LESSON 5

An Eternal Immovable Substance Must Exist

ARISTOTLE'S TEXT Chapter 6: 1071b 3-1071b 22

1055. Since there are three classes of substance (1028), two of which are physical and one immovable, concerning the latter it is necessary to affirm that an eternal immovable substance must exist. For substances are the primary kind of beings, and if all of them are perishable, all things are perishable. But it is impossible either that motion should have come to be or that it should perish, for it always existed; [1] and the same is true of time, for there cannot be a before and an after if there is no time. Motion is continuous, then, in the sense that time is; for time is either the same as motion or a property of it. Now the only continuous motion is that which pertains to place, and of this only that which is circular.[2]

1056. But even if there is something which is capable of imparting or producing motion, but is not actually doing so, motion will still not exist; for that which has a potentiality may possibly not exercise it. Hence nothing is to be gained if we invent certain eternal substances, as do those who posit the separate Forms, unless there is some principle among them which is capable of causing change (83). This is not sufficient, then, nor is another substance besides the separate Forms sufficient; for if it does not act, there will be no eternal motion.

1057. And even if it does act this will still not be sufficient, if its essence is a potentiality; for there will be no eternal motion, since what is potential may possibly not be. Hence there must be a principle of the kind whose substance is an actuality.

1058. Further, such substances must also be immaterial; for they must be eternal if anything else is. Hence they are actualities.

[1] *Physica*, VIII, 1 (251b 10).

[2] *Physica*, VIII, 8 & 9 (264b 9-265b 16).

COMMENTARY

2488. After having shown what the principles of sensible substances are, here the Philosopher begins to establish the truth about the immovable substances, which are separate from matter. This topic is divided into two parts. First (1055:C 2488), he treats substances of this sort by giving his own opinion. Second, he treats them by giving the opinions of other thinkers. He does this in the following book [1] ("Concerning the substance of sensible things").

The first part is divided into two members. First, he proves that there is a substance which is eternal, immovable and separate from matter. Second (1067:C 2519) he investigates the attributes of this substance ("Now the first mover").

In regard to the first he does three things. First, he proves that an eternal substance must exist. Second (1059:C 2500), he deals with a question arising from the foregoing discussion ("There is a difficulty, however"); and third (1064:C 2508), from the answer given to the question which was raised he proceeds to clarify a truth previously established ("Hence, Chaos or Night").

In regard to the first he does two things. First, he shows that it is necessary to posit an eternal substance. Second (1056:C 2492), he shows what kind of substance it must be ("But even if there is").

He accordingly says, first (1055), that it has been pointed out above (1028:C 2424) that there are three classes of substances. Two of these are natural substances, because they undergo motion—one being eternal, as the heavens, and the other perishable, as plants and animals. And besides these there is a third class, which is immovable and not natural; and of this kind of substance it is now necessary to speak. With a view to investigating this kind of substance it is first necessary to prove that an eternal immovable substance must exist. He proceeds as follows.

2489. Substances are the primary kind of beings, as has been shown above (1024:C 2417-23), and when primary things are destroyed none of the others remain. Therefore, if no substance is eternal but all are perishable, it follows that nothing is eternal but that "all things are perishable," i.e., they do not always exist. But this is impossible. Hence there must be an eternal substance.

2490. That it is impossible for nothing to be eternal he proves from the fact that motion cannot have come to be or "perish," i.e., it cannot have come to be anew or at some time totally cease to be. For it has been shown in Book VIII of the *Physics* [2] that motion is eternal without qualification. It also seems impossible that time should not be eternal; for if time began to be at some time or will cease to be at some time it would follow that prior to time there was the non-being of time, and also that there will be time after the non-being of time. But this seems to be impossible, because there could be no before or after if time did not exist, since time is nothing else than the measure of before and after in motion. Thus it would follow that time existed before it began to be, and that it will exist after it ceases to be. Hence it seems that time must be eternal.

2491. And if time is continuous and eternal, motion must be continuous and eternal, because motion and time are either the same thing, as some claimed, or time is a property of motion, as is really the case. For time is the measure of motion, as is evident in Book IV of the *Physics*.[3] However, it must not be thought that every motion can be eternal and continuous, since this can be true only of local motion; and among local motions this is true only of circular motion, as is proved in Book VIII of the *Physics*.[4]

2492. **But even if** (1056).

Then he shows what kind of substance this eternal substance must be, and in regard to this he does three things. First, he shows that in order to account for the eternity of motion

[1] I.e., Book XIII.

[2] *Physica*, VIII, 1 (251b 10-252b 5).

[3] *Physica*, IV, 12 (221a 1).

[4] *Physica*, VIII, 8 & 9 (264b 9-265b 16).

it is necessary to posit an eternal substance which is always moving or acting. He says that, since it is necessary, on the assumption that motion is eternal, that there be an eternal substance which is capable of imparting or producing motion, it is also necessary that this be a mover or agent which is always acting, because if it were "capable of imparting or producing motion," i.e., if it had the power to produce or cause motion, and was not actually doing so, it would follow that there would be no actual motion. For that which has the power of causing motion may possibly not be causing it, since that which has the power of acting may possibly not act; and thus motion would not be eternal. Assuming, then, that motion is eternal, it is necessary to posit an eternal substance which is actually moving or acting.

2493. Next, he concludes from this that nothing is to be gained by accepting the opinion of Plato, who posited eternal substances, since this is not sufficient to account for the eternity of motion. For the assumption that there are certain separate and eternal substances is not sufficient to account for this unless there is some principle among them which can cause change; but this does not seem to fit the separate Forms. For Plato claimed that the separate Forms are nothing else than universals existing apart from matter. But universals as such do not cause motion; for every active or motive principle is a singular thing, as has been pointed out above (1053:C 2482). Neither the separate Forms, then, nor any other separate substances besides the Forms, such as the separate mathematical entities posited by some, are sufficient to account for the eternity of motion, because even the objects of mathematics as such are not principles of motion. And if there is no eternal active substance, there will be no eternal motion, because the principle of motion is an eternal substance which is a mover or agent.

2494. **And even if** (1057).

Second, he shows that, in order for motion to be eternal it is necessary not only that an eternal substance exist, which is a mover or agent, but also that its essence be an actuality. Hence he says that the eternity of motion is not adequately accounted for even if it is supposed that an eternal substance does act yet is potential in essence. For example, it would not be sufficient to hold that the first principles are fire or water, as the ancient natural philosophers did, because then motion could not be eternal. For if a mover is such that its essence contains potentiality, it can possibly not be, because whatever is in potentiality may possibly not be. Hence it would be possible for motion not to be, and so it would not be necessary and eternal. Therefore it follows that there must be a first principle of motion of the sort whose essence is not in potentiality but is only an actuality.

2495. **Further, such substances** (1058).

Third, he further concludes that this kind of substance must be immaterial. He says that it also follows from the foregoing (1055-57:C 2488-94) that substances of this kind, which are the principles of eternal motion, must be free from matter; for matter is in potentiality. Therefore they must be eternal if something else is eternal, as motion and time. Thus it follows that they are actualities.

2496. He concludes in this way last because of the question which he will next raise. From this reasoning, then, it is evident that here Aristotle firmly thought and believed that motion must be eternal and also time; otherwise he would not have based his plan of investigating immaterial substances on this conviction.

2497. Yet it should be noted that the

arguments which he introduces in Book VIII of the *Physics*,[5] which he assumes as the basis of his procedure here, are not demonstrations in the strict sense but only dialectical arguments; unless perhaps they are arguments against the positions of the ancient natural philosophers regarding the beginning of motion, inasmuch as he aims to destroy these positions.

