Chapter 6

Terminus a Quo of the Self
Throughout the ages humanity has been engaged in discovering and defining the purpose of life. This undergoes, from time to time, changes as new modes of thinking emerge depending upon the scenario of scientific progress, historical interpretations and political ideologies. In its efforts to solve the riddles of life it strives to reach beyond what appears to be to 'what is.' In reaching out to the hidden truth man faces at one stage or other the question of beginning. Beginning always connotes a starting point of an event or spontaneous occurrence of a happening. In conceiving beginning, one obviously becomes aware of the three basic categories of time, viz. past, present, and future. Since, man lives in the present which is rooted in the past and looks forward to the future, there is a chance of impossibility of knowing about the beginning. When impelled to investigate the matter further, it turns out to be a multi-faceted puzzle. It raises questions about time, cause, material, etc. The definition of creation by St. Bonaventure offers an excellent, all comprehensive answer: "the entire fabric of the universe was brought into existence in time and out of nothingness by one first principle, simple and supreme, whose power, though immeasurable, has disposed all things by measure and number and weight."¹ He further elaborates this def-
inition by rejecting the false theories and by establishing the right notion of creation. Against the view of an eternal universe, Bonaventure by referring to the expression of 'in time asserts that time has a beginning. By saying 'out of nothingness' he opposes the theory of an eternal material principle. The Manichean error of the plurality of principles was repudiated by claiming 'one principle.' Mediatory help is rejected by pointing out 'simple and perfect.' The triple qualifications, 'measure, number, and weight,' indicates that the creatures are the effect of a triple causality. The creatures receive unity, mode, and measure through efficient causality; truth, species, and number through exemplary causality; goodness, order, and number through final causality.

6.1 Time has a Beginning

St. Bonaventure in his Commentary on the Sentences offers various arguments to demonstrate that the world is non-eternal and more to the point, time has a beginning. To Bonaventure, notions of creation and the eternity of the world are incompatible. Against the Aristotelian conception of the eternity, Bonaventure reasons that if it is created from eternity it involves a manifest contradiction,
for, it comes into being from non-being. So, it cannot possibly have existed from eternity. To substantiate this claim, he gives a series of arguments.

The argument is based on the principle that an infinite which is the ultimate cannot be increased, or in mathematical parlance, supposing a number larger than the infinite is absurd. If it is supposed that the world has no beginning, it has existed for an infinite duration. Each passing day adds a unit to the infinite number of days already gone. So the eternity of the world supposes an infinite which is capable of being augmented, which contradicts the said principle that it is impossible to add to the infinite.

Second argument is based on the principle that it is impossible to order an infinite of terms. If life is considered seriously, it is clear that the order of the life is something like this: it starts from birth, grows into maturity, and ends in death. Likewise, all orders start from a beginning, pass through a middle point and reach an end. Bonaventure argues by pointing out that in reality the seasons and days follow certain order - beginning, maturity, and end. If one takes up the position that there is
no beginning, then there is no order either. If it is main-
tained stubbornly that the revolutions of the stars, and
the duration of the world have no beginning, then their
series would have no first term, i.e. beginning, and it is
impossible to possess an order without a first term. In
reality, Bonaventure asserts, the contrary is true, so to
believe that the world has no beginning is false.

The third inconsistency in the eternity of the world
with the property of the infinite is that it cannot be
bridged. The contend of the argument is that the in-
finte cannot be traversed. If the universe has no begin-
n ing, the revolutions of earth and stars must have been
infinite, and as it is impossible to cover the infinite, the
present day could have not been reached.

The fourth argument relies on the inability of the finite
to understand fully the infinite. Bonaventure points out
that the infinite alone can have the actual knowledge of
the infinity of memories, while the finite intelligence can-
not know it or produce it, it must have been produced in
time by the infinite.
6.2 Fecundity and Self-diffusion

Time has a beginning implies that God brings into existence something which has not previously existed. Since God creates everything other than Himself, He creates ex nihilo. It means that there is nothing other than Himself out of which He creates the world. It is also not made up of the substance of God which is non-material and non-temporal. To clarify his position Bonaventure resorts to the Pseudo-Dionysian principle that good is self-diffusive. He sees the God-head as a mystery of goodness and love. So creation is related to the Father on the basis of two principles, the fecund primordiality and the self-diffusion of the good. Bonaventure develops the idea of fecund primordiality in the following works, *Disputed Questions*, *De Mysterio Trinitatis*, and *Brevisloquium* and the idea of the self-diffusion in *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, and *Collationes in Hegameron*.

Bonaventure following the general principle that the more a primordial a thing is, the more the fecundity it has. Adhering to this principle, Bonaventure conceives God as the *plentitudo fontalis* that is as an overflow-
ing fount of being. Accordingly, the Father in the Trinity flows into two internal generations through which the Son is generated and through the Son the Spirit is spirated.

