

STUDY MATERIALS: Metaphysics

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Introduction

Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas before Reading and Study

*Grant me grace, O merciful God, to desire ardently all that is pleasing to thee,
to examine it prudently,
to acknowledge it truthfully,
and to accomplish to perfectly
for the praise and glory of thy name. Amen*

Books you should have:

1. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, Dumb Ox Books, Notre Dame, Indiana.

[This edition contains both the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle and Thomas's exposition of it.]

2. Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings*, translated, edited and introduced by Ralph McInerny, Penguin Books, 1998.

Lesson 1: The Degrees of Knowledge

You are already acquainted with the six taped lectures which constitute the heart of this International Catholic University course in metaphysics. This is the first of twelve lessons that will supplement the lectures and provide reading and writing assignments for those registered to take the course for credit. The lessons are accessible to all and everyone is welcome to read and study the materials laid out here.

The title of this lecture is taken from Jacques Maritain's masterpiece -- actually this is its subtitle; Maritain called it *Distinguer pour unir: Distinguish in order to Unite*. You can see why the English translation preferred the subtitle:

The Degrees of Wisdom.

The Big Questions

The etymology of "philosophy" tells us that it is a search for wisdom. Wisdom is a form of knowledge, and knowledge is had when we grasp the causes of a thing or event. Wisdom is the grasp of the highest or ultimate causes of things. This is the kind of knowledge God has, and thus philosophy can be said to be an undertaking which

seems ultimately to mimic, to the degree possible for a human intellect, the knowledge God has. Divine science.

But philosophy aims at a divine science in another sense as well -- not just an imitation of God's knowledge, but a knowledge which has God as its principle object. A theology.

Theology was the aim of Greek philosophy: its *telos* or aim or completion, not something that might be taken up after philosophy had reached its goal. Divine science is the defining aim of philosophy.

I speak of classical philosophy, of course. Present-day Anglo-American philosophy would scarcely so define itself. Far more modest tasks are undertaken. It has been said that with Descartes, philosophy turned from being to thinking and with Analytic Philosophy the linguistic turn was made: now language is the subject matter of philosophy. This has been the case even when something akin to classical philosophical theology seems to be in view. Philosophy of religion dwelt almost exclusively on the status of religious language. There seems to be little confidence that one could prove that God exists -- *au contraire*; it is more or less received opinion that the classical proofs fail.

That there is something decidedly counter-cultural about doing philosophy in the way we will be doing it in this course, and indeed in all the courses offered by ICU, is clear from John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. The Holy Father recalls that the Church relies on philosophy to come to know fundamental truths about human life. Why does he feel it necessary to take up the question of the activity of human reason? "I judge it necessary to do so because, at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected..." [5] Whatever its achievements, modern philosophy seems a "one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity" that "seems to have forgotten that men are always called to direct their steps towards a truth that transcends them." [5] The human mind seeks the answers to big questions. "Does life have meaning? Where is it going?"

The classical understanding of philosophy, that adopted and extended by Thomas Aquinas, seeks to answer the big questions. What is the purpose of human life? Is there a cause of all the things that are? In what does human happiness consist? Is death the end? What can I know about God? Philosophy as practiced by Thomas Aquinas addresses each of these questions, although some of them come only when the culminating science, metaphysics, is undertaken.

As explained in the taped lectures, "philosophy" once functioned as a synonym for the totality of knowledge. We called it an umbrella term because it covered any intellectual pursuit. Not, however, pell-mell or any which way. The term suggests a direction, a quest, an aim -- the pursuit of wisdom. Any science or art that is necessary to or useful for the pursuit of wisdom is to that degree philosophical. One might of course study plane geometry without any thought of its forming a stage in a curriculum. The knowledge gained would perfect the mind. However, seen as one science among others with the science of things in their highest causes as the *telos* in terms of which all the

others take on a meaning beyond their isolated merits, geometry becomes philosophical.

The pursuit of wisdom is a human activity and as such is sought as all other things are sought, for the sake of happiness, fulfillment, perfection. Man's ultimate end, the point of doing anything at all, is the starting point of ethical inquiry; as such we are likely to think of it as the practice of the virtues. But when Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* brings the discussion back to where it began, taking up again in the tenth book what had been broached in the first, our ultimate end is depicted as contemplation. The ultimate point of action is not an action in the first and obvious sense of the term. It is the mind's dwelling on the divine as the source and cause of all else. The ultimate aim of life is the knowledge of the highest causes gained in metaphysics.

Many have been surprised by this and find in it evidence of Aristotle's elitism. Perhaps. But recall the surprising turn his reflections on "All men by nature desire to know" took. Perhaps we undervalue the implications of our more modest engagements. Rather than set apart those who had the time and talent to study metaphysics, Aristotle could be said to be eager to relate what they are doing to what others are doing. He thereby sees a kinship and linkage between the arts and sciences such that it is not fanciful to say that what some seek in mathematics or natural science can only fully be found in metaphysics.

In any case, it is important to see the way in which the theoretical and the practical sides of philosophy relate to one another. It is not simply that the moral virtues dispose us for the kind of activity contemplation is. The pursuit of knowledge, the quest for contemplation, involves moral action. Indeed, Thomas Aquinas in the moral part of the *Summa theologiae* draws attention to the moral virtues of the intellectual life. In that part of the *Summa*, he compares the active and contemplative as *lives* -- that is, as moral.

The Degrees of Wisdom

Science is knowledge through causes; wisdom is knowledge through the highest or ultimate causes. Insofar as we can think of any science as wisdom within its domain -- it considered the highest relevant causes in its domain -- it is possible to do as Maritain does and speak of a hierarchy of wisdoms or of degrees of wisdom.

In comparing philosophy of nature to the empirical sciences, Maritain argues that the former has a greater claim on the term 'wisdom.' Not every reason he gives for this priority will be persuasive for all, but surely in some obvious sense it is true. However wide-ranging and non-specific the analysis of physical being into the fundamental constituents of matter and form, it has the merit of saying something true of things as they are. On the other hand, at least in some scientific efforts, we first devise a model and then seek to match it to the world via various experiments. Are the elements of the explanatory model elements of the things explained? If not, the explanations so far forth differ from those of philosophy of nature, even as we concede that such models are efforts to give us a far more detailed knowledge of natural things.

In any case, the order that Maritain suggests is first of all the science of nature, then the philosophy of nature and then wisdom in the sense we are interested in now, metaphysics. But Maritain does not stop there, any more than Thomas Aquinas did. Beyond the divine science of the philosophers is another, that based on Sacred Scripture. Thus theology is a wisdom beyond and superior to that of the philosophers. But there is a wisdom superior to that of the theologians, namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the first question of his *Summa theologiae*, when he is asking whether *sacra doctrina* is a wisdom, Thomas contrasts the wisdom of the holy person with the wisdom of the learned theologian. He illustrates the difference in the moral order. If you should ask the theologian about chastity and its demands, he will reply with definitions, distinctions, arguments and advice at a level of generality. A holy but unlearned person would probably respond to your question by putting herself in your shoes and saying that she would do in such circumstances. Thomas expresses this contrast by the phrases *per modum cognitionis* and *per modum connaturalitatis*.

Ad tertium dicendum quod, cum iudicium ad sapientem pertineat, secundum duplicem modum iudicandi, dupliciter sapientiae accipitur. Contingit enim aliquem iudicare uno modo per modum inclinationis: sicut qui habet habitum virtutis, recte iudicat de his quae sunt secundum virtutem agenda, in quantum ad illa inclinatur: unde et in X Ethic. dicitur quod virtuosus est mensura et regula actuum humanorum. Alio modo, per modum cognitionis; sicut aliquis instructus in scientia morali, posset iudicare de actibus virtutis, etiam si virtutem non haberet. Primus igitur modus iudicandi de rebus divinis, pertinet ad sapientiam quae ponitur donum Spiritus Sancti... Secundus autem modus iudicandi pertinet ad hanc doctrinam, secundum quod per studium habetur, licet eius principia ex revelatione habeantur.

In response to the third objection it should be said that since it is for the wise man to judge, there are two kinds of wisdom insofar as there are two ways of judging. For it happens that someone judges in one way in the manner of inclination, as one having the habit of virtue judges rightly what is to be done according to that virtue insofar as he is inclined to it. That is why in *Ethics* 10 it is said that the virtuous person is the measure and rule of human acts. In another way, in the manner of knowledge, as one instructed in moral science can judge of the acts of virtue even if he does not have virtue. To judge of divine things in the first way belongs to the wisdom that is a gift of the Holy Spirit... The second kind of judging belongs to this doctrine insofar as it is had through study, although its principles are held on the basis of revelation.

ST, 1.1, 6, ad 3

The wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Spirit is higher than the learned wisdom of theology. It is true that theology derives from principles whose truth is accepted on faith, but in its mode it is an intellectual assimilation of the implications of those truths. Thanks to such learning, one is made capable of judgments in keeping with those principles. The gift of wisdom is more a matter of being than of knowing: one has

affinity with divine things and judges of them in the way in which the virtuous person can rightly judge of things to be done according to this inclination to the good. Such judgments by inclination Thomas elsewhere calls judgments by connaturality. The one judging has been made similar in nature -- connatural -- with the things of which he judges and it is out of that affinity and connaturality that he judges them.

Saintly theologians are capable of both kinds of judgment, but a simple holy person can be wise with the gift of the Holy Spirit while remaining illiterate so far as theology goes. And, alas, one can become adept in theology, moving on a level of abstraction and disengagement, without exhibiting in one's life the supernatural life being spoken of. Of course this is an unstable state. It is highly unlikely that a theologian or moralist whose life is at odds with the science he professes will long judge correctly even *per modum cognitionis*.

The Dismissal of Metaphysics

David Hume in a famous passage commends selective book burning. Take any treatise or book, he says, and if it contain any metaphysics consign it straightaway to the flames. For him, metaphysics is a bogus science, a pretense of knowledge, the search in an unlit room for a black cat who is not there. Immanuel Kant dismisses metaphysics as it [has] hitherto existed but wrote a prolegomenon to any future metaphysics. The great fault of metaphysics, according to Kant, is that it projects into reality features of our knowing, confusing the phenomenal and the noumenal.

For example, metaphysics speaks of cause and effect; indeed, it famously moves from knowledge of effects to knowledge of their causes, from sensible things as effects to God as their cause. Furthermore, it speaks of substance and the other categories, applying them to things. This is radically wrongheaded, however, according to Kant, because cause and effect, substance and other categories, are aspects of our knowledge, not of real things. Of course our knowledge has to be expressed in terms of cause and effect, but we must beware like sin the suggestion that there is cause and effect anywhere but in our knowledge.

The phenomenal order consists of things-as-known; it is opposed to the noumenal order, things-in-themselves. The thing about the noumenal order is that we cannot know it as it is. We can only know it as we know it, that is, as phenomenal. As phenomenal, the objects of our knowledge are related as cause and effect, substance and accident, and so on, but none of this is true of the noumenal order. The great mistake of metaphysics, then, is a confusion of the phenomenal and noumenal order, assuming that things as we know them are identical with things as they exist.

If Kant is right, it is of course silly to think that we can move from cause and effect to truths about the noumenal order, to knowledge of God, for example.