2498. And aside from the other arguments which he does not touch upon here, it is evident that the argument which he does give here to prove that time is eternal is not demonstrative. For if we suppose that at some moment time began to be, it is not necessary to assume a prior moment except in imaginary time; just as when we say that there is no body outside of the heavens, what we mean by "outside" is merely an imaginary something. Hence, just as it is not necessary to posit some place outside of the heavens, even though "outside" seems to signify place, so too neither is it necessary that there be a time before time began to be or a time after time will cease to be, even though before and after signify time.

2499. But even if the arguments which prove that motion and time are eternal are not demonstrative and necessarily conclusive, still the things which are proved about the eternity and immateriality of the first substance necessarily follow; for, even if the world were not eternal, it would still have to be brought into being by something that has prior existence. And if this cause were not eternal, it too would have to be produced by something else. But since there cannot be an infinite series, as has been proved in Book II (153:C 301-4), it is necessary to posit an eternal substance whose essence contains no potentiality and is therefore immaterial.

[5] *Physica*, VIII, 1 & 2 (250b 10-253a 21).

telligible and the first desirable good must be the same. The reason is that a concupiscible good, which is not an intelligible good, is merely an apparent good; but the first good "must be an object of will," i.e., an object desired by intellectual appetite. For will belongs to the intellectual order and not merely to that of concupiscible appetite. And this is so because what is desired by the concupiscible power seems to be good because it is desired; for concupiscence perverts the judgment of reason insofar as something pleasant to sense seems to be good to reason. But what is desired by intellectual appetite is desired because it seems to be good in itself. For "understanding" as such, i.e., the act of intellection, which is moved in a way by an intelligible object, "is the principle of desire." Therefore it is evident that the object of concupiscible appetite is good only when it is desired through a dictate of reason. Hence it cannot be the first good, but only that which, because it is good, moves desire and is at once both appetible and intelligible.

2523. **And one of the two** (1068).

Since he has proved that the first mover is both intelligible and appetible, it now remains to show from this how perfection is found in the first mover. In regard to this he does three things. First (1068:C 2523), he shows the perfection of the first mover in itself by considering the formal character of the intelligible and the appetible; second (1070:C 2529), in relation to the first sphere ("And it causes motion"); and third (1071:C 2536), in relation to the thing that desires and understands it ("And its course of life").

In treating the first part he does two things. First, he proves that the first mover is perfect on the ground that it is intelligible; and second (1069:C 2526), on the ground that it is appetible ("But that which is good").

He says, first (1068), that, just as movers and things moved are related to one another, so also are intelligible things. He calls this latter relationship an intelligible column of opposites because one intelligible is the first principle for understanding another, just as one mover is also the cause of the motion of another.

2524. Therefore, just as it has been shown (1066:C 2518) from the series of movers and things moved that the first mover is a simple substance and an actuality, in a similar fashion the same thing is found to be true from the series of intelligible things. For it is evident that substance is the first of intelligible things, because we understand accidents only by means of substance, through which they are defined; and among substances a simple intelligible substance is prior to a composite one; for simple things are included in the concept of composite things. And of the simple entities contained in the class of substance the actually intelligible are prior to the potentially intelligible; for potentiality is defined by means of actuality. It follows, then, that the first intelligible entity is a simple substance which is an actuality.

2525. And lest he should seem to be adopting the opinion of Plato, who claimed that the first principle of things is the intelligible one-in-itself, he therefore explains the difference between being one and being simple. He says that *one* and *simple* do not signify the same thing, but one signifies a measure, as has been pointed out in Book X (825:C 1950-52), and simple signifies that state whereby something is such as not to be composed of many things.

2526. **But that which is good** (1069).

Then he proves the same point from the formal character of the appetible. He says that that which is good and [2] that which is desirable in itself belong to the same class. For that which is prior in the class of intelligible things is also a greater good in the class of appetible things, or is something analogous to it. He says this because intelligible things are actual insofar as they exist in the intellect, whereas appetible things are actual insofar as they exist in reality; for good and evil are in things, as has been pointed out in Book VI (558:C 1240).

2527. Hence, just as the concept of intelligible substance is prior to that of intelligible accidents, the same relationship holds for the goods which correspond proportionally to these concepts. Therefore the greatest good will be a simple substance, which is an actuality, because it is the first of intelligible things. It is evident, then, that the first mover is identical with the first intelligible and the first appetible good, which is the greatest good.

2528. But since what is appetible and what is good have the character of an end or goal, and there does not seem to be an end in the realm of immovable things, as has been explained in the dialectical discussions in Book III (192:C 374-75), he therefore removes this difficulty. He says that the division in which the various senses of end or goal are distinguished shows that a final cause can be found in a way in the realm of immovable things. Now one thing can be the goal of another in two ways: first, as something having prior existence, as the center of the world is said to be a goal which is prior to the motion of heavy bodies; and nothing prevents a goal of this kind from existing in the realm of immovable things. For a thing can tend by its motion to participate in some degree in something immovable; and the first mover can be a goal in this way. Second, one thing is said to be the goal of another, not as something that exists actually, but only as existing in the intention of the agent by whose activity it is produced, as health is the goal of the activity of the medical art. An end or goal of this kind does not exist in the realm of immovable things.

2529. **And it causes motion** (1070).

He now relates the first unmoved mover to the first sphere. He says that, since the first unmoved mover causes motion as something loved, there must be something which is first moved by it, through which it moves other things. This is the first heaven. Therefore, since we suppose motion to be eternal, the first sphere must be moved eternally, and it in turn must move other things. And it is better to speak of it as something loved rather than as something desired, since there is desire only of something that is not yet possessed, but there is love even of something that is possessed.

2530. And if it must be moved eternally, it must be incapable of being other than it is but must always remain substantially the same. Hence the primary kind of motion, by which "the first sphere" is moved, necessarily "is local motion," i.e., motion as regards place; because that which is moved "according to the other kinds of motion," i.e., generation and destruction, increase and decrease, and alteration, must differ as regards something intrinsic, namely, substance, quantity or quality. But that which is moved with local motion differs as regards place, which is extrinsic to the thing in place, but not as regards substance or any intrinsic disposition of substance.

2531. Therefore, since the first sphere differs as regards place but not as regards substance, the first mover, which is immovable and always actual, can in no way be other than it is, because it cannot be moved. For if it were moved, it would be moved especially with the primary kind of motion, which is local motion, of which the first type is circular. But it is not moved with this motion, since it moves other things with this motion. For the first mover is not moved with that kind of motion by which it imparts motion, just as the

[2] Inserting *et* before *per se eligibile*.

first cause of alteration is not itself altered. Hence it is not moved circularly, and so cannot be moved in any way. Therefore it cannot be other than it is; and thus it follows that the primary kind of motion exists in that which is moved of necessity; for that is necessary which cannot not be. But it is not necessary in the sense in which things forced are necessary, but its necessity consists in its good state. And the thing which moves it is a principle of motion as an object of desire, or a goal.

2532. That its necessity is such becomes evident from the different meanings of the term *necessary*, for it is used in three senses. First it means that which happens by force, i.e., what cannot fail to happen because of the power exerted by the thing applying force. Second, it means that without which a thing does not fare well—either that without which a goal cannot be attained at all (as food is necessary for the life of an animal), or that without which something is not in a perfect state (as a horse is necessary for a journey in the sense that it is not easy to make a journey without one). Third, it means that which cannot [3] be other than it is, but is necessary absolutely and essentially.

2533. Therefore, when it is said that an orb is moved of necessity, such necessity cannot be called necessity of force; for in imperishable things there is not found anything that is outside their nature, but in the case of things which are forced what occurs is not natural. Similarly such necessity cannot be absolute necessity, because the first thing which is moved moves itself, as is proved in Book VIII of the *Physics*,[4] and what moves itself has within itself the power to move or not move. It follows, then, that the necessity of the first motion is necessity from the end, inasmuch as there cannot be a fitting order to the end unless such motion is eternal.