In generating the Son, the Father produces in the Son the eternal ideas or *rationes aeternae* of all those He can create. These *rationes aeternae* are the ontological foundations of creation. For this reason the Son is known as the *medium metaphysicum*. He stands in the middle ground on which the polarities of the divinity and the universe converge. It is made clear by Bonaventure in the following analysis, where he argued that Christ, the Son, is the centre of metaphysics: “This must necessarily be the centre of persons: for if there is a person who produces and is not produced and a person who is produced and does not produces, there must necessarily a person who is produced and produces.”² Here the Son occupies the midway position between the two extremes, on the one side the Father who represents the productive aspect of the Trinity and on the other side the Spirit represents the receptive side. While the Father for generating the Son is known as *principium originans*, the Spirit for it is produced remains as the *spiratio passiva*. Since the Son within Himself contains the opposites of
the poles, viz. being produced and also able to produce, the Son as persona media is linked these two poles. As the Trinity is that of the dynamic good and self-diffusive in nature, creation is expressed in the Son as rationes aeternae. These rationes aeternae represent all that is there in the universe. These exist in the Son with a two-fold reference: insofar as the Son is the Father’s image, they (rationes aeternae) reflect the Father’s boundless fecundity; insofar as the Son is the Father’s Word, they (rationes aeternae) are oriented toward His expression of Himself ad extra outside the intra-trinitarian life in the production of creatures in the finite realm.

These rationes aeternae are existing in God as potential essences and when they flow out in creation they become actual essences. Bonaventure adopts the Augustinean doctrine of seminal principles for explaining the origin of new beings in the universe. In the beginning God created the universe filled with the ‘seeds’ of all things that would latter develop. So, matter is known as seminarium or seed-bed in which God created all corporeal forms in a virtual state. All things with the exception of human soul, which exists in matter in an embryonic or virtual state, sprout out as perfect things in the proper
indent To the question whether “all the forms induced by the creator or by a created agent?” Bonaventure answers saying that no created agent can impart forms to matter. God alone can do that by creation. All that secondary causes can do is to bring the forms which exist in an embryonic state into an actual state. He differentiated between seminal reasons and causal reasons. While seminal reasons pertain to created ones, causal ones cover both the created ones and the uncreated ones. Seminal reasons refer to such as those from which, ex quo, however causal reasons pertain to those by which, a quo. So the secondary causes only give a new disposition to beings.

6.3 The Whole Human Composite

Every contingent or finite being is a composition of two correlative constitutive co-principles, viz. matter and form. Matter represents the sense of potentiality or determinability and form represents the composition of things out of matter. From this arises the problem of the source
of individuality. Individuation denotes two things. First, it arises from the union of two, matter and form, and secondly, it also involves a distinction from other things which are the origin of number.

Individuation arises from the actual union of matter and form, which appropriates one another, as it were, through their union. Consider for example, seals are made by different impressions in wax, and without wax there would be no plurality of seals, but without the different impressions the wax could not become many. Similarly, matter is necessary if there is to be any distinction and multiplicity, and form is also necessary, for distinction and multiplicity presupposes constitution of a substance through the elements composing it. That an individual substance is something definite and it owes it its definiteness primarily to matter, by which the form acquires position in place and time.

Matter considered in itself is neither spiritual nor corporeal. If it receives corporeal form, it becomes a corporeal matter. If it receives spiritual form, it becomes a spiritual matter. When one looks at the potentiality in abstraction from all forms and looking at it as a co-
principle of an individual thing, it is essentially the same in both spiritual as well as material creatures. However, matter actually exists apart from form.

In the creation of new creatures the nature of the creature is decided either by the kind of matter or of form. While individuality arises from the existence of form in matter, personality arises when a rational form is united with matter. Within the *suppositum* (that which supports) the rational nature should possess the *actualem eminentiam*. This is the highest substantial form that the matter can accept. This supereminent nature in an individual puts that particular individual in the highest place among the creatures.

Human soul is different from animal souls in brutes and the vegetable souls in plants in its origin and destiny. The souls of lower beings are activated by the seminal reasons in matter. The human soul is directly created by God. It does not pre-exist in the body but is created when appropriate matter is engendered in the natural process of reproduction.
The human body is transferred from the body of Adam by means of seed. The seed contains the fathers nourishment and something of father’s *humiditas radicalis* (radical humanity). This element of radical humanity instill in the child or in the body of the unborn an active disposition towards the act of sensation. This inchoate sensibility develops into the complete act of sensation by the infusion of the soul. At the complete animation of the embryo by the infusion of the soul this inchoate sensibility is subsumed under the activity of the soul. In other words, as Copleston writes, “St. Bonaventure is careful to maintain the continuity of life and the reality of parentage, while avoiding any splitting of the human soul into two.”

The human soul is the form of the body. It pervades the entire body. Against the idea of curtailing the soul to a part of the body or reducing the soul to atomic size, Bonaventure views the soul as the form of the body. As the *motor sufficiens* of the body it pervades every part of the body. He argues that, ‘because it is simple, it is not present partly here and partly there.’ The doctrine that the soul is the form of the body poses some problems as to how the hylomorphic nature of the body can
be compatible with the simplicity of the soul. The soul can act and can be acted upon or can move and moved upon. This passivity and mutability indisputably points to the presence of matter in soul. This matter being spiritual in nature transcends extension and corruptibility. The absence of quantitative and constitutive parts in the soul directs the attention to the fact that it can exist by itself. And, moreover, the form and matter, that is of spiritual nature may make the soul an individual. But it is necessary that soul and body must come together to form a human composite. While the soul has natural inclination to inform a body, a body has an appetite for being informed by the soul. The union of the two does not incapacitate either the soul or the body, but it leads to the perfection of each other.