A student of Thomas will be struck by the similarity of Kant's account with Thomas's explanation of Aristotle's fundamental disagreement with Plato. Plato's great fault was to confuse the order of human knowing with the order of existing, the real order. That is,

since in knowing things we first grasp them under such comprehensive concepts as being, then substance, then living substance, then living substance endowed with senses, and so on, producing a hierarchy of concepts in which the first or higher concepts have more predicable universality than those below them: that is, they can be said of more things. Animal is true of more things than man is; animal can be predicated of man and beast. What Plato did, so runs the Aristotelian critique, was to project this hierarchy which is formed by us as we know onto the real order and assume that there was a one-to-one correspondence between the levels of the predicable hierarchy and levels of being.

We can imagine Plato or the target of Kant's criticism objecting that since we can only know things as we know them, the supposed contrast cannot be made. And indeed it does seem that in Kant the "noumenal order", by definition unknown, has to carry a lot of explanatory weight. It seems to be a requirement of the theory rather than anything Kant could possibly know. What if the contrast phenomenon/noumenon has the same status as, according to Kant, the relation cause/effect has. Absolute idealism is just around the corner. To be = to be known. Far from being a restriction on knowledge, this identification amounts to a definition of knowledge. It is no longer taken to be a flaw or failure, but simply the achievement knowing is.

Perhaps there is a simple fallacy at work in this large claim that all metaphysics has been based on the fallacious transition from the phenomenal to the noumenal. What is the fallacy grounding Kant's fallacious critique?

The distinction between things-as-we-know-them and things-as-they-are is as important as Aristotle thought it was, and it would be fatal to confuse the two orders. But the two orders do not compare, *pace* Kant, as what is known to what is not known. The distinction between them can be captured by comparing

[1] Man is a two-legged animal, Swift's poor forked beast.

[2] Man is a species.

You should be reminded of our discussion of universals in the lectures. How did we show the difference between [1] and [2]?

Consider the sequence: Man is a two-legged animal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is a two-legged animal. That inference moves right on through without any problem. However, were we to proceed thus: Man is a species, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is a species, we would sense that something has gone wrong. How to put it? What we mean by "two-legged animal" applies to animal and it applies to Socrates, expressing something essential to what we are talking of. What we mean by "species" prevents it from traveling in that way. A species is something that is predicated of many numerically different things. Socrates is a numerical thing: he is not predicated of many numerically different things. To be predicated is something that happens to the nature as it is known by us: the predicate does not express some feature or component of the nature to which it attaches. To be a species is incidental to

human nature, not part of its definition. It is true of human nature because of the way we know and speak of it.

But in order for this to make any sense, there must be a contrast between what is incidentally true of the nature -- as known by us -- and what is constitutive of the nature, what belongs to it as such. Thus things as they are, and the features of them, are not merely a foil for things-as-they-are-known. It is because we first know things as they are that we can, on reflection, notice that we do things to natures as we know them. But this does not mean that we create the content of the concepts expressive of the things that are.

Did Kant make some such inference as this: We can only know things as we know them, therefore we cannot know them as they are? But knowing things is first of all knowing them as they are; this is the presupposition for noticing what is true of them as we know them.

Like so many of the grand gestures in modern philosophy whereby centuries of reflection were dismissively swept away, Kant's critique can be swept away by drawing attention to its incoherence. If we can only know things as we know them, that is the end of the story. There is no possible appeal to things as we do not know them. That is, Kant is deprived of making the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal on which his whole critique depends. He would have been better advised to write a docile retrospect on classical metaphysics than his prolegomenon to an impossible future metaphysics.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Read the opening two chapters of the *Metaphysics* and Thomas's commentary on them = Book One, lessons 1-3.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a two page essay on: metaphysics is divine science.

Desiderata

You will eventually want to read the whole of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, as well as Thomas's commentary on it. You might want to acquaint yourself with the work, paging through it, noting its divisions, getting the lay of the land. Jacques Maritain's *Degrees of Wisdom* is a volume in the twenty volume Maritain in English being published by the Jacques Maritain Center and the University of Notre Dame Press. Selection 6 in the Penguin Selected Readings provides a contrast between the theology of the philosophers and the theology based on Sacred Scripture.

Lesson 2: The Genetic Aristotle

Since it characterized so much of Aristotelian scholarship during this century, mention should be made of the suggestions of Werner Jaeger about the body of Aristotle's writings. In 1912, Jaeger published a book on the evolution of the *Metaphysics* and in 1923 he published *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development*. To say that these books were influential would be understatement. The approach to the text of Aristotle suggested by Jaeger provided the mandatory point of reference for work on Aristotle for more than half a century.

From antiquity, readers of the *Metaphysics* had seen it as a unified whole. Its fourteen books were taken to trace a connected and coherent development. This is clear from the commentaries which were written on the work by Neoplatonists, by medievals, by men of the Renaissance, and indeed in all scholarly works on the text up to 1912. What Jaeger did, in a nutshell, was to question radically the unity of the work. He felt that he had found internal evidence which showed, he said, that the *Metaphysics* is a compilation of materials which date from different times in the career of Aristotle. Perhaps they were put together by a later hand, and the *Metaphysics* as we have it is not a direct product of Aristotle at all. Aristotle spent twenty years in Plato's Academy and this fact, plus the evidence of the Aristotelian dialogues that scholars have reconstructed, ground a clear Platonist phase in Aristotle's thought. Scholars had long recognized this, of course, and contrasted the "platonic" dialogues and the treatises which presented Aristotle's mature and more or less anti-platonist thinking. What Jaeger did was to place this development *within* the treatises. Thus there are "platonic" as well as "Aristotelian" pages in the *Metaphysics*. Does this mean that some of the fourteen books are early and others later? Jaeger's hypothesis is that the early and late are jumbled together and only painstaking scholarship will be able to expose the almost geological layers which represent the development of Aristotle's thought.

As indicated, that development can be generally described as from the platonic to the Aristotelian. In the case of the *Metaphysics*, this progression is seen, Jaeger maintains, in two conflicting notions of what the science Aristotle is seeking is. On the one hand, there is an earlier, platonic conception of the science according to which divine things or separated substances are the subject matter of the science: it is theology. On the other hand, there is a later, more modest and Aristotelian view which exhibits a failure of never as to the range of the intellect and according to which the subject matter of the science is being as being, a search for the characteristics of the things that are, their general notes, without any presumption in favor of the view that the set of physical objects is not coterminous with the set of all beings: the science is thus an ontology.

As between these two views, Jaeger sees Aristotle wavering and never able to decide how, if at all, the two conceptions could be made compatible. On the fact of it, such a reconciliation seems unlikely. A general science, the most sweeping consideration of

all, on the one hand, and a science bearing on a special kind of being set apart from all other kinds, divine being, separated substance.

It is not Jaeger's view that Aristotle held the theology view early and the ontology view late: it is not as simple as that. The two views of the science, Jaeger finds, continue to tease the Aristotelian mind and indeed there is one passage in which he seeks explicitly to resolve the problem, namely, chapter one of Book Six of the *Metaphysics*.

In this passage, Aristotle recalls the threefold division of theoretical knowledge into mathematics, physics and theology. This third science has been introduced by pointing out, after mathematics and physics have been mentioned, that it is not yet clear whether there are immobile and separable things and, if so, how they are to be considered.

But if there is something which is eternal and immoveable and separable, clearly the knowledge of it belongs to a theoretical science -- not, however, to physics (for physics deals with certain movable things) nor to mathematics, but to a science prior to both. For physics deals with things which exist separately but are not immovable, and some parts of mathematics deal with things which are immovable but presumably do not exist separately, but as embodied in matter; while the first science deals with things which both exist separately and are unmovable. [1027a11 ff.]

The passage seems clearly to allot different ranges of being to the various sciences. Physics deals with inseparable and changeable things; mathematics with unchangeable but inseparable things; first philosophy with the separable and changeless. If the divine exists anywhere, it will be here, which is why this science is called theology. Moreover, it will be the most honorable science because it deals with the most honorable objects and thus the most desirable of the theoretical sciences. But there now occurs this passage:

For one might raise the question whether first philosophy is universal, or deals with one genus, i.e. some one kind of being; for not even the mathematical sciences are all alike in this respect -- geometry and astronomy deal with a certain particular kind of being, while universal mathematics applies alike to all. We answer that if there is no substance other than those which are formed by nature, natural science will be the first science; but if there is an immovable substance, the science of this must be prior and must be first philosophy, and universal in this way, because it is first. And it will belong to it to consider being qua being -- both what it is and the attributes which belong to it qua being. [1026a22 ff]

For Jaeger, this passage, which confronts and offers a resolution of the apparent problem, is rather an unsuccessful effort to paper over an insoluble problem. We are invited to see Aristotle caught between thinking of first philosophy, the culminating effort of philosophy, as a general science or as a particular science distinguishable from other particular sciences. If it is simply a general science or ontology, it will be impossible to

distinguish it from natural philosophy: it will simply be the consideration at a high level of generality of physical objects. Or, one might say, it would consider as well matter common to physics and mathematics. Aristotle may be tempted by this, as Jaeger portrays him, but he could not succumb to the temptation without a radical abandonment of the platonic project. In the end, he decides to bluff his way through and assert that first philosophy is *both!* It is a general science -- and then it cannot have a particular subject matter -- but it is also the science of the separable and immobile, that is, the divine. Moreover, Aristotle says it is the one because it is the other -- because it is first in the sense of dealing with the first kind of being, separable being, it also deals with being as being and its properties.

Jaeger finds in this passage the noble even tragic failure of the Aristotelian project. The *Metaphysics* is a monument to Aristotle's irresolution as to what he is doing and thus cannot be read as the unified inquiry it has always been taken to be.

The first thing to be said against Jaeger's central thesis -- and what I have just sketched is the heart of his interpretation of the *Metaphysics* -- is that the option he sees Aristotle vacillating before could not possibly be an option for Aristotle. In order for Jaeger's dilemma to make sense, it would have to make sense that there could be a science whose subject matter is separate or divine being. But no human science could have such a subject. At the end of the following book, Book Seven, Aristotle reminds those who might have forgotten what the requirements are of something if it is to serve as the subject of a science. "Evidently, then, in the case of *simple* terms no inquiry or teaching is possible; our attitude towards such things is other than that of inquiry" [1041b10]. In order for any of the four questions Aristotle has elaborated as the relevant ones in the quest of knowledge -- Is it? What is it? Is it the case that...? Why? -- the object must be complex. This rules out simple substances as possible subjects of a science. Once this is remembered, the passage in which Jaeger finds the problem restated as if the restatement were its solution turns out to be very illuminating indeed.

First philosophy has as its subject matter being as being and it is in the pursuit of knowledge of this subject that separate substances will come into the science in the only way in which they could, as causes of the subject.

Whatever problems the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle presents, the great dilemma of Jaeger's interpretation is not among them. In the wake of Jaeger's books there followed an incredible fleet of alternatives, modifications, rivals, studies in which the notion that Aristotle's development is the key to reading the treatises and that in terms of that putative development one can array the works chronologically, arrays the contents of a given treatise chronologically and so on. Scholars vied with one another in proposing the earlier treatise which might then serve as a touchstone for reading all the others. The more intensely these studies were pursued, the more they diverged from one another. A non-philologist who stumbled onto this battle field would be as bewildered as Pierre in *War & Peace* and would have been forgiven for thinking there was any point in just picking up Aristotle and reading him.