2534. Hence it is on this principle, i.e., the first mover viewed as an end, that the heavens depend both for the eternality of their substance and the eternality of their motion. Consequently the whole of nature depends on such a principle, because all natural things depend on the heavens and on such motion as they possess.

2535. It should also be noted that Aristotle says here that the necessity of the first motion is not absolute necessity but necessity from the end, and the end is the principle which he later calls God inasmuch as things are assimilated to God through motion. Now assimilation to a being that wills and understands (as he shows God to be) is in the line of will and understanding, just as things made by art are assimilated to the artist inasmuch as his will is fulfilled in them. This being so, it follows that the necessity of the first motion is totally subject to the will of God.

[3] Reading *non contingit* for *convenit* with the sense of the text. See G. Ducoin (as in C 2513, n. 8).
[4] *Physica*, VIII, 5 (256b 14 ff.).

LESSON 8

The Perfection of the First Substance

ARISTOTLE'S TEXT Chapter 7: 1072b 14-1073a 13

1071. And its course of life is like the best which we enjoy for a short time; for it is always in that state, though this is impossible for us.

1072. For its operation is also pleasure.[1] This is why being awake, sensing and understanding are most pleasant, and hopes [2] and memories are pleasant because of them. Now understanding in itself has to do with what is best in itself, and the highest type of understanding has to do with what is best in the highest degree.

1073. And an intellect understands itself insofar as it takes on its intelligible object; for it becomes intelligible by attaining and understanding its object, so that an intellect and its intelligible object are the same. For that which is receptive of something intelligible and of substance is an intellect; and it is actual when it possesses this.[3] Hence it is the latter rather than the former state which seems to constitute the divine state of intellect; and its act of understanding is the most pleasant and best. Therefore, if God is in that pleasurable state in which we sometimes are, this is wondrous; and if He is in that state in a higher degree, this is even more wondrous; and He is in that state.

1074. Life, then, also belongs to Him; for intellectual activity is life, and God is that activity; and the essential activity of God is the life which is best and eternal. And we say that God is an animal, eternal and most excellent. Hence life and continuous and eternal duration belong to God; for this is what God is.

1075. And all those, such as the Pythagoreans and Speusippus,[4] who think (1109:C 2644) that the greatest good and excellence are not found in the [first] principle (because they are of the opinion that, while the principles of plants and animals are causes, it is in the things that come from these that goodness and perfection are found) are in error. For seed comes from other things which are prior and perfect, and it is not seed that is first but the perfect being. For example, one might say that the man is prior to the seed, not the man who comes from the seed, but another man from whom the seed comes (780). Therefore it is evident from what has been said that there is a substance which is eternal and immovable and separate from sensible things.

1076. And it has been shown [5] that this substance can have no magnitude, but is without parts and indivisible; for it causes motion for an infinite time, and nothing finite has an infinite power. And since every magnitude is either finite

[1] For an explanation of this see *Eth. Nic.*, X, 4 (1174b 15 ff.).
[2] Reading *spes* for *species*, on the basis of the Greek.
[3] See *De Anima*, III, 2 (426a 1 ff.).
[4] Reading *Speusippus* with the Greek for *Leucippus*.
[5] *Physica*, VIII, 10 (266a 24).

immaterial substances and immobile principles, and even the same number of "perceptible principles," i.e., celestial bodies. He uses the term *reasonable* in order to imply that this conclusion is a probable one and not one that is necessary. Hence he adds that he is leaving the necessity of this to those who are stronger and more capable of discovering it than he is.

2587. **However, if there can be** (1085).

Here the Philosopher rejects those suppositions by which the conclusion given above could be weakened; and there are three of these. The first is that one could say that there are certain separate substances to which no celestial motion corresponds.

2588. In order to reject this he says that, if there can be no celestial motions which are not connected with the motion of some star, and again if every immutable substance which has reached "in itself the highest good," i.e., which has reached its own perfection without motion, must be considered an end of some motion, there will be no immutable and immaterial nature besides those substances which are the ends of celestial motions; but the number of separate substances will correspond necessarily to the number of celestial motions.

2589. Yet the first assumption is not necessary, namely, that every immaterial and immutable substance is the end of some celestial motion. For it can be said that there are separate substances too high to be proportioned to the celestial motions as their ends. And this is not an absurd supposition. For immaterial substances do not exist for the sake of corporeal things, but rather the other way around.

2590. **But there cannot be** (1086).

Then he rejects the second supposition which could weaken the inference mentioned above. For one could say that there are many more motions in the heavens than have been counted, but that these cannot be perceived because they produce no diversity in the motion of one of the celestial bodies which are perceived by the sense of sight and are called stars.

2591. And in order to reject this he had already equivalently said that there can be no celestial motion which is not connected with the motion of some star. His words here are that there cannot be other motions in the heavens besides those which produce the diversity in the motions of the stars, whether they be the motions mentioned or others, either the same in number or more or fewer.

2592. This can be taken as a probable conclusion from the bodies which are moved; for if every mover exists for the sake of something moved, and every motion belongs to something which is moved, there can be no motion which exists for itself or merely for the sake of another motion, but all motions must exist for the sake of the stars. For otherwise, if one motion exists for the sake of another, then for the same reason this motion also must exist for the sake of another. Now since an infinite regress is impossible, it follows that the end of every motion is one of the celestial bodies which are moved, as the stars. Hence there cannot be any celestial motion as a result of which some diversity in a star cannot be perceived.

2593. **And it is evident** (1087).

Then he rejects a third supposition by which the above inference could be weakened. For someone might say that there are many worlds, and that in each of these there are as many spheres and motions as there are in this world, or even more, and thus it is necessary to posit many immaterial substances.

2594. He rejects this position by saying that there is evidently only one heaven. If there were many numerically and the same specifically, as there are many men, a similar judgment would

also have to be made about the first principle of each heaven, which is an immovable mover, as has been stated (1079:C 2555). For there would have to be many first principles which are specifically one and numerically many.

2595. But this view is impossible, because all things which are specifically one and numerically many contain matter. For they are not differentiated from the viewpoint of their intelligible structure or form, because all the individuals have a common intelligible structure, for example, man. It follows, then, that they are distinguished by their matter. Thus Socrates is one not only in his intelligible structure, as man, but also in number.

2596. However, the first principle, "since it is a quiddity," i.e., since it is its own essence and intelligible structure, does not contain matter, because its substance is "complete reality," i.e., actuality, whereas matter is in potentiality. It remains, then, that the first unmoved mover is one not only in its intelligible structure but also in number. Hence the first eternal motion, which is caused by it, must be unique. It therefore follows that there is only one heaven.

2597. **Now traditions** (1088).

He shows how the points discovered about an immaterial substance compare with both the ancient and common opinions. He says that certain traditions about the separate substances have been handed down from the ancient philosophers, and these have been bequeathed to posterity in the form of a myth, to the effect that these substances are gods, and that the divine encompasses the whole of nature. This follows from the above points, granted that all immaterial substances are called gods. But if only the first principle is called God, there is only one God, as is clear from what has been said. The rest of the tradition has been introduced in the form of a myth in order to persuade the multitude, who cannot grasp intelligible things, and inasmuch as it was expedient for the passing of laws and for the benefit of society, that by inventions of this kind the multitude might be persuaded to aim at virtuous acts and avoid evil ones. He explains the mythological part of this tradition by adding that they said that the gods have the form of men and of certain other animals. For they concocted the fables that certain men as well as other animals have been turned into gods; and they added certain statements consequent upon these and similar to the ones which have just been mentioned. Now if among these traditions someone wishes to accept only the one which was first noted above, namely, that the gods are immaterial substances, this will be considered a divine statement, and one that is probably true. And it is so because every art and every philosophy has often been discovered by human power and again lost, either because of wars, which prevent study, or because of floods or other catastrophes of this kind.

