veritate*, q.1 a.2). Inter omnia primum movens est appetibile... intellectus practus propter hoc dicitur movere, quia scilicet eius principium quod est appetibile, movet (*De anima*, 3.15). [For the thing, which is outside the soul, moves the intellect, and the known thing moves the appetite, and the appetite tends toward that which arrives at this, from which movement starts. Among all things, the first mover is the desirable [thing]... on account of this, the practical intellect is said to move, namely, because its principle, which is the desirable thing [*appetibile*] moves.]”

The Minor Premise. St. Thomas: “In unoquoque autem genere id quod est principium est mensura et regula illius generis. [In any given genus, that which is the principle is the measure

⁷⁴ [Tr. note—The text reads “minor,” though he almost certainly meant “major.” Though there is a small change to the minor premise, he focuses on the significant changes to the major premise. Also, it was the minor in the last problematic argument, and here he contrasts the two, leading one to believe that he does indeed mean the major here.]

⁷⁵ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 345 and 346.

and rule of that genus.]” Fr. Elter: “Scimus autem in unoquoque genere illud quod est principium, esse mensuram primam⁷⁶ illius generis. [However, we know that in any genus that which is the principle is the first measure of that genus.]”

Conclusion: “The rule and measure of human acts is reason.” —Fr. Elter: “In rebus creatis, seu potius in ipsa natura⁷⁷ humana rationali quaerenda est, SECUNDUM PRINCIPIA ET DOCTRINAM AQUINATIS prima mensura bonitatis moralis actus humani, in ordine creato contenta. [ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES AND DOCTRINE OF AQUINAS, the measure of the moral goodness of the human act, within the created order, must be sought in created things, or rather in the rational human nature itself.]” And all of this is supposedly SECUNDUM PRINCIPIA ET DOCTRINAM AQUINATIS!!!

Ought we not change the definition of law, and in place of “Lex est *rationalis* ordinatio, etc...,” say, “Lex est *naturae* ordinatio”?

Fr. Elter, remembering that, according to Aristotle nature is the first principle of the movement of beings, perhaps was somewhat embarrassed to cite St. Thomas’s major: “*Ratio est principium primum actus humani*,” all the more so because the end is also “*primum principium in agendis*.” And then, in St. Thomas’s major, he has believed himself able to substitute this mosaic that we have reproduced above. The propositions are materially from St. Thomas, yes, but they have nothing to do with the Holy Doctor’s reasoning in this article.

And first of all, St. Thomas’s language is perfectly clear: “*Ratio est principium primum actus humani*.” How ought we to understand this major premise? We do not wish to detract in any way from the primacy of nature. However, St. Thomas speaks formally. He speaks of the “actus humanus,” as opposed to the “actus hominis,” and if it is true that nature is the first

⁷⁶ Note that this word “primam” is not found in St. Thomas’s text.

⁷⁷ I do not see the reason for this equation: “In rebus itaque creatis, seu potius in ipsa natura humana.”

principle of all activity, in man as in all beings, we must say nonetheless that an act of reason is the first manifestation by which properly human activity is differentiated from a mere act of man. Behold why St. Thomas says that reason is the first principle of the human act. A little earlier elsewhere, he himself had explained his intention: “Reason is the first principle of all human acts; though other principles of human acts are found, inasmuch as they obey reason in some way, though in various manners.”⁷⁸ These other principles are the appetitive faculties and, to a certain degree, the external bodily parts.

As for the objection drawn from the end, which is also a first principle, we will return to this below when we treat of the “question of ends and means” in chapter four.

§3—Summary of the preceding

And, now, gathering into a bundle the data from the three articles we have commented on, we can arrive at this conclusion:

The rule of the will is reason because reason is:

- a. The *first* principle (ST I-II, q.90, a.1),
- b. The *proper* principle (*De malo*, q.2, a.4),
- c. The *formal* principle of the human act (ST I-II, q.18, a.5)

And in these three articles—as we have demonstrated—reason means reason, not the substantial form nor the rational nature of man.

§4—*In II Sent. dist.39, q.2, a.1; In II Ethic. lect.2*

⁷⁸ ST I-II q.58 a.2.

In the article cited from the Commentary on the Sentences, St. Thomas asks himself if it is natural to man to will the good. To this question, he responds: “That which is fitting to a thing on account of its form is called natural to it. Now the form by which man is man is his very reason and intellect. Whence man natural tends to that which is fitting to him according to reason and intellect.”⁷⁹

The minor of this syllogism is precisely the doctrine that is objected against our interpretation. He says to us that man’s form is reason. Behold why St. Thomas, saying that the rule of morality is reason, means by reason the substantial form of man!

We will note that, taken in its rawness, this minor premise does not fail to cause some discomfort for us. We know that the substantial form of man is the rational soul and that the terms “rational” and “reason” are not synonyms. Also, to make this proposition passable, Dom Lottin and I have believed ourselves obligated to accompany it with a gloss. However, Dom Lottin’s gloss is applied to the word “reason,” whereas mine is applied to the word “form.”

Dom Lottin speaks to us of the “realization of the proper form of humanity, rationality, the form of man and, in this capacity, the norm of human morality. An act will be endowed with moral goodness to the degree that it is adjusted to right reason, to reason directed according to the requirements of natural reason or, if one wishes, the requirements of rational nature.”⁸⁰

“Therefore, in human actions, good and evil are defined according to man’s nature, which is

⁷⁹ *In II Sent.* dist. 39 q.2 a.1: “That which is fitting to a thing on account of its form is called natural to it, just as fire natural tends upward. Now the form by which man is man is his very reason and intellect. Whence man natural tends to that which is fitting to him according to reason and intellect. Now the good of any given virtue is fitting to man according to reason; because such goodness is from a kind of commensuration of the act to the circumstances and the end, which reason makes. Whence, certain inclinations of virtues or aptitudes [to virtue] preexist naturally in this very rational nature (which are called natural virtues) and also through exercise and deliberation are brought to completion, as is said in the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Therefore, man naturally tends to the good.”

[Tr. note—I cite here in translation the full text, which he gives in Latin.]

⁸⁰ Lottin, “Les éléments de la moralité des actes chez S. Thomas d’Aquin. (ST I-II q.18-21),” 298.

rational. An act is good if it conforms to reason, bad in the contrary case.”⁸¹ “St. Thomas says, ‘The act is specified by the form of man, i.e., by reason.’”⁸²

For my part, I take the term reason in the proper sense of the word. Reason is reason. However, I believe that “form” must be understood not in the sense of meaning the static form, the *forma in essendo*, but instead as meaning the dynamic form, the *forma in operando*. Therefore, one will not say that reason is man’s substantial form. Indeed, this would be an eminently defective use of terminology. Instead, one will say that it is the form of human activity, in other words, the form of the human act. This is the doctrine of *ST I-II q.18, a.5* and *De malo q.2, a.4*.

We make the same response to a text in the *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2 lect. 2, that Fr. Elter objects to us.⁸³ Here is the text that we give, supplementing it with a preamble and the finale whence it results, obviously, that St. Thomas speaks here of right reason, which can in no manner be understood as the substantial form, as we have seen earlier. St. Thomas, wishing to explain how the virtues are caused in us by activities, writes the following:

There must be presupposed, as it were, something common concerning the quality of the activities causing virtue, namely that they are in accord with right reason. The reason for this is that the good of a given thing is found in the fact that its activity be fitted to its form. Now, the proper form of man is that following upon the fact that he is a rational animal. Whence, it is necessary that man’s activity be good from the fact that it is in accord with right reason, for perversity of reason is repugnant to the nature of reason. Now, it will be determined later (namely, in the 6th book) what right reason, which namely, pertains to the intellectual virtues, is and how the intellectual virtues are related to the other virtues, namely to the moral virtues.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 301.

⁸³ Elter, “Norma honestatis,” 341.

⁸⁴ The right reason of which it is a question in the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is certainly not nature.

St. Thomas, speaking formally of the form of the agent, wants to signify the form in the dynamic order, not in the static order. Now, in the dynamism of human activity, the form of man acts as man. It is reason.

Moreover, St. Thomas, speaking here of right reason, adds: “*perveritas enim rationis repugnat naturae rationis*,” which cannot mean that the perversity of the substantial form is repugnant to this form.

§5—*In II Sent. dist. 40, q. 1, a. 1; SCG 3.9 and ST I-II q. 19, a.1*

The parallel texts that precede have been cited on account of their similitude with *ST I-II* q. 18, a. 5. The passage that remains for us to study is interesting on account of its opposition, at least apparent opposition, with this very article, and it is for this reason that we have reserved it for the end. However, following a chronological order, it ought to have been placed before the texts that precede it.

This opposition is noted by Dom Lottin:

In the Commentary on the Sentences, St. Thomas said: the human act is specified by the form of the will, that is, by the end. In this place in the *Summa theologiae*, he says: the human act is specified by man’s form, that is, by reason. In this, there is obviously only a simple question of nuances, and in many places of *ST I-II*, St. Thomas indifferently employs the two expressions, for example, in *ST I-II* q.72, a.1, ad 2.⁸⁵

Between the Commentary on the Sentences and the *Summa theologiae*, the *Summa contra gentes* offers us an intermediate step by joining the two arguments into one.⁸⁶ But what is

⁸⁵ Lottin, “Les éléments de la moralité des actes chez S. Thomas d’Aquin. (*ST I-II* q.18-21),” 301-302. Moreover, there are also here several affirmations that we do not accept. (1) We do not accept the formula “by man’s form, that is, by reason.” We have said that reason is not man’s form. (2) We do not accept that there would be a simple nuance between the formula “specified by the end” and “specified by reason.” (3) We have never encountered the many places in *ST I-II* where St. Thomas indifferently employs the two expressions, and notably, we have never found the same in the text cited from q.72.

[Tr. note: Here, again, he cites this as 1925. He also only cites 301, though the quote spans into 302.]
⁸⁶ *SCG* 3.9: “Bad and good are posited as specific differences in moral matters, for moral things depend upon the will. For this reason, anything that is voluntary pertains to the genus of morals. Now, the object of the will is the end and the good. Whence, moral matters get their species from the end just as natural actions get theirs from the

remarkable is the argument of the Commentary had been abandoned in the *Summa theologiae*.
Such is Dom Lottin's sentiment.

—And firstly, is it indeed true that the arguent of the Commentary on the Sentences had been abandoned in the *Summa theologiae*? One should carefully reread *ST I-II* q. 19, a. 1. It is precisely the argument of the Commentary.⁸⁷ Therefore, St. Thomas has not abandoned it.

And if he would have abandoned it, ought it not suffice for us to know that we have in the *Summa theologiae* the work of the Holy Doctor's maturity and that it is there that we ought to seek his true thought?

Moreover, it would be an error to believe that, at the moment when he wrote his Commentary on the Sentences, St. Thomas had not yet recognized that reason is the rule of morality.⁸⁸

However, finally, we are asked how it can be that in *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 5, St. Thomas remains silent concerning this consideration that he had developed in the Commentary? A more attentive reading gives us an explanation of this fact. The text of the Comentary on the

form of their active principle (as heating gets its from heat). Therefore, because good and evil are said according to the order to the end or a privation of [such] order, it is necessary that in moral matters the first difference be the good and the bad." Up to this point, we have the argument the *Commentary on the Sentences*. Behold now the argument of the *Summa theologiae*: "Now, of one genus there must be one first measure, however the measure of *moral matters [moralium] is reason*. Therefore, it is necessary that from *the end of reason* thins in moral matters are called good or bad. Therefore, that which in moral matters takes its species from an end that is *according to reason* is called good according to its species; but that which takes its species from an end contrary to the *end of reason* is called bad according to its species. Now, that end, even if it removes *the end of reason*, etc..."

⁸⁷ *ST I-II* q. 19, a. 1: "Good and evil are essential differences of the act of the will, for good and evil pertains to the will, just as true and false pertain to reason, whose act is to distinguish the ture and the false, inasmuch as we say an opinion to be true or false. Whence, good and bad will are acts differing according to species. Now, a difference of species in acts is on account of objects. And therefore, good and evil in acts of the will are properly applied on account of objects." We will not enter into the difficulties raised by this article because they are not directly related to our subject. The reader should refer to the Commentators."

⁸⁸ See *In II Sent.*, d. 24, q. 3, a. 3, ad 3: "The rule of human acts is not any reason whatsoever, but right reason. *Ibid.*, d. 42, q. 2, a. 5: "An act is of itself called bad inasmuch as it is in discord with the rectitude of reason." *In III Sent.* d. 23, q. 1, a. 1: "And in the irascible and concupiscible [appetites] we need habits inasmuch as they participate in the rectitude of reason, which is their rule..." et passim.

Sentences is divided into two sections. In the first section, St. Thomas speaks of the elicited acts of the will: *forma voluntatis... in actibus voluntatis.*” In the second section, he speaks of the imperated [i.e., commanded] acts.

In the *Summa theologiae*, the matter is presented in a different order: q.18, the morality of acts in general; q.19, the morality of the internal acts; q.20, the morality of the external acts. The argument developed in the first section of the text of the *Commentary on the Sentences* was related to the internal acts. It was natural that it was reserved to q.19 of the *Summa theologiae*, and indeed, we find it in the first article of that question. St. Thomas, treating the morality of acts in general in q.18, implemented the argument that we have developed at length and that is applied indistinctly to internal acts and to external acts.

Thus, the edifice that Dom Lottin has scaffolded upon the divergence that he had believed himself to have found between the two texts of St. Thomas collapses at its very foundation.

Chapter 3: The Rule of the Moral Good in the Object and in the Circumstances of the Human Act

Perhaps Fr. Elter would accept that reason is the proximate rule that immediately rules and measures the act of the human will,¹ but he thinks that this rule, in the order of created things, needs another rule that would be the formal principle of its rectitude. And this rule would be human nature. If I have understood Fr. Elter correctly, it is by the intermediary of the object that nature rules reason.² Let us examine what St. Thomas teaches concerning the moral rule of the object.

§1—Morality of the Act and Morality of the Object

Morality is said of the act and of the object; but of the act formally; of the object by analogy

There is a morality of the act and a morality of the object. However, morality is not said similarly of each of them. It is said by way of analogy.

The classic example of analogy is health. One says that the man is healthy and that the remedy is healthy. However, health is a form that exists only in man. In the remedy, what is present is not the form of health but the cause of health.

It is the same in the case of morality. Morality is a form that is found in the human act and in the moral virtues.³ The object is called moral only inasmuch as it is the cause of the morality in the act.

¹ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 343: “It is the proximate rule, which indeed regulates and measures immediately the act of the human will.”

² *Ibid.*, 342: “The object constitutes the measure.”

³ Certain modern authors feared to grant formal morality to the moral virtues. However, St. Thomas, leaning upon the Aristotelian definition of virtue—“Virtue is that which makes its possessor good and his work good as well”—recognizes that if virtue is the principle of a good operation, it is, in itself, a formally good quality: “It follows that man’s virtue will be a certain *habitus* from which man becomes good, formally speaking (just as whiteness makes something to be white), and through which he acts [*operatur*] well” (*In II Ethic.*, l.6).

Certain authors have given to the morality of the act the name “formal morality” and to the morality of the object the name “objective morality.” And, going further, they have made the great division of the treatise on morality from this twofold denomination: the first part, objective morality; the second part, formal morality.⁴

We have spoken elsewhere concerning the disadvantages of this terminology.⁵

These authors have not noted that both moralities are encountered in the act and in the object. Objective morality is opposed to subjective morality; formal morality is opposed to material morality. Moreover, some call “objective” the morality that the act takes from its object, as opposed to the morality taken from its end. To avoid all confusion, we believe it is preferable in this matter to maintain the distinction that we have proposed; the morality of the act and the morality of the object. The morality of the act is a property of the act. The morality of the object is a property of the object.

§2—The Object in its Physical Being and in its Moral Being

The act in its physical being and in its moral being

The human act can be considered either in its physical being or in its moral being.

In its physical being, it is an emanation from a physical faculty. The act is principally considered in its relationship with the cause that produces it. Moral being is the relation of fittingness or non-fittingness with the rule of morality.⁶

It is in *ST* I-II that St. Thomas placed the treatise on human acts (q. 6-21). In the first section (q. 6-17), he considers human acts in their physical being. In the second section (q. 18-

⁴ See Frins and Cathrein.

⁵ See Lehu, *Ethica generalis*, n.161.

⁶ [Tr note: On this important topic, see the appendix “The Thomist School on the Metaphysical Essence of Morality.”]

21), he considers them in their moral being. Properly speaking, this latter is the Treatise on Morality.

The same distinction in the object

In the objects of these very acts, St. Thomas found this same distinction that he recognized in human acts. “Every object or end has a certain goodness or wickedness, at least natural goodness or wickedness.” This is the object in its physical being. “However, it does not always imply moral goodness or wickedness.” This is the object in its moral being.⁷

This distinction is of extreme importance. We saw above that the human act receives its goodness or its wickedness from its object. Of what object do we wish to speak? Of the object in its physical being? Obviously not. We would dash ourselves against this well-worn principle: “Nobody gives what he does not have.” How can a purely physical object produce good and evil in the human act?

St. Thomas taught us from the first question of *ST I-II*, “Movement does not receive its species from that which is a *per accidens* terminus but only from that which is a *per se* terminus. However, the moral ends are accidental to the natural thing, and conversely, the natural end is accidental to the moral thing.”⁸

The physical end (or, the physical object—they are the same) is accidental to the moral thing. If it is accidental to the moral act, it cannot specify it, since the movement does not receive its species from that which terminates it accidentally.⁹

The object that gives its morality to the act is not the physical object but, instead, the moral object

⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 8, ad 2.

⁸ *ST I-II*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3.

⁹ Read again *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 8, obj. 2. It is this objection that St. Thomas resolves by the text that we cited above.

Since the property of rendering the act good or bad pertains exclusively to the object in its moral being, it is important to distinguish the moral object from the physical object. The object in its physical being is the object considered in relation to its nature and to its properties in the physical order. The object in its moral being is the object considered in relation to the rule of morality.

But what is the rule of the morality of the object?

§3—The rule of morality in the object

Here, I will greatly astonish Fr. Elter. However, it is not my fault. I am expounding St. Thomas's doctrine.

According to St. Thomas, the rule of the morality of the object is reason.

The Doctrine of St. Thomas on this subject

First, let us finish the text that we began to cite above: “Every object or end has a certain goodness or wickedness, at least natural goodness or wickedness. However, this does not always imply moral goodness or wickedness, which is defined in relation to reason—*QUAE CONSIDERATUR PER COMPARATIONEM AD RATIONEM.*”¹⁰

A little later on, St Thomas says more expressly again: “The good is represented by reason to the will as an object, and inasmuch as it falls under the order of reason, it pertains to the moral genus and causes moral goodness in the act of the will. This is so because reason is the principle of human and moral actions, as was said above.”¹¹

¹⁰ ST I-II q.18 a.8 ad 2.

¹¹ ST I-II q.19 a.1 ad 3.

Bonum per rationem repraesentatur voluntati ut obiectum. Consequently, inasmuch as the object has not been touched by the rule of reason, it has not passed out of the physical order and cannot specify the act of the will. On the other hand, as soon as it has undergone the influence of reason and, to the degree that this influence is exerted, it becomes a moral object—*inquantum cadit sub ordine rationis, pertinet ad genus moris.* Then, having become a moral object, it produces moral goodness in the act of the will—*causat bonitatem morale in actu voluntatis.* Therefore, one ought not to place an opposition between the act’s rule of morality and the object’s rule of the morality. In each case, it is the same rule, *ratio enim principium est humanorum et moralium actuum.*

Therefore, the object in its moral being is the object considered “in relation to reason.” Such is the constant teaching of St. Thomas.¹²

What does it mean to say, the object “in relation to reason, *secundum ordinem ad rationem*”? Shall we say with Fr. Elter that it simply signifies the object known by reason?¹³ However, St. Thomas’s teaching is wholly different from this: “In the physical order, human reason is not the rule of things.” Human reason is not the rule of chemistry or of astronomy. It knows the movements of the stars and the combinations of bodies. It knows them, but it does not rule them:

[Human reason, of itself, is not the rule of things], but the principles that are naturally innate in it (i.e., the precepts of the natural law)¹⁴ are certain¹⁵ general rules and measures

¹² ST I-II q.18 a.8: “Human acts that are called moral have [their] species from the object related to the principle of human acts, which is reason...” *De malo* q.2 a.4 ad 5: “The moral act receives [its] species from the object inasmuch as it is compared to reason”; a.5: “The moral act has its species from an object according to an order to reason”; a.6: “It is necessary that the moral act have [its] species according to something in the object considered in relation to reason.

¹³ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 342: “Reason is the principle through which and in which human nature as such is manifested.”

¹⁴ [Tr. note—The parenthesis indicates an addition made by Lehu.]

¹⁵ [Tr. note—Lehu does not translate the *quaedam*.]

of all that which is done by man, whose natural reason¹⁶ is the rule and measure, although it is not the measure of those things that are of nature.¹⁷

Let us consider again *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 5, about which we have already commented at length without exhausting its content, for “it contains many things.” St. Thomas says to us, “Therefore, it is clear that, *considered in the object*, the difference between good and evil has an essential relation [*comparatur per se*] with reason, namely inasmuch as the object is suitable or not suitable to it.”¹⁸ And a little later on, in *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 8, with regard to indifferent acts, he says, “Every act has its species from an object, and the human act that is called moral has its species from an object considered in relation to the principle of human acts, which is reason.” “Every act,” i.e., the physical act, “receives its species from an object,” the physical object, “and the moral act receives its species from an object considered in relation to reason,” i.e., the moral object. St. Thomas continues:

Therefore, if object of the act includes something that is suitable to the order of reason, it will be a good act according to its species, e.g., to give alms to the needy. However, if it includes something that is repugnant to the order of reason, it will be evil according to its species, as stealing is the taking of something that is not one’s own. However, it happens that the object of an act does not include something pertaining to the order of reason, e.g., to lift a straw from the ground, to walk in the fields, and other such things of this sort, and such acts are indifferent with regard to their species.¹⁹

We must register a remark regarding the expression “ordo rationis” in this article. Fr. Gillet attaches a certain importance to this formula: “In article 5, St. Thomas has not pronounced the expression ‘rational order [*ordre rationnel*].’ Here, he repeats it up to three times.”²⁰ And he concludes, “The morality of an act, under all its aspects, rests upon the *rational order*, such that

¹⁶ St. Thomas, here treating of the natural law, attributes to natural reason the quality of being the rule of the moral order. We will show below (in chapter 4) how not only natural reason but also prudence is the rule of morality.

¹⁷ *ST I-II* q.91 a.3 ad 2. [Tr. note—Lehu translates the closing as “of the physical order.”]

¹⁸ *ST I-II* q.18 a.5.

¹⁹ *ST I-II* q.18 a.8.

²⁰ Gillet, *Les actes humains*, n.48.

it springs from the needs and laws of a reasonable nature called to perfect itself by its acts. In this sense, human reason, envisioned as the specific form of man is indeed the foundation of morality.”²¹

For us, the *ordo rationis* is simply the order of reason, i.e., the order established by reason. We said earlier why the word “reason” does not have a different sense, whether one understands it of the rule of the act or whether one understands it of the rule of the object. Likewise, here, everything that is forced into the *rational order* seems to us to be gratuitously added to what St. Thomas calls here the “ordo rationis,” in an article of the *De malo* contemporaneous to the *Summa theologiae* he calls “ratio” without qualification: “It is some *object* that conveys something *suitable to reason*...; however, some *object* that conveys something *at variance* [*discordans*] *with reason*... but there is a certain object that neither conveys something *suitable to reason* nor something *at variance with reason*.”²² And in this very ST I-II q.18 a.8, before speaking of the *ordo rationis*, St. Thomas had written: “the human act that is called moral has its species from an object considered in relation to the principle of human acts, which is reason.”²³ This reason, the principle of human acts, is not reason, the specific form of man.²⁴

²¹ *ibid.*, n. 49.

²² *De malo*, q. 2, a. 5.

²³ *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 8.

²⁴ A little later, in *ST I-II*, q. 21, a. 1, St. Thomas will speak many times of the “order of reason and of the eternal law”; if the “order of reason” signifies the order of the rational nature, what will the “order of the eternal law” signify?

§4—An objection: The mean of intellectual virtues

ST I-II q.64, a.3

Against the doctrine that we have come to exposit, Fr. Elter believes to have found an objection in a text of St. Thomas concerning the mean of the intellectual virtues, *ST-II* q. 64, a.3.²⁵

He should have pondered *ST I-II*, q. 64, a. 2, which is entitled, “Whether the mean of moral virtue is a mean of a reality [*medium rei*] or a mean of reason [*medium rationis*].” Had he done so, he would have found himself upon moral terrain, the response given *in materia propria* would have been more topical and he could have read that “every mean of moral virtue is a mean of reason, for moral virtue is said to consist in a mean through conformity to right reason.”²⁶ We have cited this article earlier.²⁷

Fr. Elter’s Commentary

See Fr. Elter’s difficulty:

The truth [*verum*] of practical intellectual virtue (and, consequently, of prudence)²⁸ compared indeed *to a reality* [*ad rem*] receives its measure from it [*habet rationem mensurati*]. Thus, just as is the case in the speculative virtues, in the practical intellectual virtues the mean is taken through conformity *to reality* [*ad rem*]. However, with regard to appetite, it has the character of being rule and measure.²⁹

In the response to the first objection, St. Thomas adds that, “Also, intellectual virtue has its measure, and through conformity to this measure the mean is established in it.”³⁰ And, he continues in the response to the second objection, “It is not necessary to proceed to infinity in the

²⁵ See Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 344.

²⁶ *ST I-II* q.64 a.2.

²⁷ See page 28 in original.

²⁸ [Tr. note—Parenthesis added by Lehu.]

²⁹ *ST I-II* q.64 a.3.

³⁰ *ST I-II* q.64 a.3 ad 1.

virtues, for the measure and the rule of intellectual virtue is not some other kind [*genus*] of virtue, but *reality itself* [*ipsa res*].”³¹

And concerning this text, Fr. Elter concludes that even in admitting that right reason is the proximate rule of the will, we must recognize another, anterior rule, which communicates its rectitude to reason, and this rule is *reality*.

Cajetan’s Commentary

Cajetan had already remarked that the text that one opposes here, seems, at first view, difficult to reconcile with two earlier texts of St. Thomas.

First of all, in *ST I-II*, q. 57,³² a. 5, ad 3, St. Thomas wrote:

The truth [*verum*] of the practical intellect is taken in a different manner than it is in the speculative intellect, as is said in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI. For the truth of the speculative intellect is taken from the conformity of the intellect *with reality*... The truth of the practical intellect is taken from conformity *with right appetite*.³³

How can he say here [i.e., in *ST I-II*, q. 64, a. 3] that truth each intellect [i.e. in the intellect in speculative orientation and the intellect in practical orientation] is taken equally from conformity with reality?

Secondly, St. Thomas wrote in *ST I-II*, q. 63, a. 2: “It is necessary that the good of man be considered according to some rule, which indeed is twofold, namely human reason and the divine law.”³⁴ Here [i.e., in *ST I-II*, q. 64, a. 3], “the measure and the rule of intellectual virtue is not another kind of virtue but reality itself.” This is Fr. Elter’s objection.

³¹ *ST I-II* q.64 a.3 ad 2.

³² [Tr. note—Here, the text reads “59.” Clearly, Lehu means “57”; his later citations are correct.]

³³ *ST I-II* q.57 a.5 ad 3.

³⁴ *ST I-II* q.63 a.2.

Letting Cajetan deal with the first difficulty, we will linger with the second that touches us more directly.³⁵

In what sense reality is the rule of the practical intellectual virtue. In these virtues, we can distinguish knowledge and direction. From the point of view of knowledge, the thing is the rule of prudence, but it is the physical object.

First of all, St. Thomas's principle in q. 64 (that the truth of practical intellectual virtue is measured by reality) when limited to its legitimate sphere, is perfectly exact. It is verified both in art as in morality.

In art, when the builders of the Eiffel tower prepared their plans, they had to take into account both the resistance of the steel materials and the arcs load-bearing strength. On this terrain, they were commanded by reality, and an error concerning the thing easily would have led to a catastrophe.

It is the same in morality. If Noah is intoxicated, it is because he did not know reality, i.e., the alcoholic power of wine.

Doctrine of St. Thomas concerning the object of temperance

St. Thomas's doctrine concerning temperance places us on the path of finding a solution to the proposed difficulty.

St. Thomas, asking himself if the rule of temperance ought to be taken according to the necessities of the present life, responds, "Temperance takes the necessities of the present life as the rule of the delightful goods that it commands."³⁶ On this subject, Suarez remarks that nobody will call the necessities of life a law but, the foundation of the law.³⁷ This is the response that St. Thomas gives us in another form when he says, "The end and rule of this very

³⁵ [Tr. note: See the appendix below "*".]

³⁶ ST II-II q.141 a.6.

³⁷ Suarez, *De legibus*, I.2, c.5 §6: "Concerning temperance, D. Thomas teaches [*tradit*] the necessity of the body to be the rule of temperance; however, nobody would say that it is the law, but the foundation of the law."

temperance is beatitude. However, the end and rule of the thing that temperance uses are the necessities of human life.”³⁸ The necessity of the present life is not the rule of temperance. It is only the rule of the reality that temperance commands.—Yes, but, I will be told that the thing that temperance commands is the object of temperance and, therefore, that we must admit that the object of temperance is ruled not by reason but by the thing.

Let us recall that which we have said concerning the object of the human act. We have distinguished the object in its physical being and in its moral being. Of which of these two objects are we speaking here?

Speaking of gluttony, St. Thomas distinguishes excess in the use of food and excess in the desire for food. It is this latter excess that constitutes, properly speaking, the sin of gluttony. As regards the use of food, it is determined according to the rule of corporeal nature. Indeed, this rule falls more to the art of medicine than to prudence, although it then pertains to prudence to judge if this desire is moderate or immoderate.³⁹

The rule for the use of food falls to medicine. That is, the object in question here is an object in its physical being, in other words, before it has been submitted to the rule of reason. It is of this physical object that St. Thomas says that the rule is reality itself.

I have before me a bottle of beer and a bottle of champagne. Before prudence begins its work in regulating desire, it is first necessary to distinguish the two liquors. In other words, it is necessary to recognize reality. The doctor forbids sugar to diabetics. In the case of typhoid fever, he imposes an absolute diet. We are ever in the domain of the physical object; it is here

³⁸ ST II-II q.141 a.6 ad 1.

³⁹ *De malo* q.14 a.1 ad 2: “Gluttony, as has been said, does not convey primarily and essentially an immoderate consumption of food, but an immoderate desire for consumption of it. However, the measure of this consumption of food is taken according to the rule of the corporeal nature; whence, it rather can be known according to the art of medicine than according to the reason of prudence, according to which, however, it can be decided whether the desire is moderate or immoderate.”

that it is necessary to recognize reality; for truth in the intellectual virtues is taken in relation to reality. The reality being known, reason intervenes as regulative of the moral object; it rules desire. Then, we are in the moral domain.

§5—The Rule of Morality in the Circumstances of the Human Act The circumstances in their physical being and in their moral being

What we have said about the morality of the object of the human act, we will say again concerning the morality of the circumstances. And this is wholly understandable, for if the object determines the substance of the act, the circumstances are like the accidents of the act.

Before everything, we must distinguish the circumstances in their physical being and in their moral being. In their physical being, they are accidental modalities modifying the substance of the physical act. In their moral being they are understood in their relation with the rule of good and evil.

What is the rule of good and evil in the circumstances?

St. Thomas's doctrine

St. Thomas responds to us: it is reason. “A circumstance gives the species of good or evil in the moral act, inasmuch as it has a special relation with the *order of reason* [*respicit specialem ordinem rationis*].”⁴⁰

Already in *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 5 (where, as we have seen, St. Thomas established that reason is the rule of moral good and evil in the object) he wished, in the response to the fourth objection, to show that the same doctrine must equally be applied to the circumstances:

Sometimes, a circumstance is taken as the essential difference of the object, inasmuch as it is related *to reason*, and this can give the species to the moral act. And this must be so

⁴⁰ *ST I-II* q.18 a.11.

whenever a circumstance changes the act from goodness to wickedness, for a circumstance would not make an act to be bad unless it is *repugnant to reason*.⁴¹

As we already saw above,⁴² St. Thomas thus shows the difference existing from this point of view between natural things and human acts, between the physical order and the moral order—species are constituted in natural things by forms, products of nature, and in human acts by forms conceived by reason. Nature is determined to a single effect; also, in the physical order, that which is an accident could never be taken as the specific difference. Reason does not have this determination to a unique effect. Behold why, in the moral order, apart from the specification coming from the object, every circumstance (place, time, etc...) having a special repugnance with the order of reason will produce a new species. And St. Thomas concludes: “And in this way, whenever some circumstance has a special relationship to the *order of reason* (whether for or against [this order]) it is necessary that the circumstance give a species⁴³ to the moral act, whether good or bad.”⁴⁴

St. Thomas himself provides a summary for the preceding doctrine:

⁴¹ ST I-II q.18 a.5 ad 4.

⁴² See page 62 in original.

⁴³ [Tr. note—Or, as Lehu translates, “that it specifies the moral act...”]

⁴⁴ ST I-II q.18 a.10: “Just as the species of natural things are constituted from natural forms, so too are the species of moral acts constituted from forms, inasmuch they are conceived *by reason*, as is obvious from what was said above (a.5). But, because nature is determined to one, nor can there be a process *in infinitum* in nature, it is necessary to arrive at some ultimate form from which is taken the specific difference after which there cannot be another specific difference. And hence is it that in natural things, that which is as an accident to a given thing, cannot be taken as the difference constituting the species. However, the process *of reason* is not determined to some one thing but, anything being given, can proceed further. And therefore, that that which is taken in one act as a circumstance added to the object that determines the species of the act can again be taken *by directing reason [a ratione ordinante]* as the principle condition of the object determining the species of the act. Thus, taking the another’s property has its species by reason of being another’s and thus is it constituted in the species of theft. An if beyond this one considers reasons concerned with place or time, then this will be an additional circumstance. However, because *reason* can direct [*ordinare*] with regard to place or also time, and other such things, it happens that a condition of place concerning the object is taken as being contrary to the *order of reason*; for example, *reason* ordains [*ordinate*] that one not do damage to a sacred place. Whence, to take something from a sacred place adds a special repugnance *to the order of reason*. And therefore place, which first was considered as a circumstance, is not considered as the principal condition of the object *repugnant to reason*. And in this way, whenever some circumstance has a special relationship to the *order of reason* (whether for or against [this order]) it is necessary that the circumstance give a species to the moral act, whether good or bad.” Cf. *De malo* q.2 a.6 and 7.

Reason must order the act not only with regard to its object but also with regard to all the circumstances. This is why when an act is in dissonance [*aversio*, dissonance] WITH THE RULE OF REASON, on account of whatsoever bad circumstance (e.g., if someone acts when or where one ought not to act) this dissonance [*aversio*, dissonance] suffices to make the act bad. This dissonance [*aversionem*, *répugnance*] WITH THE RULE OF REASON produces separation from God, to whom man ought to be united by *right reason*.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ [Tr. note—Although taken from the Latin, I have rendered several portions of this in a way close to Lehu's French, which felicitously expresses the text.]

Chapter 4: Prudence. Right Reason

§1—The Question of Ends and of Means

An objection by Fr. Elter

Fr. Elter¹ objects to us these three texts of St. Thomas: “Just as speculative reason is called right inasmuch as it is in conformity to the first principles, so too is practical reason called right inasmuch as it is conformed to right ends.”² “It is obvious that rectitude of appetite in relation to the end is the measure of truth in practical reason.”³ Now, the end is determined for man by nature.⁴ And he concludes: therefore, it is in nature that one must seek the first rule of moral rectitude.

This introduces us to the treatise on prudence

Fr. Elter here raises the question of ends and means, a capital question in morality. It is the whole treatise on prudence, and prudence is like the very heart of St. Thomas’s moral philosophy. Let us enter, since we have been invited to do so.

§2—Choice or Election

The importance of this act

In moral matters, there is an act that takes precedence [*prime*] all the others: it is “choice”⁵ or election. It is according to choice that Aristotle defines moral virtue: “Moral virtue is an elective habit, that is, a habit that produces a good choice.”⁶

Whence comes it?

¹ See Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 344.

² *In III Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, qcl.2.

³ *In VI Ethic.*, lect. 2.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *In II Ethic.*, lect. 7: “The principal of virtue is choice.”

⁶ ST I-II, q. 58, a. 4.

Choice owes its importance to the fact that it is not enough to do the good; it is still necessary to perform this good action in the right way and to do it well, for to perform an action by caprice or by passion, even a good action, is not to act well.⁷ The human act is the act that arises from reason and from the will. The part played by an element that is not, properly speaking, human (e.g., passion) restricts the morality of the act. It is why the good act must be done well, since it proceeds from reason and the will and not from one of these principles of the inferior order that disturb human activity.⁸

We attribute this perfection of the human act to choice, for choice is an act by which, in view of an end to be obtained, the will, after reason's deliberation, adopts one means in preference to other possible means.⁹

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas tells us another indication that highlights the importance of choice:

Although both inner choice and outward action proceed from the *habitus* of virtue, virtuous and vicious practices [*mores*] are judged more by choice than by outward actions. For every virtuous man chooses the good, but sometimes does not do it because of some external impediment. And the vicious man sometimes does a virtuous deed, not however from a virtuous choice but from fear or on account of some unsuitable end, for example on account of vainglory or something else of this sort.¹⁰

Two conditions of a perfect choice: rectitude in intention of ends, rectitude in the choice of means.

In order that choice be perfect, two conditions are required: (1) rectitude in the intention of the end; (2) rectitude in the choice of means.¹¹

⁷ ST I-II q. 57, a. 5: "In order for someone to act well, not only what a man does matters but also the manner that he does it, namely that it is done according to right choice, not only from impulse or passion." Cf. *In II Ethic.*, lect. 4.

⁸ See ST I-II, q. 77, a. 6: "However, in us, something is said to be by reason and will. Whence, the more reason and the will of themselves do something of their own accord and not from the impulse of passion, the more is it voluntary and does it exist in us." Cf. ST I-II, q. 74, a. 3, ad 3.

⁹ See ST I-II, q. 13.

¹⁰ *In III Ethic.*, lect. 5.

¹¹ ST I-II, q. 57, a. 5: "However, since choice is concerned with those things that are ordered to the end, rectitude in choice requires two things, namely the due end and that which is suitably ordered to the due end."

Natural reason is the rule of ends; discursive reason is the rule of means. It is always reason.

Now, the rule of the ends is natural reason (or, synderesis); the rule of the means is discursive reason (or, prudence). In either case, it is reason, always reason.¹²

§3—Practical Reason

Morality carries us into the field of practical reason. What is reason? What is practical reason? What is the process of practical reason? Let us begin by briefly responding to these three questions.

I. What is reason?

Man's knowledge is discursive, and it is in this that it differs from angelic knowledge.

The angels are intellectual beings [*intelligences*] that proceed solely by intuition.

Knowing the essence of things, they know at the same time all of the properties concerning that essence, without needing to consider it from various perspectives in order to discover its properties in a successive manner.

Man also has an intellect, but this intellect is inferior to that of the angels. It only knows the first principles intuitively. From these principles, it must deduce conclusions, and sometimes it arrives at them only at the price of bitter struggles. Therefore, what is proper to reason is reasoning or the discursive procedure by which we extract conclusions from their principles. Hence, we see why men are called rational creatures.¹³

II. What is practical reason?

In intellectual knowledge, certain objects have no relation with action. They are the object of speculation. Reason that stops in speculation is called speculative reason. Sometimes,

¹² Cajetan, *In ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 6: "Natural reason, which dictates concerning the end, and prudence, which dictates concerning means to the end, suffice."

¹³ See ST I, q. 79, a. 8.

on the contrary, the known object belongs to the order of action. When I have arrived at this conclusion, “It is a bad thing to steal,” reason does not stop there; it takes the direction of the will, and the will refuses to steal. This is practical reason.¹⁴

Speculative reason and practical reason are not two different faculties. It is one and the same faculty of which the acts alone differ, for practical reason orders to action the object of its speculation, something that speculative reason does not do. Therefore, these two kinds of reason differ on account of their ends. This difference, arising from the end, is extrinsic to the object of knowledge; it is therefore purely accidental and not able to differentiate two powers.

III. What is the process of practical reason?

Practical reason is reason; as such, it is discursive. However, in speculative reason, one’s reasoning sets forth from principle so as to be terminated in the conclusion. In practical reason, the principles are ends and the conclusions are the means.¹⁵ This is why the truth of speculative reason depends upon its conformity with reality, and the truth of practical reason depends upon its conformity with right ends.¹⁶

§4—Ends

¹⁴ ST I, q. 79, a. 11: “For the practical intellect knows truth, just as does the speculative intellect, but it orders this known truth to a work.”

¹⁵ ST I-II, q. 89, a. 4: “However, in things to be desired [*appetibilibus*], as has been said many times, the ends are like the principles, but those things that are ordered to the end are like conclusions.”

¹⁶ See *In III Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, q. 2: “Just as speculative reason is called right inasmuch as it is right by conformity to the first principles, so too is practical reason called right reason inasmuch as it is conformed to right ends.” *In VI Ethic.*, lect. 2: “It is obvious that rectitude of appetite in relation to the end is the measure of truth in practical reason.”

On this point, we are fully in accord with Fr. Elter, who objects these two text to us. Even better, we are more in accord with him than he is with himself. I would like to know how these two texts that he opposes to us on page 344 of his article are reconciled in his mind with the text of ST I-II cited on the same page. See ST I-II, q. 64 a. 3: “The truth [*verum*] of practical intellectual virtue compared indeed to the thing [*ad rem*] receives its measure from it [*habet rationem mensurati*]; and so, just as in the speculative virtues, in the practical intellectual virtues is the mean taken through conformity to the thing [*ad rem*].”

[Tr. note: Fr. Lehu incorrectly cites book two of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He cites this passage correctly above, however.]

Definition of the end

The end is that in view of which action is done.¹⁷ Considered in the order of intention, the end is the cause of the action; it is what triggers the action of the agent and urges [*pousse*] it to act. Considered in the order of execution, it is the effect of the action; as soon as the end is obtained, the action is arrested and the agent enjoys the good that it has acquired.

Natural ends and voluntary ends

Every agent acts for an end. Natural agents tend to the end that the Creator has determined for them; free agents seek the end that they have chosen.

The texture [*trame*] of human life is composed of ends that intermingle and are subordinated. Just as the conclusion of a syllogism can become the principle of another syllogism—for example, the philosopher who has demonstrated the spirituality of the soul takes up this conclusion and makes a principle of it, making it to be the point of departure for another syllogism destined to prove the immortality of the soul—so too in practical reason, that which was the means and conclusion in a preceding reasoning can become the end (i.e., the principle) of a subsequent chain of reasoning. I will to build a house—this is an end. For this, I will to seek the attention of an architect friend who lives in Paris; I will the trip to Paris—it is a means. The trip to Paris, now a means, will become an end when in an ulterior consideration I will look for the manner of accomplishing this trip—and so forth...¹⁸

¹⁷ See Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.3

¹⁸ Cajetan, *In II-II*, q. 47, a. 6: “Scientific knowledge [*scientia*] is always of the conclusions, but, however, *scientia* of a second conclusion is materially *scientia* of the principle of a third conclusion: because that very proposition that was the conclusion of the second demonstration is the principle of the third demonstration, and so for the others. And, similarly, prudence always has regard for those things that are ordered to the end [i.e., the means], except that in this case prudential knowledge with regard to this given end is materially concerned with the end in regard to the next prudential knowledge subordinated to that means [i.e., from the first prudential knowledge] and so forth, insofar as it happens that many means are subordinated to one principal end. For that which was a means to an end in the first discursive act of prudence becomes the end in the second discourse, and so forth for the third and all the rest.”

St. Thomas calls the procedure that we have just described the way of research or of discovery, for in either reason [i.e. speculative or practical], one goes from the known to the unknown. However, when we have arrived at the final conclusion or at the final means, reason returning over its steps and proceeding by way of judgment—St. Thomas says by way of resolution; we might say, in order to obtain the crosscheck—reason reverts to the first principle from which it has set forth, and it is only when it has rejoined this first principle that it finds its perfect rest.¹⁹

In practical reasoning, the ends take the place of principles: the final end in practical reason is akin to the first indemonstrable principle in speculative reason.

The final end

It is the final end that gives the impulse to our activity; it is like the main spring in a watch mechanism. If there were no last end, there would be no second end; there would be no movement in the world. After having been the point of departure, it is the terminus without which nothing is fixed in action, just as in speculative reason, the final resolution is found only in the first, absolutely indemonstrable principle.²⁰

The last end is determined by nature. Therefore, like nature, it is necessary and does not depend upon the free will. Man was created for happiness. He can err in this search for happiness; he can take for happiness that which is only an appearance of it. However, it is impossible for him to seek after anything other than happiness.

¹⁹ See ST I, q. 79, a. 8: “Human ratiocination, according to the way of inquiry or discovery proceeds from some things that are simply understood, which are first principles; and, in turn, in the way of judgment, by way of resolution, returns to the first principles, in light of which it examines what it has discovered [*ad quae inventa examinat*].”

²⁰ ST I-II, q. 90, a. 2, ad 3: “Just as nothing comes to a halt firmly according to speculative reason except by resolution to the first principles, so too nothing comes to a halt through practical reason except through an ordination to the final end.” ST I-II, q. 72, a. 5: “which stands in relation to matters of action as does the indemonstrable principle in speculative matters.”

The ends of the moral virtues

The last end is not in man the only end determined by nature. We must add to it that which St. Thomas calls the ends of the moral virtues:

Just as in speculative reason there are certain things that are naturally known (of which one has understanding [*intellectus*]) and some things that are known through them (namely, the conclusions of which there is science [*scientia*]), so too in practical reason there preexist certain things as naturally known principles, and things of these sorts are the ends of the moral virtues because the end stands in relation to matters of action as does the principle in speculative matters; and certain things are in practical reason as conclusions, and things of these sort are those which are directed to the end [i.e., the means] at which we arrive form the ends themselves. And prudence is concerned with these [i.e., the means], applying universal principles to particular conclusions of things to be done.²¹

Natural inclinations

These ends of the virtues correspond to *natural inclinations*.

