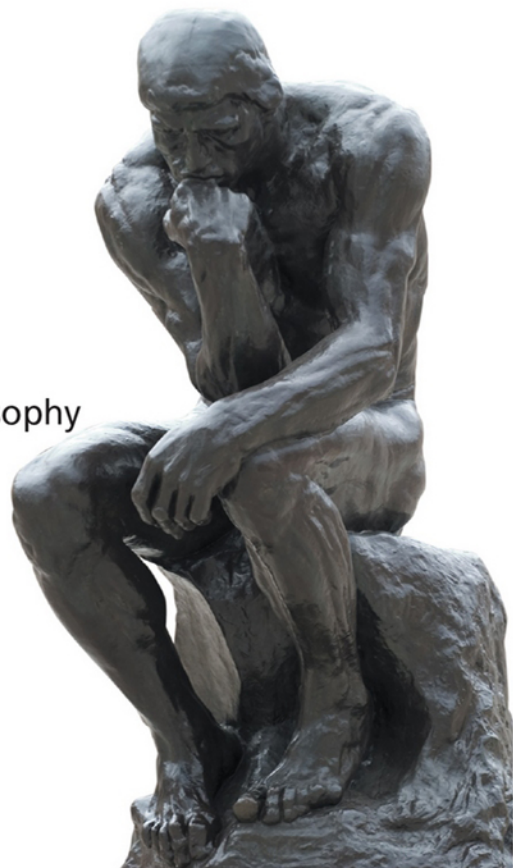


# Alphatopbetics

~ Volume One ~

Ideas We Live with and Live by  
Every Day of Our Life

**A**ngels & demons  
**B**eauty  
**C**ourage  
**D**emocracy  
**E**ducation  
**F**iction  
**G**od  
**H**appiness  
**I**mmortality  
**J**ustice  
**K**nowledge  
**L**ove  
**M**adness  
**N**obel Prize  
**O**pinion  
**P**hilosophers & philosophy  
**Q**uantum  
**R**ace  
**S**ex & sexuality  
**T**ruth  
**U**niverse  
**V**iolence  
**W**isdom  
**X**enophobia  
**Y**outh & old age  
**Z**ombies



Jerry Dampier

# Alphatopbetics

~ Volume One ~

Ideas We Live with and Live by  
Every Day of Our Life

Jerry Dampier



Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.

Copyright © 2017 Jerry Dampier. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the permission, in writing, of the publisher. For more information, send an email to [support@sbpra.net](mailto:support@sbpra.net), Attention Subsidiary Rights Department.

Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co., LLC  
USA | Singapore

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co. Special Sales, at [bookorder@sbpra.net](mailto:bookorder@sbpra.net).

ISBN: 978-1-94653-948-9

Book Design: Suzanne Kelly

## Novels by Jerry Dampier

*The Pedagogy and the  
Boys from Beal Alley Boulevard*  
(Science Fiction for teenagers and young adults)

*The Downfall and Rise of Steven Leroy Zienner*  
(Adult Drama/Suspense)

*Trapped Between The Extremes of Good and Evil*  
(Detective Crime Mystery: Horror/Supernatural)

*The Romantic Comedies of Clover*  
(Romance/Humor)



# Alpha, top, bet, ics

## Brief Statements on a Diverse Range of Topics from A to Z

**A** *lphatopbetics* should be understood as the philosophy of, or the nature of, or the understanding of a collection of individually selected topics or subjects ranging from A to Z. This particular collection of topics includes:

1. Angels and Demons
2. Beauty
3. Courage
4. Democracy
5. Education
6. Fiction
7. God
8. Happiness
9. Immortality
10. Justice
11. Knowledge
12. Love
13. Madness
14. Nobel Prize
15. Opinion
16. Philosophers and Philosophy
17. Quantum
18. Race
19. Sex and Sexuality
20. Truth
21. Universe
22. Violence

Jerry Dampier

23. Wisdom
24. Xenophobia
25. Youth and Old Age
26. Zombies

I have taken the liberty of naming any mixed collection of ideas, issues, terms, events, and biographies—all combined in one book or volume—*Alpha, top, bet, ics*.

*Alphatopbetics* can be identified in this manner:

Every idea, subject or topic written about represents one letter in the alphabet. Each volume of *Alphatopbetics* starts with a subject beginning with the letter *A* and ends with a subject starting with the letter *Z*. The words *Alphabet* and *topics* are rearranged then combined to form the new name *Alphatopbetics*.

There are twenty-six essays in any single volume of *Alphatopbetics*. This is because the American alphabet system that the essays represent has twenty-six letters in it.

# Table of Contents

## Volume One

Prologue: The Purpose of Alpha, top, bet, ics .....	ix
Outline of Chapters .....	xi
Acknowledgments .....	xix
Angels and Demons .....	1
Beauty .....	25
Courage .....	39
Democracy .....	48
Education .....	66
Fiction .....	81
God .....	86
Happiness .....	113
Immortality .....	141
Justice .....	152
Knowledge .....	166
Love .....	179
Madness .....	198
Nobel Prize .....	208
Opinion .....	214
Philosophers and Philosophy .....	222
Quantum .....	242
Race .....	251
Sex and Sexuality .....	296
Truth .....	308



Jerry Dampier

Universe .....	318
Violence .....	332
Wisdom .....	345
Xenophobia .....	357
Youth and Old Age .....	364
Zombies.....	371

## PROLOGUE

# The Purpose of *Alphatopbetics*

**M**y purpose in writing *Alphatopbetics* was to exercise my intellectual curiosity in subject areas where thought is required in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the topic under consideration.

My purpose in making *Alphatopbetics* available to a readership is to help shed a little more light on their paths when considering various names, ideas, issues, events, people, or terms that the reader may be somewhat acquainted with or even may have heard a great deal about before, but about which he or she may want to know a little more; in other words, the aim of *Alphatopbetics* is to benefit the reader by providing insight into the overall concept, meaning, description, or understanding of the topic under consideration.