All this has subsided now, often for bad reasons. Philosophers eventually wearied of such disputes, waved them to one side, and did indeed simply read and interpret Aristotle as had been done from the beginning. But it is important to see that Jaeger's central thesis about the *Metaphysics* is based on an assumption that Aristotle could not accept. Jaeger's problem is not Aristotle's.

Thus it is not obscurantism that is involved in taking up once again the *Metaphysics* and seeking to understand it. It is not a questionable loyalty that explains consulting such commentaries as that of Thomas Aquinas for help in understanding the text. Not only did Thomas find the *Metaphysics* to be a unified work, he traced its order into its finest details. Far more than any other commentator, he sees as his chief role to display the order of the text. This is nowhere more obvious than in the *Metaphysics*. If Jaeger had been right, commentators, but especially Thomas Aquinas, would have been finding a detailed order and interlocking of texts that was not there. To call this ingenious could not begin to capture the inventiveness it would have required. But it is Jaeger who is manifestly mistaken and we can continue to profit from the great tradition of commentary.

It might be well, to round off our discussion, to see how Thomas Aquinas reads the text which for Jaeger signaled the defeat of every effort to unify the *Metaphysics*.

1169. -- Tertio movetur quaedam quaestio circa praedeterminata: et primo movetur eam, dicens quod aliquis potest dubitare, utrum prima philosophia sit universalis quasi considerans ens universaliter, aut eius consideratio sit circa aliquod genus determinatum et naturam unam. Et hoc non videtur. Non enim est unus modus huius scientiae et mathematicarum; quia geometria et astrologia, quae sunt mathematicae, sunt circum aliquam naturam determinatam, sed philosophia prima est universaliter communis omnium. -- Et tamen e converso videtur, quod sit alicuius determinatae naturae, propter hoc quod est separabilem et immobilium, ut dictum est.

1169. -- Third, he raises a question about what has been discussed, and does so by saying that someone might doubt whether first philosophy is universal, as considering being universally, or that its concern is some determinate genus and some one nature. The latter does not seem true. This science is not like the mathematical sciences, since geometry and astronomy, mathematical sciences, deal with a determinate nature, but first philosophy is universally common to all. -- Indeed it is the opposite that seems true, namely, that it is concerned with some definite nature, because its concern is with the separable and immobile, as has been said.

In VI *Metaphysic.*, lect. 1

Thomas lays out the difficulty as clearly as the text does. Of two things one. Either metaphysics is a general science and is not restricted to one kind or nature of things or it is a special science like the mathematical ones mentioned, and has a restricted range due to the fact that it studies but one kind and nature of things. The resolution of the

accusation of unwieldiness -- "being" is simply too broad a term to pick out a given subject matter -- had been dealt with in Book Four, but the resolution there relied on the way "being" is common to things so that substance emerged as the effective subject of the science of being as being. Now the question becomes: substance in general or separated and divine beings?

1170, -- Secundo solvit, dicens quod si non est aliqua alia substantia praeter eas quae consistunt secundum naturam, de quibus est physica, physica erit prima scientia. Sed si est aliqua substantia immobilis, ista erit prior substantia naturali; et per consequens philosophia considerans huiusmodi substantiam erit philosophia prima. Et quia est prima, ideo erit universalis, et erit eius speculari de ente in quantum ens, et de eo quod quid est et de his quae sunt entis in quantum est ens: eadem enim est scientia primi entis et entis communis, ut in principio quarti habitum est.

1170. -- Second, he provides the solution, saying that if there is no substance beyond those which exist in nature, physics would be the first science. But if there is some immobile substance, it will be prior to natural substance. Consequently, the philosophy considering such substance will be first philosophy. And because it is first it will be universal and it will fall to it to consider being as being and the essence of it and those things which pertain to being insofar as it is being. The science of the first being and the science of common being are the same science, as was said at the outset of Book Four.

One caught up in the Jaegerian fever might easily dismiss this comment as a mere repetition of the text and thus participating in the effort to cover up the dilemma Aristotle has created for himself. But only a philologist or one in the grips of a theory would imagine that this text enjoys an autonomous existence and is unrelated with what has been going on in the work in which it occurs. Thomas' reference to Book Four may be taken to mean that Jaeger's misunderstanding might have been forestalled by a careful reading of that earlier discussion. In Thomas's own case, he has masterfully anticipated and resolved the supposed dilemma in his preface to the commentary. Lesson 9 below discusses that preface, but the intervening and subsequent discussion will re-enforce the interpretation of the *Metaphysics* given here, which relies on Thomas Aquinas.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Read Thomas's Commentary, Book One, lesson 1 to get the full context of the passages quoted in this lesson.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a three-page essay on Thomas's solution to Jaeger's claim that there are two conflicting views of the subject of metaphysics in Aristotle.

Desiderata

In order to move beyond mere hearsay, you will want eventually to read Jaeger's second book mentioned in the lesson.

Lesson 3: The Order of Learning

Man's happiness consists in the activity of his highest faculty, namely, his intellect, as it bears on the most intelligible. What does it mean to say that one thing is more intelligible than another? Well, since the effect is known by means of its cause, a cause is more intelligible than its effect. It is true that some effects are more easily known by us than their causes and we must move laboriously from knowledge of effects to knowledge of their causes. Here, what is objectively less knowable, the effect, becomes the *cause of our knowledge* of the objectively more knowable, its cause. Simply speaking, the first and ultimate causes of things are most intelligible and the most worthy object of knowledge. They are highest both in being and in truth since they are the cause of the being and truth of other things. We first know what is objectively less knowable because our mind's are to the objectively most intelligible as the eye of a night bird to the light of the sun. Nonetheless, the highest happiness we can achieve in this life will consist in the admittedly imperfect knowledge we can gain of the first causes from their effects. Other sciences have objects more proportioned to our intellectual capacity and thus yield knowledge which is more complete and exact. But even the little knowledge we can attain of the objectively most perfect is preferable to the knowledge gained in these other sciences. But Thomas does not suggest an option, as if we might choose sciences of more manageable objects or the science of first causes. We arrive at the latter by way of the former. This is the basis for Thomas's teaching on the order of learning the sciences.

Et inde est quod philosophorum intentio ad hoc principaliter erat ut, per omnia quae in rebus considerabant, ad cognitionem primarum causarum pervenirent. Unde scientiam de primis causis ultimo ordinabant, cuius considerationi ultimum tempus suae vitae deputarent: primo quidem incipientes a logica quae modum scientiarum tradit, secundo procedentes ad mathematicam cuius etiam pueri possunt esse capaces, tertio ad naturalem philosophiam quae propter experientiam tempore indiget, quarto autem ad moralem philosophiam cuius iuvenis esse conveniens auditor non potest, ultimo autem scientiae divinae insistebant quae considerat primas entium causas.

So it is that philosophers chiefly intended that the consideration of things should lead on to knowledge of the first causes. Hence they placed the science of first causes last, putting off its study until the final stage of life, beginning first with

logic, which teaches the mode of the sciences, second, going on to mathematics, which even children are able to master, third, natural philosophy which, requires time for the sake of experience, fourth, to moral philosophy, a subject the youthful cannot profitably study, arriving finally at divine science which considers the first causes of being.

In libum de causis, proemium

This pedagogical order is based on the availability of the objects of the different sciences as well as on the subjective disposition of the student. Without a vast experience of the natural world, it is impossible to develop a science of it. Better then to begin with logic, highly abstract to be sure but, like mathematics, requiring little experience in order to be grasped. The adolescent is not yet ready for calm reflection on the nature and appraisal of human action. The aim of moral philosophy, since it is a practical enterprise, is not knowledge but rather the moral improvement of the student. The acquisition of moral virtues, the integration of the emotions and their ready response to reasoned direction, disposes one for the intellectual virtues and for the ultimate ascent to wisdom by providing an existential affinity with immaterial reality.

We find a similar pedagogical order in Plato, in the middle books of *The Republic*, where he is developing the analogy of the sun and analyzing the divided line. In his discussion of virtue, Plato links the overcoming of the tug of the passions with the lifting of the cloud from the mind, permitting the remembrance of ideal reality. One who aspires to the ultimate goal of philosophy, must put in an apprenticeship of ten years of mathematics, a study which both sharpens the mind and orders the passions.

This pedagogical order of learning the sciences captures the upward ascent traced by Aristotle in those remarkable opening chapters of the first book of his *Metaphysics*. Indeed, the lead-in to the text cited just above from Thomas's exposition of the *Book of Causes*, clearly evokes that passage. Metaphysics, as another name for the wisdom that is the telos of philosophy, is ultimate in several senses. Both in terms of the ultimacy and perfection of its objects and chronologically, as being the last and culmination study undertaken by the aspiring philosopher.

We may note parenthetically that since metaphysics is the telos which gathers into an ordered whole all of the sciences, the learning of the other sciences is conducted under the guidance of metaphysics. That is, one who would teach us the earlier and presupposes sciences *as philosophical* must himself already followed the route to the desired end. Teaching any constitutive science of philosophy is thus a sapiential task with the teacher mindful of the ultimate orientation of the particular science to metaphysics. This is why Thomas Aquinas, in the course of his commentaries on the natural writings of Aristotle will introduce asides about the further metaphysical import of a particular doctrine. A portion, in the prefaces or proemia to his commentaries, he will explicitly relate and compare the study about to being with the culminating goal of inquiry.

Schematic Division of Philosophy

We often find the constitutive sciences of philosophy displayed without reference to the order in which they are learned. Here the principal division is between theoretical and practical sciences. The distinction between the theoretical and practical uses of our mind, as well as the classic statement of it in *On the soul*, III, 10, will be familiar to you from earlier courses. These two uses of the mind differ in their ends or aims, Aristotle observes. The theoretical use of the mind aims at the perfection of mental activity as such, that is, it aims at truth. The practical use of the mind seeks truth but in order to direct and perfect activities other than thinking. The knowledge of the artisan is not sought for its own sake, but in order to direct his activities with an eye to the production of the artifact. The artifact, not the thinking that goes into producing it, is the perfection of such productive or practical thinking.

Practical sciences are the reflective and general knowledge about things to be made or done, more remote from their actual use or application but for all that having such application as their *raison d'être*. The aim of moral action is the good and just as the degrees of community of the regulative good is productive of a threefold distinction of practical wisdom or prudence, so it is productive of a threefold division of practical or moral philosophy.

1199. -- *Agit de prudentia. Et primo ostendit quae dicatur prudentia. ... Dicit ergo primo, quod quamvis politica tam legis positiva quam executiva sit prudentia, tamen maxime videtur esse prudentia quae est circa unum tantum, scilicet circa seipsum. Et talis ratio suiipsius gubernativa retinet sibi commune nomen prudentiae; quia aliae partes prudentiae habent propria nomina, quibus nominantur. Earum enim quaedam dicitur oeconomica, idest prudentia dispensitiva domus; quaedam vero dicitur legis positio, idest prudentia ponendi leges; quaedam vero est politica, idest prudentia exequendi leges. Et quaelibet earum dividitur in consiliativum et iudicativam. Oportet enim in agibilibus, primo per inquisitionem consilii aliquid invenire, secundo de inventis inventis iudicare.*

1199. -- He treats of prudence. And first he shows what is called prudence. So first he says that although political prudence involves both enactment and execution, that is chiefly called prudence which deal with one alone, namely with oneself. And this self-governing reason retains the common name of prudence because the other kinds have their own proper names which designate them. One of these is called economics, that is, the prudence governing a household; another is called legislative, that is, the prudence involved in enacting laws; another is called political which executes the laws. Each of them is divided into the deliberative and judicative. For in things to be done, something is first hit upon by the inquiry of deliberation and then what has been found is judged.

