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A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

St. Thomas Aquinas

ON POLITICS AND ETHICS

A NEW TRANSLATION

BACKGROUNDs

INTERPRETATIONS

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THE SUMMA AGAINST THE GENTILES
(SUMMA CONTRA GENTILES, 1259–1264)†

Book 1

Chapter 3

The Two Ways of Knowing the Truth about God.

There are two ways of knowing what we hold to be true about God. There are some truths about God that exceed the capacity of human reason—for example the fact that God is three and one. There are also some truths that natural reason can attain, such as that God exists, that he is one, and other truths of this kind. These are truths about God that have been conclusively proved by philosophers making use of their natural reason.

It is evident that there are some things to be known about God that completely exceed the capacity of human reason. Since all the knowledge that a person has about a thing is based on his understanding of its substance (according to the Philosopher [Aristotle] the basis for any argument is “what a thing is”), the way the substance of a thing is understood must determine what is known about it. Thus if the human intellect comprehends the substance of, say, a stone or a triangle, no intelligible aspect of that thing is beyond the capacity of the human reason. However this is not the case for us with God. The human intellect cannot achieve the understanding of God’s substance by means of its natural capacity because in this life all knowledge that is in our intellects originates in the senses. Hence things that are not perceived by the senses cannot be grasped by the human intellect except in so far as knowledge of them is gathered from the senses. But the objects of the senses cannot lead the human intellect to the point that in them it can see the divine substance as it is, for they are effects that are not equal in power to their cause. However our intellect is led from the objects of the senses to the knowledge of the existence of God—as well as to other attributes of the First Principle. Therefore there are some things that can be known

† Those interested only in Aquinas’s politics and ethics may prefer to omit the Summa contra Gentiles and to begin with the Summa Theologica, I, qn. 2. The Summa contra Gentiles was originally entitled On the Truth of the Catholic Faith against the Gentiles. It was written in Paris and Italy as an aid to Dominican missionaries working among the Moslems and Jews in Spain and North Africa.

1. Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, II, 3. For medieval philosophy, substantia is the underlying reality that distinguishes a thing from others and gives it independent existence.

2. First Principle—God as the Foundation of all creation. For Aquinas’s argument that reason can lead us to the knowledge of the existence of God, see Summa Theologica, I, qn. 2, a. 3 (p. 50).
Chapter 4

Truths about God that are Known by Reason are also Properly Made Available to Man by Faith.

If it were left solely to reason to seek the truth about God, few men would possess a knowledge of God. There are three reasons why most men are prevented from carrying out the diligent inquiry that leads to the discovery of truth. Some are prevented from doing so because of their physical disinclination—as a result of which many men by nature are not disposed to learning. And so however earnest they are, they cannot attain the highest level of human knowledge which consists in knowing God. Others are prevented from doing so by the pressures of family life. Some men must devote themselves to managing temporal affairs and thus are not able to spend time in leisurely contemplative inquiry, so as to reach the highest point of human inquiry—the knowledge of God. Laziness prevents others. To know what reason can investigate concerning God requires that one already have a knowledge of many things, since almost all of philosophy is directed towards the knowledge of God. This is why we learn metaphysics, which is concerned with the divine, last among the subjects in the field of philosophy. The study of truth requires a considerable effort—which is why few are willing to undertake it out of love of knowledge—despite the fact that God has implanted a natural appetite for such knowledge in the minds of men.

Chapter 7

Truths Based on Reason Are Not Contrary to the Truth of the Christian Faith.

Although the truth of the Christian faith exceeds the capacity of human reason, truths that reason is fitted by nature to know cannot be contrary to the truth of faith. The things that reason is fitted by nature to know are clearly most true, and it would be impossible to think of them as false. It is also wrong to think that something that is held by faith could be false since it is clearly confirmed by God. Since we know by definition that what is false is contrary to the truth, it is impossible for the principles that reason knows by nature to be contrary to the truth of faith.