It should be noted that there may be elements of thought within each topic or subject that reflect my own singular point of view, which may imply reasoned speculation or conjecture on my part. For example, I may discuss, hear, read, or research various writings on the idea or concept of beauty, but may disagree with what I have found. Thus, upon reflection and reasoned speculation and sustained thought and judgment it may be necessary to give my own philosophical point of view or opinion on the nature of beauty. However, I must explain, argue, clarify, and give support to my thesis and the conclusion I arrive at. I must also explain, argue, clarify, and show why the conclusions of others should be rejected. I may do so implicitly by the drift of my argument. Or I may do so explicitly by plainly stating the matter as I see it. However, it should also be noted that for

Jerry Dampier

such topics as Quantum or Universe, the general facts of science are very much in place; therefore, conjecturing or hypothesizing or opining may be—for the most part—inappropriate. All that may be necessary is to give an overview of the knowledge understood on the subject and explain the underlying principles involved.

# Outline of Chapters

Chapter One, *ANGELS AND DEMONS*, inquires into the nature of angels and demons. In this chapter, I discuss the nine different types of angels, which include seraphs, cherubs, thrones, dominions, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, and angels. Along with the different attributes or characteristics they possess, I delineate the status that each angel is said to hold in heaven. In addition, this chapter investigates the purpose angels and demons serve in the universe and their service to humans.

Chapter Two, *BEAUTY*, examines and then answers age-old questions. For example, Is beauty only in the eye of the beholder? Or are there certain features that have the status of beauty and that everyone can come to some agreement upon? It examines whether beauty is subjective—that is to say, a matter of taste, or whether it is objective—that is to say, a matter of fact. In addition, this chapter not only discusses physical and artistic beauty; but also inner beauty, as represented by such human qualities as wisdom, honor, goodness, grace, intelligence, talent, self-respect, and the capacity to bestow love.

Chapter Three, *COURAGE*, examines the nature of courage and distinguishes it from fearlessness. This chapter argues that courage is a moral term. It also looks into how courage is developed and what it takes to be considered a man or woman of courage. It looks at how being courageous plays out in everyday life, and also why it is impossible to live a good human life without it. In addition, I discuss the emotion of fear and argue that without initially facing or feeling some degree of difficulty, pain, anxiety, or fear, one can never be said to act courageously.

Chapter Four, *DEMOCRACY*, explores the descriptive and philosophical idea of democratic government. This chapter dis-

cusses the origin or invention of democracy, which first took root in the ancient Greek city-states, starting with Athens in the seventh century BCE. This chapter also discusses the development of democracy through medieval and modern times. I take the position and show that full-fledged or true democracy—with universal suffrage—was not actually achieved until very recent times.

Chapter Five, *EDUCATION*, explores what it means and takes to become a truly educated human being. This chapter argues that education is different and much broader than mere public or private schooling; that education begins shortly after birth and—along with vast experiences—continues through one’s adult life well toward the event of one’s death. This chapter also makes educational recommendations for what should be a lifelong pursuit of learning and discusses what it takes to become a “Renaissance” man or woman.

Chapter Six, *FICTION*, discusses the world of make-believe. It explores the creative imagination and the natural need and the natural love we as human beings have for stories. In this chapter I discuss why fiction is poetically true and why works of fiction are great teaching tools for learning. We learn not only why stories delight us—and therefore entertain us—but also why it is psychologically healthy for us to engage in various forms of fiction.

Chapter Seven, *GOD*, examines the idea of the Supreme Being or God from two different perspectives: one theologically and the other philosophically. I examine what are widely believed to be the characteristics or attributes of God as understood by religious scholars on one hand and by philosophers on the other. I attempt to bring together or reconcile as much as possible the common elements of the two different perspectives on God. With regard to God as understood by religion, I draw on sacred texts; however, for the philosopher’s point of view, I turn to philosophical writings that depend exclusively on the exercise of logic and human reasoning alone. No theological or religious faith is involved when considering God from a purely philosophical point of view. This chapter is especially ambitious; for I draw

insights from a number of philosophers and explore the question Does God exist? The chapter also attempts to give some reason why God might exist, then analyzes what it might mean.

Chapter Eight, *HAPPINESS*, examines the two completely different types of happiness as understood in Western civilization—one psychological, the other ethical. I analyze the two different ways the word *happiness* is used. I begin with what is called psychological happiness, which I identify with experiencing feelings such as cheerfulness, joy, excitement, or euphoria. Next—drawing on Aristotle’s writings—I discuss happiness in the ethical sense of the term—that is, as a goal to be pursued and achieved. This chapter also examines the conditions that make up a happy or good life. The age-old question, What is the purpose of human life? is answered in this chapter.

Chapter Nine, *IMMORTALITY*, discusses the immortality of the soul. In doing so, this chapter inquires into the possible spiritual existence of human life after death. I discuss the soul and the spirit and explain the difference between the two, and discuss why both soul and spirit are necessary in order to achieve the possibility of immortality. Immortality is discussed from a religious point of view, and even more so from a philosophical point of view. I conclude with a brief discussion on the everlasting existence—or immortality—of a person’s name, achieved as a result of earthly fame.

Chapter Ten, *JUSTICE*, examines different theories of justice—with the controlling principle in mind that justice is the act of rendering each his or her due and that justice involves regulating the conduct of a person or persons towards another person or persons for the purpose of living together in society. I argue that inflicting injury or harm upon another is unjust. In this chapter I discuss law and community and how it relates to justice. I make and defend the proposition that justice is a natural or inherent human right of all people everywhere.

Chapter Eleven, *KNOWLEDGE*, examines our natural need to know and our capacity to acquire knowledge by learning and understanding. This chapter focuses on our ability to think and to turn outside stimuli and individual pieces of raw data or

information into cohesive and coherent bodies of thought. Two dimensions of knowledge are highlighted in this chapter: *Evolving Knowledge* and *Absolute Knowledge*. I also examine knowledge in the broadest sense of the term as all we acquire or come to know. I contrast knowledge with an examination of what it is to be ignorant—that is, lacking knowledge or awareness.

Chapter Twelve, *LOVE*, examines the nature of love. This chapter focuses on the interplay of love among human associations or relations. The chapter goes into detail on what the different types of human love are, namely, sexual or erotic love, love based on friendship, and agape or charitable love. When focusing on what the true nature of love is, I contrast it to what mistakenly—but often—pass for true love, but is not. I conclude with a discussion pertaining to self-love or love of self.

