

Eric M. Brown
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The Thomistic Derivation of Moral Goodness from Human Nature in the Natural Moral Law

Since “We must speak of good and evil in actions as of good and evil in things: because such as everything is, such is the act that it produces.”¹, in order to acquire the principles of ethics pertaining to the moral good and moral evil of human operations, human nature and being in general must be known to the degree that they pertain to the moral good and moral evil of human operations. This is what this paper proposes to do, that is to partially investigate the Thomistic foundations of ethics in theoretical philosophy as exemplified in the statement quoted previously. This is a partial and not a complete investigation because the subject of this paper is limited to the Thomistic derivation of moral goodness from human nature in the natural moral law. In the order of reality, this means investigating, first the Thomistic derivation of transcendental goodness from being.² Second to be investigated is the Thomistic derivation of moral goodness from the ontological³ good of human nature in the natural moral law. Finally to be investigated is the Thomistic derivation of moral goodness from the ontological good of human nature in itself.

Starting with the derivation of transcendental goodness from being, first to be investigated must be the metaphysical preliminary that is the Thomistic definition of a transcendental attribute of being. The definition of a transcendental attribute of being is that a transcendental is an attribute of being that is not limited to (that is transcends) any genera of being.⁴ The genera of being in this definition includes the supreme genera of being which

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:18,1*. translated by the English Dominican Province. New York, NY: Benziger Bros., 1948.

² This is only in so far as this is necessary to comprehend the Thomistic foundations of moral good and moral evil in ethics from his metaphysical theory of goodness in general instead of studying for its own sake the metaphysics of goodness in itself. The same goes for the natural philosophical foundations that there are for Thomistic ethics, they will be investigated only in so far as it is necessary to comprehend the Thomistic derivation of moral goodness from human nature in the natural moral law and in itself.

³ This term “ontological” is used only in the sense of that which is consequent to every being, as a general mode of being. Thereby “ontological” goodness means the same as transcendental goodness. Aquinas did not use this term for it was first developed in the early modern period. The term can be abused when it is applied to anything real in which case the reality of anything (which can be studied non-metaphysically from a non-metaphysical perspective) is easily confused with the metaphysical perspective of being *qua* being. In no way does this paper use the term “ontological” according to this latter meaning of the reality of anything.

⁴ See Wippel, John F. *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000, pg. 192.

are the ten predicaments or categories, which Aquinas has to his judgement demonstratively proved in metaphysics.⁵ Now, turning to his most preeminent derivation of the transcendental attributes of being in his *Disputed Questions on Truth*(1256-1259)⁶. The text in which he derives the transcendental attributes of being is *De Veritate 1,1*. In summary, some predicates extend the notion of being insofar as they signify a mode of being not signified by the term being. First, are the special modes of being, the ten predicaments. The ten predicaments do not extend being by signifying a reality extrinsic to being in general, that is impossible, but instead signify a special mode of being, either being *per se*(substance) or being *per accidens*(the nine-fold division of accidents). Second, some predicates extend being because the mode they signify is general and thereby consequent to every being. These general modes of being are the transcendental attributes of being⁷. Among these transcendental attributes of being, Thomas first has a twofold division. First are those transcendentals consequent to every being absolutely. Second are those transcendentals consequent to every being in relation to another being. For those transcendentals consequent to every being in logical relation to another being, Aquinas in *De Veritate 1,1* has another twofold division. First are those relative transcendentals based on the conformity of one being to another. Aquinas states that these transcendentals are possible only because there is something that can be in conformity with every being such as the (rational) soul. Aquinas supports this statement by referring to Aristotle's *De Anima III, 8* where Aristotle states, "... that the soul is in a way all existing things;..."⁸. Aquinas states however that the (rational)⁹ soul has both cognitive and appetitive

⁵ See Wippel, John F. *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, pgs. 208-228.

⁶ See Torrell, Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Washington, D.C.:Catholic University of America Press, 1996, pg. 334.

⁷ For Aquinas' use of the technical term transcendental see Aertsen, Jan. *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas*. Leiden-New York-Cologne, 1996, pg. 91 and n. 52.

⁸ Aristotle. *De Anima 431b21*. edited by Jonathan Barnes. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995. All further quoted Aristotelian texts will be from this edition unless otherwise notified.

⁹ It is evident that by soul in this context Thomas means the rational soul because he refers to truth as signifying any being insofar as it is conformed to the souls' knowing power in comparison to the sense of sight. Also, next Aquinas mentions explicitly the intellect in defining transcendental truth. This is how Wippel explains this text. See Wippel, John F. *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Washington, D.C.:Catholic University of America Press, 2000, pg. 193. Wippel, John F. "Truth in Thomas Aquinas". *Review of Metaphysics* 43 (1989/1990), pgs. 295-326, 543-567.

powers. Finally, Aquinas arrives at that transcendental, of the five Thomistic transcendentals, which this paper is exclusively interested in, goodness as a general mode of being. He states, “Good expresses the correspondence of being to the appetitive power, for, and so we note in the *Ethics*, the good is ‘that which all desire.’”¹⁰ Aquinas accepts the Aristotelian nominal definition¹¹ of goodness, the general mode of being. The next Thomistic text in chronological order for which there is a derivation of transcendental goodness in the context of the derivation of the other transcendental attributes of being is *De Veritate 21,1*, “Does good add anything to being?”. In the body of the article Aquinas starts off with a threefold division of how something adds(extends) to something else. First, some thing adds some reality extrinsic to the essence of another thing, i.e., an accident adds something actually distinct from its substantial subject. Second, some thing adds or extends another thing as a species extends a genus¹². Finally, the third division is that of some attribute extending being in thought only and not in reality so that the two are only logically distinct and not really distinct. Aquinas quickly excludes the first division of the extension or addition of being from applying to being in general for no thing is extrinsic to being in general since every thing has being and no being is extrinsic to being in general among finite beings and no being is not a being.¹³ The second division applies to reality as (analogically) divided into the ten predicaments and as we have seen the univocal division of genera into species. Yet, as he states this is not how goodness, the general mode of being, adds to being or extends being since this goodness, like being is divided into the ten categories and refers this latter statement to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics I,6*. So finally Aquinas concludes that goodness, the general mode of being, adds or extends

¹⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. *De Veritate 1,1*. translated by Robert W. Mulligan. Indianapolis, IND: Hackett Publishing Co., 1994. The Aristotelian text is the *Nicomachean Ethics 1094a2-3*. This text and the Thomistic commentary will be investigated later.