We conclude therefore that any arguments made against the doctrines of faith are incorrectly derived from the self-evident first principles of

1. Nature, for Aquinas, is purposive and man's intellect is directed by nature to the knowledge of truth.

Chapter 8

The Relationship between the Human Reason and the Primary Truth of Faith.

There is a further point to be considered. The objects of the senses on which human reason bases its knowledge retain some traces of likeness to God, since they exist and are good. This resembles is inadequate because it is completely insufficient to manifest the substance of God. Effects possess a resemblance to causes in their own particular way because everything that acts does so in ways like itself, but effects do not always exhibit a perfect likeness to their cause. Now human reason is related to the knowledge of the truth of faith—which can only be known fully by those who see the divine substance—in such a way that reason can attain likenesses of it that are true but not sufficient to comprehend the truth conclusively or as known in itself. Yet it is useful for the human mind to exercise its powers of reasoning, however weak, in this way provided that there is no presumption that it can comprehend or demonstrate [the substance of the divine]. For it is most pleasing to be able to see some aspect of the loftiest things, however weak and inadequate our consideration of them may be.

Book II

Chapter 68

How an Intellectual Substance Can Be the Formative Principle of the Body.

In this way a wonderful linkage of things can be seen, for the lowest member of a higher classification (genus) is always found just above the highest member of a lower classification. For example, the lowest members of the class of animals are only a little above plant life, such as oysters that are immobile, and possess only the sense of touch, and are attached to the ground. Thus Dionysius says, "Divine wisdom has linked the lowest examples (fines) to higher beings to the first examples (principle) of those below them." This is true of the human body in the classification (genus) of bodies. It is an equal composite of two classifications. It touches the lowest level of the next higher genus because the human soul is the lowest in the series of intellectual substances, as we can tell from the way in which it acquires knowledge. Therefore the
intelligence and is at the borderline or limit of things corporeal and incorporeal since it is an incorporeal substance that acts as the formative principle (forma) of the body.

Book III
Chapter 2

Everything that Acts Acts for an End.

When something clearly acts for an end we say that the end is that toward which the movement of the thing that acts tends; when it is reached, we say that the end has been reached, and if it fails to reach it, we say that it has failed to reach its intended end. We see this in the case of a doctor who aims at health or a runner who runs towards a finish line. It does not matter whether the thing tending towards an end is endowed with consciousness or not. A target is both the end of the archer, and the end of an arrow’s flight. When things act for an end the thing beyond which they seek nothing further is said to be their last end. Thus a doctor’s action goes as far as health and once that is achieved he seeks nothing further. And in the action of everything that acts there is a point beyond which the actor does not seek anything further. Otherwise actions would go on forever—which is impossible.

Chapter 3

Everything that Acts Acts for a Good.

An intellectual agent acts for an end that it has chosen for itself, while things in nature that act for ends do not decide on their ends, for they do not know the meaning of an end but are moved to ends chosen for them by someone else. When someone uses his intellect to act, he always chooses an end that he thinks is good because the object of his intellect only moves him when it appears to be a good—and good is the object of the will. Everything in nature moves and acts for an end that is a good since the end of something acting in nature is the result of a natural appetite. Therefore everything that acts acts for a good.

Chapter 25

The End of Every Intellectual Substance is to Know God.

For everything that acts and moves in an ordered way, the purpose (finis—end) of the first actor and mover should be the final purpose of all, just as the goal (finis) of the commander of an army is the goal of all the soldiers under his command. Now the purpose of the intellect is what moves all the parts of man; the intellect moves the appetites by proposing their objects to them. The intellectual appetite or will moves the sense appetites of spirit and passion. We do not obey the passions unless the will commands, and the sense appetite, once the will consents, moves the body. Therefore the end (goal, purpose) of the intellect is the end of all human actions. The end and good of the intellect is truth. Therefore the ultimate end of the whole man and of all his actions and desires is to know the first truth; namely, God.