Chapter Thirteen, *MADNESS* (the ancient name for mental illness), examines the nature of madness and who has traditionally been responsible for dealing with it. For example, two groups have historically dealt with madness: the people or professions I call the “supernaturalists” and the people or professions I call the “naturalists.” Under the heading of “supernaturalist” I discuss the practices of spiritual leaders, shamans, and tribal medicine men. Under the heading of “naturalist” I examine the theories and contributions made by philosophers, scientists or physicians, and writers. I examine the historical development and treatment of madness from ancient to modern times, as the so-called “evil possession” of madness evolved into the legitimate psychiatric understanding of mental illness.

Chapter Fourteen, *NOBEL PRIZE*, examines the life of Alfred Bernhard Nobel and the creation of the Nobel Prizes. This chapter briefly traces Alfred Nobel’s career as a wealthy explosives manufacturer to his death in 1896 where—in his will—he established the creation of the Nobel Prize in Physics, the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the Nobel Prize in Medicine, the Nobel Prize in Literature, and the Nobel Peace Prize. This chapter also discusses the Nobel Prize in Economics, which was not originally among Nobel Prizes to be awarded.

Chapter Fifteen, *OPINION*, discusses what opinion is and how we determine what we conceive or judge as opinion. It looks at what is right opinion in contrast to what is wrong opinion. This chapter also focuses on the concept of knowledge and contrasts it with opinion to give a clearer understanding of what it means to have an opinion of one kind or another rather than knowledge.

Chapter Sixteen, *PHILOSOPHERS AND PHILOSOPHY*, is set on two tracks. First, it looks at some of the most important and earliest philosophers in Western civilization, along with a brief early history of philosophy (which ushered in the beginning of the sciences); secondly, this chapter discusses the various dimensions (that is, the four basic categories) of philosophy and examines them in some detail.

Chapter Seventeen, *QUANTUM*, is an investigation into the world of the infinitesimally small in that it examines the inner structure and peculiar activity occurring within the atom. It briefly looks at the history of quantum theory and what thinkers have contributed to it. This chapter looks over the shoulders of some of the most brilliant physicists that science has ever produced, and it addresses a question about the mysterious position and velocity of elementary particles that only philosophers may be brash enough to try and answer.

Chapter Eighteen, *RACE*, is a very detailed look at the invention of “race” and the purpose for its invention. This chapter traces the creation and development of “race” from ancient and medieval times to modern times. It examines “race” as a mythology and as a dangerous ideology. It examines or looks back at the development and *social construct* of the so-called “races” and profiles some of the people who invented it. It also looks at the places where race theory originated and at the various professions that helped to create it, support it, and promote it. In short, the chapter discusses the racial belief systems of those men I have come to call the founding fathers of race-theory.

Chapter Nineteen, *SEX AND SEXUALITY*, discusses the science of reproduction in that it looks at sex from a technical



point of view when considering chromosomes and hormones and their effect in determining gender. With regard to sexuality, the chapter explores sex in relation to courtship, foreplay, and orgasms. The ethics of sex is addressed. Lastly, the discussion turns to addressing sex and its role as an activity indulged in by human beings for the sole purpose of providing sexual pleasure.

Chapter Twenty, *TRUTH*, not only examines what we believe and define as truth, but also discusses those thinkers who deny that truth even exists; they are referred to as “Skeptics,” which is a school of thought that has ancient roots. This chapter discusses the different types of truths, for example, the ideas of factual truth, practical truth, and poetic truth.

Chapter Twenty-one, *UNIVERSE*, explores the creation, formation, and objects that make up the universe. It examines the theological explanation as well as the philosophical and the scientific explanations of the creation of the universe. In addition, it looks at the future of the universe and the possible existence of parallel universes.

Chapter Twenty-two, *VIOLENCE*, discusses the nature of violence or, in other words, wrongful conduct or vicious attacks committed by a person or group upon another person or group. It couples violence with the act of immorality; and contrasts the immoral act of violence with the moral act of legitimate force. The theory of nonviolence is discussed. This chapter also discusses and clarifies the meaning of aggression.

Chapter Twenty-three, *WISDOM*, contemplate two different types of wisdoms. One type is implied by the word *philosophy* itself (the word *philosophy* literally means “love of wisdom”). Philosophical wisdom—as the chapter points out—is the pursuit of lifelong learning in which a person endeavors to use his or her mind by reason and logic to know and understand the world. I attempt to show how a person committed to wisdom goes about becoming intellectually wise. The other type of wisdom this chapter examines is practical wisdom; another name for practical wisdom is *prudence*. This chapter discusses the reason why the exercise of sound judgments about the best way to pro-

ceed in life and arriving at decisions that ought to be made lie at the heart of practical wisdom or prudence.

Chapter Twenty-four, *XENOPHOBIA*, examines the nature of xenophobia—irrational fear of foreigners or strangers among us. This chapter looks at what qualifies as xenophobia and what makes a person xenophobic and whether or not such fear can ever be justified. It looks at what we owe to foreigners and what they owe to their adopted countries.

Chapter Twenty-five, *YOUTH AND OLD AGE*, begins by examining the characteristics of youth and old age. This chapter discusses the advantages and shortcomings of youth; it then focuses on the twilight of old age, pointing out its advantages and shortcoming as well. I discuss the tendencies and habits acquired in youth and also how wisdom and guidance from the old—or from those who have accumulated some experience in the business of living—might benefit youth.

Chapter Twenty-six, *ZOMBIES*, is an examination of the spectacle as well as the natural and supernatural profile of what it means to be a real-life zombie. This chapter goes into detail on just how zombies are created or produced, and also on just where zombism is practiced and where it originated. Drugs or chemical ingredients, the belief system of the voodoo priest and the immediate community, and the magic said to be involved in creating a zombie are also the focus of this chapter.