¹¹ Without using this technical term, Aquinas explains what a nominal definition is in ST I:2,2, ad.2. It simply is the definition of the meaning of a term. In the context of ST I:2,2 he applies this logical theory of the nominal definition to the proofs for the existence of God. Yet the logical theory applies perfectly to explain what division of definition this accepted Aristotelian definition of goodness, the general mode of being, belongs in.

¹² Aquinas in this article will also include in this division the determination of being to the supreme genera of the ten predicaments, as will be seen briefly. Yet this must be recognized as an analogical determination whereas the determination of a genus to its species is a univocal determination in accordance with his metaphysical theory of the predication of being..

¹³ This latter proposition “No being is not a being.” in Thomistic technical terminology is a theoretical self-evident (*per se nota*) principle.

nothing to being or at most only that which is in thought. He reasons that because goodness is not synonymous with being¹⁴ but adds to being something in thought with a distinct meaning, he concludes that goodness, as a general mode of being, adds to being only in thought. Therefore transcendental goodness is only logically distinct, and not really distinct, from being in general. After dividing logical being into negation and logical relations, which are in thought only, and then deriving transcendental unity from negation; Aquinas derives transcendental goodness from the logical being of logical relations(as he did in *De Veritate 1,1* in the context of relative transcendentals). As he states it, the logical relation of perfection is what distinguishes the notions of truth and transcendental goodness from being. Perfection in the order of knowledge is what distinguishes transcendental truth and logical truth but it is perfection in reality that distinguishes transcendental goodness from the other transcendental attributes of being. To this Aquinas refers to Aristotle, the conclusion that the good is in things.¹⁵ In as much as one being by reason of its real existence perfects another being, it is the end of that other being. Therefore, Aquinas concludes that all who correctly define goodness, the general mode of being, put the end in its definition because the good has the attribute of final causality. Consequently, Aquinas again accepts Aristotle's nominal definition of goodness, the general mode of being, that is in *Nicomachean Ethics 1094a2-3*. The next subject to be investigated in the Thomistic metaphysical theory of transcendental goodness is the nominal definition of goodness, the general mode of being, and the transcendental nature of goodness, the general mode of being, as presented in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aquinas' *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*(1271-1272) was written contemporaneously with his second part of the *Summa Theologiae*.¹⁶ The opening words of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* are stated to be, "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at some good; and for this

¹⁴ By synonymous Thomas intends to be some term having the same meaning but only vocally or grammatically distinct, i.e. logically identical. See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I:13,4*.

¹⁵ See Aristotle. *Metaphysics 1027b25-26*. This statement is not exactly in Aristotle's text but Aquinas infers it from Aristotle's text in his interpretation. Thomas states: "It is also evident from the statements made here that the true and the false, which are objects of knowing, are found in the mind, but that good and evil, which are the objects of appetite, are found in things." St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, n. 1240*. translated by John P. Rowan. Notre Dame, IND: Dumb Ox Books, 1995.

¹⁶ See Torrell, Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, pg. 343.

reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”¹⁷ Thomas accepts the latter statement as the nominal definition of goodness, the general mode of being. He explains this nominal definition in his commentary¹⁸. Here as elsewhere, goodness, the general mode of being, is being insofar as it is an end. Thereby general goodness is logically distinct from being by its logical relation to final causality and this is what is meant by the statement that the good is that which all things aim (or desire). Aquinas explains that the nominal definition of goodness in general provided by Aristotle, “... is to be understood not only of those who knowingly seek good but also of beings lacking knowledge. These things by a natural desire tend (physical ordination) to good, not as knowing the good,... ”¹⁹. Then it is evident that this nominal definition of goodness in general at the beginning of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* presupposes that principle of finality which is in Aristotelian natural philosophy: Every agent acts for an end. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* also investigates the transcendental nature of general goodness. After having rejected the Platonic theory of a subsistent form of goodness as that in which happiness consists, Aristotle reasons,

“...but things are called good both in the category of substance and in that of quality and in that of relation... so that there could not be a common Idea set over all these goods. Further, since things are said to be good in as many ways as they are said to be..., clearly the good cannot be something universally present in all cases and single; for then it would not have been predicated in all the categories but in one only.”²⁰.

By admitting that goodness in general is predicated in all the categories and not one only Aristotle affirms that goodness, as a general mode of being, is a transcendental attribute of being meaning that it is an attribute of being not limited to any of the categories. Aquinas explains the text with great clarity when he states,

“To understand this we must know that Plato held the “idea” to be the “ratio” or nature and essence of all things that partake of the idea. It follows from this that there cannot be one idea of things not having a common nature. But the various categories do not have one common nature, for nothing is predicated of them univocally.

¹⁷ Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a1-3.

¹⁸ See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, n. 9-11. translated by C.I. Litzinger. Notre Dame, IND: Dumb Ox Books, 1993.

¹⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, n. 11. The parentheses are mine. This is the natural ordination of all physical agents and the powers of a physical agent to their end (which extends to material being in general). Also see St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae* I:6,1, ad.2. From this it is historically evident that there is no biologization of inanimate being in Aristotelian-Thomistic natural philosophy as it is sometimes accused.