Furthermore, there is a natural desire in all men to know the causes of what they see. Because men wondered about the underlying causes of what they saw, they first began to philosophize, and when they found the cause they were satisfied. Human inquiry does not cease until it comes to the first cause and we think that we have full knowledge when we know the first cause. Therefore man desires by nature to know the first cause as his ultimate end. But the first cause of everything is God. Therefore man’s ultimate end is to know God.

Chapter 27

Human Happiness Does Not Consist in Bodily Pleasures.

In the order of nature, pleasure is the result of a function and not the reverse. Therefore if a function is not the ultimate end, the pleasure that results from it cannot be the ultimate end, or accompany the ultimate end. Now it is clear that the functions that are followed by the (bodily) pleasures mentioned above are not man’s ultimate end but are directed at certain specific ends—for instance eating at the preservation of the body, and sexual intercourse at the procreation of children. Therefore these joys are not the ultimate end, nor do they accompany the ultimate end. Therefore (ultimate) happiness is not located in such pleasures.

Chapter 32

Happiness Does Not Consist in the Goods of the Body.

The soul is better than the body—which needs the soul to live and to possess these goods. Therefore a good of the soul, such as understanding and the like is better than a good of the body. Therefore the good of the body is not man’s highest good.

Furthermore these (bodily) goods are common to man and to other animals. But happiness is a good proper to man alone. Man’s happiness therefore does not consist in the things mentioned above.

Moreover, many animals surpass man in the goods of the body. Some are speedier, some stronger, and so on. If the highest good of man were in these things man would not be the best of the animals—which is obviously false. Therefore human happiness does not consist in the goods of the body.
Chapter 37

Man's Ultimate Happiness Consists in the Contemplation of God.

Man's ultimate happiness consists in the contemplation of truth for this operation is specific to man and is shared with no other animals. It is not directed to any other end since the contemplation of truth is sought for its own sake. In addition, this operation man is united to higher beings (substances) since this is the only human operation that is carried out both by God and by the separate substances (angels). Through this operation too man is united with those higher beings by knowing them in a certain way.

Chapter 48

Man's Ultimate Happiness Is Not in this Life.

Man's ultimate end fulfills his natural appetite in such a way that once he achieves it he desires nothing more. If he is still moved towards something else, he has not reached the end which satisfies him. This cannot happen in this life because the more someone knows the more his desire for knowledge increases. And this occurs by nature.

Everyone agrees that happiness is a kind of perfect good, since it satisfies the appetite. Now a perfect good is one in which there is no admixture of evil. A thing that is perfectly white has no admixture of black. It is not possible for man in this life to be wholly free from evil—nor only from those of the body and the flesh such as hunger, thirst, cold, and so on, but also those of the spirit. There is no one who is not sometimes upset by disorderly passions, who does not sometimes exceed the virtuous mean either because of excess or deficiency, who is not deceived for one reason or another, or at least is not ignorant of things he would like to know, or doubtful about things of which he would like to be certain. No one therefore is happy in this life.

Chapter 51

How God May Be Seen in His Essence.

Since it is impossible for a natural desire to be frustrated—which would be the case if it were not possible to arrive at the understanding of the divine substance that all minds naturally desire—we must conclude that the substance of God can be seen through the intellect, by both the separate intellectual substance (angels) and our souls. How God can be seen is clear from what has been said. We have proved that the divine

6. On the contemplative life as man's highest and happiest pursuit, see Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, X, 7-8.
7. On the doctrine that virtue lies in the mean or intermediate point between excess and deficiency of a quality, see Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, II, 6-9.

Chapter 53

A Created Intellect Needs the Influence of (Divine) Light in Order to See God in His Essence.

The divine essence is a higher form than any created intellect. In order for God in his essence to be known by any created intellect as is required for the divine substance to be seen, the created intellect must be elevated by action from on high. * * *

Since we come to the knowledge of intelligible things from the objects of the senses, we transfer the terms we use for sensory knowledge to intellectual knowledge. This is especially true of sight which is the most noble and spiritual of the senses and the one that is most akin to the intellect. Because bodily vision is not possible without light, we call what makes intellectual vision possible "light" as well. * * *

Accordingly the action by which a created intellect is elevated to the intellectual vision of the divine substance is appropriately called the light of glory.