2598. It was also necessary for Aristotle to maintain this view in order to save the eternity of the world. For it was evident that at one time men began to philosophize and to discover the arts; and it would seem absurd that the human race should be without these for an infinite period of time. Hence he says that philosophy and the various arts were often discovered and lost, and that the opinions of those ancient thinkers are preserved as relics up to the present day.

2599. Last, he concludes that "the opinion of our forefathers,"[9] i.e., the one received from those who philosophized and after whom philosophy was lost, is evident to us only in this way, i.e., in the form of a myth, as has been stated above (1088:C 2597).

[9] Reading *paterna opinio* with the text for *praedicta opinio*. See G. Ducoin (as in C 2513, n. 8).

LESSON 11

The Dignity of the First Intelligence

ARISTOTLE'S TEXT Chapter 9: 1074b 15-1075a 10

1089. The things which pertain to intellect (or mind) involve certain difficulties; for of the things apparent to us it seems to be the most divine; but how it is so gives rise to certain difficulties.

1090. For if it is not actually understanding, but is in a sense like one asleep, what dignity will it have? Or if it is understanding, but its chief good is different from itself, then, since its essence is not an act of understanding but a potentiality, it will not be the best substance; for it is by reason of its act of understanding that dignity belongs to it.

1091. Furthermore, whether its substance is its power to understand or its act of understanding, what does it understand? For it understands either itself or something else; and if something else, either the same thing always or something different.

1092. Does it make any difference or not, then, whether it understands what is good or what is contingent? Or is it absurd that it should ponder about certain things?

1093. Hence it is evident that it understands what is most divine and honorable, and that it does not change; for a change would be for the worse, and this would already be motion.

1094. Therefore, if the first mover is not its act of understanding but a potency, it is reasonable to assume, first, that the continuity of its act of understanding is laborious to it (797).

1095. Second, that there is evidently something else more honorable than intellect, namely, what it understands. For both the power to understand and understanding itself belong even to one who understands the basest thing. This must accordingly be avoided; for there are some things which it is better not to see than to see. But this will not be so if the act of understanding is the best of things. Therefore, if there is a most powerful intellect, it must understand itself.

1096. And its act of understanding is an understanding of understanding. But science, perception, opinion and thought always seem to be about something else and only indirectly about themselves.

1097. Again, if understanding is something different from being understood, from which of these does the intellect derive its goodness? For the essence of understanding and that of being understood are not the same.

1098. But in certain cases is not understanding identical with the thing understood? For in the productive sciences the object is the substance or quiddity without matter; and in the theoretical sciences the intelligible structure is both the object and the understanding of it. Therefore, since the object of understanding does not differ from the act of understanding in the case of things which have

no matter, they will be the same; and the act of understanding will be identical with the thing understood.

1099. Yet the difficulty still remains whether the thing that it understands is composite; for if it is, the intellect will be changed in passing from one part of the whole to another.

1100. Now whatever does not have matter is indivisible, for example, the human mind.[1]

1101. And the act of understanding composite things involves time. For it does not possess its goodness at this or at that moment but attains the greatest good over a whole period of time,[2] and this is something different from itself. And an intellect which understands itself is in this state through all eternity.

[1] This statement and the first sentence of T 1101, given as questions in the Latin version, have been emended to conform with the Greek text and St. Thomas' commentary.
[2] See *Ethica*, I, 7 (1098a 16-20).

COMMENTARY

2600. Having settled the issue about the perfection and oneness of this immaterial substance, the Philosopher now meets certain difficulties concerning its activity; for it has been shown above (1067-70:C 2519-35) that the first immaterial substance causes motion as an intelligible object and a desirable good. This is divided into two parts. In the first (1089:C 2600) he settles certain difficulties about the first immaterial substance insofar as it is an intelligible good and an intellect; and in the second (1102:C 2627), insofar as it is a desirable good ("We must also inquire").

In regard to the first he does two things. First, he gives the reason for the difficulty concerning the intellect of the first substance. Second (1090:C 2901), he raises and meets this difficulty ("For if it is not").

He accordingly says, first (1089), that, the things which pertain to the intellect of the first immaterial substance involve certain difficulties, and these seem to arise as follows. The Philosopher has shown that the intellect which understands and desires the first mover, which causes motion as an object of understanding and of desire, has something nobler than itself, namely, what is understood and desired by it. He has also shown that the first intelligible object itself is also an intellect. Hence for a like reason it could appear that the first intellect also has something nobler and higher than itself, and that it therefore is not the highest and best thing. But this is contrary to the truths which are apparent about the first principle; and so he says here that it seems evident to all that this principle is the noblest. Yet certain difficulties emerge if one wishes to explain how it is "noblest," i.e., best and most perfect.

2601. For if it is not (1090).

Then he clears up these difficulties; and in regard to this he does three things. First, he raises the difficulties. Second (1093:C 2606), he prefaces his discussion with certain prerequisites for meeting all the questions raised ("Hence it is evident"). Third (1094:C 2608), he solves these difficulties ("Therefore, if the first mover").

In regard to the first he does two things. First (1090), he raises the questions in which he is chiefly interested.

Second (1092:C 2604), he introduces an additional question whose solution is necessary for solving the questions raised ("Does it make").

First of all he raises two questions. He asks, first, how the intellect of the first mover is related to its own act of understanding; and second (1091:C 2603), how it is related to its own intelligible object ("Furthermore, whether").

Now it should be noted that an intellect can be related to its own act of understanding in three ways: first, actual understanding does not belong to it but only potential or habitual understanding; second, actual understanding does belong to it; and third, it is identical with its own act of understanding or its own knowledge, which are the same thing.

2602. He accordingly says, first (1090), that, if the intellect of the first mover is not actually understanding but only potentially or habitually understanding, it will have no dignity; for the goodness and nobility of an intellect consists in its actually understanding, and an intellect that is only potentially or habitually understanding is like one asleep. For one asleep has certain powers which enable him to perform vital operations even though he is not using them, and thus he is said to be half alive; and during sleep there is no difference between happiness and unhappiness or between virtue and vice. But if the intellect of the first intelligence is actually understanding, yet its chief good, which is its activity, is something different from itself because its "act of understanding," i.e., its intellectual activity, is not identical with its own essence, then its essence is related to its act of understanding as potentiality to actuality, and as something perfectible to its perfection. It accordingly follows that the first intellect is not the best substance; for it is by reason of its act of understanding that honor and nobility belong to it, and nothing that is noble in comparison with something else is noblest in itself. It seems to follow, then, that the essence of the first intellect is not the best, whether it understands only potentially or actually, unless one assumes along with this that its very essence is identical with its act of understanding, as he will establish later on (1094:C 2608).

2603. **Furthermore, whether its substance** (1091).

Before he answers the questions raised he asks another about the intelligible object of the first mover. He says that, whether the essence of the first mover is its power to understand or its "act of understanding," i.e., its intellectual activity or thought (this was the first question raised), we must still ask what it understands? For it understands either itself or something else. And if it understands something else, it must understand either the same thing always or something different, i.e., sometimes one thing and sometimes another.

2604. **Does it make any difference** (1092).

So before he answers the foregoing questions, he introduces another question whose solution is useful in giving the answer; that is, whether it makes any difference or none at all to the nobility or perfection of the intellect that it should understand what is good and noble or what is contingent.

2605. By using an instance he shows that it does make a difference, because it seems incongruous and unreasonable that anyone should ponder or employ the operation of his intellect on things that are base. That this should not be the case would demand that the nobility of the intellect be independent of the nobility of its object, and that the understanding of base things be no different from the understanding of good things. But this is quite impossible, since activities are evidently specified by their proper objects. Hence

the nobler an object, the nobler must be the operation.

2606. **Hence it is evident** (1093).

He prefaces his discussion with certain points necessary for answering the main questions. First, he gives two points. He infers the first of these from the solution of the question which he interjected. For, if it does make a difference to the nobility of the intellect whether it understands what is good or what is contingent, as has been stated (1092:C 2605), then, since the first intellect is the noblest, it obviously knows what is most divine and most honorable.