²⁰ Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096a19-29.

Now good, like being with which it is convertible, is found in every category... It is clear, therefore, that there is not some one good that is the idea or the common "ratio" of all goods. Otherwise good would not be found in every category but in one alone."²¹

With this Aquinas affirms that goodness, as a general mode of being, is a transcendental attribute of being and not a universal that is univocally predicated. Due to this he affirms the convertibility of transcendental goodness with being which means that transcendental goodness is logically distinct from being but is really identical with being. It is this convertibility of transcendental goodness with being, in my judgment, that is fundamental to answering the assertion of modern ethics that is the naturalistic fallacy accusation by David Hume and G.E. Moore. Finally this paper turns to the subject of the convertibility of transcendental goodness with being. According to Aquinas, as mentioned previously, this consists in two components which are the logical distinction between transcendental goodness and being and the real identity between transcendental goodness and being. To get to the main ethical subject of this paper, the paper will omit Thomas' investigation of this subject in *De Veritate* 21:2 and proceed immediately to his best known treatment of the subject in the *Summa Theologiae* I:5. In article 1 the question is "Whether goodness differs really from being?" In this article Aquinas affirms the real identity and logical distinction of transcendental goodness with being and demonstrates this conclusion. He states,

"Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea; which is clear from the following argument. The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable. Hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. I.): *Goodness is what all desire*. Now it is clear that a thing is desirable in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection. But everything is perfect so far as it is actual. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect in so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual, as is clear from the foregoing (Q.3, A.4; Q.4, A.1). Hence it is clear that goodness and being are the same really. But goodness presents the aspect of desirableness, which being does not present."²²

The Thomistic demonstration of the convertibility of transcendental goodness with being is as follows, explaining the

²¹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, n. 81. In the context of this text the "ratio" must mean the universal post rem (after the thing) of the Avicennian-Thomistic division of universals. This is the universal properly speaking and it is univocally predicated of its' subordinates. Aristotle's and Aquinas' moderate realism in the theory of universals affirmed that the universal post rem is only in the intellect as an abstraction of the universal in re, which is the universal essence of things, where as Plato's extreme realism in the theory of universals affirmed the subsistent reality of such universals as separated from singulars. For the Avicennian-Thomistic division of universals see St. Thomas Aquinas. *In II Sent.*, d.3,3,2, ad.1. edited by P. Mandonnet and M.F. Moos, 4 vols. Paris, France: Lethielleux, 1929-1949. For the most extensive and succinct statement of the Thomistic theory of universals see St. Thomas Aquinas. *On Being and Essence*, c.2. translated by Armand Maurer. Toronto, Canada: PIMS, 1968.

²² St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I:5,1.

notion of desirability in terms of the teleology discovered in the nominal definition of transcendental goodness. Starting from the nominal definition of transcendental goodness, goodness is being in so far as it is an end. Every end of a thing is that thing's perfection. Every perfection is actually real. This is because potential reality is imperfect²³. Existence is the metaphysical principle of actuality as stated in ST I:3, 4 on "Whether essence and existence are the same in God." Therefore existence is the metaphysical principle of perfection.²⁴ Finally, every being is because of existence (*esse*). Consequently, because every end of a thing is that thing's perfection and transcendental goodness is being in so far as it is an end, a being is insofar as it is transcendently good. Therefore transcendental goodness and being are the same really but are logically distinct because transcendental goodness presents the aspect of desirability, that is logical relation to final causality, which the notion of being does not. In a naturalistic fallacy type of objection there is the argument that, "It seems that goodness differs really from being. For Boethius says (*De Hebdom.*): *I perceive that in nature the fact that things are good is one thing: that they are is another.* Therefore goodness and being really differ."²⁵ Aquinas responds with an affirmation of the logical distinction between transcendental goodness but a negation of any real distinction between transcendental goodness and being. He states, "Although goodness and being are the same really, nevertheless since they differ in thought, they are not predicated of a thing absolutely in the same way."²⁶ My interpretation of this article is confirmed by ST I: 5,4 that is "Whether goodness has the aspect of a final cause?". In the *sed contra*, Aquinas refers to Aristotle's *Physics*: "The Philosopher says (*Physic. ii*) that 'that is to be considered as the end and the good of other things, for the sake of which something

²³ See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I:4,1*. "For since matter as such (the principle of potentiality intrinsic to the essence of a substance) is merely potential, the first material principle (prime matter) must be simply potential, and thus most imperfect." Also "... for a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality...". The parentheses are mine.

²⁴ See St. Thomas Aquinas. *De Potentia Dei 7,2, ad 9*. translated by the English Dominican Fathers. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004. "Wherefore it is clear that *esse* (existence) as we understand it here is the actuality of all acts, and therefore the perfection of all perfections." The parentheses are mine. For the Latin see Wippel, John F. *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, pgs. 174-175, n. 115.

²⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I:5,1, obj.1*. For the reference to Boethius' *De Hebdomadibus (Quomodo Substantiae)* see Boethius. *Quomodo Substantiae*. translated by H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, and S.J. Tester. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973, pgs. 45-47.

²⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I:5,1, ad.1*.

is.’ Therefore goodness has the aspect of a final cause.”²⁷ Aquinas reasons as such in the body of the article, clearly explaining what he means by desirability. He states: “Since goodness is that which all things desire, and since this has the aspect of an end, it is clear that goodness implies the aspect of an end.”²⁸ Now that the Thomistic derivation of transcendental goodness from being in metaphysics has been investigated, the relation of moral goodness to transcendental goodness and thereby to being can be investigated.