Chapter 63

In that Final Happiness Every Human Desire Will Be Fulfilled.

There is a certain desire in man, as an intellectual being, to know truth. Men achieve this by pursuing the contemplative life. This is fulfilled in that vision of the First Truth through which everything that the intellect naturally desires to know becomes known to it.

* * *

Secondly, there is a certain desire in man for a bliss on which to order all lesser things. Men achieve this by pursuing the active life in society. This is principally the desire of man to order his whole life according to reason, that is, to live in accordance with virtue, since the end of the action of any virtuous person is the good of virtue itself. Just as that of a brave man is to act bravely. This desire will be completely fulfilled when reason is at its fullest strength, illuminated by the divine light so that it cannot depart from what is right.

There is a third desire of man that he shares with animals to enjoy pleasure. Those men who live lives of voluptuousness achieve this goal but because of lack of moderation they become intemperate and incontinent. But in that ultimate happiness there will be perfect pleasure—a most perfect delight of the senses than that which animals enjoy, since the intellect is higher than the senses. That good in which we will delight

8. The essence of a thing is its ultimate unchanging nature, its defining characteristics.
is greater than any sense good. It is more intimate and continuous as well as more pure because it is not mixed with sadness or worry that it may be disturbed.

Therefore it is clear that through the vision of the divine, intellectual substances attain the true happiness in which all desire is at rest—which is the full sufficiency of all goods that Aristotle says is required for happiness. Nothing is as similar to this perfect ultimate happiness in this life as the life of contemplation of truth, as far as is possible in this life. Therefore philosophers who could not have full knowledge of that ultimate happiness have said that the ultimate happiness of man consists in the contemplation which is possible in this life.

Chapter 64

God Governs the Universe by His Providence.

From what has been said above, it has been sufficiently proved that God is the end of all things. From this we can further conclude that he governs and rules the universe by his providence.

Whenever things are ordered to some end, they are subject to the direction of the one who is principally concerned with that end. Thus all the parts and activities of an army are directed as their ultimate end to the goal of the general, which is victory, and therefore the general commands the whole army. In the same way an art which is concerned with an end controls and lays down rules for an art which is concerned with the means to an end. The art of government directs the military, the military the cavalry, and navigation shipbuilding. Therefore since all things are ordered to the Divine Goodness as to their end, God who is that Goodness substantially possessed, and known, and loved, must be the one who governs all things.

Chapter 81

Order among Men and in Relation to Other Things.

Relative to other intellectual substances, the human soul is lowest in rank because when it is created it only receives knowledge of the order of divine providence in a general way. The (human) soul must acquire a full knowledge of the individual aspects of that order from the particular ways in which the order of divine providence is expressed. Consequently the human soul needs bodily organs to derive its knowledge from bodily things. But because of the weakness in the light of its intellect it cannot acquire from them a perfect knowledge of the things that concern man without the help of light from higher spirits. For God has directed that lower beings should be perfected by higher spirits.

But since man has some share in intellectual light divine providence has decreed that brute animals that have no share in it should be subject to

2. Aristotle, Politics, I, 3. For fuller statements in the Summa Theologica of Aquinas's view of slavery which differs in important respects from that of Aristotle, see S.T. I, qu. 96, a. 4 (p. 55), S.T. II, qu. 57, a. 3 (p. 67), and qu. 104, a. 5 (p. 75).

ON KINGSHIP or
THE GOVERNANCE OF RULERS
(DE REGIMINE PRINCIPUM, 1265–1267)†

Chapter 3

Men in Society Must Be under Rulers.