2607. The second point is the solution given to the last part of the second main question. The question was whether the intellect of the first mover changes from one intelligible object to another. Now it is evident that it does not change from one object to another. For, since it understands what is most divine, if it were to change from one object to another, it would change to a less noble one; but this is fitting only to something tending to defect and destruction. Moreover, this change from one intelligible object to another would be a kind of motion; and therefore it could not be fitting to the first mover, since he is immovable in every respect.

2608. **Therefore, if the first mover** (1094).

He now answers the questions first raised. First, he gives the correct solution to the first question; and second (1095:C 2611), the solution to the second question ("Second, that").

He answers the first question as follows. If the substance of the first mover "is not its act of understanding," i.e., its own intellectual activity, but an intellective potency, "it is reasonable," i.e., it seems to follow as a probable conclusion, that "the continuity of its act of understanding," i.e., of its intellectual operation, is laborious to it. For whatever is in potentiality to something else is related both to this something else and to its opposite, because what can be can also not be. Hence, if the substance of the first mover is related to its act of understanding as potentiality to actuality, then according to the nature of its own substance it will be able both to understand and not to understand. Therefore continuous understanding will not be proper to it by reason of its own substance.

2609. In order not to be sometimes like one asleep it must derive the continuity of its intellectual activity from something else. Now whatever a thing acquires from something else and does not have by its own nature is probably laborious to it, because this is true in our case; for when we act continuously we labor. But this conclusion is not necessary, because that which one thing acquires from something else is laborious to it only if the thing acquired or something connected with it is contrary to its nature. Therefore, even though the continuity of the motion of the heavens depends on some external principle, such motion is not laborious.

2610. Hence Aristotle was content here to reduce to absurdity the probable conclusion which follows, because the untenable conclusion which necessarily follows is evident, namely, that the goodness and perfection of the first mover will depend on some higher entity; for then it would not be the first and best.

2611. **Second, that there is** (1095).

He now answers the second question; and in regard to this he does three things. First, he establishes the correct answer to the second question. Second (1096:C 2617), he argues on the opposite side of the question ("And its act of understanding"). Third (1098:C 2619), he answers the arguments given ("But in certain cases").

He accordingly says, first (1095), that, since it has been shown (1094:C 2608) that the substance of the first mover is not an intellective potency but is itself an act of understanding, it is

evident from this that, if the first mover does not understand itself but something else, it follows that this other thing, i.e., what is understood by it, is nobler than the first mover.

2612. He proves this as follows. Actual understanding itself, i.e., thinking, also belongs to one who understands the basest thing. Hence it is evident that some actual understanding must be avoided, because there are some things which it is better not to see than to see. But this would not be the case if the act of understanding were the best of things, because then no act of understanding would have to be avoided. Therefore, since some act of understanding must be avoided because of the baseness of the thing understood, it follows that the nobility of the intellect, which is found in its understanding, will depend on the nobility of its object. Hence the intelligible object is nobler than the act of understanding.

2613. Since it has been shown that the first mover is its own act of understanding, it follows that if it understands something different from itself, this other thing will be nobler than it is. Therefore, since the first mover is the noblest and most powerful, it must understand itself; and in its case intellect and thing understood must be the same.

2614. Now we must bear in mind that the Philosopher's aim is to show that God does not understand something else but only himself, inasmuch as the thing understood is the perfection of the one understanding and of his activity, which is understanding. It is also evident that nothing else can be understood by God in such a way that it would be the perfection of His intellect. It does not follow, however, that all things different from Himself are not known by Him; for by understanding Himself He knows all other things.

2615. This is made clear as follows. Since God is His own act of understanding and is the noblest and most powerful being, His act of understanding must be most perfect. Therefore He understands Himself most perfectly. Now the more perfectly a principle is known, the more perfectly is its effect known in it; for things derived from principles are contained in the power of their principle. Therefore, since the heavens and the whole of nature depend on the first principle, which is God, God obviously knows all things by understanding Himself.

2616. And the baseness of any object of knowledge does not lessen His dignity; for the actual understanding of anything more base is to be avoided only insofar as the intellect becomes absorbed in it, and when in actually understanding that thing the intellect is drawn away from the understanding of nobler things. For if in understanding some noblest object base things are also understood, the baseness of the things understood does not lessen the nobility of the act of understanding.

2617. **And its act of understanding** (1096).

Then he raises two objections against the correct solution. The first is as follows. The first mover understands himself, as has been shown above (1095:C 2615); and he is his own act of understanding, as has also been shown (1094:C 2608). Hence his act of understanding does not differ from his act of understanding his own thought. But this is contrary to what seems to be true, because perception, science, opinion and thought always seem to be about something else. And if they are sometimes about themselves, as when someone perceives that he perceives, or knows that he knows, or is of the opinion that he has an opinion, or thinks that he is thinking, this seems to be something in addition to the principal act or operation; for the principal act here seems to be that whereby someone understands an intelligible object. But that someone should understand that he is understanding something intelligible seems to be accessory to the principal act. Thus if the first mover's act of understanding consists solely in his understanding his own thought, it seems to follow that his act of understanding is not the most important thing.

2618. **Again, if understanding** (1097).

Then he raises a second objection against the correct solution. He says that the act of understanding and the thing understood are obviously different; and even if it were possible for an intellect and its object to be the same in reality, they would not be the same in their formal structure. Hence, if the first mover is himself both his act of understanding and the object that is being understood, which is the best of things, there still seems to be the problem as to which of these confers goodness on him, namely, his act of understanding or the thing understood.

2619. **But in certain cases** (1098).

He now answers the objections raised. He says that in certain cases the thing understood is the same as the knowledge of it. This becomes clear when we draw a distinction between the sciences; for one kind of science is productive and another is speculative. In the case of a productive science the thing understood, taken without matter, is the science of that thing; for example, it is clear that a house without matter, insofar as it exists in the mind of the builder, is the very art of building; and similarly health in the mind of the physician is the medical art itself. Thus a productive art is evidently nothing else than the substance or quiddity of the thing made; for every artist proceeds to his work from a knowledge of the quiddity which he intends to produce.

2620. In the case of the speculative sciences it is evident that the concept, which defines the thing itself, is the thing understood and the science or knowledge of that thing. For an intellect has knowledge by reason of the fact that it possesses the concept of a thing. Therefore, since in the case of all those things which do not have matter the intellect when actually understanding does not differ from the thing understood, then in the case of the first substance, which is separate from matter in the highest degree, the act of understanding and the thing understood are evidently the same in the highest degree. Hence there is just one act of understanding pertaining to the thing understood; that is, the act of understanding the thing understood is not distinct from that of understanding the act of understanding.

2621. **Yet the difficulty** (1099).

Here he raises a third question in addition to the two dealt with above. For since it has been shown (1074:C 2544) that the first mover understands himself, and a thing is understood in two ways: first, by way of a simple understanding, as we understand a quiddity, and second, by way of a composite understanding, as we know a proposition, the question therefore arises whether the first mover understands himself by way of a simple understanding, or by way of a composite one. This is what he refers to when he says that the difficulty still remains whether the object of God's understanding is composite.

2622. Now he shows that it is not composite when he says (1099) "for if it is"; and he gives three arguments in support of this. The first goes as follows. In every composite object of understanding there are several parts, which can be understood separately. For even though this composite object of understanding *Man runs,* insofar as it is one composite object, is understood all at once, none the less its parts can be understood separately. For the term *man* can be understood by itself, and so also can the term *runs.* Hence, whoever understands some composite ob-

ject can be changed when his act of understanding passes from one part to another. Therefore, if the first intelligible object is composite, it follows that the intellect can change when its act of understanding passes from one part of this object to another. But the contrary of this has been proved above (1098:C 2619).