Aquinas makes a distinction between moral goodness and transcendental goodness. He states in his *De Veritate*: “A thing can be called good both from its act of existing and from some added property or state. Thus a man is said to be good both as being just and chaste or destined for beatitude. By reason of the first goodness being is interchanged with good, and conversely. But by reason of the second, good is a division of being.”²⁹ Existence and its transcendental goodness is analogically divided into substance and accident but being (and therefore existence, *esse*, the Thomistic metaphysical principle of being) is primarily predicated of substance and secondarily predicated of accidents. This order of predication is reversed for goodness for Thomas states that,

“... goodness is divided into substantial and accidental, just as is the act of being. There is, however, this difference: a thing is called a being in an absolute sense because of its substantial act of existing; but because of its accidental act of existing it is not said to be absolutely... But just the opposite is true of good. From the point of view of its substantial goodness a thing is said to be good in a certain sense, but from that of its accidental goodness it is said to be good without qualification. Thus we do not call an unjust man good simply, but only in a certain sense—inasmuch as he is a man. But a just man we call good without further restriction... Consequently, complete or absolute goodness increases and diminishes and disappears entirely in us... Our substantial goodness, however, always remains.”³⁰

So Aquinas divides goodness primarily into accidental goodness and secondarily into substantial goodness. It is to accidental goodness that he associates with moral goodness and this is the primary division of goodness and it is to substantial goodness that he first and foremost associates transcendental goodness (since substantial being is the analogically primary division of being and transcendental goodness is convertible with being) which is secondarily

²⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae* I:5,4. For the reference to Aristotle in the *sed contra* see Aristotle. *Physics* 195a24-25.

²⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae* I:5,4.

²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *De Veritate* 21,2,ad.6.

³⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. *De Veritate* 21,5.

and qualifiedly goodness.³¹ The next text where there is stated a distinction between transcendental goodness and moral goodness is in the *De Potentia Dei* (1265-1266)³² He states that, “The good that is a kind of quality is not the good that is convertible with being. The latter adds nothing real to being, whereas the former adds a quality in respect of which a man is said to be good.”³³ Transcendental goodness is convertible with being whereas moral goodness is not convertible with being but instead, as seen previously, moral goodness is a division of being. Finally, Thomas states in the *Summa Theologiae* the distinction between transcendental goodness and moral goodness. Aquinas states: “Good, which is put in the definition of virtue, is not good in general which is convertible with being, and which extends further than quality, but the good as fixed by reason, with regard to which Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv.) *that the good of the soul is to be in accord with reason.*”³⁴ The good, as fixed by reason, that is the good of the rational soul and is in accord with human reason is moral goodness. Since Aquinas distinguishes transcendental goodness from moral goodness, the question is how does Thomas derive moral goodness from human nature which itself is ontologically good. What Aquinas means by human reason in relation to moral good and moral evil is also fundamental and also will be investigated. A human being is ontologically good primarily insofar as a human being substantially exists but unqualified goodness requires the perfection of human operations in accidental goodness. As will be made evident, this perfection of human operations consist in the conformity of human operations to the natural inclinations of man.

For this subject it is necessary to take a step down from metaphysics to natural philosophy in order to investigate as a preliminary natural inclinations. This will also prepare for this paper’s investigation into the natural moral law. The natural inclinations of man are the ordinations of human nature to their proper ends which are the goods of human nature. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, after demonstrating the proposition of philosophical physics that every agent acts for an end in chapter 2, Aquinas in chapter 3 argues that every agent acts for a good. Thomas

³¹ Also see St. Thomas Aquinas. *De Veritate* 21, 5, ad.1. “A creature cannot fail to be good with essential(substantial in this context) goodness, which is goodness in a qualified sense; yet it can fail to be good with accidental goodness, which is absolute and unqualified goodness.”

³² See Torrell, Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, pg. 335.

³³ St. Thomas Aquinas. *De Potentia Dei* 9,7, ad. 5.

³⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:55,4, ad. 2.*

states about the nature of every agent,

“That every agent acts for an end has been made clear from the fact that every agent tends toward something definite. Now, that toward which an agent definitely tends, must be proper to it, for the agent would not be inclined to it except for some agreement with it. But what is proper to something is good for it. So every agent acts for a good.”³⁵

From here it is evident that the natural inclinations of each agent is the ordinations of each agent by its nature to its proper end or ends. Now this paper is in a position to comprehend the Thomistic derivation of the moral goods of the self-evident principles and therefore self-evident precepts of the natural moral law from the goods of human nature in its natural inclinations. The pertinent text here is *Summa Theologiae I-II:94, 2* from the treatise on law. Aquinas derives the moral goods self-evidently presented by the first principles of the natural moral law as known in the practical intellect from the natural inclinations of human nature as known by the theoretical intellect. The question is “Whether the natural law contains several precepts or one only? Aquinas proves the conclusion that there are several precepts of the natural moral law by first stating that the (self-evident)³⁶ precepts of the natural moral law are related to practical reason (practical matters) as the theoretical first principles are related to theoretical reason’s demonstrations. The foundation for this premise is in the close relation that Thomas asserts between practical reason and theoretical reason³⁷. Therefore from there being several theoretical self-evident principles³⁸ Aquinas concludes that there are several self-evident precepts of the natural moral law. This paper will omit the division of self-evident principles for the sake of brevity. Aquinas ultimately comes to a division of theoretical self-evident principles that he will base his division of the practical self-evident principles of the natural moral law upon. Thomas ultimately divides the theoretical self-evident principles according to the analytical, i.e. by means of resolution, logical order of

³⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles III:3,2*. “Inde enim manifestum est omne agens agere propter finem, quia quodlibet agens tendit ad aliquod determinatum. Id autem ad quod agens determinate tendit, oportet esse conveniens ei: non enim tenderet in ipsum nisi propter aliquam convenientiam ad ipsum. Quod autem est conveniens alicui, est ei bonum. Ergo omne agens agit propter bonum.” *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. Vol. 14, Leonine edition. Rome, 1882–. The translation is mine.