# Acknowledgments

**A**s a historical matter, I would like to acknowledge and share with the reader my profound admiration for the early development of ideas that began with the ancient Greek philosophers, which I turn to again and again throughout this volume. Many of the ideas in this volume originate with the ancient Greeks, who first began to think about ideas in a rational, logical, argumentative, and systematic or methodical manner nearly three thousand years ago. I sincerely believe that in order to understand the ideas or topics that span Western civilization today—which of course includes the United States—we must study the writings of past thinkers; for nowhere else can we get a better understanding of who we have become—intellectually speaking—than to look back upon the writings of persons of learning and wisdom. Of course, in developing these ideas for the first time, a great many errors were made. It should be noted, however, that the errors in the consideration of ideas that these thinkers introduced to the world are almost as informative as the truths or insights that they have developed. In this volume, I point out some of the errors as well as what I believe to be the truths; for knowing both error and truth gives us a more comprehensive understanding of the topics this book contains.

In arguing for what I believe to be the correct understanding of the ideas under analysis, I have generously drawn on such truths from the past when I thought it appropriate to do so. Thinkers in the Middle Ages as well as the thinkers in modern times—be they philosophers, scientists, historians, artists, or writers—have also made valuable contributions to our understanding of the ideas I cite in this volume. But without the firm intellectual foundation and method of analysis set in place by the ancient Greeks, the overall progress we have made throughout Western civilization

as to the understanding of many of the ideas or topics set forth in this volume would not have been possible; or at the very least, the ideas certainly would not have been as intelligible. As the old saying goes—or something close to it—we stand on the shoulders of giants that we might better see.

As a general matter, my life experiences in writing this book consist in holding informal and wide discussions (and sometimes debates or arguments) with many people over the years. That is to say, the ideas or topics written about in this book are not just research based—although I have done extensive research over the past four or five years. The ideas I have written about are topics about which I have had many conversations with people from all walks of life. The discussions or conversations were held with family relations and friends, acquaintances and total strangers, academicians or college professors and classmates. Along with a great deal of reading over the years and my own evolving philosophical points of view, these folks and the recent research and energy I have put into this book have helped me to write it.

In particular, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Center for the Study of The Great Ideas—of which I am a longtime member—founded by the philosophers Mortimer J. Adler and Max Weismann. As a member, the philosophical ideas that The Center has made available to me on a regular basis over the years have been an important and valuable contributing factor in writing this book. Adler’s philosophical genius is on display throughout this volume.

Also, I would like to thank my editor, Anne Geiberger, for her suggestions and the editorial changes she made to improve the overall quality of the manuscript.

When attempting to achieve a goal, as you put aside the fear of failure, do the very best you can, and you’ll usually find that your best—even if it falls short of your intended target—takes you unimaginably closer toward the goal you have in mind than you ever originally thought possible.

*Jerry Dampier*

Alphatopbetics



## Angels and Demons

Here we inquire into the interesting—and some would say the delightful and fascinating—nature of angels. At the same time, we will be examining the nature of demons. The reason for this is that angels and demons possess the same nature; for all demons were—in the beginning of spiritual creation—angels, but angels who violated the will of God: this according to biblical scriptures, theologians and philosophers, religious scholars, and people of religious faith. The faithful believe that over the earthly and spiritual world is God, who, of course, is understood to be the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being or the Creator, as God is sometimes called, is worshiped by religious Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Angels and demons are created spiritual beings—as God is not. According to Genesis, God is the Creator, and not the created. He made earthly creatures and spiritual beings along with heaven and earth. God Himself not being a creature of any sort is an indication that He is not only all knowledgeable, but also all powerful; for what other entity or being, it can be asked, is the total cause of its own existence?

The powers and abilities of angels and demons are said to be far above those of human beings; nevertheless, angelic powers and abilities are limited. Demons and angels share the same powers and abilities, for despite their sinful act of willful disobedience, the spiritual know-how and capabilities of demons do not appear to have been rescinded by God. But angels and demons having the same natures should not lead us into thinking that they share the same goals or possess the same state of



mind; for one of the most glaring differences between the two, and what makes them the type of spiritual beings that they are, is that they serve two different masters.

The holy angel's will or desire is to obey and serve God without reservation; in opposition and in contrast, demons as evil spirits labor in the service of their chosen master, whom Judaism and Christianity identify as Satan. In the Holy Koran and Islamic theology he is also known as Satan or ash-Shaytan (the Demon) or Iblis (the Devil). In the Gospels, he is referred to as the Devil and as Beelzebub. Satan's sin is that he rejected God's gift or charity whereby he—Satan—would have had a proper understanding of God and His glory in a way that only God possesses and that only God can give. While residing in heaven, Lucifer was the original name of Satan; he was created and favored by God and was the top ranking angel among all the angels. *Lucifer* means “light.”

However, Lucifer turned against God, and in that instant, he became Satan, ruler of hell or the world of evil. For this, Satan is without the divine light of God, which leaves him in darkness. Although Satan is the adversary of God—the word *Satan* taken from the Hebrew and Greek translation literally means “adversary”—he is in no way an equal to God (God has no equal). Satan merely is, or was, as Holy Scripture indicate, the highest ranking spiritual being—a once good angel who willfully disobeyed his master. Although Satan is the most powerful of all the demonic spirits, his power is limited, whereas God's power is omnipotent.

As interesting as these religious beliefs may be, they only set the groundwork for what follows. This Alphatopbetics statement will not directly address the power of God or even Satan—although we will constantly refer to them throughout this essay. Instead, we will focus here on the nature of angels and demons. Specifically, we will look at the different types of angels along with their different characteristics and status in heaven. This essay will also examine their powers and what purpose angels and demons serve in the universe; and lastly, what the artistic mind has contribute to our understanding of angles through symbols.

The word *angel* through its Hebrew and Greek translations means “messenger.” Acting as messenger is a function of angels. But the word *angel* can be misleading if it is equated only with functioning as a messenger sent to earth by God. For all angels do not function simply as earthly messengers. According to angelology, the top or highest order of angels is said to never leave heaven. Their place and function is to remain in heaven and to communicate with other angels, to behold the vision of God, along with carrying out other various spiritual duties. However, because all angels from the highest to the lowest receive and relay God’s word or plan—some angels relay it to other angels, some to mankind; in this way it can be said that all angels are messengers in one way or another.

