

THE CONVERTIBILITY OF
GOODNESS AND BEING
IN ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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AN EXPOSITION OF THE TEXTS ¹

To begin our exposition of St. Thomas' doctrine of goodness and its relationship to being, let us first examine the notion of goodness in general. To do so we will proceed by studying St. Thomas' response in Question 5 to various questions raised concerning the general nature of goodness. The first question: Does goodness really differ from being? According to St. Thomas goodness and being are really the same and differ only in idea. The essence of goodness consists in that it is in some way desirable. Things, says Thomas, are desirable so far as they are perfect for all desire their own perfection. Now everything that is, is perfect in so far as it is actual. Therefore, a thing is perfect in so far as it is being; for being is the actuality of everything.

Before proceeding it is helpful to explain some distinctions drawn by St. Thomas between potency and actuality and between essence and existence to better show their relationship to being and to each other. When we speak of created being or caused being, we are always speaking of a composite. Created being is composed of matter and form. Such a being has both an essence,

that which makes it what it is, "whatness" and existence, the fact that it is, its being shared with all other being "isness." To illustrate this imagine the classic example of the acorn. The form of the acorn is its essence, its "whatness", and the fact that it is a being, something and not nothing, is its existence, its "isness." So for all creatures the act of existence is distinct from essence. St. Thomas argues that only in God is both existence and essence perfectly one, because God simply is, uncreated, without form and matter. Now in regard to potency and actuality once again imagine an acorn. The acorn has actuality, in as much as it actually exists as an acorn. The acorn also has potentiality in that it has the potential, for example, to grow into an oak tree. So it is with every imperfect being; every such being has actuality and potentiality. Further every creature has both essence and existence. So when St. Thomas concludes that a thing is perfect in so far as it is being because being is the actuality of everything, he means a composite being is perfect to the extent that its essence as a potentially existing kind of thing is actualized by its very existence.² St. Thomas thus concludes that goodness and being are really the same.

Though they are the same to the extent that as any substantial being that is good, they do differ in idea. We can draw a logical distinction between the two, and so we predicate them of things in different ways. Goodness expresses an aspect of desirability which being does not express. St. Thomas explains

this when he responds to the first objection in article 1. The objection is based on Boethius' claim that there is a distinction between goodness and being. He claims that the fact that things are in one thing and that they are good is yet another. St. Thomas' response is as follows. A being, upon first coming to be, its first act of existence, is a being simply or absolutely. It actually exists but has many proper potentialities that are not yet actualized. It is being absolutely and good relatively compared to what it can yet become, according to its present degree of perfection. On the other hand, a being in its complete actuality, that is, having actualized all its proper potential, it is a being relatively compared to its first coming to be and good absolutely in that it has actualized all its potentiality, in that it has reached its desired perfection.

Article 2 raises the question: is goodness prior in idea to being? St. Thomas argues that in idea being is prior to goodness. What is first conceived by the intellect is prior in idea. Human intellect first conceives of being because things are knowable only in so much as things are actual. That which is not actual is not and is thus not knowable. So, it follows that being is the proper object of the intellect and is thus the first intelligible. Therefore, it is being which is prior in idea to goodness. The significance of this point will be clearer later when we examine Elizabeth Salmon's commentary on St. Thomas' ontological notion of the good itself.

In response to the question in article 3 whether or not every being is good, St. Thomas states that every being as being is good. All being as being has actuality and to the extent it is actually, it is to that extent perfect. Now every act is some sort of perfection, and perfection implies desirability and goodness. So it follows that every being in so much as it is, is good. Now one might ask: what about those beings which are evil? How does St. Thomas account for evil beings in the world? His reply is that no being is said to be evil as being, but only in so far as it lacks being. We will return to this problem later when we examine more fully St. Thomas' thinking in regard to evil.