³⁶ These precepts are not conclusions and so must be self-evident precepts, i.e. self-evident principles of the natural moral law.

³⁷ See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I:79,11*.

³⁸ These are the first principles of knowledge such as the principle of non-contradiction and the proposition “Truth exists”. For this latter self-evident principle see St. Thomas Aquinas. *De Veritate 10,12, ad. 3*.

their theoretical primary notions which are being and the transcendental attributes of being . Since, as is stated in other Thomistic texts(and is dependent historically on Avicenna and Aristotle), being is logically prior to the transcendentals of unity and truth, the theoretical self-evident principle of being in general³⁹ is logically or analytically prior to the other theoretical self-evident principles. Next, Aquinas states, “Now as *being* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension simply, so *good* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action...⁴⁰ From the notion of being in general as analytically first in the theoretical intellect, Thomas moves to transcendental goodness as that which is analytically first in the practical intellect. The good here is transcendental goodness as known by human reason for Thomas states the reason why goodness is analytically first in the practical intellect. This is because, “... every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good.”⁴¹ As Aquinas himself states, “Consequently the first principle in the practical reason is the one founded on the notion of good, viz., that *good is that which all things seek after*. Hence this is the first precept of law, that *good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided*.”⁴² Simply speaking this analytically first, practical self-evident principle is “Do good and don’t do evil.” Concerning this analytically first, practical self-evident principle Thomas states, “All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this: so that whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man’s good or evil belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided.”⁴³ From here Aquinas divides the self-evident precepts of the natural moral law according to the natural inclinations of man. He states,

”Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all these things, to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently

³⁹ This analytically first theoretical self-evident principle is stated to be the principle of non-contradiction by St. Thomas.

⁴⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*.

⁴¹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*.

⁴² St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*.

⁴³ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*.

as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance.”⁴⁴

From here St. Thomas divides the self-evident precepts of the natural moral law according to the order of the natural inclinations of human nature. First, there is the natural inclination of human nature insofar as it substantially exists as an animate being in human life. He states, “... by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law.”⁴⁵ Second, there is the natural inclination of human nature insofar as it is sentient as an animal with all of the sensitive powers. Concerning this natural inclination of man insofar as he is an animal with all sensitive powers, Thomas states that by, ”... virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, *which nature has taught to all animals*, such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth.”⁴⁶ Finally, there are the natural inclinations of human nature insofar as it is a rational nature, “... which nature is proper to him... and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law...”⁴⁷ The lectures of Francis Vitoria, and early modern Thomistic commentator, are a very helpful

⁴⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*. By the phrase “naturally apprehended” Aquinas must mean that the natural inclinations of man are self-evidently known by the human intellect as good and that the contraries of the natural inclinations of man are self-evidently known by the human intellect as evil. See Armstrong, R.A. *Primary and Secondary Precepts in Thomistic Natural Law Teaching*. The Hague, 1966, pgs. 46-47. It is evident from the following Thomistic text that by the statement that “self-evident propositions are naturally known”, Thomas does not mean that self-evident propositions are acquired without or prior to sense perception(this is the “a priori knowledge” of Kantianism) but instead this statement means that self-evident propositions are not acquired through the art of proof. He thereby is contrasting natural to that which is acquired through the “art” of the interior work of proof and not that which is “a priori knowledge” in the Kantian sense with that of knowledge that is derived from sense perception. See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles II: 83, 30, 32*. translated by James F. Anderson. Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1956. Such a theory to the contrary is opposed to the Thomistic theory of intellectual knowledge which states that “All intellectual knowledge is derived(by intellectual abstraction) from sense perception.” For this theory of intellectual knowledge, excluding both epistemological rationalism and empiricism, see ST I:84, 3,6. Consequently in a Thomistic(and Aristotelian) theory of natural intellectual knowledge it is impossible for there to be any “a priori knowledge” in the sense of Kantianism and of epistemological rationalism in general(Augustinian-Platonism for example).

⁴⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*.

⁴⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*. The reference in italics is to the Roman law formalized by the order of the Eastern Roman emperor Justinian I(reigned from 527-565 A.D.) in the *Corpus Juris Civilis: The Digestae(Pandecta)*. It is a subject of itself to investigate historically how Thomas utilizes Roman law, including the Roman jurist Ulpian (second to third century author whose works were used in extract in the Digests of the Body of Civil Law). The natural moral law jurisprudence of the Stoics evidently was transmitted by this formalized Roman law.

⁴⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:94,2*. This paper will omit due to size limitations any questions raised by the examples he gives of this natural inclination of the rational nature, i.e. the intellectual powers

instrument in comprehending the *Summa Theologiae II*. Vitoria interprets ST I-II:94,2 as meaning that human operations which violate the natural inclinations of human nature are morally evil where as those human operations which conform to the natural inclinations of human nature are morally good. In this respect he interprets the text as deriving moral goodness from human nature. Vitoria states: “If a thing is against natural inclination it is prohibited, if it is according to natural inclination it is a precept. ... there are three types of natural inclination, and to act against them is evil, and a sin against the precepts of the natural law.”⁴⁸ Moving next to Thomas’ arguments against legal positivism in the *Summa Contra Gentiles III*(1260-1265)⁴⁹ by which he proves that certain human operations are morally good by nature and not only by positive law. This argument ultimately constitutes a demonstration of the existence of the natural moral law. However, instead of deducing the existence of the natural moral law from the eternal law in God as Thomas does in ST I-II: 91, 2, Thomas proves his conclusion only from human nature itself. The conclusion of the chapter is that “some human acts are right according to nature and not merely because they are prescribed by law”. Thomas states in proof of his conclusion:

“Besides, there must be definite operations, which conform to a definite nature, whenever things have such a definite nature. For the operation proper to a given being is a consequent of that nature. Now it is certain that there is a definite nature for man. Therefore, there must be some operations that are in themselves proper for man.”⁵⁰

Since Aquinas states that “... law ... is a rule of operation...”⁵¹, by proving that there are some operations that are in

that are intellect and will, in man. The examples he gives for these rational natural inclinations are to know the truth about God(this must be God insofar as he is the author of nature and known by unaided natural reason), and to live in society. The latter must refer to Aristotle’s statement in his *Politics* that man by nature is a social or political animal and thereby this statement of Thomas must ultimately refer, at least as through its first principle, to the natural institution of the state in general. This is necessary since he must not be referring to the instinctual societal organizations of irrational animals.