We must first explain what is meant by the term, king. When a thing is directed towards an end, and it is possible to go one way or another, someone must indicate the best way to proceed toward the end. For example, a ship that moves in different directions with the shifting winds would never reach its destination if it were not guided into port by the skill of its helmsman. Man too has an end towards which all the actions of his life are directed, since all intelligent beings act for an end. Yet the diversity of men’s pursuits and activities means that men proceed to their intended objectives in different ways. Therefore man needs someone to direct him towards his end. Now every man is naturally endowed with the light of reason to direct his actions towards his end. If men were intended to live alone as do many animals, there would be no need for anyone to direct him towards his end, since every man would be his own king under God, the highest king, and the light of reason given to him from on high would enable him to act on his own. But man is by nature a political and social animal. Even more than other animals he lives in groups (multitudine). This is demonstrated by the requirements of his nature. Nature has given other animals food, furry covering, teeth, and horns and claws—or at least speed of flight—as means to defend themselves. Man however, is given none of these by nature. Instead he has been given the use of his reason to secure all these things by the work of his hands. But a man cannot acquire all these by himself, for a man cannot adequately provide for his life by himself. Therefore it is natural for man to live in association with his fellows.

In addition, nature has installed in other animals the ability to perceive what is useful or harmful to them. For example, a sheep knows by nature that the wolf is its enemy. Some animals even have the natural ability to know the medicinal herbs and other things necessary to their existence. Man, on the other hand, has a natural knowledge of what is necessary to his life only in a general way, using his reason to move from general principles to the knowledge of particular things that are neces-
sary for human life. And it is not possible for one man to arrive at the knowledge of all these things through the use of his reason. Thus it is necessary for him to live in society so that one person can help another and different men can employ their reasons in different ways, one in medicine, and others in this or that endeavor. This is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that man uses words to communicate his thoughts fully to others. It is true that other animals express their feelings in a general way. Dogs express their anger by barking and other animals express their feelings in other ways. But man is more able to communicate with others than other gregarious animals such as cranes, ants, or bees. [King] Solomon refers to this when he says “It is better for two to live together than alone, for they have the advantage of mutual company.”

Therefore if it is natural for man to live in association with others, there must be some way for them to be governed. For if many men were to live together and each to provide what is convenient for himself, the group (multitudine) would break up unless one of them had the responsibility for the good of the group, just as the body of a man or an animal would disintegrate without a single controlling force in the body that aimed at the common good of all the members. As Solomon says, “Where there is no ruler, the people will be dispersed.” This is reasonable since the private good and the common good are not the same. Private concerns divide the community, while common concerns unite it. Those differences exist for different reasons. Therefore besides what moves each person to his own private good there must be something that moves everyone to the common good of the many. Therefore in everything that is ordered to a single end, one thing is found that rules the rest. In the physical universe, by the intention of divine providence all the other bodies are ruled by the first or heavenly body, as divine providence directs, and all material bodies are ruled by rational creatures. In each man the soul rules the body and within the soul reason rules over passion and desire. Likewise among the parts of the body there is one ruling part, either the heart or the head that moves all the others. So in every group, there must be something that rules.

When things are ordered to some end, one can proceed in the right way and the wrong way. So the government of a group can be carried out in the right way or the wrong way. Something is done in the right way when it is led to its appropriate end, and in the wrong way when it is led to an inappropriate end. The proper end of a group of free men is different from that of a group of slaves, for a free man determines his own actions while a slave, qua slave, is one who belongs to another. If then a group of free men is directed by a ruler to the common good of...
the group, his government will be right and just because it is appropriate for free men, but if the government is directed not at the common good of the group but at the private good of the ruler it will be unjust and a perversion. God warns such rulers in the Book of Ezekiel, "Woe to shepherds that feed themselves (because they seek their own benefit). Should not the flock be fed by the shepherd?" Shepherds must seek the good of their flocks, and rulers, the good of those subject to them.

If a government is under one man who seeks his own benefit and not the good of those subject to him, the ruler is called a tyrant. The word is derived from tyros, the Greek word for "strength," because he uses force to oppress the people instead of justice to rule. Hence among the ancients all powerful men were called tyrants. But if an unjust government is exercised not by one but by more than one, if they are few it is called an oligarchy which means "rule by the few." In this case a few rich men oppress the people. Such a government differs only in number from a tyrant. An unjust government exercised by the many is called a democracy, that is, "rule by the people," which occurs when the common people use the force of numbers to oppress the rich. In this case the whole people acts like a tyrant.