In article 4 the first objection is based on Dionysius' claim that goodness lacks the aspect of a final cause and has rather the aspect of a formal cause. Thomas replies that since goodness is that which all things desire and this desire has the aspect of an end, it can be shown that goodness implies the aspect of an end or final cause. Thomas agrees, however, that the idea of goodness presupposes the idea of both an efficient and formal cause. In things that cause other things to happen, first comes goodness as the end or purpose which moves the agent to act. Before acting the agent conceives of some good as an end. For example, a carpenter, the agent, needs a worktable, a good. Secondly comes the action of the agent acting to "place" the form in the matter; so the carpenter begins to assemble the table. Finally comes the form of the thing -- the carpenter completes the

form worktable. Now in respect to beings which are caused, St. Thomas says we would expect the opposite. First is the form whereby a caused thing is a being. For example, the form oak tree whereby an oak tree is a being. For example, the form oak tree whereby an oak tree is a being. Secondly, we consider its effective power, the actualization of its potential whereby it is perfect in being. Thirdly, there follows the formality of goodness which is the basic principle of perfection in a being.

In the 5th article St. Thomas considers whether the essence of goodness consists in limit, species, and order, and if so, how. As we have stated, all things are good in so far as they are perfect. And in so far as they are perfect they are desirable. A thing is perfect if it lacks nothing according to its mode of perfection. Now everything is what it is by its form. In order for a thing to be perfect and good, it must have a form together with all the accidents that compose that form. For example, a man must have a body complete with arms, legs, etc. Form presupposes determination of its principles whether material or efficient, and this is signified by limit. But form itself is signified by the species. Man has a human body not a horse's body according to his species. Also form follows an inclination to the end of action of the being and this belongs to weight and order. So we can conclude, the essence of goodness, so far as it consists in perfection, consists also in limit, species and order.

This concludes my exposition of St. Thomas' understanding of goodness in general. I want to turn now to how St. Thomas applies this notion of goodness in his discussion of God's goodness and of evil.

In question 6, article 1, St. Thomas applies this notion of the convertibility of goodness and being to God. In response to the question whether good belongs to God, Thomas replies that to be good belongs preeminently to God. As we have said, a thing is good according to its desirableness. Every being seeks its own perfection. Perfection and form of a being consists in a likeness to its agent or creator. Every agent makes its like, and so the agent itself is desirable and has the nature of good. God is the first producing cause or creator of all things. Therefore, it is evident that the aspect of good and desirableness belong to him. Everything, in desiring its own perfection, desires God inasmuch as its own perfection is a participation in the likeness of God.

In article 2 of question 6 Thomas addresses the question whether or not God is the highest good. St. Thomas replies that God is the highest good absolutely. In God there is total perfection, no potentiality at all, but rather the fullness of actuality. God is good absolutely not only in any genus and order but good in every respect.

Next, in article 3 Thomas responds to the interesting

question: does to be essentially good belong to God alone? The objectors claim that to be essentially good does not belong to God alone. The first objection points out that we say that one, the transcendental notion of unity, the notion that there is a real unity among all being, that is by virtue of each being's existence, is convertible with being. Further, as has been stated by Thomas, being is convertible with good. Now if every being is one essentially, sharing in the transcendental notion of unity, so every being is good essentially. A further objection to the claim that God alone is good essentially is as follows. If a being is not good essentially, then it is good by something else. To illustrate, A is a good, but not essentially, now what is it that makes A good? B makes A good. But B is not good essentially either, but is made good by C. Now C also is not good essentially, but is good by means of D. And so on. If being is not good essentially, then we have the problem of infinite regression. If we state that a being is essentially good we avoid the problem of infinite regression.

Thomas holds to the position that God alone is good essentially. His reasoning follows. Things are called good according to their perfections, as has been earlier stated. There are three ways in which a thing can be perfect. First, according to the constitution of its being; secondly, in respect to accidents being added to perfect a being; thirdly, in the attainment of something else as an end. This triple perfection

does not belong to any creature by its essence, but to God alone. For in God there is no distinction between essence and existence; His essence is His existence. God is pure actuality, and whatever belongs to God's creatures accidentally belongs to God essentially because He is the perfection of all being. So we see that God alone has every kind of perfection by His very essence, and, therefore, God is the only being who is good essentially.