⁴⁸ Francisco De Vitoria. *Political Writings*. edited by Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pg. 171.

⁴⁹ See for its dating Torrell, Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, pg. 332-333.

⁵⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles III:129,4*. “Praeterea. Quorumcumque est natura determinata, oportet esse operationes determinatas, quae illi naturae convenient: propria enim operatio uniuscuiusque naturam esse determinatam. Oportet igitur esse aliquas operationes secundum se homini convenientes.” *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. Vol. 14. The translation is mine. By determinatam, translated as definite, Aquinas only means the nature of some thing as distinguished from nature in general.

⁵¹ Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles III:114, 3*. translated by Vernon J. Bourke. Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1956.

themselves proper to human nature, which is the universal essence of man insofar as it is the principle of human operations, Thomas has proven the existence of a natural rule of human operations that is the natural moral law. This natural rule of human operations orders human operations to their proper natural end so that those human operations are morally good which conform to human nature as prescribed by this natural rule of human operations which is the natural moral law. Those human operations which are disordered from their proper natural end and thereby violate human nature are prohibited by this natural rule of human operations as morally evil. This interpretation of Thomas is confirmed by what he states in paragraph 8 of this chapter but by applying it to the human nature of every rational agent. Aquinas states: “Besides, those acts by which he (any agent) inclines towards his natural end are naturally proper to an agent; but those that have the contrary effect are naturally improper to the agent.”⁵² However, it is because the nature of man is rational with a rational appetite, i.e. human free will, that the natural rule of human operations, which proceeds from the universal essence of man insofar as it is the principle of human operations (the rational nature of man), is a natural moral law pertaining to human operations. This is the case instead of the non-volitional, natural physical law of the per se irrational powers of a physical agent.⁵³ Further, notice that in his argument of SCG III: 129, 4 the dependence is on Aristotelian natural philosophy as distinguished from the metaphysical theory of divine ideas and the theory of the eternal law that proceeds from the metaphysical theory of divine ideas⁵⁴. Finally, to be investigated for the subject of the natural moral law is Aquinas’ derivation of the moral goodness of the virtues from the natural moral law. Thomas does not separate the virtues from the natural moral law but instead concludes that the natural moral law in some way prescribes the human virtues. In ST I-II:94,3 Aquinas’ question is “Whether all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural law?” In the sed contra Thomas wrote,

⁵² St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles III:129,8*. “Praeterea. Unicuique naturaliter conveniunt ea quibus tendit in suum finem naturalem: quae autem e contrario se habent, sunt ei naturaliter inconvenientia.” *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. Vol. 14. The translation and the parentheses are mine.

⁵³ For why (moral) law is proper to the rational creature only see St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles III:114, 3,4*. This text must be referring to moral law for Aquinas admits that “... every creature is subject to the laws of nature...” in St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:5,6*. In this latter text he is referring to the natural physical law which even humans are subject to insofar as the human body has the per se irrational powers of any irrational agent. However, the actions of man consequent to these powers are not human operations. Therefore they do not belong to the practical science of moral philosophy. See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, n. 3*.

⁵⁴ For this latter subject see St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:91,1*.

“Damascene says (De Fide Orthod. iii. 4) that *virtues are natural*. Therefore virtuous acts also are a subject of the natural law.”⁵⁵ Next Thomas states in the body of the article that, “We may speak of virtuous acts in twofold: first, inasmuch as they are virtuous; another, inasmuch as such acts are considered in their proper species.”⁵⁶ This division of the consideration of virtuous acts is first, insofar as the human operations are virtuous in general and second, insofar as each virtuous act is specifically differentiated morally by their objects. The latter can be added to the natural moral law such that these virtuous acts are not prescribed by the first principles of the natural moral law. He does not state whether or not virtuous acts proceed from the conclusions of the natural moral law which are those precepts of the natural moral law that are inferred from the first(self-evident) principles of the natural moral law.

Therefore St. Thomas states,

“If then we speak of acts of virtue, considered as virtuous, thus all virtuous acts belong to the natural law. For it has been stated that to the natural law belongs everything to which a man is inclined according to his nature. Now each thing is inclined naturally to an operation that is conformed to it(to the thing) according to its form.. Wherefore, since the rational soul is the proper form(substantial form) of man; there is in every man a natural inclination to act according to reason: and this is to act according to virtue. Consequently, considered thus(insofar as they are virtuous), all acts of virtue are prescribed by the natural moral law: since each one’s reason naturally commands him to act virtuously.”⁵⁷

This is how Thomas proves that every virtuous act, insofar as it is virtuous, is prescribed by the natural moral law.

Next he explains the other side of his conclusion for this article.

“But if we speak of virtuous acts, considered in themselves, i.e. in their proper species, thus not all virtuous acts are prescribed by the natural law: for many things are done virtuously, to which nature does not incline at first; but which, through the inquiry of reason, have been found by men to be conducive to well-being.”⁵⁸

By this Aquinas refers to the variability of the natural moral law by means of addition to the conclusions of the

⁵⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:94,3*.

⁵⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:94,3*. “de actibus virtuosis dupliciter loqui possumus: uno modo, in quantum sunt virtuosus; alio modo, in quantum sunt tales actus in propriis speciebus considerati.” *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. Vol. 7. The translation is mine.