Each of our faculties in the moral order as well as the natural powers in the physical order, has a tendency toward which a good that is proper to it: reason is inclined toward the true, the will toward the good, the irascible appetite toward the difficult good under the direction of reason, the concupiscible appetite toward the delightful good moderated by reason. These inclinations are in us by nature, but they are only rudimentary perfections that need to be developed by exercise; then, they become virtues, while bad action atrophies them.

The last end and the ends of the virtues are determined by nature;²² all the other particular ends are determined by the free will of man. We have spoken of the man who wishes to build a house; this end, if we consider it in relation to all the operations that will follow, is truly an end;

²¹ ST II-II, q. 47, a. 6. And St. Thomas concludes: “And this is why it does not pertain to prudence to determine the proper ends of the moral virtues but only to dispose the means.” We will see in §6 what is the rule of the ends.

²² It is a question of these natural ends in the text that Fr. Elter opposes to us in *Norma honestatis*, 344: “However, the end is determined for man by nature.” *In VI Ethic.*, lect.2.

however, considered in relation to anterior reasonings, which have their point of departure in natural ends, it is a means.

This distinction is of the highest importance, for, if the principle that we have cited—perfect choice requires two conditions, i.e., rectitude of ends and rectitude of means—is universal and is applied to every choice, only the natural ends have natural reason for their rule; the voluntary ends that, in fact, are means, are submitted to the rule of the means, i.e. to prudence.

§5—Natural Reason, Synderesis, Natural Law

What Natural Reason Is

“In us, every operation of reason and will is derived from that which is according to nature, for every reasoning process [*ratiocinatio*] is derived from principles that are naturally known and every desire for those things that are ordered to the end [i.e., means] is derived from the natural desire of the final end.”²³

Synderesis

Indeed, there are, in speculative reason, principles that are naturally known; they pertain to the *habitus* that one calls the understanding of principles. It is the same in practical reason; it contains naturally known principles, and these principles fall under synderesis.

Understanding [*l'intellect*] and synderesis are not faculties distinct from reason. They are not even faculties. They are *habitus*, natural intellectual virtues.²⁴

²³ ST I-II, q. 91, a. 2, ad 2.

²⁴ Perhaps, it would be better to say a virtue that, inasmuch as it is related to the principles of speculative reason is called “understanding of principles”; inasmuch as it is related to the principles of practical reason, it is called synderesis. St. Thomas did not decide this question, but one can cite texts that favor one or the other opinion. For example, in favor of the single virtue, *In VI Ethic.*, l.3: “It was previously said that the intellectual virtues are *habitus* by which the soul speaks the truth. However, five in number are those by which the soul always speaks the truth (either by affirming or by denying), namely art, science, prudence, wisdom, and understanding. Whence, it is

These principles are known naturally. That is why they are intuitive, not discursive.²⁵

They are determinedly true and consequently are infallible. They are unavoidable.

The reason that produces these principles is called natural reason. It is distinguished from discursive reason, which employs reasoning and sometimes goes astray in the search for the truth.

Natural reason and discursive reason are not two distinct faculties, no more than are speculative and practical reason. It is always the same faculty that receives different names according to the objects to which it is applied.

Concerning one text of St. Thomas—“natural reason, which is called synderesis”²⁶—certain people have believed it possible to conclude a veritable identity between natural reason and synderesis. It seems preferable not to press this formula. Therefore, we will say that natural reason is the “faculty” inasmuch as it knows the first principles. It exercises this function by the natural *habitus* of principles, synderesis.²⁷

The natural law

It remains for us to speak of the natural law, which is very closely related to natural reason and to synderesis.

The natural law expresses two things. First, it is a law; then it is a law of nature.

obvious that these are the five intellectual virtues.” If synderesis differs from understanding, St. Thomas would have added it to the aforementioned enumeration. Thus, he would have arrived at a total of six intellectual virtues, but he only ever counts five of them. And, in *In III Sent.*, dist. 33, a. 4, St. Thomas, returning to this text of Aristotle, says to us, “Natural *habitus*, such as synderesis, in the place of which the Philosopher (*VI Ethic.*, 1.3) places understanding in matters of operation.”

On the other hand, we frequently find in St. Thomas a formula like this, “Just as in speculative reason there is understanding of principles, so too in practical reason we have synderesis,” which seems well to indicate two distinct *habitus*.

[Tr. note—Fr. Lehu has *In III Ethic.*, where he should have *In VI Ethic.*]

²⁵ [Tr. note: That is, they are known directly and not through the mediation of objectively illative reasoning through a middle term.]

²⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 6, ad 1.

²⁷ See *ST* I, q. 79, a. 12, ad 3.

Like every law, it is a *dictamen* of practical reason, and that distinguishes it from synderesis. Synderesis is a virtue, i.e., a principle of action; the *dictamen* is the product of the action. As St. Thomas concludes: “Synderesis is called the law of our intellect, inasmuch as it is a *habitus* containing the precepts of the natural law, which are the first principles of human actions.”²⁸

It is a law of nature because all beings naturally receive a participation in the eternal law, a participation that directs them toward their proper ends, and this participation in rational creatures is made in a rational manner, by what we have called natural reason.

§6—Natural Reason, Rule of Ends

It is a question of natural ends

Here, it is a question of natural ends in the sense that we explained above in §4.

Considered in themselves, natural ends are, as we have said, the ends of the moral virtues that are interconnected [*confundent*] with the natural inclinations.

How they are expressed

Considered in their expression, they are the first, indemonstrable principles of practical reason, otherwise called the precepts of the natural law.

All these formulas, regardless of their nuance, are employed indifferently by St. Thomas.

An example: “The precepts of the Decalogue thus fall into the judgment of men, as though under the purview of natural reason. However, chief among the dictates of natural reason are the ends of human life, which are related to matters of action as naturally known principles are related to speculative matters.”²⁹

²⁸ ST I-II, q. 94, a. 1 ad 2.

²⁹ ST II-II, q. 56, a. 1.

Also, St. Thomas concluded that the rule of the principles of action is found in natural reason: “Concerning the universal principles of things to be done, man is rightly disposed through the natural understanding of principles, through which man knows that nothing bad is to be done.”³⁰ “This is why the moral virtues receive their end from natural reason, otherwise called synderesis.”³¹

With regard to the natural law, the doctrine of St. Thomas is explained at length in the Treatise on Laws (ST I-II q.90-108). It suffices for us to extract a few passages from it:

ST I-II, q. 94, a. 2:

The precepts of the natural law [*legis naturae*] in this manner are related to practical reason, just as the first principles of demonstration are related to speculative reason: for both are *per se nota* principles... However, just as being is the first thing that falls into apprehension without qualification [*simpliciter*], so too is the good that which falls into the apprehension of practical reason, which is ordered to a work. For every agent acts according to an end, which has the character [*rationem*] of good. And therefore the first principle in practical reason is: “The good is that which all things desire. Therefore, this is the first precept of the law, namely that the good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided. And upon this is founded all the other precepts of the natural law, that is as all those things to be done and avoided pertain to the precepts of the natural law that practical reason naturally apprehends to be human goods.

But, because the good has the character [*rationem*] of being an end, and, however, the evil the character of being contrary to this, hence is it that reason naturally apprehends all those things to which man has a natural inclination as being good and consequently to be pursued in his actions and those things contrary to them to be evil and things to be avoided. Therefore, the order of the precepts of the natural law are according to the order of natural inclinations.

Ad 2: All (natural) inclinations of this sort of any part of human nature (e.g., of the concupiscible or irascible appetites) insofar as they are ruled by reason, pertain to the natural law.³²

³⁰ ST I-II, q. 58, a. 5.

³¹ ST II-II, q. 47, a. 6, ad 1. [Tr. note—For flow, I followed Fr. Lehu’s slightly modified translation. The Latin merely reads: “Natural reason, which is called synderesis, determines in advance the end for the moral virtues.”]

³² [Tr. note—This last text is only in the original Latin in a footnote.]

In ST I-II, q. 100, a. 1, St. Thomas asks himself if all the moral precepts of the old law pertain to the natural law. See how he summarizes his argumentation:

Therefore, it is obvious that since the moral precepts are of those things that pertain to good morals [*mores*], and these are such things as are suitable to reason, and every judgment of human reason is in some way derived from human reason, it is necessary that all the moral precepts pertain to the natural law.³³

Conclusion: “And so it is necessary that the first direction of our acts to their end is done through the natural law [*legem naturalem*],”³⁴ for “the first rule of reason is the natural law [*lex naturae*].”³⁵

Natural reason has this prerogative of establishing the link between the eternal law and discursive reason

Natural reason has this unparalleled prerogative that it must establish the link between the Eternal Law, the ultimate rule of morality, and discursive reason, the proximate rule of morality.

How it joins with discursive reason

As we will come to see, it connects to discursive reason, which must follow it, because all reasoning in us derives from principles that are naturally known.

How it joins with the Eternal Law

And now, if we want to know how it connects to the eternal law, let us ask St. Thomas.

St. Thomas asks himself if there is a natural law within us. He responds:

Since all things that are submitted to Divine Providence are regulated and measured by the eternal law, as is obvious from what was said in the preceding article, it is obvious that all things participate, each in its own manner, in the eternal law, namely inasmuch as from the imprint of the eternal law they have inclinations for their proper acts and ends.

Now, among other beings, the rational creature falls under Divine Providence in a more excellent manner, inasmuch as it partakes in Providence, being provident for its very self and for others. Whence also it participates in Eternal Reason through which it has a

³³ ST I-II, q. 100, a. 1.

³⁴ ST I-II, q. 91, a. 2, ad 2.

³⁵ ST I-II, q. 95, a. 2.

natural inclination to its due act and end; and such a participation in the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law [*lex naturalis*].

Whence, the Psalmist, after saying (Psalm 4:6): “Offer up the sacrifice of justice,” as though to someone asking what are the works of justice, adds, “Many say, ‘Who shows us good things?’” to which question he says in response, “The light of your countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us,” as though the light of natural reason by which we discern what is good and what is evil, which pertains to the natural law, is nothing other than the imprint of the divine light upon us.³⁶

§7—“Natural Reason” and “Rational Nature”

Dom Lottin translates “natural reason” by “rational nature.” These are not interchangeable concepts: reason, even natural reason, is reason, and nature, even reasonable nature, is nature.

Dom Lottin recognized in St. Thomas the rule of ends and of means. Speaking of the rule of ends, at first, he expressed himself with perfect rectitude:

Therefore, synderesis is the first norm of moral activity. It is essential, like the *habitus* of first principles. Its enunciations have an absolutely certain rectitude. Faithful and indefectible echo of the fundamental demands of nature, they ever dictate the good and incline toward it; they ever repudiate the evil. The point of departure of every judgment of conscience—for every particular judgment derives from a universal major [premise]—synderesis, at the same time, is the point of arrival to which all conscious information concerning the morality of the action to be done leads: no certitude, no rectitude is guaranteed if it is not attached to the immobility and indefectibility of the first principles.³⁷

These remarks are perfect.

He continues, “It is necessary to deepen this concept of natural reason since it constitutes the norm of morality.” He admits that his theory had not been explicated in any way by St. Thomas expressly, and that is true; nevertheless, he thinks that it is strictly conformed to the line of his synthesis, and this is less true.

Indeed, in this work of deepening, he has deviated and has departed notably from the doctrine that he has so well expressed.

³⁶ ST I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

³⁷ Odo Lottin, “L’ordre moral et l’ordre logique d’après S. Thomas d’Aquin,” *Annales de l’Institut supérieur de Philosophie de Louvain* 5 (1924), 335.

The principle of this deviation arises from the tendency, already noted, to exaggerate approximate translations.

Each time that Dom Lottin encounters in St. Thomas the expression *ratio naturalis*, he translates it by “rational nature [*nature raisonnable*].”

“What else is this last word, (natural reason), than the simple transposition of the expression ‘rational nature’?”³⁸

No, natural reason and rational nature cannot be considered as interchangeable formulas—for reason, even natural reason, is reason; and nature, even rational nature, is nature; and reason has attributes that cannot agree with nature. Thus, St. Thomas often speaks of the dictate of natural reason; he never speaks of the dictate of the rational nature. Reason can dictate (*dicere, dictare*); nature cannot, except in a metaphorical sense that is not in the genre of St. Thomas. Dom Lottin does not stop at so little: “An action realizes the properly human good when it is conformed to reason, OR IF ONE WISHES, at the dictate of rational nature.”³⁹ He continues, “This dictate is borne over the form of judgments of practical reason.” But why attribute to the dictate of nature these judgments of reason?

Dom Lottin says also: “The immediate norm of certitude is in our intellectual nature considered in its first axioms.”⁴⁰ Does one understand the first axioms of a nature?

Dom Lottin had said earlier, “Therefore, rational activity finds its directive norm, the foundation of its rectitude in the rational nature, OR IF ONE WISHES, in natural reason.”⁴¹ Once again, no, WE DO NOT WISH that one indifferently say “rational nature” or “natural reason.” When St. Thomas wanted to speak of rational nature, he said, “*natura rationalis*”;

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 397.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 323.

when he wrote, “*ratio naturalis*,” he meant, “natural reason.” We wish that one would leave St. Thomas language’s to shine in relief. Be gone with the smudges that deform it!

The difference between the physical law and the moral law

Dom Lottin seeks to justify these audacities of language. He does so in two manners.

First, he does so by bringing the natural law closer to the law of nature that is found in material creatures.

Having placed aside this essential difference, [namely,] that “the necessity of the physical law is inevitable of itself, that of the moral law is avoidable [*évitable*],”⁴² he seems to believe that for the rest, the moral law is wholly assimilated to the physical law.

He forgets another difference explicated at length by St. Thomas in *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 2 (cited above) and summarized in the response to the third objection of the same article.⁴³ The sense of this response is as follows. All created beings participate in the eternal law, in their own manner, “Inasmuch as from the imprint of the eternal law they have inclinations for their proper acts and ends.”⁴⁴ These inclinations are natural, but in the rational creature, they are received in an intellectual manner; this is why the natural law in man is a law in the proper sense of the word. In beings lacking reason, they are manifested in the form of blind impulses—instinct or natural appetite. Not belonging to the rational order, one cannot call them “laws,” except in a metaphoric sense.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 311.

⁴³ See *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 2, ad 3: “Irrational animals also participate in the Eternal Reason in their own way, just as does the rational creature. However, because the rational creature participates in it intellectually and rationally, therefore the participation in the Eternal Law in the rational creature is properly called law, for law is something of reason. However, in irrational creatures, it is not participated rationally. Whence, it cannot be called law except by way of similitude.”

⁴⁴ *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 2.

Let us retain how the derivation of the eternal law in created beings is effected. It is made not by the intermediary of nature but by the intermediary of natural inclinations, which in man are rational: synderesis and the natural law.

We do not need to excavate all the way to nature

Dom Lottin is not yet satisfied; these natural inclinations do not suffice for him; we must burrow all the way to nature itself: “And one knows the source of all rectitude—it is nature.”⁴⁵ St. Thomas never was of this opinion. As we have already said, “In us, every operation of reason and will is derived from that which is according to nature, for every reasoning process [*ratiocinatio*] is derived from principles that are naturally known and every desire for those things that are ordered to the end [i.e., means] is derived from the natural desire of the final end.” Therefore, St. Thomas attributes the first direction of our acts, not to human nature, but to natural reason (i.e., synderesis or the natural law).

With St. Thomas, we can stop at natural reason

What the eternal law is to the Divine Essence, the natural law is to human nature; for the natural law is a formal participation, not in the Divine Essence but in Divine Reason.

Certain authors, seeking that which in God ought to be considered as being the ultimate rule of morality have taught that it is the Divine Essence. It is perhaps a reminiscence of the ontological theses concerning the origin of essences—created essences depend formally upon the Divine Reason and fundamentally upon the Divine Essence.

However, a radical difference separates the two cases. Created essences, considered in their ideal being, fall under the Divine Reason, that is true. However, considered in themselves, they are a formal participation of the Divine Essence, which is the plenitude of being.

⁴⁵ Elter, “Norma honestatis,” 333.

The natural law is a formal participation in the Eternal Law. The Eternal Law being the Divine Reason, the formal participation in the Divine Reason in man will be the reason of man, not human nature.

It is true that this faculty that is reason depends upon the substantial form of being: *in ratione entis* [speaking from the perspective of being], yes; *in ratione regulae* [speaking from the perspective of the notion of a rule], no; for, if it is as rule, it is in virtue of an immediate and formal participation in the Divine Reason.

§8—The insufficiency of Natural Reason. Necessity of Another Rule.

Why nature cannot be the rule of the will

Consequently, by its close link with nature, natural reason participates in the prerogatives of nature, as we have seen; however, it participates equally in its insufficiencies.

Here, we touch upon a capital point in this question: nature cannot be the rule of the will. We say the same thing of natural reason.

De virtutibus, q. 1, a. 6; *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 15

St. Thomas explains this insufficiency of nature in several places. The principal ones are in *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 15 and in the Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General, a.6.

Consider first the exposition of the Holy Doctor in the latter text:

Between the natural and rational virtues [*virtutes*] there is assigned this difference—that a natural power [*virtus*] is determined to one, while a rational power [*virtus*] is in relation to many.

Now, it is necessary that the animal appetite or the rational appetite be inclined to its desired thing [*in suum appetibile*] from some preexisting apprehension, for inclination toward the end without any preexisting knowledge pertains to the natural appetite, as the heavy body is inclined to the center of the earth.

However, because the object of the animal and of the rational appetite must be some known good, it is thus the case that where this good holds itself in a uniform manner

there can be a natural appetite in the appetite and a natural judgment in the cognitive power, as happens in brute animals.

For, since brute animals have few operations on account of the weakness of an active principle that is extended to few things, all the members of the same species uniformly seek a given good. And from this natural judgment and natural appetite it arises that every swallow uniformly builds its nest, and every spider uniformly spins its web.

However, man has many and various operations; and this is on account of the nobility of his active principle, namely the soul whose power [*virtus*] extends, in a way, to infinite things. And, therefore, the natural appetite for the good does not suffice for man, nor does natural judgment suffice for acting rightly, unless it is more fully determined and perfected.

It is true that through his natural desire [*appetitum*], man is inclined toward the desire for his proper good; however, since this is multiplied in various ways, and since man's good consists in many things, there cannot be in man a natural desire [*appetitus*] of this determinate good, according to all the conditions that are required so that it may be good for him; for this varies manifoldly according to various conditions of person, time, place, and other such things.

And, for the same reason a natural judgment, which is uniform, also does suffice for seeking goods of that kind. Whence, it is fitting that, through (discursive) reason whose office it is to confer about multiple things, man find and decide his own good according to all the determinate conditions, as it here and now ought to be sought.

And in order to do this, reason lacking any perfecting *habitus* is akin to speculative reason when it is lacking the *habitus* of science for judging concerning a given conclusion in some science—it can only do so imperfectly and with great difficulty.

Therefore, just as it is necessary that speculative reason be perfected by the *habitus* of science in order to judge rightly concerning things to be known pertaining to a given science, so too is it necessary that practical reason be perfected by a given *habitus* in order to judge rightly concerning the human good with regard to particular things to be done.

And this virtue is called prudence.⁴⁶

In the Treatise on Prudence, St. Thomas presents us with this same doctrine in an abbreviated form: The rule of human activity requires both a general knowledge and a particular knowledge. General knowledge adds nothing to the data of speculative reason. With regard to

⁴⁶ De virt., q.1 a.6.

particular knowledge, it has for its object either the ends or the means. The rectitude of the ends of human life being determined by nature, nothing precludes that man naturally have a right inclination and also a right judgment with regard to these ends. Thus is it that we have recognized the rule of ends in natural reason. However, for the means, it is another matter. In human things, the means are not determined like the ends, but they differ and are multiple, following the difference of persons and affairs.⁴⁷

Such is the inevitable reason for which nature cannot be the rule of morality: Nature and the natural faculties are determined to only one end. The will, a rational faculty, is of itself, undetermined.⁴⁸ It is in reason, and discursive reason, that it finds the rule of its activity.⁴⁹

And again: “The inclination of nature in things that lack reason is without choice, and therefore such an inclination does not of necessity require reason. However, the inclination of

⁴⁷ See *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 15: “Now, the ends of human life are determined. And therefore there can be a natural inclination with respect to such ends... However, those things that are directed to the end [i.e., the means] in human things are not determinate but are diversified in many ways according to the diversity of persons and activities.”

⁴⁸ [Tr. note: One of the weaknesses of this sort of vocabulary is that it under-emphasizes the fact that the *indifference* in question is a *dominating indifference*. It is qualified as “dominating” because the will has the universal good as its natural formal object. Thus, it is *undetermined* with regard to any *finite* good to be pursued. If one does not get this matter right, one falls covertly into the kind of nominalism that Fr. Servais Pinckaers decried as providing only for a “freedom of indifference.” As regards Fr. Lehu, it seems clear that he accepts the developed position of the Thomist school, which understood this indifference as *positive* and *dominating* precisely because of the will’s formal object. While Fr. Lehu does not develop the theme at length, he states in his *Philosophia moralis et socialis*, vol. 1 *Ethica generalis* (Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1914) no. 70 (p.42): “Beatitude is a perfect good that totally brings an appetite to its rest. Now, no created good can totally bring man’s appetite to rest. Therefore, [no created good can bring beatitude.] *Proof of the minor*. Every created good is finite and particular. Now, man’s appetite, that is, the will, cannot be brought to rest by a finite good but only by an infinite good, for the object of the will is the universal good, just as the object of the intellect is the universal truth.”

While Fr. Lehu does not develop this point at length, three excellent expositions of the Thomist School on the nature of freedom can be found in the writings of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, Jacques Maritain, and Yves Simon. See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies*, vol. 2, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1949), 268-350. Jacques Maritain, *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, trans. Mabelle L Andison and J. Gordon Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 265-277. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, ed. Peter Wolff (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999).]

Regarding Fr. Pinckaer’s critique and concerns, see Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1995), 240-279, 327-456.]

⁴⁹ Cf. *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 15, ad 3: “In brute animals there are determined ways of arriving at the end; whence we see that all animals in the same species act similarly. However, this cannot be so in man on account of his reason, which, because it is cognoscitive of all things, is extended to infinite singular things.”

moral virtue is with choice, and therefore for its perfection requires that reason be perfected by an intellectual virtue.”⁵⁰

§9—Prudence, Rule of the Means

The means, the object of prudence

Prudence has for its object the means.⁵¹

There are many particular prudences but only one unqualified kind of prudence, for it is ordered to a unique end, the last end.

The means being taken in relation to the end, there will be as many particular prudences as there are specific [*spéciales*] ends: domestic prudence, political prudence, military prudence, commercial prudence, medical prudence, etc.

However, prudence taken without qualification is unique. It is that which is ordered to a unique end, the final end.⁵²

The three acts of prudence

Prudence has three acts, which are: (1) deliberation or the research into the means; (2) judgment upon these various means; (3) the declaration of the precept.⁵³ For prudence does not stop at consideration. What properly pertains to it is the application to action, which is the end of practical reason. The precept is what applies to action the elements that have been the object of deliberation and of judgment.

This third act, being the closest to practical reason, is the principal act.

⁵⁰ ST I-II, q. 58, a. 4, ad 1. [Tr. note—Fr. Lehu has ST II-II instead of ST I-II.]

⁵¹ ST II-II, q. 47, a. 1, ad 2: “Those things that prudence considers are ordered to something else as to an end.”

⁵² ST II-II, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1: “Just as he who reasons well concerning some particular end (e.g., victory) is said to be prudent, not without qualification but in this particular genus (namely, in things of war), so too he who reasons well about the whole of human life is called prudent without qualification.”

⁵³ [Tr. note: Or, the *iudicium*, command.]

We find the proof of this in what differentiates art and prudence as regards this point.

The perfection of art consists in judgment, not in the precept, for the workman who voluntarily commits a fault against the rules of art is reputed to be better than he who commits the same fault involuntarily. In the first case, the fault does not harm the rectitude of judgment (and, consequently, the perfection of the art); in the second case, it is the judgment that is shown to be deficient (and, consequently, the art). The matter is wholly otherwise in the case of prudence. He who voluntarily sins against the rules of prudence shows himself to be more imprudent than he who commits the same fault involuntarily: it is that he sins against the precept, which is the proper act of prudence.

The virtues that perfect each of them

Each of these three acts demands a special disposition in practical reason. Deliberation, judgment, and command are three quite different acts and are not necessarily found united in the same man. Certain men who have a real aptitude for deliberation do not have nearly the same aptitude for judgment or command.⁵⁴

Deliberation is ruled by *euboulia*. Two virtues perfect judgment; they are *synesis* and *gnome*. *Synesis* judges according to common rules. These common rules suffice in ordinary cases. However, there are exceptional cases outside the bounds of the common rules, and it is thus necessary that one have more elevated rules. It is *gnome* that furnishes them. *Euboulia*, *synesis*, and *gnome* are three virtues adjunct [*annexe*] to prudence. The practical reason that these three virtues have well-disposed in relation to the two preliminary acts of prudence will

⁵⁴ ST II-II, q. 51, a. 2: “The acts of reason ordered to a work are diverse, nor do they have the same notion [*rationem*] of goodness; for, from different sources does man have the character to counsel well, and to judge well, and to command well; and this is obvious from the fact that sometimes these are separated from each other.”

then be able to produce the third: the command. This act is the principal act, and therefore it falls to prudence.

Touching on the two first acts (i.e., of deliberation and judgment), Dom Lottin thinks they pertain to speculative reason, practical reason entering in to play only when it is a matter of the third act, the command.⁵⁵

First of all, it seems strange that practical reason, which has its point of departure in *synderesis* (i.e., practical reason), immediately abandons it so as to appeal to speculative reason from which it would demand deliberation and judgment, and then return to practical reason for the third act, the command.

St. Thomas teaches that the three acts fall to practical reason: “*Reason pertaining to things to be done [ratio agibilium] has three acts: deliberation, judgment, and command.*”⁵⁶ Now, the *ratio agibilium* is practical reason. Therefore, these three acts are acts of practical reason. St. Thomas observes that the first two are found either kind of reason [i.e., speculative or practical reason]. However, speculative reason, operating on its proper matter, stops with judgment. Practical reason does not stop there; it continues with the third act, the command. This third act is the principal act of practical reason; this does not mean that the two others belong to speculative reason.⁵⁷ Let us recall that deliberation and judgment are perfected by

⁵⁵ Lottin, “L’ordre moral et l’ordre logique d’après S. Thomas d’Aquin,” 368: “St. Thomas explicitly says that the judgment of conscience belongs to speculative reason.”

⁵⁶ ST II-II, q. 47, a. 8. Cf. *In VI Ethic.*, lect. 9: “And these two works (to find by inquiry and to judge concerning that which is found) are of practical reason.”

[Tr. note—The text from the *Summa* is rewritten slightly by Fr. Lehu. The original Latin is “...rationis agibilium cuius quidem sunt tres actus.”

⁵⁷ *De virtut. card.*, q.1 a.1: “On the part of practical knowledge, three things are required. Of these, one is counsel [or, following Lehu, ‘deliberation’] and the second is judgment concerning that about which counsel has been had; just as also there is found in speculative reason discovery (or, inquiry) and judgment. However, because the practical intellect commands one either to flee or to seek, which speculatively reason does not do, therefore a third [act] pertains to practical reason to consider in advance concerning things to be done [*praemeditari de agendis*].”

See now the text where Dom Lottin has found that “St. Thomas explicitly says that the judgment of conscience belongs to speculative reason.” It is in ST I-II, q. 57, a. 6: “Concerning human things to be done, three acts of reason are found, of which the first is to counsel, the second to judge, and the third is to command. However,

euboulia, *synesis*, and *gnome*, virtues of practical reason. Is one to understand that there are virtues of practical reason that are ordered to the production of acts of speculative reason?

Synderesis, superior to prudence

If synderesis needs to be perfected by prudence, someone may be tempted to conclude from this that prudence surpasses synderesis in nobility and dignity.

St. Thomas resolves the question by making appeal to the oft-mentioned analogy between, on the one hand, the understanding of principles and science, and, on the other hand, synderesis and prudence. As discussed above, in the speculative order, understanding [*l'intellect*] needs to be perfected by science; nonetheless, understanding dominates science, for science depends upon understanding as upon a superior *habitus*.⁵⁸ The same is true concerning prudence in relation to synderesis: “Prudence receives its direction from synderesis, as science does from understanding.”⁵⁹

§10—Prudence and the Moral Virtues

The moral virtues

The moral virtues perfect the appetitive part of man by ruling its operations in conformity with reason.

the first two correspond to the acts of the speculative intellect that are to inquire and to judge... But the third act is proper to the practical intellect inasmuch as it is directive to action [*est operativus*].”

Here again Dom Lottin’s translation of the text seems to us rather to betray [*trahir*] the text. St. Thomas did not say that the first two acts are acts of the speculative intellect, but that they have correlatives in the speculative intellect: “*primi duo respondent actibus intellectus speculative*”; while the third act, specific to the practical intellect, has no analogue in the speculative intellect.

⁵⁸ ST I-II, q. 57, a. 2, ad 2: “In this way science depends upon understanding as upon something that is of higher degree [*principaliori*].” St. Thomas continues: “And, as upon that which is most principal [*principalissimo*], both depend upon wisdom, which contains understanding and science under it because it judges concerning the conclusions of sciences and their principles.”

⁵⁹ ST II-II, q. 17, a. 6, ad 3. [Tr. note—Above, I have kept Fr. Lehu’s translation. A more literal translation of the Latin would be, “Synderesis moves prudence just as the understanding of principals moves the sciences.”]

Prudence is an intellectual virtue; it has practical reason as the subject in which it inheres [*a son siege dans la raison pratique*]. Nevertheless, St. Thomas gives it a place among the moral virtues on account of its matter—human acts.⁶⁰

How they are connected to prudence; No prudence without the virtues; no virtues without prudence

Moreover, prudence and the moral virtues stand closely united.

Prudence has a double relation with right appetite. First, it has a relation as an effect to a cause, then a relation of cause to effect. A relation of effect to cause: no prudence without right appetite. A relation of cause to effect: no right appetite without prudence.

At first sight, one may be tempted to accuse us of a vicious circle.

How we escape from a vicious circle: rectitude of ends and rectitude of means.

Aristotle responds to this objection by distinguishing a twofold rectitude of appetite: rectitude of ends and rectitude of means.

The rectitude of ends is determined by nature, and it is of this rectitude that we speak when we say that prudence depends upon the rectitude of ends. With regard to rectitude of means, it depends upon prudence.

We are given notice of the rectitude of ends by means of synderesis. However, between synderesis (the first principle of moral activity) and virtuous action (the ultimate conclusion), there remains a great distance to be traveled and many pitfalls are to be feared upon this way. For example, synderesis says to us that we ought to desire the goods of table in a just measure. However, craving desire intervenes; it shows the attraction of dishes and of wines; it comes to

⁶⁰ *In III Sent.*, d. 23 q. 1, a. 4, qcl. 2, ad 3: “Prudence is a middle between the moral and intellectual [virtues]. Now, it is essentially intellectual, for it is a cognitive *habitus*, perfecting reason. However, it is moral with regard to its matter, inasmuch as it is directive of the moral virtues, since it is right reason in things to be done, as has been said.”

the charge with insistence, the appetite bends, it is no longer right. Under the influence of this false rule, reason utters [*emet*] a judgment that is not right; it is no longer prudence.

In order to remove this shortcoming, the appetite must be not only illuminated (as it is by *synderesis*) but also rectified in itself. This rectification is the work of the moral virtues.⁶¹

How prudence depends upon the virtues.

The moral virtues are not the product of nature, for nature is determined to a single object. They arise in us from the repetition of acts. At the beginning, the faculty, undetermined, is nearly indifferently inclined toward the good or toward the bad. However, when we produce with frequency acts conformed to reason, the reason, a given form, is impressed in the appetite, and this impression is nothing other than moral virtue.

Therefore, virtue produces in the faculty a determination that is like a new nature, and under this influence man tends toward the good. This is what Aristotle wished to say by this formula, to which St. Thomas made appeal so often: “*Qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei.* [As a given man is, so does the end seem to him.]”

The axiom, “*Qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei.*”

See how Cajetan explains this adage:⁶² Let us suppose a man under the influence of a movement of passion that presses upon him with a vengeance. From this fact, two things result: (1) in the man, there results an inclination to vengeance; (2) in the vengeance itself there results a relation of fittingness to this appetite. This fittingness did not exist in the undisturbed [*paisible*]

⁶¹ ST I-II, q. 58, a. 5: “And therefore, just as man is disposed by natural understanding or by the *habitus* of science to be rightly related with regard to universal principles, so too in order that he be rightly disposed with regard to ends, it is necessary that he be perfected by certain *habitus* by which it becomes, in some manner, connatural to man to judge concerning the end. And this is through moral virtue, for the virtuous man judges rightly concerning the end of virtue.”

⁶² [Tr. note: Although not included in Lehu’s text, Cajetan’s commentary on ST I-II, q. 58, a. 4 and 5 is included in an appendix at the end of this book.]

man; therefore, a change is produced, not in the vengeance itself but in the appetite. The appetite, thus disposed, moves reason, and it moves it in the direction [*sens*] of its inclination. Just as bitter taste finds all things to be bitter, so too does the appetite, affected either toward the good or to the bad, inclines reason in its direction. And a proof that the decision depends, not upon reason alone, but upon reason under the influence of the appetite, is that without these inducements of appetite, reason would never have decided in this direction.⁶³

See how, in order to act well, the judgment of synderesis does not suffice. It needs in addition an inclination of appetite in the direction of the good of reason. It is this inclination, acting like another nature—we call it moral virtue—that rectifies the appetite, just as synderesis rectifies reason.

Thus is it that prudence depends upon the moral virtues.⁶⁴

How the virtues depend upon prudence; Thus does St. Thomas establish his theses concerning connection of the virtues.

On the other hand, the moral virtues depend upon prudence.⁶⁵

Virtue is an elective *habitus*. It presides over the rectitude of choice. This rectitude of choice requires two conditions: (1) rectitude in the intention of the end, and this is the work of the moral virtue that, as we have seen, inclines the appetite toward the good conformed to reason; (2) rectitude in the approval of means, and this can only be the work of reason, which deliberates, which commands, and which judges—all things that relate to prudence.

⁶³ [Tr. note: On this, see the Appendix below, “Austin Woodbury on the Mutual Causality of the Intellect and the Will.”]

⁶⁴ See ST I-II, q. 58, a. 5.

⁶⁵ See ST I-II, q. 58, a. 4.

Such are the principles upon which St. Thomas supports his thesis concerning the connection of the virtues: No virtue without prudence, no prudence without virtue.⁶⁶

Cajetan does not wish that one stop there. To have a just idea concerning St. Thomas's teaching, it is not a simple connection of moral virtue with intellectual virtue. It is a veritable compenetration that must be admitted such that, in order to define prudence, it will not suffice to say that it is right reason touching upon human actions, *recta ratio agibilium*. It is necessary to say that it is right reason obtained and strengthened by right appetite of the particular end.⁶⁷

Prudence cannot be lost through forgetfulness, but it is corrupted by the passions.

From the fact that prudence is not a purely intellectual virtue, it results that it is not lost through forgetfulness, as is the case for the intellectual virtues that consist in knowledge alone. Prudence consists principally in the declaration of the precept, which is the application of knowledge to appetite and to action. Therefore, it is not lost by forgetfulness, but it is corrupted by the passions.⁶⁸

§11—The Prudential Syllogism

Two particularities of the discursive process in practical reason. Construction of the prudential syllogism.

As is well known at this point, we are in the domain of practical reason.

In this field of practical reason, we have already recognized natural reason, the rule of ends and discursive reason, the rule of the means.

⁶⁶ ST II-II, q. 47, a. 13, ad 2: "Prudence implies a relation [*ordinem*] to right appetite. First because the principles of prudence are the ends of things to be done, about which one has a right estimation by the *habitus* of moral virtues, which make the appetite right; whence prudence cannot exist without the moral virtues. Second, also because prudence commands right acts [*est praeceptiva rectorum operum*], which happens only if right appetite exists.

⁶⁷ Cajetan, *In I-II*, q. 58, a. 4.

⁶⁸ ST II-II, q.47, a. 16.

This discursive reason, St. Thomas has at times called it the reason “that syllogizes,”⁶⁹ the reason “that deliberates,”⁷⁰ the reason “that deliberates and that demonstrates.”⁷¹

Its name indicates the fact that it is not intuitive (as natural reason is).⁷² Like every reason, properly so called, it utilizes reasoning; it goes from the known to the unknown.

We have already pointed out two particularities of the discursive process in practical reason. In the first place, while in speculative reason, reasoning has as its point of departure a principle, in practical reasoning, it is the ends that play the role of a principle. Secondly, in speculative reason, one arrives sometimes at a universal conclusion, sometimes at a particular conclusion, and the laws of the syllogism differ either case. Practical reason results in an action, that is, in a conclusion that is not only particular but individual. It will apply the laws of the syllogism in a contingent and individual matter.

With these data borrowed from St. Thomas, it will be easy for us to reconstruct the prudential syllogism.

The universal major is furnished to us by synderesis.

Every reasoning has its point of departure in one of the first principles furnished by the intellect. In a moral matter, these principles are communicated to us by synderesis, which dictates to us, for example, that “Man in all his acts ought to act for the good of reason.”⁷³

These principles are universal. For reason to arrive at a particular conclusion, we will need to join to this universal major a particular minor.⁷⁴ “Now, the good of reason in this

⁶⁹ *In III Ethic.*, lect. 3: “rationis syllogizantis.”

⁷⁰ ST I-II, q. 74, a. 6 ad 3: “ratio deliberans.” Cf. ST I-II, q. 77, a. 8.

⁷¹ *De virt.*, q. 1, a. 12, ad 19.

⁷² [Tr. note: Again, the point is that synderesis does not involve objective illation through a middle term.]

⁷³ See ST II-II, q. 47, a. 6: “The end of the moral virtues is the human good. However, the good of the human soul is according to be in accord with reason. Whence, it is necessary that the ends of the moral virtues preexist in reason.”

⁷⁴ See ST II-II, q. 49, a. 2, ad 1: “The reasoning of prudence is terminated, as in a certain conclusion, at a particular thing to be done to which it applies universal knowledge, as is obvious from what has been said. Now, the singular conclusion is syllogized from a universal and a singular proposition.”

particular and concrete case is wrath, or it is courage, or it is temperance to this or that degree, with this or that modality.”

The conclusion is identified with the perceptive judgment of right reason.

Then follows the conclusion that is not only speculative but practical; not only practical, but preceptive: “Therefore, here is what I must command, choose, and seek.”⁷⁵

Let us return to each of the propositions of this syllogism.

The major. In §9 above, we have explained how synderesis is the rule of ends. We will only add a word to this. The end must not only be *known* intellectually by synderesis; it must be *willed* by the act of will that is called “intention.”⁷⁶

This volition is what sets in motion the prudential reasoning into the search for and choice of means.

The conclusion is identified with the right reason that will be the object of discussion in §12 below.

The particular minor: eight secondary virtues contribute to its rectification.

It is therefore the minor alone that will hold our attention here.

First of all, let us note an important difference between the speculative syllogism and the prudential syllogism. In the speculative syllogism, the major immediately embraces [*includit*] the minor. It is quite different in the prudential syllogism. The principle given by synderesis acts directly upon the appetite to produce a right tendency toward the end. And it is from the rectified appetite under the influence of the end that the truth of the second premise arises, a

⁷⁵ See Cajetan, *In I-II*, q. 58, a. 5. [Tr. note—See the appendices below for a translation of this text.]

⁷⁶ Concerning intention, see ST, I-II, q. 12.

premise that could not be more particular. Thus, one arrives at a conclusion conformed to the minor: it is the judgment concerning the means that in turn will trigger the choice.⁷⁷

This particular minor requires special dispositions in practical reason. St. Thomas mentions eight of them that contribute to facilitating the action that practical reason exercises upon it in the prudential syllogism:⁷⁸

1. *Memory*. Reason in contingent matter is directed, not by that which is absolutely true, but by that which is verified in most cases. Now, this is the object of experience, and experience is the result of many memories.
2. *Understanding [l'intelligence]*. The understanding in question here is not confused with the understanding of principles; it approximates it by a kind of analogy.

Understanding is intuitive; likewise, in the practical life, we see men who, faced with a situation, immediately and, as though by intuition, grasp the weak and the strong possibilities in it.
- 3/4. *Docility and Shrewdness*. The acquisition of truth, in the practical order as in the speculative order, is obtained in two manners: at times by way of discovery, at times by the teaching of a master. Thus, we see why docility to the lessons of a master is necessary for prudence, even more than for every other intellectual virtue. Likewise, in research into the truth by way of discovery, shrewdness always and without hesitation knows how to find what is appropriate.
5. *Reason*, that is to say, aptitude in reasoning by applying the general principles to particular objects that are variable and uncertain.

⁷⁷ See Cajetan, *In I-II*, q. 58, a. 5, no. 8.

⁷⁸ See *ST II-II*, q. 49.

6. *Foresight*, which knows how to measure the relations of a future thing with current arrangements in view of obtaining this thing.
7. *Circumspection*. It does not suffice that one foresee the substance of the future act. It is necessary, moreover, to be attentive to the circumstances that can cover the “surface” of the act from the moral point of view.
8. *Precaution*. Evil is often found mingled with good in human things; precaution teaches us to avoid what is evil.

§12—Right Reason

It is the moral rule.

If there is a word that returns, one could say, to the point of satiating the reader, in St. Thomas’s moral philosophy, it is this: “right reason.” And in order to form an idea concerning the importance of this word, we must recall to ourselves that, nearly always, “reason” simply means right reason: “The perfection of virtue depends upon reason... Whence, it is necessary that the virtues be differentiated according to their relation [*ordinem, rapport*] to reason.”⁷⁹

Right reason and erroneous reason. It cannot mean the substantial form of man.

Now, “the rule of human acts is not any reason whatsoever, but is right reason.”⁸⁰ Indeed, there can be a right reason and reason that is not right. St. Thomas says an “erroneous” reason. However, only right reason is the rule of our acts.⁸¹

And now, if reason here signifies man’s substantial form, does one conceive of a right substantial form and an erroneous substantial form? This is unintelligible.

⁷⁹ ST I-II, q.60, a. 5.

⁸⁰ In II Sent., d. 24, q. 3, a. 3, ad 3.

⁸¹ In II Ethic., lect. 7: “Because it happens that reason is right and erroneous, in order to act according to right reason virtue is required.”

We will begin by eliminating several false conceptions of right reason. Then, we expost its true concept.

THAT WHICH RIGHT REASON IS NOT.

(1) It is not conscience

Suarez thinks that right reason signifies conscience.⁸² After we study conscience in §15, it will be easy for us to show the difference that exists between right reason and conscience.

Fr. Elter abandons Suarez on this point, but he has found numerous other significations of right reason.

(2) Nor is it nature

First of all, he assures us that “it is one and the same thing to say that the rule of morality is nature or right reason. And whosoever wants to establish some distinction goes against the true conception of the Scholastics.”⁸³

—What do you mean? Upon what rests this identification of right reason with nature?

—Oh! It is quite simple. First of all, St. Thomas, speaking of the natural law, employs in one place the word “apprehendat.”⁸⁴ Now, the logicians [*dialecticiens*] explain to us the qualities of “apprehension.” Furthermore, according to all the Scholastics, the intellect in act is the

⁸² Suarez, ad ST I-II, tr. 3, disp. 2: “It remains that we must explain two rules or measures of human actions, about which St. Thomas teaches in this place: one is *right reason or conscience*; the other is the Divine Will or the Eternal Law.” See Leonard Lehu, “Si la ‘recta ratio’ de S. Thomas signifie la conscience,” *Revue Thomiste* 30 (1925): 159-166. [Tr. note—I have added a translation of this text is found in the appendices at the end of this volume.]

⁸³ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 346: “And so, right reason, inasmuch as it is the measure of fittingness [*honestas*] does not differ from the rational nature. Hence, Dom Lottin rightly says, ‘The natural law is nothing other than human nature expressing itself rationally.’ [See Odon Lottin, *Le Droit Naturel, chez saint Thomas et ses prédécesseurs* (Bruges, 1931), 85]. Therefore, either nature is posited as the rule of fittingness or right reason must be understood as the same. He who introduces between them something that would introduce a distinction, seems to withdraw from the genuine concept of the Scholastics.”

On the subject of the citation of Dom Lottin, we ought to remark that “right reason” and “natural law” are not synonyms.

⁸⁴ See ST I-II, q. 94, a.2.

intelligible in act; consequently, when right reason knows nature, right reason is nature, it is all one. And thus we have the reason why whosoever does not admit the identity of right reason and nature goes against the true thought of the Scholastics.

—And first, we respond that, in logic [*logique*], the word “apprehension” is employed in a technical sense. Outside of that, it is usually a synonym for knowledge. And in the current case, right reason being the conclusion of the prudential syllogism, as we will discuss below, one does not see how the conclusion of a syllogism enters back into the sphere of simple apprehension.⁸⁵ With regard to the axiom, “*intellectus in actu est intelligibile in act,*” leave it in its intentional order in the theory of knowledge and do not transport it into a foreign matter. Finally, while it would be true that the identity in question is verified when man understands the nature, what happens when man understands something other than the nature? How will nature intervene, since, as has been said to us, it is what must form right reason?

(3) Nor is it the object

Elsewhere,⁸⁶ Fr. Elter tells us that right reason signifies the object—for the object is the measure of the act, and reason is right inasmuch as it proposes the object.

—I do not see well the reason for all of this.

—Here you go. When we say that reason is the rule of morality, the word “reason” means neither the power, nor the act; therefore, it means the object.

—We respond that the word “reason” means the product of the operation, i.e, the *dictamen* of practical reason.⁸⁷ It is also manifest that the known object is not the product of the act of knowledge.

⁸⁵ [Tr. note—A conclusion being a *complex* enunciation on which a judgment is borne, it is formed by a different act of the intellect than simple apprehension.]

⁸⁶ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 340 and 342.

⁸⁷ See page 8 in original.