Let us now focus our attention on the problem of evil in questions 48 and 49 to see how Thomas applies his notion of goodness in his discussion of evil. Question 48, article 3 asks: Is good the subject of evil? In an earlier question St. Thomas claimed that evil indicates an absence of good. But not every absence of good is evil. There are two ways the absence of good may be understood. First, in a privative sense, and secondly, in a negative sense. Viewed negatively the absence of good is not evil. If the absence of good taken negatively were an evil, it would follow that what does not exist is evil. This is absurd because things that do not exist are actually neither good nor evil. Further every existing thing would be evil because it does not possess a good that belongs to something else. For example, all human beings would be considered evil because they lack the good of being able to fly. We do not expect humans to exhibit this power which is specific to birds. However, the absence of good takes in a privative sense is an evil. If a being lacks a good in the privative sense, that being lacks a good it is

supposed to have by its nature. For example, the absence of sight is blindness. However, sight is not predicated of a rock. Therefore, in the case of a rock blindness is not considered an evil because sight is not something a rock possesses by nature. But blindness in a human being, because sight is something we are supposed to have, would be an evil. In light of this understanding of evil Thomas answers the question. Since every substantial being has substantial form, and since the form which makes a thing actual is a perfection of that specific being and a good, a privation of a proper good is a privation in that substance. So, the substance, a good, since it exists is the subject of evil, a privation of some good proper to that substance. So, good is the subject of evil.

St. Thomas next addresses the question whether good can be the cause of evil. Every evil in some way has a cause. Evil, as we have seen, is the absence of good which is natural and due to a thing. When a thing fails to reach its natural fulfillment, it can only be because of something outside itself which draws it away from its proper fulfillment. Only good can be the cause of evil. How so? Nothing can be a cause except inasmuch as it is a being, and every being as such is good. Therefore, good is the material cause of evil. Evil has no formal cause because it is understood as a privation of some form. Nor does evil have a final cause, because evil as a privation prevents a being from reaching its proper end. Evil does, however, have a cause by way of an agent

not directly but accidentally. So evil has an accidental cause.

Thus we can conclude that good is the cause of evil.

St. Thomas next focuses on the question of article 2, which logically follows from the conclusion that good is the cause of evil. The question is: Is God, the highest good, the cause of evil? Evil which is the defect of action is always caused by the defect of the agent. God as we know by definition is the highest perfection and has no defect. Since God has no defect, it follows that evil which consists in defect of action or which is caused by the defect of the agent cannot be attributed to God as its cause. But evil, at least indirectly, can be attributed to God.

Now an agent that produces a form which is corruptible and subject to defect is said to produce to a degree or indirectly that corruption and defect which the form possesses. Now God is the first cause and creator of the universe who created all forms and intended their good in the order of creation. But God creates forms or beings which are both actual and potential. Because beings have potential, they are open to the possibility of corruption and defect. So it is that God, as creator of all forms, is indirectly responsible for evil.

The next question Thomas deals with posed by article 3 of question 49 is most interesting. Is there one highest evil which is the cause of every evil? The first objection claims that it

would seem that there is one highest evil which is the cause of every evil. Life is full of opposing effects. E.G., good is set against evil, life against death, etc. Now every effect be it good or bad, has a cause, and contrary effects seem to have contrary causes. Therefore, there are contrary principles, one of good and the other evil. St. Thomas objects to the notion of one highest evil being the cause of every evil. Every being, as we have shown, is good in as much as it is, and evil can exist only in good as in its subject. Secondly, the first principle of good, God, precontains in Himself all goodness. From this we see there can be no cause of every evil, opposing God's goodness and independent from God. Further, although evil lessens good, good is never wholly consumed, but survives. Consider the evil of blindness for a human being as we have considered it. Nothing can be completely evil, because if all good were destroyed, which is essential for something to be completely evil, evil itself would not exist in the being, because its subject is good. One further point St. Thomas raises is that every evil is caused by good, because evil can be only an accidental cause, and thus it cannot be the first cause. Those who believed in two contrary principles in the universe one of good and the other evil fell into the manichaeian heresy. 3