⁵⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:94,3*. “Si igitur loquamur de actibus virtutum in quantum sunt virtuosus, sic omnes actus virtuosus pertinent ad legem naturae. Dictum est enim quod ad legem naturae pertinet omne illud ad quod homo inclinatur secundum suam naturam. Inclinatur autem unumquodque naturaliter ad operationem sibi convenientem secundum suam formam.. Unde cum anima rationalis sit propria forma hominis, naturalis inclinatio inest cuilibet homini ad hoc quod agat secundum rationem. Et hoc est agere secundum virtutem. Unde secundum hoc, omnes actus virtutum sunt de lege naturali: dictat enim hoc naturaliter unicuique propria ratio, ut virtuose agat.” *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. Vol. 7. The translation and the parentheses are mine.

⁵⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:94,3*.

natural moral law as referred to previously.⁵⁹ Yet, fundamentally, especially for the first principles of the natural moral law, which Aquinas divided and distinguished in ST I-II:94, 2 according to the natural inclinations of man, every virtuous act, insofar as it is virtuous, is prescribed by the natural moral law. In confirmation of this interpretation of the Thomistic ethical theory of moral goodness as consisting in the conformity of human operations to the rational nature of man, there is ST I-II:94, 3, ad. 2. Aquinas states: “By human nature we may mean either that which is proper to man and in this sense all sins, as being against reason are also against nature, as Damascene states (De Fide Orthod. ii. 30) or we may mean that nature which is common to man and other animals...”⁶⁰ What is noticeable in this article’s argumentation is how heavily Aquinas’ premises in an ethical subject such as that of this article proceed from Aristotelian natural philosophy in both the philosophical physics of Aristotle’s *Physics* and the philosophical psychology of Aristotle’s *De Anima*.

Next to be investigated is the derivation of moral goodness in itself from the ontological good of human nature. For this the paper will start off with that Thomistic text, ST I-II:18,1, which was quoted from at the beginning of this paper. Here Thomas derives the moral goodness of some human operations in the context of defending the conclusion that there are some morally evil human operations. Thomas states: “ “We must speak of good and evil in actions as of good and evil in things: because such as everything is, such is the act that it produces. Now in things, each one has so much good as it has being: since good and being are convertible, as was stated in the First Part(Q.5, AA. 1,3).”⁶¹ Aquinas states that, as everything is such is the act that it has, not only because of his theory that every operation is proportional to the actuality of its agent but also because of his theory of nature. Nature, according to this meaning, is the essence of a thing insofar as it is the principle of its operations⁶². Now every finite being

“... has its proper fulness of being in a certain multiplicity. Wherefore it happens with some things, that they have being in some respect, and yet they are lacking in the fulness of being due to them. Thus the fulness of human being requires a compound of soul and body, having all the powers and instruments of knowledge and movement: wherefore if any man be lacking in any of these, he is lacking in something due to the fulness (plenitudine) of his being. So that as much as he has of being, so much has he of goodness: while so far as he is lacking in the fulness of

⁵⁹ Also see St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:94,5*.

⁶⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:94,3, ad. 2*.

⁶¹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:18,1*.

⁶² See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica III:2,1*.

his being, so far is he lacking in goodness, and is said to be evil.. ”⁶³

So far Thomas has been referring to transcendental goodness, which is convertible with being, and to its privation, which is evil in general. By plenitude or the fullness of being he must mean the perfection due to the nature of a being whether substantial or accidental as is evident from his examples. Then he states: “But since this same plenitude of being is of the meaning of good, if a thing be lacking in its due plenitude of being, it is not said to be good simply, but in a certain respect, inasmuch as it is a being...”⁶⁴ Therefore, as seen previously in the *De Veritate*, the transcendental goodness of being, especially substantial being, is secondarily and qualifiedly a division of goodness, “... although it can be called a being simply, and a non-being in a certain respect as was stated in the First Part (Q.5, A.1 ad 1).”⁶⁵ Yet, as in the case of substantial being, for it to be deficient in the perfection due to towards it(which is its’ plenitude of being) is for it to be deficient in goodness. Consequently, goodness is secondarily predicated of such a being while being is primarily and simply predicated of it(substance). Such a substantial being is a non-being in a certain respect(secundum quid) and secondarily inasmuch as it does not have the accidental goodness due to the nature of the substantial subject. As has been made evident previously while investigating the *De Veritate* and ST I:5,1,ad.1 that this reversal in the order of the predication of being and of general goodness is due to the logical distinction between being and general goodness and not because of any real distinction between transcendental goodness and being. Now inasmuch as moral goodness comes under what is simply or primarily good as distinct from what is good in a certain respect and secondarily(transcendental goodness) this Thomistic text helps to refute the assertion of the naturalistic fallacy by David Hume and G. E. Moore. Consequently, Aquinas states in conclusion: “Therefore it should be said that every act as having something of being has something of goodness...”⁶⁶ and by this he is referring to the transcendental goodness of each human operation. Yet, “... insofar as it lacks

⁶³ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:18,1*. The parentheses are mine.

⁶⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:18,1*. “Sed quia de ratione boni est ipsa plenitudo essendi, si quidem alicui aliquid defuerit de debita essendi plenitudine, non dicitur simpliciter bonum, sed secundum quid, in quantum ens:...” “*Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. Vol. 6. The translation is mine.

⁶⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:18,1*.