In addition, we have seen earlier,⁸⁸ it is not accurate to say that the object is the rule of morality.

(4) Nor is it the mosaic of disparate things where Fr. Elter thought he found it

However, this is not all. Fr. Elter, swelling right reason to the point of bursting it, finds in it many other things. “Right reason is the proximate rule of the goodness of the human moral act, but inasmuch as the object is understood by right reason, the object being that which reason proposes as a measure of the act, in exactly the same manner, the essential order of things (the rational human nature with all its relations and its relationship to its end) can be called the proximate measure of fittingness.”⁸⁹—In truth, I cannot understand how certain people put themselves through such pains to allow anything whatsoever to be signified by the word “reason,” so long as it is not reason itself.

A simple question: “This proximate rule whose enunciation alone requires five lines of the Review, is it a single rule or is it multiple?” If it is a single rule, I believe it is quite complicated, and it does not seem that the advantages of reuniting in such a synthesis multiple elements that Fr. Elter thinks he finds in St. Thomas compensate for the inconveniences of this ever-so complex rule. If one says that the rule is multiple, oh!, then the matter is graver indeed. Fr. Elter knows enough to cite this text of St. Thomas: “One thing cannot have many proximate rules.”⁹⁰ Bimetallism⁹¹ is no more employed in moral philosophy than it is employed in finance. And here we are far from bimetallism; we have set sail toward full polymetallism.⁹²

⁸⁸ See page 40 in original.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁹⁰ ST I-II, q. 19, a. 4, ad 1.

⁹¹ [Tr. note—The unlimited use of two metals, exchangeable at fixed rates, for the coining of currency by a government.]

⁹² Here, let us add an example of these smudges, of which we have spoken above, by which one disfigures St. Thomas’s language. We read in *LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE*, Feb. 1929, p.208: “To the degree that the teaching of the Church interprets and defends *right reason*, the rational order of nature...” What a definition! *Right reason*, meaning the rational order of nature.

WHAT RIGHT REASON IS.

It is the conclusion of the prudential syllogism.; It is the ultimate term of the process of practical reason.

Right reason is the conclusion of the prudential syllogism. From this notion flow two prerogatives of right reason.

In the first place, it is the ultimate term of the process of practical reason in the matter of human actions. The three operations that constitute prudence (deliberation, judgment, and command) terminates in the last of these acts, the command, which is the principal act. Therefore, right reason is essentially a command.

Sometimes, the work of practical reason will stop at judgment, with a man for some reason not daring to pass further and make a decision. In this case, we have only a truncated prudence that is not [complete] prudence. However, if practical reason, after judgment does not stop there and continues all the way to a command, we have true prudence, which comes to completion in right reason.

This is why right reason is the ultimate act of the process of practical reason. Immediately after comes the election that is no longer an act of reason but of the will.⁹³

Its certitude and its truth

In second place, right reason being the product of prudence (an intellectual virtue) it will participate in the properties of the intellectual virtues.

⁹³ [Tr. note: I have left the French *élection* as “election” and not “choice,” as Fr. Lehu’s language here is a bit perplexing. In his *Philosophia moralis et socialis*, he clearly sees choice, strictly speaking, as pertaining to the order of intention, as prudence renders judgments concerning the means to be taken to “fill out” or realize the accomplishment of an intended end. See Lehu, *Philosophia moralis et socialis*, no.101-104 (p. 60-65). Also, on the nature of the act of command, see *ibid.*, no.105-114 (p. 66-71). The mutual causality of the will and the intellect in practical reason are sketched well in the work of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange cited above.]

The intellectual virtues give us certainty and truth. A *habitus* that would result in uncertainty or in the possibility of error would not deserve to be called a virtue. Therefore, in right reason we must find both certainty and truth, but they are found there in the manner of virtues of practical reason in contingent matter.

St. Thomas teaches us that every matter is not susceptible to the same certainty.⁹⁴ The metaphysician will arrive at metaphysical certainty, the moralist at moral certainty. This moral certainty is subject to many variations even in general considerations; for all the more reason will it be so when one descends to particular conclusions.⁹⁵ And St. Thomas concludes, “In human acts... demonstrative certainty cannot be had, as they are about contingent and variable things. Therefore, it suffices to have probable certainty [*probabilis certitudo*],⁹⁶ which reaches the truth in the greater number of cases [*in pluribus*], even if it may fail in a small number of cases [*in paucioribus*].”⁹⁷

Equally, the truth of practical reason differs from the truth of speculative reason.

Prudence, as we have said, is knowledge and direction. The act of knowledge is common to one

⁹⁴ See *In I Ethic.*, lect. 3: “Certitude cannot be found, nor is it required, in a similar manner in all the discussions by which we reason concerning something.”

⁹⁵ See *In II Ethic.*, lect. 2: “Discussions are to be carried out according to the nature of matter being discussed, as has been said. Now, we see that those things that pertain to moral actions and those things that are useful for such actions (namely, external goods) do not have in themselves something fixed in the manner of necessity. Instead all of them are contingent and variable. The same thing happens in actions related to medicine, which are concerned with health, for both the very disposition of the body to be cured and the things used for curing vary in many ways. And since discussion of moral matters is uncertain and variable even in universal notions [*in universalibus*], it is all the more uncertain when one wants, in addition, to descend [into particulars] for the sake of handing on teaching concerning particular cases in their specific details [*de singulis in speciali*]. For this falls under neither art nor under some particular teaching [*narratione*] because the accidents [*casus*] of singular actions vary in an infinity of ways. Whence, judgment concerning singular matters is left to the prudence of each person.”

[Tr. note: There are some minor differences between the Latin cited by Fr. Lehu and the current critical edition, which is followed for this note. They are very minor and do not change the sense.]

⁹⁶ [Tr. note: I have chosen to follow the Blackfriars translation on this expression so as to remain ambiguous regarding the famed debates among probabilists, probabiliorists, et al. A good treatment shedding much light on this issue can be found in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “Du caractère métaphysique de la Théologie morale de saint Thomas, en particulier dans ses rapports avec la prudence et la conscience,” *Revue Thomiste* 30 (1925): 341-355. A translation of the text is forthcoming in the English edition of *Nova et Vetera*.]

⁹⁷ ST II-II, q. 70, a. 2.

and the other [kind] of reason, but the act of direction is proper to practical reason. This is why the truth of knowledge consists in conformity with the known thing; but knowledge of direction consists in conformity to the directive principle, i.e., to right appetite.⁹⁸ Also, even if the outcome did not correspond to the end, the truth would not be lacking in prudence, for its precept corresponds to reason and to right appetite.⁹⁹

§13—The Genesis of the Moral Evil

Sin occurs in reason in two manners.

When the discourse of practical reason has faithfully followed the laws of prudence, it arrives at right reason. However, if any deviation is produced in the operations preliminary to the final judgment, in place of right reason we have moral evil, sin.

Moral evil has its proper place in the will,¹⁰⁰ but reason and the sensitive part [of the soul] claim a part in its genesis.

First, the sense appetite. The sense appetite cannot act immediately upon the will, whose object is the good presented by reason; however, it acts indirectly inasmuch as it excites the

⁹⁸ See Cajetan, *In ST I-II*, q. 57, a. 5: “Because the practical intellect agrees with the speculative intellect in the act of knowledge and differs from it in the act of direction, the difference of the practical intellect from the speculative intellect applies not to what pertains to knowing but to what pertains to directing. Therefore, the truth of the speculative intellect consists in knowing, while the truth of the practical intellect consists in directing. And thus, the truth of the speculative intellect consists in this, namely, that knowing be adequated to the thing known, whereas the truth of the practical intellect consists in this, namely, that directing be adequated to the directive principle; however, as is said in *IX Meta.*, the determinative (and, through this, the directive) principle of art to its operation is the appetite. Therefore, since each thing is related to the truth just as it is to being, the act of direction characteristic to the practical intellect depends upon the appetite both with regard to being and with regard to truth.” [Tr. note: Fr. Lehu miscites this as a. 6. Also, the text appears to have been accidentally ellipsed, rendering one portion unreadable. I have translated this passage from the Leonine edition of Cajetan’s commentary.]

⁹⁹ See Cajetan, *In ST II-II*, q. 47 a.3: “Such certitude is always present to prudence, even in regard to absent singulars and future ones: for a prudent man, ordering something to be done for the republic, even though the intended end does not come about or even though the action be impeded, nevertheless has an act of ordering that is most true, best, and certain, inasmuch as it is in harmony with reason and right appetite.”

[Tr. note: See also the article by Garrigou-Lagrange cited above, as well as the texts by Yves Simon, Jacques Maritain, and Austin Woodbury cited in the translator’s bibliography.]

¹⁰⁰ See *ST I-II*, q. 74, a. 1. *De malo*, q. 1, a. 5: “The evil of sin is an evil in the act of the will.”

imagination and the passions, which influence reason. We have explained above how prudence cannot exist without the moral virtues, which have for their object the rectification of the passions.

Next, reason. Sin is encountered in reason in two manners.¹⁰¹ Indeed, reason can be considered from two points of view. In the first place, it is the faculty of knowledge: its object and its good are the truth [*le vrai*]; its evil is falsity [*le faux*]. When it adheres to what is false, its act is evil, it arrives at error. In the second place, it is the directive faculty of human activity.¹⁰²

There has been discussion recently concerning the sin of *error*.¹⁰³ Setting aside this question, we will stop ourselves at the second consideration, which is the proper object of our study.

How the moral evil can slip into created activity.

St. Thomas, seeking how moral evil can slip into created activity makes this remark:

Therefore, it must be known that the appetite is nothing other than a kind of inclination toward what is desired. And just as the natural appetite follows upon a natural form, so too does the sensitive appetite or rational / intellective appetite follow upon an apprehended form, for it is nothing other than the good apprehended by the sense or by the intellect. Therefore, evil cannot occur from the appetite from the fact that it is in at variance with the apprehension that it follows but, instead, from the fact that it is at variance with some superior rule. And therefore it must be considered whether the apprehension that follows the inclination of this appetite can be directed by some superior rule...

Now, in man there is a twofold apprehension to be directed by a superior rule: for sense cognition ought to be directed by *reason*, and cognition of *reason* ought to be directed by wisdom or the Divine Law. Therefore, evil can be in man's appetite in two manners. In one way, because sense apprehension IS NOT REGULATED ACCORDING TO REASON, and according to this, [Pseudo-]Dionysius says that the evil of man is *to exist contrary to reason*. In another way, because *human reason* must be directed according to wisdom and the Divine Law; and according to this, Ambrose says that sin is a transgression of the Divine Law.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ See *ST I-II*, q. 74, a. 5 and 6.

¹⁰² See *ST I-II*, q. 77, a. 3: "Now, reason is the ruling power of the soul's parts."

¹⁰³ M.-D. Roland-Gosselin, "Erreur et péché," *Revue de philosophie* (1928): 466-478.

¹⁰⁴ *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2.

It is obvious that the reason of which it is a question in this passage does not mean human nature.

The deficiency of reason.

Sin is the result of a deficiency in reason, the director of human acts. Let us see how this defect is produced in the application of one or the other rule.

First, let us consider the application of the rule of reason. From this point of view, there is sin from reason when it commands movements of the inferior powers that are not ruled or, again, when after deliberation it does not restrain them.¹⁰⁵

In either case, the deficiency from reason is always a sin, for it pertains to the directive power that it direct away from this deviation by its proper act.¹⁰⁶

However, for this, it is necessary that practical reason be conformed to all the rules imposed by logic.

In every syllogism, the truth flows from the connection of two true premises. Nevertheless, one sometimes arrives at a true conclusion by a false syllogism,¹⁰⁷ and thus is verified the axiom, “*Malum ex quocumque defectu*. [Evil arises from any fault whatsoever.]” It is not permissible for one to steal for the sake of giving alms.

¹⁰⁵ See *ST I-II*, q. 74, a. 5: “When it either commands inordinate acts of the lower powers or, also, after deliberation does not restrain them.”

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, ad 1: “The defect that is only in directing other powers always is imputed to reason as a sin, for it can always oppose this defect by its proper act.”

¹⁰⁷ See *In VI Ethic.*, lect. 8: “It sometimes happens in syllogistic arguments that some true conclusion is drawn through a false syllogism. And so also in matters of action it sometimes happens that we arrive at a good end through something evil [i.e. through some bad means]. And this is what [Aristotle] means by saying that it sometimes happens that we obtain a good end by means of a false syllogism, as it were. Thus, someone by deliberating arrives at that which he should do, but not through that which he should do [i.e., not through suitable means], for example as when someone steals to give to the poor. And this is as though someone in syllogizing, in order to arrive at a true conclusion, would suppose some false middle term. For although in the order of intention the end is like the principle and the middle term, nonetheless, in the order of execution, which he who looks for counsel [*consiliator*] seeks, the end is akin to the conclusion, and that which is ordered to the end [i.e., the means] is akin to the middle term. Now, it is obvious that he is not said to reason rightly who draws a true conclusion through a false middle term.”

Socrates's theory that every sin is an ignorance

A renowned controversy divided the philosophers of antiquity. It was wondered whether moral evil was compatible with knowledge of the good. Socrates responded to the question in the negative: “Knowledge of the good necessarily excludes the evil, which can only be produced by error.”

The double distinction formulated by Aristotle: (1) knowledge of the universal or that of the particular; (2) actual knowledge and the habitual knowledge that can be bound by passion

Aristotle intervenes with two distinctions that carry St. Thomas's approval. First of all, there is a universal knowledge and a particular knowledge. I know that every theft is an evil—universal knowledge. I do not know that a given act is a theft—particular knowledge.

Moreover, there is a habitual knowledge and an actual knowledge. A man knows in a habitual manner that one should avoid excess in drinking. However, under the influence of the passion, he forgets to consider this rule; he sees only the delight of wine, which leads him to evil.

Therefore, it is not exactly the case that every knowledge [*science*] is incompatible with moral evil and that every sin necessarily be an error or an ignorance.

Therefore, error can corrupt deliberation in a twofold manner: first in the knowledge of the universal, then in the knowledge of the particular.¹⁰⁸ Knowledge [*connaissance*] of the universal falls to moral science, for example fornication is evil, theft is forbidden. This knowledge [*science*] of the universal does not preclude that the judgment concerning a particular object be corrupted. Prudence, on the contrary, must utter a judgment conformed to the good in

¹⁰⁸ *In VI Ethic.*, lect. 7: “However, in deliberation [*consiliando*] error can occur in two ways: in one way concerning the universal, in another concerning the particular.”

the matter of the action that will follow. The prudential judgment is corrupted by sin; this is why, inasmuch as prudence perseveres, man does not sin.¹⁰⁹

Universal knowledge and habitual knowledge bound by passion are not incompatible with sin.

Therefore, it can happen that man, at the moment of his sin, has a universal and actual knowledge. However, in the given case, his particular knowledge is not actual; it is habitual and bound by the passion. And then in the practical syllogism that precedes action, we find a true universal major [and] a particular minor distorted by passion. The conclusion is erroneous; it leads to sin.¹¹⁰

The false syllogism of the sinner

St. Thomas adds that this syllogism is obviously defective, for it is composed of four propositions. The correct prudential syllogism, such as we have explicated, only has three propositions. The man who has the virtue of temperance argues thus: *No fornication is*

¹⁰⁹ *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 6, ad 1: “Prudence involves more than practical science. For a universal judgment pertains to practical science—e.g., that fornication is evil, that theft is not to be done, et other such things of this sort. Indeed, even with such science existing, it happens in a particular act that the judgment of reason is intercepted so that it does not rightly judge; and on account of this it is said to be of little avail for virtue, for even when it is had it happens that a man can sin against virtue. However, it pertains to prudence rightly to judge concerning singular things to be done, inasmuch as these are now to be done, and such a judgment is corrupted by whatsoever sin. And therefore, prudence remaining, man does not sin. Whence, this confers not a little but much for virtue—nay, rather, it causes virtue itself.

¹¹⁰ See *In II Sent.*, d. 21, q. 3, a. 3: “It happens that the sinner knows universally and in act; however, in the particular matter he does not happen to know in act but only in a habitual manner, bound by a passion (whether of anger or of desire) so that reason does not issue forth a right choice [*electionem*] but follows the movement of a passion; and if even he who is subdued by passion can bring forth orally things that are in accord with right reason about the particular matters, nevertheless he does not hold this in his mind—just as the drunk can orally bring forth the words of the wise, although these words do not hold for his intellect. And therefore, since reason in a certain way syllogizes concerning things to be done, there is found a right judgment of reason with regard to the major premise, which is universal; however, in the minor premise, which is particular, there is admixed a passion that is effective concerning the particular matter. Whence, there follows a corruption of reason in the conclusion of choice [*electionis*]. For example, if it is said that “No fornication is to be committed,” one is perfect in this judgment of reason. Again, there is proposed another, “Every fornication is delightful.” A particular [proposition] is placed [*assumatur*] under these two [propositions], namely this: “To approach this woman is fornication.” If reason is strong, so that it is not actually conquered in the particular matter by a passion, it will bring forth a negative conclusion, choosing [*eligens*] not to commit fornication. However, if it is conquered by passion, it will elicit [*eliciet*] an affirmative conclusion, choosing [*eligens*] to delight in fornication. And thus, here there is held to be a sin in reason, namely when after reason’s deliberation, because reason is corrupted by a passion in regard to some particular matter, a corrupt [*prava*] choice [*electio*] follows.”

permitted; now, this act is [an act of] fornication; therefore, it is not permitted. This syllogism is perfectly correct. However, the man who in place of the virtue of temperance has only an imperfect disposition that one calls continence begins his reasoning with two propositions. One is the judgment of reason: “It is necessary to avoid sin.” The other is the movement of passion: “It is necessary to pursue all that is delightful.” When the judgment of reason is energetic, it continues, “Now, this act is a sin; therefore, it is necessary to flee from it it.” However, when the movement of passion is predominant, reason continues the reasoning begun in the second proposition: “It is necessary to pursue all that is delightful”; the minor will be, “Now, this act is delightful; therefore, it is necessary to pursue it.” It is thus that the continent and the incontinent reason with a syllogism of four propositions.¹¹¹

§14—Concerning a Gap Signaled by Fr. Elter

Between St. Thomas’s two rules (man’s reason and God’s reason), Fr. Elter has thought to find a gap that can only be filled by nature. The motives: (1) St. Thomas, speaking of the two rules, never wished to deny the possibility of a third. (2) The same thing cannot have many proximate rules, but it can have many subordinate rules. (3) Human reason does not perceive the Eternal Law immediately and in itself. (4) St. Thomas often speaks of an irradiation of Divine Reason in human reason.

¹¹¹ See *De Malo*, q. 3, a. 9, ad 7: “It is necessary that in any given act of virtue or of sin there be a kind of quasi-syllogistic deduction. However, the temperate man syllogizes in one maner, the continent man in another, and the incontinent in yet another. For the temperate man is moved only according to the judgment of reason; whence he use a syllogism of three propositions, as though he were deducing, ‘No fornication is to be committed; this act is fornication; therefore, it is not to be done.’ . . .

But both the continent and the incontinent man are moved in a twofold manner: indeed, moved according to reason to avoid sin, but moved also according to concupiscence to commit it. But, in the continent man, the judgment of reason wins out, while in the incontinent man the movement of concupiscence wins out. Whence, both make use of a syllogism of four propositions, though to contrary conclusions. For the continent man thus syllogizes, ‘No sin is to be done,’ and does this according to the judgment of reason; but according to the movement of concupiscence there turns about in his heart the thought that *every delightful thing is to be sought*. However, because the judgment of reason wins out in him, subsumes [the minor premise] under the first [i.e., ‘no sin is to be done’] and concludes, ‘This is a sin and therefore is not to be done.’ However, the incontinent man in whom the movement of concupiscence wins out subsumes [the minor premise] under the the second [i.e., ‘every delightful thing is to be ought’] and such a person is he who sins from weakness. And therefore, it is obvious that, although he may know in a universal manner, he nevertheless does not know the particular matter to be be done because he does not make the subsumption according to reason, but does so instead according to concupiscence.”

Fr. Elter does not discuss the question of ends and means. He does indeed lead us all the way to the entrance, but he does not cross the threshold. This question interested him little.

What preoccupies him is a gap that he discovered between St. Thomas's two rules (i.e., Divine Reason and human reason).

As St. Thomas himself recognized, as long as the Eternal Law remains in the secrets of the Divine Intellect, it is unknown to us. How could human reason be ruled by an unknown rule? Therefore, we are faced here with an obvious gap between St. Thomas's two rules, and in order to fill it we have nothing other than nature.

Fr. Elter pursues his demonstration in successive steps. Let us follow him, step by step:

1. St. Thomas, speaking of the two rules (Divine Reason and human reason), does not intend to deny the possibility of a third rule that would be an intermediary between the two others.¹¹²—*Response*. St. Thomas does not at all speak of it. Consequently, if Fr. Elter affirms the possibility of this third rule, it is at his risk and peril; St. Thomas has nothing to do with it. I would add that if St. Thomas had written only once the text cited at the beginning of this work, Fr. Elter's argument could perhaps have an appearance of value. However, it is not only one time and accidentally that St. Thomas is spoken of the two rules of morality. I have before my eyes more than twenty passages where these two rules are mentioned.¹¹³ One could call it a stereotypical formula. From this fact, the very possibility of a third rule to interpose between the two other rules is notably diminished.
2. St. Thomas teaches that one and the same thing cannot have several proximate rules, but it can have several rules that are subordinated to one another, and this is what is verified

¹¹² Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 343.

¹¹³ See note 2 in the foreword.

in our case.¹¹⁴—*Response*. Absolutely. St. Thomas has written this with regard to the Eternal Law. To apply this text to human nature can be done only in an accommodated sense.

3. St. Thomas teaches that human reason does not perceive the Eternal Law immediately in itself but “inasmuch as in the essential order of things, or rather in the rational human nature with all the relations springing forth [*pullulantibus*] from it radiates forth.”¹¹⁵

And, in support of his text, the author cites *ST I-II*, q. 93, a. 2.—*Response*. I have read and reread this article, and I have found nothing similar, neither the essential order of things, nor the rational human nature, nor all the relations that abound [*pullulent*] in this nature. Perhaps one should attribute the erroneous citation to a fault in printing, but I do not recall ever having encounter either this text or anything approaching to it.

4. St. Thomas speaks of an “irradiation” of Divine Reason in human reason, and this irradiation is man’s nature.¹¹⁶—*Response*. In no way. This irradiation is reason itself. St. Thomas says, “Every rational creature knows it (i.e., the Eternal Law) according to a certain greater or lesser irradiation of it. Now, every knowledge of the truth is a kind of irradiation and participation in the Eternal Law, which is the incommutable truth, as St. Augustine says. However, all [humans] know the truth in some manner, at least with regard to the common principles of the natural law; but, with regard to other precepts, they participate in knowledge of the truth, some more, some less, and in this regard know the Eternal Law more or less.”¹¹⁷ A little earlier, St. Thomas had given us the same teachings: “The light of natural reason that makes us discern good and evil (which

¹¹⁴ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 343.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 93, a. 2.

pertains to the natural law) is nothing other than an impression of the Divine Light in us. Whence, it is obvious that the natural law is nothing other than a participation of the Eternal Law in the rational creature.”¹¹⁸ Already in *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 4, St. Thomas, responding to the very question that brings Fr. Elter to a halt, said, “Although the Eternal Law is unknown to us inasmuch as it rests in the secrets of the Divine Intellect, it is known by us in a certain manner, either by natural reason, which derives from it as its proper image, or by some additional revelation.”¹¹⁹

Why this gap is inexistent

Therefore, the gap that Fr. Elter feared is inexistent. The Eternal Law irradiates in our intellects by means of natural reason. This (i.e., synderesis, the natural law) transmits to us the ends of the virtues, which are natural ends, and discursive reason (i.e., prudence), by means of the prudential syllogism, places the natural end (the universal major) in contact with the means (the individual minor); and thus do we arrive at the conclusion, the *dictamen* of right reason.

Perhaps Fr. Elter will continue to insist and will find that the gap remains in the particular minor that must be connected to the universal major.—St. Thomas never experienced this difficulty. He says, “It is manifest that human acts can be regulated by the rule of human reason, which is taken from created things, which man naturally knows, and finally from the rule of the Divine Law.”¹²⁰

Here, as always, St. Thomas speaks of the rule of reason, never of the rule of nature. Let us recall the opposition established earlier between nature (the principle of the physical order)

¹¹⁸ *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 2.

¹¹⁹ *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 4 ad 3. Following St. Thomas, we have twice cited on pages *and* the text of Psalm 4. Note that in the second case, St. Thomas applies it to natural reason and in the first to discursive reason.

¹²⁰ *ST I-II*, q. 71, a. 7. In this passage, natural knowledge is opposed not to discursive knowledge but, as the context indicates, to supernatural knowledge.

and reason (the principle of the moral order). St. Thomas says, again, on this subject, “Reason both is the nature of man and is reason. Whence, from the fact that it is reason, it adds a given mode of causality beyond the mode by which something is naturally caused from another; and according to this mode [i.e., reason as reason, not as the nature of man], it is the principle of the virtues.”¹²¹

Reason is the nature of man, and it is something more than nature. It is nature; thus we see why in certain matters, one can speak of acts conformed or not conformed to nature.¹²² However, it is reason, and it is for this reason that it commands the moral order. Also, St. Thomas never speaks of the rule of nature; he always speaks of the rule of reason. If one said the rule of nature, one would have an incomplete rule, leaving aside that in which reason overflows nature; however, in saying the “rule of reason,” one has a complete rule that includes the nature’s part and reason’s part.

§15—Conscience—The Rule of Subjective Morality

We arrive at the last step of this uninterrupted series that, setting forth from the eternal law situated in God and passing through the natural law (or, *synderesis*), joins up with human action in itself—it is conscience.

Here, it is a matter of moral conscience and not psychological consciousness [*conscience*].

Conscience, according to St. Thomas, is an act, not a faculty or a *habitus*, but often this word designates the *dictamen* of conscience.¹²³

I. Objective morality and subjective morality

Objective morality is that which pertains to the act in itself: lying is a sin. However, it can happen that reason goes astray in its deductions and arrives at such a conclusion that, in a

¹²¹ *In III Sent.* d. 33, q. 1, a. 2, qcl. 1, ad 2.

¹²² See *SCG*, 3.129.

¹²³ See *ST I*, q. 79, a. 13 ad 1: Conscience “is a kind of *dictamen* of the mind.”

given particular case, on account of particular circumstances, a man will believe himself to be obliged to lie in order to obtain a good of high value.

This judgment of conscience, contrary to objective morality, constitutes subjective morality. Thus, let us say that conscience is the rule of subjective morality.

II. Right conscience and erroneous conscience.

Therefore, there is a right conscience, which is conformed to right reason, and an erroneous conscience, which goes astray from it.

In St. Thomas's time, the treatise on conscience was reduced to these two questions: "Does erroneous conscience oblige? Does erroneous conscience excuse?"¹²⁴

The first question: does erroneous conscience oblige or, in other words, when conscience, by error, presents as obligatory an act that of itself is not obligatory, is man bound to follow the *dictamen* of conscience? Yes, because the omission of this act (which is believed to be obligatory) is presented as being an evil, the agent willing such an omission therefore wills something evil—not evil in itself but evil because it is presented to him as being forbidden by the law of God.

The second question: does erroneous conscience excuse or, in other words, when conscience, by error, presents as being non-obligatory an act that, of itself, is obligatory will man be, on account of erroneous conscience, dispensed of the obligation of the law? St. Thomas responds that the question must be resolved in conformity with the principles that govern ignorance. Invincible ignorance suppresses the voluntary; vincible ignorance does not.

¹²⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 19 a. 5 and 6.

Perhaps certain people will be surprised to see us attribute the force of obliging even to erroneous conscience. We recognize it as having the quality of a rule, and we admit that this rule is fallible.

Conscience is a rule in a certain sense. It has been compared to the herald of arms who conveys the prince's orders; the subjects owe obedience to him as to the prince himself. If the envoy prevaricates and is unfaithful in the accomplishment of his mission, the subjects not forewarned of the error are equally held to obey. The situation is the same for erroneous conscience: "When reason, erring, proposes something as the precept of God, then it is the same thing to despise the *dictamen* of reason and the precept of God."¹²⁵ St. Thomas has not found here something disadvantageous. Just as the prince is not responsible for the infidelity of his envoy, so too is the Divine Wisdom not responsible for the error of transmission that is produced in the case of erroneous conscience. It is a matter of a judgment that concerns an individual in a particular case. This individual, before acting, has taken, as he ought to, the judgment of his conscience. He has believed himself to find the law of God where it is not [to be found]. This arises from human defectibility; God is not the cause of it. It would be otherwise if the objective rule of morality were fallible. Error would go all the way up to God. See why above the fallible rule of conscience, we need an infallible rule, namely, St. Thomas's "right reason."

III. Conscience and right reason.

Therefore, it is by a manifest error that Suarez believed he could identify right reason and conscience.¹²⁶ There is an erroneous conscience; there cannot be an erroneous right reason. Moreover, right reason is the ultimate act of the process of reason in the prudential judgment; after the *dictamen* of right reason, there comes the elective act [*l'election acte*] of the will. The

¹²⁵ *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 5, ad 2.

¹²⁶ See the discussion above, in particular that associated with note 82.

dictamen of conscience terminates the deliberation; reason could continue in reasoning to know if it will follow or not follow the data of conscience.¹²⁷

IV. Certain conscience and probable conscience

Today, the Treatise on Conscience has taken an excessive extension as a result of the question of Probabilism.

It is an absolute principle in moral philosophy that no one can act with a doubtful conscience. We must leave aside mushrooms of which we are not absolutely certain—this is an absolute law of prudence. It is the same in the moral order: prudence tells us that we cannot act in doubt if an act is good or bad, permitted or defended. Before acting, the man will need to remove the doubt in order to act with a certain conscience. Often, direct certitude is impossible; then, indirect certainty will suffice, but always it is necessary to illuminate the doubt before acting.

Certainty is direct when it is obtained directly by arguments proper to the matter in question; it is indirect when it is the product of reflex principles. Reflex principles are rules of conduct that help us to resolve a practical difficulty by means of general principles that are applied equally to a certain number of cases. For example: In doubt, it is necessary to judge according to that which commonly passes; in doubt, a fact is not presumed, one must prove it; in doubt, presumption is in favor of the superior, etc... These principles do not conduct us to a direct certainty, for they do not illuminate directly the disputed question, but they give us an indirect practical certitude, sufficient for acting prudently.

¹²⁷ See *In II Sent.* d. 24, q. 2, a. 4, ad 2: “Conscience and choice are each a kind of particular conclusion either of acting or avoiding. However, conscience is only a cognitive conclusion, while choice is an affective conclusion, for such are conclusions in things to be done.”

V. Probabilism

The reflex principles of which we have spoken are limited in number and applied to determinate matters. Pressed by the need for systematization, certain theologians in the sixteenth century asked themselves if there were some means at hand for simplifying matters, enabling them to arrive at a single principle that would be capable of producing indirect certitude in any matter whatsoever. Such was the origin of the controversy concerning Probabilism.

Entire libraries have been filled with texts concerning the controversy surrounding the question of Probabilism. Let us not get involved with this polemic but, instead, merely note that this theory first saw the light of day around 1570. This date should be kept in mind, for it indicates the fact that for over 1500 years nobody was aware of this principle which, for certain people, is a light in the night for moral theology. And yet, through the course of all these many years, holy confessors and wise men had to resolve an infinite number of doubtful cases, doing so without recourse to Probabilism, which had not yet come into the light of day. Therefore, how did they proceed? Quite simply, by following the rules of Christian prudence. Probabilism changed all of that. Prudence is no longer necessary: *qui probabiliter agit, prudenter agit*; [he who acts in a probable manner, acts in a prudent manner]. I hope that the Probabilists, whose birth is so recent in memory, will not frown upon those who, leaving aside a system invented in the sixteenth century, prefer to follow the line of line of conduct taken up by the earlier Doctors.

Chapter V: Nature's Part

Following St. Thomas, we have recognized that reason is the rule of the will.

Does this mean that we want to deny to nature the rightful part that falls to it?—In no way. We would like to render to Caesar what is Caesar's. We recognize nature's part. This part comes from a kind of twofold head. First, because it is nature itself that has constituted reason as the rule of morality; then, because, in men as in other beings, nature is the ultimate foundation upon which rests everything that pertains to the various faculties.

§1—How Reason is Ruled by the Constitution of Nature

The appetitive faculties each modeled upon the corresponding faculty of knowledge.

Nature has modeled the appetitive faculties each upon the faculty of knowledge that corresponds to it.¹

Inorganic beings and the plant [*végétal*] kingdom, lacking a faculty of knowledge, are likewise deprived of an appetitive faculty, the principle of an elicited appetite; they only have a natural appetite, which follows the natural form.

Animals have sensible knowledge that knows the individual; they equally have an appetite that is sensible and individual.

Creatures endowed with intelligence (angels and men) know being in its universality [*connaissent l'être universel*]; their appetite, the will, has for its object the universal good and, consequently, has freedom.

¹ See *ST* I-II, q. 83, a. 4: "It is necessary that the appetitive power be proportioned to the apprehensive powers." *ST* I, q. 64, a. 2: "The appetitive power in each being is proportioned to the apprehension by which it is moved, as the moveable by the mover."

A twofold difference separates men from the angels in this regard. First, man has a twofold principle of knowledge—the senses and reason. Therefore, he is endowed with a twofold appetite—the sense appetite, which is conformed to sensible knowledge, and the will, which follows reason. The angel, being a pure spirit, does not possess the sense appetite.

Moreover, the angel’s knowledge is intuitive. In a single glance, it grasps principles and conclusions. Man’s knowledge is discursive. Setting forth from principles, it passes through more or less numerous intermediaries in order to arrive at the conclusion. Thus, we see why in man we have a natural love that follows the natural knowledge of the intellect and an elicited [*électif*] love that is proportioned to the discursive knowledge of reason. In the angel, where discursive knowledge is lacking, there is a natural love and an elicited [*électif*], but this elicited [*électif*] love does not proceed from the deliberations of reasons. It springs like a sudden acceptance of the intellectually known good.²

Reason being the rule of the will, how one ought to understand the conformity of the rule to its will. In one and the other, two objects and two movements, the will is right when it is conformed to the movement of reason. *In VI Ethic.*, lect. 2. Cf. ST II-II q.20, a.1.

And now, this data being acquired, we can, following St. Thomas, burrow further below the principle enunciated earlier, namely that reason has modeled our will upon our reason, and we will find in this how reason is truly the rule of the will.

The good of everything consisting in conformity of this thing with its rule,³ St. Thomas asks himself how one should understand this conformity of the will with its rule, reason. He responds:

Now, the intellect in judging has two acts, namely affirmation by which it assents to the true, and negation by which it dissents from the false. To these two acts, two [other]

² See Cajetan, *In I*, q. 60, a. 2.

³ See *De malo*, q.1 a.3: “The good in the ruled and in the measured is from the fact that it is ruled and conformed to its rule and measure.”

things proportionally correspond, namely the pursuit by which the appetite tends toward the good and holds fast to it, and the flight by which it recedes from evil and dissents to it. And according to this, the intellect and the appetite can be conformed inasmuch as the appetite follows what the intellect affirms to be good, and inasmuch as the appetite flees what the intellect says not to be good.⁴

And in another place, St. Thomas concludes, “Therefore, every appetitive movement conformably related to true understanding [*intellctui vero*] is, of itself, good; however, every appetitive movement conformably related to false understanding [*intellctui falso*], is, of itself, bad and a sin.”⁵

An example. Is envy a sin? Envy consists in sadness in the good of another [person]. The good of another is a good thing; therefore, it calls for a movement of pursuit (*prosecutio*). However, sadness is a movement of repulsion (*fuga*). To apply to the good a movement of repulsion is a bad act—thus, we see why envy is a sin.⁶

Envy can be presented under another form: joy in the ill [*mal*] of another [person]. The ill [*mal*] of another is an evil [*mal*]. Therefore, it calls for a movement of repulsion. Joy is a movement of attraction. Thus, to rejoice in the ill of another is a bad act.

The good or bad act *ex genere*

This exposition helps us to understand a terminology applied in the Middle Ages, which is less used today. St. Thomas, wishing to explain what he means by the good act *ex genere* [from its genus], says to us that it means that the act “falls upon a due matter,” while the bad act *ex genere* is the act “falling upon an undue matter.”⁷

⁴ *In VI Ethic.*, bk. 2 Cf. *De malo*, q. 10, a. 1.

⁵ *ST II-II*, q. 20, a. 1. [Tr. note—The passage cited begins, “That which is affirmation or negation in the intellect is pursuit or flight in the appetite; and what is the true or the false in the intellect is the good and the bad in the appetite.”]

⁶ See *ST II-II*, q. 36, a. 2.

⁷ *Quod.* 4, q. 9, a. 1: “An act is said to be good *ex genere* from the fact that it falls upon a due matter; now, the due matter of the appetite is the good; whence, to desire whatsoever good is good *ex genere*.” See *De malo*, q. 2, a. 4, ad 5: “The moral act receives its species from the object inasmuch as it is compared to reason. And therefore, it is commonly said that given acts are good or bad *ex genere*, and that the act that is good *ex genere* is an act falling

The act falls upon a matter that is due to it when the good provokes a movement of attraction and the evil provokes a movement of repulsion. In the contrary case, the act falls upon an undue matter.

Thus, we see how the conformity of the will with its rule, reason, is verified. The act of the will is good when it is conformed to the *dictamen* of right reason. In the contrary case, it will be bad and a sin.

Reason, the homogeneous rule.

One now understands how is realized this word, “homogeneous,” employed by St. Thomas: “The proximate and *homogeneous* rule of the will is reason.” That reason is the proximate rule is obvious, for there cannot be an intermediary between reason and the will. However, this proximate rule is at the same time the homogeneous rule.⁸ And, indeed, when we consider the activity of the two powers, reason and the will, we find in their dynamism the same disposition that we had found in their being. Just as the being of the will is modeled upon the being of the reason, which served as its rule, so too in the exercise of their activity, the operation of the will is ruled by the operation of reason. Thus, we see how reason is a homogenous rule. To this homogeneous rule, St. Thomas opposes the Divine Law, which he calls a transcendent rule—*suprema et excedens*;⁹ *prima mensura transcendens*.¹⁰ It is transcendent because it overflows the rule of reason and it ought to supplement it.¹¹

upon a due matter (e.g., to feed the hungry); however, an act bad *ex genere* is that which falls upon an undue matter (e.g., to take what is not one’s own): for the matter of the act is called its object.”

[Tr. note—Fr. Lehu cites the quodlibet as *Quodlibet* 4 a.16. In the current edition, this corresponds to the aforementioned question and article. (q. 9, a. 1 is the 16th article in the entire Quodlibetal Question in question.)]

⁸ *ST* I-II q. 19, a. 4, ad 2: “A proximate measure is homogeneous to that which is measured.”

⁹ *ST* I-II q. 17, a. 1.

¹⁰ *De virt.*, q.5 a.2.

¹¹ See *ST* I-II q.19 a.4 as cited in note [8](#) above.

Far from introducing a break between the ontological order and the moral order, how St. Thomas's doctrine establishes a perfect continuity between the being and the operation of the will.

By this, one also notes how unfounded are the fears of those who fear the possibility that St. Thomas's system would introduce a break between the ontological order and the moral order.¹² Far from introducing any break, we establish a perfect continuity between the being and the operation of the will.

§2—Nature, the Foundation of Reason

The faculties issue from nature by emanating in two manners: there are natural faculties and rational faculties, and the dynamism of each class is absolutely different.

The rights of nature also arise from another head: nature is the ultimate foundation of reason, of all the faculties, of all man's operations.

That which is natural, and that which is not natural

But here a distinction is imposed, one that we have already noted. Among the faculties that emanate from nature, there are natural faculties and rational faculties, and in each case, the dynamism is wholly different.

St. Thomas says, "The will¹³ is distinguished from nature as one [kind of]¹⁴ cause is distinguished from another, for, certain things are done naturally and others are done voluntarily. However, proper to the will, which is the master of its act, there is another mode of causality besides the manner that pertains to nature, which is determined to one [thing]."¹⁵

¹² See Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 348.

¹³ And by will he also intends reason, which is the principle of the proper mode of voluntary activity.

¹⁴ [Tr. note—The words in brackets reflect Lehu's own translation of the passage.]

¹⁵ *ST I-II*, q. 10, a. 1, ad 1. [Tr. note—Lehu adds "end" as well.]

This distinction is of extreme importance: there is the natural, that which arises from nature immediately or from natural inclinations; on the other hand, that which arises from reason is not natural in this sense, for nature and reason, as we have seen, are irreducible principles.

The moral good is the proper good of human nature, but it is a good of reason

It is in this light that we should read certain texts of St. Thomas that have surprised Fr. Elter.

He read in St. Thomas that the moral good is the proper good of human nature, that moral virtue is a perfection of our nature, that the morally good act is conformed to human nature as well as to reason, and that the evil act is contrary both to nature and to reason. He has carved out an easy success for himself by expositing with a great number of citations a thesis that nobody thinks to contest. Thomists have not needed to await his arrival in order to recognize the doctrine of St. Thomas on this point.

Fr. Elter read that the moral good is the good proper to human nature and not that of the nature of an ox, and he has read well. But see what he has not read: “The good of the human soul is to exist *according to reason*.”¹⁶ “It is necessary that the good of man be considered according to some rule, which is twofold—namely, *human reason* and the Divine Law.”¹⁷ “It pertains to the notion of human virtue that, in human things, the *good of reason* be preserved, *which is the proper good of man*.”¹⁸ St. Thomas repeated many times this well-known text of the [Pseudo-]Areopagite, from which it follows that the rule of the moral good is reason. He never said that the rule of the moral good was nature.

The virtues are perfections of our nature, but their perfection depends upon reason.

¹⁶ *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 6.

¹⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 63, a. 2.

¹⁸ *ST II-II*, q. 129, a. 3.

Fr. Elter has read that moral virtue is a perfection of our faculties and, consequently, of our nature. And he has read well. But see what he has not read: “The perfection of virtue depends upon reason.”¹⁹ “Moral virtue is nothing other than a kind of habitual *conformity to reason*.”²⁰ “Moral virtue perfects the appetitive part of the soul and orders it toward *the good of reason*.”²¹ “The formal principle of virtue is *the good of reason*.”²² “That which is formal in all the virtues is the very *order of reason*.”²³ St. Thomas, who said that virtue is a perfection of nature, never said that the rule of this perfection was nature. He always says reason.

The good act is conformed to nature and to reason, though differently. *ST I-II*, q. 71, a. 2; q. 94, a. 3

Fr. Elter has read that the morally good act is conformed both to nature and to reason, that the morally bad act is contrary both to nature and to reason. And he has read well. However, where he has understood things less well is when he has found that St. Thomas has spoken indifferently of nature and of reason upon this point, in such a manner that one can hear the word “reason” as much as meaning nature as in meaning reason. Oh! No, St. Thomas knows quite well what his speech means to indicate. An example: When he wants to prove that the good act is suitable to nature, he does not say, like Fr. Elter: the acts of virtues are suitable to nature; therefore, they are suitable to reason. On the contrary, he says: They are suitable to reason; therefore, they are suitable to nature. “The acts of the virtues are suitable to human nature *because they are according to reason*; but the acts of vices, *since they are contrary to*

¹⁹ *ST I-II*, q. 60, a. 5.

²⁰ *ST I-II*, q. 56, a. 4.

²¹ *ST I-II*, q. 59, a. 4.

²² *ST I-II*, q. 61, a. 2.

²³ *ST I-II*, q. 67, a. 1.

reason, are in discord with human nature.”²⁴ Whence, one must conclude that fittingness to reason is known before fittingness to nature.

Numerous are the passages where we find this reasoning. It will suffice it to report two texts cited by Fr. Elter.²⁵

In *ST I-II*, q. 71, a. 2, St. Thomas asks himself if vice is contrary to nature. He responds: “Vice is opposed to virtue. Now, in each thing, virtue consists in a good disposition conformed to its nature, as was said earlier. Therefore, vice will consist in a disposition contrary to the thing’s nature.” We are here in the presence of a declaration of the universal order. The specific application to the matter with which we are occupied comes next. St. Thomas continues:

But it must be considered that the nature of any particular thing is chiefly the form, according to which the thing derives its species. Now, man is constituted in his species by the rational soul. And therefore, that which is against the order of reason is properly said to be against man’s nature, inasmuch as he is man. Now, “man’s good is to exist according to reason, and man’s evil is to exist against reason,” as [Pseudo-]Dionysius says. Whence, human virtue, which makes man good and his work good, *is in accord with man’s nature inasmuch as it is suitable to reason (in tantum est secundum naturam hominis in quantum convenit rationi)*; however, vice is against the nature of man inasmuch as it is against the order of reason (*in tantum est contra naturam hominis, in quantum est contra ordinem rationis*).

Another text has been objected against us, this one taken from the Treatise on Law:

Everything to which man is inclined according to his nature pertains to the natural law; now, any being is naturally inclined to an operation suitable to it according to its form, as fire is to heating. Whence, since the rational soul is the proper form of man, there is in whatsoever man an inclination to act *according to reason*. And this is to act according to virtue. Whence, according to this, all the acts of virtue are according to the natural law, for each [man’s] *own reason* naturally says that one should act virtuously.²⁶

Here we find the two forms of reason that we encountered above: natural reason, the rule of ends (*dictat naturaliter propria ratio*), and discursive reason (or, right reason), the rule of the

²⁴ *ST I-II*, q. 54, a. 3.

²⁵ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 341.

²⁶ *ST I-II*, q. 94, a. 3.

means (*ad hoc quod agat virtuose*)—*et agere secundum rationem, hoc est agere secundum virtutem*.

From what precedes, we hold two things. First, nature has its part in the foundation of the rule of morality. Second, it is not the proximate rule, for the proximate rule is reason, and there can be but one proximate rule.²⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that St. Thomas never spoke of the rule of nature.²⁸

§3—Proximate Rule and Fundamental Rule

The fundamental rule is contained in the proximate rule; How these two rules differ

Therefore, besides the rule, properly speaking, one can acknowledge a rule that one will call fundamental.