Manichaeism, a dualistic world view, claimed there were two deities, one good and the other evil. During the early years of christianity, 3rd century A.D. this extreme form of dualism was

promoted by Mani (born about 215 A.D.). This belief in two equally powerful forces, one of good, the other evil, became the basis of the manichaeian religion. St. Thomas said the manichaeians failed to consider the universal cause of all being and considered only particular causes of particular effects. If they found a thing harmful or injurious by the power of its nature, they thought the very nature of the thing was evil. For example, tigers are harmful and injurious to man by their nature, so the nature of a tiger would be considered evil by a manichaeian. But we know this type of reasoning is fallacious because the goodness of a thing does not depend on its reference to any particular thing (such as tiger to man) but rather on what it is in itself and its relation to the whole created order.

SALMON'S COMMENTARY

We have begun our quest for a clear understanding of St. Thomas' notion of good as it relates to being by first inquiring into his Summa Theologica. We looked briefly at his notion that goodness and being are convertible and at his application of this notion to God's goodness and the problem of evil. Now we will intensify our study by examining Elizabeth G. Salmon's "The Good in Existential Metaphysics," a commentary on Thomas' treatment of goodness. I will focus primarily on her exposition of the ontological notion of good and ignore her explanation of its moral application. In other words, we will focus on what is meant by

the good as good and the good as interchangeable with being. To understand this Salmon thinks we must work with the fundamental metaphysical ideas of being, unity, and truth. Salmon points out that being is given in all and every knowable experience, but that its strictly metaphysical significance is not clear to us except through more reflection upon that experience. Only by reflecting further on being that is rendered intelligible in our judgments do we arrive at a metaphysical notion of being. This primary understanding is that actual existing being is intelligible as intellectually expressed in our existential judgments. As we reflect on being as intelligible, we come to a notion of being as transcending all classes or kinds, expressing an intelligibility of anything that is or could be. This leads to an understanding that sees a unity in all being yet sees the diversity of what is.

We have just implicitly and briefly shown some connections between the transcendental notions of being, unity, and truth (intelligibility). Salmon thinks it important to note the order of transcendental notions, because St. Thomas himself puts the good as coming after the notions of being, the one, and the true. This ordering leads Salmon to claim that the notion of the good is less primary and more complex than the notions of being, one, and truth. Yet good is called a primary notion because it arises immediately from our understanding of being, unity, and truth. By more closely examining these primary notions we will attempt to discover what exactly is the intelligibility that we amass in the

notion of good.

First of all, being stresses the absolute position of what is. Every being of existent is an existing or actual form or essence. From this we form our transcendental notion of being. Every being has a certain necessity, a self-sufficiency that follows from its act of "to be." Although all being is alike through the act of "to be," yet all beings are different according to their manner of being. Thus, there is a unity of existence through the richness of diversity. Unity as a transcendental notion shows us that whatever is, is one and distinct from every other being. But also since all beings are alike inasmuch as they are all beings, there is a oneness of being.

It is also significant that being, inasmuch as it is being, is intelligible; it is not rendered intelligible by something else. While being is intelligible in itself, one may have difficulty grasping that intelligibility. Being is seen as the actual foundation of any truth of mind. So, being must always be included in the field of the intelligible, as a source and basis of a relation to an intellect. It is connatural to intellect. In this sense being itself is true.

Salmon uses this analysis of being, unity, and truth to elucidate the notion of good. As we reflect on our knowing, we see that existence constitutes the "isness" of a thing, makes it to

be. That is the primary principle of unity and the primary condition of intelligibility, of the ability to be known. So we move to a realization that to be actual, to be something that exists, is what makes a thing good. This does not mean the fundamental principle of being is the same as the fundamental principle of the good. Rather the fundamental principle of the good is not only an understanding of being, unity, and truth of a concrete being, but also an understanding of such a being in its various aspects and its connections with other beings.