In VI Ethic., lect. 7

Practical wisdom, that takes counsel and judges what a person should do, lays special claim to the common term prudence because the other kinds of it have special names of their own. Economic prudence, the wisdom that goes into running a household, looks not to the private good, but to the good shared by members of the household. Political prudence, which judges in the light of a good shared by all members of the city is higher simply because its good is more common, more comprehensive. One who can rule a city is wiser than one who can rule only a household whereas one whose governance extends only to his own good is wise only to that degree. Thomas adds an important distinction between these practical virtues and the corresponding practical sciences.

1200. -- Est autem considerandum, quod sicut supra dictum est, prudentia non est in ratione solum, sed habet aliquid de appetitu. Omnia ergo de quibus hic fit mentio, in tantum sunt species prudentiae, in quantum non in ratione sola consistunt, sed habent aliquid in appetitu. In quantum enim sunt in sola ratione, dicuntur quaedam scientiae practicae, scilicet ethica, economica et politica.

1200. -- It should be noticed that, as has been said above, prudence is not only in reason, but has it in something of appetite. Therefore, all the things mentioned here are species of prudence insofar as they have something of appetite. But insofar as they are in reason alone, they are called practical sciences, namely, ethics, economics, and politics.

The practical judgments made with reference to the good of the individual, of the common good of the household, or of the common good of the city, will be true insofar as the one judging is appetitively ordered to those goods. The judgments of practical reason are true when there is a conformity of mind with rectified appetite. Thus, prudence presupposes the corresponding moral virtues or it simply cannot truly appraise what is to be done. After all, the judgment is that this action is what the good demands here and now and only one whose mind is guided by an appetitive orientation to that good can bring it off with any ease or certainty. Practical science operates on a general and universal level and their discourse is correspondingly abstract and less constitutively affected by the condition of the thinker's appetite.

The schematic upshot of this is:

- Practical philosophy:
 - Politics
 - Economics
 - Ethics

As for the division of speculative philosophy, this emerges as we seek to describe a possible science between the special sciences, that is, a science of being as being. The special sciences are then seen as bearing on a kind of being, e.g. being that comes

about as the result of a change = physical or natural being, and being as quantified = mathematical, whether discrete as in arithmetic or continuous as in geometry.

The object of theoretical or speculative thinking, the theoretical or speculable object, has two constitutive characteristics, one which belongs to it as the object of intellect, namely, immateriality, and another which belongs to it because of the demands of science, namely, necessity. A scientific or demonstrative argument is one which derives a property of a thing from the essence of that thing. A thing having that essence cannot not have that property; it has it necessarily.

If immateriality and necessity are the formally constitutive notes of the theoretical object, formal variations in these constituents will be productive of different sciences. That is, insofar as the theoretical object is differently related to matter and motion, there will be different theoretical sciences. The necessary is that which cannot be otherwise and thus cannot change. That is why, motion is given along with matter as that from which the theoretical object must be removed, abstracted, distinguished, separated. [Thomas uses each of these verbs]. How will such degrees of removal be discerned?

We look to the mode of definition. Where there are formally different manners of defining, with respect to removal or abstraction from matter and motion, there will be formally different sciences. Why should definition exercise so crucial a role in typifying the discursive movement of a science? Because the essence or nature of the subject is captured in the definition that figures as middle term in the argument establishing that something is a property of that subject.

There are some things, Thomas observes -- and here he is following Aristotle as well as Boethius -- which require sensible matter not only in order to exist but also in order to be defined. Natural or physical things have matter as an essential component of them; they could not be what they are without it. But how then can we say what they are without including matter and then what becomes of separation or abstraction from matter as a condition of intellectual knowing? Individual things are made up of this singular matter. This man has this flesh and these bones. But when we say what a man is, while we must mention matter -- flesh and bones -- in order to accurately state what he is, it is not this flesh and these bones, but flesh and bones that we mention. That is, what is common to the singular. We remember that the immateriality of intellection was established in precisely this way, that the human mind knows physical things in an immaterial manner, universally. The definitions of physical objects, in summary, contain common or universal sensible matter, but not of course singular matter.

There are other things which, though they exist only in sensible matter, can be considered apart from and defined without sensible matter. Thus the line, the circle and the number 7 are defined without any mention of weight, temperature, color or any of the other notes of sensible matter. To consider a triangle without sensible properties does not commit us to the view that there exist triangles in the way in which they are defined and studied in plane geometry. They enjoy an abstract or ideal existence but do not increase the inventory of substantive things in the world. [Some have thought that there are counterparts outside of the mind of triangles, lines and numbers, but insofar

as they do this *because* we so define them, Thomas thinks Aristotle was quite right to see this as a confusion of the way we think of things and the way they exist.]

Metaphysics, as we have seen, will be distinguishable from natural science and mathematics insofar as there are things which are both defined without any sensible matter and which exist apart from sensible matter. These are the so-called separate substances. Can we say that the subject of metaphysics is separate substance? Not quite. For reasons touched on in the lectures and to which we shall return, metaphysics needs a subject which permits the slow and careful attainment of clarity separate substance. Separate subject may be called the great object of metaphysics in the sense of that we principally and chiefly wish to know. After all, separate substance is a synonym for the divine, and the whole of philosophy is ordered to such knowledge as we can achieve of the divine. The subject of metaphysics, accordingly, is said to be those things which exist without matter and thus can be defined without matter, with the hurried addition that this is ambiguous and covers [a] that which sometimes but not always exist apart from matter, e.g. being, substance, cause, etc., and [b] things which always exist apart from sensible matter, e.g. God and the angels. It is [a] that is the subject of metaphysics and [b] that is the cause of the subject of metaphysics.

For now, we can complete our schematic presentation of philosophy thus:

Philosophy

Speculative:

Metaphysics
Mathematics
Natural philosophy

Practical:

Politics
Economics
Ethics

Suggested Reading Assignment

One of the lessons in my course on the Introduction to Moral Philosophy [Lesson 2] is based on a close reading of a text from the *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 14, 1. 16. You can gain access to that on the web site or, if not, find it in a copy of the *Summa*.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write a few pages on the way in which the speculative is divided from the practical and the way in which practical sciences are distinguished from moral virtues.

Lesson 4: The Philosophy of Nature

Why Not Begin with Metaphysics?

Writing shortly after World War II, Jacques Maritain contrasted Thomism with the then modish Existentialism in a little book called in English, *Existence and the Existent*. His primary target was Jean-Paul Sartre, whose little book *Existentialism is a Humanism* had given a popular statement to the new philosophical craze. What James Collins called Sartre's "postulatory atheism" led to a stark contrast. Theists see God as a maker and creatures as possessing the nature God gave them; this nature provides a measure of the flourishing of the one having that nature. In Sartre's lapidary phrase, for the theist *essence precedes existence*. But things are quite different for the atheist. Without a maker there is no essence and without an essence there is no antecedent guide for action. I cannot say, for example, "Well, a human being ought to do such and such," since this presupposes that there is a human nature to which appeal can be made to ground the judgment. Without such a nature, what-I-am is freely constructed by the acts I perform. *Existence precedes essence*.

As Cole Porter put it, Anything goes. There are no precepts or prohibitions to which my actions must conform. I am free through and through. Sartre did not advance this position with libertarian -- or libertine -- glee, as if, being able to do anything I wished, I would be happy as a lark. Freedom is a burden because, *sans* nature, it is without excuse. Total freedom entails total responsibility. This was the view Maritain wished to counter with an equally popular restatement of the outlook he had learned from Thomas Aquinas.

Since Sartre had spoken of essence and existence, Maritain is led to speak of what Thomas had had to say of this pair. But the student of Thomas will have difficulty matching what Maritain says with what Thomas taught. This is nowhere more evident than in the discussion of the "intuition of being" and its relationship to metaphysics.

The act of existing is the key to Thomas's philosophy, we are told, and it is something super-intelligible which is revealed in the judgment I make that something exists. "This is why, at the root of metaphysical knowledge, St. Thomas places the intellectual intuition of that mysterious reality disguised under the most commonplace and commonly used word in the language, the word *to be*; a reality revealed to us as the uncircumscribable subject of a science which the gods begrudge us when we release,

in the values that appertain to it, the act of existing which is exercised by the humblest thing -- that victorious thrust by which it triumphs over nothingness" [Image Books edition, 1957, pp. 28-29].

Maritain seems to say that existence is the subject of metaphysics, but then seems not to say this, by adding "uncircumscribable." But it is the grasp of existence that he takes to be the key to metaphysics. A philosopher who is not a metaphysician is not a real philosopher and it is the intuition of being that makes the metaphysician.

I mean the intuition of being in its pure and all-pervasive properties, in its typical and primordial intelligible density; the intuition of being *secundum quod est ens*. Being, seen in this light, is neither the *vague* being of common sense, nor the *particularized* being of the sciences and of the philosophy of nature, nor the *de-realized* being of logic, nor the *pseudo*-being of dialectics mistaken for philosophy [p. 29].

There is much that is familiar here for the student of Aquinas, but there is strangeness as well. On the one hand, metaphysics is concerned with being as being, whereas the sciences and philosophy of nature are concerned with a particular kind of being. No mention is made of mathematics, but the way in which logic is described might be taken to do service for that. Moreover, Maritain is clear that the intuition of being required for metaphysics is not the sort of vague grasp of being everyone has. It is an achievement. But what kind of an achievement is it?

Maritain's account becomes progressively more obscure and rhetorically charged. "It is being, attained or perceived at the summit of abstractive intellection, as an eidetic or intensive visualization which owes its purity and power of illumination only to the fact that the intellect, one day, was stirred to its depths and trans-illuminated by the act of the act of existing apprehended in things..." [29-30]. There are many paths to this intuition. It may spring "like a kind of natural grace at the sight of a blade of grass or a windmill, or at the sudden perception of the reality of it self..." [30]. This is contrasted somewhat obscurely with the way Thomas Aquinas gained this intuition. In the end it is a boon, a gift, fortuitous, a kind of docility to the light.

I cite this only because it suggests a way around the order of learning we have seen in Thomas Aquinas. For reasons to which we will return more than once in what follows, for Thomas, the possibility of a science between the special science depends on *demonstrations* within the philosophy of nature that conclude to the existence of something apart from matter. On the basis of such proofs, one knows that to be and to be material are not identical. Absent such proofs, Thomas says, philosophy of nature would be wisdom and the culminating science of philosophy. Talk of an intuition, which might be triggered by a blade of grass, suggests another route into this recognition that some being is not material and thus that being as being is not identical with being as material. Whatever else might be said of this, it must be said that it is quite different from Thomas's view. Accordingly, it is somewhat disingenuous to present it as Thomistic or as merely a variation on what we find in Thomas.