In the scholarly work of the theologian Pseudo-Dionysius (fifth or sixth century A.D.), nine different types or orders of angels are cited as carrying out heaven’s will. In his book *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Pseudo-Dionysius (who was mistaken at one time for Dionysius the Areopagite) lists nine different types of angels, all with different functions, abilities, and characteristics. It should be said that all nine names are found at one place or another in Holy Scripture; however, the explanation of their characteristics and their duties or functions is richly and elaborately expanded on by theologians and scholars of one faith or another, and this is particularly true of Pseudo-Dionysius. It was said that this religious scholar was converted by none other than the apostle Saint Paul. This turns out not to have been true. Nevertheless, Pseudo-Dionysius provides us with an interesting theory of angelology that is well worth exploring. Many theologians including Saint Thomas Aquinas have consulted Pseudo-Dionysius on his understanding of angelology.

Starting from the highest-ranking angel to the lowest, the nine different orders of angels are (9) seraphim or seraphs, (8) cherubim or cherubs, (7) thrones, (6) dominions, (5) virtues, (4) powers, (3) principalities, (2) archangels, and the last and lowest order are simply called (1) angels. What follows is an account of the status and different characteristics of all nine orders of angels.

Seraphim or seraphs are the highest order of angels. Their place—as far as I am able to understand Pseudo-Dionysius—is next to God in favor and ability. Being next to Him, seraphs are filled with the direct light or knowledge of God, which gives them direct enlightenment concerning God's divine nature, and which they share with angels of lesser rank. They burn brightest with the love of God in that their devotion is unsurpassed. Seraphs retain the deepest understanding of their Creator and know His essence above that of any other angel.

Next we have cherubim or cherubs. They are the angels of wisdom; they are placed under the seraphs, and they are given the privilege of knowing God as no other angel under them does. The wisdom of cherubs, which they receive directly from God, their Creator, is extended to the lesser order of angels by way of the cherubs sharing their wisdom.

The third highest order of angels is known as thrones. Although they are further removed from the divine light or knowledge of God in comparison with seraphs and cherubs, they too have a relatively close proximity to God, which enables them to understand His divine essence or nature. Thrones, like Seraphs and Cherubs, never leave their home which is a spiritual dimension (not a place) called heaven; they also possess wisdom but to a lesser degree than cherubs. It is said that from the angelic nature of thrones flows unity, simplicity, constancy, and firmness.

Next we have the order of angels known as dominions. Dominions are untouched by the activities that occur on earth, for they too never leave heaven. Their nature is one of harmony. Dominions are free of tyranny, debasement, or any other thing of a lowly nature. They perpetually aspire to the will of God, and they are responsible for communicating to lower ranking angels the will and manifest nature of God, so far as they understand it.

The next order of angels is called virtues; they are characterized by lack of feebleness and lack of weakness. In other words—to state the matter positively—they are characterized by strength, courage, and resiliency. Their virtuous character

comes directly from God, and they—like all other orders of angels—aspire to do what God wills.

This leads us to the next order of angels, known as powers. The duty or function of powers is to regulate the action of angels below them in rank, but never by unjust force, for an angel commits no injustices. They proceed by keeping with the will of God and in keeping with the divine directions of angels above them.

Next we come to principalities. This order of angels is said to comprise the princes of angels. They carry the characteristics of a prince and lead the angels below them in a manner resembling the ways of a prince. It is fair to suppose that their princely ways are majestic, regal, and dignified. But it should be pointed out that the qualities the principalities demonstrate to the lower order of angels are the qualities of majesty, regality, and dignity that come from the grace of God and not the earthly ways of mankind. The earthly princes who govern in the society of man are only metaphors for the spiritual prince like qualities that flow from the heavenly angelic beings known as principalities.

Just under the rank of principalities is the order of angels known as archangels. According to theologians and as demonstrated in Holy Scripture, archangels and angels make several trips to earth. (A better or more exacting word than the word *trip* is the word *appearance*.) The prefix *arch-* in the word *archangel* implies that these spiritual beings are the chief or the highest of the angels. Three of the most famous archangels in Holy Writ; namely, Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael belong to the order of archangels. Archangels act as mediators or liaisons between God and man. Archangels appear to be chief among the angels that visit earth, for they are chosen to deal with the most difficult problems concerning mankind, and they are also charged with delivering God's most important messages to the world at large. They deliver God's message to prophets and to others who are chosen to receive it.

The last order of heavenly spiritual beings is simply called angels. If individual persons, particularly children, are assigned guardian angels, it is the duty or function of angels to comply

and act as protective spirits. Angels along with archangels are messengers in the true sense of the word. They act as intermediaries between the heavenly spiritual world and the earthly material world, between God and humans. Archangels and angels are directly involved in the active world and affairs of humankind. These angels may even carry on relationships with those that they are sent to protect and minister to; but their relationships are always under the stewardship of heaven's vision. It is interesting to note that the word *angel* is used in two different senses: it is used to name all nine orders of angels or spiritual beings, and it is also used to name the lowest rank of spiritual being.

At this point, it should be noted that the nine order of angels mentioned above are divided by three, and in the same instance, grouped into three separate classes or divisions by Pseudo-Dionysius: upper, middle, and lower. The upper division is superior to the middle division, and the middle division is superior to the lower division. Each division is said to occupy a level of supremacy above the next in relation to and according to their proximity to God. For example, the top and highest level is made up of seraphs, cherubs, and thrones. They are nearest to God in favor and in created excellence. They and only they above all other angels understand the inexplicable nature or essence of God, to the degree that God allows his nature or essence to be understood. These angels understand the inexplicable nature or essence of God as a result of God's grace.

The second cluster of angels is made up of dominions, virtues, and powers. They understand the general or universal cause of things and what is to be done with regard to God's plan. Under them is the bottom and lowest level of the hierarchy of angels. This group is made up of principalities, archangels, and angels. They understand how God's will is to be applied and carried out in particular; therefore, they involve themselves in the details of worldly matters. They are the implementers of the will of heaven. This lower division, in its role as protector and messenger, is charged with aiding and ministering to mankind and possesses knowledge and understanding and wisdom surpassing humankind in every measure.