But what exactly is the good? St. Thomas says the good is the object of the will, and it is the good that moves the will. What is apprehended as good and befitting moves the will as an object. What is significant is that the object of the will is the good. But the "apprehended good" is what specifies the will and moves it. If "apprehended good" is what specifies the will, then how do we account for intellectual appetite in explaining this transcendental notion of good? As we have already stated, we come to appreciate existence as the first act of a being through reflections on existential judgments. Our existential judgments terminate, through reflection on sense knowledge, in an existing thing. But the notion of being results from an intellectual apprehension, first of being as essence of a thing, then this essence is understood as the essence of an existing thing. Being, through its actual existence, and this as perfective of being in some manner, is the aspect of being which is designated as good.

Salmon argues that human knowledge of being as good is obtained by continued reflection on our own knowing and desiring. Man is a physical, sensible, and intellectual being. Man, as a physical being, has a "natural tendency," as St. Thomas puts it, to something that is suitable. This tendency is determined to a particular thing. So the suitable is the suitability of a particular thing to fulfill a natural tendency. Besides a physical being, man is a sensitive being. With sense consciousness man has a certain awareness of his unity and an instinctive tendency to preserve it. Through sense knowledge he becomes aware of what is suitable and unsuitable by perceiving certain sensible aspects of the thing perceived. For example, an apple is perceived as suitable to man as food by virtue of its color, smell, feel, pleasurable taste, and satiating feeling it gives. In the case of a rotten apple, upon perceiving its brown color, rotten smell, and putrid taste man would designate it unsuitable according to its sensible aspects. It is through sense knowledge that sense appetite is awakened.

Now, "in the case of sense knowledge there is no knowledge of the distinction between the thing perceived and its aspect of desirability or 'ratio' of appetitibility" (p. 22). The apple example should help clarify what is meant by this statement. An animal, depending on sense knowledge only, cannot distinguish the apple from its sensually attractive qualities, or from its "ratio of appetitibility," its aspect of desirability. Man as a rational

being can see the important distinction between the thing (apple) perceived as an existing being which can be considered in itself and the thing as it actuates the appetite, i.e., under its aspect of suitability (sweet, satisfying hunger, etc.). So that which is suitable to an animal could be called good. If one stopped here, being would be divided on the grounds of suitable and unsuitable, not as good and nongood as corresponding to being and nonbeing. However, this division of being is relative to the sense appetite in its particular nature. But man is not simply a sensible being as other animals are. So we must consider the crucial role of man's intellect in understanding the transcendental notion of good.

Man as an intellectual being can reflect on himself as knowing, sensibly and intellectually, and upon the union of the two in his own nature. He can also reflect on the appetitive reaction to his own knowledge. Man can distinguish, unlike animals, the knowledge and appetitive factors in his knowing activity. He distinguishes, on the one hand, the sensible thing as a thing that can be considered in itself, and, on the other hand, the ratio of appetibility or aspect of desirability. It is intellect that makes the distinction between a thing as being, quiddity or nature and its ratio of desirability. Just as sense knowledge has an appetite which desires and is activated by sense knowledge of the desired thing, so the intellect also has an appetite which desires the intelligible and is activated by

intellectual knowledge of intelligible things. This intellectual appetite we call rational appetite. Rational appetite is a tendency that is stimulated by the knowledge of natures, of beings, being apprehended by the intellect. "Rational appetite as appetite is going to desire or tend to act, to being as existing as perfective of it" (p. 27). This rational appetite is our key to identifying the ontological notion of good.

Rational appetite desires the natural, the intelligible. It desires or tends toward being as existing as perfective of it, as mentioned above. However, in reflection on our knowing we recognize that we have knowledge of physical natures, presented as existents, only through sensible existence. But since this involves sense appetite, this would lead to a consideration of the intellectual object under the aspect of suitability or unsuitability. This would render impossible any transcendental notion of the good. So how do we avoid this apparent problem?

Salmon suggests that to do so we must recognize the transcendent character of quiddity or essence. Essence implies the act "to be," the aspect under which all are being. So a plurality of essences can be reduced to a unity by the fact that all essences are essences of being and so seen as beings. In this way we restore existence to natures when we consider natures, quiddities, or essences as true of all being and not simply as expressing some possible physical natures.