2623. **Now whatever** (1100).

Then he gives the second argument. Whatever does not have matter is simple and indivisible. But the first intellect does not have matter. Therefore it is simple and indivisible.

2624. He gives as an example the human intellect, and this example can be taken in two ways. First, it can be taken as a comparison, meaning that the human intellect is indivisible in its own essence, because it is an immaterial form in every respect.

2625. It can also be taken in a second and better way as a contrast, meaning that the human intellect knows composite things because it derives its intelligible objects from material things. And this is not true of the first intellect.

2626. **And the act** (1101).

He gives the third argument. An act of understanding which is concerned with composite things does not possess its perfection always but attains it over a period of time. This is clear from the fact that it does not attain its good in knowing one part or another, but its greatest good is something else, which is a kind of whole. Hence the truth (which is the good of the intellect), is not found in simple things but in a composite one. Further, simple things are prior to composite things as regards both generation and time, so that whatever does not possess its own good in knowing parts which can be understood separately but in knowing the whole which is constituted of them, attains its good at some particular moment and does not always possess it.—However, the first mover's act of understanding, which is of himself, is eternal and always in the same state. Therefore the thing understood by the intellect of the first mover is not composite.

LESSON 12

God Is the Final Cause of All Things. The Order of the Universe

ARISTOTLE'S TEXT Chapter 10: 1075a 11-1076a 4

1102. We must also inquire how the nature of the whole [universe] contains the good and the highest good, whether as something separate and self-subsisting or as the order of its parts.

1103. Or is it in both ways, as an army does? For the good of an army consists both in its order and in its commander, but mainly in the latter; for he does not exist for the sake of the order, but the order exists for him.

1104. And all things, both plants and animals (those that swim[1] and those that fly), are ordered together in some way, but not alike; and things are not such that there is no relation between one thing and another, but there is a connection. For all things are ordered together to one end, but in the same way as in a household, where the children are not permitted to do just as they please, but all or most of the things done are arranged in an orderly way, while the slaves and livestock do little for the common good but act for the most part at random. For the nature of each of these constitutes such a principle. I mean that by it all must be able to be distinguished. And there are other activities which all have in common for the sake of the whole.

1105. And we must not fail to consider all the impossible and incongruous conclusions that confront those who explain things differently, and what sort of views are expressed by the more popular thinkers, among whom the fewest difficulties appear.

1106. For all these thinkers derive all things from contraries. But neither "all things" (1055) nor "from contraries" (1029) is correct; nor do they explain how the things in which contraries are present come from contraries.

1107. For contraries cannot be acted upon by one another. But this difficulty is solved by us in a reasonable way on the ground that there is a third element. Some thinkers make one of the contraries matter, as those who make the unequal the matter of the equal, or the many the matter of the one.[2] But this is also met in the same way; for matter, as one, is contrary to nothing.

1108. Further, [according to them] all things except the one will exist by participating in evil; for evil itself is one of the two elements (78).

1109. For other thinkers[3] consider neither good nor evil as principles, even though the good is in the fullest sense a principle of things.

1110. The former are right in holding that the good is a principle, but they do not say how it is a principle: whether as an end or as a mover or as a form.

1111. And Empedocles' doctrine (50) is also unreasonable; for he identifies the good with friendship, although the latter is a principle both as a mover

[1] Reading *natatalia* for *natalitia*.
[2] I.e., the Platonists.
[3] I.e., the Pythagoreans, see 1075.

(for it combines things), and as matter (for it is a part of the mixture [4]). Therefore, even if it happens that the same thing is a principle both as matter and as a mover, still their being is not the same. In what respect, then, is friendship a principle? And it is also unreasonable that strife should be indestructible; for the essence of evil, for him, is precisely this strife.

1112. Again, Anaxagoras makes the good a principle as a mover; for his "Intellect" causes motion. But it causes motion for the sake of some goal, and therefore there must be something other than intellect (84), unless it is as we say; for the art of medicine is in a sense health (606). It is also unreasonable not to provide something that is contrary to the good (78) or to intellect.

1113. But all who speak of contraries fail to make use of them as such, except that some make use of imagery. And none of them explain why some things are destructible and others are not; for they derive all things from the same principles (250-263). Again, some derive beings from non-being, while others (63),[5] lest they be driven to this, make all things one.

1114. Further, no one explains why there is always generation, and what its cause is.

1115. And those who posit two principles of things must assume a first principle which is superior. This also holds for those who posit separate Forms, because there is another principle which is more important; for why has matter participated in the Forms or why does it participate in them?

1116. And for other thinkers there must be something contrary to wisdom or the noblest science; but this is not so in our case. For there is nothing contrary to what is primary, since all contraries involve matter, and things having matter are in potentiality; and ignorance is contrary to the particular knowledge which is the contrary into which it can pass. But there is nothing contrary to what is primary.

1117. Further, if nothing exists except sensible things, there will be no principle, no order, no generation, no heavenly bodies; but every principle will have a principle, as is maintained by all the theologians and natural philosophers.

1118. Now if there are separate Forms and numbers, they will not be causes of anything; but if they are, they will certainly not be causes of motion.

1119. Again, how will extension or continuous quantity be composed of parts which are unextended? For number cannot either as a mover or as a form produce a continuum.

1120. Further, no one of the contraries will be a productive principle and a mover, because it would be possible for it not to be. And in any case its activity would be subsequent to its potentiality. No beings, then, would be eternal. But some are. Therefore one of these premises must be rejected. How this may be done has been explained (1057).

1121. Again, as to the way in which numbers, or soul and body, or forms and things in general are one, no one states anything; nor is it possible to do so unless he says, as we do, that a mover makes them one (733-41).

1122. And those [6] who say that mathematical number is the primary reality and that there is always one substance after another and give different principles for each, make the substance of the universe itself a group of substances unrelated to each other (for one substance confers nothing upon another, either by being or not being), and give us many principles. But beings do not want to be badly disposed.—"Many rulers are not good; therefore let there be one ruler." [7]

[4] See Diels, Frag. 17.
[5] I.e., the Eleatics.
[6] I.e., Speusippus and his followers.
[7] Homer, *Iliad*, ii, 204.

COMMENTARY

2627. Having shown how the first mover is both an intelligence and an intelligible object, here the Philosopher aims to investigate how the first mover is a good and an object of desire; and in regard to this he does two things. First (1102:C 2628), he shows how the good is present in the universe, according to his opinion; and second (1105:C 2638), according to the opinions of other philosophers ("And we must not fail").

In regard to the first he does two things. First, he raises a question. Second (1103:C 2629), he answers it ("Or is it").

Now this question arises because of a statement which was made above to the effect that the first mover causes motion as something good and desirable; for good, inasmuch as it is the end or goal of a thing, is twofold. For an end is extrinsic to the thing ordained to it, as when we say that a place is the end of something that is moved locally. Or it is intrinsic, as a form is the end of the process of generation or alteration; and a form already acquired is a kind of intrinsic good of the thing whose form it is. Now the form of any whole which is one through the arrangement of its parts is the order of that whole. Hence it follows that it is a good of that whole.

2628. Therefore the Philosopher asks (1102) whether the nature of the whole universe has its good and highest good, i.e., its proper end, as something separate from itself, or whether this consists in the ordering of its parts in the way in which the good of any natural being is its own form.

2629. Or is it (1103).

Then he answers the question raised; and in regard to this he does two things. First, he shows that the universe has both a separate good and a good of order. Second (1104:C 2632), he shows the ways in which the parts of the universe contribute to its order ("And all things").

He accordingly says, first (1103), that the universe has its good and end in both ways. For there is a separate good, which is the first mover, on which the heavens and the whole of nature depend as their end or desirable good, as has been shown (1067:C 2521). And since all things having one end must agree in their ordination to that end, some order must be found in the parts of the universe; and so the universe has both a separate good and a good of order.