We can also classify the types of just government. If the government is carried out by a large number, as when a group of warriors governs a city or province, it is usually called a polity. But if a few virtuous men carry out the administration, a government of this kind is called an aristocracy, that is the best rule, or rule of the best, who for this reason are called the aristocrats. But if a good government is in the hands of one man alone, it is appropriate to call him a king. So the Lord said in the Book of Ezekiel, "My servant David will be king all over, and there will be one shepherd over all of them." Thus it is very clear that it is the nature of kingship that there should be one to rule and that he should be a shepherd who seeks the common good of all and not his own benefit.

Since men must live together because they cannot acquire what is needed to live if they remain by themselves, a social group is more perfect if it provides better for the necessities of life. A family in a single household provides adequately for some of the needs of life such as the natural acts of nourishment and the procreation of children, etc. In a single locality you will find self-sufficiency in a given manufacture. But a city which is a perfect community contains whatever is needed for life, and even more so a province because of the need for common defense and mutual aid against enemies. Therefore the right name for someone who rules a perfect community, whether a city or a province, is a king,

while someone who directs a household is not called a king but the father of a family. Yet there is a certain resemblance to a king in his position so that sometimes kings are called the fathers of their people.

From what we have said it is clear that a king is one who rules over the people of a city or a province for the common good. So Solomon says in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "A king commands all the lands subject to him."

Chapter 2

Is it Better for a Group to Be under One Ruler or Many?

Next we must inquire as to whether it is better for a province or a city to be ruled by one person or by many. We will approach this question from the point of view of the purpose of government.

The aim of any ruler should be to promote the welfare of the territory that he has been given to rule. The aim of a helmsman is to preserve his ship from the dangers of the sea and to bring it safely to port. The welfare of any organized group is based on the preservation of its unity in what we call peace. Without peace life in society is no longer beneficial and its divisions make social life burdensome. Thus the most important responsibility of the ruler of a community is to achieve unity in peace. Just as a doctor does not debate whether to cure a sick man under his care there is no reason for a ruler to question whether he should maintain the peace of the community under him. No one should debate about the end of an action but about the appropriate means. Therefore the Apostle [Paul] when he endorses the unity of the faithful says, "Be solicitous to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Thus the more effective a government is in promoting unity in peace, the more useful it will be. We say more useful, because it leads more directly to its end. But it is evident that that which is itself one can promote unity better than that which is a plurality, just as the most effective cause of heat is that which is in itself hot. Therefore government by one person is better than by many.

Furthermore, it is evident that many persons cannot preserve the unity of a group if they generally disagree. Some agreement among them is necessary for them to govern at all. A number of men could not move a ship in one direction unless they worked together in some way. But a number of people are said to be united to the extent that they come closer to unity. It is better therefore for one person to rule than for many to try to achieve unity.

In addition, whatever is in accord with nature is best, for nature always operates for the best. But in nature government is always by one. Among the members of the body, the heart moves all the other parts; among the parts of the soul one power, reason, predominates. Among the bees there is one king bee, and in the whole universe one God is the Maker and

5. Ezekiel, 34:2.
6. This classification is derived from Aristotle's Politics, III, 7-8.
7. This is a gambled reference to Aristotle's assertion (Politics, III, 7) that the shared excellence or virtue of a good government by the many is likely to be militant, and the franchise will be related to the possession of arms.
8. Ezekiel, 34:24. The reference is to King David who ruled over Israel in the 10th Century B.C. and was believed to be author of the Psalms.
1. Ephesians, 43.
Ruler of all. This is in accord with reason because every plurality derives from unity. Therefore since art imitates nature and a work of art is better to the degree that it resembles what is in nature, it follows that it is best for a human group (multitude) to be ruled by one person.