As we have seen, sense appetite is perfected by physical things according to their aspect of desirability. This aspect of desirability or ratio is the recognition of some actuality in the thing that in its own actuality is able to be perfective. "The actuality is recognized as making being more fully to be" (p. 30). On the side of rational appetite, the intelligibilities of essence and "esse" are perfective of intellect, and so the will can tend to them as good for the intellect. "Intellect can understand the significance of act and the ultimate character of the act of existence. It recognizes existence . . . as the primary constituting principle of a thing" (p. 32). Intellect recognizes that beyond existence there is nothing; that no being is being without the act of existence. Intellectual knowledge acts as examiner and evaluator of the "esse" that can perfect rational appetite. Being, as an actual existent, naturally inclines the will to act. The actuality of existence pulls the will toward it as giving it being, moving the will to be more fully being through the act of love. From this we say that intellect apprehends the actuality of being and its significance and presents this to the will as its end. We can also consider the situation as the actuality of being in its own existence which, when presented to the will, actuates will. The activity of the will is to love a thing, not just as perfecting but as perfection, as it is in itself. Being as good is the fullness of being as existence. The ratio of the good consists in being as perfecting, seen as completing in its actuality. AS a being has this actuality in its

mode of existence and as it is itself perfect and so good, will as agent love it. Thus, as St. Thomas claims, all that is insomuch as it is, is good. By intellect's reflection on the actualization of the will by good as good and will's love of it, we are able to grasp the transcendental notion of good. Being as good is intellectually understood and loved as it is -- good in itself. Being as being is seen as perfective and perfection as both source and condition of lower meanings of the good. Good as good is loved primarily, that is, in and for itself. This love of being as existent is love of that which is sufficient in itself that which makes a thing to be an existent itself.

From being in general arises the love of the good in general. So it is that we love all that is inasmuch as it is, but in regard to being and the good only choice can determine the will. To establish the hierarchy of good things we need to see the good as interchangeable with being -- which I have just attempted to illustrate. From this we begin to see the richness of the ontological notion of the good and its relation to being.

CONSIDERATIONS OF OBJECTIONS

Having examined St. Thomas' doctrine of the good, and its convertibility with being as presented in His Summa Theologica and as illustrated by Elizabeth G. Salmon's work The Goal in Existential Metaphysics, we will now examine some objections to St. Thomas' position and how they can be answered.

As we have seen, St. Thomas claims, every being insofar as it is being, is good and in some way desirable. Every being desires its own continual existence and perfection of its own nature. Now things are perfect or good insofar as they are actual. Existence we understand to be the actuating principle of any being. So it follows, that as St. Thomas claims, that which is primarily desirable in anything is its actual being, existence. Brother Benignus, F.S.C. in his book, Nature, Knowledge and God, reports an objection against St. Thomas' claim that every being desires its own existence. It seems that in some cases a being desires its nonbeing or nonexistence as in the case of suicide. If it is true that some beings desire their own nonexistence, then we are missing a crucial premise for the conclusion that being is desirable and, so, good. St. Thomas responds to this objection in his reply to the third objection considered in Q. 5, a2. By examining carefully the motive or desire of a person contemplating suicide, we can see that the person desired not his/her non-being but rather the alleviation of some evil. A person desires

non-being only inasmuch as it removes some evil. A being desires the removal of evil because evil, as a privation, deprives a being of some being or good. So a being desires non-being only relatively to being. Only being is desired in itself. So we can dismiss the case of suicide as threatening the truth of St. Thomas' claim that the good, or desirable, is identical with being. 5

A further objection is raised by John Hick in his book, Evil and the God of Love. St. Thomas, as we have seen in his Summa Theologica, believes every being desires its own continued existence and perfection of its nature. Now since every substantial being desires its own being and perfection, the existence and perfection of any nature is good. Hick agrees with St. Thomas on this point and holds as does St. Thomas that each creature's existence is a good to that particular creature. However, Hick thinks St. Thomas concludes too much from this in claiming the convertibility of being and goodness.