⁶⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:18,1*. translated by John A. Oesterle in the *Treatise on Happiness*. Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.

something of the fullness of the being a human action ought to have, it lacks goodness and to this extent is called evil ...”⁶⁷ This means that every human operation is transcendently good insofar as it has some being but insofar as a human operation lacks the perfection due to it from human nature, such a human operation is morally evil. By this it is necessary to conclude that moral goodness is the, “... fullness of the being a human action ought to have...”⁶⁸ Thomas accepts the theory of Pseudo-Dionysius that evil is never directly, i.e. *per se*, intended by an agent so to be efficiently caused but is instead only indirectly, i.e. *per accidens*, intended by an agent. Therefore, Aquinas has to explain how human operations, by which man efficiently causes an ontological good such as the procreation of a human, can be morally evil as in the case of adultery. Thomas states, “An evil action can have a *per se* effect, corresponding to the goodness and being it has. For example, adultery is the cause of the generation of a human being inasmuch as it involves the union of male and female; it is not a lack in the order of reason that causes generation.”⁶⁹ From this it is evident that he identifies moral evil as a lack in the order of reason. Then the next question is whether this order of reason is divorced from human theoretical knowledge of human nature as the case is with Kant’s agnosticism of the noumenal essence of man or is it not.⁷⁰

In answer to this question, the next text to be investigated is ST I-II:71,2. The question of the article is “Whether vice is contrary to nature?”. Thomas answers affirmatively by arguing as follows.

“But it must be observed that the nature of a thing is chiefly the form from which that thing derives its species. Now man derives his species from his rational soul (the substantial form in man): and consequently whatever is contrary to the order of reason is, properly speaking, contrary to the nature of man, as man; while whatever is in accord with reason, is in accord with the nature of man, as man. Now *man’s good is to be in accord with reason, and his evil is to be against reason*, as Dionysius states (Div. Nom. iv). Therefore human virtue, which makes a man

⁶⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:18,1*. translated by John A. Oesterle in the *Treatise on Happiness*.

⁶⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:18,1*. translated by John A. Oesterle in the *Treatise on Happiness*.

⁶⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II:18,1, ad. 3*. translated by John A. Oesterle in the *Treatise on Happiness*.

⁷⁰ I raise the question because certain authors, in attempting to rescue Thomistic ethics from the assertion of the naturalistic fallacy by modern ethics, have interpreted Aquinas in such a way as to divorce practical reason, the order of human reason that is immediately pertinent to the subject of ethics, from theoretical reason’s knowledge of nature and human nature. For such an author see Martin Rhonheimer. *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy*. translated by Gerald Malsbary. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2000.

good, and his work good, is in accord with man's nature; for as much as it accords with his reason; while vice is contrary to man's nature, in so far as it is contrary to the order of reason."⁷¹

From this explicit text it must be concluded that when Thomas mentions morally evil acts as contrary to reason it means the same as stating that morally evil acts are contrary to human nature, human nature being the universal essence of man insofar as it is the principle of human operations. Nature in this context cannot refer to the universal essence of man insofar as it has the powers of an irrational agent.⁷² This "nature" per se cannot be the subject of moral good or moral evil and cannot acquire virtue or vice⁷³ because the acquisition of virtue or vice is habituation and this proceeds from human operations instead of being an action of the per se irrational powers in man. Aquinas states that: "... being against nature is contrary to being in accord with nature, in which latter sense virtues are said to be in accord with nature, inasmuch as they incline us to that which is proper to nature."⁷⁴

In conclusion, far from separating metaphysics from ethics⁷⁵, Aquinas' derives his ethical theory of good and evil in human operations from his metaphysical theory of transcendental goodness and its privation, evil. Instead of separating moral goodness from human nature he derives moral goodness from human nature, inasmuch as by human nature it is meant the universal essence of man insofar as it is the principle of human operations. This derivation of moral goodness from human nature is founded on the transcendental good as (analogically) predicated

⁷¹ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:71,2*.

⁷² This distinction between the rational nature of man and the sensitive nature of man is evident in St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:71,2, ad.3*.

⁷³ See St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:63,1*. and St. Thomas Aquinas. *Disputed Questions on the Virtues in General*, 8. translated in *Disputed Questions on Virtue* by Ralph McInerney. South Bend, IND: St. Augustine's Press, 1999.

⁷⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae I-II:71,2, ad. 2*. "... esse contra naturam opponitur ei quod est esse secundum naturam, eo modo quo virtutes dicuntur esse secundum naturam, in quantum inclinant ad id quod naturae convenit." *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. Vol. 7. The translation is mine.

⁷⁵ Neither does this imply that Thomas confused these philosophical sciences. Not only does he affirm a distinction in proper object between metaphysics, the science of being qua being, and moral philosophy, the science of human operations insofar as they are ordered to one another and to an end, (making them at least specifically different sciences) but also affirms that metaphysics is a theoretical science where as ethics is a practical science. For Thomas's statement of the proper object of moral philosophy see St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, n. 2. For a historically accurate account according to Thomas Aquinas of the status of ethics as a practical science, i.e. a science ordered to the end of human operation, see Naus, John E. *The Nature of the Practical Intellect according to St. Thomas Aquinas*. Rome: Gregorian University, 1959, pgs. 42-68.

of the end of man as his perfection insofar as man is a rational agent. Thomas derives the practical self-evident principles of the natural moral law from the natural inclinations of man, i.e., from the ordinations of the universal essence of man (insofar as he is an animate substance, sentient, and rational) to a proper end. Finally, far from separating the human virtues from the natural moral law he concludes that every virtuous act, insofar as it is virtuous, is prescribed by the natural moral law. All of the derivations of moral goodness from human nature involve not only the general good of man as his natural end, which is known from metaphysics, but also the natural philosophical theory of nature in general and human nature determinately. Therefore it is evident that Thomas founds moral philosophy, the science “. . . of human operations insofar as they are ordered to one another and to an end.”⁷⁶, in the conclusions of the theoretical sciences of metaphysics and natural philosophy but only inasmuch as they are necessary to investigate human operations insofar as they are ordered to one another and to an end.

⁷⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, n. 2.