I single out Maritain on this matter because of the earned authority he has in the Thomistic Revival. There may be one or two others who have done as much to make Thomas audible to the contemporary ear, but no one has exhibited the range and depth that we find in Maritain's work. It was only fitting that he should step forward and address the rise of Existentialism from the vantage point of Thomism. In commending metaphysics, Maritain is not alone in bypassing the route laid out by Thomas. What is the cause of this discontent?

The Reasons for this Discontent

A glance at the history of western thought provides the answer. It is one of the great givens that with Copernicus and Galileo a turn was taken in the study of nature which effectively rendered obsolete the Aristotelian system that had preceded it. That this received opinion, like so many others, requires profound emendation will be clear to you from Father Wallace's course in philosophy of nature. Nonetheless, something happened and the subsequent advance of the sciences has carried them increasingly away from philosophy, or at least from philosophy as understood by Aristotle and St. Thomas.

One of the key issues facing the Thomistic Revival was precisely the relationship between philosophy and the sciences. If one simply assigned to the natural sciences, as they had developed, all the tasks that had fallen to the philosophy of nature, one might then look to the sciences for some intimation that the objects of those sciences do not exhaust reality. From time to time, it is maintained that a development in the sciences has opened up the mind to a reality beyond the physical, but the dominant view has tended to be that, given its methodology, natural science will simply deal with the things which come within the range of that methodology and remain agnostic about whatever does not.

Positivism is a more assertive form of this last view. Not only must the sciences stick to the things which fall within its range, whatever does not fall within the range of the natural sciences can safely be regarded as nothing. Thus the rise of science, far from providing aid and comfort to metaphysics, took the path indicated by Thomas. *If physical reality is synonymous with reality, then natural science is wisdom and the goal and term of philosophy.*

With knowledge of nature no longer serving as the handmaid of metaphysics but setting itself up as a rival, the philosopher who wished to retain anything like a classical metaphysics had a problem. One solution is that suggested by Maritain's talk of an intuition of being. The suggestion is that, by many paths, on the basis of one kind of fortuitous experience or another, one has an intuition of being as being and thus is in possession of the subject of metaphysics.

Ens Primum Cognitum

Maritain is careful to distinguish the intuition of being from the vague grasp of being that anyone has. Anyone aware of anything at all is aware of being since being is the most

general term applicable to whatever is. Being in this sense, *ens ut primum cognitum*, being as the first and most obvious thing the mind grasps, is distinguished from *ens inquantum ens*, the subject of metaphysics. Both Cardinal Cajetan and John of St. Thomas engage in extensive discussions of this contrast. The transition from the one to the other is made in the manner taught by Aquinas. The vague awareness of our surroundings leads on to a reflective effort to grasp the nature of physical things and this in turn leads to the proof of the prime mover and the proof of the immateriality of the human soul. Those proofs establish that to be and to be physical are not identical and thus provide a new sense to the phrase, being as being.

There is no reason to hold that what is called scientific methodology represents the only means of knowledge of nature. Indeed, as I developed in one of the taped lectures, it can be argued that scientific knowledge of the world presupposes what may be called pre-scientific knowledge, without which the scientific account would be meaningless, that is, without referent. If I do not have knowledge of the world before I begin its scientific study, I would have no object of study. Such pre-scientific knowledge, insofar as it simply means knowledge of the natural world by means other than scientific methodology, provides the charter for the continued existence of the philosophy of nature as Aristotle and Thomas understood it. This is not to say that Aristotelian cosmology is untouched by subsequent developments. That would be ridiculous. What it does say is that there is scientific knowledge of nature, where scientific bears its Aristotelian meaning, prior to and independent of scientific knowledge.

On this basis, there remains a discipline that can provide the proofs on the basis of which we speak of being as being as the subject of a new science beyond the particular sciences.

The Wonder at Being

That being said, we can return to the notion of an intuition of being, that is, of a sudden epiphany at how astounding it is that things exist. This wonder is often summed up in the questions, "Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?" And one is drawn toward what the poets have said about their astonishment at things. Paul Claudel spoke of poetic knowledge as a *connaissance* and then, by breaking the word down into *co-naitre* suggested that the poet somehow comes to be with what he experiences, has an affinity with it that goes beyond a merely conceptual grasp. Gerard Manley Hopkins spoke of poetic *inscape* and became enamored of what he understood Duns Scotus to mean by *haecceitas*, the thisness that sets one being off from another and makes it unique.

Such accounts carry their full weight if the being grasped is sensible being. Indeed, poets are likely to respond by preference to what is given to the senses. There may even be some intimation of immortality provided by poetic experience, but it would be chancy indeed to regard this as the basis for the science of metaphysics.

As both Plato and Aristotle insisted, philosophy begins in wonder. The objects of wonder are first of all obvious things -- the burning of fire, an eclipse -- and we are both in awe

of such things and seek to know how they happen. What is clear is that the requisite wonder is operative in our response to the physical world and is not as such any argument for their being things beyond the physical.

Philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger and others, some non-German, have lamented the way in which modern technological society cuts us off from existing things. Reality becomes encrusted with familiarity and the quotidian. When this is so, various devices must be employed to wake up the mind to reality, to enable us to see what lies before our eyes. But in grasping what lies before our eyes and marveling that it exists we are not yet provided with the presuppositions of metaphysics.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book Two, in its entirety.

This is a short book but full of insights. Of course you will want to consult Thomas's commentary on it.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Contrast the two Sartrean slogans, "existence precedes essence" and "essence precedes existence." What does "existence" mean in these phrases? What is the point of the contrast?

Desideratum

You would do well to get hold of Maritain's *Existence and the Existent* from a library. It is currently out of print but will eventually appear in the Notre Dame edition.

Lesson 5: The Immortality of the Soul

The human mind first grasps general truths about things and then progresses to more specific knowledge of them. So it is that, confronted with the realm of things that come to be as the result of a change, we first ask what can be said of things understood in that most general fashion. The least that one can say of the product of a change is that it is a combination of a subject and the characteristic acquired as the result of the change, a characteristic lacking in the subject prior to the change. This sweeping generalization applies to changes of quality and place and quantity, though insofar as "matter" is used for the subject and "form" for the new characteristic, we would first think of a qualitative change, a change of shape. To use "shape" or "form" in a generalized way can surprise, though perhaps the surprise is had by remembering the origin of the term rather than in its generalized use which of course is very familiar to us.

This account of the product of change does not obviously apply to a change whereby a subject would not just come to be in this respect or that -- quality, place, quantity -- but as such. That is, human beings undergo all kinds of changes, but they themselves are products of change and eventually will undergo a change after which they will be no more. Can the analysis of the product of change be applied to basic things, substances, themselves? Yes, by an analogy. This extension of the analysis to substantial change -- the change whereby basic things come into and pass out of existence -- is not meant to be a proof that such changes occur. We already hold that there are substantial changes. We know that there are basic things in the world and that they come into being and pass out of being. The preliminary analysis covered changes such things undergo once they have come to be. The analysis can be extended to substantial change so long as we take care to see that we are indeed extending it.

The subject or matter of the substantial change cannot itself be a substance. Why? A characteristic acquired by an existing substance does not make it to be as such, but to be in a certain respect. If then there is to be a change whereby a substance comes into being, we can say negatively that this subject cannot be a substance. This is signaled by calling it Prime Matter. Similarly, to underscore that the form acquired by Prime Matter results in a substance, we call it Substantial Form.

When we turn to living things, we bring along with us what has been said generally of physical objects. The analysis just recalled applies to every natural thing. But some natural things are alive. Therefore, it applies to them. But, as applied to them, it does not of course pick out what is distinctive to living things. What is distinctive to living things? We discriminate between the living and non-living physical objects on the basis of certain activities. Where these activities are present, we are in the presence of a living thing. Living things are the natural things that are capable of performing such activities. Among such vital activities are seeing and hearing. We would give different accounts of each. This living thing is capable of hearing and seeing; that is, sometimes it actually sees, something it could but its eyes are closed and it doesn't. Sometimes it actually hears, picking up a given sound, sometimes it picks up another sound. These capacities differ because when they are actuated we have activities which differ. The ability to see differs from the ability to hear. Now we are ready for Aristotle's first account of soul. "Soul is that whereby we first move, sense, think, imagine, etc." The soul is the substantial form of the living thing. To be alive is not like being here as opposed to there. It may be manifested by actually seeing or hearing, but these acts are episodic. Living is a substantial characteristic of certain natural things. The soul is simply the name used to designate the substantial form of such things.

As Aristotle's first definition suggests, our experience of life is not merely one of external observation. I am alive. This is something about which I am as certain as I can be. But my certainty is not generated by taking a peek at my soul, but by knowing that I am at the source of such acts as seeing, hearing, moving my hand, uttering complicated sentences and the like. My certainty that I myself am alive is one of the great presuppositions of this part of natural philosophy. My certainty of my own life combines internal and an external experience. I am capable of wiggling my fingers. I extend my

hand and perform this feat. I am at one and the same time internally aware that I am doing this and I look at my wiggling fingers as what I am bringing about. It is on an analogy with this that I think that other entities that exhibit such external behavior have the interior wherewithal to engage in it.

Vital activities are the acts of powers or potencies. In the analysis of change, we can speak of the matter as potency and the form as act. Motion itself is the actuating of the potency. This is why we can apply to the analysis of vital activities the elements of the analysis of physical objects and the change that produces them. What happens when we think of seeing as coming to see and hearing as coming to hear and so on? Well, if there is a becoming there must be something that becomes and something that it becomes. The subject of the change will be the power of sight and the form will be color. From not seeing red, I come to see red. If the subject of the change has come to be red, we will find it important to distinguish this from the change whereby an apple, say, becomes red. When the apple becomes red, there is one more countable instance of redness in the world. When the eye sees red, this becoming red does not result in another countable instance of the quality redness. The distinction is marked by saying that, if the reception of the form in such a substance as an apple is for that form to be received in matter, then the reception of the form in sense perception can be denied to be the reception of the form in matter. When form is received in matter, when we have a physical change, the result is a new instance of the kind. This is not the case when the form is received in the sensing power. If the latter reception is called immaterial we can see that this arises from the negation and for the reasons given. It is also called an intentional change because redness as received by the power of sight is the means of seeing the red object. It tends toward the red object.

Now as it happens, the organ of sight can be the subject of change in the usual sense as well as subject of the change that is coming to see. The eye can become warm or cool, wet or dry. Moreover, a very bright light can render the eye momentarily blind. Thus, while the distinction between coming to see and physical change is clear enough, it is also clear that seeing involves a physical organ.

The Immateriality of Thinking

The use of "immaterial" to speak of sense perception is carefully controlled by the meaning of "material" that is being negated. There are different ways of having or receiving a form as the result of a process of change. When we think of thinking and its similarities and dissimilarities with sensing, a much stronger sense of "immaterial" is called for. To know what redness is, to have a concept of it, is to be able to give an account that, if accurate, is true of every instance of red such that "red" as signifying that concept can be predicated of any instance of the color. Universality is the mark of intellect.

Just as sensing involves a passage from a passive to an active state -- sensing is an intermittent activity -- so too thinking involves the actuation of a capacity which is not always operating, certainly not always thinking the same thing. In the case of sensation, it is the object that triggers the passage from potency to act. A red object in appropriate

light causes us actually to see it. So too, if the intellect passes from potency to act, moving from being able to think to actually thinking, there must be some agent which brings about this change, an agent to produce the form in the mind. Material objects do not seem to suffice to bring this about. If they did, the change would be but another instance of a physical change, a cause bringing it about that a form is in matter.