The measure of contents is the liter. However, the liter depends upon the meter, and the meter depends upon the terrestrial meridian, of which it equals the forty-millionth part. The meter and the terrestrial meridian are the fundamental measure.

It is in this sense that we say that, if reason is the proximate rule of morality, nature can be called the fundamental rule.

Fr. Elter complains to me that, treating of the proximate rule (since the beginning, indeed, I have done nothing else than comment on St. Thomas's expression, "*regula proxima est ratio*"), I have not given a large enough part to the fundamental rule.

²⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 4, ad 1: "There are not many proximate rules of one thing."

²⁸ I have encountered the expression *regula naturalis* (*ST I-II*, q. 75, a. 2, ad 3) only one time, but this term means the rule that man must follow by his nature: "*quam homo secundum naturam suam debet attendere*," and St. Thomas explains in the body of the article that it is concerned with the rule of reason: "*cum defectu debiti motivi, scilicet regulae rationis vel legis divinae*." Therefore, we will say that nature is the foundation of the rule or, if one wishes, the fundamental rule.

I could give him back his own coin, for, in treating exclusively of the fundamental rule, he has given a rather paltry part to the proximate rule.

If it were a matter of a purely personal matter, a jurist perhaps would declare the cause dead by compensation for reciprocal griefs.

However, our persons are nothing. That which is in play is the truth, and I ask, “Which of these two rules is the most important?”

Let us transport ourselves to a wine merchant serving his clients. He takes in his hands a measure, a liter. It is the proximate rule. Shall we shout at him and say to him, “My friend, where is your meter? You seem to forget that the meter is the fundamental measure of the liter.” No, the question is not posed.

[Application to the rule of morality.](#)

It is the same case with morality. We seek the rule of morality. We seek the proximate rule. This rule suffices for us.

Will one say that there exists a difference between the liter and the rule of morality? It is that the liter comports with its fundamental measure: it is equal to a cubic decimeter. One cannot say this concerning the rule of morality.

And why, if you please, couldn't one say that the proximate rule of morality comports with its fundamental rule?

If only one were to reread what we said in the preceding chapter concerning the prudential syllogism, one would find there how all the content of nature had spilled into right reason through the intermediary of natural reason. Now, natural reason is to right reason what the meter is to the liter, and nature is to natural reason what the terrestrial meridian is to the meter. Thus, one can see why when we speak concerning the rule or measure of a thing, we

always speak of the proximate rule or measure, aware that the fundamental rule is included in the proximate rule and that the latter, the homogeneous rule, is of an infinitely more practical use.

In order to prove that nature is more than the fundamental rule of morality, one says to us that the natural law is the rational expression of the inclinations of nature. It is the very teaching of St. Thomas: “Everything to which man is inclined according to his nature pertains to the natural law.”²⁹ But if the natural law is a law in the proper sense of the word, it is because it is rational:

Irrational animals also participate in the Eternal Reason in their own way, just as does the rational creature. However, because the rational creature participates in it intellectually and rationally, therefore the participation in the Eternal Law in the rational creature is properly called law, for law is something of reason. However, in irrational creatures, it is not participated rationally. Whence, it cannot be called law except by way of similitude.³⁰

We ought to apply what St. Thomas says here of the irrational creature to the natural inclinations of man. Considered in themselves, before the expression of reason, they are not a law except in a metaphorical sense. It is when they are expressed rationally by synderesis that they, properly speaking, become a rule and law.

We have already said earlier that “natural reason” and “rational nature” are not interchangeable formulas. Reason, even natural [reason], is reason; nature, even rational [nature], is nature; and the properties of each of them are not identical. This is why we say that natural reason is a rule of morality and that natural inclinations are the foundation of this rule. And as the natural law includes all the natural inclinations of man, it is all the content of nature that, by the intermediary of synderesis, has passed into right reason.

²⁹ ST I-II q.94 a.3.

³⁰ ST I-II q.91 a.2 ad 3.

Perhaps we ought to seek there for the explanation of this diversity that one certainly will notice in the terminology of authors. St. Thomas always says, “*regula, regula vel mensura*,” I do not recall ever having encountered the word “*norma*.” Fr. Elter entitles his article, “*Norma honestatis*,” and the word “*norma*” regularly comes to his pen. If one consults a dictionary, the two words “*regula*” and “*norma*” could seem to be synonyms; however, in use, a nuance separates them. The word “*regula*” has the more precise contours. It designates the rule in the proper sense of the word, the rule that determines what ought to be. If one wishes to apply it to the foundation of the rule, it is necessary to add a word and say the “fundamental rule.” The word “*norma*” is a bit blurrier; it includes the foundation of the rule as well as the rule itself. Also, it is held in higher honor by certain scholastics who do not have, to the same degree as the ancients, a horror for equivocation.

Whether the rule of nature is a usage more commodious than the rule of reason

We have added that reason, the proximate rule, is of an infinitely more practical use than is nature.

Dom Lottin does not share this opinion. He says to us, “Therefore, it will suffice for man to consult his nature to know the fundamental demands of the natural moral law.”³¹ Is it true that man would need to consult his nature so as to know the natural law? It does not seem so, for demonstration always passes from the more known to the less known, and [man’s] nature is less known than the natural law.

Nature remains latent in the profundities of being. To know it, we must search for it in its manifestations, which are its powers or natural inclinations. Indeed, St. Thomas, speaking of the rule of the physical good has indeed attributed in one place this role to nature,³² but generally he

³¹ Cited in Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 340.

³² See *De malo*, q. 2, a. 4: “The good act is that which is according fittingness with the nature of the agent.”

speaks of the virtue of nature,³³ of natural powers,³⁴ of natural inclinations,³⁵ for it is by these intermediaries that we discover the manifestations of nature.

The precepts of the natural law are contained in synderesis, which is the *habitus* of first principles of practical reason, principles that are known as soon as one has understood the sense of the terms. Besides these very common precepts, there are other secondary precepts that immediately flow from the first principles. However, the natural law, the rational expression of the inclinations of nature and, as such, pertaining to reason, will be more known than these inclinations foreign to the rational order, and as such, less close to reason.

Therefore, there is no need to have recourse to nature in order to know the natural law.³⁶

§4—Nature *complete spectata*

Fr. Elter thinks that nature *nude spectata* is only the fundamental rule—it is also our opinion—but that the true rule is nature *complete spectata*. Nature *nude spectata* and nature *complete spectata*. The relations that one attributes to nature *complete spectata* are not natural.

“It is indeed true,” Fr. Elter says, “That man’s nature *nude spectata* is only the foundation of the rule of morality.”³⁷

—Here, we are completely in agreement. What is nature “*nude spectata*”? It is what in Scholastic parlance we call, simply, “nature.” It is of this nature that we have spoken up until here; it is what we have called the fundamental rule. Of this nature, Fr. Elter says now that it is only the foundation of morality. Duly noted.

³³ *ST I-II*, q. 21 a. 1: “The due rule in things that act according to nature is the very virtue of nature.”

³⁴ *De virtut.*, q. 1, a. 6: “Between the natural and rational powers [*virtutes*]...”

³⁵ *ST I-II*, q. 94, a. 2, ad 3: “All inclinations of this sort of whatever parts of human nature (e.g., the concupiscible or irascible) inasmuch as they are ruled by reason pertain to the natural law.”

³⁶ Trans. note: The remarks is so striking in comparison to how many Thomists speak that it merits having the French cited: “Il n’y a donc pas lieu de recourir à la nature pour connaître la loi naturelle.”

³⁷ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 347.

He continues: “However, nature ‘*complete spectata*’, i.e. with all the relations that flow from it, ought, it seems, to be called not the foundation but the rule itself.”³⁸

But first what is nature “*nude spectata*” and nature “*complete spectata*”? I have passed through the *Tabula aurea*,³⁹ and among the numerous acceptations of the word “*natura*”, I have found nothing that is related to this subject. It is obvious that St. Thomas did not know the “*complete spectata*.” However, I do not wish that one accuse me of making of St. Thomas an outer boundary of thought. If this distinction truly signals a progress, I am wholly disposed to use it to my profit for the advancement of science.

That which is voluntary is not natural

The [so-called] nature “*complete spectata*” is nature considered with all the relations that flow from it. Thus, Peter is the owner of a meadow and not the owner of a neighboring orchard. His relation of ownership authorizes him to cut the hay of the meadow, and his relation of non-owner forbids him from gathering fruits of from the orchard. If one considers all the objects of which Peter is the owner or, above all, the non-owner, there already is a bundle of relations that loads his nature “*complete spectata*.” But if, in addition to the relations of property, one considers all the positive or negative relations resulting from the infinite complexity of social relations, I do not see how the nature of this poor Peter, even stretched upon the wrack of the “*complete spectata*” could attain unto this degree of extensibility.

But it is not only from the quantitative point of view that the nature “*complete spectata*” raises difficulties. Above all, it raises difficulties from the qualitative point of view. The nature of the scholastics is a principle of uniformity, “*natura est determinata ad unum*,” the nature “*complete spectata*” is a principle of multiformity. Let us return to our Peter, whom we have left

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ [Tr. note—He is referring to the *Tabula aurea* of Peter of Bergamo, O.P. (d.1482)]

as the owner of his meadow. He has sold his meadow and has bought a horse, which he intends to lease to those who request it of him. From this fact, he has lost all the relations that he possessed as the owner of the meadow, but he has acquired relations inherent in his quality of being the owner of the horse. All these relations are not Peter's nature. In what way had this nature been modified by the sale of the meadow or by the purchase of the horse?

Will we say that these relations are natural? Not at all.

St. Thomas says, "It is natural for man to have two feet; however, to have a tunic is not."⁴⁰

Example, taken from the right to property.

And indeed, that which is artificial is not natural. The Cathedral of Rheims is artificial; it is not natural.

That which is voluntary is not natural.⁴¹ The order of nature and the order of the will constitute two orders that are opposed to one another. For example, in matters of property, that which is natural is the ability to possess that is found equally in every man.⁴² That is why the natural law requires that one render to each what belongs to him.⁴³ However, the determination of "*quod suum est unicuique*," of that which belongs to each, is not a fact of nature. St. Thomas defines the natural: that which is the product of the principles of nature. The principles of nature are form and matter.⁴⁴ From form arises the specific nature that is common to all beings of the

⁴⁰ In V *Ethic*, bk.12.

⁴¹ See *ST* I-II, q. 10, a.1, ad 1: "The will is distinguished from nature as one cause is distinguished from another, for, certain things are done naturally and others are done voluntarily." See page 85 in original.

⁴² See *ST* II-II, q. 66, a. 1: "Now, this *natural* dominion over other creatures falls to man on account of reason."

⁴³ See *ST* II-II, q. 58, a. 11: "Now, that which is said to be each man's own is that which is due to him according to an equality of proportion; therefore, the proper act of justice is nothing else than to render to each one that which is his own."

⁴⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 164, a. 1, ad 1: "That is called 'natural' which is caused by the principles of nature. However, the *per se* principles of nature are form and matter."

same species; from the matter, the individual nature, proper to each individual.⁴⁵ When Peter was the owner of the meadow, this was not in virtue of his specific nature; otherwise, all men equally would be owners of the same meadow. This was no more in virtue of his individual nature, which results from his body; it is not by the body that one is an owner. Therefore, the determination of what belongs to each person is not a fact of nature: “Whence, ownership of possessions is not contrary to the natural law but is superadded to the natural law by *human reason’s* devising.”⁴⁶ Also, St. Thomas declares to us that the relations of property are determined according to “THE RULE OF REASON”,⁴⁷ he does not say: according to the rule of nature “*complete spectata*.”

Let us summarize. Nature, according to the scholastics, is essentially a principle of uniformity. Nature “*complete spectata*” is essentially a principle of multiformity. Therefore, it is not nature. We can leave it aside.

Summary

Having arrived at the terminus of our work, let us cast our glance back over what has been discussed.

From Fr. Elter’s article, it results that we are in agreement upon two points:

⁴⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 63, a. 1: “It is necessary to consider that something is said to belong to a given man naturally in two ways—in one way from the nature of the species; in another way from the nature of the individual. And because each thing has its species on account of its form, but is individuated on account of matter; and because the form of man is his rational soul and his matter his body; therefore, that which pertains to man on account of his rational soul is natural to him on account of the notion of species, while that which is natural to him on account of the determinate temperament of body is natural on account of the nature of the individual.”

⁴⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 66, a. 2, ad 1: “According to the natural law [*ius naturale*], there is not a distinction of possessions; rather, it is of human agreement, which pertains to the positive law [*ius positivum*]. Whence, ownership of possessions is not contrary to the natural law but is superadded to the natural law by *human reason’s* devising.

⁴⁷ *De malo*, q. 2, a. 4: “For one’s own and what is not one’s own is determined according to the RULE OF REASON.”

1. He admits that reason is the proximate rule of human acts.⁴⁸ This is what we, with St. Thomas, teach.
2. He admits that nature “*nude sumpta*” is not a rule but only the foundation of the moral rule.⁴⁹ This is our sentiment as well.

The divergence pertains principally to the two points that follow.

In the first place, Fr. Elter says that the rule of reason needs an anterior rule that rectifies it formally, and this rule is nature. The Thomists sustain that reason, from the moment that is the rule of the will’s act, is, by that very fact, the rule of the moral order completely. It is—we have seen it above—what St. Thomas teaches with regard to the object. The object, he says, “Inasmuch as it falls *under the order of reason*, pertains to the moral order [*genus moris*]...,” and this is because, “*reason* is the principle of human and moral acts.”⁵⁰ And St. Thomas elsewhere tells us that “each kind [*genre*] has a unique rule.” Also, for the Holy Doctor, the moral order is always the *ordo rationis*, the moral good is always the *bonum rationis*. Also, we can conclude with St. Thomas: *Moralium mensura est ratio*.⁵¹

In the second place, Fr. Elter says that the rule of morality is nature “*complete spectata*.” However, we have seen that the nature “*complete spectata*” is something nonexistent in philosophy.

⁴⁸ Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 343: “It is the proximate rule that indeed rules and measures immediately the act of the human will.”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 347: “It is true the nature of man *nude spectata* is nothing other than the foundation of the rule of fittingness.”

⁵⁰ *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 1, ad 3.

⁵¹ *SCG*, 3.9: “Now, of one genus [*generis*] there must be one first measure. Now, the measure of moral things [*moralium*] is *reason*.” Take note of this word “*moralium*.” St. Thomas does not say that reason is the rule only of human acts, but of the moral order entirely, *moralium*. See Cajetan, *In ST II-II* q.20 a.2: “Reason is the principle of all moral goodness and evil, for it is the principle of all of *esse moralis*.”

Perhaps one will say to me that, considered from the point of view of content, both the nature *complete spectata* of Fr. Elter and the *ratio recta* such as we have explicated it, do not differ very much.

Perhaps this is possible. But then, we have all the more reason not to abandon St. Thomas's terminology: *regula rationis*; all the more reason not to give preference to a formula that the Holy Doctor expressly rejected: the *rule of nature*; all the more reason not to accord the right of citizenship to an expression that places under the word "nature" a host of things that are not of nature, the nature *complete spectata*.

Conclusion

The “rationality” of the morality of St. Thomas

Dom Lottin indicates somewhat in St. Thomas the preoccupation with “rationalizing”¹ of moral philosophy.

The word is very just.

Reason is in the moral order what the sun is in our terrestrial world.

In the moral philosophy of St. Thomas, “reason” is what the sun is in our terrestrial world.

The sun illuminates first the highest peaks of the mountains; similarly, all the capital theses of the treatise on morality are constructed in dependence upon reason.

The sun illuminates first the highest peaks of the mountains. Similarly, all the capital theses of the Treatise of Morality² are constructed in dependence upon reason.

The human (or, moral) act is an act *of reason*.³

Reason is the first, proper, and formal principle of the human act.⁴

The good proper to man is to exist in conformity with reason.⁵

The moral good is *the good of reason*.⁶

The proximate and homogeneous rule of the will is *human reason*.⁷

The human act is good or bad according to the RULE OF REASON.⁸

¹ Lottin, “Les éléments de la moralité des actes chez S. Thomas d’Aquin. (*ST* I-II, q. 18-21),” 302.

² [Tr. note—See the included appendix, “At what precise point of the *Summa theologiae* does the Treatise on Morality begin?”]

³ *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 5: “Certain acts are called human or moral inasmuch as they are *from reason*.”

⁴ See page 101 in original

⁵ Various cited—“Bonum hominis est *secundum rationem esse*.”

⁶ *ST* I-II q.34 a.1: “Good and evil in moral matters is designated inasmuch as it agrees with reason or is at variance with it.”

⁷ See the very first page of this study.

⁸ *ST* II-II q.58 a.3: “The act of man is made good by attaining THE RULE OF REASON, according to which human acts are rectified.” *ST* II-II, q. 152, a. 2: “In human acts, that is vicious which is *contrary to right reason*.” *ST* II-II, q. 132, a. 1: “The desire of the good ought to be regulated *according to reason*; if it transgresses its rule, it will be

Human virtue belongs to the order of reason.⁹

The deep valleys are bathed with the light of day; similarly, at each step, one appeals to reason

There are not only the high peaks that receive the light of the sun; the vales, even those that never see its rays are bathed by the daylight. The word “reason” returns on every page of St. Thomas’s moral philosophy. One will excuse me if I cannot resist the need to cite again some articles. In the first chapter, I reported a certain number taken from the *Prima secundae*. I will take the following citations from the *Secunda secundae*. Thus, one will be able to judge the constancy of St. Thomas’s doctrine. I will not say that these passages are taken randomly, for all the articles of the Second Part do not present reason with such refulgent splendor. However, such articles are not rare; one could cite them masses of them.

A collection of citations taken from ST I-II: q.123, a.1; q.129, a.1; q.129, a.4; q.136, a.1; q.141, a.3; q.146, a.2; q.153, a.3; q.157, a.2

ST II-II q.123 a.1: Is fortitude a virtue?—*Response*:

According to the philosopher, virtue is that which makes good him who has it, and makes his work good. Whence, the virtue of man, about which we are now speaking, is that which makes man good and makes his work good. Indeed, the good of man is *to exist according to reason*. And therefore, it pertains to human virtue that it make man good and to make his work to be *according to reason*.

vicious.” *ST II-II*, q. 168, a. 3: “In all that can be directed *according to reason*, that which exceeds THE RULE OF REASON is called excessive [*superfluum*]; however, that which falls short of THE RULE OF REASON is called deficient.” *ST II-II*, q. 168, a. 4: “Everything in human things that is against reason is vicious.”

⁹ *ST I-II*, q.55, a. 4, ad 3: “Human virtue, which is under the jurisdiction of *reason*.” *ST I-II*, q. 64, a.1: “It is obvious that the good of moral virtue consists in being adapted [*in adaequatione*] TO THE RULE OF REASON....” Ad 1: “Moral virtue has goodness FROM THE RULE OF REASON.” *ST II-II*, q. 161, a. 5: “The good of human virtue consists *in the order of reason*.” *ST II-II*, q. 155, a. 4: “The good of virtue is laudable because it is *according to reason*.” *ST II-II*, q. 30, a. 3: “The notion of human virtue consists in the movements of the soul being regulated *by reason*.” *ST II-II*, q. 157, a. 2: “The notion of moral virtue consists in the appetite being placed under *reason*.” *ST I-II*, q. 127, a. 2: “It belongs to moral virtue that it preserve *the measure [modum] of reason* in the matter about which it is concerned.” *ST II-II*, q. 58, a. 8: “All things whatsoever that can be rectified *through reason* are the matter of moral virtue, which is defined *through right reason*.” *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 3: “That he act *according to reason* and this is to act according to virtue.” *De virtut.*, q. 1, a. 8: “It is obvious that the perfection of virtue is not from nature, but *from reason*.”

This happens in three ways. In one way, in that *reason itself* is rectified, which is done by the intellectual virtues. In a second manner, in that this very *rectitude of reason* is instituted in human things, which pertains to justice. In a third manner, in that the impediments to the establishment of this rectitude in human things are removed.

Now, the human will is impeded in two ways so that the *rectitude of reason* is not sought after. In one way by being attracted by something delightful toward something other than what the *rectitude of reason* requires; and the virtue of temperance removes this impediment. In another manner by the will being repelled from that which is *according to reason* on account of some difficulty that presses on one; and for the removal of this impediment, fortitude of mind is required, by which one resists difficulties of this sort, just as also a man through bodily fortitude overcomes and fends off corporeal impediments.

Whence, it is manifest that fortitude is a virtue inasmuch as it makes man to exist *according to reason*.

ST II-II, q. 125, a. 1. Is fear a sin?—Response:

In human acts, something is said to be a sin on account of some inordinateness, for the good of a human act consists in a certain order. Now, this due order requires that the appetite be subject *to the rule of reason*. Now, *reason dictates* some things are to be shunned and others to be sought. Among things to be shunned, *it dictates* that some are more to be shunned than others; and similarly also, among things to be sought, *it dictates* that some are more to be sought than others; and the more is a good to be sought, the more is an opposed evil to be shunned. Thence is it that *reason dictates* that certain goods are more to be sought than are certain evils to be shunned.

Therefore, when the appetite shuns those things that *reason dictates* are to be endured so that one not desist from those things that one ought rather to seek, fear is inordinate and has the character of being a sin. However, when the appetite flees by fear that which *according to reason* ought to be fled, then the appetite is neither inordinate nor sinful.

ST II-II, q. 129, a. 4. Is magnanimity a special virtue?—Response:

It pertains to a special virtue that it place *the measure [modum] of reason* in some particular determined matter. Now, magnanimity places the *measure of reason* concerning a determined matter, namely concerning honors... and for this reason, magnanimity of itself is considered a certain special virtue.

ST II-II, q. 136, a. 1. Is patience a virtue?—Response:

The moral virtues are ordered to the good inasmuch as they preserve the *good of reason* against the impulse of the passions. Now, among the passions, sadness is strong at impeding *the good of reason*. Whence, it is necessary to have some particular virtue

through which the *good of reason* is preserved against sadness, namely so that *reason* may not succumb to sadness. Now, patience does this.

ST II-II, q. 141, a. 3. Does temperance have for its object only desires and pleasures?—

Response:

It pertains to moral virtue to preserve *the good of reason against the passions* repugnant to *reason*.

Now, the movement of the passions of the soul is twofold: one, in that the sensitive appetite pursues sensible and bodily goods; another, in that it shuns sensible and bodily evils.

Now, the first movement of the sense appetite chiefly is repugnant to *reason* through immoderation, for corporeal and sensible goods, considered according to their own species are not repugnant to *reason* but, rather, serve it as instruments that *reason* uses for acquiring its proper end. However, they are repugnant to it chiefly inasmuch as the sensitive appetite tends toward them in a manner that is not according to the measure of *reason*. And therefore, it pertains to moral virtue properly to regulate passions of this kind that bring about a pursuit of the good (i.e., temperance).

Now (in the second case, namely of the irascible appetite, which has a tendency to flee sensible evils), the motion of the sensitive appetite for shunning sensible evils chiefly is contrary to *reason* not on account of its immoderation but chiefly on account of its effect, namely, inasmuch as someone by fleeing the sensible and bodily evils that sometimes accompany the *good of reason* consequently departs from this very *good of reason*. And therefore it pertains to moral virtue, in a flight of this sort, to furnish firmness in the *good of reason* (i.e., fortitude).¹⁰

ST II-II q.146, a.2. Is abstinence a special virtue?—*Response:*

Moral virtue preserves the *good of reason* against the impulse of the passions; and therefore, where there is found a special reason by which a passion withdraws *from the good of reason*, there is necessary a special virtue be found there. Now, the delights of food are of such a nature as to withdraw man *from the good of reason*... And therefore abstinence is a special virtue.

ST II-II q.153, a.3. Can lust be special sin?—*Response:*

The more something is necessary, the more it is necessary that the *order of reason* be observed concerning that thing; consequently, the more is it vicious if the *order of reason* is forsaken. Now, the use of venereal acts is greatly necessary for a common good, which is the preservation of the human race. And therefore, concerning this matter the *order of reason* must be heeded maximally; and consequently, if in this matter something

¹⁰ [Tr. note—The remarks in parentheses are those of Fr. Lehu.]

is done outside that which has the *order of reason*, it will be vicious. Now, it pertains to the notion of lust that it exceeds the *order and measure of reason* concerning venereal matters. And therefore, without a doubt, is lust a sin.

ST II-II q.157, a.2. Are clemency and meekness virtues?—Response:

The notion of moral virtue consists in the appetite being subjected *to reason*. Now, this is preserved as much in clemency as in meekness. For clemency, by mitigating punishments, observes *reason*. Similarly also, mercy regulates anger according *to right reason*. Whence it is obvious that there is virtue as much in clemency as in mercy.

As one sees, it is reason, always reason. It is a veritable obsession.

The adversaries of the “rationality” of the morality of St. Thomas.

Yes, truly, St. Thomas has wished to “rationalize” his morality. And if by the word “reason,” he had wanted to signify man’s substantial form, it would have been quite easy for him to say so. Why didn’t he do so?

This is why Thomists cannot look with indifference upon the efforts of those who strive to “derationalize” the morality of the Master.

Is it not the case that those who say that reason means the substantial form or the nature of man (or the object.. or a heap of disparate things...) ultimately perform such “derationalization”? Or those who claim that it is extremely difficult to know just what St. Thomas wished to teach by this word “reason”? Or those who reject these formulas: the rule of the will is reason; the good of man is to exist according to reason; the formal principle of the virtues is the order of reason—formulas that are encountered thousands of times in St. Thomas’s writings? Or those who place “reason” in a little, very dark corner where nobody will know to find it when the need for it will be felt? According to them, there would not be a great difference between reason the rule of morality and reason and the rule of astronomy, if reason knows the rule of morality, as it knows the laws of astronomy, but does not rule more in one case than in the other.

The true sense of the word “reason”

At the moment of bringing this work to a close, I imagine myself hearing a certain reader who, at the end of his first contact with the current controversy, remarks out loud: “I am not strong; I know it; but when I say that a cat is a cat and Rollet is a rascal, everyone understands me. Whereas, it appears that when St. Thomas (whose limpidity of thought and clarity of style the Roman Pontiffs, following many philosophers and theologians, are pleased to praise) wrote this phrase—*regula voluntatis est ratio humana*—he did not wish to say what these words say. This phrase, innocent at first sight, is full of difficulties. I do not see them very well, but men who believe themselves to be competent affirm the fact. The word ‘*ratio*’ above all is, it appears, indecipherable.¹¹ The specialists have gone to their workbench, pen in hand; they try to scrutinize the mystery of it, but in vain, since agreement seems more difficult from day to day, and its realization more distant. Behold, volumes follow upon articles. This is one more controversy that will swell the number of insoluble polemics that encumber the manuals: essence and existence, the *scientia media* and predetermining decrees, simultaneous concurrence and physical promotion, predestination and efficacious grace, etc., etc. Henceforth, to this already lengthy list, it will be necessary to add: the sense of the word ‘reason’ in the morality of St. Thomas.” And, disillusioned, he will conclude, “And people say that time makes the questions advance...”

To speak truly, it is only with reluctance that I have put pen to paper.

One does not prove the existence of the sun. One shows it—and then one either sees it or one does not see it. Among those who do not see, there are not only the blind; there are all those

¹¹ See Elter, *Norma honestatis*, 339: “It is not easily explained what is understood by the word ‘reason.’”

who for one reason or another do not wish to see it and close their eyes. Others look at it, but with distorting glasses.

If I have multiplied to the point of profusion citations from St. Thomas,¹² to the point that those who can and want to see will be blinded by them, it is above all because I have in view the young students of our Order. At the end of their studies, they will have to undergo an exam that they must accompany with an oath to hold and teach St. Thomas's doctrine. Lest they be distressed by the attacks of adversaries, I have wished to reassure them and also to arm them.

Next, I would like to come to the aid of external students who follow our courses in theology. I had in view those who, not having begun moral philosophy [*morale*] by the opening of the *Prima secundae*, have found themselves, in studying the second part of the *Summa theologiae*, confused by this obsessive return of the word "reason" that leaves a certain impression in their intelligence. I have told them that often a simple transposition would suffice to resolve the difficulty—when you encounter *bonum rationis*, read *bonum morale*; *ordo rationis*, read *ordo moralis*; but sometimes the obscurity persisted. Thus, I am happy to be able to present them, in an overview, the synthetic justification of what one has called the "rationality" of St. Thomas's morality.

Two comments will suffice for us to summarize the current work:

1. The rule of morality is reason.
2. Reason, here, means reason, that is to say, the *dictamen* of right reason.¹³

¹² These citations also will have the advantage of showing that our teaching proceeds directly from St. Thomas and in no way from the inspiration of the *Salmanticenses*, as Fr. Elter has thought—I know not why. See *ibid.*, 338.

¹³ This is what we have always taught. Cf. Lehu, *Ethica generalis*, n.188: "The *dictamen* of right reason is the proximate rule of objective morality," where we understand objective morality in the sense explained above, on page 206, in opposition to subjective morality. "The *dictamen* of conscience is the ultimate practical rule of subjective morality."

The Lehu-Elter, Lottin Controversy Concerning the Rule of Morality According to St. Thomas

Ludovicus N. Hamel, “Controversia Lehu-Elter, Lottin circa regulam moralitatis secundum S. Thomam,” *Antonianum* 7 (1932): 377-384.

Monographs concerning natural Ethics, written by modern Scholastics, are so rare that those very few that do come forth into the light ought to be read with the greatest of attention. Fr. Lehu,¹ who used to be a professor at the Angelicum, treats of the famous problem of the rule of morality, indeed in a contentious manner.

Here, in a somewhat broad outline, I would like to examine this book and to propose certain observations.

The examined problem is the following: according to St. Thomas, reason is most certainly the rule of human activity, how should we understand this word, “reason”? Because, as is obvious, the question is placed historically in relation to St. Thomas, the response must be presented historically and objectively according to the original and most authentic texts. Such is the problematic at hand and it is also the method followed by Fr. Lehu. The pure deposit must play the central role and propose the solution according to its truth so that no particular reader may believe that said thesis seems to belong among those “insoluble polemics that encumber the manuals: essence and existence...” (p.251-252).

The question sound forths thus: is the reason that is discussed as being a rule (and not a norm, p. 230) the substantial form of man (as Elter and Lottin want) or simply the knowing faculty (p. 5-11)? Lehu holds this latter position, not indeed from the Salamanca Carmelites

¹ Leonard Lehu, *La raison, règle de la moralite d'après Saint Thomas* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, J. Gabalda et Fils, 1930).

(p.253 note) but based upon the whole second part of the *Summa theologiae*. Now, such an interpretation is in accord with the words and the mind of St. Thomas.

If the words of St. Thomas are considered, whether where he discusses this question openly (p.12-22) or elsewhere in *ST II-II* (p.242-250), the reason that is discussed, because it acts, judges, etc... certainly is not the substantial form (i.e., man's nature) but instead is reason in the proper sense (p.34).²

But beyond the words of the Angelic Doctor, his mind must be considered, which Lehu does through all of his work (p. 35-240). Now, it is not a question concerning the number of texts (p. 35) (which, nonetheless, Lehu does not neglect). Instead, the main concern is the meaning of the texts. And, besides, it will be clear that reason must be considered not entitatively according to a reduction to the substantial form but functionally according to its various acts.

The question to be solved and mystery to be illuminated is the following: "Thomas, when he treats of the rule of morality, always speaks, absolutely always, of the rule of reason, which, according to Fr. Elter does not rule, and that he never speaks, absolutely never, of the rule of the object, or of the rule of nature, which, it appears, truly does rule?" (p.35). So that the complete solution may be presented, we must look into the roles played by reason and by nature.

1. The role of reason is examined first and at length (p.35-212). Is reason only the measurer who applies or manifests the measure (i.e., the object), as Fr. Elter thinks? Lehu denies this. Reason is more, for it is also the measure inasmuch as it judges concerning the object and the circumstances. This is so because reason signifies sometimes a power, sometimes an act,

² However, see *ST I* q.76 a.1: "I respond that it must be said that it is necessary to say that the intellect, which is the principle of intellectual operation, is form of the human body. Now, that by which something primarily operates, is its form to which the operation is attributed." Also, q.5 a.4 in corp. On the other hand, St. Thomas says (q.80 a.1 ad 3): "That any given power of the soul is a kind of form or nature and has a natural inclination to something."

sometimes the proposition of an act (i.e., propositionem, *dictamen*). In the first case, it is the measurer, in the last it is the measure, the rule indicating that which ought to be.³ Thus, reason, through its proposition, which contains the matter and the object of the act, is truly the measure and, in a proper sense, the rule of morality. The fact is clearly elucidated from the famous fifth article of the 18th question of *ST* I-II, as well as from parallel texts (ch.2 p.44-109).

However, having admitted the fact, another question remains concerning the manner, or the sense or interpretation of this fact (ch. 3 and 4, p.110-211). This question can be thus formulated: “Is reason a sufficient rule or not? Does it require another rule that would be the formal principle of rectitude?” This principle, according to Fr. Elter, will be the nature by the mediation of the object⁴ and the circumstances. But Lehu rejects this both in general (ch. 3) and in particular, with regard to the circumstances of the end and the means (ch. 4). And indeed, with what object are we here concerned? We are not concerned with the object taken in its natural goodness but instead are concerned with the object in its moral goodness. And this goodness is derived through a relation to reason not only knowing or receiving passively whatsoever object but to reason elaborating, judging, and pronouncing morality itself. As for the object, so too for the circumstances (p. 127-131).⁵

³ The modern terminology of psychologists who distinguish in psychological phenomena a transitive state (act) and a substantive state that constitutes the object and the matter of the very act, ought to be applied in this question. For “object” can be understood in a twofold sense. On the one hand, it can be understood as the matter of the very act (proposition, *dictamen* according to Lehu) and then with Lehu himself we can say that reason completely considered, both substantively and transitively, is the rule and measure. On the other hand, “object” can and ought to be understood in the ordinary sense, not the psychological sense, and then it is the measure, according to Elter’s conclusion, which Lehu denies. Cf. Baudin, *Cours de psychologie et de philosophie* (Paris: De Gigord, 1919), 15-17. St. Thomas has the same distinction, although not in the same terms, in *ST* I-II q. 90, a. 1, ad 2.

⁴ Here by “object” one does not mean the substantive state that is included in reason and is through reason (which Lehu posits) but something extrinsic to consciousness.

⁵ Certainly, by “reason” [*ratio*] we must understand the judging faculty and not the form. Lehu multiplies evident texts on this point. But with regard to the specific question about which we are concerned now, we will see below in what way *ratio* has recourse to the object about which Fr. Elter writes. According to St. Thomas, “Reason is the first rule of the natural law,” in *ST* I-II q. 95, a. 2. What is derived afterward from the first principles of reason are introduced more by reason than these very principles. Certainly, human movement is not blind and is not only spontaneous or natural but, as human, directed by reason. But yet, in order that our Ethics not be made similar to a

The cases of the ends and means merit special attention (ch.4, p. 132-211). With St. Thomas, Elter affirms, “Practical reason is called right inasmuch as it is related conformably to right ends.” Lehu responds by asking about the meaning of this affirmation. His opinion concerning it can be reduced to the following syllogism. The perfection of the human acts derives from the deliberative choice concerning the end and the means, which deliberation derives from rectitude in intention and in choice of the means. However, the rule of the ends is natural reason (*synderesis*) and the rule of the means is discursive reason or prudence. Therefore, the perfection of the human act derives from reason as from its rule both as regards the end and the means. The minor must be proven, and Fr. Lehu does this first by directly and expressly exposing the doctrine.⁶

The human act, like every motion, is nothing other than a kind of order constituted by the end and the means to the end that are derived from (or depend upon) this very end. Now, ordering is natural (i.e., spontaneous), automatic, and passive in beings without reason. However, it is rational and active in humans. Whence, it is obvious that reason plays a leading role in human activity. However, what does reason do or in what way does it order? Order is a work of reason, which actively and freely orders, but in what way does it order?

The natural ends (which are principles of derivation) are either the ultimate end or the ends of the moral virtues that correspond to natural inclinations. In themselves, all these ends can be called natural and are the first rule of reason (and it seems that Elter insists upon this).

kind of subjectivism or apriorism, we must also show how this reason proceeds. Fr. Elter wishes to emphasize this. However, Fr. Lehu does not seem here to do anything other than repeat his general thesis. Nonetheless, it is not a matter concerning words but concerning the sense [of the words.]

⁶ This part (p.135-199) seems to be the best part of the whole book. However, the controversy disappears if all of these are points are sympathetically understood. From the manner by which reason proceeds in order to arrive at the conclusion of the prudential syllogism, it is clear that Lehu posits all these things and transfer to reason those things that others require and place under the name of nature. For Lehu, reason is (rightly so) as maximally comprehensive.

However, considered in their expression, they are the first indemonstrable principles of practical reason, or precepts of the natural law (p. 147), (and Lehu insists upon this latter point on p.226).

Whence, to those who say (p. 239) that these two opinions do not differ much, Lehu responds:

“It is possible. But then, for all the more reason one should not abandon St. Thomas’s terminology.” Besides, for the sake of saving the words, Lehu willed to write an entire book!

Order is not perfected only with regard to the end but also with regard to the means. Now, here discursive reason (or, prudence) intervenes (p. 159-176), discursive reason which arrives at conclusions (*ius gentium*) and determinations (*ius civile*). It is the whole question concerning the human law understood broadly, or, contrived [*inventata*] by human reason. To this point, Lehu cites many texts that certainly show reason’s role according to, as I would call it, its logical and psychological mechanism (cf. “The prudential syllogism,” p. 176-198), but they do not exclude the appearance of realism which others wish to place in greater light. Lehu requires everything that Fr. Elter requires, but the former places it under the synthetic formula “reason.”

To this extensive and more direct argument concerning reason’s role in determining the end and the means, Lehu adds an indirect argument (p. 199-205) by rejecting various arguments of Fr. Elter and terminating all this argumentation (which regards objective morality) through certain considerations concerning subjective morality (or, conscience) (p. 205-211) which certainly is a rule and, nonetheless, not the form but reason itself.

2. From all these points, it is obvious what reason is and in what sense it is the rule of the will. But what about nature? Lehu responds to this question in chapter five (the final, non-concluding chapter) (p. 212-237). Here as well, “to each his own,” and Fr. Lehu wishes to preserve a moderate opinion. Now, nature’s role is twofold. The first role consists in the fact that this very nature constitutes reason as being the rule of morality. Indeed, from nature,

because the good of the thing is the conformity of the thing with its rule, the good of the will will be found in its conformity with reason. In other words, just as the being of the will is in conformity to the being of reason,⁷ so is the operation of the will ruled by the operation of reason. From this fact, there is no hiatus between the ontological and moral orders. Nature has another function: it is also the rule as Fr. Elter wants [it to be]. However, it is not the proximate rule, for human activity is not from nature (i.e., natural or spontaneous, automatic as in animals) but instead is voluntary (i.e., reflexive and rational) meaning that the proximate rule is always reason. Nature will then be the fundamental rule which, according to Fr. Elter, Fr. Lehu seems to have neglected too greatly. But, Lehu asks (p.227): “Which of these is more important?”

Fr. Lehu himself responds, always by having recourse to the mechanism of the prudential syllogism, in intricate pages (p. 227-237) that, nonetheless, are fundamental to his interpretation of the position, and from which it is obvious (Lehu himself even concedes the fact) that it is a question more of words than of the reality under consideration. Fr. Lehu proceeds in the following manner. To the question concerning the proper importance to be assigned to the proximate rule and to the remote rule, he responds indirectly: reason as the proximate rule suffices because, by *ratio*, we must understand *both* natural reason (synderesis, the practical intellect), which sees natural ends as the principles that are the foundation or nature *nude spectata*, and discursive reason, which arrives all the way at what is derived whether as conclusions or as determinations. This is the position Lehu gives to the problem concerning the rule of morality according to St. Thomas.

⁷ But whence is this being of reason taken? We know that according to Lehu the entire ontological order is transferred into reason, but such an explanation can seem ambiguous and dangerous to those who see apriorism or subjectivism in our theories.

From these points, we can understand why for Lehu, reason, which contains nature within it, can suffice, and why for Elter reason, which (from his perspective) does not contain nature within it, does not suffice. But for both, nature is required and is considered important. Secondly, reason, in Lehu's sense (as he himself affirms) is the more suitable rule because in order to know the fundamental requirements of the natural moral law it suffices to have recourse to reason, which is more known than nature.⁸ Thirdly and finally, reason is the rule without qualification, because nature *complete spectata*, which the others require as the principle of multiformity, precisely requires determination by reason and thus is ruled and is not the rule. However, besides the nature *complete spectata* described by Lehu (p.233-234) (against which one can indeed easily argue given that it appears as including particular, contingent relations that need to be ruled), there exists another nature *complete spectata* with the necessary and universal relations that are the very total order⁹ created by God and the *terminus ad quem* of the eternal law.¹⁰ However, this order includes both the external¹¹ order related to man (but to which he himself belongs and to which he must submit himself) and then his internal order.¹²

If Fr. Lehu's exposition, sympathetically understood, can be accepted, his method, however, seems to be deficient inasmuch as he abstracts too much from the *Prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*.

⁸ But synderesis, which is the terminus from which discursive reason begins, is nothing other than the very ends of nature "considered in their expression" (p. 147) And how can this natural reason formulate its principles without recourse to the very nature or natural inclinations: "now the first rule of reason is the natural law [*lex naturae*]" *ST I-II*, q. 95, a. 2? What is more known?!

⁹ The five ways of argumentation for discovering the existence of God contain synthetically this whole order which afterwards, in q. 3-22, are analyzed according to its conditions (I would say "laws" in modern terminology) so that the essence and activity of God may be known better, and finally through parts is developed according to distinct orders in the whole remaining portion of *ST I* from q. 44 all the way to the end. If the moral order in fact is treated separately in the so-called second part, however, we know that its logical location is in *ST I* (cf. the introduction to *ST I* q.84).

¹⁰ See *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 1 and 2. However, in *ST I*, q. 22 and 103 are of greatest importance to all of Ethics, and especially to understanding the concept of law, the natural law, and eternal law: *ST I-II*, q. 90, 93, 94.

¹¹ See *ST I*, q. 65, a. 2.

¹² See *ST I*, q. 77, a. 2, 3, and 4; q. 78, a. 1; q. 81, a. 3.

For, the Secunda Pars cannot be taken in abstraction from the Prima Pars. If reason, or its order (or, the natural law itself), can be understood in a sense which is maximally comprehensive (a point that we admit with Lehu), nevertheless, we cannot forget that the natural law is a participation in the Eternal Law. Now, the Eternal Law includes the entire created order (I would say “nature *complete spectata*”) inasmuch as it includes a concept of providence which is maximally complex.¹³ Thus may be avoided, on the part of interpreters, the danger of a break between the ontological and moral orders. Concerning other matters, Lehu himself concludes (p.239), as I already said, that between nature *complete spectata* and right reason there is perhaps no distinction except a verbal one because by the prudential syllogism, “all the content of nature is poured into right reason through the intermediary of natural reason.”

In any case, Lehu has written an excellent book that is a quasi-testimony for students and disciples who know him, and, in its own way, it provokes one to reflection. Well does he describe in the fourth chapter the whole mechanism of reason through the prudential syllogism from which the intellectualism [*rationalismus*] (p. 250) and, especially, realism of St. Thomas can be understood—an intellectualism and realism that are in no way aprioristic—and also how with Ethics, which due regard for immutable things, there is moreover a place for a progressive Ethics.

Having reflected upon his position regarding the explanation provided regarding the prudential syllogism, Lehu’s position is true. However, that of his adversary, sympathetically understood, is not false. Indeed, based upon Fr. Lehu’s conclusion (p. 237-239) the controversy does not seem to be of great importance.

¹³ *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 1.

The moral order is so utterly complex because it uses the various sciences,¹⁴ and the difficulty often perhaps arises from the fact that we do not distinguish among the data proper to each science that afterwards are brought into the moral order. The same words, in fact, mean different things for many different people (e.g., the expressions *obiectiva moralitas* and *subiectiva moralitas*, this very word *morale* which is used in various sciences, and finally the famous term *naturale*). What Lehu observes (p. 112, 216) as regards objective and subjective morality are true, but what he himself proposes is no less ambiguous. So too the counsel that he gives to young students who did not begin Ethics by a study of *ST I-II*, recommending that they substitute for the expression “*bonum rationis*” another word “*bonum morale*” (p. 253), does not dissipate obscurity as he himself believes it does.

In order to understand the entire *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, neither the substitution of an altered, perhaps more ambiguous, formula, nor the multiplication of texts, whether from *ST I-II* or *ST II-II*, suffices. From such a fastidious method, one clearly manifests the identity of a given doctrine which, nonetheless, is not understood better for this fact. I think, with many others, that the *Secundua pars*, by reason of its intimate relation with the *Prima pars* in which the whole order is expounded, ought to be expounded in intimate contact with the latter. If in the *Secunda pars* it is more abundantly affirmed that reason is the rule of voluntary action, from the first part we can know why it is the rule. So long as it is not accidental, every

¹⁴ *SCG 2.4*: “And, divine wisdom sometimes proceeds from the principles of human philosophy; for also in the case of philosophers does first philosophy utilize the teachings of all the sciences in order to realize its objectives.” However, as regards the order among the sciences, see *In VI Ethic.*, c.7: “Therefore, the fitting order of teaching will be...” Perhaps the difficulties in students to be taught and in matters to be learned arises from the fact that such an order is not preserved in our programs inasmuch as our students are taught everything all at once and not according to the progressive manner that they should acquire knowledge. The excellent Baudin, in his *Introduction générale à la philosophie* (Paris: Gigord, 1927), offers reflections of greatest importance concerning the pedagogical usefulness of the classification of the sciences (p. 95) and of the philosophical disciplines (p. 150). These cannot be disregarded and ought to be applied. They are founded on the principle of *the communication* of laws and method (l.c. p. 94, III), on account of the unity of being.

movement, whatever may be its species,¹⁵ is on account of an end, on account of an intention, and thus presupposes some cognition: “Now, the agent does not act on account of a form except inasmuch as a similitude of the form is in it. Indeed, this happens in a twofold manner.... But in certain things (the form preexists) according to *esse intelligibile*, as in those things that act through understanding.”¹⁶ Every motion is effectively [*efficienter*] from an appetite (*ordo executionis*) and on account of an idea or cognition (*ordo intentionis*). Thus, every order requires a twofold ordination: intentional and executive. But, it is now obvious in what way the necessary execution is ruled by the intention. The form or *terminus ad quem* presupposes the end as the *terminus a quo*: “For in all things that are not generated by chance, it is necessary that form be the end of any generation whatsoever.”¹⁷ This first problem concerning the rule of action in general now solved, there remains another to be solved with regard to each being (e.g., with regard to man): in what way does man desire and know? As is well known, this second problem is already solved in the *Prima pars*.¹⁸ Thus, it is clear how St. Thomas according to the analytic method develops in the *Secunda pars* what he proved in the *Prima pars* and according to

¹⁵ *ST I*, q. 18, a. 1.