Let us briefly examine what one of the greatest theologians in the Western world has to say on the subject of angels. In his masterful treatise entitled *Summa theologica* (meaning, “summary of theology”), in *Treatise on the Angels*, under the heading *Of the Angels in Comparison with Bodies*, the thirteenth-century theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas makes the point that in their essence angels are pure spirits; this, of course, makes them non-physical and invisible. Therefore, Saint Thomas tells us, in order to manifest their appearance or to be known to us they must take on the form of assumed bodies (bodies that have the appearance of being physical but which are not real). In this way, angels make their presence noticeable to the sight and sound of human beings. As may be apparent, says Saint Thomas, this is necessary in order to communicate and relate to human beings in the material world that mankind inhabits.

Saint Thomas also identifies angels as “intellectual substances” or “intellects separated from bodies.” “These bodies,” he says, “we call angels.” We will have more to say in detail about angels as intellects without bodies shortly.

Angels along with demons (which of course as has been said before have the same nature as angels) neither eat, nor drink, nor breathe air. However, by the power of illusion and with the ability to manipulate or fashion material things, they take on the appearance of eating, drinking, and breathing. Due to their power of illusion, what they consume or eat only appears to be real. What angels can enjoy is defined and limited by their nature. This is true of demons as well. For example, it is impossible for a demon to enjoy physical pleasure with regard to wine, women, and song in any sense. But because of the power of illusion and their skill at being crafty and clever, it is possible for demons to take on the form of a human body and pretend to enjoy wine, women, and song. The pretense of experiencing things that only give humans pleasure is orchestrated by demons to lure or tempt people into taking part in extravagant degrees of pleasure in the hope of leading them into sin—or into wretched excess, which amounts to the same thing. In other words, a demon is interested in getting human souls to misuse or to abuse

or to overindulge in the things that humans take pleasure in. According to sacred theologians, one of the aims of demonic ambition is to sway human beings to go beyond a moderate and sensible measure of respectable pleasure.

Holy angels suffer neither physical torment nor physical injury; nor do they die a mortal death. This is because their spiritual nature is fitted to bask in the presence and grace of God. As far as I understand the theological point, demons also do not die a mortal death. However, demons do suffer a kind of spiritual anguish. Holy angels experience happiness. But the grace of divine happiness conferred by God is totally absent from the lives of demons. This results in spiritual frustration and misery—or hell.

The demons' purpose on earth is to cause as much injury and destruction as is spiritually possible; they do this because they have selfish natures, and because their misery loves company. It is said that they take genuine pleasure in causing mischief and mayhem. This type of pleasure is not physical but a perverted spiritual pleasure of the mind or of a spiritual psychological kind; without the divine light of God and His grace, according to religious scholars, the nature of demonic spiritual beings is void of heavenly pleasure or goodness, and as a consequence heavenly pleasure or goodness is what they most want to keep humankind from receiving. Spirits who are not busy being good are busy being evil. With regard to the conduct of angels and demons, their conduct is never in between good and evil; their actions are directed exclusively all one way or all the other. It is human beings who operate in shades of gray and vacillate between good and evil.

In further trying to understand the reality of angels as living beings, it would be helpful if instead of only looking at them from a theological point of view we also took a philosophical approach to the whole matter and examined it from that perspective. As an extension of logic—because it is impossible for philosophy or philosophers to prove the existence of angels—it is reasonable to speculate philosophically and ask the question, “Why should such spiritual beings exist as a part of the

universe?” One of the answers is that if a Supreme Being exists and has as His plan to create a metaphysically perfect universe in which the universe has creatures occupying every level of being (from top to bottom), as philosophers of old and new have pointed out, then the universe would be more perfect having beings or creatures that fill the void or gap between God and man, and the existence of angels would do that; for the gulf between God and man alone is very wide indeed.

The chain of existence or being, according to a number of philosophers and writers, starts with considering the lowest or the simplest type of life or being—namely, plant life—to the ultimate or highest form of life or being—which is, of course, God. Following this progression from the lowest to the highest form of life will give us a better understanding as to why angels would have reason to occupy a universe where every level of being exists or is realized. What follows is a brief look at the different levels of life or living substances that are said to make up the chain of being in the universe.

In our examination of the chain of being, let us start with plants. Plant life is, of course, life, because unlike a rock it takes in nourishment and uses the elements within its environment; and as a result, activity, development, and growth occur. One scale or rung up the ladder of life—after plant life—belongs to animal life (including insects). Animals are a higher form of life than plants in that they possess something that plants do not, which is perceptual-emotional acuity and sense organs; they have not only the ability to take in nourishment and grow, but also the power of self-propelled locomotion which allows them to move from one place to another. They have complex social organizations and communication. In addition to these capabilities—with the possible exception of insects—animals are intelligent (but not intellectual) creatures.

With regard to intelligence, at the top of the nonhuman animal kingdom are first bottlenose dolphins, followed by chimpanzees: observation and animal experiments have shown that they are very intelligent creatures. Dolphins and chimpanzees have the largest brain-body ratio next to humans. Above all



other animal species is *Homo sapiens*—in the form of male and female. All people everywhere in the world, regardless of their ethnicity, belong to the genus and species called *Homo sapiens*. Humans not only possess all of the characteristics that plant and animal species possess, but in addition they have something else that no other living animal does, which is the ability to reason and think abstractly—to develop an understanding of the world and to grow wise.

Unlike all other animal species; human beings possess the intellectual power to learn history, math, philosophy, the arts, and the sciences. Endowed with this capacity or power, we are justified in saying that humans are the only intellectual creatures within the animal kingdom. (The intellect—which we often call “mind”—has a direct bearing on our understanding of and the nature of angels, as we shall see later.) Men and women naturally have intellects, which makes them intellectual equals. Both genders possess the capacity to acquire knowledge, to understand, and to think or reason intellectually.

This brings us back to the categorization of life forms that we discussed earlier in the chain of beings—from the lowest to the highest. If we include angels as inhabitants of the universe, then it can be said that first in simplicity comes plants, followed by insects and nonhuman animals; next is our species, what the scientific community calls *Homo sapiens* or human beings; next on the latter of higher life forms are angels and demons; and in a single class all by Himself is the Supreme Being or God, who occupies the ultimate state of reality and existence.