One physical object can alter the temperature, change the place, increase the size of another, and the forms received as a result of the change are numerically different from the form as it is found in the cause. Sensation involves such a physical change, but cannot be reduced to it. When my hand touches the surface, there is a mutual alteration of temperature -- my hand cools as the surface warms. These are physical changes like any others. But feeling and an alteration of temperature are not identical: if they were, we would have to see that the book laid on the table feels the table and vice versa. Some philosophers and more science fiction writers have entertained this possibility but its entertainment value is limited. Such "sensation" would be a well-kept secret, exhibiting none of the concomitant features of sensation -- withdrawing before excessive heat, for example.

Sensation is the presupposition for thinking, not simply external sensing but the production of images by imagination and memory. Aristotle spoke of a common sense to account for the unified sensation of a physical object, one in which color and temperature, size, place, texture, etc. come together as this thing. These images are of singular things. Could they produce the idea?

The mark of intellection, as we have noted, is universality. We will consider the famous problem of universals in Lesson 10 below. For now, let it suffice to recall that it is a feature of our ideas that they range over individuals and they do this because they do not include individuating characteristics. "Man" can be predicated of Socrates and Euclid and Sophrosyne because the peculiarities of none of these humans are expressed by the concept the name signifies. They are not excluded in the sense of denied but -- as abstraction will be explained in Lesson 8 -- the nature is abstracted from them. This reception of the form -- when one comes to think Man, comes to know human nature -- will have the intellect as its subject and the nature plays the role of form. This is, of course, the source of the world "information", another proof for the Anti-Aristotelian Society that the great philosopher's theories have been smuggled into our languages. But of course the traffic goes in the other direction, and Aristotle is trying to articulate what we in some sense already know.

How does the reception of the form in sensation -- coming to see red -- differ from the reception of the form in understanding -- coming to know redness? One great difference lies in range. Sight is receptive of colors, hearing of sounds, and so with the other external senses; the internal common sense is the grasp of a colored, textured individual, with temperature, and so on. But for all that, the image of an individual, of this red thing. It is not simply that mind is receptive of redness. It is, as Aristotle wondrously remarked, receptive of anything and everything. "The mind is, in its way, everything." It was the pursuit of this spoor that led to the realization that thinking is an activity *toto*

coelo different from sensing, let alone physical change, and involves not simply immateriality but spirituality.

The mind potentially knows and then actually knows. This is the change that leads to talk of the mind as subject and what it receives as a form. Physical objects as such cannot bring about this change, since there would be an obvious incommensurability between cause and effect -- a material cause, an immaterial effect. There must be some agency if this change is to occur, and it must like its effect be immaterial. There were those who thought this agent was some other being, a separated substance; there were those who thought this was Aristotle's view. What we do find is talk of intellect as the recipient of forms or ideas -- the receiving or passive intellect -- and of the intellect as agent. The same thing cannot be cause and effect, agent and patient, of the same change, so the two are indeed distinct -- the passive intellect, on the one hand, the agent intellect, on the other. It was the agent intellect some thought was an separated substance. Thomas proved, first, that this was not Aristotle's teaching and, two, that it leads to the impossibility of giving any straightforward account of "This man thinks." The upshot is that both agent and passive intellects are powers or faculties of the human soul.

Have we wandered too far from our primary concern? We set out to address the question of the immortality of the human soul. Some readers might think that we have become bogged down in esoteric discussions of concept formation and this may seem light years distant from the yearning that is often the antecedent to discussions of immortality. Is this all there is? Life is a wonderful thing, but it is short, even when it is long. The elderly speak with wonder of how short their long lives seem. Death is a horror and seems a definitive end, yet it seems part of human nature to think beyond the grave, to anticipate a continued existence as if unable to imagine that life should simply and completely end. It is not that the running down of the body surprises, so much as the distinctive human activities. The creative imagination, the ranging intellect. These capacities enable us to contain our container, so to speak. Speck though he may be from a cosmic point of view, man's intellect soars out into space, negating distances, encompassing the whole.

That is the lived background against which such analyses as we have sketched take place. To some degree, we are simply seeking to make explicit what is implicit in the experiences just described. There are, needless to say, questions that arise from the preliminary account of the immateriality of intellect we have put forward. A philosophical account is always put forward in readiness to take objections to it. But I will end with a thought experiment.

Imagine undertaking the task of proving that thinking is just a physical event. Material. Nothing more. There are philosophers committed to this view. Their work lies all before them. As they will acknowledge, we do seem to have "two languages," one for physical objects, another for mental events. The algorithm that would enable us to transpose mental object talk into physical object talk has not been found. Materialism is a project, not an established position. Those who stick with the project through thick and thin, who

acknowledge the obstacles to it and renew their faith in the eventual triumph of materialism, make clear that they are operating from an antecedent belief or hunch. They are antecedently sure that the material is all there is. Any indication that this is not so, must be explained away. It is well, when the difficulties involved in arguing for the general sense of mankind that death is not the end, to remind oneself that the opposite position has even more troubles. Sometimes I think that the dogged devotion to materialism is the most profoundly existential refutation of it.

Suggested Reading Assignment

In the Penguin Selected Readings you will find a selection devoted to Thomas's commentary on the opening chapters of Book Two of Aristotle's *De anima*.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Show how the analysis of physical coming-to-be is used and extended to talk about coming-to-see, coming-to-hear, etc.

Desideratum

You might want to look at *Aquinas against the Averroists: On there being only one intellect*, my translation of the *De unitate intellectus* published by Purdue University Press, 1993. This text defends his interpretation of Aristotle against that of the Averroists. The edition contains a number of interpretative essays.

Lesson 6: The Existence of God

When we read Plato and Aristotle, we find references to God everywhere. These are made in an untroubled way. What troubled Plato were the demeaning things that the poets said about the gods, attributing to them behavior that would be reprehensible in human beings. Not only did Plato regard such accounts as providing defective instruction for the young, he thought them false. One of the tasks of the philosophers was to insure that talk about God was appropriate to its subject.

Aristotle said of Anaxagoras' appeal to Mind, or *Nous*, as the ultimate cause of things that he sounded like the one sober man in a crowd of drunks. On another occasion, he commended Heraclitus, telling an anecdote about the philosopher that he took to underwrite the importance of the study of nature. "Every realm of nature is marvelous: and as Heraclitus, when the strangers who came to visit him found him warming himself at the furnace in the kitchen and hesitated to go in, is reported to have bidden them not to be afraid to enter, as even in that kitchen divinities were present, so we should

venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful. Absence of haphazard and conduciveness of everything to an end are to be found in Nature's works in the highest degree, and the resultant end of her generations and combinations is a form of the beautiful" [*On the Parts of Animals*, Book One, Chapter 5].

Some awareness of God is a feature of being human, nor of course does each one individually hit upon the existence of God. Such awareness is conveyed by our language, our upbringing, our culture. But it answers to the experience of everyone. Cardinal Newman held that God's presence is most widely recognized in the fact of conscience, which is operative in every human agent. The hesitation before acting, this or that -- and why or why not? It is not necessary to speak of a voice, though this seems natural enough; it suffices that the agent is attending to criteria of action which are antecedent to his choice. Conventions, customs, laws? To some degree, but when conventions, customs, laws? At the limit, it is the sense of the imperfect mastery we have over our lives that impresses upon us a sense of creatureliness. Great evil, misfortune, great joys as well. "Life is a book in which we set out to write one story and end by writing another." But it is the sense that there is an Author and we are characters, however free, in a story we cannot comprehend that induces awe and may occasion worship.

In speaking of philosophical proofs of the existence of God, it is well first to exorcise the assumption that agnosticism or atheism is the natural default position of the human mind, and that only the cunning of culture or craven fears of the unknown have led some, alas many, from this pristine recognition that the world just happens to be there, just happens to function as it does, that we and our species have against all statistical probability arrived on the scene, but in the end, none of it makes sense, it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Far from being the natural attitude, this is an acquired outlook, and one that must explain away far more than it explains. Man is not naturally atheistic. He is naturally theistic.

If the case can be made that Plato and Aristotle undertake philosophical discussions of God against the background of Greek popular religion, it is yet more obvious that in the Christian era talk about God -- theology -- takes place against the background of the Christian tradition, of revelation and of the authoritative interpretation of Scripture. Does this mean that so-called proofs of God's existence are really only an articulation of convictions already held?

The secularist complaint against Christian Philosophy -- the secularist is one who with the great effort mentioned arrives at an agnostic or atheist position and then portrays it as the natural standpoint -- is that believers are unwilling to follow the argument wherever it goes precisely because they have begged the question. Proofs of God's existence are not meant to bring about a certainty not previously had, but actually depend upon the believer's antecedent commitment that there is a God.

There is much to this objection. Sometimes, as with Kierkegaard and Karl Barth -- his interpretation of Saint Anselm and of *fides quaerens intellectum* -- it is the believer who blows the whistle on the supposed bad-faith of the believer who would prove the existence of God. How can you ask a question to which you already hold an answer?

Of course the believer before, during and after his philosophical efforts to show that God's existence follows on other known truths, holds that God exists because he believes in Him. He does not put his faith in escrow. He does not for the nonce adopt the stance of the agnostic. As a matter of fact, he is sustained in his effort by what he believes, mindful that St. Paul has said that human beings can "from the things that are made, come to knowledge of the invisible things of God." Paul was speaking to and of the pagan Romans and was holding them inexcusable in their actions because the knowledge they should have had of God, moving from the things that are made, would have precluded such actions. It is no accident that the ambience of faith has provided a powerful stimulus to natural theology.

Natural Theology

The believer comes to philosophy with a rich inventory of truths about God. Thanks to his faith, he knows that God is a trinity of persons, he knows that Jesus is one divine person with two natures, a human and divine, he knows that sins are forgiven, on and on. When he reads Plato and Aristotle, he will note what they say of God and some of it will strike him as just right. It jibes with what God has told us of himself, although from the point of view of the vast number of truths God has revealed about himself, those philosophers hit upon will not seem like much. But on reflection the believer will marvel at what the human mind, unaided by revelation has had to say about God. And eventually it will dawn on him that there is an overlap between what God has revealed about himself and what philosophers have discovered about God. If those philosophical proofs and analyses are correct, then some of the things one has accepted on divine faith, can be known. The believer who takes up philosopher undertakes to see if he can know those truths about God.

We have seen that the pagan philosophers saw theology as the culminating task of philosophy. Theology means what human beings can come to know about God. Call this philosophical theology. Call it natural theology, since it is achieved in reliance on the natural human cognitive powers without any special light or revelation. When the believer recognizes that philosophers have sought to prove truths about God which are part of what he believes, he may wonder if the arguments work. If he is a philosopher, he will pursue the matter. Let us say that, like Thomas Aquinas, he concludes that the philosophical argument for the existence of God is sound. He does not conclude from this that every truth revealed about God is susceptible of such proof. He will know that most of what he believes constitute mysteries. He will accordingly distinguish among the truths that God has revealed those which can be known, proved, understood, and those which cannot. Thomas called the first *preambles of faith* and did not confuse them with the *mysteries of faith*. There are then two kinds of truth about God, those which can be demonstrated, and those which cannot. And both are part of revelation.