¹⁶ *ST I*, q. 15, a. 1.

¹⁷ *ST I*, q. 15, a. 1. We cannot, however, forget the maximal difference that exists between the creative intellect and the created intellect: “Now, the intellect that is the cause of the thing is compared to it as rule and measure, while the converse is the case concerning the intellect that receives knowledge from things. Therefore, when things are the measure and rule of the intellect, truth consists in the fact that the intellect is adequated to the thing, as happens in us” (*ST I*, q. 21, a. 2, having presupposed q. 16, a. 1). Hence a twofold question must be distinguished. The first will be concerning the rule of the will and of the moral action, to which it is responded, with Lehu, that it is the intellect. The second will be concerning the rule of the intellect, to which we cannot fail to respond with others that it is reality [*res*], lest we appear to offer an opening to a kind of subjectivism. In this sense, and according to this principle, St. Thomas logically concludes: “however, the first rule of reason is the natural law [*lex naturae*].” This natural law [*lex naturae*] or universal order (according to *ST I* q. 65, a. 2 and 77-83; presupposing the words in *ST I* q. 5, especially a. 5) is imposed upon man. As a result of these St. Thomas appears as holding aposteriorism and objectivism. (See notes 11 above 12; also see *ST I* q. 14 a. 8).

[Tr. note—Fr. Hamel also has a mistake in pagination that does not make sense regarding a back-reference. It appears that he meant to cite note 2 above. Also, I have maintained the ambiguous expression “creative intellect” for *intellectum creatorem* so as to maintain the Thomistic truth that the artisan too, by means of the creative idea, measures the artifact measured by that idea. Likewise, the command of the practical intellect in moral matters stands as the extrinsic formal cause of the will.]

¹⁸ *ST I*, q. 77, a. 4; q. 79, a. 8 and 9; q. 81, a. 3.

the synthetic method exposit it. All this is in conformity to the methodology of the *Summa theologiae*.

In a word, from Lehu's book, it is quite abundantly affirmed that reason is the rule of human activity, but it is not clear why it is the rule. The consistency of the doctrine certainly had been proven from the whole of the *Secunda pars*, but the foundation and meaning of the doctrine ought to be taken from the *Prima pars*, which the author seems to overlook and not wish to treat.

The complete theory of human movement is contained in seed in the metaphysical theory of motion. Ethics can be neither conceived nor understood without metaphysics.¹⁹

¹⁹ The whole treatise on God (*ST I*, q. 2 - 26) contains a metaphysics of motion without which nothing can be understood in St. Thomas regarding human motion in the *Secunda pars* (see the remarks above on this). These and other questions concerning man (*ST I*, q. 77-83) contain fundamental *data* related to the moral problem, nay, the whole doctrine or principles.

Fr. Lehu's Original Position in *Philosophia moralis et socialis*

Very Brief Translator Note

It has been many years since I drafted this translation. I am beset by many labors right now and could only slightly edit the work. The style is rather clunky, as it predates my numerous years of experience translating scholastic Latin texts. I do not have time to do a deep review of the text. But, together with the Woodbury text in this volume, it provides important contextual points regarding the distinction between the rational measure of morals and a natural measure. Have mercy, please, on a very busy scholar trying, however, to communicate some of his private labors to those who might benefit from his mere sketches!

Fr. Lehu's Text

145. We are concerned here with morality, not with obligation. For, it is a question concerning the source of the distinction of human acts as good or bad, not obligatory or non-obligatory. Indeed, each of these questions is intimately connected and from each, likewise, does there result that which modern thinkers call *The Moral Problem* (*il problema morale*) or the question that is the foundation of all of Ethics; however, attentively each difficulty must be distinguished and solved in terms of its proper principles. This is the proper place for discussing the question concerning morality; the question concerning obligation will be treated in chapter VII below, On Laws.¹

Modern thinkers' errors, which are many, will be explicated in the article following this one; here we are concerned with the true norm of morality. As regards the reality [*rem*], all Catholics agree, teaching there to be a twofold rule of morality: one immanent, in man himself;

¹ [Tr. note—This is not translated in this volume.]

the other transcendent, on the part of God. However, as regards the manner of speaking, not a few disagree. St. Thomas frequently expresses his doctrine thus: “The rule of the human will is twofold: one proximate and homogeneous, namely human reason itself; but the other is the first rule, namely, the Eternal Law, which is, as it were, God’s reason.”² But that which is said by St. Thomas, “The proximate rule is *man’s reason*,” or as he often says, “*right reason*,” others say, “It is *conscience*” (St. Alphonsus and many casuists); others say, “it is human nature (in many more recent authors)”; others, “*the ultimate end*”; others, “*the essential order of things*” (Liberatore); and others, “*the Divine Will*.” And the danger of confusion increases for beginners from the fact that none of the aforementioned formulas is, simply speaking, false, but each opinion, while it does stand firm in the partial truth that it contains, does not pay heed well enough to that which is essential in this matter. Therefore, so that we may proceed in such an obscure matter, first through two propositions will we expound St. Thomas’s doctrine; then, through many questions will we investigate what of the truth is contained in the other formulas. The Divine Will will be treated in n.188.³

Conclusion 1: The proximate rule of morality is human reason, that is the *dictamen* of right reason.

146. *Proof.* First, *From the fact that reason is the first principle of human acts* (ST I-II q.90 a.1). In each genus, that which is the principle is the measure and rule of that genus: e.g. unity in the genus of numbers and the first movement [*motus*] in the genus of motions. Now, reason is the first principle of human acts, for it is the office of reason to order [*rationis est*

² ST I-II q.71 a.6. Cf. ST I-II q.19 a.3 and 4; q.21 a.1; q.63 a.2; q.72 a.4 and 8; q.74 a.7; q.86 a.1 and 2 et *passim*.

³ [Tr. note—This is not translated in this volume.]

ordinare] to the end, which is the first principle in things to be done. *Therefore*, the rule and measure of human acts is reason.

Second, *From the fact that the human act takes its form from reason* (ST I-II q.18, a.5): “For a given thing that which is suitable [*convenit*] to it with regard to its form is good, that which is contrary to the order of its form is bad.” *Now*, the form of the human act is that it be from reason: “Something is called a human or moral act inasmuch as it is from reason.” *Therefore*, “In human acts, good and evil are said by comparison to reason, for, as [Pseudo-]Dionysius⁴ says, the good of man is to exist according to reason, whereas evil is to exist contrary to reason.”

Proof of the minor. The human act proceeds immediately from the will and mediately from reason (n.119). *Now*, an act proceeds *materially* from that power from which it is elicited and immediately, and *formally* from the superior power (n.110). *Therefore*, in the human act, what is held as being on the part of the will is matter, and what is held as being on the part of reason is the form of the act. And because each thing is placed in its species by its form, the human act has its species from reason as though from a proper form.⁵ Whence, the species in moral acts is taken with respect to reason. “It is called a bad act because it is *not fitting* [*conveniens*] to reason,” and, “the conjugal act and adultery differ in species *inasmuch as they are compared to reason.*”⁶

In a slightly different form, St. Thomas relates this notion in *De Malo* q.2 a.4: Good and evil in human acts is admitted according to that which is proper to the human agent inasmuch as he is man. *Now*, this is reason. *Therefore*, good and evil in human acts is considered according

⁴ *De div. nom.*, c.4.

⁵ See ST I-II q.88 a.6: “Because the moral act has its species from deliberated reason.”

⁶ ST I-II q.18 a.5, ad 2 and 3.

to that by which the act is in agreement with reason. Whence, [Pseudo-]Dionysius⁷ said that evil for the soul is to exist contrary to reason, and for the body to exist contrary to nature.

147. Third, *from the fact that the object of the will is ruled by the rule of reason* (ST I-II q.19 a.3). The act of the will is good or evil inasmuch as it has a good or bad object. *Now*, the object of the will is proposed to it by reason. *Therefore*, the goodness of the act of will depends upon reason in the same manner that it depends upon its object.

Proof of the major. Acts are specified by their objects. *Now*, good and evil are specific differences of the human act. *Therefore*, the human act is good and evil from its object.

Proof of the minor. The understood good is the object of the will proportioned to it, whereas the sensible or imagined good is not proportioned to the will but to the sensitive appetite, for the will can tend to the universal good that reason apprehends, whereas the sense appetite only tends to the particular good that the sense appetite apprehends.

Against the minor and its proof, you may say: From this it indeed follows that reason is required as a *sine qua non* condition, namely that it may propose a good to the will; however, it does not follow that reason is required as the rule of the moral good.

I respond. Reason not only presents the object to the will, but it presents the ruled object [*obiectum regulatum*], or the moral object. For just as the free act necessarily designates a transcendental order to the moral rule (n.115), so does the object of the free act necessarily designate the same transcendental order in which morality consists.⁸ Therefore, reason presents to the will not only a physical object but necessarily presents an object morally considered and in this respect is reason called the rule of morality.

⁷ *De div. nom.*, c.4.

⁸ [Tr. note—See the appendix, Text by Fr. Austin Woodbury, S.M. – *Ethics*, sec.3 ch.7 a.2: Metaphysical Essence of Morality.]

Therefore, there must be a twofold morality distinguished: the morality *of the act*, which is a property of the human act and concerning which to this point in general we have been discussing; and the morality *of the object*, which is a property of the object morally considered. Morality is not said univocally of the act and of the object; but of the act, it is said *formally*, of the object *analogously*, just as health is said formally of the healthy animal and analogically of healthy medicine, namely to the extent that it causes health.

You may continue to pursue the matter, however: It seems impossible that reason be the rule of the moral good—either (a) the moral good is understood concerning the goodness of the object, for the good as good, that is as desirable, is the object of the will and not reason. *Therefore*, it does not depend upon reason as upon a proper rule;—or (b) it is understood concerning the goodness of the act, for since the good in the ruled and measured is from that which is conformed to the rule and measure,⁹ one can ask how the act of the will has conformity with the act of reason; for these two acts have quite different processes [*utriusque enim actus longe diversus est processus*], “whereas the proximate measure is homogenous to the measured.”¹⁰

I respond. To the first, I distinguish the antecedent: I concede that the good, as desirable, is the object of the will; however, I deny [that it is the object] of the intellect alone and independently of any other. For the will cannot desire the good unless it is presented by reason, which apprehends it as true; whence the good grasped by reason from the perspective of the true is the object of reason: “The good from the prespective of the good, i.e. of the desirable, *per prius* pertains to the will than to reason; but, however, *per prius* does it pertain to reason from the perspective of the true than to the will from the perspective of the desirable, for the desire

⁹ *De malo*, q.1 a.3.

¹⁰ ST I-II q.19 a.4 ad 2.

[*appetitus*] of the will cannot exist concerning the good unless it is first grasped by reason.”¹¹

Therefore, since reason, from the perspective of the true, grasps the good that it presents to the will, from that fact does it rule the goodness of the object. Therefore, that object which is conformed to right reason is good, and that which has a repugnancy to right reason is bad; therefore, right reason is the proximate rule of morality.—*To the second*, the conformity of one act to another is taken on the part of the object, insofar as the will is related to the object, in the same way that this same object is grasped by reason. Furthermore, “the intellect in judging has two acts, namely the affirmation by which it assents to the true and denial by which it dissents from the false. To these two acts there respond two acts proportionally in the appetitive power, namely pursuit, by which the appetite tends to a good and holds fast to it, and flight, by which it recedes from the bad and dissents to it. And on account of this the intellect and the appetite can be conformed inasmuch as that which the intellect affirms to be good the appetite pursues, and that which the intellect denies as being good the appetite flees.”¹² “And therefore, every motion of the appetite conformably is related to an understood truth is of itself good; whereas every motion of the appetite conformably related to an understood falsity is of itself evil and a sin.”¹³

See what will be said below in n.167.

148. Fourth, *from the difference between the rational nature and non-rational nature* (ST I-II q.91 a.2). The rational creature participates in Divine Providence not only as being governed but also as governing. *Now*, to govern is to order according to a rule preexisting in him who rules. *Therefore*, there must have been a rule placed in man by which he can order his acts.

¹¹ ST II-II q.20 a.1.

¹² *In II Ethic.*, lect.2.

¹³ ST II-II q.20 a.1.

Accepting this, now, this rule is reason, which is derived from the Eternal Law as its proper image. *Therefore*, human reason is the rule of human acts.

Proof of the subsumed [i.e., second] minor. For the notion [*ratio*] of governing in God is the Eternal Law or Providence, which is an act of the intellect; whence, the participation of Providence in man is had through reason.

149. *Conclusion 2.* **The supreme rule of morality is the Eternal Law, which is, as it were, God's reason.**

Since reason is the proximate rule of morality, certain people say that God is the remote rule. It is better called by St. Thomas first or supreme [rule], for the influx of God cannot be called remote, although it is of a superior order.

As concerns what the Eternal Law is, this matter will be explicated in the treatise *On Laws*. In the meanwhile, by the Eternal Law is intended the notion of the governing of the universe preexisting in the Divine Mind, especially concerning the essential order of things, that is, concerning the order which various essences have among themselves.

Proof. First, in all ordered causes, the effect depends more upon the first cause than upon the second cause, for the second cause does not act except in virtue of the first. *Now*, human reason has the fact that it is the rule of morality in virtue of being a second cause from the Eternal Law. *Therefore*, morality depends more upon the Eternal Law than upon human reason.

Proof of the minor. Human reason is true or false inasmuch as it is conformed to the truth or not, because our reason knows the truth but does not make the truth. *Now*, the measure of every truth is God's Reason, for the Divine Reason is that which makes the truth. *Therefore*, [human reason is measured by God's Reason.] (ST I-II q.19 a.4.)

Second, human action is called good or bad inasmuch as it is fitting or not fitting in the order to the final end. *Now*, the final end of each thing is that which is intended by the Author of nature, namely by God (n.54, *coroll.* 1). *Therefore*, the supreme ordination of human acts proceeds from God's Intellect.

The major results from what was said in n.10, where it was asserted that the scope of Ethics is to direct human activity to the ultimate end and it will be demonstrated below in *Inquiry* 4 (n.158).

Third, *from the doctrine of St. Thomas concerning the universal extension of Divine Providence* (ST I q.22, a.2). As much as the ordering of effects to an end is extend, so far too is the causality of the agent extended, for every agent acts on account of an end. *Now*, the causality of the first agent, namely God, is extended to all beings. *Therefore*, all things that in some way have being [*esse*] must be ordered by God to an end; therefore, the ordering according to which morality is considered also is from God.

Confirmation. From the third proposition condemned in the *Syllabus of Errors*: "Human reason, without any consideration at all of God, is the sole judge of truth and falsehood, of good and evil; it is a law unto itself, and by its natural powers, it suffices to care for the good of men and of nations."¹⁴

Corollary. Therefore, the rule of morality is twofold, but with subordination:¹⁵ human reason is indeed the rule, but it is a ruled rule; the Eternal Law is ever the ruling rule.

¹⁴ Denz., 2903.

¹⁵ See ST I-II q.19 a.4 ad 1.

Inquiry 1: Whether the Reason that is the Proximate Rule Should be Understood as being Conscience

150. *I respond.* Conscience is the rule of morality, as we will say in n.339, but it is the *subjective* rule of morals; but here we are concerned with the *objective* rule of morals.

Objective morality and subjective morality. *Objective* morality is applied with regard to itself in respect to the rule of reason and the Eternal Law *independent* from the practical judgment of any agent. *Subjective* morality is applied in respect to the practical judgment taken concretely and determines that which is good for the agent in a given case, although perhaps it will not be good in itself. Thus theft is objectively bad because it is repugnant to right reason and to the Eternal Law; however, among the German tribes about which Julius Caesar spoke, theft was held to be permitted and thus was not subjectively bad.

Material morality and formal morality. This distinction is related to the previous one. *Material* morality is involuntary and consequently is not imputable; *formal* morality is voluntary and imputable. Thus, he who blasphemes when drunk *per se* does not commit a formal sin but only a material sin. Again, if someone from invincible ignorance holds himself bound to lie so that the life of a neighbor may be saved, that lie will be formally and subjectively good, although materially and objectively bad.

151. **What is right reason?** From what has been said, it is amply obvious what *right reason* is. For “corrupt reason is not reason, just as a false syllogism is not, properly speaking, a syllogism; and therefore the rule of human acts is not any indiscriminate kind of reason but, rather, is right reason.”¹⁶ Conscience can be erroneous, right reason cannot, and it is called right

¹⁶ *In II Sent.*, d.24 q.3 a.3 ad 3.

[*recta*] because it has conformity with the Eternal Law from which it flows as from the source and rule of every good thing, just as the meter that merchants use is the true measure on account of the conformity that it has with the prototype of the meter.

You may say: The meter used by the merchants is discerned as being right from application to the prototype of the meter, but we do not know the Eternal Law of God and how can we compare our reason to It?—*I respond:* “Although the Eternal Law is unknown to us inasmuch as it is in the Divine Mind, nevertheless it becomes known to us in some manner either through natural reason, which is derived from it as its proper image, or through some superadded revelation.”¹⁷

So that it may be understood how the *dictamen* of reason ruling the appetite can be right by derivation from the Eternal Law, note that appetite is twofold: appetite for the *end* and appetite for *those things that are directed to the end*: “In order for choice to be good, two things are required. First, that there be a due intention of the end... Second, that man rightly grasp those things that are ordered to the end.”¹⁸

Both appetites are ruled by a *dictamen* of right reason though in diverse manners.

The appetite *of the end* is rectified through moral virtue; for “a due intention of the end is brought about through moral virtue, which inclines the appetite to the good that is fitting to reason, which is the due end.”¹⁹ But this presupposes a *dictamen* of reason upon which it depends; for “reason, inasmuch as it is capable of grasping the end, precedes desire for the end,”²⁰ whence “it is necessary that the ends of the moral virtues preexist in reason.”²¹ And,

¹⁷ ST I-II q.19 a.4 ad 3.

¹⁸ ST I-II q.58 a.4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ ST I-II q.58 a.5 ad 1.

²¹ ST II-II q.47 a.6.

indeed, in right reason, for “in no way can it be called right reason, if there were some defect in whatsoever principle. Just as if someone were to err regarding this principle, ‘Every whole is greater than its parts,’ one could not have geometric science, for he must then withdraw much from the truth in those things that follow [as conclusions in light of that principle].”²² —

Furthermore, the *dicamen* of practical reason concerning principles is right *naturally*. “Through the intellect are the principles naturally known, as much in speculative matters as in matters of action [*operativis*].”²³ “Concerning the universal principles of things to be done [*agibilium*], man rightly is related through a natural understanding of principles, through which man knows that no evil is to be done.”²⁴ And just as in the speculative order, the *per se nota* (e.g., *the whole is greater than its parts*) principles are naturally known once the terms are grasped, so too in the practical order are there also certain principles that are naturally known (e.g. *the good is to be done*). But practical reason has for its principles ends (n.34). Therefore, just as the understanding of the principles of speculative reason is naturally right, so too is understanding of the practical principles, that is of ends: “This end is determined in advance for man according to natural reason, for natural reason dictates to each one that he is to act according to reason.”²⁵ Whence, this practical *dictamen*, since it is naturally right, is right just nature is nature too, that is as an immediate participation in the Eternal Law.

However, the desire [*appetitus*] for those things that are directed to the end is rectified by prudence. “Prudence is right reason in things to be done, which as though from principles it proceeds from the ends to be done, to which one is related rightly by the moral virtues.”²⁶ For,

²² ST I-II q.65 a.1 ad 4.

²³ ST I-II q.58 a.4.

²⁴ ST I-II q.58 a.5.

²⁵ ST II-II q.47 a.7.

²⁶ ST I-II q.58 a.4.

“desire [*appetitus*] of the end precedes reason reasoning in order to choose those things that are directed to the end,... just as also in speculative matters the understanding of principles is the principle of syllogizing reason.”²⁷—And just as in the speculative order reason proceeding from true principles through right discourse arrives infallibly and necessarily at objective, universal truth (e.g., the human soul is immortal), so too in the practical order does reason rightly syllogizing from a right end infallibly and necessarily arrive at objective and universal moral truth (e.g. theft is bad). And thus is declared how, whereas the *dictamen* of conscience, which is fallible, is only the rule of subjective morality, the *dictamen* of right reason is the infallible and universal rule of objective morality. For, just as in the speculative order, reason concluding, “The human soul is immortal,” is right through conformity to the Divine Reason, the exemplar of all truth; so too in the practical order, reason concluding, “Theft is bad,” is right through continuation to Eternal Law, which is the supreme rule of morality.

St. Thomas expresses all of this briefly: “In those things that are directed to the end, the rectitude of reason consists in conformity to desire [*appetitus*] of the due end. But, now, this very desire of the due end presupposes right apprehension concerning the end, which is [accomplished] by reason.”²⁸

And thus are matters satisfied with regard to the difficulties of the modern followers of moral Positivism, who, taking into consideration only the the variable *dictamen* of conscience, refuse to admit any absolute morality, and hold morality to be variable for various times and places.

²⁷ ST I-II q.58 a.5 ad 1.

²⁸ ST I-II q.19 a.3. Very clearly expressed, this is the doctrine concerning the relationship of prudence to the moral virtues, which St. Thomas exposit in a broader manner in the places that have been cited here.

152. **Corollary.** What *Frins* asserts is, without qualification, false:²⁹ “Therefore, moral good and evil, according to St. Thomas, is found in things—namely, objectively and primordially—before the *dictamen* of reason and independently from it.” And, he cites *De malo*, q.2 a.3, where, however, no such thing is found, but only that the exterior act,³⁰ if it is considered as the object of the will, has morality *primordially* in relation to the act of the will because the act of the will takes its goodness and malice from the object. On the contrary, St. Thomas always asserts that the moral good is the good of reason.

But, so that every doubt may cease, there is the following conclusion.

***Conclusion.* For St. Thomas, the moral good essentially conveys a consideration of reason [*respectum ad rationem*], as to its proper rule.**

Declaration. The conclusion is also true concerning the moral goodness of the human act, as is clear from what was said in n.146ff; however, it is especially intended here in view of the objective moral good, in the sense of his argument in context [*in sensu arguentis*].

It is proven from St. Thomas’s terminology, in which the moral good is constantly called *the good of reason*, or *the order of reason*, or *that which is according to reason*, or *that which is fitting to, which is in concord with, reason*; moral evil is *what is repugnant to reason* or *the order of reason*. Add to this all the places where he expressly speaks of the *regula rationis*. From the infinite number of testimonies that could be cited, we will refer to certain ones taken from the various moral tractates in the *Prima secundae*.

²⁹ Victore Frins, *De actibus humanis moraliter consideratis*, vol. 2 (Fribourg: Herder, 1904), n.74.

³⁰ [Tr. note: It is useful to recall, also, that the “exterior act” often refers to the chosen moral object (not the “external physical” object), which is “exterior” in relation to the intention. Too often, the “external act” is held to be the act which is “outside” the agent’s will (or the “physically external act”). While there is a sense in which this is the case, the first case of an internal-external action coupling is actually between the acts of intention and choice. For a recent treatment of this, see Duarte Sousa-Lara, “Aquinas on Interior and Exterior Acts: Clarifying a Key Aspect of His Action Theory,” *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 15, no. 2 (2008): 277-316. Much of this rediscovery could have been sped along if one had consulted Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange who made the same terminological point decades earlier in *De beatitudine*, 345-371.]

From the treatise on morality. ST I-II q.18, a.5, ad 1: “Good *inasmuch as it is according to reason*, and evil *inasmuch as it is against [praeter] reason*, diversify the species of morals.”; ad 2: “An act is called bad because it has *an object not fitting to reason*.” (evil object); ad 3: “the conjugal act and adultery, *as they are compared to reason*, differ specifically”; ad 4: “a circumstance, whenever it is taken *as it is compared to reason*, can give a species to the moral act.” Art. 8: “Every act has its species from its object, and the human act that is called moral has its species from the object related to the principle of human acts, which is reason. Whence, *if the object of an act includes something that is fitting to the order of reason*, it will be a good act according to its species (such as to give alms to the poor). However, if it includes something *that is repugnant to the order of reason* it will be an evil act according to its species (such as to steal, which is to take that which is someone else’s). However, it happens that *the object of the act does not include something pertaining to the order of reason* (such as to lift a piece of straw from the ground, to walk in a field, and things of this sort), and such acts are indifferent with regard to their species.” Ad 2: “Every object or end has a kind of goodness or evil, at least natural (physical good)³¹; however, it does not always include a moral goodness or evil, which is considered *through a comparison to reason*.”—Art. 10: “Whenever a given circumstance considers *a special order of reason* (either for or against), it is necessary that the circumstance give a species to the moral act (either good or bad).” Ad 3: “Not every circumstance constitutes a moral act in a given good or bad species, since not every circumstance brings about *a certain consonance or dissonance to reason*.”—Art. 11: “A circumstance gives a good or bad species to a moral act *inasmuch as it considers a special order of reason*.”—Qu. 19 a.1 ad 3: “Through

³¹ [Tr. note—This is added by Fr. Lehu.]

reason, the good is represented to the will as its object, and, *inasmuch as it falls under the order of reason*, it pertains to the genus of morals and causes a moral goodness in the act of the will.”

From the Treatise on Virtues. ST I-II q.55, a.4, ad 2: “The good that is placed in the definition of virtue is not the good in common that is convertible with being (the physical good) but the good of reason (the moral good).”³² Qu. 58, a.4: Moral virtue “inclines the appetitive power to the good fitting to reason (*to the moral good*).” Qu. 59 a.4: “Moral virtue perfects the appetitive part of the soul by ordering it to the good of reason (*to the moral good*). Now, the good of reason is that which is moderated or ruled according to reason. Whence, concerning all that which comes to be ordered and moderated by reason pertains to moral virtue.” Qu. 61, a.1: “The formal principle of virtue, about which we are now speaking, is the good of reason (*bonum morale*).”—Qu. 63, a.2: “It is necessary that the good of man (*bonum morale*) be considered according to a kind of rule. This rule is twofold, namely *human reason* and the Divine Law. Therefore, the virtue of man ordered to the good that is controlled *according to the rule of human reason* can be caused from human acts, inasmuch as acts of this sort proceed from reason, under whose power and *rule* such a rule consists.” Art. 4: “(*Speaking of the moral good*) the formal *ratio* of such an object is *from reason*. Now, it is manifest that there are two different means (*modus*) imposed depending on whether this is done *according to the rule of human reason* or according to the divine rule.”—Qu. 64, a.1: “The measure and rule of the motion of the appetite about what is desired is *reason itself*. Now, the good of any measured and ruled thing consists in the fact that it is conformed to its rule; however, evil consequently in things of this sort is through the fact that something is in discord with its rule or measure. And therefore, it is

³² [Tr. note—Again, parentheses added by Fr. Lehu. The first could also include, as he does elsewhere, “the transcendental good.” All remarks in parentheses in this section of quotes are from Fr. Lehu.]

obvious that the good of virtue (*the moral good*) consists in an adaptation [*adaequatio*] to *the measure of reason.*” Ad 1: “Moral virtue has goodness *from the rule of reason.*” Ad 2: “Toward this maximum do virtues of this sort tend *according to the rule of reason.*” Qu. 67, a.1: “What is formal in all the virtues is *the very order of reason.*”

From the Treatise on Sins. ST I-II q.72, a.4: “Now, order must be threefold in man. One, indeed, according to *the rule of reason*, namely inasmuch as all our actions and passions ought to be commensurated *according to the rule of reason.*” Art. 8: “Since there are two things in sin, namely the very act and its inordination, *inasmuch as it recedes from the order of reason* and the Divine Law...”—Qu. 73, a.1: “It is on account of the virtue of any given agent that he follows *the very rule of reason.*” Art. 2: “Similarly it must be said concerning sins, for in them *the due commensuration of reason* is deprived such that *the order of reason* is not totally removed.” Art. 3: “Just as the good of health consists in a kind of commensuration of the humors in a way that befits an animal’s nature, so too the good of virtue (*the moral good*) consists in a kind of commensuration of the act *to the rule of reason.*” Art. 7, ad 3: “Reason must order the act not only with regard to its object but also with regard to all its circumstances. And therefore a given aversion *from the rule of reason* is attended with a corruption of some circumstance.” Qu. 74, a.7: “It is obvious that the human act can be regulated *by the rule of human reason*, which is taken from the created things that man naturally knows; and finally, from the rule of the Divine Law.” Qu. 75, a.1: “The will being without the direction of *the rule of reason* and the Divine Law, intending some changeable good, causes the act of a given sin *per se*, but the inordinate act *per accidens.*”; and ad 1: “The will without the application of *the rule of reason* or the Divine Law is the cause of sin.” Art. 2: “Because the cause of sin is some apparent good as a motive, though lacking a due motive, *namely the rule of reason* or the Divine Law, this

very absence of the due rule pertains to reason, whose nature is to consider the rule of this kind...”

From the Treatise on Laws. ST I-II q.91 a.3 ad 2: “Human reason of itself is not the rule of things. But the principles naturally placed in it are certain general rules and the measure of all things that are to be done by man, *things whose rule and measure is natural a reason*, although it is not the measure of those things that are from nature.” For human reason is not the measure of the physical good.—Qu. 94, a.4, ad 3: “Just as reason in man rules and commands the other powers, so too is it necessary that all the natural inclinations pertaining to the other powers be ordered *according to reason*.”—Qu. 95, a.2: “In human htings, something is called just from the fact that it is right *according to the rule of reason*.”

Similar expressions are found in the *Secunda Secundae* and in the rest of St. Thomas’s moral works.

However, all this does not draw the attention of *Frins*, who dares to assert: “moral good and evil, according to St. Thomas, is found in things—namely, objectively and primordially—before the *dictamen* of reason and independently from it.” He did not know to distinguish between the *dictamen* of right reason and the *dictamen* of conscience.

153. Of those things that thus far have been declared concerning the twofold rule of morality, St. Thomas gives a synthetic exposition in *De malo* q.16, a.2:

Therefore, it must be known that appetite is nothing other than a certain inclination toward a given desirable thing [*appetibile*]. And just as the natural appetite follows upon the natural form, so too does the sense or rational appetite follow upon an apprehended form; for it is nothing other than a good apprehended through sense or the intellect. Therefore, evil cannot come to pass in an appetite from the fact that it is in discord with the apprehension that it follows but, instead, from the fact that it is in discord with a given rule.

And therefore, it must be considered whether that apprehension that the inclination of this appetite follows is direct can be directed by some superior rule.

I. If it does not have a superior rule by which it ought to be directed, then it is impossible that there be evil in such an appetite. And this indeed happens in two ways:

a) Because the apprehension of brute animals does not have a superior rule by which it ought to be directed. And therefore, in its appetite, there cannot be evil; for the good is what moves an animal of this kind to desire or anger according to a sensible, apprehended form. Whence, [Pseudo-]Dionysius says that the good of a dog is to be raging.

b) Similarly, also, the divine intellect does not have a superior rule by which it could be directed. Therefore, in His appetite (or, will) there cannot be evil.

II. However, in man there is a twofold apprehension to be directed by a superior rule, for sense cognition ought to be directed through reason, and the knowledge of reason through wisdom or the divine law. Therefore, evil can be in man's appetite in a twofold way; and for this reason, [Pseudo-]Dionysius says that evil for man is to exist against reason. In another way, because human reason is to be directed according to wisdom and the Divine Law; and for this reason, Ambrose says that sin is a transgression of the Divine Law.

III. However, in substances separated from the body there is one knowledge, namely intellectual, to be directed according to the rule of Divine Wisdom. And therefore in their will there can be evil from the fact that it does not follow the order of the superior rule, namely of divine wisdom. And in this manner the demons became evil through the evil exercise of their wills.

Note the symmetry posited by St. Thomas: The proximate rule is the reason of man, the supreme rule is the Reason of God, and thus is understood in what way man's reason rules from the fact that it is a proper participation in the divine reason.

Inquiry 2: Whether It Must Be said that Rule of Morality is Human Nature?

n.154 In place of the Thomistic formula, "The proximate rule [of human acts] is *human reason*," many believe it necessary to substitute the formula, "*human nature*." Thus has been proposed of late by *Schiffini*, *Cathrein*, and many others. Sometimes it is called *rational nature as such*, sometimes *human nature completely considered* [*complete spectata*]³³ It is asked whether St. Thomas's formula ought to give place to these more recent formulas?

³³ This is to be taught in the Jesuit Schools by the order of R.P. Peter Beckx, Master General, 11 May 1858, *De triennali philosophiae studio*. [Tr. note—See note 11 in the author's foreward.]

I respond. The measure is one thing, the foundation of the measure is another. Thus, for example, liquid is measured by the leater and weight by the kilogram, and not by the meter, and however, the meter is the principle from which the liter is derived [*desumitur*], nay rather, the foundation of the entire metric system. Therefore, akin to this twofold sense we must ask: (1) Whether human nature is the proximate and formal rule? (2) Whether it is the fundamental and remote rule?

155. I. Concerning the proximate and formal rule. *Conclusion.* **Human nature is not the proximate rule of the moral good.**

Thus *St. Thomas*, who not only teaches that the true rule of morality is reason, as we exposted above in n.146ff, but expressly asserts that nature is not the rule of morals. Nay, rather, St. Thomas in this constitutes the difference between the operations of nature and the operations of the will (*between the physical good and the moral good*), namely that nature is ruled by itself and the will by another rule. ST I-II q.21, a.1: “The due rule in those things that act according to nature is the very power of nature, which inclines to a given end... But, in those things that act through will, the proximate rule human areason...” *De malo*, q.2, a.4: “In natural things, the good act is that which is according to a fittingness [*convenientiam*] to the nature of the agent... However, we are speaking now about human acts... good and evil in human acts is considered according to whether the act is in concord with reason informed by the Divine Law. Whence, [Pseudo-]Dionysius said that evil for the soul is to exist against reason, [and evil for] bodies is to exist against nature.” ST I-II q.77, a.3: “Just as the parts of the body are said to be inordinate when they do not follow the order of nature, so too the parts of the soul are said to be inordinate when they are not placed under the order of reason.” Whence, *De veritate* q.22, a.1 ad 9: “Nature does not direct to the end but is directed.” St. Thomas holds the same concerning the

operations of art. *De malo*, q.2, a.1: “The due measure or rule in operations, indeed in natural things [*in naturalibus*] is the very inclination of nature following some form, but in works of artifice [*in artificialibus*] is the very rule of the art.”

From which we conclude: *Every good is said according to some rule*: “Any given thing is right and good inasmuch as it achieves its proper rule.”³⁴ *But*: (1) *The physical good is in accord with the rule of nature*: “The good in any given thing is considered according to the condition of its nature.”³⁵ (2) *The moral good is in accord with the rule of reason*: “For the good and evil of man is according to reason.”³⁶ (3) *The good of art is in accord with the rule of art*: “Good in works of artifice [*in artificialibus*] inasmuch as they follow the rule of art.”³⁷

The conclusion is proven by expositing the reason indicated by St. Thomas in the places just cited: Nature is the proximate rule of the physical good. *Now*, it is impossible that one and the same thing be the proximate rule of the physical good and the moral good. *Therefore*, it is impossible that nature be the proximate rule of the moral good.

The major is admitted by all.

Proof of the minor. “The proximate measure is homogeneous to the measured.”³⁸ *Now*, Those things that are homogeneous to some third thing are homogeneous among themselves. *Therefore*, when two things are measured by one measure, they are homogeneous among themselves; but those things that are heterogeneous are measured by diverse measures. Thus, in a cask of wine there can be distinguished many kinds of quantities to be measured, e.g. the

³⁴ ST I-II q.19 a.9.

³⁵ ST I-II q.59 a.5 ad 3.

³⁶ ST I-II q.59 a.1.

³⁷ ST I-II q.64 a.1.

³⁸ ST I-I q.19 a.4 ad 2. Cf. *In X Meta*. 1.2: “The measure always ought to be akin, namely of the same nature or measure, to the measured: just as the measure of a magnitude should be magnitude; and it does not suffice that it agree in a common nature as all magnitudes agree, but there must be an agreement [*convenientiam*] of the measure to the measured according to each thing's specific nature, just as length is the measure of length, breadth the measure of breadth, tone [*vox*] of voice, weight [*gravitas*] of weight, and unity of unity.”

material quantity, which is measured by the liter; the quantity *with regard to alcoholic content*, which is measured by the acoholimeter; the quantity of *value*, which is measured by money.

Since these various measures are heterogeneous, they cannot be measured by one measure.

Thus, in the human act, goodness is to be ruled in two ways: physical goodness, which is ruled through the rule of nature, and moral goodness, which must be ruled through some other rule.

Whence, to posit that one and the ssame is the proximate rule of the physical good and the moral good is to posit the homogeneity of the physical good and the moral good—i.e. identity, i.e. confusion. This ends in destroying the whole moral order.

Indeed, *Frins* and *Cathrein* grant this identity and confusion but only with regard to the good elicited acts of the will (about which, recall what was said in n.129 and 133), but not with regard to evil acts or imperated acts; and perhaps from this exception they believe that the existence of the moral order is preserved.—SED CONTRA: (1) *With regard to evil acts*. If the moral good and the physical entity (i.e, the physical good) of an act are one and the same perfection, I do not see how the privation of that one perfection would not at one and the same time be a physical evil and a moral evil. Therefore, the same confusion between physical evil and moral evil follows. (2) *With regard to imperated acts*. What is *per se* some such thing is maximally that thing. *Now*, elicited acts are moral *per se* and imperated acts are moral *per accidens* (n.204). *Therefore*, elicited acts are maximally moral. But I do not see why the *per accidens* morality of the perated act ought to be distinguished from the entity of the physical act, when the *per se* morality of the elicited act does not suffice for the distinction [of physical and moral good]. Therefore it remains that such an opinion is utterly destructive of the moral order.

Cathrein Argues: "... Therefore, the moral good is whatever good that *per se* and by its very notion [*ex sua rationi*] is appetible for man. Moreover, what is appetible for man in this manner must be judged from the rational nature as."³⁹ Furthermore, what is desirable for man in this manner must be judged from the rational nature as such.

³⁹ Victore Cathrein, *Cursus philosophicus in usum scholarum, pars IV: Philosophia moralis* (Friborg: Herder, 1905), n.70 (p.66).

Response. The notion of the moral good provided in the *major* premise is incomplete. St. Thomas has an adequate notion: “That which for its own sake [*propter se*] is desired by the rational appetite, which tends toward that which is fitting to reason, is called fitting.”⁴⁰ *Therefore*, reason is the proximate norm of fittingness.

Cathrein argues a second point: “‘The good in any given thing is considered according to a condition of its nature’ ST II-II q.59, a.5, ad 3; in other words, for all creatures it is discerned from their nature what is an activity that is fitting and good for them. Therefore, the same must be said concerning man.”⁴¹

Response. I distinguish. I concede that from nature is discerned what is a good activity *for physical* goodness; I deny this for *moral* goodness.

Cathrein argues a third point: To human nature alone are the required properties for the true norm of morality fitting. And it is proven by citing four arguments taken from SCG 3.129.⁴²

Response. (1) We explicated above in n.151 how all that is required for the true rule of morality is fitting to reason.—(2) From the cited text of *SCG* it does not follow that nature is the rule of morality. St. Thomas concludes: “Therefore, there are some things in human acts that are *naturally* right... Therefore, there are some human acts that are *naturally* fitting... Therefore, intoxication, etc., are *naturally* evil.” *I distinguish: naturally* or of its very nature, that is of the very nature of the act, *this I concede; naturally* or of the nature of man, *this I deny*.

Cathrein insists: “St. Thomas often mentions reason alone as the norm of morality for two reasons: (2) because reason is the proximate subjective rule proposing fittingness to the will... (2) Wherever St. Thomas indicates the ultimate reason why some acts are intrinsically good or evil, he recurs to human nature.”⁴³

To the first response, I say: I deny that reason is only the subjective rule, for right reason is the rule of objective morality, as we said in n.121; *to the second response, I say:* if human nature is the ultimate reason, therefore it is not the proximate reason; now, we are here concerned with the proximate rule of morality.

n.156. **Reason does not stand for [supponit] nature.** *Frins* and *Cathrein* think that in all the very frequent places in which the Holy Doctor says that reason is the rule of human actions, reason stands not for the judgment of reason but for human nature or for man’s substantial form, and they believe this to hold on the basis of what is said

⁴⁰ ST II-II q.145 a.3 ad 1.

⁴¹ *Cathrein, Philosophia moralis*, n.70 (p.67).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.67-68.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, n.74 (p.70).

in ST I-II q.18, a.5 and q.71, a.2 in which places [they say], “If in the conclusion *ratio* means the *dictamen* of reason, we will have a clear sophism.”⁴⁴

Response. (1) Those who hold that reason stands for nature must explain to us why St. Thomas, whose “doctrine before others, with the exception of Canonical matters, takes care to be very careful with his words,”⁴⁵ always wrote *bonum rationis* or *regulam rationis* and never *bonum naturae* or *regulam naturae*.

(2) If *reason* stands for the substantial form of man or for human nature, we can indifferently use one for the other. Therefore, let us see how that goes. When St. Thomas said, “The rule of human actions is not any reason whatsoever, but right reason,” the sense will perhaps be, “It is not any nature whatsoever, but right nature; it is not any substantial form of man whatsoever but the right substantial form of man.” Again, when St. Thomas says, “Good and evil in human acts is considered according to whether the act is in agreement with reason informed by the Divine Law,”⁴⁶ the sense will perhaps be, “According to whether the act is in agreement with human nature informed by the Divine Law, or the substantial form of man informed by the Divine Law.” The examples can be multiplied; cf. *De malo* q.2, a.4 (n.134) where he expresses an opposition between reason and the generative power as between two different powers. Again, *De malo* q.16 a.2 (n.153) where he expresses manifestly the opposition between God’s reason and man’s reason.

(3) Nor in the places brought forth [by them] does reason stand for the substantial form or nature.

a) The first locus is a text from ST I-II q.18, a.5, which we cited in n.146, remark 2. *Frins* has this: “The doctrine related here is manifest *per se*. However, so that it also may be more obvious, let us form a syllogism. Without a doubt, the Holy Doctor reasons in this manner: For any particular thing, the good is that which is fitting to it according to its form. The implied (*subintellecta*) minor contained in the conclusion and is this: but, the form of man is reason. Thus, the conclusion follows: Therefore, since reason is the form of man, it is that by which one must ultimately declare what is truly and properly good for man and what is not good for him.”⁴⁷—*I respond*: The implied minor is unsuitably adduced, for the true minor of the syllogism is contained in these words, “Now, certain acts are called human or moral inasmuch as they arise from reason,” which “reason” certainly does not stand for the

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Clement VI, *Sermo de S. Thoma Aquin.*

⁴⁶ *De malo*, q.2 a.4.

⁴⁷ Frins, *De actib. hum.*, vol. 2, n.75.

substantial form. We explicated St. Thomas's syllogism in n.146. That implied (*subintellecta*) minor in no way is contained in the conclusion, as is obvious from a reading of the text.

b) The second locus is taken from ST I-II q.71, a.2⁴⁸: “But it must be considered that the nature of each given thing most chiefly is its form, according to which the thing receives its species. Now, man is constituted in his species through the rational soul. And therefore that which is contrary to the order of reason, properly speaking, is contrary to the nature of man inasmuch as he is man.” And *Cathrein* concludes: “If in the conclusion *ratio* means the *dictamen* of reason, we will have a clear sophism.”—*I respond by denying the logical consequence*. So that the syllogism may conclude, we are not compelled to admit an identity between reason and the substance of the soul (for St. Thomas is not of the habit of using improper terminology to such a degree), but the result can also be given without the aforementioned identity, by understanding the proposition in this way that is obvious to the minds of all: ‘However, what is contrary to the *dictamen* of reason is contrary to the rational soul.’ And that this is the true sense is obvious from what follows, where St. Thomas subjoined: “And therefore, that which is against the order of reason, properly speaking, is contrary to the nature of man inasmuch as he is man; now, what is according to reason is according to the nature of man inasmuch as he is man. (*However,*) the good of man (i.e. the moral good) is to exist according to reason, and man's evil is to exist against reason, as [Pseudo-]Dionysius says. (*Therefore,*) human virtue (or the moral good) inasmuch as it is according to the nature of man, so much is it fitting to reason; however, vice inasmuch as it is contrary to man's nature, so much is it against the order of reason.”⁴⁹ St. Thomas does not conclude, “Therefore the act is good because it is according to nature,” but, instead, concludes, “Therefore, the act is good according to nature because it is in accord with reason—‘ human virtue inasmuch as it is in accord with the nature of man, so much is it fitting to reason.’” Therefore, also from this text it is confirmed that the rule of human actions is neither nature, nor the substantial form, but reason.

c) *Frins* cites⁵⁰ many other texts that do not greatly support his opinion. First: ST I-II q.94 a.3: “Since the rational soul is the proper form of man, the natural inclination belongs to a given man that he act according to reason.” The Thomists agree. However, it does not follow from this that reason stands for the form, for St. Thomas subjoins: “Now, each one's reason naturally dictates to him that he act virtuously.” Therefore, it pertains to the

⁴⁸ [Tr. note—The text reads q.72.]

⁴⁹ [Tr. note—The remarks in parentheses are those of Fr. Lehu.]