The hylomorphic composition in the soul was accepted by Bonaventure on account of several considerations. By assuming hylomorphic composition in the soul, he contended that it does not depend on its informing a body for its substantiality, rather it is a substance in its own right. Secondly, it provides the soul with a principle other than corporeal matter by which the individuality could be explained. His acceptance of hylomorphic composition
of the soul rules out the possibility of identifying the soul with the body. Likewise, Bonaventure, by rigorous application of the principle of the creation *ex nihilo*, maintains that the human soul is not produced from the substance of God. For, it is said that man is differentiated from God by a specific form which God does not possess. On the other hand, if man is not distinguished from God by any additional form, then man becomes equal to God. A look into the three-fold causation also bears out the truth. As an efficient cause, He created the creatures; as a formal cause, the creatures are modelled after Him, for He is the exemplar; as final cause the creatures exist for His glory alone. Since God created the human soul also *ex nihilo*, He is not the material cause of any creature.

6.4 The Purpose of Creation

The question about the end or the purpose of creation, though meaningful and necessary, may not be readily answerable. Only in the context of everyday human existence, the concepts of willing and purpose gain currency. These words refer to the result towards which one chooses to direct one's activity. While willing implies an agreeable or voluntary choice based on either need or desire,
purpose suggests a deliberate movement toward a willing result. In contrast to this anthropomorphic way of thinking, which can not be strictly applicable to the activities of God, Bonaventure says: "The utterly Perfect Principle from whom flows the perfection of all things must act by His own power and law and for Himself as end; for in His action He needs none but Himself." In God there is nothing lacking, there is no defects and He requires no external complement to fulfill His being. He by communication manifests Himself. The infinite by its very nature is self-diffusive, so it radiates around itself. For this reason alone it can be said that the creation is wholly a gratuitous exercise of love from the standpoint of God.

6.5 The Fall

Human beings are created in God's image and likeness. The human race is created to enjoy fellowship with God. But as Bonaventure laments, "... turning from the true light ... man was bent over by his own fault and the entire human race by original sin, which infected human mind with ignorance and flesh with concupiscence. As a result man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness..."
The fall of mankind consists in not fulfilling the end of creation, namely communion with God. These are the following questions that have to be raised and examined with a deliberate effort: What is original sin? How it is transmitted? What is the distinction between original sin and actual sin? In the very beginning of the discussion on sin Bonaventure declares that "sin is not some positive essence, but a defect, a corruptive tendency; that is, a force which contaminates mode, species, and order in the created will." He is very emphatic that the first principles is not evil in nature or the cause of evil. When man is created, he is created to act by the power of God, in accordance with God, and for God as an end. But the creatures, especially human beings having free will turned away form God and instead of seeking God as an end, they went for other things as their ends. The sin is a vitiation of mode, that is not by the power of God; and the vitiation of species, i.e. not according to God; and the vitiation of order, i.e. not for God as an end. Since corruption stems from free will, sin proceeds from the will, and it is the source of sin. To this effect Bonaventure quotes St. Augustine, "Sin is so directly dependent upon the will that without will, there is no sin."
The first parent’s fall is because of the temptation. They were tempt ed first through probing, then by prodding and finally by enticing. First they were probed by questions, to refer to the Biblical account,9 “Did God say: you shall not eat...?” then prodding by asserting, “You shall not die.” Finally they were enticed by the promise that “You will be like God.” This temptation leads them to the sins of the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. Since man was created without defects and God tolerates no disorder of any kind, the sin which creates disorder demands justice. And, God hence, afflicted the corrupt human with hard work and pain.

The soul itself is not handed down, but the original sin did pass from the soul of Adam, the first parent, into the souls of his descendants through the flesh which is born of concupiscence. As Adam’s flesh had been tainted by his sinful soul, it has become prone to lust. Hence, the spiritual element corrupts the physical, and the corrupted physical nature in turn corrupts the spiritual. If the first father, Adam, had stood firm, he would have handed down an obedient body to his descendants. But unfortunately Adam became a victim to the temptation. When the soul and the corrupt body come together to form a
human composite, the original sin is transmitted.

Actual is born of free will of the individual. The actual sin is either by omission or by commission, that is what divine law prescribes or committing what it forbids. Bonaventure also distinguishes venial sin from mortal sin. Sin indicates that the human will is withdrawn from God and acts on its own and this disorder in the will results in the destruction of the order of justice, an order instituted by God. When this disorder is slight and does not destroy the order, but merely disturbs the order, it is venial sin. If the temporal is preferred to the eternal, one's own will is chosen to the will of God, then a mortal sin results. In the causal nexus, if suggestion and satisfaction remain short of actual consent, the sin is venial, but if they are followed by consent and an action which is forbidden by divine law committed, a mortal sin is committed.