2630. We see this, for example, in the case of an army; for the good of the army is found both in the order itself of the army and in the commander who has charge of the army. But the good of the army is found in a higher degree in its commander than in its order, because the goodness of an end takes precedence over that of the things which exist for the sake of the end. Now the order of an army exists for the purpose of achieving the good of its commander, namely, his will to attain victory. But the opposite of this is not true, i.e., that the good of the commander exists for the sake of the good of order.

2631. And since the formal character of things which exist for the sake of an

end is derived from the end, it is therefore necessary not only that the good of the army exist for the sake of the commander, but also that the order of the army depend on the commander, since its order exists for the sake of the commander. In this way too the separate good of the universe, which is the first mover, is a greater good than the good of order which is found in the universe. For the whole order of the universe exists for the sake of the first mover inasmuch as the things contained in the mind and will of the first mover are realized in the ordered universe. Hence the whole order of the universe must depend on the first mover.

2632. **And all things** (1104).

Here he shows the ways in which the parts of the universe contribute to its order. He says that all things in the universe are ordered together in some way, but not all are ordered alike, for example, sea animals, birds, and plants. Yet even though they are not ordered in the same way, they are still not disposed in such a way that one of them has no connection with another; but there is some affinity and relationship of one with another. For plants exist for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men. That all things are related to each other is evident from the fact that all are connected together to one end.

2633. That all are not ordered in the same way is made clear by an example; for in an ordered household or family different ranks of members are found. For example, under the head of the family there is a first rank, namely, that of the sons, and a second rank, which is that of the slaves, and a third rank, which is that of the domestic animals, as dogs and the like. For ranks of this kind have a different relation to the order of the household, which is imposed by the head of the family, who governs the household. For it is not proper for the sons to act in a haphazard and disorderly way, but all or most of the things that they do are ordered. This is not the case with the slaves or domestic animals, however, because they share to a very small degree in the order which exists for the common good. But in their case we find many things which are contingent and haphazard; and this is because they have little connection with the ruler of the household, who aims at the common good of the household.

2634. And just as the order of the family is imposed by the law and precept of the head of the family, who is the principle of each of the things which are ordered in the household, with a view to carrying out the activities which pertain to the order of the household, in a similar fashion the nature of physical things is the principle by which each of them carries out the activity proper to it in the order of the universe. For just as any member of the household is disposed to act through the precept of the head of the family, in a similar fashion any natural being is disposed by its own nature. Now the nature of each thing is a kind of inclination implanted in it by the first mover, who directs it to its proper end; and from this it is clear that natural beings act for the sake of an end even though they do not know that end, because they acquire their inclination to their end from the first intelligence.

2635. However, not all things are disposed to this end in the same way. For there is something common to all things, since all things must succeed in being distinguished; that is, they must have discrete and proper operations, and must also be differentiated essentially from each other; and in this respect order is lacking in none of them. But there are some things which not only have this but are also such that all their activities "participate in the whole," i.e., are directed to the common good of the whole. This is found to be true of those things which contain nothing contrary to their nature,

nor any element of chance, but everything proceeds according to the right order.

2636. For it is evident, as has been pointed out (1104:C 2632-34), that each natural being is directed to the common good by reason of its proper natural activity. Hence those things which never fail in their proper natural activity have all their activities contributing to the whole. But those which sometimes fail in their proper natural activity do not have all their activities contributing to the whole; and lower bodies are of this kind.

2637. The answer briefly stated, then, is that order requires two things: a distinction between the things ordered, and the contribution of the distinct things to the whole. As regard the first of these, order is found in all things without fail; but as regards the second, order is found in some things, and these are the things which are highest and closest to the first principle, as the separate substances and the heavenly bodies, in which there is no element of chance or anything contrary to their nature. But order is lacking in some things, namely, in [lower] bodies, which are sometimes subject to chance and to things which are contrary to their nature. This is so because of their distance from the first principle, which is always the same.

2638. **And we must not** (1105).

Then he deals with the end and order of the universe according to the opinion of other philosophers. In regard to this he does two things. First, he explains what he aims to do. He says that we must state all the impossible or incongruous conclusions facing those who express views different from our own about the good and order of the universe; and we must also state the kind of views held by those men who give a better explanation of things and in whose statements fewer difficulties appear.

2639. **For all these** (1106).

He then carries out his plan. In regard to this he does two things. First (1106:C 2639), he gives the opinion of those who held that the principles of things are contraries; and second (1117:C 2656), the opinion of those who held that the principles of things are separate natures ("Further, if nothing").

In treating the first point he does two things. First (1106), he explains in what way those men are wrong who say that the principles of things are contraries. He says that all the ancient philosophers held that all things come from contraries as their principles; and they were wrong on three counts. First, they were wrong in holding that things come from contraries; and second, in saying that *all* things come from contraries; and third, in failing to explain how things are produced from contraries.

2640. **For contraries** (1107).

Second, he indicates how they were wrong in the three ways mentioned above. He explains how they erred, first, in holding that things come from contraries; and second (1108:C 2643), in claiming that *all* things come from contraries ("Further, [according to them]"); and third (1113:C 2650), in failing to show how things come from contraries ("But all who speak").

He accordingly says, first (1107), that they were wrong in saying that things comes from contraries, because contraries taken in themselves cannot be acted upon by one another; for whiteness is not acted upon by blackness or vice versa, and one thing could come from them only if they were influenced by one another and so were reduced to an intermediate state.

2641. But in Aristotle's opinion this difficulty is easily solved, because besides the two contraries he also posited a third principle, matter. Hence one of the two contraries can be acted upon by the other in the sense that matter, which is the subject of one contrary,

can be acted upon by the other contrary.

2642. But others claimed that matter is one of the two contraries and not something distinct from them, as is evident in the case of those who held that the contraries, the unequal and the equal, and the one and the many, are principles. For they attribute inequality and plurality to matter, and equality and unity to form, as is found in Plato's opinion, although the natural philosophers held the opposite. But this statement of theirs is met in the same way, because matter, which is one thing as the common subject of contraries, is contrary to nothing.

2643. **Further, [according to them]** (1108).

Then the Philosopher explains how these thinkers were wrong in saying that *all* things come from contraries; and in regard to this he does two things. First, he shows the unreasonable conclusion which follows from this view. For it is evident that the primary contraries are good and evil, because one of two contraries is always the privation of the other and so has the character of evil. Therefore, if all things come from contraries, it follows that all things participate in evil as well as in unity, i.e., good, which is a principle; for good is posited as one of the two elements, and everything else is supposed to come from these two principles. But this is not true, because destruction and evil are not found in the heavenly bodies or in the nature of the separate substances.

2644. **For other thinkers** (1109).

Second, he shows that the position of all those who held that all things come from contraries is not in agreement with the position of certain of the philosophers. For if all things come from contraries, it follows, as has been pointed out, that good and evil are the first principles of things. But some did not claim that good and evil are principles but said that the good is the principle of all things.

2645. **The former** (1110).

Third, he indicates the error made even by those who claimed that the good is a principle of things. He makes this clear, first, in a general way. He says that, even though some philosophers are right in holding that the good is a principle of all things, they are still wrong in failing to show how it is a principle, i.e., whether as an end or as a form or as a mover. For these things are characterized by perfection and goodness, whereas matter, which is perfected only by form, does not have the character of something good and perfect; and therefore he makes no mention of it.

2646. **And Empedocles' doctrine** (1111).