⁵⁰ See *Frins, De actib. hum.*, vol. 2, n.78.

dictamen of reason.—Second: ST I-II q.54 a.3: “The acts of the virtues are fitting for human nature because they are according to reason. But the acts of vices, since they are against reason, are in variance with human nature.” But this is the same doctrine according to the Thomists’s mode of expositing. To which *Frins* adds ST II-II q.23, a.3 and SCG 3.129. However, I do not know what he finds in these texts.

Therefore, *Frins* concludes without cause: “You see how truly the Salmanticenses have asserted that St. Thomas hardly ever recalls the rational nature as the rule of human actions.” For me, what holds for after reading the works of St. Thomas a thousand times is the terminology of *bonum rationis* and *regulam rationis* and never have I found *bonum naturae* and *regulam naturae*, unless in a case where St. Thoams is speaking not of the rule the rational nature but of the rule of a bodily nature: “However, the measure of one’s taking of food is taken according to the rule of bodily nature,”⁵¹ about which *Suarez* rightly notes, “Concerning temperance, D. Thomas teaches [*tradit*] the necessity of the body to be the rule of temperance; however, nobody would say that it is the law, but the foundation of the law.”⁵² The same msut be said concerning the rational nature.

157. II. Concerning the Fundamental and Remote Rule. Therefore, human nature is not the formal and proximate rule, but is there fundamental and remote rule?

Response. It can be conceded. For, “The rule of human reason is taken from created things that man naturally knows,”⁵³ and consequently it is taken also from knowledge of human nature. And this will be more manifest from what we will need to say concerning the ultimate end in n.159.

Perhaps those who of late have argued contrary to our position intend nothing more when they say that human nature is the rule, not formally but fundamentally.⁵⁴—However, without cause do they say nature is the proximate rule.⁵⁵ Also, without cause do they neglect the rule of reason; they are silent with regard to it; nay, rather, they fight against it. For many thigns will be

⁵¹ *De malo*, q.14 a.1, ad 2. Cf. ST II-II q.141 a.6.

⁵² *Suarez, De legibus*, l.2 c.5 §6.

⁵³ ST I-II q.74 a.7.

⁵⁴ *Frins, De actib. hum.*, vol.2, n.79 and 84.

⁵⁵ *Cathrein, Philosophia moralis*, n.66 and 70.

deficient if that which has a fundamental rule however lacks a proximate rule, just as if one had only the meter for measuring the weight of a cow. Therefore, it is most necessary to insist on the most immediate and essential rule.

Moreover, *Cathrein* does not rightly assert, “Wherever St. Thomas indicates why certain actions are intrinsically good or evil, he recurs to human nature.”⁵⁶—*Response*. First, St. Thomas is not in the habit of defining the goodness and wickedness of acts from the fact that they are in accord with or contrary nature; but more often, as I have already said, he defines good and bad acts to be in accord with or contrary to nature from the fact that they are according to or against reason: so that the “to exist in accord with or contrary to nature” is not the foundation but instead follows upon the “to exist according to or against nature.”⁵⁷ Second, therefore, they can cite testimonies from St. Thomas that enable them to demonstrate that St. Thomas is not entirely opposed to their opinion. However, these texts of St. Thomas: a) are not numerous but very few in number; b) are not capital but incidental remarks; c) most often they are not express, but the intended meaning must be extracted from them by means of some more or less necessary reasoning. Therefore, said testimonies do not suffice that we be compelled to admit this point to be one of the chief points of St. Thomas’s system concerning the rule of morality.

Inquiry 3: Whether Human Nature Can be Called the Fundamental Rule of Morality

n.158 In a twofold, very different, sense can this question be taken:

1. Whether human nature is the fundament of the proximate rule, i.e., the *dictamen* of right reason. In this, all easily agree. For as we have just said, reason has its rectitude from

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, n.74.

⁵⁷ [Tr. note—The point being that we say (or, know) something is fitting or unfitting to our nature from the fact that it is morally contrary to right reason. The conditional is, “If an act is according to or against right reason, then it is according to or against our nature.”]

conformity to the Eternal Law. However, the Eternal Law is known by us from creatures and principally from knowledge of human nature. Therefore, nature is related as a means between the Eternal Law and reason; in this sense it is rightly called the fundamental rule, that is, the foundation of the rule of reason.

2. Whether human nature is also the foundation of the supreme rule, i.e. the Eternal Law; in other words, whether human nature considered [logically] in a moment anterior to the Eternal Law and independently from it has of itself some notion of which it can be said to be the foundation of the Eternal Law, although not perfectly (for all hold nature not to have a true and perfect notion of rule except in dependence upon the Eternal Law), however in some sense. This difficulty comes from the time of Suarez who thought it necessary for himself to withdraw from the traditional concept of the Eternal Law which they handed on out of St. Thomas in the schools. Suarez wanted the Eternal Law to be an act not of the intellect but of the will of God; whence they began to ask: “Whether human nature considered before the Divine decree of itself has something that is the foundation of morality. *Vasquez* answered affirmatively; again, among recent authors, so has *Frins*. *The Thomists* answer negatively with many non-Thomists [*extraneis*].

Frins, reviewing those authors who hold human nature to have the notion of being a moral rule even independently from the eternal law he subjoins: “Among whom is, UNLESS I GREATLY ERR, St. Thomas. Let the reader revisit the aforementioned texts, and it will be immediately clear that he goes in the direction this opposite opinion [*ipsum in hanc oppositam ivisse*]. However, permit us here to cite just one text in particular. They are those that stand out in the beginning and end of SCG 3.129. Portending, the Holy Doctor said, ‘Now, from what has been said, it appears that those things that are ordered by the Divine Law, have rectitude not only because they are posited by the law but also according to nature.’ And in the end of the same chapter, ‘Therefore, it is obvious that good and evil in human acts are not only according to the positing of law but also according to the natural order. Hence is it said that “The judgments of God are true, justified in themselves (Ps. 18:10).’ I do not know what is clearer, what is

more eloquently expressed can be desired for this opinion. For good and evil and rectitude in human acts is also then had when no positing of law is had, but only the order of nature is considered [*attenditur*].”

Response. Certainly does *Frins* GREATLY ERR, and his error proceeds from ignorance of St. Thomas’s terminology. Here and in other places, those things that are *posited by the law* or *according to the positing of the law* mean those things that are *from the positive law*. Whence, above in n.141, from the cited chapter in the *Summa contra gentes* we chose arguments against moral Positivism in order to demonstrate that there are certain actions that are essentially good and certain ones that are essentially evil. But what St. Thomas wrote for the sake of excluding the positive law, *Frins* understood concerning the exclusion of the Eternal Law (cf. *In I Ethic.*, 1.3).

Conclusion. **Human nature, considered in a moment anterior to the Eternal Law and independently from it, in no way can be called the foundation of morality.**

Proof. First, the Eternal Law is related to the essential order of things, just as the Divine Idea is related to those essences taken separately. *However*, in a moment anterior to a Divine Idea, nothing can be conceived regarding a created essence. *Therefore*, in a moment anterior to the Eternal Law no order among essences can be conceived and, consequently, no morality.

To the major. For, just as the Divine Ideas are exemplars of created things, so too the Eternal Law is the exemplar of the order in created things.

To the minor. For, the created essence, in a moment anterior to the Divine Idea, does not have existence, whether real or ideal, as is obvious; therefore, it is nothing.

To the consequent. In inquiry five, it will be more fully declared how morality depends upon the essential order of things.

Second, in thus ruling, God is related to inferior rules just as in the order of efficient causes He is related as First Cause to second causes. “Just as in movers there is found a First Mover that moves and is not moved..., so too in ruling is there found something that rules and in

no way is ruled, and this is the notion of the first rule, and this is God.”⁵⁸ *However*, In the order of efficient causes, the action of a second cause cannot be conceived in a moment anterior to the first cause and independently from it, for otherwise the second cause would no longer be second [i.e. a secondary cause]. *Therefore*, in a moment anterior to the Eternal Law, human nature in no manner can be called the fundamental rule. Whence, St. Thomas: “*However*, if one refers to *ius naturale*, which is contained first indeed in the Eternal Law, but secondarily in the natural judgment [*iudicatorio*] of human reason, then every sin is evil because it is forbidden [*prohibitum*]: for from the very fact that it is inordinate, it is repugnant to the *ius naturale*.”⁵⁹

In order to exposit this text, *Frins*, having rejected the disproven interpretation of Suarez and *Cathrein*,⁶⁰ holds this:

Therefore, the sense of this text in my opinion, briefly put, is this: Nothing can be evil or inordinate against reason and against the order of natural things except insofar as God willed the order in things, especially in those that touch upon us, to thrive and therefore also insofar as He wished it not to be disturbed by us: and thus, finally, in relation to the natural law (*ius naturale*) nothing is either in any manner morally bad nor is it inordinate for us, except insofar as having been willed by the divine order and instituted directly and formally in things it indeed indirectly and virtually opposes the divine will, which enforces and establishes the natural order.”⁶¹ Certainly, the very text of St. Thomas is much clearer than is his commentator’s.

Inquiry 4: Whether It is Rightly Said That Morality Depends Upon the Final End

159. Two Opinions. The first denies it: “The intrinsic wickedness or goodness of an act depends upon the object, not from a relation or necessity to the ultimate end.”⁶² Such was the

⁵⁸ *In III Sent.*, d.25 q.2 a.1 qcl.4 ad 2.

⁵⁹ ST II-II q.71 a.6 ad 4.

⁶⁰ *Cathrein, Philosophiae moralis*, n.64.

⁶¹ *Frins, De actib. human.*, vol.2 n.91-95.

⁶² *Suarez, De legibus*, l.2 c.15 n.12.

position of *Suarez*, whom *Frins* and *Cathrein* cite. The other opinion affirms it: thus, *St. Thomas* along with the *Thomists*.

There can be no difficulty discerning *St. Thomas's* own mind on this matter. “In moral things [*moralibus*] where the order of reason to the common end of human life is applied, sin and evil is always applied through a deviation from the order of reason to the common final end of human life.”⁶³ “Now, it is necessary that all human acts be regulated by means of the end,”⁶⁴ and that he is speaking concerning the ultimate end is obvious from the context. “Therefore, the ultimate end is that from which all things take the notion of the good,”⁶⁵ and, “Rectitude of the will is through a due order to the ultimate end.”⁶⁶ Whence, “So much as a given person is more perfect, so much too is he closer to the final end,”⁶⁷ and, “Between all human acts, those by which man adheres to God are best, inasmuch as they are closer to the end.”⁶⁸ “Since sin is said on account of a disordering from the end to which the rational nature is ordered...,”⁶⁹ for “no inordinate act is referable to the final end”,⁷⁰ and therefore because “the law directs as by showing how there must be an act proportioned to the final end.”⁷¹; whence, “The more a given act leads away from the end of human life, the graver in itself is the sin.”⁷²

But *Frins's* objections to this are in vain.⁷³ For example, he says that the text cited in the first locus is not about the reality in question, as is obvious from the title of q.21, “Concerning those things that follow upon” morality. In this question, *St. Thomas* treats of certain things following upon morality, not morality itself.—The

⁶³ ST I-II q.21 a.2 ad 2.

⁶⁴ ST I-II q.109 a.8.

⁶⁵ SCG 1.40.

⁶⁶ ST I-II q.4 a.4.

⁶⁷ ST I-II q.106 a.4.

⁶⁸ SCG 3.115.

⁶⁹ *In II Sent.*, d.37 q.2 a.1.

⁷⁰ *De malo*, q.9 a.2.

⁷¹ *In II Sent.* d.41 q.1 a.1 ad 4.

⁷² *In II Sent.* d.42 q.2 a.5.

⁷³ *Frins, De actibus humanis*, vol.2, n.117 and 118.

response is easy: St. Thomas, determining those things following upon morality, had to refer to the conditions of morality itself, from which said consequences [of morality] flow.

*Cathrein objects:*⁷⁴ “Moral things [*moralia*] do not have their speices from the final end, but from the proximate end” (ST I-II q.60, a.1, ad 3). *Response.* *I make a distinction. I concede* that moral things do not have the *ratio* of their atomic [i.e. ultimate] species from the final end, for they have this from their proximate ends. However, they receive their generic *ratio* from the final end, for the final end is the first specifying end, as we have said in the third point of n.57 above. “Therefore, all human acts agree in some manner in one genus insofar as they are orderd to the final end.”⁷⁵ And although good and evil are species in relation to the genus of moral acts, in relation to the particular acts of the virtues and vices, they are two genera.

Conclusion. Rightly is it said: Morality depends upon the final end.

It is declared. When we assert that morality depends upon the ultimate end, we did not constitute a new rule distinct from the preceding ones. Nay rather, we say that in the way that morality depends upon the final end, so too does it depend upon human nature. And nideed, since human nature is the principle of human activity, and the final end the terminus of its activity, human nature designates an essential order t othe final end of man. “Nature is nothing other than the notion of a certain art (namely, the Divine Art) placed in things by which these very things are moved to a determined end.”⁷⁶ Whence, in the present case, whether one is speaking of human nature or or of the final end, the same essential relation expressed by one or the other term is asserted.

Proof. (1) “Good and evil are said in relation [*per comparationem*] to the end.”⁷⁷

However, the moral good (or, the good of reason) is the good of man as such, and the moral evil

⁷⁴ Cathrein, *Philosophia moralis*, n.81.

⁷⁵ ST I-II q.73 a.3 ad 3.

⁷⁶ *In II Phys.*, lect.14.

⁷⁷ *De Pot.*, q.3 a.6 ad 12.

(or, the evil of reason) is man’s evil as man. *Therefore*, moral good and evil are said in relation to the end of man as such, i.e., to the final end.”

(2) Goodness applies to human life in respect to the ultimate end (n.59).⁷⁸ *However*, human life is a kind of journey to a terminus, whose separate steps are the separate human acts. *Therefore*, just as the goodness of separate steps is applied in respect to the terminus of the journey, so too is the goodness of separate human acts applied in respect to the final end.

[On pp. 122–124, Fr. Lehu engages in a series of responses to Cathrein. There are interesting points made, though due to the limits of time as I prepare this file for public draft-release, I cannot justify making a translation. My current workload is very heavy, and I fear making the perfect be the enemy of the good.]

Inquiry 5. Whether One Can Say that Morality Depends upon the Essential Order of Things

160. *Response*. By *the essential order of things* is understood: the order or relation resulting from the coexistence of two or many essences. This essential order rules the whole universe as much with regard to *esse physicum* as with regard to *esse morale*. With regard to *esse physicum*, e.g. if water and oil are simultaneously poured into a vase, the oil will float to the top, and it is required by the order that results from the coexistence of both essences; again, in springtime, at a given degree of coldness there follows the destruction of grapes that are in seed, etc... By no means is it different with regard to *esse morale*. There are a father and son; if the two essences are brought together, namely, paternity and filiation, there arises immediately a certain order of superiority in the father and inferiority in the son. And since all essences are

⁷⁸ Whence, St. Thomas often says, “The principle of the entire order in moral matters [*moribus*] is the final end that plays the role in activities [*operativis*] like that played by the indemonstrable principle in speculative matters, as is said in the seventh book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.” ST I-II q.72 a.5; q.87 a.3; q.88 a.1, *et passim*.

interconnected with each other by many links so as to fashion the universe, the complex of all these relations among various essences constitutes the universal order of things.

Those who say that morality depends upon the essential order of things do not intend to constitute some other foundation differing from nature and from the ultimate end; nay rather, one and the same is the foundation that is designated by these three names because of the various respects in which it can be considered. For, the human act is a kind of motion that proceeds from human nature or from man's substantial form as from a remote principle and that tends toward man's ultimate end: the essence of the act, the essence of human nature, and the essence of the ultimate end are bound together by a necessary relationship and this relationship is the essential order. Whence, whether morality is said to depend upon nature or upon the ultimate end, or upon the essential order of things, entirely the same thing is asserted. Nay rather, this ultimate denomination is most apt inasmuch as it is more adequate: for through it is designated their essential relation to each other and not only one or the other terminus.

Cathrein objects. First, "This opinion does not prevail in explaining objective moral goodness... Besides, if I ask, for example, why God is a fitting object for man's love, it cannot be responded, 'Because he is conformed to the objective order.'"⁷⁹

Response. I deny the antecedent, in proof of which I will allow the assumed point pass [*transmitto assumpto*] and I deny the consequence, for as I said in n.159, obj. 2, when moral goodness was being discussed, the goodness of God must be set separately. In fact, other objects are morally good with respect to the rule of morals because they are measured goods; however, God is not a measured good, but the measure of every good. Therefore, to the question raised by the objector, "If I ask why is God a good object," I respond: God is a good object because He is the plenitude of the good. But to love that which, in itself, is the plenitude of good, certainly is a good act.

⁷⁹ Cathrein, *Philosophia moralis*, n.73.

Cathrein objects. Second, “Goodness designates something fitting for an agent [*operantem*]. Now, what is fitting to an agent must be decided not from the objective order but from the nature of the agent.”—*I respond* from the words used in the exposition just given, *by denying the minor.*

But, that which *Cathrein* subjoins against those who understand by the essential order “the order that arises from the essential relations of man to other beings, does not stand against our opinion. Certainly, paternity or superiority are not essential relations of this or that person, but once the essence of paternity and that of filiation have been posited, once the essence of superiority and that of inferiority have been posited, from this very fact there arises a kind of relation that rightly is called an essential order because it is an order between two essences.

The Thomist School on the Metaphysical Essence of Morality

Editor's Introduction (Miner)

Many points made in Fr. Lehu's book hinge upon the point of doctrine concerning the Thomistic school's teaching that *morality is the real transcendental relation of the free act to the moral rule*. Of this teaching, Fr. Martin Rhonheimer (who in several places is quite laudatory regarding Lehu's work) somewhat dismissively writes:

Every deliberately chosen human act, on the other hand, already *necessarily* has an object at the moral level, because its object is this exterior act itself, as a "good understood and ordered by reason." To deny this is to fall into physicalism. Traditionally, to avoid this danger, it was customary at this point to resort to the *Deus ex machina* of the mysterious "transcendental relation of the physical object to the moral norm."¹ This solution,

¹ Indeed, here, one wonders about the source for this wording. The appeal to transcendental relation clearly harkens from the Thomist school. But Rhonheimer's wording is neither that of Lehu nor that of the great manualists Benedict Merkelbach and Dominic Prümmer (who themselves draw on the numerous exponents of the mainline Dominican school of Thomistic commentators). Indeed, as will be seen in Woodbury's notes, Fr. Rhonheimer's supposed *Deus ex machina* seems to be a kind of mingling of the Thomist position with the Suarezian and Nominalist conception of morality as being a merely extrinsic denomination. The wording expressed by Rhonheimer ("transcendental relation of the physical object to the moral norm") most definitely *is not* the classic formulation of the Thomist school.

See Leonard Lehu, *Philosophia Moralis et Socialis* (Paris: LeCoffre, 1914), n.77: "Moralitas consistit formaliter in relatione reali transcendentali actus ad regulam morum." By "actus", Fr. Lehu certainly does not mean "physical object."

And also Benedictus Henricus Merkelbach, *Summa theologiae moralis ad metem D. Tomae et ad normam iuris novi*, 5th ed., vol. 1 (*De principiis*) (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Soc., 1947), n.115 (p.108): "Moralitas est conditio omnis actus humani et definir solet: conformitas vel disconformitas **actus humani** cum sua regula, recta ratione." And, *ibid.*, n.116 (p.109): "Sed moralitas est *intrinsecus respectus seu relatio transcendentalis*, i.e. intrinseca habitude **ipsius actus**, qua tendit ad obiectum praecise ut conforme vel difforme cum regulis morum. Est sententia Thomistarum" (bold emphasis added).

And also Dominicus M. Prümmer, *Manuale theologiae moralis*, 13th edition (Barcelona: Herder, 1958), cap.3 a.1 (p.68): "Moralitas actionum humanorum definir potest: transcendentalis relatio **actus humani** ad normam moralitatis" and (p.71): "Moralitas consistit formaliter in tendentia (seu relatione transcendentali) ad obiectum, quatenus istud praecise substat regulis morum. Regulae autem morum sunt lex aeterna et omnia, quae derivantur a lege aeterna, ut sunt omnes aliae leges iustae et conscientiae. Ita explicant essentiam moralitatis omnes fere Thomistae, e.g. Ioannes a S. Thoma, Gonet, Salmanticenses, Billuart. Ratio autem huius sententiae est, quia actus formaliter constituitur per tendentiam ad suum obiectum; tota enim ratio actus est eius obiectum. Quod quidem in ordine physico ab omnibus admittitur et per se patet; sic e.g. actus visionis formaliter constituitur per tendentiam ad obiectum visum. Ergo a pari actus moralis essentialiter constituitur per suam tendentiam in obiectum morale. Obiectum autem est morale, in quantum subicitur regulis seu norma morum... Norma supreme obiectiva moralitatis est lex aeterna seu ratio divinae sapientiae, prout est directive omnium actionum humanarum... Norma proxima obiectiva moralitatis est ratio humana, i.e. dictamen rationis rectae, non quidem per se, sed in quantum est participatio legis aeternae" (bold emphasis added).

however, more juridical than moral, hindered a proper understanding of the *intrinsic* constitution of the moral object, and therefore also of the goodness or evil that human acts intrinsically possess on the basis of their object. To avoid the necessity of recourse to this *Deus ex machina* or—like those who were aware of the inadequacy of this “legalistic” solution and rebelled against it—to avoid ending up in proportionalism or consequentialism (which are nothing other than variations of the same ethical-normative extrinsicism), one must place himself “in the perspective of the acting person,” conceiving the object of a human act as the proximate end of the will, that is, as an “object rationally chosen by the deliberate will” on which “primarily and fundamentally depends the morality of the human act (*Veritatis splendor*, n.78).²

However, this remark cannot remain uncontested—neither in its attitude, nor even in its formulation of the so-called *Deus ex machina*. The problem, in fact, is the precipitous abandoning of the Dominican Thomist school by most scholars during the past half-century. As the work of John Deely has shown in great detail,³ the distinction between *relatio secundum esse* and *relatio secundum dici* is not an unimportant affair in certain quarters of the *schola Thomae*.

Again, also, one can find a digest form of this in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De beatitudine, de Actibus humanis et de habitibus* (Rome: Berutti, 1951), p. 307-318. Note that the current English translation of this text is only a paraphrase and should not be consulted as definitive. Josephus Greth, *Elementa philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae*, vol. 2, ed. Eucharius Zenzen (Friburg: Herder, 1961), *Ethica generalis*, ch. 3 § 1 (p. 372-376). Antoine Goudin, *Philosophia iuxta inconcussa tutissimaque Divi Thomae dogmae* (Paris: Sarlit, 1857), q. 4 a. 1 (p. 114-115).

Though treated with different inflections based on context, the theme was taken for granted in the Thomist school by the baroque period, and the loss of this long debate (part of the inherently historical character of a school’s thought as it answers adversaries) is one monument among many of the sad iconoclasm exacted against the Thomist school. See John of St. Thomas, disp. 8 a.1 (p. 617-639); also see the subsection of a.2, “Quid sit ponitas naturae et quomodo se habeat ad moralitatem?,” p. 640-644. Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, vol. 6 (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1878), *De bonitate actuum humanorum*, disp.1 dub. 1-3 (p.3-29). Jean-Baptiste Gonet, *Clypeus theologiae thomisticae contra novos eius impugnatores*, vol. 4 (Paris: Vivès, 1876), disp. 1 a. 1 and 2 (p. 3-12). Charles René Billuart, *Summa sancti Thomae hodiernis academiarum moribus accomodata*, vol. 2 (Paris: Voctor Palmé, 1872), *De actibus humanis in esse moris* (ST I-II, diss. 4), a. 1 (p.283-286). Jacques-Casimir Guerinois, *Clypeus philosophiae thomisticae contra veteres et novos eius impugnatores*, vol. 7 *Ethica* (Venice: 1729), q. 5 a. 1 (p. 312-323).

² Martin Rhonheimer, “The Perspective of the Acting Person and the Nature of Practical Reason: The ‘Object of the Human Act’ in Thomistic Anthropology of Action,” in *The Perspective of the Acting Person: Essays in the Renewal of Thomistic Moral Philosophy* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 212-213.

³ Deely’s works are labyrinthine, many, and often repetitive. Though there have been more recent works by him, a good starting place remains John N. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding: The First Postmodern Survey of Philosophy from Ancient Times to the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). Deely cites many of his other works in this text, making it a good starting point for considering his general claims. The classic text contesting transcendental relation is A. Krempel, *La doctrine de la relation chez saint Thomas: Exposé historique et systématique* (Paris: Vrin, 1952). For important corrective responses to certain points in Krempel, see John Poinot, *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinot*, second ed., ed. and trans. John Deely and Ralph Austin Powell (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2013), 462, 473n114, 477-478n119, 4999, and 500n139.

However, the metaphysics involved in such discussions have been sloughed off as so many accretions upon Thomas's thought. Be that as it may, Lehu writes as a member of the *schola Thomae*, so one must understand that school in order to understand his own thought.⁴ Were Fr. Rhonheimer to take seriously this topic within the Thomistic school, he may find that he has allies in unexpected, quite traditional quarters.

Whatever might be said about that particular contemporary issue, consider Fr. Lehu's words in his *Philosophia Moralis et Socialis*:

The moral act has a relation both to the object and to the moral rule, though not in the same manner. It has a relation to the object *morally understood*. Now, as regards the act *in esse moris* [i.e. *ens morale*], it is necessary to determine the matter in a way that is proportionally like that regarding an action *in esse physico* [i.e. *ens naturae*]. However, an act *in esse physico* is formally constituted through a real, transcendental relation to the object considered from the perspective of *esse physico*.⁵ Therefore, an act *in esse morali* is formally constituted through a real, transcendental relation to the object considered from the perspective of *esse moris*. However, what is the object considered from the perspective of *esse moris*? It is the object inasmuch as it has a real, transcendental relation to the moral rule.

Therefore, if one wishes to express the matter adequately, one ought to say, "The good act is that which has a real, transcendental relation of agreement to the object which has a real transcendental relation to the moral rule." Whence, St. Thomas says, "Every act has its species from the object, and the human act that is called moral has its species from *the*

⁴ I write this with the utmost respect for Fr. Rhonheimer, whose work in many ways pushes forward these very points that lay at the heart of the expansive universe that is human morality. He is quite sensitive to the central metaphysical issue, namely that *ens morale* is not the same as *ens naturae*. My vexation is merely due to the fact I find his "Deus ex machina" comment gravely unfortunate. Yet, it is understandable, given that the past sixty years have not been a time when one would be encouraged to take seriously the writings of the Thomist school. As regards Fr. Rhonheimer, one wonders if he has considered at length the matters of *ens morale* as a strictly metaphysical topic. If not, he should be forgiven with great clemency, for as Yves Simon remarked in his youth, Aristotelians (and Thomists) have not spend adequate time reflecting on this matter—one that lies at the heart of intentional existence in the moral order. See his letter to Jacques Maritain, dated July 30, 1932 in Jacques Maritain and Yves Simon, *Correspondance*, vol. 1 *Les années françaises (1927-1940)*, ed. Florian Michel (Tours: CLD, 2008), 105. Hence, it is discovered only accidentally by engaging with the Thomists of old—and is a doctrine upon which I was fortunate to stumble accidentally. See Matthew Miner, "Beyond Non-Being: Thomistic Metaphysics on Second Intentions, *Ens morale*, and *Ens artificiale*," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 3 (July, 2017): 353-379.

⁵ He cites back to n.45 on p.24-25 of the text. See his remarks near the end of this selection: "Indeed, the end, in itself, is something extrinsic to the act, but the act has a real, transcendental relation to its end and itself, inasmuch as it is intrinsic to the act, is the proper principle specifying the act. But, since this transcendental relation becomes known from its terminus, that is from the end, therefore for the sake of brevity the act is said to be specified from the end."

object related to the principle (or rule) of human actions, which is reason” (ST I-II q.18 a.3).⁶

But since all acts—whether *in esse physico* or *in esse morali*—in common are a transcendental relation to the [given] object, we can rightly omit it, just as St. Thomas often does,⁷ thus defining morality based on the relation to the moral rule and saying that the good act is that which has conformity with the moral rule.⁸

From what we find in Fr. Lehu’s text, provided above, it is obvious that this issue lies at the heart of his concerns. The same point is obvious in the vehemence with which he protests against Dom Lottin in the appendix article included in this draft volume, taken from the *Revue Thomiste*, in which Fr. Lehu defends the *essentially moral* outlook of the whole of ST I-II q.18.

In his *Philosophia Moralis et Socialis*, n.115-213 (p.72-166), Fr. Lehu treats at length of human acts, morally considered. Because a complete translation of this would be a very lengthy appendix, I have included here a shorter selection taken from the unpublished lecture texts of Fr. Austin Woodbury, S.M. Fr. Woodbury was a student at the Angelicum in the late 1920s. He founded the Aquinas Academy in Sydney Australia, where he taught for decades. In the course of his teaching, he put together texts that represent a succinct, yet profound, synthesis of the philosophical tradition that one would find in the traditional Dominican that Woodbury imbibed from his teachers at the Angelicum (among whom numbered Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.). Woodbury’s notes show that he remained an exponent of that school throughout his years of teaching. Because of the clarity of his text, it is being provided here to give a fair outline of the issues at stake. (Often, Woodbury began his texts by translating from a preexisting scholastic manual—e.g., F.X. Maquart for the speculative philosophy texts, though I have not tracked down

⁶ At this point, Lehu goes on to remark, *ibid.*, p.83: “Note, the object *in relation to the principle* (or rule) of human acts. This is what is called the object *in esse morali* or *in esse moris*. Cf. *De malo* q.2 a.6 ad 2: ‘Just as an in general (i.e., *in a physical act*) receive its species from the (physical) object, so too does the moral act receive its species from the moral object.’”

⁷ He notes, as is the case in some of the citations he made at length in a long list several pages earlier.

⁸ *Ibid.*, n.127 (p.82-3).

any such foundational text for moral matters. Thereafter, however, he would add significant important sections and observations to these underlying texts.)

In handwritten notes, likely taken by Dr. Anthony F. Russell when he attended Fr. Woodbury's Aquinas Academy, a remark is recorded from one of Woodbury's lectures: "The threshold concept in moral philosophy is that moral ought [i.e., in distinction from the ontological 'ought']. You can't take the first step in morals until you get that concept—the concept of a moral ought as distinct from a physical ought in human free acts—the free act as free has a diverse rule from the physical rule."⁹ Golden words.

In what follows, I am reproducing Austin Woodbury, *Ethics*, sec. 3, ch.7, a.2: "The Metaphysical Essence of Morality" and an important subsection of sec. 3, ch. 6, which he references in ch.7 a.2. It is taken from the copied manuscript found in the John N. Deely and Anthony F. Russell collection at St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA. The Sydney-based researcher, Andrew Wood, has been collecting and working on the texts of Fr. Woodbury for nearly two decades. It is his hope (and mine) that the full texts of Woodbury will come into publication in the future. However, given the immediate relevance of this article to Lehu's text, it is being presented here.

⁹ Untitled Manuscript on Ethics, The John N. Deely and Anthony F. Russell Collection, St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA. Lest the reader misjudge Fr. Woodbury to hold that this "ought" is utterly primordial, see later in the same text: "Note (-many Thomists miss this-) that the concept of the FITTING GOOD is the dominating concept of the Thomistic concept of moral philosophy—not the concept of THE ULTIMATE END. God is the ULTIMATE END because He is the SUPREME GOOD (Supreme FITTING good); [it is] not [the case that] He is the Supreme Good because He is the Ultimate End." This point is obvious in his detailed, typed texts. What he is concerned to say is that unless we understand that the moral rule is different from the physical rule, we will never take a step forward in moral philosophy. The terminology that he uses in the typed texts bears witness to telling similarities with Jacques Maritain's *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale* (Paris: Téqui, 1951)—available in translation as *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy*, trans. Cornelia Borgerhoff (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1990).

Interestingly, Maritain's text meets with Rhonheimer's approval—buttressing my belief that a rapprochement is possible between his work and that of the traditional Thomist school. See Martin Rhonheimer, "Practical Reason, Human Nature, and the Epistemology of Ethics: John Finnis's Contribution to the Rediscovery of Aristotelian Ethical Methodology in Aquinas's Moral Philosophy: A Personal Account," *Villanova Law Review* 57 (2012): 873-887, esp. 878.

In reproducing Fr. Woodbury's text, I have had to make some editorial changes—some minor alterations to the text where clear typographical errors were found, some indentation changes, and a few other minor layout changes that were attendant upon modernizing the text. (If I had more time, I would have also updated his diction, often very latinized, in detail. I began doing this once upon a time, but due to time constraints, I cannot finish such editorial labors.) While I have maintained Fr. Woodbury's idiosyncratic outline style, I have not presented his schematic diagrams in the same format as found in the text because of the difficulties of fitting these adequately on the pages for publication. These have been reproduced in redacted form. In the text below, any footnotes are my additions. Any references are Woodbury's own cross-references to his other extensive teaching texts. (His *corpus* of works is highly interconnected.) All words in brackets are my additions (at times necessary because of the state of Fr. Woodbury's text).

Text by Fr. Austin Woodbury, S.M. – *Ethics*, sec.3 ch.7 a.2: *Metaphysical Essence of Morality*

183. ORDER OF PROCEDURE: Since before the determination of [what] is the metaphysical essence or formal constitutive of morality certain preliminary notions are to be recalled or explained,

A. this article will:

- a. First, expose certain preambles;
- b. Secondly, solve the question;
- c. Thirdly, draw certain corollaries.

B. Hence, the following order:—

On the metaphysical essence of morality:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Dissertation one: | Preambles |
| Dissertation two: | Solution of the question |
| Dissertation three: | Corollaries |

Dissertation One: Preambles

184. METAPHYSICAL ESSENCE: The metaphysical essence of some thing is that thing primarily conceived, as distinct from its metaphysical properties, which are that same thing consequently conceived—as man is primarily conceived when he is understood as [a] rational animal (his METAPHYSICAL ESSENCE), whereas risible animal, or

speechful animal, or political animal (METAPHYSICAL PROPERTIES of man) [are] only consequently understood. (Cf. *Logic*, n.124, E).

- A. Accordingly, the metaphysical essence of some thing is that:
 - a. whereby that thing is FIRST constituted in itself
 - b. and whereby it is FIRST distinguished from all other things,
 - c. and wherefrom flows as from a FIRST root all else which is necessarily conceived of that thing.

- B. Therefore, the metaphysical essence of morality is that:
 - a. whereby morality is first constituted in itself, or in other words, that, which when it is conceived, morality is already conceived,
 - b. and whereby morality is first distinguished from whatsoever is not morality, so that all other distinctions therefrom will be only consequent distinctions,
 - c. and wherefrom as from a first root flows all else that is necessarily conceived of morality, so that all other concepts of morality will be merely consequent concepts thereof.

185. TWOFOLD BE¹⁰ OF THE HUMAN ACT: It is clear from what has been said above where it was a question of proving the existence of morality (nn.135-138¹¹), that a twofold be is to be distinguished in the human act:

- A. To wit:
 - a. Its PHYSICAL BE (*esse physicum* or *esse naturae*) or what it is physically, which is nothing else than the very physical entity of the act—according to which indeed it is adjudged ontologically, that is, according to its ontological value or with respect to its ontological rule (cf. n.135, E)

 - b. And its MORAL BE (*esse morale* or *esse moris*) or what it is morally:
 - 1. which is nothing else than the morality itself of the act, according to which it is adjudged morally, that is, according to its moral value or with respect to its moral rule (cf. 135, E)
 - 2. and which, as will appear hereunder, is nothing else than the transcendental relation of the act to its object morally considered or as falling under the (constitutive) rules of morals.

- B. This distinction appears clearly from this example:
 - a. Peter and Agnes have sexual union:
 - 1. Now the physical entity of the act (i.e., its physical be) remains unvaried whether they be married together or not,—it remains sexual union.
 - 2. but the moral character of the act (i.e., its moral be) is diverse, and even opposite, according as they are married together or not,—if so, the act

¹⁰ The reader will note that “be” is substituting for *esse* (or, existence).

¹¹ I have included these below in the current appendix as well.

is morally good (to wit, an act of chastity); if not, the act is morally bad, to wit, fornication or adultery (to wit, an act of unchastity).

- b. Wherefrom it is clearly manifest that the moral be of the act is other than its physical be

C. But:

- a. IF IT BE ASKED what relation intercedes between the moral be and the physical be of the human act,
- b. THE ANSWER is that the moral be has itself towards the physical be as an accident towards its substance.
 - 1. Which is not to be understood in the sense that the physical entity of the act would be a substance,—which it is not (cf. Natural Philosophy, n.508, A, a);
 - 2. but in this sense:
 - a. that:
 - 1. Just as substance is the proper subject of accidents
 - 2. so the physical entity of the act is the proper subject of its moral entity,
 - b. which accordingly has itself in some manner proportionally¹² as an accident has itself towards its substance.

186. PHYSICAL AND MORAL OBJECT: Distinction is likewise to be made between the physical object of a human act and the moral object thereof.

- A. By the PHYSICAL OBJECT of a human act is meant that which the act primarily and essentially (*per se primo*) attains, but considered in its physical entity.
 - a. Thus, for example, Peter's act may be the carrying off of Paul's gramophone to Peter's house,—then the physical object of this act is the locatedness of Paul's gramophone in Peter's house.
 - b. This object is the specificative object of the act physically considered, i.e. of the act taken in its physical be;—wherefore physically the act is transportation.
- B. By the MORAL OBJECT of a human act is meant nothing else than the physical object BUT AS IT FALLS UNDER THE RULE OF MORALS.
 - a. Thus, to use the example just given, the moral object of Peter's act is the locatedness of Paul's goods in Peter's house, as this falls under the rule of morals.
 - b. This moral object is the specificative object of the act morally taken, i.e. of the act taken in its moral be.
 - c. And, indeed, this same physical object may fall diversely under the rule of morals, and accordingly in it may be materially realized diverse moral objects; for example:

¹² That is, according to the analogy of proper proportionality.

1. Let it be supposed that Peter and Paul have contracted that Peter take Paul's gramophone to his house and repair it: then the locatedness of the gramophone in Peter's house so falls under the rule of morals so as to be conformed to it, i.e., it falls under it as under a perceptive (enjoining) rule;¹³—then Peter's act, specified by this moral object (enjoined locatedness of the gramophone) is morally good (indeed, since the precept is a precept of justice, the act is an act of justice).
 2. But let us suppose, on the contrary, that Paul is reasonably unwilling that his gramophone be outside his own house: then the locatedness of the gramophone in Peter's house so falls under the rule of morals as to be disconformed from it, i.e. it falls under it as under a prohibitive rule;—then Peter's act, specified from this moral object (prohibited locatedness of the gramophone) is morally bad (indeed, since the prohibition is a prohibition of justice, the act is an act of injustice, to wit, theft).
187. **RULE OF MORALS:** Moreover, the rule of morals whereof it is question here, and to which, as will appear hereunder, the human act, by the mediacy of its object, bespeaks a transcendental relation, is the **CONSTITUTIVE** rule of morals, as explained above (n.135, E; n.138).
- A. That is, it is the norm or measure in virtue of which the human act, according as it is conformed to it or disconformed from it, is adjudged good or bad morally (cf. n.127, C).
 - B. According to St. Thomas, the rule of morals is twofold, to wit:
 - a. **PROXIMATE**,—and this is right human reason (cf. n.169, A, b1b; B, c);
 - b. and **SUPREME**,—and this is the eternal law, or, as it were, the divine reason (cf. n.169, A, b1a; B, b).
188. **RELATION:** The relation wherein Thomists repose the formal constitutive or metaphysical essence of morality is **TRANSCENDENTAL**.
- A. For it is to be recalled from *Metaphysics* that relation is respect towards other or towards other or having self towards other.¹⁴

¹³ One understands the negative reaction one may have to this language, which perhaps does not emphasize the role of prudence in forming the dictamen in these particular circumstances. If misunderstood, Fr. Woodbury could be understood in a Kantian manner, which would be to misunderstand him. (Incidentally, the reason for such a possible Kantian reading is precisely because Kant's own formation was German-Scholastic, a primary hermeneutical point at once well-known and underemphasized by many commentators.)

¹⁴ One may quibble with this presentation's details. As is obvious in his *Ostensive Metaphysics: Treatise One: Ontology*, n.1201E, Fr. Woodbury is well aware of the distinction between *relatio secundum esse* and a predicamental relation (as well as their radical difference from transcendental relations or *relationes secundum dici*).

B. But:

a. Relation is twofold, to wit:

1. Either MENTAL RELATION, which is:

- a. a relation attributed to some subject from mental consideration alone, without its positing anything of reality in the subject itself.
- b. or in other words, a relation whose whole be is be-known.

2. Or REAL RELATION:

a. which is:

1. A relation found in its subject independently of the consideration of mind,
 2. or in other words, a relation whereof the be is other than be-known,
 3. or again, a relation whereto it befits to be in the real order.
- b. But real relation itself is twofold, according as it either is a pure relation, i.e. nought except a relation, such as sonship, or is together some absolute being.

1. A pure real relation is called a PREDICAMENTAL RELATION:

- a. which is a pure order towards another, so that it is not together some absolute being;
- b. wherefore it is named “predicamental”, since it constitutes a special mode of being really distinct from every absolute mode of being.
- c. This predicamental relation:
 1. is a real purely relative accident superadded to its subject,
 2. This subject being constituted related to another:
 - a. not formally through itself
 - b. but formally through this accident really distinct from itself.

2. But a real relation which is together some absolute being is called a TRANSCENDENTAL RELATION:

This seems to be from a later edition of his works, written in the 1960s. One can also consult what appears to be his edition from the early 1950s, *Ostensive Metaphysics: Treatise One: Ontology*, n.479-482. A full study of Fr. Woodbury’s works waits to be written. At this time, the best sources are the works published by Andrew Wood by Donum Dei Press in Sydney Australia. Significant portions of the Woodbury texts can be found in duplication in the Collection of John N. Deely and Anthony F. Russell at St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA.

- a. because it extends itself beyond relation and is found in all the predicaments or modes of being (v.g. in substance, quality, etc.).
 - b. A transcendental relation accordingly is the very entity of some absolute being from its very essence ordered towards another, or proportioned or adapted or adjusted to another, as matter from its very essence is ordered towards form, or essence toward be, or power towards act, or act towards object.
 - c. Therefore:
 1. a transcendental relation is nothing else than the very ESSENCE of a being, which is not only a relation, AS IT IS ADAPTED OR ORDERED TOWARDS ANOTHER,—as the essence of sight (which is not merely a relation, but is a quality), is adapted or ordered towards vision and color.
 2. wherefore it is nothing else than an ESSENTIAL ADAPTATION of a thing which is not a mere or pure relation.
 3. Accordingly, that which is related through a transcendental relation is constituted related:
 - a. formally through its own entity, so that it IS its own relation.
 - b. not formally through a relation really distinct from its own entity—in this case its order or adaptation to another would be only accidental, not essential.
-
- b. From what has just been said follow two further distinctions between predicamental and transcendental relation:
 1. First indeed:
 - a. whereas predicamental relation respects its term as a pure term;
 - b. transcendental relation, on the contrary, respects its term, not as a pure term, but as that whereunto the subject is essentially adapted, to wit, as a specificative, or perfective, or complement, or proper subject.
 2. But secondly:
 - a. whereas predicamental relation perishes if its term does not really actually exist, since its sole office is to refer

the subject to that term as to a term,—which it cannot do if that which is the term does not exist [, although a mental / rationally relation can still exist as a relation in this now-non-“real” case];

- b. transcendental relation, on the contrary, does not require that its term really exist actually, since something can be essentially adapted to another without the real actual existence of that other; thus, for example, [the] human soul is transcendently related to the human body, but can exist after the body has ceased to exist; also there can be a science of an object [that] does not really exist (v.g. logic, whose object is mental being¹⁵).

- c. Accordingly, relation is divided thus:¹⁶

Relation is...

Either relation whereof be is other than be known; and then it is real relation, which is...

Either the very entity of an absolute being from its very essence ordered towards another; and then it is
TRANSCENDENTAL RELATION.

Or a pure order towards other; and then it is
PREDICAMENTAL relation.

Or, relation whose whole be is be-known; and then it is MENTAL
RELATION

189. DENOMINATION: To mental relation is reduced EXTRINSIC DENOMINATION, in which some would make morality formally consist (cf. Met., n.668, D, c).

- A. For because “according as we know something according to this do we name it, since according to the philosopher ‘names are the signs of understandings’ (Periherm., I, 16a3)” (ST I q.13, a.6, obj. 1¹⁷), but we know things by their form (cf. Nat. Phil., nn.614-640), therefore the attribution of a name to some subject is according as some form is its form, and this form is that wherefrom the subject receives the name.

¹⁵ Technically, *a* mental being, namely second intentions.

¹⁶ Fr. Woodbury’s texts are clearly indebted to John of St. Thomas; however, his division should only be read as one possible way to interpret this breakout. As noted above, Fr. Woodbury *is* sensitive to the fact that mental relations and real predicamental relations are *both relationes secundum esse*. However, this division may occlude the fact. One should consult on this matter the sage remarks found in John Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2007), 137.

¹⁷ I am not sure why Fr. Woodbury cites this well-known adage from this objection text, but I have reproduced it for the sake of fidelity to his original.

- a. But some form may be the form OF a subject, forasmuch as it is the form constitutive of what the very subject itself is,—as humanity is the form constitutive of man, which Peter is.
 1. Therefore, when the name “man” is attributed to Peter, this name is attributed to Peter from the very form constitutive of what Peter is; for man is what possesses humanity;
 2. Accordingly, Peter receives the name “man” from the form constitutive of what he is.
 3. When something receives thus a name from the form of WHAT IT IS, the attribution of the name is called SIMPLE NOMINATION.

