

THE PROOF FROM ORDER — PART I

And so to the fifth of St Thomas's proofs for the existence of God, that from the order in the world and in the universe. As in so much of metaphysics, the best place to begin our considerations is with the fourfold distinction of causes.

		[<i>formal</i>
	[<i>intrinsic</i>	[
	[	[ <i>material</i>
Cause	[
	[	[ <i>efficient</i>
	[<i>extrinsic</i>	[
		[<i>final</i>

The chief of the causes, because it begins the process and ends it, is the final cause : it *begins* by being desired ; it *ends* by being achieved. This reflects (in reverse order) the two ways we have of referring to an end, namely, either as—

[the *termination*— as in the end of a line or 'The End' of a book ;
 [or
 [the *purpose* or aim— as in the end of the action of writing a book.

The runner in a race aims for the tape at the finish line. It marks the end of his race. But he aims for something more, the glory of being the first to breast the tape.

Formality follows finality. The final cause determines the character of the formal cause by specifying what must be had to achieve the end. I could build a number of different things if I have the necessary materials, each with a different form, table, door, ladder, chair or small boat. If I want something to assist me to climb onto the roof of the house, I will build a ladder. I could, conceivably use a table to help me get onto the roof, but a ladder will do the job best. The end I wish to achieve determines the form of the thing I will make.

This involves not just means to achieve the end but *fitting* means. Let's say I want to cross a creek or a gap in the terrain. If I am alone and the gap is not very wide I might use a log or a ladder (if there is one handy) to do the job. Either would suffice though neither would serve to well as a bridge. Now consider how I must adjust my ideas if I want to get my horse across the gap as well. I will need a much more substantial structure.



Every action of any agent is teleological, i.e., for the sake of an end. But ordination to an end may be taken—

- [actively, *as it is in the orderer*—and then it evidences that one orders something to an end ;
- [or,
- [passively, *as it is in the ordered*—when it evidences that something is ordered to an end.

Let us consider each in turn.

Active Ordination

Active ordination to an end presupposes intellect (the faculty to understand) in the orderer, as appears from the following syllogism :

Principle To order something to an end is to dispose that it be, or that it act, for the sake of an end, i.e., that it (or its action) be for the sake of an end.

Fact But to dispose in this fashion is to know that this end is a reason of be in respect of the thing.

Conclusion Therefore to order something to an end is to know that this end is a reason of be in respect of it.

But to know that something is a reason of be in respect of something is to understand. Therefore only one who understands, one possessed of intellect, orders things to an end.

“Ordering,” says St Thomas, quoting Aristotle—

“is the act of the wise. For the ordering of things cannot be achieved save through knowledge of the relation and proportion of the ordered to each other and to something higher which is their end ; for the order of certain things to one another is for the sake of their order to an end. But to know the relations and proportions of things to each other is the act of him alone who has intellect.” (*Summa Contra Gentes* II, 24,)

This ordering of things to an end is called governance. It entails—

- * knowledge of the end as it is an end (formal knowledge of end) ;
- * knowledge of what is ordered to the end (means) ;
- * knowledge of the relation and proportion of the means to the end ;
- * practical conceptualisation, or mental construction, of the order to be realised ; and,
- * effecting the realisation of this order.

These are the steps I take as is I choose, and construct, a structure capable of carrying me and my horse over the gap in the terrain.

Passive Ordination

Passive ordination towards an end (ordination in the ordered) may occur in two ways, either by way of knowledge, that is, as known by the ordered, as the soldier knows that his advance or retreat in respect of the enemy is ordered by his commander. This entails intellect in the ordered as well as in the orderer.

This knowledge may be had either autonomously (by discovery), as occurs when I discover without the influence of an instructor, that I am ordered to an end. This is the way a man discovers philosophically his own order to his own ultimate end, happiness, and the necessity of conformity with the natural moral law (the means) to achieve it. Alternatively, the knowledge may be had by instruction (heteronomously) inasmuch as the ordered through the influence of an extrinsic knower

learns his own order towards an end—and this is how men know their own passive ordination through positive law (the law of the land). This shows the teaching function of a country's law and explains the essential need for its conformity with the natural moral law.

Again, passive ordination may be had *not by way of knowledge*, as the computer does not know its own order towards the reproduction of words and symbols to form messages. This passive and unconscious order towards an end implies the operation of intellect *not in the ordered* itself (not in the computer), *but in the orderer*, i.e., in the makers and programmers of the computer.

This unconscious passive ordination may be with *material* knowledge of end only, or with no knowledge of end whatsoever. Thus, birds know (through imagination) the nest which is the end of their gathering of sticks, or leaves and the silk of spiderweb, and are moved by this nest known and desired, to seek and to gather the necessary ingredients. But they do not know that in the nest so known and desired is the principle of desirability of the ingredients. That is, they do not effect that they be moved by the imagined nest nor do they know that they are moved by it. They act as to execution and according to a certain formality only, not as to the end of their actions. Using modern terminology we might say they are programmed, for the good of their species, to perform these actions.

Or, this unconscious passive ordination may be had with no knowledge end, as is the case with agents such as lifeless natural bodies, with plants, and with artificial things like motor cars or computers. Such agents act only executively for the sake of an end. Hence—

	[either ACTIVE, as in an orderer]			
	[]			
	[	[ either by]		
	[	[ either	[DISCOVERY]	
Order	[	[ as	[	] and then]
towards	[	[ KNOWN	[	] INTRINSIC]
end is	[	[ and then	[or by]]
	[or	[	[ INSTRUCTION]]
	[PASSIVE,	[]		
	[as in the	[	]	] INTELLECT	
	[ordered,	[	]	] is implied	
	[and then	[	[ either nonetheless]]
		[or as	[with knowledge of]]
		[NOT	[end MATERIALLY]]
		[KNOWN	[	] and then]
		[and then	[	] EXTRINSIC]
			[]	
			[or without any]	
			[knowledge of end]	
			[whatsoever]	