Filling the gap in the universe with angels, placing them just between God and man, fills out the universe. It does so in a way that gives it metaphysical perfection that it would lack without the presence of angels to fill the void. Now, this all may be metaphysically interesting, but it is not morally instructive unless we have some idea of why angels should involve themselves in the tangled web of human society. An answer to the question may hinge on whether God—if God exist—is concerned for the welfare of mankind and the ultimate destiny of each human being. If one believes that the answer is affirma-

tive and that God does care and has taken steps to see to the salvation of individual people as well as humankind as a whole, then it would appear that the purpose of angels is not only to fill in the gap between God and man for the sake of hierarchical consistency throughout the universe, but also to aid mankind in obtaining a better life and perhaps gaining salvation in some future life after death.

Of course, believing that God not only exists but that He also cares about the destiny of the human population is an act of religious faith—faith in what Holy Scripture says is true and faith that mere mortals can correctly interpret without grievous mistakes the true intent of God. For the religious believers or the faithful, it is not necessary to show or attempt to prove God’s love for mankind; but it is extremely important to correctly interpret and understand the literal and symbolic expressions set down in religious text. Nevertheless, religious believers and secular persons alike are obligated to do all of the intellectual thinking they can in order to arrive at religious or theological truths. One can use philosophy, history, and even imaginary literature as vehicles to arrive at religious or theological truths; however, there are some matters that transcend human reasoning, particularly when it comes to certain religious matters. For the religious faithful, the truth of God’s love for mankind and the created spiritual world of heaven and angels are confirmed—not by philosophy, or history, or literature, but by Holy Scriptures. Believing that God revealed Himself to humankind is an article of faith.

Articles of religious faith are all the faithful need in order to believe in God and angels. Besides, if religious persons could prove that God loves His worshipers as well as mankind, and if they could prove that He sends His angels to aid mankind, then what would be the use or need of faith? People have faith because proof is unattainable. The height and ultimate truth of faith reaches above and beyond earthly speculations; however, even religious faith—with human speculation at ground level acting as a sort of an anchor—rests on elements of human rationality, truth, and the wisdom that men and women accu-

mulate as they live their lives. Therefore, human rationality, truth, and wisdom should never be ignored; to the contrary, they must be used whenever possible in the pursuit of faith seeking understanding.

We learn from the theologians that angels do not learn from experience or from joy or pain or suffering as human beings do—or as human beings should do. All angels are infused with knowledge, understanding, and wisdom by their Creator. Moreover, no angel is torn asunder by the emotional conflicts that plague the mind and heart of human beings, and on a fairly consistent basis I might add. No angel has to make up its mind. An angel is pure mind; or more precisely, as we have said earlier, an angel is pure intellect without a physical body. No human being who comes to understand the nature of reality by thinking, remembering, imagining, and experience can possibly come close to an angelic understanding of reality; for the understanding of reality by angels is clear and flawless. Knowing reality and understanding the things in reality is a part of their nature. Their knowing and understanding is said to derive from the inborn or innate idea infused in them by God, from the beginning of their creation.

According to theology, God's understanding is total in that His understanding encompasses everything; but although the understanding of angels is flawless because it comes directly from God, it is also limited. The highest level of angels know and understand more of the essence of God; the next level of angels are those who understand the big picture as a whole; this leaves the lowest order of angels knowing the details that make up the big picture as a whole—the big picture being, of course, God's earthly and heavenly plan.

There are philosophers and theologians alike who defend and advance the proposition of human beings possessing an intellect like that of angels. But along with angelic powers, angels are all intellect and nothing but intellect; humans are mostly flesh and blood—the intellect being only a small part of human nature. Still it can be said that men and women as well as angels are all made in the image or likeness of God; for like

God and angels, who are all spirit, human beings also possess some aspect of spirituality, which is their intellect. In male and female, the intellect is that single nonmaterial or spiritual aspect that is rooted in his or her nature; and it is the only substance in them capable of experiencing the possibility of immortality.

Having what Saint Thomas Aquinas calls “pure intellect,” angels are removed from experiencing emotions or desires; for they are without physical bodies, and it is the physical body through chemicals and organs—not the intellect—that is the seat of having emotions and bodily desires. Not having a physical body to influence their behavior; but having the power of pure reason makes it impossible for any angel to experience emotional turmoil.

Heaven or paradise, if it actually exists, must exist outside the physical world and outside of time itself. If we accept the proposition that heaven is an existing paradise, we are obliged to think of it as a state of utter perfection in which nothing is ever lacking. It follows that anything that exists in time cannot maintain perfection for long; for with time comes change and what necessarily occur in time are deterioration, decay, and corruption, which are of course opposite to the characteristics of paradise or perfection. Assuming that there is a heaven, it is most likely that heaven exists in a dimension where time is in no way present. If change ever occurs, and change is certainly a component of time, it is safe to say that it does so in a way that hardly resembles what we identify as change and time in the physical universe.

This also means that the process of thinking does not occur in heaven because thinking takes time or is time related; therefore, it necessarily follows that neither angels nor God engages in thinking. In other words, there is no time as we know it in heaven, nor is heaven a place, nor does heaven take up space. If heaven exists, it exists as a timeless, spaceless, placeless spiritual dimension of existence. Therefore; if angels exist in a heavenly dimension, and if angels are spiritual substances, they know and understand without going through the process of ratiocination. Both speculating and thinking are prisoners

of physical existence and of time; what angels know or have knowledge of is simply a natural part of their nature. They are spared the process of thinking. In this way, they resemble God, who also does not engage in the process of thinking. If this is difficult for us to grasp or visualize, it is quite understandable; for all our experience is connected to time and the three physical dimensions that take up space.

Along with being a spirit of pure intellect, an angel is also willful in its intentions. By being free of a physical body, angels are not subject to the physical laws of nature: of movement, or force, or operation. The spiritual will of an angel is totally and absolutely free. Thus the term *free will* is properly applied to angels. The angel freely wills as he ought. And how ought an angel to will? The answer is that as they follow God's plan, angels will as they rightly ought; their created purpose and nature is to behold and to serve God's vision. They naturally recognize goodness; for it is said that God is the essence of everything good. Because an angel's will is pure (i.e., purely spiritual), angels have freedom of choice in the absolute. Possessing pure intellects or being pure intellects, it would be irrational for angels to disobey their Creator; for they are rational beings, and pure rationality would not act irrationally—at least it ought not to act irrationally.