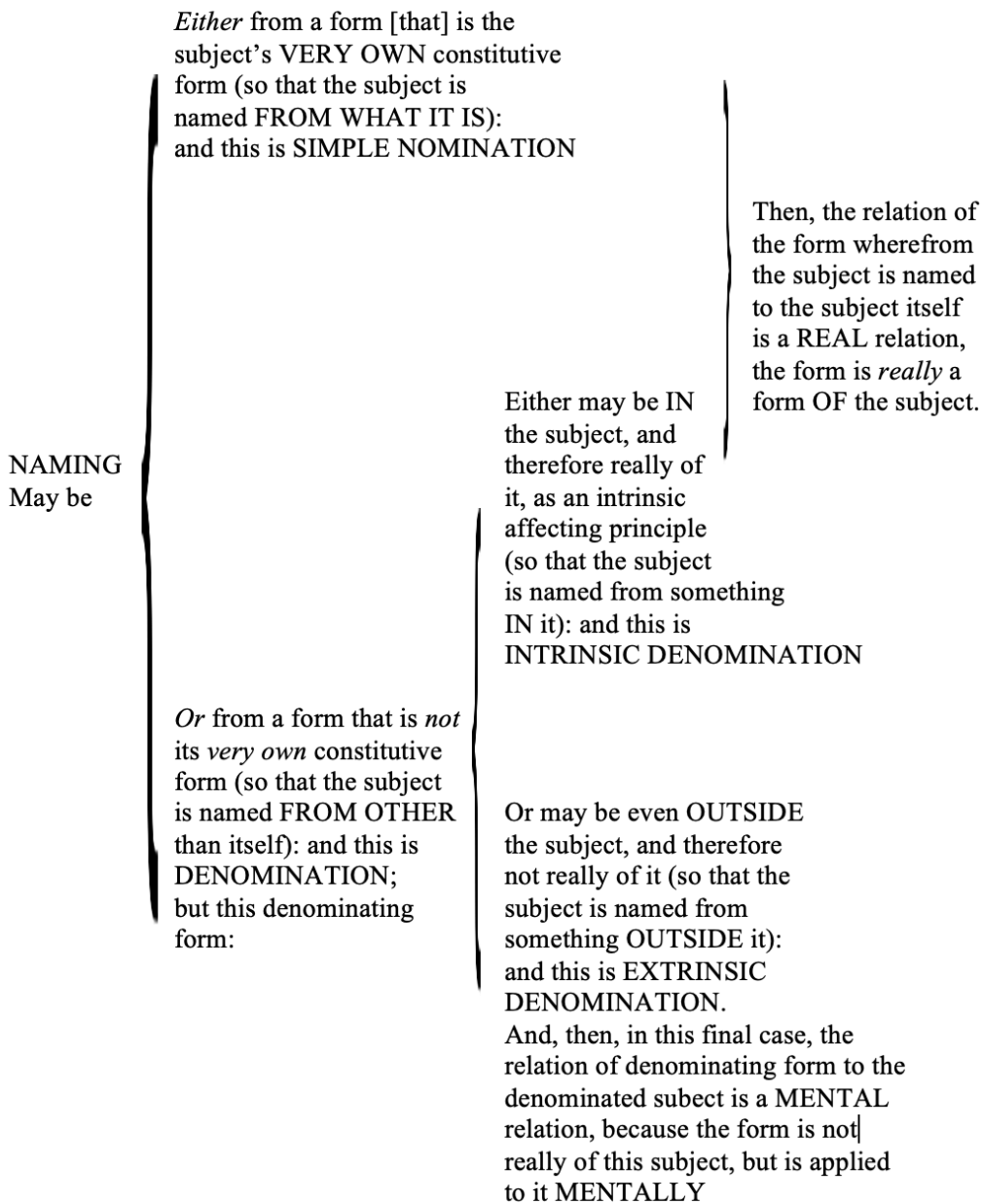
- b. But some form may be the form OF a subject, only forasmuch as it is a form, received indeed IN the subject, but merely affecting (not constituting) it,—as whiteness is a form, received indeed in Peter, not only affecting (not constituting) what Peter is.
 1. Therefore when the name “white” is attributed to Peter, this name is attributed to Peter from a form which is not the constitutive form of what Peter is, but is Peter’s form only as it is IN him;
 2. accordingly, Peter receives the name “white” from a form [that] is other than HIS VERY OWN form, but nevertheless is IN him.
 3. When something thus receives a name from a form [that] is not its very own form, but is in it, the attribution of the name is called INTRINSIC DENOMINATION.

- c. But some form may in the real order not be the form of the subject at all, forasmuch as neither is it the very constitutive form of what the subject is, nor is it even in the subject,—as remembrance is a form neither constitutive of Peter (who is remembered) nor is in Peter.
 1. Therefore:
 - a. when the name “remembered” is attributed to Peter, this name is attributed to him from a form [that] is not his own form even in the sense that it would be in him, but is his only as applied to him by the consideration of mind;
 - b. accordingly, Peter receives the name “remembered” from a form [that] is even OUTSIDE him.
 - c. When something thus receives a name from a form [that] is even outside it, the attribution of the name is called EXTRINSIC DENOMINATION.
 2. It is clear therefore that extrinsic denomination:
 - a. Bespeaks that a form which in the real order is not the form of the subject, is nevertheless conceived by the

- mind as of the subject, i.e. it is mentally applied to the subject,
- b. wherefore, extrinsic denomination is reduced to mental relation, i.e. relation constituted in and by thought.

B. Which may be thus exhibited schematically:-¹⁸

¹⁸ Because of the nature of this schema, it was necessary to represent it graphically.



C. Extrinsic denomination is indeed divided into:

- a. MERELY EXTRINSIC denomination, which bespeaks nothing whatsoever of reality in the denominating subject; thus, when a tree is named “seen”:

1. the denominating form is vision;
 2. but vision is not in the tree, but in the animal
- b. And ORIGINATIVELY EXTRINSIC denomination, which bespeaks something of reality in the denominated subject, which however is not the denominating form itself, but some virtue by reason of which the denomination is originated and depends upon the extrinsic denominating form.
1. Thus, for example, medicine is named “healthy” from an extrinsic denominating form [that] is in the animal, but it has in itself something whereby it can cause this health of the animal, to wit, healing power;
 2. Wherefore, St. Thomas says:
 - a. “Although health is not in medicine nor in urine,
 - b. “nevertheless in each there is something through which:
 1. “the former indeed produces health,
 2. “but the latter signifies it” (ST I q.16 a.6).

D. Accordingly nomination is divided thus:¹⁹

NOMINATION is...

Either SIMPLE NOMINATION

Or DENOMINATION, which is

Either INTRINSIC

Or EXTRINSIC, which is

Either ORIGINATIVELY EXTRINSIC

Or MERELY EXTRINSIC.

190. THE QUESTION: The question to be dealt with here is: In what properly and formally consists the morality of human acts? Or, in other words, What is conveyed by the moral be of the human act inasmuch as this is distinguished from the physical be thereof?

A. That is: [What] is the metaphysical essence of morality?

B. For example: According to what is that sexual union mentioned above (n.185, B) exercised between Peter and Agnes diverse, inasmuch as:

- a. Though it retains the same physical be in either case,
- b. nevertheless:
 - i. in the one case it is an act of chastity and has moral goodness,
 - ii. while in the other case it is an act of unchastity and has moral badness?

191. DIVERSE OPINIONS: Upon this question, diverse opinions are proposed.

A. Some Nominalists and [Francisco] Suárez say that morality is of extrinsic denomination, and indeed merely extrinsic, the human act being extrinsically denominated moral from the rules of morals—somewhat as a certain piece of paper

¹⁹ I return here to my own formatting of Fr. Woodbury’s schemata.

- (pound note) is denominated “worth twenty shillings” from an ordinance of civil government.
- B. Others, such as [Gabriel] Vásquez, assert that morality is mental being, to wit, a mental relation.
 - C. According to others, it is a predicamental relation to the rule of morals.
 - D. [Samuel von] Pufendorf says that morality consists in imputability.
 - E. To Durandus [of Saint-Pourçain] and [John Duns] Scotus is attributed the opinion that morality formally consists in the very freedom of the act.
 - a. “This opinion has a seductiveness for the mind. Is not interior freedom the very essence of morality? It is a question here, of freedom, not only in the strict sense of free decision, but also in the sense of the depths of consciousness. Does not this interior vitality of freedom interest morality in a more profound manner than reason, which seems less personal, something exterior, because concerned with objects and a law, which is not my own very ‘me.’ Luther, by the irreducible opposition [that] he instituted between law on the one hand and faith on the other, contributed powerfully to this process of immanentization, which has developed right through the course of modern times, and which tends to seek the essence of morality in the perfect spontaneity of willing, in the perfect affirmation of our independence.
 - b. The greater is this autonomy, the more freely my subjectivity deploys its vitality,—the more formal, noble, pure is the act, because then do I express more purely and more fully my personality, and the incommunicable depths of my consciousness. An act will be supremely moral when it will be posited without interest or motivation, whether from pure respect for the universal law, that is, in the last analysis, for the absolute autonomy of the noumenal Will (Kant), or by way of pure affirmation of freedom surmounting the world of despair and engaging itself at all risks. Recall the words of Rousseau: obey oneself only; you will be led to the notion, dominant today, which regards sincerity as the supreme measure of morality.
 - c. “The form of reason has been excluded, on the pretext that it is freedom which is important above all in the morality of the act, and which is the formal element of it” (Maritain, *Neuf leçons sur la Morale*, 136-137).²⁰
 - F. But Thomists teach that:
 - a. The metaphysical essence or formal constitutive of morality is:
 1. the real transcendental relation of the human act to its object as this falls under the (constitutive) rule of morals;
 2. or, more briefly, the real transcendental relation of the human act to its moral object;
 3. or again, the real transcendental relation of the huma act to the (constitutitve) rule of morals.

²⁰ The translation is Fr. Woodbury’s. Cf. Maritain, *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy*.

b. Thus:

1. In the example given above (n.185, B) of sexual union between Peter and Agnes:
 - a. if they are married together, then their act is transcendently relative to an object [that] is conformed to the rule of morals, or in other words, to an object falling under the rule of morals as permissive (or perceptive), that is, to a good moral object,—wherefore their act is morally good;
 - b. whereas, if they are not married together, then their act is transcendently relative to an object [that] is disconformed from the rule of morals, or in other words, to an object falling under the rule of morals as prohibitive, that is, to a bad moral object,—wherefore their act is morally bad.
2. And similarly in the other example given above (n.186):
 - a. When Peter removes Paul's gramophone in fulfilment of a contractual obligation (n.186, B, c1), then Peter's act is transcendently relative to an object falling under the rule of morals as preceptive thereof, i.e. to an object conformed to the rule of morals, and therefore to a good moral object,—wherefore Peter's act is morally good.
 - b. but when Peter removes Paul's gramophone against Paul's reasonable will, then Peter's act is transcendently relative to an object falling under the rule of morals as prohibitive thereof, i.e. to an object falling under the rule of morals as prohibitive thereof, i.e. to an object disconformed from the rule of morals, and therefore to a bad moral object,—wherefore Peter's act is morally bad.

Dissertation Two: Solution

192. CONCLUSION: It must be said that THE METAPHYSICAL ESSENCE OF MORALITY IS THE REAL TRANSCENDENTAL RELATION OF THE HUMAN ACT TO ITS OBJECT AS THIS FALLS UNDER THE (CONSTITUTIVE) RULES OF MORALS.
- A. Or, more briefly, it is the real transcendental relation of the human act to the rule of morals.
 - B. Which will be proved
 - a. First, indirectly, through refutation of other opinions (n.193).
 - b. Secondly, directly (n.194).

193. INDIRECT PROOF BY EXCLUSION OF OTHER OPTIONS: These other options have been indicated above (n.191, A-E)

A. MORALITY DOES NOT FORMALLY CONSIST IN AN EXTRINSIC DENOMINATION

- a. For a name is not said of some thing according to extrinsic denomination from a form [that] is properly intrinsic to it (cf. n.189).
- b. But the form of morality or morality itself formally, is properly intrinsic to the human act and to it alone;
 1. for all else that is named moral, is so named by posteriority from the form (of morality) [that] is in the human act, which form is named moral by priority, and are extrinsically denominated moral according to analogy of attribution (cf. *Logic*, n.152; *Metaphysics*, n.631)
 2. For:
 - a. [the] will is said to have morality or to be moral, because it elicits the human or moral act;
 - b. [the] rule (the moral rule) is named moral, because it measures the human or moral act;
 - c. law is named moral because it directs or prescribes the moral human act;
 - d. an object is named moral, because it terminates the human or moral act;
 - e. an end is called moral, because it motivates the human or moral act;
 - f. circumstances are called moral, because they affect the human or moral act.
- c. Therefore:
 1. “moral” is said of the human act not according to extrinsic denomination,
 2. that is, morality does not consist in an extrinsic denomination.

B. NOR DOES MORALITY FORMALLY CONSIST IN A MENTAL BEING

- a. For what is found intrinsically in a thing, independently of all consideration of mind, does not consist formally in a mental relation (cf. n.188, B, a1).
- b. But morality formally taken is found intrinsically in the human act, independently of all consideration of mind.
 1. For some acts are naturally good morally, while others are naturally bad morally.
 2. Moreover, between a good man and a bad man there is not merely a difference according to mental relation, but they differ really.

- c. Therefore, morality does not consist formally in a mental relation.

C. NOR DOES MORALITY FORMALLY CONSIST IN FREEDOM

- a. For what presupposes something as a condition *sine qua non* of itself and as a proximate condition pertaining to its subject, yet is formally distinct from it, does not formally consist in it.
- b. But morality, formally taken, presupposes freedom as a condition *sine qua non* of itself and as a proximate disposition pertaining to its subject, yet is formally distinguished from it.
 - 1. Morality indeed presupposes freedom as its condition *sine qua non* and as the proximate disposition of its subject:
 - a. for only the free act is morally directable, or in other words, falls under the rule of morals or has moral value (for the rule of morals is the rule whereby is determined what be an action ought to have freely, i.e. it is a rule regulating the free action formally as it is free), as is manifest from what has been said above in the vindication of the existence of morality (nn.135-138);
 - b. moreover, freedom is the disposition or form whereby the human act, which is the matter or subject of the moral act, is ultimately disposed to be regulated by the rule of morals and therefore to have moral value or morality, as is clear from what has been said above (nn.135-138).
 - 2. But, nevertheless, morality is formally distinguished from freedom, for:
 - a. although the moral human act and the free human act are really or materially one and the same thing,
 - b. nevertheless, their formal reasons are diverse; which appears:
 - 1. first, from this, that the forma reason why the act is free is because it proceeds from choice of will not naturally determined (cf. n.102, A, b2b),—which can be quite well understood without morality being yet understood, a rule of morals not yet being understood;
 - 2. secondly, because one and the same free human act may have several diverse moralities, as when someone thievs in order to commit adultery (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 2, 1130a24; ST I-II q.18 a.6),—but has only one freedom;
 - 3. thirdly, freedom belongs to the physical be of the human act, for the free act is physically distinguished from the unfree or necessary act,—but morality belongs to the moral be thereof (cf. n.185);

4. fourthly, freedom remains specifically the same in the morally good act and in the morally bad act,—but the morality is specifically diverse (cf. n.128, B; n.139,A-B).

- c. Therefore, morality does not consist formally in freedom.

D. NOR DOES MORALITY CONSIST FORMALLY IN IMPUTABILITY

- a. Indeed, the imputability of a human act (v.g. Peter's act) is that property by virtue whereof the act can, and must, be attributed to a determinate man (Peter) as to its determining author,—determining it whether as regards exercise only or also as regards specification (cf. n.103).
- b. Wherefrom it is manifest:
 1. both that imputability belongs to an act because it is free, not because it is moral;
 2. and that moral imputability (that is, imputability of its moral goodness or moral badness) supposes its morality, and therefore does not constitute it.
- c. Therefore, moral imputability:
 - i. Is a property of the moral act, by reason of its freedom,
 - ii. The morality pertaining to the matter which is imputable.

E. NOR DOES MORALITY CONSIST FORMALLY IN A PREDICAMENTAL RELATION TO THE RULE OF MORALS

- a. For if morality were to consist formally in a predicamental relation, then the morally good act and the morally bad act would not be specifically diverse, but would be diverse only *per accidens*; for a predicamental relation is only an accident superadded to its subject.
 - i. But *morally good act* and *morally bad act* are diverse *per se* and specifically, as said above (n.139, A-B)
 - ii. Therefore, morality does not consist formally in a predicamental relation.
- b. Moreover, the morality of an act can exist, even though its object does not exist really actually,—as is clear, for example, when the object is something no longer existing, as when someone delights over a past thing or desires a future thing.
 1. But:
 - a. A predicamental relation does not exist when its object does not really actually exist, as was said above (n.188, B, b2);
 - b. but the relation of a human act to its moral object is no other than its relation to the rule of morals;

1. for it is by the medium of the object that reason orders the human act, (so that the act being conformed to the rule of morals or disconformed therefrom), by proposing the object as conformed to the rule of morals or as disconformed therefrom;
 2. Therefore, morality does not consist formally in a predicamental relation to the rule of morals.
2. Therefore, morality does not consist formally in a predicamental relation to the rule of morals.
- c. Further, the relation of the human act to its moral object, which is no other than its relation to the rule of morals, as just said (E, b1b), does not respect the object of the act as a pure term, but as its specificative and perfective [*sic*].
 - i. But a predicamental relation regards its term as a pure term, as said above (n.188, B, b1).
 - ii. Therefore, morality does not consist in a predicamental relation of the human act to the rule of morals.
194. DIRECT PROOF: This proof is taken from the principle of extrinsic specification according to which ACTS, HABITS AND POWERS ARE SPECIFIED FROM THEIR FORMAL OBJECT (Cf. *Natural Philosophy*, nn.519-523; cf. ST I-II q.54 a.2).
- A. For:
- a. since:
 1. morality:
 - a. is said by priority of the act (cf. n.193, A,b), holding itself therefore primarily essentially (*per se primo*) on the side of the act,
 - b. and pertains to the order of the specification of the act (that is, to what there is of specification in the act), (cf. n.138, B, b1),
 2. therefore, due proportion²¹ being kept:
 - a. we must speak of the act taken in its moral be, as we speak of the specification of the act taken in its physical be (cf. n.185)
 - b. wherefore, to the act as it is moral, must be applied the general theory regarding the specification of acts
 - b. But:
 1. the act taken in its physical be is specified from its physical object (cf. n.186, A),
 2. so that:
 - a. all that there is of physical specificity, or pertaining to the order of physical specification, in the act is had through its transcendental or essential relation to that object, as through its proper form,

²¹ Note again that notions expressed concerning the order of *esse morale* are thus asserted to be known by an analogy of proper proportionality in comparison with notions pertaining to the order of *esse naturae*.

- b. wherefore of the act taken in its physical be, the formal constitutive or metaphysical essence is its essential adaptation or transcendental relation to its physical object.
- c. Therefore, the act taken in its moral be is specified in corresponding manner from its moral object (cf. 186, B),
 - 1. so that:
 - a. whatever there is of moral specificity, or pertaining to the order of moral specification, in the act is to be had through its transcendental or essential relation to that object, as through its proper form,
 - b. wherefore, of the act taken in its moral be, the formal constitutive or metaphysical essence is its essential adaptation or transcendental relation to its moral object.

B. Which argument may be thus illustrated:

- a. If it be asked:
 - 1. for example:
 - a. why some act is vision?
 - b. the reason is:
 - 1. that it is essentially or transcendentially relative to illuminated color,
 - 2. so that the specific form or metaphysical essence of vision is this transcendental relation to illuminated color;
 - 2. or:
 - a. why some act is hearing?
 - b. the reason is:
 - 1. that it is essentially or transcendentially relative to sound,
 - 2. so that the specific form or metaphysical essence of hearing is this transcendental relation to sound.
 - 3. or:
 - a. why some act is transportation?
 - b. the reason is:
 - 1. that it is essentially or transcendentially relative to newly produced locatedness of some thing (cf. n.186, A),
 - 2. so that the specific form or metaphysical essence of transportation is the transcendental relation to newly produced locatedness of some thing.
- b. But in the foregoing examples, it is a question of the formal constitutive reason of some act physically considered or taken in its physical be; but passing now to some act considered morally or taken in its moral be:
 - 1. If it be asked:
 - a. For example:

1. why some act is theft?
2. The reason is:
 - a. that it is essentially or transcendently relative to withdrawnness of some thing from availability to, or disposability by, its owner, he being unwilling reasonably (v.g., it is essentially relative to newly produced locatedness of some thing, as it falls under the prohibitive rule of justice),—which is a moral object of the act (cf. n.186, B, c2),
 - b. so that the specific form or metaphysical essence of theft is this transcendental relation of the human act to withdrawnness of some thing from availability to its owner.
- b. or:
 1. why some act is an act of justice?
 2. The reason is:
 - a. that it is essentially transcendently relative to positedness of some thing within availability to its owner—which is a moral object of the act (cf. n.186, B, c1),
 - b. so that the specific form or metaphysical essence of the act of justice is this transcendental relation of the human act to positedness of some thing within availability to its owner.
- c. or, more generally:
 1. why some act is a morally good act?
 2. The reason is:
 - a. that it is essentially or transcendently relative to an object falling under the rule of morals as under an approving or enjoining rule,
 - b. so that the specific form or metaphysical essence of a morally good act is this transcendental relation to an object falling under the rule of morals as under an approving or enjoining rule.
- d. or, correspondingly:
 1. why some act is a morally bad act?
 2. The reason is:
 - a. that it is essentially or transcendently relative to an object falling under the rule of morals as under a prohibitive rule,
 - b. so that the specific form or metaphysical essence of a morally bad act is this transcendental relation to an object falling under the rule of morals as a prohibitive rule.

2. Accordingly:²²
 - a. just as the essence or species or essential value of an act taken in its physical be is nothing else than its transcendental relation or essential adaptation (its essence adapted) to its physical object,
 - b. so the essence or species or essential value of an act taken in its moral be (that is, its moral value or morality) is nothing else than its transcendental relation or essential adaptation (its essence adapted) to its moral object.

C. This reasoning is indeed in accordance:²³

- a. Both with the mind of Aristotle,
 1. when he says:
 - a. “With the bad man, what he does is not conformed with what he ought to do,
 - b. “but the good man does what he ought, since... the good man obeys his intellect” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, c.8, 1169a15).
 2. Which is to say:
 - a. the act of the bad man, that is, the morally bad act, is an act disconformed from the rule of human acts,
 - b. but the act of the good man, that is, the morally good act, is an act conformed with the rule of human acts, since it is conformed to reason.
- b. And with the mind of St. Thomas, who says:
 1. “The human act, which is called moral, has its species from the object related to the principle of human acts, which is reason” (ST I-II q.18 a.8).
 2. “Human reason has from the eternal law, which is the divine reason, that it be the rule of [the] human will, so that the goodness thereof” (i.e., of the human will) “be measured from it” (ST I-II q.19 a.4).

Dissertation Three: Certain Corollaries

195. ITS MORALITY IS A METAPHYSICAL PROPERTY OF A HUMAN ACT: Since morality or the moral be of a human act is an essential or transcendental relation of the act to its moral object, therefore morality formally taken is not distinguished really from the essence of the act, but is the very essence of the act as transcendently ordered to the moral object or rule of morals.

A. Therefore, morality:

²² Note again the role of proper proportionality in this exposition.

²³ Admittedly, merely noting the sources cited by, e.g., Prümmer (whose doctrine is comparable to Woodbury’s) in the citation above, one is well aware that this exposition is the mature position of the later Thomist school. At best, Fr. Woodbury is here showing the *principal conceptual nucleus* in Aristotle and Aquinas for the doctrine here expositied.

- a. Is not a physical property of the human act, or an accident necessarily and really consequent upon (and therefore really distinct from) the essence of the human act (cf. *Logic*, n.124, E, a);
- b. But, rather, is a metaphysical property of the human act, i.e., a predicate necessarily but only conceptually distinct from) the essence of the human act (cf. *Logic*, n.124, E, b).

B. Wherefore, MORALITY may be defined: The METAPHYSICAL PROPERTY OF THE HUMAN ACT BY REASON WHEREOF THIS ACT IS GOOD OR BAD ACCORDING AS IT IS CONFORMED TO, OR DISCONFORMED FROM, THE RULE OF MORALS.

C. But, it is to be noted:

- a. That:
 1. although the morality of the human act is not really distinguished from the essence of the act,
 2. nevertheless, it is distinguished by reason of its formal or specifying object (moral object) which is related (*se habet ad*) accidentally to the natural or physical goodness of the object specifying the physical entity of the act (physical object).
- b. For which reason the morality of the act:
 1. is not the same formally as the physical entity of the act
 2. but is, as it were, accidentally superadded to the physical entity of the act (cf. n.185, C).

196. FORMAL REASON OF MORAL GOOD AND EVIL: From what has been said, it follows:

A. That moral goodness (or the formal reason of moral good) consists in [a] transcendental relation of the human act to an object consonant with the rule of morals, or in other words, [a] transcendental relation of conformity of the human act to the rules of morals (cf. n.128, B, a).

- a. Wherefrom it appears:
 1. That moral goodness is the fullness of be due to a human action, forasmuch as “be conformed to the rule of morals” is due to a human action (cf. ST I-II, q.18 a.1);²⁴
 2. That moral goodness is the same as moral rectitude, and the morally good is the same as the morally right: for rightness is the proper good of a ruled (or measured) as it is ruled (or measured)
- b. But:
 1. since:

²⁴ See the appendix below, “Lehu, ‘At what precise point of the *Summa theologiae* does the Treatise on Morality begin?’”

- a. the rule of morals is nothing else than the rule determinative of which actions are suitable or befitting²⁵ to man (cf. nn.135-137; n.169, B),
 - b. therefore:
 1. moral goodness is nothing else than suitability or befittingness of a human act to man according to his nature (cf. n.169, A, b3);
 2. so that the morally good is nothing else than the suitable or befitting to man according to his nature;
 2. and since:
 - a. the rule of morals is nothing else than the rule determinative of which end man is naturally ordered to pursue and which are the acts conducive to that end (cf. nn. 135-137; n.169, B),
 - b. therefore:
 1. moral goodness is nothing else than conductivity of a human act to man's true ultimate end;
 2. so that the morally good is nothing else than what is conducive to the true ultimate end of man.
- B. That moral badness (or the formal reason of moral evil) consists in the transcendental relation of the human act to an object dissonant from the rule of morals, or in other words, transcendental relation of disconformity of the human act from the rule of morals (cf. n.128, B, b).
- a. Accordingly:
 1. Moral badness is nothing else than
 - a. unsuitability or unbefittingness of a human act to man according to his nature,
 - b. or aversiveness of a human act from man's true ultimate end;
 2. So that the morally bad is nothing else than:
 - a. the unsuitable or unbefitting to man according to his nature,
 - b. or what averts or impedes man from his true ultimate end.
 - b. Wherefore, it must be said with most Thomists (v.g. Capreolus, Ferrariensis, Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, the Salmanticenses, Gonet, Billuart, Garrigou-Lagrange, etc.) and against a few Thomists (such as Sylvius, Contenson, and Bancel) that the formal constitutive of a SIN OF COMMISSION consists in something positive, to wit, in the transcendental relation of a human act to an object dissonant from the rules of morals (therefore in a positive tendency to its object), as indeed it founds and connotes privation of moral rectitude (i.e., privation of conformity to the rule of morals) (cf. *Metaphysics*, n.923, A, b).
 1. For the privation of rectitude follows upon the positive tendency which already from itself is morally bad, because it is towards an object dissonant from the rules of morals.

²⁵ See note 9 above.

2. Nevertheless, this controversy among Thomists is of minor importance, since it “is almost like asking: what formally constitutes lace: the holes or the thread?” (Garrigou-Lagrange: *De Beatitudine*, p.318).²⁶
- c. But if it be a question of a “SIN OF OMISSION speaking *per se*, it is true that it is privation alone
 1. “But:
 - a. “the subject of a privation is not something had, but a potency; as the subject of blindness is not vision, but that which is naturally apt to see.
 - b. “Therefore, the subject of omission is:
 1. “not indeed some act,
 2. “but the power of the will” (*De malo*, q.2 a.1 ad 4).
 2. But the subject of the privation [that] follows in a sin of commission, which “is an act deprived of due order” (*ibid.*) is:
 - a. not indeed the power immediately,
 - b. but the very act itself.

197. THE ULTIMATE TERM OF THE MORAL RELATION IS THE ETERNAL LAW: It follows also that, since the rule of morals is twofold, to wit, right human reason and the eternal law (cf. n.169, A, b; B, b-c; n.187);

- A. The moral be of the human act is formally constituted by [the] transcendental relation of the act to right human reason and the eternal law.
- B. But on this account do we say “RIGHT” human reason:²⁷
 - a. that human reason:
 1. Does not make truth,
 2. But only is cognoscitive thereof;
 - b. and, therefore, it has that it be a rule of morals only so far forth as it participates the eternal law (cf. n.169, A, b1b; B, c; n.194, C, b2).
- C. Wherefore, ultimately and *per se* morality is constituted formally by [a] transcendental relation of conformity or of disconformity of the human act towards the eternal law or the divine reason.

²⁶ The translation is Fr. Woodbury’s. Indeed, consultation with the original Latin of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange’s *De beatitudine* shows that Patrick Cummins’s translation is, at best, an abridgment. The Latin original is significantly more detailed, and clearly was a source for Fr. Woodbury (who was an astute student of Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange). Cf. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Beatitude: A Commentary on St. Thomas’ Theological Summa, Ia Iae, q.1-54*, trans. Patrick Cummins (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1956); Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De beatitudine, de actibus humanis, et habitibus: commentaries in summam theologicam, S. Thomae Iae-IIae, qq.1-54* (Turin: R. Berruti, 1951).

²⁷ Here, Woodbury is perhaps a bit too speculative in his account of practical truth, it seems. As ordering, our practical knowledge “makes” truth and falsity—insofar as it *is* and *is not* rectified in line with the eternal law, participated in by synderesis, prudence, and all the moral virtues. However, I present him as is.

198 SCHEMATIC RECAPITULATION: Accordingly, the contents of the foregoing article may be thus summarized schematically:—

The metaphysical essence of morality...

Consists

Not in...

An EXTRINSIC DENOMINATION, for morality formally is properly intrinsic to the act, since of the act it is said by priority.

A MENTAL RELATION for human acts have natural morality.

FREEDOM, for...

An act may be understood to be free, while it is not yet understood to have morality.

One same act may have several diverse moralities, whereas it has only one freedom.

Freedom pertains to the physical be of the act, whereas morality is its moral be.

Freedom remains specifically the same in the good act and the bad act, whereas the morality is specifically diverse.

IMPUTABILITY, for imputability simply belongs to the act because it is free, not because it is moral; and moral imputability supposes morality.

A PREDICAMENTAL RELATION, for...

This would make the morally good act and the morally bad act only accidentally diverse; whereas they are specifically diverse

The morality of an act can exist even though its object does not really exist.

The moral act is related to its object, not merely as to a pure term but as to its specificative.

But, in, the REAL TRANSCENDENTAL RELATION OF THE ACT TO ITS MORAL OBJECT;

For the morality of an act pertains to its specificity.

But the specificity of an act is its transcendental relation to its object.

But whereas when it is a question of the physical specificity of an act, this object is its physical object; when it is a question of the moral specificity thereof, this object must be the moral object.

Therefore...

The morality of a human act is a metaphysical property thereof.

Moral

goodness is [the] transcendental of a human act to an object consonant with the rule of morals.

badness is [the] transcendental relation of a human act to an object dissonant from the rule of morals.

Sin

of commission consists formally in positive essential relation of the act to its object, as this founds privation of due order.

of omission consists in privation of due order.

Morality consists formally and ultimately in [the] transcendental relation of the human act to the eternal law or divine reason.

Text by Fr. Austin Woodbury, S.M. – *Ethics*, sec.3 ch.6: The Existence of Morality

135. EXISTENCE OF MORALITY VINDICATED FROM THE PROPER MENSURATION OF HUMAN ACTIONS: “We must speak of good and bad in actions as of good and bad in things, because of what sort each thing is, such sort of action does it produce” (ST I-II q.18 a.1).

A. “But:

a. “in things”

1. Something is good from fullness of the be due to it, i.e. of the be which it OUGHT to have;
 - a. thus a horse is good from be-strong, be-healthy, be-agile, be-sound-footed, etc.,—which a horse OUGHT to have;
 - b. thus an automobile is good from be-aptly-ordered with regard to its parts with respect to its end (i.e., from this, that its parts be so ordered among themselves and to the whole that the automobile may run swiftly, smoothly and as directed by the driver and without wastage of petrol), be-unbroken, be-aptly-sized, be-beautiful, etc.,—which an automobile OUGHT to have.
2. So that:
 - a. a thing:
 1. “how much it has of” its due “be, so much it has of goodness,
 2. “But so far forth as something is lacking to it of the fullness of” its due “be, so far does it default from goodness, and is called bad;
 - b. “as a blind man:
 1. “of goodness, has that he is alive,
 2. “but it is evil to him that he lacks sight” (ST I-II q.18 a.1).
3. Where it is to be noted accordingly:

- a. That goodness and badness in things are taken through relation to a RULE or measure whereby it is determined what be a thing OUGHT to have.
 - b. This rule:
 1. When it is a question of natural things (v.g. of a horse, or of a man) is:
 - a. proximately, the order of the thing towards its natural end, to wit, towards the end whereunto it is from its nature ordered,—as a horse is ordered towards existence of the equine species, which requires that he be alive, which requires that he run swiftly (in order to avoid destruction by his enemies), which requires that he be-sound-footed, and be-agile, and be-healthy, and be-strong, and so on;
 - b. but remotely, is the divine reason whereby the thing is ordered toward its natural end.
 2. But when it is a question of artificial things, is the order of the thing towards the voluntary end (purpose), towards which it is ordered from the reason of the artifex.
 4. But:
 - a. The rule whereby is determined what a thing ought to have, is called its ONTOLOGICAL RULE,—since it respects the physical entity of the thing.
 - b. And the DUE-NESS whereby a thing OUGHT to be conformed to this rule, is called its ONTOLOGICAL DUE-NESS (“ONTOLOGICAL OUGHT”).
 - c. And the conformity or disconformity of the thing to this rule (i.e. its fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this due-ness), is called its ONTOLOGICAL VALUE.
 - b. Accordingly, when it is a question of the ontological value of things
 1. This value is not taken according as things would rule (govern) themselves, and therefore would be:
 - a. not only perverted (i.e., defaulting from their rule),—which indeed is so,
 - b. but also perverting (themselves),—for this is not so.
 2. But, as will be said hereunder, when it is [a] question of moral value, this must be said.
- B. “THUS THEREFORE...EVERY ACTION:
- a. “SO FAR FORTH AS IT HAS SOMETHING OF” ITS DUE “BE, SO MUCH IT HAS OF GOODNESS;
 - b. “BUT SO FAR FORTH AS SOMETHING IS LACKING TO IT OF THE FULNESS OF BE WHICH IS DUE AN...ACTION, SO FAR DOES IT DEFAULT FROM GOODNESS, AND THUS IS CALLED BAD” (ST I-II q.18 a.1).
- C. But:

- a. Whereas, on the one hand, in actions [that] are not human (and also in actions considered not formally as human, v.g. when a surgical act is considered, not as it is an exercise of man's free will, but as it is an act of art, to wit, of surgery), the fullness, or lack, of the be due to them, IS NOT FROM A FREEDOM WHEREWITH THE ACTION IS EXERCISED.
 1. Thus, if a hen tends, or kills, her [chicks]:
 - a. That is:
 1. acts as a hen ought to act,—for a hen ought (i.e. is naturally ordered) to act for the good of her species,
 2. or acts as a hen ought-not to act,—for a hen ought not to destroy the good of her species,
 - b. In neither case is this from a freedom wherewith the action of the hen would be exercised,—for infra-human agents do not enjoy freedom of choice.
 2. Thus also, if a surgeon by perfect, or by imperfect, surgery kills an innocent man, this perfection, or imperfection, of his action:
 - a. is not from this:
 1. that:
 - a. in the one case, he would be making such a use of his free will as he ought to make,
 - b. but in the other case, he would not be making such use of his free will as he ought to make,
 2. (for in either case, he is not making such a use of his free will as he ought to make),
 - b. but rather is from this:
 1. that:
 - a. in the one case, his action has the be (v.g., be-skillful) [that] a surgical action, as it is surgical, ought to have,
 - b. but in the other case, his action has not the be which a surgical action, as it is surgical, ought to have;
 2. so that, SURGICALLY CONSIDERED, his action is perfect (good) or imperfect (bad) as it is measured by the RULE OF SURGERY (not as it would be measured by a rule of the use of freedom—for thus in both cases his action is bad).
- b. On the other hand, in actions [that] are human (considered formally as human), the fullness, or lack, of the be due to them, IS FROM THE FREEDOM WHEREWITH THE ACTION IS EXERCISED.
 1. Thus, if a woman, tends, or kills, her children:
 - a. that is:
 1. acts as a mother ought to act,—for a woman ought (i.e. is naturally ordered), as she is an individual of the human species, to act for the good of her species,
 2. or acts as a mother ought-not to act,—for a woman ought not to destroy the good of her species,

- b. in either case this IS FROM THE FREEDOM WHEREWITH HER ACTION IS EXERCISED.
 2. Thus also the action—even most perfect surgically—of a surgeon killing an innocent man lacks this be which it ought to have, to wit, BE A PROPERLY HUMAN USE OF FREE WILL, that is, BE SUCH A USE OF FREE WILL AS IS CONFORMED WITH THE DICTATE OF (RIGHT) REASON.
- D. This difference is better understood if it is recalled that:
- a. While every created agent is naturally ordered toward its (natural end):
 1. whether it be [a] question of infra-human agents whose natural end is the good of their species,
 2. or of men whose natural end is happiness
 - b. Nevertheless:
 1. When it is [a] question of infra-human agents;
 - a. Since these do not govern themselves (i.e., they neither determine which end they will pursue, nor how—by which acts—they will pursue it),
 - b. Therefore:
 1. neither is there in them a formal participation of the divine governing reason (i.e. of the eternal law),
 2. nor are they themselves the authors:
 - a. whether of the rectitude of their own acts,—the hen [that] tends her [chicks] is not the author of the rectitude of her actions,
 - b. or of the perversion of their own acts,—the hen [that] kills her [chicks] is not the author of the perversion of her own actions (cf. A, b), so that:
 1. she is perverted in regard to her action,
 2. but she is not perverting (herself) in regard to it.
 2. But when it is a question of men:
 - a. Since these govern themselves (to wit, they both determine which end they will pursue, and how they will pursue it).
 - b. Therefore:
 1. *Both* in them there is a formal participation of the divine governing reason (which is practical human reason)
 2. *and* they themselves are the authors:
 - a. whether of the rectitude of their own acts,—the woman who tends her children is the author of the rectitude of her own actions,
 - b. or of the perversion of their own acts,—the woman who kills her children is the author of the perversion of her own actions, so that
 1. both she is perverted in regard to her action,

2. and also she is perverting (herself) in regard to it.

E. Wherefrom it follows:

a. that:

1. Goodness and badness in actions, as in things, is taken through relation to a RULE or measure whereby is determined what be an action OUGHT to have

2. But:

- a. Whereas in actions [that] are not human (and also in human actions considered not formally as human):

1. This rule is, as when it is question of things, still an ONTOLOGICAL RULE (cf. A, a4a).

2. And correspondingly therefore:

- a. the due-ness whereby an action OUGHT to be conformed to this rule, is still an ONTOLOGICAL DUE-NESS (“ONTOLOGICAL OUGHT”);
- b. and the conformity or disconformity of the action to this rule (i.e., its fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this due-ness), is still an ONTOLOGICAL VALUE.

- b. On the other hand, in actions considered FORMALLY as HUMAN:

1. The rule whereby is determined what be the action OUGHT to have, is a RULE OF ANOTHER ORDER:

- a. For it is a rule whereby is determined what be an action OUGHT to have FREELY, i.e. a rule regulating free action formally as it is free.
- b. wherefore it is called by a special name, to wit, it is called a MORAL RULE or rule of morals.

2. and correspondingly therefore:

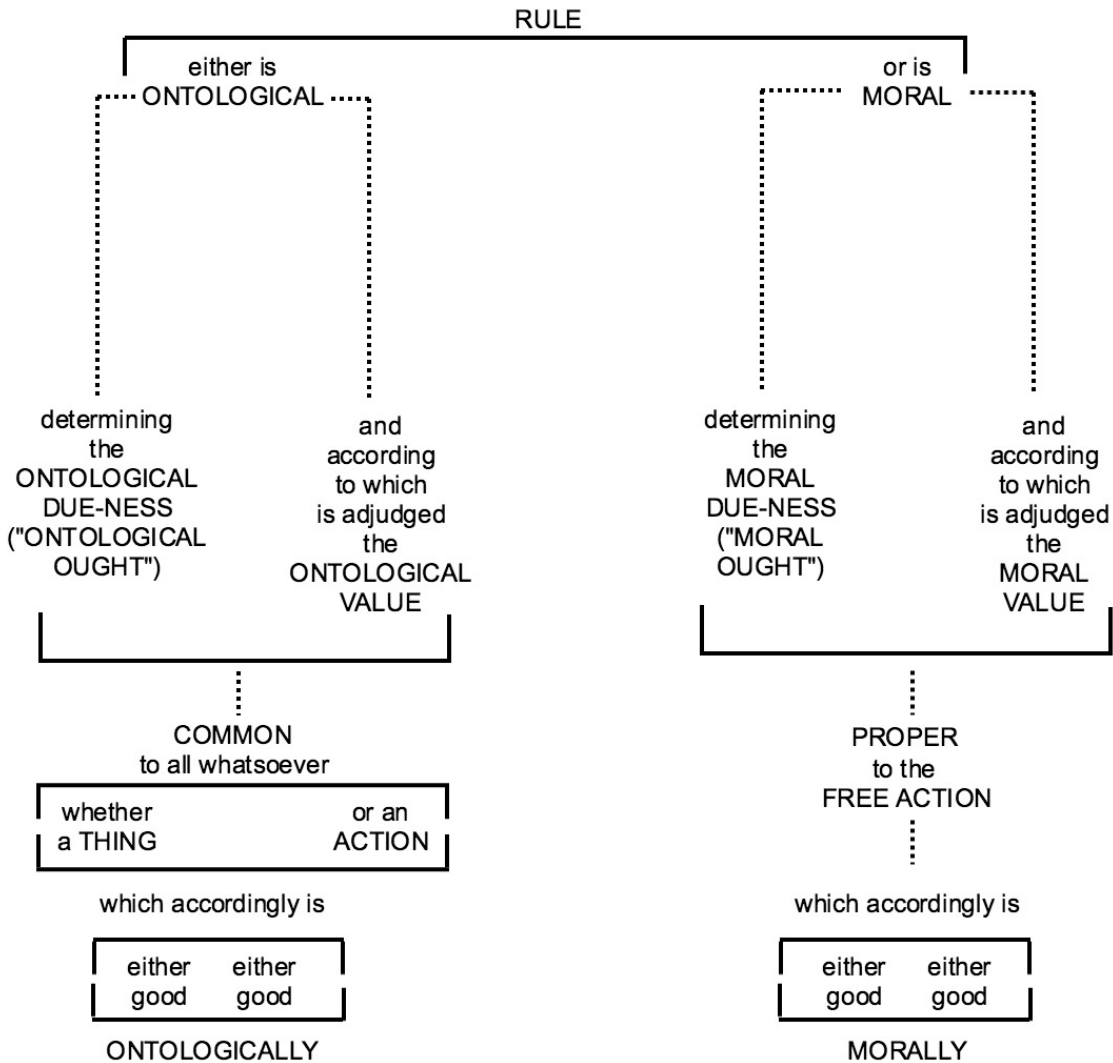
- a. The DUE-NESS whereby a human action OUGHT to be conformed to this rule is a due-ness of another order than ontological due-ness.

1. For it is a due-ness whereby a FREE action, forasmuch as it is FREE, OUGHT to be posited or omitted;
2. wherefore it is called a MORAL DUE-NESS (“MORAL OUGHT”).

- b. And the VALUE of a human action according as it is conformed or disconformed to this rule is a value of another order than is ontological value:

1. For it is a value enjoyed by a FREE action, forasmuch as it is FREE, i.e. according as it is a use of freedom befitting man (cf. *Metaphysics*, n.966).
2. wherefore it is called a MORAL VALUE, or MORALITY

b. Which may be thus illustrated schematically:—



F. Therefore, HUMAN ACTIONS HAVE MORALITY or MORAL VALUE.

136. THE SAME ARGUMENT OTHERWISE FORMULATED: The foregoing argument (n.135) may be proposed less complexly thus:

- A. It befits every agent (i.e. every agent ought):
 - a. both:

1. to intend—whether by natural appetite or by elicited appetite: according to its nature respectively—that end whereunto it is naturally ordered,
 2. and to act in such a manner as to attain that end;
 - b. so that:
 1. those actions are good which are conducive to that end,—since they are befitting, or in other words, have their due be-conductive to that due or befitting end (but something is good from fullness of its due be),
 2. while those actions are bad which are not conducive to that end,—since they are unbecoming, or in other words, lack their due be-conductive to that due or befitting end (but something is bad from lack of its due be).
 - B. But:
 - a. Whereas infra-human agents *per se*:
 1. both necessarily intend their natural end
 2. and necessarily act in such manner as to attain it;
 - b. Man, on the other hand, in his human actions:
 1. neither necessarily intends his natural end,—but if he intends it, does so freely; (and he can default from intending it);
 2. nor necessarily acts in such manner as to attain it,—but if he so acts, does so freely; (and he can freely default from so acting).
 - C. Therefore:
 - a. Whereas the actions of infra-human agents have (natural) goodness or badness only as conducive or non-conductive to their natural end;
 - b. Man’s human actions, on the other hand, have goodness and badness:
 1. also AS FREELY POSITED OR ELECTED BY HIMSELF SUCH as to be conducive to the concrete or particular end whereto man is naturally ordered or SUCH as to be non-conductive thereunto
 2. so that they have a goodness or badness formally as they are HUMAN, i.e. as they are befitting or unbecoming exercises of free-will.
 - D. But this goodness and badness thus PROPER to human or free actions is nothing else than what is meant by MORAL goodness and badness, i.e. it is nothing else than morality
 - E. Therefore, man’s human actions have morality.
137. THE SAME ARGUMENT PROPOSED IN A THIRD MANNER: The same argument may be proposed in a third manner thus:
- A. Good and bad is accounted in things respectively from fullness or from lack of fullness of their due be; so that “in things:
 - a. “each has so much of good as it has of be: for good and being are converted...;

- b. “but forasmuch as something of the” due “ fullness of be is lacking from it, forsomuch [*sic*] does it default from goodness, and is called bad,... for of the reason of good is fullness itself of be” (ST I-II q.18 a.1).
- B. But:
 - a. “we must speak of good and bad in actions as of good and bad in things,
 - b. “because of what sort each thing is, such sort of action does it produce...
- C. “Thus therefore it must be said that every” human “action:
 - a. “forasmuch as it has something of be, forsomuch has it (something) of goodness;
 - b. “but forasmuch as something of the fullness of be, which is due to a human action is lacking to it, forsomuch does it default from goodness, and thus is called bad” (ST I-II q.18 a.1).
- D. But in human actions, the fullness or lack of their due be, is:
 - a. Not only from this, that they are certain things,
 - b. But also—and indeed chiefly, though peculiarly,—from this that they are properly human, i.e. from this that they proceed from man formally as he is man (to wit, as using reason and free will),—which is precisely the MORAL BE of human actions.
 - 1. For there peculiarly and chiefly is accounted fullness or lack of due be (i.e., the objective concept²⁸ of good and of evil), where the objective concept of end is realized in a special manner:—because good and bad are taken by reference to end.
 - 2. But in regard to human actions, and in regard to them alone, is the objective concept of end realized in a special manner;
 - a. Which appears from this:
 - 1. that:
 - a. forasmuch as these actions are human (i.e., forasmuch as they proceed from man formally as man or as using reason and free will),
 - b. forsomuch are they done in a special manner from the influence of the end owing to which they are done
 - 2. for it is from man’s own free action that this end is influential upon his actions (i.e. man determines freely for himself the end owing to which his actions are done).
 - b. In other words: when it is [a] question of human actions, the end for which they ought to be done and towards which they ought to be conductive, is an end [that] is to be FREELY intended and attained;

²⁸ For an account of this from the perspective of the Thomist School, see A very clear exposition is also found in John Frederick Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1952), 132-212. For some historical details, see Marco Forlivesi, “La distinction entre concept formel et concept objectif: Suárez, Pasqualigo, Mastri,” *Les études philosophiques* 60 (2002): 3-30.