Can a believer engage in natural theology? Well, can a believer evaluate and/or formulate arguments which establish the existence of God? Of course. The fact that he believes in God before, during and afterward has no intrinsic effect on the proof he offers. Either it is good or it is not. If it is good, it is good for anyone; if it is not sound, it fails for everyone. As was suggested earlier, religious faith can serve as a stimulus to philosophical inquiry and it can sustain one's efforts in the face of reversals. The believer has extra-philosophical confidence that God's existence can be known even apart from the faith.

It is increasingly apparent that the presuppositions of secular philosophy have had terrible effects on philosophy itself. This judgment is based on the assumption that nihilism and relativism and skepticism are terrible effects. One of the features of Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* is that we now find the Holy Father, Christ's Vicar on Earth, defending human reason against the depredations it has suffered at the hands of many recent philosophers. Chesterton once said that the man who stops believing in God does not believe in nothing, he believes anything. One might also say that one who adopts a narrow and materialist view of reason will not only be indisposed to follow proofs for God's existence; he will end by doubting that any proof is valid.

Selection 11

In the *Selected Writings of Thomas Aquinas*, you will find some chapters from the *Summa contra gentiles* dealing with the matter of this lesson. A feature of the discussion is Thomas's treatment of the view that a proof is unnecessary because it is self-evident that God exists. Perhaps no discussion of proofs of God's existence is possible without mentioning the proof formulated by Saint Anselm in his *Proslogion*. The proof was suggested by the psalmist's remark that "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." In reflecting on this, Anselm reasoned that if it was foolish to make this denial, then it was absurd and wouldn't that make it incoherent? He set about showing that it was logically impossible to deny God's existence.

Such an effort is the classical form of the *reductio ad absurdum*. I maintain that p is self-evidently true, and you deny it, asserting $\neg p$. Since my claim is that p is self-evident, I have deprived myself of finding something more evident from which I would derive it. All I can do in defense of p is show that you cannot hold $\neg p$. In the case in point, the value of p is "God exists." How can it be shown that "God does not exist" is self-contradictory?

Anselm makes two preliminary points. If I say that the whole is greater than its part, my listener must know what "whole" and "part" mean, and he will have to know what "greater than" means. Here, one must know what "God" means. Anselm suggests this meaning as capturing the obvious: *that than which nothing greater can be thought*.

What does "greater than" mean here? If I have the idea of a birdhouse. Subsequently, I go to my workshop and realize this idea. If I give the birdhouse in my mind the value of 1, then the combination of the idea and the reality receives the value of 2. So, the combination of idea and realization is greater than the idea taken alone.

Let us use the acronym TTWNGCBT for Anselm's proposed meaning of the term "God." The fool hears the word spoken and he knows what it means. So TTWNGCBT exists in his mind. If God means TTWNGCBT for both Anselm and the fool, but the fool denies that God exists, that is, that the idea has a counterpart in reality. But if this is so, he at one and the same time holds that God means TTWNGCBT and the opposite, - (TTWNGCBT). If God exists only in the mind, it would be greater from him to exist in mind and in reality. But if he exists only in the mind, he is not than which nothing greater can be thought. The fool has thus deprived himself of the means of denying the existence of God.

It is the assumption of this argument that Thomas rejects in chapter 11 of Selection 11 (p. 246). His own argument will be found in Chapter 13. I had intended to analyze that argument in detail in this lesson but have decided to let it stand on its own rather than extend this lesson as much as such an analysis would require. In lieu of that analysis, I will suggest some secondary readings.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Selection 11 in the Selected Writings.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Write your own summary outline of this key text (Selection 11).

Lesson 7: The Logic of Demonstration

A crucial consideration of both the taped lectures and of these lessons is the way in which sciences are distinguished from one another. The following two lessons will particularly deal with aspects of this issue. Both will presuppose certain things about the logic of science or of demonstrative proof. In this lesson I will set down the bare bones of that doctrine.

Thomas distinguishes a number of different mental attitudes vis-a-vis a proposition, that is, something complex that is susceptible of truth or falsity. In order to understand him, we must see that each of these attitudes is seen as bearing on one side of a contradiction. That is, if I think that p is true, my attention centers on p and not on $\neg p$ its contradictory opposite. Here are the different mental acts Thomas compares.

I have the opinion that p .

I doubt that p .

I know that p .

When I have an opinion about p I do not wholly exclude the possibility that $\neg p$ is true. I may have stronger or weaker grounds for thinking what I do, but if it is an opinion it leaves the door open to its contradictory. If I doubt that p is true, I may be said to have the opinion that $\neg p$ is true, so there is a symmetry between these two. When I say that I know something, I wholly and definitely exclude its contradictory.

The internal structure of the value of p is, minimally, S is P -- this is a simple proposition (as opposed, for example, to "If p , then q "). Now there are two ways in which I may be said to know p . First, it may be such that I know straight off that it is true because of the meaning of its constituent terms. "Equals taken from equals leave equals." If I know what equals are and what "take from" means, I have all I need to see that the proposition is true. Such a proposition is said to be known in, of, through itself, *per se*. An example of this is had when the predicate of the proposition is part of the definition of its subject. Second, a proposition may be known to be true because it follows from other true propositions; then it is said to be known through those other truths, *per alia*. How can other truths ground the truth of the proposition in question?

Just as "S is P" is the simplest form of the proposition, so the simplest form of discursive reason looks like this. We want to establish that "S is P." Now, M is P and S is M, it follows that S is P. Such discourse links the terms of the conclusion by finding premisses in which a third term occurs in such a way that the conjunction of the premisses yields the conclusion.

Let us say that I wonder why I should hold that "Man is risible." If I should know that A rational being is risible and that man is a rational being, I have linked Man and risible and assert its truth on the basis of these premisses.

This arrangement is called the syllogism, but all "syllogism" means is discursive knowledge. Knowing something on the basis of something else. In the syllogism, something is held to be true because other things are true. Those other things, the premisses, must be of a certain kind and arrangement in order for the conclusion to follow. The figures of the syllogism are distinguished on the basis of the location of the middle term in them. The arrangement mentioned above gives us the first figure -- the figure in which the middle term seems more manifestly in between the predicate and subject of the conclusion.

It is because the constituent propositions can be universal or particular, affirmative or negative, that there can be different modes of each of the three valid figures of syllogism. Not all such combinations permit inference, needless to say, and the logician will help us to see which do and which do not and why.

Once the syllogism is understood, we have in hand the basic form of argumentation. Arguments are of all kinds, of course. Sometimes a conclusion follows from its premisses but we feel no compulsion to accept it. If the premisses are probable, the conclusion will

be probable. Science is had when we have a conclusion which establishes the necessary truth of the conclusion.

The distinction just made makes it clear that it is one thing for a proposition to follow necessarily on premises and quite another for the conclusion to be a necessary truth. In scientific argument, both necessities are in play. At this point, the logician will examine the requirements of the premises in an argument in which the conclusion not only follows necessarily but is also a necessary truth. The premises will have to be themselves necessary truths in order for this to result. And there will be other requirements as well. But perhaps we have enough to clarify what is meant by the subject of a science.

Such clarity is needed because much time will be spent establishing how the subject of metaphysics differs from the subjects of the philosophy of nature and mathematics. Obviously, such discussions will only make sense if we have at least a preliminary grasp of what is meant by the subject of a science.

Science will be had from a syllogism of a certain kind; scientific knowledge is knowledge of the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism. The conclusion can be called the object of the science. *The subject of the science is the subject of the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism.* If I prove that the sum of the internal angles of a plane triangle equals 180 degrees, I will do so by using the definition of triangle for my middle term. The predicate of the conclusion, shown to belong to the subject because of what it is, as expressed by its definition, is a property. The triangle does not just happen to have it; it necessarily has it. It is not true of the triangle because it is a plane figure nor because it is a scalene triangle, but simply because it is a triangle. The most manifest example of a demonstrative syllogism is one in which the predicate is shown to be a property of the subject because it belongs to it thanks to the subject thanks to what it is.

One further point. If you were asked for a definition of science, you would probably begin by saying that it is a body of knowledge Thus far, we have been speaking of science in terms of one argument, one syllogism, but as the allusion to plane geometry indicates, a science is a concatenation of arguments. How do they all fall to the same science?

Much will be said of this in the following chapters, but this much must be said now. When I said that the property of the triangle belongs to it as triangle and not as plane figure or scalene triangle, I might have put it in another way. The property belongs to the subject, not because of its species, not because of its species, but because of what it is. Of course what is proved of a plane figure will be true of triangle as one species of plane figure. And what is proved of triangle will be true of the species of triangle. Thus it can be said that one way it is clear that many arguments belong to the same science is because their subjects are related as genera and species.

This should suffice to follow the next two lessons profitably.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Commentary on Metaphysics, Bk. 4, lessons 1 and 2.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Show how the above account of proof is exhibited in Selection 11 from the Penguin book.

Desideratum

Consult John A. Oesterle's classic logic text published by Prentice-Hall more than a quarter century ago and is still in print.

Lesson 8: Abstraction and Separation

We have had occasion several times to dwell on the manner in which the theoretical sciences are distinguished from one another. The classical sources for this are found in various passages of Aristotle but there is a later text which is reminiscent of Aristotle but which has seemed to readers to convey a somewhat different doctrine from that of the Stagyrte. Boethius (480-524) is one of the most important figures in the history of philosophy. Living in Rome in parlous times, himself the beneficiary of an education that acquainted him with classical philosophy, he conceived the plan of turning all of Aristotle and all of Plato into Latin, thereby making them accessible to readers who had no Greek. Beyond this, Boethius hoped to show the fundamental agreement and complementarity of Plato and Aristotle. Boethius himself gives many indications of the influence of Neoplatonism.

Boethius had not made much headway on his translation project before he was accused of treason by Theodoric the Ostrogoth and sentenced to death. *The Consolation of Philosophy* was written as he awaited execution. Its influence on subsequent times can be gauged by the number of copies that have survived. That work, along with a handful of theological treatises -- Boethius was a Catholic -- drew the fascinated attention of later generations. In the thirteenth century, early in his Parisian career, Thomas Aquinas commented on two of the Boethian treatises, the work called by the medievals *De hebdomadibus* and another called *On the trinity*. Thomas's commentary on the latter is incomplete, coming to an abrupt stop shortly after he has discussed the statement of the distinction between physics, mathematics and theology found at the beginning of Chapter Two of *On the Trinity*. This incomplete commentary has been known by students of Thomas from the beginning, but the study of the holograph -- Thomas's own handwritten version -- of the work, along with discarded paragraphs which nonetheless survived in the manuscript tradition, triggered in recent years a spate of works, some of

which professed to find in the Boethian commentary a vision of metaphysics quite different from Aristotle's.

I simply allude to the scholarly cadenza that can be described here. A first set of questions turn on the relationship between Boethius and his sources: is he a Platonist or is he an Aristotelian? Neoplatonists give a quite different account of the distinction of the sciences than Aristotle did, and we find a version of this presented with apparent approval by Boethius in one of his commentaries on the Neoplatonist Porphyry. [There is as well the vexed problem of universals, occasioned by another Boethian commentary on Porphyry, something to which we will return.] Next, the question arises as to the relation between Thomas and Aristotle and Boethius -- does Thomas hold views that set him at odds with his great predecessors? Such questions have an attraction all their own and they are not without importance for the deeper understanding of the matters before us. But here we touch on them only insofar as the discussion casts light on the nature of metaphysics.