Each creature's existence is a good to that creature but this does not establish that each creature's existence is intrinsically good, or that it is good in the sight of God, or indeed in the sight of any but the individual creature itself. So far as this argument is concerned the universe might consist of a multitude of beings which are evil and abhorrent to God as such that it would be better if they did not exist, each however wholeheartedly desiring its own continued existence. Thus Aquinas' reasoning does not warrant a general identification of the existence of good. 6

It is not clear that Hick's objection holds because of his ambiguous use of terms and his apparent misunderstanding of Thomas' use of good, in the ontological sense, in reference to the convertibility of being with good. Either Hicks misunderstands St. Thomas' use of the term or he is confused between the meaning of ontological and moral good.

In the first line of his objection Hicks uses the term intrinsically, ". . . But it does not establish that each creature's existence is intrinsically good . . ." It is unclear what Hick means when he says a creature's existence is intrinsically good. If by intrinsically good Hick means a creature's existence is good in and of itself, as good for the creature, then he is contradicting his previous statement. Before stating his objection Hicks has said he agrees with St. Thomas that each creature's existence is a good to that particular creature. Now another possible interpretation of the statement, "a creature's existence is intrinsically good" is to see a creature's existence in relation to other beings. This interpretation involves the notion of moral good. St. Thomas in his claim being is convertible with good bases his statement on an ontological notion of good. So if Hicks is implying "intrinsically good" refers to moral goodness, we can doubt the strength of his objection on the grounds that he is arguing on the basis of moral goodness, not ontological good as Thomas does.

Hicks also makes the claim in his objection, "so far as St. Thomas' argument is concerned that the universe might consist of a multitude of beings who are each evil and abhorrent to God." Hick, in accord with Thomas says a creature's existence is a good to that particular creature, but Thomas' argument does not claim to show that beings are morally good as God sees them or in regard to other beings, as Hick seems to imply. So, Hick says a world of evil and abhorrent beings is possible. According to St. Thomas' doctrine of convertibility of being and good a being is good in the ontological, transcendental sense inasmuch as it is actual. Now even if the world were full of morally evil and abhorrent creatures, they would all still be good inasmuch as they are actual existents, according to St. Thomas. So again we can't tell whether Hick's objection is sufficient to challenge Thomas' doctrine of convertability.

In view of this paper's objective which is to express clearly St. Thomas' doctrine of convertability of goodness and being, let us review the material covered which lead to significant findings that have enriched our understanding of St. Thomas' doctrine. We began our task by exposing St. Thomas' general notion of goodness as expressed in the Summa Theologica. In questions 6, 48 and 49 we saw how Thomas applied his doctrine to God and the problem of evil. Next we explored Elizabeth G. Salmon's work; The Good in Existential Metaphysics in which she explains in depth the transcendental notion of the good. Having examined more fully the

ontological notion of good and St. Thomas' claim that goodness and being are convertible, we then looked at some objections to Thomas' claim. Benigus and Hick provided objections, which according to St. Thomas' doctrine of convertability, proved to be less than adequate. To conclude, I believe we can claim some success in our effort to clarify St. Thomas' doctrine of the convertability of goodness and being.

NOTES

1. Material in this section is based on the Summa Theologica questions 5, 6, 48 and 49 as found in Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas, Anton C. Pegis, ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 1948), pp. 34-52 and 267-279.
2. This exposition is based on notes taken from unpublished lectures of Mr. Gill Ring given in the course Pl 304: Metaphysics at Saint Meinrad College, Spring 1984.
3. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, Rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), p. 25
4. Material in this section is based on Elizabeth G. Salmon, The Good in Existential Metaphysics (The Aquinas Lecture, 1952), Milwaukee & Marquette University Press, 1953). Internal citations are to this book.
5. Brother Benignus, F.S.C., Nature, Knowledge, and God, (New York: Bruce Publishing, 1949), p. 514.
6. Hick, pp. 171-172.

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