It is said, however, that the good angels who later became demons or devils acted irrationally when they disobeyed God. However, if angels are purely spiritual and therefore rational, it can be asked, "How in heaven's name could they do something as irrational or unheavenly as to disobey or deny God?" How is this possible, given all that has been said about their nature, that they would freely choose sin? In one Biblical tradition, the answer is that Satan—out of pride—desired to be as God. His prideful desire influenced him into behaving irrationally and rebelliously, for which he was cast out of heaven. He and his rebellious band of rebellious angels had tried to take over the reigns of heaven.

Another tradition has it that when asked to worship Adam and his descendants, out of pride for his own glory and out of love for God, Satan refused to bow to man, whom he consid-

ered to be of a lowly nature; that is to say, mere dirt or dust. “I beg your pardon, Master of the universe,” one could hear Satan saying to God. “But did you say that I should worship man? You mean the idiot who couldn’t find heaven if you laid a trail of stardust lining the way and gave him a map? An animal that eats, sleeps, and excretes? I worship that? You’ve got to be kidding. How humiliating. I will do no such thing! There is a level of lowliness, my Lord God, to which even I, your servant Lucifer, will not sink.” Whether or not Satan said anything like this, the point is that he chose to disobey God (which is what his sin is); and for that he was cast out of heaven.

All in all, I am not sure that really answers the question of why or how Satan could sin, at least not to the satisfaction of many; for if angels operate by reason alone, it would appear that pure reasoning could not do something that is against God’s wishes. For it is said that that which flows from God is the essence of pure reason. Therefore, logically speaking, disobedience to whatever request or commandment from the essence of pure reason—which is God—would be unreasonable, no matter what the request was.

Reason would dictate that Satan’s nature as well as his ambition lies in his service to God. Pure intellect and pure will—which are by definition free—would not and most probably could not willfully act unreasonably. In other words, spiritual beings—Satan included—could never rationally choose to disobey God, for the act would be against the very nature of reason itself. It would be like expecting a fish to tunnel underground or a bird to fly under water. Yet, Satan willfully sins. Therefore, we must conclude that Satan and a large number of angels rationally chose to do an irrational act. This, however, is very odd indeed; it seems to me that there is a mystery afoot concerning Satan’s willingness to sin.

Let’s considering this a moment further by focusing on human beings: if human beings possessed pure reasoning or pure intellect and a will that was pure (or uncontaminated), it is difficult to see how they could ever come into sin or get into the trouble that they so often find themselves in. But human beings

do not possess pure intellects and pure wills as angels do. On the contrary, their intellect and will is somewhat (or heavily) compromised; for us humans possess physical bodies with strong and persistent appetites that yearn to acquire and consume goods and services—and almost without end or limit. We tend to sin or do bad things because our many hungers and desires tempt us and—in some cases—overpower the body and mind, which in turn causes us to sin or do things we are not especially proud of doing after we've done them (although we feel good while we are doing them).

Some think they can adequately explain why sin occurred in the spiritual world, i.e., why the Devil and his demons—who were rational—chose to act so irrationally. Other theologians and scholars, however, consider the explanation of how demons that were originally created good—morally and metaphysically—could have gone bad to be a religious mystery; something that will only be fully understood in the spiritual world of heaven, once the human spirited soul enters it. Thus it can be said that heaven has secrets that only heaven knows the answers to and only heaven can tell. For human beings to think they know heaven's secrets is, of course, folly.

I myself do not think that earthly explanations as to why Satan and his demons chose to be disobedient will ever be made clear; for it seems to me that no angelic or purely rational spiritual being would ever choose to sin, not even out of pride or ambition: human beings, yes; angels, no. For any rational being or angelic creature to think it worthy to choose the sin of pride and excessive ambition over righteousness or to choose good over evil is unsound, unreasonable, and—as far as I can tell—unthinkable. I will leave it at that.

We are told that angels and demons, not having bodies or vocal cords, are uniquely capable of communicating with one another; for all lower-ranking angels willingly take and follow orders from angels of higher rank. Communication among angels is done by a reading of minds or intellects. A higher-ranking angel, say a seraph, for example, makes his thoughts known to a lower order of angel, say a cherub, by willingly

directing his thought. And the receiving angel accepts it by an act of will on his part. In other words, angels communicate by way of telepathy: all angels are telepathic beings. The willingness of one angel to transmit and the willingness of the other to receive is all that is necessary for effective communication. Angels are also telekinetic (possessed of the ability to move objects by mental powers alone). No human being possesses these capabilities in the least.

Not having a body does not keep angels from moving objects; they move physical matter by turning their attention to the object in question and willing it from one place to another. In addition to being telepathic and telekinetic, angels are capable of moving through solid objects; for spiritual beings are not confined to obeying the laws of physical nature. Their limitations follow only the laws of spiritual nature. And only God transcends every kind of nature; for his essence is supernatural without qualification.

Jealousy or envy or desire to outdo other angels is nowhere to be found in a society inhabited by angels; for their willingness to cooperate and their will to please resides in their nature to serve God. Whether they are seraphs, cherubs, thrones, dominions, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, or angels each knows their place and is sublimely content in carrying out their duty. Each angel seeks to do the will of God, who is the cause and reason for their existence; therefore, an appeal for justice as a result of suffering injustice from another angel is nonexistent. They behave justly as a condition of their super-created natures.

As a matter of religious belief, angels far exceed merely rendering justice to one another. Each angel has a natural love for the other, and most of all they were created with a natural love of God. Loving is their avocation, so to speak. That is to say, they naturally prefer to love God before and over each other and over themselves. Their capacity to love operates in perfect regulation. And this regulation is in accordance with their natural knowledge and the natural love they have for their Creator. Their love of God is perfect, for God who put love in them is perfect, according to the theologians. For example, in the