Next, he turns to certain particular opinions. First, he considers the opinion of Empedocles. He says that Empedocles made the unreasonable assumption that the good is a principle of things; for he claimed that love is a principle, identifying it with the good. However, he said that love is a principle in two ways. For he claimed that it is a moving principle inasmuch as its function is to unite things and bring them together; and he also claimed that it is a material principle inasmuch as he asserts that love is a part of compounds, since he assumed that bodies are compounds of the four elements and of friendship and strife. And even though the same principle can be both matter and a mover, it is not such under the same formal aspect. For fire can be a mover according to its form, and a material principle according to its matter; but it cannot be both in the same respect, because a mover as such is actual, whereas matter as such is potenial. Hence it must still be explained in what respect love has the character of a material principle, and in what respect it has the character of a mover—and this he fails to do.

2647. Another incongruity which follows from Empedocles' opinion is his positing strife as a first indestructible principle; for strife in itself seems to be essentially evil, and evil, in the opinions of those who are right, is not set down as a principle, but only the good, as has been stated (1109:C 2644).

2648. **Again, Anaxagoras** (1112).

Third, he turns to the opinion of Anaxagoras. He says that Anaxagoras makes the good to be a first principle of things as a mover; for he said that an intellect moves all things. But it is evident that "an intellect always causes motion for the sake of some goal," i.e., an end. Hence Anaxagoras must posit some other principle by reason of which this intellect causes motion, unless perhaps he should say, as we have, that an intellect and its intelligible object can be the same; and that an intellect moves for its own sake; which is true in a sense of those things which act by intellect, according to our view. For the art of medicine acts for the sake of health, and health is in a sense the art of medicine itself, as has been pointed out above (C 2619; 606:C 1407).

2649. Another unreasonable consequence which is contrary to the opinion of Anaxagoras also seems to follow if the common view is maintained, namely, that contraries are the principles of all things. For according to this view it would be absurd for him not to make some principle contrary to the good and to intellect.

2650. **But all who speak** (1113).

He explains the third error which he noted above (1106-07:C 2639-40), namely, that those who held the principles to be contraries did not explain how things come from contraries as their principles. He says that all those who speak of contraries as principles fail to make use of them in accounting for what appears in the world, unless "some make use of imagery," i.e., unless someone wishes to indulge his fancy or to speak figuratively.

2651. **And none of them** (*ibid.*).

First, he shows that they cannot account for the differences between destructible and indestructible things. He accordingly says that none of the ancient philosophers give any reason why some beings are destructible and some are not. Some of them claimed that all things are derived from the same principles, namely, contraries; and this is the opinion of the ancient natural philosophers. Others, the theological poets, held that all things come from non-being. Hence he said above (1065: C 2515) that they generate the world from non-being. And so although both groups assign the origin of all things, they cannot explain why things are distinguished into destructible and indestructible. Hence others, in order not to be driven to this, i.e., to posit that all things come from non-being or to account for the difference between things, held that all things are one, thereby entirely doing away with the distinction between things. This is the view of Parmenides and Melissus.

2652. **Further, no one** (1114).

Second, he shows that they were also wrong in another respect, namely, in being unable to explain why generation is eternal or to state what the universal cause of generation is; for neither of the contraries is a universal cause of generation.

2653. **And those who** (1115).

Third, he states how those men were wrong who claimed that the principles of things are contraries; for they must maintain that one of two contraries is a superior principle, since one contrary has the character of a privation. Or he means that it is necessary to posit some principle, which is more important than both contraries, by which it is possible to explain why certain things are attributed to one of the contraries as their

principle and why certain others are attributed to the other contrary; for example, why at one time strife will cause the elements to separate and why at another time friendship will cause them to combine.

2654. This difficulty also faces those who posit separate Forms; for they must assign some principle which is superior to the Forms, since it is evident that things which are generated and destroyed do not always participate in a form in the same way. Hence it is necessary to posit some principle by which it is possible to explain why this individual formerly participated or now participates in a form.

2655. **And for other thinkers** (1116).

Here he gives a fourth incongruity which faces these thinkers. He says that the philosophers who claim that the principles of things are contraries must admit that there is something contrary to the primary kind of wisdom or noblest science, because wisdom is concerned with the first principle, as has been shown in Book I (13:C 35). Therefore, if there is nothing contrary to the first principle (for all pairs of contraries have a nature which is in potentiality to each pair), and according to us the first principle is immaterial, as is clear from what has been said (1058:C 2495), then it follows that there is nothing contrary to the first principle, and that there is no science which is contrary to the primary science, but merely ignorance.

2656. **Further, if nothing** (1117).

Next, he turns to the opinion of those who posited separate substances. First, he points out that an incongruity faces those who fail to posit such substances. He says that, if nothing exists except sensible things, there will be no first principle, as has been noted (1055:C 2489), no order of things such as has been described, no eternal generation, and no principles of the kind which we have posited above (1060:C 2503); but every principle will always have a principle, and so on to infinity. Thus Socrates will be begotten by Plato and the latter by someone else and so on to infinity, as was seen to be the view of all of the ancient philosophers of nature. For they did not posit a first universal principle over and above these particular and sensible principles.

2657. **Now if there** (1118).

Then he shows that an unreasonable consequence faces those who posit certain separate natures. He does this, first, with regard to those who posited a certain connection in origin among natures of this kind; and second (1122:C 2661), with regard to those who did not hold this position ("And those who say").

Concerning the first he draws out four untenable consequences. The first (1118) of these is that the separate Forms and numbers, which some posited over and above sensible things, seem not to be causes of anything. But if they are causes of something, it seems that nothing will be a cause of motion, because things of this kind do not seem to have the character of a moving cause.

2658. **Again, how will** (1119).

Second, he brings forward another incongruity. For number is not continuous quantity, but continuous quantity is constituted only of continuous quantities. Hence it seems impossible to explain how continuous quantity or extension comes from numbers, which are not continuous. For it cannot be said that number is the cause of continuous quantity either as a moving cause or as a formal cause.

2659. **Further, no one** (1120).

Then he gives the third untenable consequence. He says that, if the separate Forms and numbers are first principles, it follows, since contrariety is not found in forms and numbers, that first principles will not be contraries, because they are not held to be productive principles or movers. Hence it will follow that there is no generation or motion; for if the first principles are not efficient causes of motion but are subsequently caused from first principles, it will follow that they are contained in the potency of prior principles; and what can be can also not be. The conclusion, then, is that generation and motion are not eternal. But they are eternal, as has been proved above (1055:C 2490-91). Therefore one of the premises must be rejected, namely, the one holding that first principles are not movers. The way in which the first principles are movers has been stated in Book I (25-26:C 50-51).

2660. **Again, as to the way** (1121).

He gives the fourth incongruity. He says that none of these philosophers can state what it is that makes number, or soul and body, or in general form and the thing to which form belongs, a unity, unless he says that a mover does this, as we explained above in Book VIII (736:C 1759). Forms and numbers, however, do not have the character of a mover.

2661. **And those who say** (1122).

Here he indicates the unreasonable consequence facing those who claim that natures of this kind are unrelated things. He says that those who claim that mathematical number is the primary reality, as the Pythagoreans did, and "that there is always one substance after another" in this way, i.e., consecutively (so that after number comes continuous quantity, and after continuous quantity come sensible things), and who say that there is a different principle for each nature, so that there are certain principles for numbers, others for continuous quantity, and others for sensible things—those who speak in this way, I say, make the substances of the universe a group of substances unrelated to each other, i.e., without order, inasmuch as one part confers nothing on any other part whether it exists or does not. And they likewise make their many principles to be unrelated.

2662. Now this cannot be the case, because beings do not want to be badly disposed; for the disposition of natural things is the best possible. We observe this in the case of particular things, because each is best disposed in its own nature. Hence we must understand this to be the case to a much greater degree in the whole universe.

2663. But many rulers are not good. For example, it would not be good for different families which shared nothing in common to live in a single home. Hence it follows that the whole universe is like one principality and one kingdom, and must therefore be governed by one ruler. Aristotle's conclusion is that there is one ruler of the whole universe, the first mover, and one first intelligible object, and one first good, whom above he called God (1074:C 2544), who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

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