This is also apparent from experience. Provinces and cities that are not ruled by one person are torn by dissension and disputes without peace so that the words of the Lord spoken through the Prophet [Jeremiah] seem to be fulfilled, "Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard." On the other hand provinces and cities under a single king enjoy peace, justice flourishes, and they delight in the abundance of wealth. Hence the Lord through his prophets promises the people as a great favor that he will place them under one hand and that there will be "one prince in the midst of them." 4

Chapter 3

Just Rule by One Person Is the Best Form of Government; Its Opposite Is the Worst.

Just as government by a king is best, so government by a tyrant is the worst. Democracy stands in opposition to polity as indicated above, since both are governments by the many. Oligarchy is opposed to aristocracy, since both are governments by the few. Kingship is the opposite of tyranny since both are governments by one person. We have shown above that kingship is the best form of government. Since that which is opposite to the best is the worst, it follows that tyranny is worst form of government.

In addition a force that is united is more effective than one that is divided. Many persons working together can pull a load that individually they could not pull. Thus just as a force operating for good is better at producing good if it is one, so a force operating for evil is more harmful if it is one rather than divided. The power of an unjust ruler operates to the detriment of the group because he replaces the common good of the group with his own advantage. Similarly in good governments, since a more unified government is a more effective one, monarchy is better than aristocracy, and aristocracy is better than polity, while in bad governments the opposite is the case so that the more unified it is the more harmful it is. Thus tyranny is more harmful than oligarchy and oligarchy is more harmful than democracy.

Furthermore what makes a government unjust is the fact that the private interest of the ruler is pursued in preference to the common good of the society. The further he departs from the common good, the more unjust his government will be. An oligarchy departs from the common good more than a democracy because it seeks the good of the few rather than the many. Tyranny departs still more from the common good because it seeks the good of only one person. The greater number comes nearer to the whole than a few, and the few nearer than only one person. Tyranny therefore is the most unjust form of government.

We can see this when we consider the order of divine providence which directs everything in the best way. The good in things results from a single perfect cause, that is, from everything working together for good, while evil results from individual defects. There is no beauty in a body unless all its parts are properly integrated. Ugliness results from one member not fitting in properly. And so ugliness comes in different ways from many different causes while beauty comes in one way from a single perfect cause. In all cases of good and evil God seems to provide that good from one cause will be stronger and evil from many causes will be weaker. It is proper therefore that just government should be exercised by one person so that it can be stronger. But if the government becomes unjust it is better that it be exercised by many, so that it is weaker because of internal divisions. Therefore among unjust governments democratic government is the most tolerable of the unjust forms of government, while tyranny is the worst.

This is also apparent when one considers the evils that result from tyranny. The tyrant despises the common good and seeks his private good and as a result he oppresses his subjects in different ways and which goods will be affected will depend on the various passions to which he is subject. If he is subject to the passion of greed, he steals the property of his subjects. Thus Solomon says "A just king improves the land; a greedy man destroys it." If he is dominated by the passion of anger, he sheds blood for nothing, so that it is said in Ezekiel "The princes among them are like wolves seizing their prey and shedding blood." The wise man advises us to avoid this kind of government when he says "keep away from the man with the power to kill" for he does not kill in pursuit of justice but uses his power to satisfy his willful lust. Thus when the ruler departs from law there is no security and everything is uncertain. No reliance can be placed on the will, not to speak of the lust, of another. He threatens not only the bodies of his subjects but also their spiritual welfare, since those who seek to use rather than to be of use to their subjects oppose any progress by their subjects since they suspect that any excellence among their subjects is a threat to their unjust rule. Tyrants always suspect the good rather than the evil and are always afraid of virtue. They seek to prevent their subjects from becoming virtuous and developing a public spiritedness which would not tolerate their unjust domination. They prevent the bond of friendship from developing among their subjects and the enjoyment of mutual peace since as long as there is mutual distrust no attempt can be made to overthrow their rule. Therefore tyrants sow discord among them, promote dissension, and