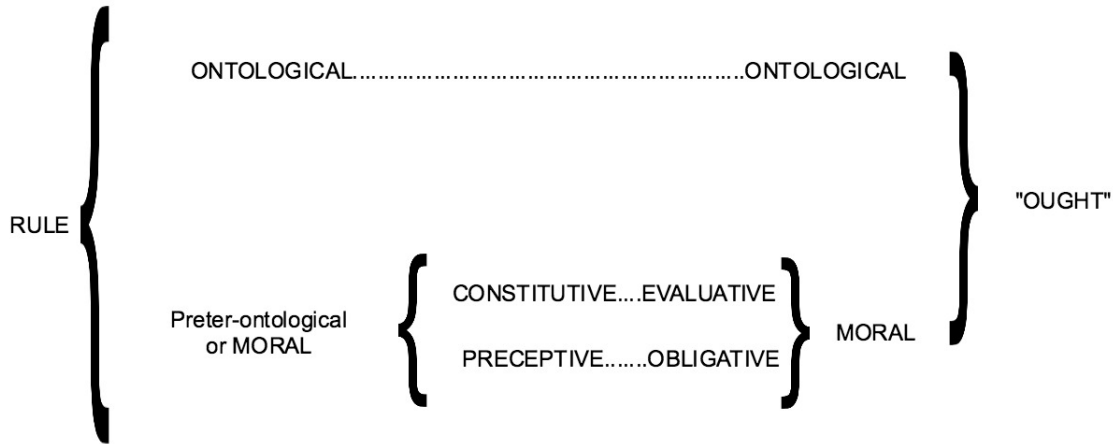
1. for man is naturally ordered or inclined towards his true concrete or particular end, so that his actions ought to be done for this end and be conducive thereunto,
 2. but, nevertheless, man is not naturally necessitated to intend or to pursue this end;
 3. wherefrom, it remains that he OUGHT FREELY to intend and pursue it.
3. But this peculiar fullness or lack of due be in human actions:
- a. consisting in this: that they be freely posited such as to be conducive to the end whereunto they ought to be conducive (then they enjoy fullness of their due be!) or that they be freely posited such as not to be conducive to the end whereunto they ought to be conducive (then they lack fullness of their due be!),
 - b. and arising:
 1. from this: that man OUGHT to intend and pursue his true concrete or particular ultimate end²⁹
 2. and from this: that he can intend and pursue this end only by using his reason and FREE will
 - c. is nothing else than what is meant by a MORAL VALUE of human actions, bespeaking that they have a MORAL BE.
- E. Therefore, human actions have morality or moral be.
138. NOTE: It is to be observed that in the foregoing argument nn.135-137), it is [a] question of vindicating the existence of morality, or of moral value—not yet of moral obligation.
- A. Accordingly, when mention has been made of a moral RULE and of moral DUE-NESS:
- a. The moral RULE or rule of morals whereof it is question:
 1. is not the PRECEPTIVE rule of morals, whereof the proper effect is moral obligation
 2. but is the CONSTITUTIVE rule of morals, which pertains to the constitution or specification of moral good and evil, forasmuch as it determines what be is required in a human act in order that it may be morally good,—but its moral goodness is presupposed to its moral obligatoriness.³⁰
 - b. The moral DUE-NESS (“moral OUGHT”) whereof it is question:
 1. is not the OBLIGATIVE due-ness or “ought” of obligation,
 2. but is the EVALUATIVE due-ness or “ought” of value, forasmuch as it bespeaks a due-ness whose fulfillment is required in order that the human

²⁹ Lest one misunderstand Fr. Woodbury, recall again, according to him *ought* depends upon *end*, which depends ultimately upon *fitting (or, befitting) good*. The *fitting good* is architectonic, as will be stressed in 138. One understands why this sort of explanation can be mistaken for a flavor of Kantianism if not properly understood—not only because of the role of “due” and “ought” but also because of the careful separation of ontological and moral concerns. However, as the astute reader will note, the two perspectives (i.e., Woodbury and Kant) are not the same.

³⁰ One suspects, here, the influence of Maritain in the latter’s *Basic Problems*.

act may have that value which is moral goodness,—presupposed to its moral obligatoriness.

- B. For, as will be hereunder manifest, when it is a question of natural morality:
 - a. Moral VALUE (i.e., goodness or badness) is presupposed to moral OBLIGATION (i.e. obligatoriness to be done or to be omitted).
 - b. And indeed:
 - 1. Moral VALUE pertains to the order of specification, or of essence,
 - 2. But moral OBLIGATION pertains to the order of exercise or of effectuation in existence.
 - c. For RULE and DUE-NESS (“ought”) are distinguished thus:-



Texts by Fr. Lehu

Lehu, “Does the ‘*recta ratio*’ of St. Thomas signify conscience?”

A translation of Leonard Lehu, “Si la ‘*recta ratio*’ de S. Thomas signifie la conscience,” *Revue Thomiste* 30 (1925): 159-166.

Fr. Cathrein, S.J., a distinguished sociologist, but a less informed Scholastic, published a note in *Gregorianum*¹ intended to explain and justify the Thomist formula, “Reason is the rule of morality.” The mere statement of this note’s title, “In what sense, according to St. Thomas, is reason the rule of human acts,”² enables us to understand the evolution that has occurred in the mind of its author. Fifteen years ago, Fr. Cathrein, then a member of the school of Fr. Frins, refused to acknowledge that reason was the rule of morality.³ Today, he recognizes that, according to St. Thomas, reason is truly the rule of human acts, and he seeks to know how this formula ought to be understood. Unfortunately, he has followed another uncertain guide, who has steered him upon a false path and has led him to an impasse. By this guide, I mean Suarez.

The principle of St. Thomas, today classic in this matter, is the following: “*The rule of the human will is twofold: one proximate and homogeneous, namely human reason itself; but the other is the first rule, namely the eternal law, which is, as it were, the reason of God.*”⁴

Suarez expounds this principle as follows: “It remains that there are two rules or measures of human acts about which St. Thomas undertakes a discussion in this place: one is *right reason (or, conscience)*; the other is *the divine will (or, the eternal law)*.”⁵

The second part of this exposition has nothing to do with our current concerns. We will only remark how far Suarez’s interpretation is from St. Thomas’s text. The Holy Doctor had

¹ Victor Cathrein, “Quo sensu secundum s. Thomam ratio sit regula actuum humanorum?”, *Gregorianum* 5 (Dec. 1924): 584-594.

² *Ibid.*, 584.

³ Cathrein, *Philosophia moralis*, 4th edition (1907), no. 74: “Rightly heed Lessius that the goodness of the object does not consist in conformity with right reason but with the rational nature.”

⁴ *ST I-II*, q. 71, a. 6.

⁵ Suarez, *In ST I-II*, tr. 3, disp. 2.

said, “*Ratio Dei.*” The commentator says, “*Voluntas Dei.*”⁶ Such indeed is Suarez’s manner: very often his interpretation consists in teaching the contrary of St. Thomas.

In the first part of the exposition (which is our primary interest here), where St. Thomas had said, “*ipsa humana ratio,*” Suarez comments, “*recta ratio seu conscientia.*” Fr. Cathrein adopts this doctrine. For him, as for Suarez, *right reason* is conscience. Nevertheless, a difficulty remains, and to solve this difficulty, he has published a rather dense note, of eleven pages, wherein there is much for one to take and much for one to leave, wholly enveloped with an obscurity that renders one’s reading of it to be difficult.

But before seeking to resolve the difficulty, it is necessary to know if the difficulty exists. In other words, it is necessary to know if by the words *ratio recta* St. Thomas truly wished to designate conscience.

We elsewhere⁷ had the occasion of noting the divergence of the formulas in use concerning this question in the various Catholic schools and to say why it is difficult to realize here unity in teaching on this matter. Each formula is partially true, and certain schools, insisting on the portion of truth that their formula contains, refuse to elevate themselves all the way upward to adequate truth concerning this matter.

The case is verified here. Conscience is a rule of morality. But it is not the rule of morality, the *recta ratio* spoken of by St. Thomas.

The proof is easy to furnish.

⁶ The matter stands the same in all the questions wherein it is a matter concerning the *imperium*. This act is for St. Thomas an act of the intellect that directs the execution of a thing already willed (*ST I-II*, q. 17, a. 1), whereas it is for Suarez an act of the will. [Tr. note: Again, as noted in the body of the text above, one should note that Lehu’s concern is primarily with the fact that command is an ordering effected by reason—though, in the issuance of this command rectitude of will plays its own role as well. It remains, nonetheless, that the act of command, considered formally as such, is an act of practical intellection, indeed the primary act of prudence.]

⁷ See Leonard Lehu, *Philosophia Moralis et Socialis* (Paris: LeCoffre, 1914), no. 145.

The judgment of conscience is essentially: a) a *subjective* rule; b) a *particular* rule (or, more exactly, a *singular* rule); c) a *practico-practical* rule; d) a *fallible* rule.

Now, the rule of morality must also be: a) *objective*, b) *universelle*, c) sometimes *speculative*, and d) above all, *infallible*.

Therefore, conscience is not *recta ratio*, the rule of morality.

a) We say that the judgment of conscience is an essentially *subjective* rule. Conscience, the definition itself indicates the fact, directs the man who is disposed to act; the rest of mankind escapes its decisions. The uncivilized man⁸ believes himself authorized by his conscience to practice anthropophagy; such a rule does not apply for the civilized European. This is because conscience considers morality from the perspective of the subject. But before considering the act in this special relation, it is first necessary to consider it in itself, independent of the subject. Therefore, an *objective* rule is needed, which is not conscience. It is the *recta ratio* explained by St. Thomas.

b) The judgment of conscience is a rule that is not only particular, but *singular*. It is *about a particular thing to be done*; it is applied *to an act to be posited here and now*. But the human intellect is not content with knowledge of individuals. It needs to generalize and elevate itself to the universal. This is what *recta ratio* does: considering the acts in themselves, it emits universal judgments, for essences are universal.⁹

⁸ [Tr. note: Fr. Lehu literally speaks of a native man living in central Africa.]

⁹ [Tr. note: As regards the judging of particular acts, however, it would seem that the rule and measure that is *recta ratio* should be *the prudent man*. One would, at times, expect Fr. Lehu to say this, but clearly, he is thinking of here of a kind of *recta ratio* in the speculatively-practical order.]

Fr. Cathrein says that we have the natural law. This is true, but the precepts of the natural law are not present for all upon the same plane.¹⁰ First, there are the very common principles that are known by all. Then, there are the proximate conclusions. Then, there are the more distant conclusions. These last are not manifest in themselves. To acquire them, one must work, and it is *right reason* that is free to these investigations. Moreover, the moral order is not composed only of the natural law; it includes also the positive law, above all the divine law and ecclesiastical law. In the interpretation of these precepts of the positive law, conscience does not suffice. We must have another rule: *recta ratio*.

c) The judgment of conscience is an essentially *practico-practical* rule. Properly speaking, it is, *moreso*, a rule of obligation than of morality, and if the rule of obligation belongs to the practical order, the rule of morality lies equally in the speculative order. When I say, “Giving alms is a good act, and calumny is an evil act,” it is not conscience, the practical rule, which will bear this judgement. Above conscience, there will need to be another rule that will be able to be speculative: the *recta ratio* spoken of by St. Thomas.

d) Finally, and above all, the judgement of conscience is an essentially *fallible* rule. All the manuals of morality, immediately after having defined conscience, distinguish right conscience and erroneous conscience. It is useless for us to dwell on justifying this distinction. Is it believable that God would have left to the human race only a fallible rule of morality, that is, a rule of morality that is doubtful because it is often erroneous?

Fr. Cathrein will respond to us by saying that he means only to speak of right conscience, but here several remarks are called for:

¹⁰ See *ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 6.

First, right conscience is not right by itself, i.e., inasmuch as it is conscience, since there can be such a thing as an erroneous conscience. Conscience is right in reason of its conformity with the rule of morals. Therefore, there is a rule of morals that is different from conscience.

Second, right conscience obliges, not inasmuch as it is right, but inasmuch as it is conscience, since erroneous conscience also obligates in certain cases. If conscience obligates inasmuch as it is conscience, and if conscience inasmuch as it is conscience can be erroneous, it follows that it is an essentially fallible rule.

Perhaps it will be objected to us that we also have ourselves admitted that conscience is a rule. Therefore, a fallible rule was not repugnant to use then. Why is it now repugnant to us?—Conscience is a rule in a certain sense. It has been compared to the herald of arms who transmits the orders of the prince. The subjects owe obedience to the envoy as to the prince himself. If the envoy is corrupt and unfaithful in the accomplishment of his mission, the subjects not aware of the error are equally bound to obey it. The same goes for erroneous conscience: “When erring reason proposes something as a precept of God, it then the same thing that one scorn the *dictamen* of reason and that one scorn the precept of God.”¹¹ St. Thomas did not find any drawback to this. Just as the prince is not responsible for the infidelity of his envoy, so too the divine wisdom is not responsible for the transmission error that is produced in the case of erroneous conscience. In that case, it is a matter of a judgment that engages an individual in a particular case. This individual, before acting, has taken, as he ought to do, the judgment of his conscience; he has believed that he has found the law of God where it was not found. This arises from human defectibility. God is not the cause of it. Matters would be wholly otherwise if the objective and universal rule of morality were fallible. Error would ascend all the way to God.

¹¹ *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 5, ad 2.

Behold why, above the fallible rule of conscience, we have need of an infallible rule: it is the *recta ratio* of St. Thomas.

—One will perhaps say to use that all the difficulties that we have lifted against right conscience equally hold against right reason. There is a right conscience and an erroneous conscience; likewise, there is a right reason and a reason that is not right. Therefore, no more will right reason be able to be the rule of the moral order than is right conscience.

—This equation does not hold. Reason is right, or it is not. “Corrupt reason is not reason,”¹² says St. Thomas. The man who reasons poorly does not reason and arrives at error. Error in this case is not imputable to reason, but to him who does violence to reason in not observing its laws. Behold why, if St. Thomas sometimes says *recta ratio*, most often he says *ratio* without qualification, because “corrupt reason is not reason”; erroneous conscience, on the contrary, is conscience.

—But, once and for all, what therefore is *recta ratio*?

—It is that which, setting out from true principles deducts therefrom conclusions following the rules of reasoning. This reason, whether it be in the speculative order or in the practical order, leads infallibly to the truth—and that because our reason is derived from the divine wisdom. It was given to us for knowing the truth, as the eye was given to us for knowing colors, and just as the eye placed in normal conditions infallibly perceives colors, so too reason, if one observes the laws of reasoning, arrives infallibly at the truth, whether in the physical order (“The human soul is immortal”) or in the moral order (“Blasphemy is a sin”). There is, however, this difference, namely that in the physical order human reason knows and does not cause,

¹² *In II Sent.* d. 24, q. 3, a. 3, ad 3. There, it is a matter of the faculty not in its essence (a spiritual faculty being incorruptible) but in its exercise. For when error insinuates itself into the exercise of reason, that arises not because of reason but by the addition of foreign elements that are, rather, a corruption.

whereas, in the moral order, the eternal law communicates to our reason the noble prerogative of being the rule, a secondary and participated rule, it is true, but nonetheless truly the rule of good and of evil. “Whence, it is said in Psalm 4:6-7: ‘Many say, ‘Who shows unto us good things? The light of Your face, O Lord, is signed upon us.’ This is as if the Psalmist said, ‘The light of *reason*, which is in us, can show unto us good things and rule our will inasmuch as it is the light of your face (i.e., it is derived from your face).’”¹³ And behold how *recta ratio* is the rule of morality, an objective rule, a universal and infallible rule, all qualities that cannot apply to the judgment of conscience.

Practical Conclusion. Wholly set aside Suarez with his two erroneous equations (*recta ratio = conscientia* and *lex aeterna = voluntas Dei*) and stick to the formula of St. Thomas: “The rule of the human will is twofold: one proximate and homogeneous, namely human reason itself; but the other is the first rule, namely the eternal law, which is, as it were, the reason of God.”

Post-Script—The thesis of an Ethics professor concerning this question of the rule of morality has been recently given to me. I have found in it many stunning things. Behold a few of them.

(1) The thesis begins with a multitude of distinctions: *The proximate constitutive rule* and *proximate fundamental rule*; then *the fundamental or ultimate constitutive rule* [and] *a rule that is not only obligatory but also remotely constitutive*; finally, *the formal rule* and *the criteriological or logical* [rule]. A bit further on, a *specificatively constitutive rule* will be discussed. Does this whole apparatus of distinctions make the concept of a rule clearer? I would not dare to affirm that it does.

¹³ *ST I-II*, q. 19, a. 4.

Let us see: I have a ruler on my table, under which of these categories should I classify it? I am not sure. For me, it is simply a ruler, and similarly when St. Thomas speaks of the “rule of reason,” I believe he also means just a rule, plain and simple.

(2) The author then introduces this fundamental principle: “Created reason, except for the works of art and the entities called *entia rationis* in Logic, is not the maker of its object but, rather, is essentially speculative.

St. Thomas, however, holds a completely opposite principle: “But it should be known that things have a different relationship to the practical intellect in comparison to their relation to the speculative intellect. For the practical intellect causes things and, hence, is the measure of things that are made through it. The speculative intellect, however, because it receives from things, is in a way moved by the things themselves; thus the things measure it.”¹⁴ Now, human acts fall under the practical intellect; therefore, we cannot apply to them the author’s principle (i.e., “created reason... is not the maker of its object but, rather, is essentially speculative”).

(3) From this principle of the author, it follows that the *rule of reason* or the *good of reason* simply mean the rule known by reason or the good known by reason.

But reason also is what knows and discerns physical good and evil. When I have a toothache, reason judges that I am suffering because of my teeth. Shall we call the toothache, known by reason, a “*malum rationis*”? St. Thomas establishes a solid distinction between the physical order and the moral order: “Human reason, of itself, is not the rule of things. However, the principles naturally instilled in it are certain general rules and measures of all things that are to be done by man, of which natural reason is the rule and measure, although it is not the

¹⁴ *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 2.

measure of things that are by nature.”¹⁵ In natural things, human reason is not a cause, and therefore, it will not be the rule. In the moral order, reason is a cause, and thus, it is the rule of morality. But if reason in the moral order were essentially speculative, how from such a perspective shall we establish the difference between the physical order and the moral order?

(4) The *rule of reason*, meaning the rule known by reason, becomes a very secondary element in the moral order. The important question for our professor is this: “In what, properly on the side of the reality itself, do moral good and evil consist, so that we may see when reason in moral matters is correct and when it is not.”

Obviously, it would today be difficult to remain completely silent concerning the *regula rationis*, as has been done for so many years. It is therefore admitted, and then put in a corner. Thereafter, one feels the sentiment: let us not talk about it anymore. Thanks to this sleight of hand, the same result is obtained as before.

And if the *regula rationis* is only a secondary element of the moral order, let them explain why St. Thomas always uses this formula and never the formula *the rule of nature*, *regula naturae*. Not in hundreds, but in thousands we can count the texts where St. Thomas speaks of the *regula rationis* or *bonum rationis*. And faced with “so great a cloud of witnesses,” what are the two or three texts upon which opponents believed they could support their thesis, whereas Saint Thomas is there speaking about something entirely different?

The author responds that, whether in the terminology of St. Thomas or in common language, preeminence should be given to the *regula rationis*, because given the subjective nature of this rule it is closer to us, and therefore, easier to recognize.

¹⁵ *ST I-II*, q. 91, a. 3, ad 1.

By this, the author seems to align with the opinion that we contested in the preceding note. As we said there, conscience is a subjective rule, yes, but not right reason. Certainly, judgment is an act of the subject, but the truth contained in the conclusion has an undeniable objective value. And that is why we maintain that right reason is an objective rule of morality.

(6) From his principle the author then draws this conclusion: “Therefore, it must be admitted that there is something that proximately constitutes the moral good, even prescinding from any relation to created reason.” He also recognizes that St. Thomas never explicitly addressed this question.

If St. Thomas did not address this question, this is because for him the question did not arise. For St. Thomas, given the fact that the moral good is essentially the “good of reason (*bonum rationis*)” (“The good is represented to the will by reason as an object, and *inasmuch as it falls under the order of reason*, it pertains to the domain of morality [*ad genus moris*]”¹⁶), anything that has not come under the influence of the “order of reason (*ordo rationis*)” is by that very fact excluded from the moral order, and any good, *prescinding from any relation to created reason*, remains confined to the physical order, for it is precisely the relation to reason that introduces the object into morality. “Every object or end has some goodness or malice, at least natural. However, it does not always entail moral goodness or malice, which is considered *through a comparison to reason*.”¹⁷

(6) Finally, if we do not accept nature “adequately taken” (*adaequate sumpta*) as a rule of morality prior to the order of reason, the author wonders where we will find this good to which

¹⁶ ST I-II, q. 19, a. 1, ad 3.

¹⁷ ST I-II, q. 18, a. 8, ad 2.

our reason must conform itself in order to be right, *recta*, and how we will be able to discern the *right reason* from the *non-right reason*.

To the first question, St. Thomas replies: “The rule of human reason is derived from created things which man naturally knows.”¹⁸ This response is more philosophical than that which, by appealing to the nature “adequately taken,” introduces into the concept of nature under the guise of the epithet *adaequata sumpta* a host of things that have nothing to do with nature.

To the second question, we answer that, whether in the order of speculative intellect or in the order of practical intellect, right reason is that which, starting from true premises, unfolds its operations in accordance with the laws of logic.¹⁹ Therefore, true premises and reasoning in accordance with the laws of logic are the conditions that constitute right reason. By fulfilling these two conditions, reason will infallibly arrive at the truth, both in matters of purely speculative truth or in those concerning the truth that directs and regulates moral activity.

The author responds to us that it will be difficult to convince modern philosophers who have such erroneous conceptions of truth.—This is indeed possible, but we are writing for scholastics who admit the existence of objective truth.

¹⁸ *ST I-II*, q. 74, a. 7.

¹⁹ [Trans. note: Fr. Lehu does not deny the essential role of appetite in moral-practical reason, but at times in this article, such a role is not in the foreground, as he considers the logical validity of moral reasoning.]

Lehu, “At what precise point of the *Summa theologiae* does the Treatise on Morality begin?”

A translation of Leonard Lehu, “A quel point précis de la Somme théologique commence le Traité de la Moralité,”
Revue Thomiste 33 (1928): 521-532.

The *Prima secundae* treats of human acts in general in questions 6 through 21. We distinguish two sections here.

The first section, human acts from the ontological point of view (*ST I-II*, q. 6-19), is a study belonging to [Philosophical] Psychology. St. Thomas treated the psychology of knowledge in the *Prima pars* (*ST I*, q.78-89). Here, it is a matter of the psychology of the will’s operations.

The second section, human acts from the moral point of view (*ST I-II*, q.18-21), is a moral study [*étude de morale*]; properly speaking, it is the Treatise on Morality.

The sequence of the four questions that compose this treatise do not pose any difficulty:

q.18, Concerning the Morality of Human Acts in General

q.19, Concerning the Morality of Internal Acts

q.20, Concerning the Morality of External Acts

q.21, Concerning Certain Properties that flow from Morality

Four questions! At first sight, it is a rather small bundle. And yet, authors have written entire volumes upon this subject, and they have not exhausted the matter, for we find still find grain to be gleaned from this field where our predecessors have worked for several centuries.

Properly speaking, the Treatise on Morality is not among the most difficult ones in the *Summa theologiae*, but it is certainly among the most profound. Often, at the moment when it is least expected—St. Thomas not being in the habit of swelling his voice when he touches upon the loftiest questions—like the bolt of lightning that tears open the cloud, an argument, or sometimes even a single word, which a superficial reading could lead one to believe is very

simple, opens absolutely unexpected horizons to the intellect. We will meet many such examples in our selection. However, to profit from this light, it does not suffice that we collect from here and there certain detached propositions that one lays out in a more or less proper manner, at risk of denaturing the Holy Doctor's doctrine. It is necessary to study carefully the *process* of reasoning in each article, benefiting from the data acquired in those that precede.

Here, we will seek the precise point of q.18 where the Treatise on Morality begins.

Up until now, all the commentators and all the theologians have been unanimous in believing that the Treatise on Morality began with the first article of question 18.

Dom Lottin is not of this opinion. He does not believe that it is a question of morality in the first four articles: "In the first four articles, the Holy Doctor abstains systematically from entering into the moral edifice, but he prepares for us entry into it... The first article of question 18 does not affirm precisely the existence of good or evil in action... Moreover, is it indeed a matter of the moral good in the three articles (2, 3, and 4)? We do not think so."²⁰

Let us successively study: (1) the alleged arguments in favor of the new opinion; (2) the arguments in favor of the traditional doctrine.

I. Arguments in Favor of the New Opinion

First argument. In these four articles, "The author indifferently employs the terms *actio hominis* [act of man] and *actio humana* [human act], although he carefully distinguishes them elsewhere."²¹

Response. Is it indeed true that elsewhere St. Thomas always distinguishes them as carefully? See, for example, what we read in the Disputed Questions in a very important and

²⁰ Dom Odon Lottin, "Les éléments de la moralité des actes chez S. Thomas d'Aquin. (ST I-II q.18-21)," *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie* 24 (1922): 294 and 293.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 293.

classic text in this question of morality:²² “However, we speak now of acts OF MAN [*actibus HOMINIS*],” and some lines before, he concludes, “Whence good and bad in HUMAN acts [*actibus HUMANIS*] are considered insofar as the act agrees with reason informed by the divine law.” St. Thomas had spoken *de actibus hominis*; ought we to conclude from this that *in actibus humanis* ought to be understood exclusively of the physical order?

And likewise, while it would be true that St. Thomas has employed one and the other formula indifferently, it would not conform to logic to conclude that in these four articles it is only a question of the *actus hominis* [act of man].

The true interpretation will be this: when St. Thomas says *actus humanus*, this term ought to be understood of the human act to the exclusion of the non-human act. When he says *actus hominis*, this term by itself does not suffice for one to explain it in one sense or in the other; the context will reveal the true signification to us.

Second argument. “The first article does not affirm precisely the existence of good or evil.”²³

Response. In the commentary on this first article that we will give in the second part of our discussion, we will show that in this text St. Thomas not only affirmed good and evil but that he there established the existence of the moral order.

Third argument. “If the Holy Doctor had had the moral order in view, he should have introduced the concept of reason to article 2 where it is a question of the object.”²⁴

²² *De malo*, q.2 a.4.

²³ Lottin, 293.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 294.

Response. St. Thomas is not among those who say everything about everything.

According to St. Thomas, reason is the rule of morality, and the object one of the sources of morality. When he speaks of the rule of morality (i.e., in article 5), he speaks of reason. Here, he treats of the objects of morality, and reason is not the object of morality.

Fourth argument. “In these first articles of question 18, St. Thomas avoids this term (*reason*), whereas he will make the idea of reason the very apparent, guiding thread of his later arguments.”²⁵

Response. When St. Thomas treats of the *bonum rationis*, he obviously speaks of the moral good; however, the word “reason” is not the *schiboleth* outside of which one cannot speak of morality. Often, we treat of morality without believing ourselves obliged to introduce explicitly this term, reason.²⁶

Fifth argument. “If the Holy Doctor had had the moral order in view, he would have spared himself somewhat fanciful argument of article 4, in relation to the end.”²⁷

Response. We reserve the right to respond to this article in the commentary on this fourth article.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

²⁶ Dom Lottin has well noted the word *reason* in article 1 (in the body and in the response to the fourth objection), but this does not bother him. See *ibid.*, 294: “Two times, it is true, by way of example or response to an objection, the word *ratio* is employed; however, one recognizes here a procedure that is habitual to this synthetic mind: to open the horizon, to throw a first light, to initiate a later development about which he wants the reader first to recognize the germ.”—So many considerations that are based upon nothing.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Sixth argument. St. Thomas closes the fourth article by a conclusion that is like a summary, a retrospective glance over the four preceding articles.²⁸ The same doctrine is found in the *Commentary on the Sentences*,²⁹ with a slight modification in form that suggests to Dom Lottin the following reflections: “One will note the difference that separates the exposition of the *Summa theologiae* from that of the Commentary [on the *Sentences*]. In his first work, St. Thomas sharply distinguished a goodness of the physical order and a threefold goodness of the moral order. In the *Summa theologiae*, this distinction disappears; in fact, the conclusion of the exposition establishes, in the same vein, four species of goodness.”³⁰

Response. The material presentation is a little different, it is true, but the doctrine has not changed; and there is no danger of equivocation, for St. Thomas, having spoken of morality in articles 2, 3, and 4, as we will see, it is manifest that the three latter forms of goodness (reported in this enumeration in article 4) are understood of the moral good.

Seventh argument. Dom Lottin addresses another reproach to this same enumeration: “Logically, the conclusion ought to make mention only of these three elements of goodness (the object, circumstances, and end). But the preoccupation of with respecting the traditional terminology of the schools led St. Thomas to admit a slight deviation into the logic of his argument.”³¹

²⁸ ST I q.18 a.4: “Therefore, in human action goodness can be considered in a fourfold manner. In one way according to genus, namely inasmuch as it is an action, for as much as it has with regard to action and entity, so much too does it have with regard to goodness, as is said in article 1. Secondly, with regard to species, which is taken according to its suitable object. Thirdly, with regard to circumstances, as it were, with regard to certain accidents. Fourthly, with regard to end, as it were, in relation to the cause of its goodness.”

²⁹ *In II Sent.*, d. 36, a. 5 and d. 41, a. 1 and 2.

³⁰ Lottin, 294.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Response. A true Thomist would look twice at the matter before granting a deviation, even a small one, in the logic of reasoning of the Holy Doctor. If I have understood him well, Dom Lottin reproaches St. Thomas of having introduced the first goodness (*prout est actio*) into his enumeration without having prepared it in the preceding articles. And were it true that this preparation were lacking, we could say that St. Thomas felt that his readers would not yet have forgotten the scholastic adage: *bonum et ens convertuntur*. However, it is not true that this preparation was lacking; St. Thomas is careful to note the fact—*ut dictum est a.1* [as was said in a.1].

II. Arguments in Favor of the Traditional Doctrine

First of all, we should point out that all theologians, without any exception, up to Dom Lottin, have taught that the Treatise on Morality begins with the first article of *ST* I-II, q.18. The unanimity of the commentators constitutes an argument of great value, and to overthrow this argument, we need discoveries that explain to us the reason for this universal error.

It is not in Abelard or Alexander of Hales that we will seek these discoveries. It is a matter of internal exegesis. An attentive study of the text of the four articles in question will serve us better than a voyage of exploration in the scrubland of primitive scholasticism.

Therefore, we will attempt a brief commentary on these four articles. One will find nothing new in this work. Nevertheless, we dare to hope that beginners, those who are in their first contact with St. Thomas's text, will be able to draw appreciable aid from our modest exposition.

Article 1: Utrum omnis humana action sit bona vel aliqua mala. [Whether every human action is good, or are there some that are evil?"]

The mere statement of the question indicates clearly that St. Thomas has in view here something other than the good or evil of the human act in the physical order.

Just as there are certain birds that sing well and certain ones that sing poorly [*mal*], certain horses that run well and certain ones that run poorly, certain hunting dogs that fetch well and certain ones that fetch poorly, so too is it obvious that there are certain men who walk well, who sing well, who work well, and certain men who walk poorly, who sing poorly, and who work poorly. If St. Thomas did not wish to mean anything else, it is necessary to confess that he has given himself a superfluous issue.

On the contrary, does it not seem that the fact of posing the question and, above all, the manner in which it is expressed want to insinuate that, in human action, there is something wholly particular, of a new order? This is what will constitute morality. Thus, we have said that, in this article, St. Thomas establishes the existence of the moral order.

After having read the body of the article, Dom Lottin does not think that it is a matter here of morality:

The first article does not affirm precisely the existence of good or evil in action; it enunciates a principle of the ideal order: “Tood and bad are in an action *if* this action realizes or does not realize all the elements required for the perfection that belongs to it.” This proposition is presented as the major of a syllogism of which the three following articles constitute the minor.”³²

I fear that the translator has not been able to guard himself against the reproach of being a traitor. In this supposed summary [*raccourci*] of the conclusion, such as it is presented here, the original text has received two nudges that completely distort its meaning.

The first, in the conjunction *if*, emphasized by Dom Lottin. The Latin text has nothing that calls to mind this conditional proposition. Novice objectors, having heard it said that in

³² *Ibid.*, 293.

argumentation the conditional proposition is frowned upon, imagine that because they have exchanged the expression “as much as... so much” for an “if” that they have salvaged the situation. St. Thomas is not one to make these novice arguments: when he writes in “*tantum, in quantum,*” the true translation will be “As much as..., so much...”

In the second place—and this is infinitely graver—Dom Lottin completely leaves aside the essential word of the whole article, that which is the foundation of all the Treatise on Morality: *quae debetur actioni HUMANAЕ*.³³ St. Thomas speaks of the perfection that is owed to human action. In this, we have one of the profound expressions about which we spoke earlier. An uninformed reader passes by them without even noticing them, like the bird that passes close to a pearl without seeing it.

In order to understand all the value of this word, it is necessary to refer to *ST I-II*, q. 1, a. 2. It is even an article that one should study carefully, for it is one of the most profound in the *Prima secundae*. It is in this article that St. Thomas establishes the insertion point of the moral order upon the physical order. The physical order is one thing, and the moral order is another. Nevertheless, these two orders have points of contact; sometimes they interpenetrate; and even the moral order is a *sui generis* blossom that grows upon the trunk of the physical order. It is important to discern exactly this point of insertion.

In q. 1, a. 2, St. Thomas asks himself, “Whether to act on account of an end is proper to the rational nature,” and he responds by two conclusions. The first conclusion: every being acts for an end. The second conclusion: it is the prerogative of rational beings that they alone lead themselves toward the end that they have chosen; other beings are led to the end that has been determined for them by the Creator. Freedom in the choice of the end—here we have the point

³³ [Tr. note—Interestingly, the popular early 20th century Blackfriars edition of the *Summa theologiae* also does not include the word, which is indeed in the Latin.]

of insertion of the moral order upon the physical order. The field of moral order is the free activity of man, which is found in every human act. Thus, see why the plenitude of perfection owed to the human act implies not only conformity to the rule of the physical good, but, moreover, conformity to the rule of the moral good (in other words, morality).

See how I would translate St. Thomas's text: "As much as the action has of being, so much does it have of goodness; as much as it lacks the plenitude of being owed [*due*] to human action, so much does it lack goodness, and one calls it evil."³⁴

In other words: human actions are good or evil. Morally good actions are those that have the plenitude of being owed to the human act; morally bad acts are those that lack something of the plenitude of being owed to the human act.

We are far from Dom. Lottin's conclusion that "the first article does not affirm precisely the existence of good or evil in action."

And not only does St. Thomas here teach us the existence of the moral order, but at the same time, he supplies us the elements for the resolution of a problem that has been stirred up recently. I mean the conflict between morality [*morale*] and sociology. According to a school of thought that is more and more numerous, there can be no morality [*morale*] outside of society.³⁵ According to St. Thomas, morality [*moralité*] is a property essential to the free act. It results from freedom, not from society.³⁶

Art. 2. Utrum actio hominis habeat bonitatem vel malitiam ex obiecto. [Whether the action of man has goodness or wickedness from its object.]

³⁴ *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 1: "Sic igitur dicendum est quod omnis actio, in quantum habet aliquid de esse, in tantum habet de bonitate; in quantum vero deficit ei aliquid de plenitudine essendi quae debetur actioni humanae, in tantum deficit a bonitate, et sic dicitur mala."

³⁵ Simon Deploige, *Le conflit de la morale et de la sociologie* (Paris: Alcan, 1911).

³⁶ Cf. *In II Sent.* d. 35, a. 1.

One distinguishes three sources of morality: the object, the circumstances, and the end. They will be studied in articles 2, 3, and 4. We begin with the object.

Before reading the body of the article, let us note that one does not find in St. Thomas these formulas that are frequently used today—“the physical order” and “the moral order”. However, when we meet the opposition between *res naturales* and *actus humani*, we can generally translate them by “the physical order” and the “moral order.” This will be the pure doctrine of St. Thomas expressed in the language of the 20th century.

And now, if we attentively read the body of the article, we will find there: “Just as the first goodness of a natural thing (in the physical order) results from its form, which gives it its species, so too does the first goodness of the moral act result from its object... And just as in natural things (in the physical order) the first evil occurs when the produced thing does not realize its specific form,... so too the first evil in moral actions is that which is from the object.”³⁷

One should note well three things here:

1. The opposition between natural things and human acts; it is the opposition between the physical order and the moral order.
2. The term “moral act” employed by St. Thomas (*ita et prima bonitas actus moralis... ita primum malum in actionibus moralibus...*); if it seemed that the term “human act” was equivocal, the “moral act” will dissipate all doubts.
3. The examples presented here; the example of a good act (to use one’s own thing) and the example of the bad act (to take what belongs to another). If St. Thomas had wished to

³⁷ *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 2. [Tr. note—I have added the ellipses, which are not found in Fr. Lehu’s French translation of the text. The remarks in parentheses are added by him.]

speaking exclusively of physical good or evil, he would not have looked for examples in the moral order.

Therefore, it remains certain that, in this second article, St. Thomas speaks of the morality that the human act receives from its object.

Dom Lottin is not yet convinced. He says that the expression, “*actus moralis* is identical to that of *actus humanus*, and it designates the deliberate act susceptible to morality.”³⁸ This interpretation is gratuitous, for the deliberate act is not only susceptible to morality. By the very fact that it is deliberate, it is necessarily endowed with morality. He saw above that the field of the free activity of man and the field of morality are one and the same.

Art. 3 Utrum actio hominis sit bona vel mala ex circumstantiis. [Whether the act of man is good or bad from its circumstances.]

In the body of the article, exactly summarized at the end of the response to the third objection, St. Thomas explains that, as much in the physical order as in the moral order—*tam in rebus naturalibus quam in actionibus moralibus*—besides the essential goodness resulting from the specific form of the thing, or the object of the act, it is necessary to acknowledge an accidental goodness resulting from accidents. Now, if the object of the act can be considered as its specific form, the circumstances are accidents for it—hence why morality depends upon the circumstances.

In the response to the second objection, St. Thomas had said that it is for this reason that the consideration of circumstances belongs to moral science—“*et per hunc modum considerantur circumstantiae actuum in doctrina morali.*” Therefore, he speaks of the morality of the

³⁸ Lottin, 293.

circumstances, as he already spoke of them in article 1—“*determinata quantitas secundum rationem, vel debitus locus, vel aliquid huiusmodi.*”

Art. 4 Utrum actio humana sit bona vel mala ex fine. [Whether human action is good or bad from its end.]

According to Dom Lottin, “If the Holy Doctor had had the moral order in view, he would have spared himself the somewhat fanciful argument of article 4, relative to the end.”³⁹ Does the argument of article 4 merit the qualification of “fanciful”? It is the first time that I have heard it said. Cajetan asked himself whether this article was superfluous: since the end is a circumstance, the question seems to be resolved by article 3, where St. Thomas treated the circumstances in general. However, Cajetan responds quite rightly that the end of the agent is not only a circumstance; it is also the form of the act, as St. Thomas will exposit at greater length in what follows, particularly in the articles 6 and 7.⁴⁰ And if article 3 sufficed for the end-circumstance, a special argument is needed for the end-form. Moreover, this argument is only sketched here, for St. Thomas will develop it in greater detail in articles 6 and 7.

Moreover, is solely the existence of this fourth article a manifest proof that St. Thomas intends to speak of morality? How is the ontological goodness of acts influenced by the consideration of the end—I mean the *finis operantis*? Two shoemakers make shoes. Both want to have money, but the one wants it in order to get drunk, the other to buy remedies for his sick child. Specifically different from the moral point of view, these two acts do not differ from the physical point of view. Would that one remember St. Thomas’s principle: “Moral ends are

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See *ST* I-II, q. 18, a. 6: “Whence, the Philosopher says that he who steals in order to commit adultery is, *essentially* [*per se*] speaking, more an adulterer than a thief.”

accidental to the natural thing.”⁴¹ Now, the end of the agent is essentially an end belonging to the moral order.

Among those who have had the patience to follow us this far, some may be tempted to find superfluous the difficulty that we have taken in order to treat at such length a question that will seem to them to be of little importance. Do we really need to be so energetic concerning whether, in St. Thomas’s thought, the division between two treatises should be made a little higher or a little lower, at some nearby articles?

If we have made a claim in this matter, it is precisely that the question is not of small importance. To subtract the first four articles of question 18 from the treatise on morality is not a simple mutilation; it is a true decapitation. In the following articles, we will discuss whether the end gives the act a specific morality (a.6), what are the relations of morality *ex fine* with morality *ex obiecto* (a.7), whether the act receives a specific morality from the circumstances (a.1), and so forth. If we are deprived of the foundations established in the first four articles, all the following articles are float in midair; they rest on nothing.

And it appears that this decapitation was not enough; in this same 18th question, there would be another two articles that do not belong to the treatise on morality—namely, articles 6 and 7:

The analysis of this sixth article shows that, in speaking of the end, St. Thomas does not mean a specifically *moral* end. Such will be in question in article 9 concerning the indifference of acts *in concreto*. In article 6, he is concerned with the concept of end specifying the *human* act as such. In fact, while the notion of reason, the formal cause of morality, permeates all of articles 8-11, it is absent from articles 6 and 7. Would that one would read *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 8, ad 2... *et de hac nunc agitur*. Therefore, it is only in article 8 that St. Thomas wishes to consider the specifically moral end.⁴²

⁴¹ *ST I-II*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3.

⁴² Lottin, 309n2. Nevertheless, in pages 303-313, he gives a commentary on these two articles, as though they are truly concerned with morality. It begins thus: “Why then the insertion of articles 6-7, which come to break up the

I reread *ST I-II*, q.18, a.8, ad 2, and I find there: *et de hac nunc agitur*. Therefore, article 8 is concerned with morality, but I see nothing that authorizes me to conclude that the matter was otherwise in articles 6 and 7.

One says to us that in this 6th article, St. Thomas “does not mean a specifically moral end,” but “an end specifying the human act as such.”—But, as we have already said, since when has one ever seen the human act specified in its physical being by the end of the agent?

Having rejected the carving up to which this poor q.18 had been the victim, it is impossible for us to accept the distribution of articles presented by Dom Lottin.⁴³

This is how we would have arranged the articles of this question:

Two Sections

First Section: **The Principles**

- | | |
|---|------|
| I. The existence of morality | a. 1 |
| II. The three sources of morality, which are... | |
| 1. The object | a. 2 |
| 2. The circumstances | a. 3 |
| 3. The end | a. 4 |

Second Section: **The Application of the Principles**

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1. The object | a. 5 |
| 2. The end, considered... | |
| a. absolutely | a. 6 |
| b. in its relations with the object | a. 7 |

Corollary. Indifferent acts...

logic of reasoning so transparent in the Commentary on the Sentences and in the question *De malo*?” This insertion breaks up not St. Thomas’s logic of reasoning but the logic of the reasoning that Dom Lottin has imagined to be St. Thomas’s.

⁴³ Lottin, 402: “With q. 18, the study of the elements of morality in general is completed. After having recalled the elements of the ontological goodness of every action in light of the metaphysical principle of the identity of the good and being (a. 1-4), St. Thomas determined the norm of moral goodness properly speaking: reason, the formal constitutive of morality (a. 5). And after a parenthesis (a. 6-7) that has moreover enabled him to initiate questions 19 and 20 (*a useless initiation here after the introduction given in the prologue before q.18*), he studied the application of the norm, asking himself whether the elements of goodness in general always imply an intrinsic relation with reason. We know his response: if the pursued end always moralizes the deliberate internal act (a. 9), in many cases, the object and circumstances leave the external act outside of the moral domain (a.8, 10 and 11).”

[Tr. note—The longer parenthesis is Lehu’s insertion.]

- a. *in abstracto* a. 8
 - b. *in concreto* a. 9
 - 3. The circumstances
 - a. Those that specify a. 10
 - b. Those that do not specify a. 11