Thomas's commentary or exposition of the *De trinitate*, observes the original demands of the genre. The first task was to explicate the text, display its division and order. This is called the *divisio textus*. That being done, the commentator might then formulate the questions raised by the text and proceed to discuss them as such, that is, without further reference to the text that occasioned them. In his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, both these moments will be found, as well as a third, when Thomas returns to the text and resolves difficulties found in it, an exercise which benefits from the intervening discussions. [It might be mentioned that all these tasks are melded into one in such commentaries as Thomas wrote on Scripture and on Aristotle.] In the Boethian commentary that interests us, we find after an analysis of the opening of Chapter Two, two great questions raised and discussed, first, the division of the sciences, second, the mode or manner of the different sciences. In the modern ordering of the work, these are known as Questions 5 and 6. In 1948, Wyser published an edition of these questions, but without the preceding *divisio textus*. It was with reference to it, as well as to the still unpublished rejected paragraphs, that a lively discussion went on. Subsequently, Bruno Dekker published the complete text of the uncompleted commentary and included in the appendix the versions that Thomas had scrapped. This edition provides the student with all he needs fully to assimilate the teaching of Thomas in this text, something desirable because of the light it casts on our subject, the nature of metaphysics and the way in which it differs from the other sciences. Father Armand Mauer's *Thomas Aquinas: Faith, Reason and Theology*, Toronto, 1987, complements his earlier *Division and Method of the Sciences*. The latter is a translation of the Wyser edition of Questions 5 and 6 of the commentary, whereas the former translates the first four questions, as well as the literal commentary of the *divisio textus*.

In Question 5, article 1, Thomas gives the division of the theoretical sciences and, in subsequent articles, takes up *seriatim* the philosophy of nature [article 2], mathematics [article 3] and divine science [article 4]. It is the discussion in article 3 that has received the most attention of late. Before turning to that, let us quickly review the content of article 1.

Alluding to the distinction between theoretical and practical thinking -- theoretical thinking aims at the perfection of thinking as such, that is, at truth, whereas practical thinking has an aim beyond thinking, in doing or making -- Thomas labels the concern of theoretical or speculative thinking the *speculabile*. The formal notes of the speculable object are derived, first, from the immaterial character of intellectual activity and, second, from the demands of science, that is, necessity. The necessary is that which cannot be otherwise, which is incapable of change. The speculabile, accordingly, will be characterized by removal from matter and change.

If immateriality and immobility are of the essence of the speculable, variations in these notes will provide us with a formal way to distinguish the sciences that bear on things so distinguished. The reader finds himself in familiar territory. The definitions of natural philosophy, while they include matter, include common not singular matter, bones and flesh, in Aristotle's favorite illustration, not these bones and this flesh. The definitions of mathematics exclude sensible matter, common as well as singular, but they do not commit us to the view that mathematics exist as they are considered. Finally, a third science defines its objects without any matter but with the added note that they are taken to exist as they are defined, that is, apart from matter and motion.

The previous lesson made clear why definition should play such a crucial role in science, even though definition is the product of the first operation of the mind, not the third, where discourse is engaged in. Just as judgments, propositions presuppose the definitions produced by the first operation of the mind, so discourse presupposes propositions and definitions. In the demonstrative syllogism *par excellence* in which a predicate is shown to express the property of the subject, the definition of the subject, its nature or essence, serves as the middle term. A property is an accident that it inheres in a subject because of what the subject is, its nature.

The stage is thus set by article 1 for subsequent detailed discussions of the various theoretical sciences. Let us turn to the third article which has generated so much discussion.

In approaching the way in which our mind grasps things and distinguishes them as it does so, we should first recall that there are two quite different mental acts. First, the mind's grasp of the nature of a thing, what it is, which is expressed in a definition or account. Second, a mental act which can be contrasted with the first as the complex is contrasted with the simple. This second act combines in affirmative and negative judgments what the mind has grasped. The mind distinguishes one thing from another, abstracts A from B, according to the first kind of mental act when it defines A without mentioning B in the definition when A and B are found together, exist together. Thus, given AB, one speaks of A without speaking of B: call this abstracting A from AB or distinguishing A from B. On the other hand, we might judge that A is not found with B and distinguish them in a negative propositions, "A is not B."

The difference between these lies in the fact that in the first mental act, to consider apart does not involve any assertion that what is so considered exists apart. For example, in defining "man" I make no mention of the singular features of this man or

that -- I leave aside this flesh and these bones -- and express only what is essential to and thus found in any man. But this, *pace* Plato, does not entail that there is some man who exists apart from this man or that, from singular men. No more does the definition and discussion of triangle, which leaves out and abstracts from all sensible matter, entail that there are subsisting triangles apart from matter and motion.

In this article, Thomas proposes that we use "to abstract" or "abstraction" in a narrow sense to cover only cases where we think apart things which do not exist apart, when from AB, I abstract A without suggesting that A exists apart from AB. On the other hand, when we abstract one thing from another by way of a negative judgment, "A is not B," Thomas proposes to use the term "to separate" or "separation." Both of these terms can be used either broadly or narrowly; used broadly, they can be synonyms. Used narrowly, they are quite distinct.

In introducing the two mental acts on which this distinction is based, Thomas says that the first looks to essence or nature, while the second looks to the existence of the thing: *respicit ipsum esse rei*. It is that that caught the eye of many. They noticed the absence of this from the discarded drafts and then its appearance, which enabled Thomas to move swiftly on and complete the article. Given the view among many Thomists -- a view not shared by Thomas himself -- that the distinction between essence and existence is both peculiar to Thomas and the key to his thought, it is not surprising that the link of separation with *esse* did not escape attention. But there is more. The distinction between abstraction and separation is referred to the distinction of science -- hardly surprising when we remember that the distinction was made precisely in the course of a discussion of the division of the sciences.

There are two kinds of abstraction in the narrow sense, what Thomas calls *abstractio totius* -- *abstraction of the whole* -- and *abstractio formae* -- *abstraction of form*. The first of these is found in philosophy of nature and is common to all the sciences. That should be so is clear when we see that it is in effect the abstraction of the common nature from the individuals that have that nature. Abstraction of form is said to characterize mathematics. Two things are necessary to understand the phrase. First, accidents are to substance as forms to matter; second, the accidents inhere in substance in a certain order. For example, only an extended surface can be colored. On the basis of these two facts, considering extension apart from color and other sensible qualities, is called abstraction of form -- that is abstracting quantity from the sensible qualities which are subsequent to it. The matter corresponding to form here is, again, substance and, since substance as such is grasped by mind and not by sense, substance is said to be the intelligible matter of quantity.

Separation in the narrow sense is taken to characterize metaphysics. In the narrow sense, separation is the consideration of A without B when A exists apart from B, something captured in the judgments, "A is not B" or "A is separate from B." Now, struck by the fact that separation in the narrow sense is associated with the second act of mind and equally struck by the phrase *respicit ipsum esse rei* as characterizing this act, and struck further by Thomas's linking of separation and metaphysics, Thomists who saw

the distinction between essence and existence as a defining achievement of St. Thomas were tempted to think that all this was pointing in the direction of saying that the distinction between essence and existence is crucial for the constitution of metaphysics, as if the science begins on the basis of this distinction. Pursued, such thinking leads in the direction of thinking that while natural philosophy and mathematics are concerned with essence, metaphysics is concerned with existence.

Approached in this way, the point of the text is quickly lost. What is the constitutive negative judgment, the separation, which metaphysics presupposes in order to begin. The context can leave little doubt that it is precisely the judgment that there is something, a substance, which exists apart from matter and motion. The second operation looks to the *ipsam esse rei* because the negative judgment expresses the real, existential separation of what is considered apart. The first operation of the mind considers apart what does not exist apart -- the nature apart from individuals, for example. When Thomas asks whether abstracting is falsifying, he further clarifies the distinction. The passage I am about to quote at some length is from the *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 85, a. 1, the reply to the first objection. This text was written some years after that in the exposition of Boethius's *De trinitate*, but the teaching is the same. You will notice that Thomas simply distinguishes two senses of abstracting here -- the narrow and broad senses -- and does not dub them *abstrahere* and *separare*, respectively, as he eventually did in the earlier text. It is doubtful that anyone would be tempted into existential excess by the passage in the *Summa*.

Dicendum quod abstrahere contingit dupliciter. Uno modo, per modum compositionis et divisionis: sicut cum intelligimus aliquid non esse in alio, vel esse separatum ab eo. Alio modo, per modum simplicis et absolutae considerationis; sicut cum intelligimus unum, nihil considerando de alio. Abstrahere igitur per intellectum ea quae secundum rem non sunt abstracta, secundum primum modum abstrahendi, non est absque falsitate. Sed secundo modo abstrahere per intellectum quae non sunt abstracta secundum rem, non habet falsitatem; ut in sensibilibus manifeste apparet. Si enim intelligamus, vela dicamus colorem non inesse corpori colorato, vel esse separatum ab eo, erit falsitas in opinione vel in oratione. Si vero consideremus colorem et proprietatem eius, nihil considerantes de pomo colorato; vel si quod intelligimus, voce exprimamus, erit absque falsitate opinionis vel orationis. Pomo enim non est de ratione coloris; et ideo nihil prohibet colorem intelligi, nihil intelligendo de pomo.

Similiter dico quod ea quae pertinent ad rationem speciei cuiuslibet rei materialis, puta lapidis aut hominis aut equi, possunt considerari sine principiis individualibus, quae non sunt de ratione speciei. Et hoc est abstrahere universale a particulari, vel speciem intelligibilem a phantasmatis: considerare scilicet naturam speciei, absque consideratione individualium principiorum, quae per phantasmata representantur.

Cum igitur dicitur quod intellectus est falsus, qui intelligit rem aliter quam sit, verum est si ly *aliter* referatur ad rem intellectam. Tunc enim intellectus est falsus, quando intelligit rem esse aliter quam sit. Unde falsus esset intellectus si sic abstraheret speciem lapidis a materia, ut intelligeret eam non esse in materia, ut Plato posuit. Non est autem verum quod proponitur, si ly *aliter* accipiatur ex parte intelligentis. Est enim absque falsitate ut alius sit modus intelligentis in intelligendo, quam modus rei existendo: quia intellectum est in intelligent immaterialiter, per modum intellectus; non autem materialiter, per modum re materiale.

It should be said that there are two ways in which abstracting takes place. In one way, by composition and division, as when we understand a thing not to be in another or to be separated from it. In another way, in the manner of a simple and absolute consideration, as when we understand one thing without considering anything of another. Therefore, to abstract with intellect things which are not abstracted in reality, in the first way of abstracting, is not without falsity. But for the mind to abstract in the second way things not abstracted in reality does not involve falsity; as is manifest in sensible things. For if we should understand or say that color is not in the colored body, or that it is separated from it, there will be falsity both in opinion and speech. If if we should consider color and its properties without considering the colored apple at all; or if we should say what we think, there will be falsity of both opinion and speech. For apple is not of the essence of color, and that is why nothing prevents color from being understood while not thinking at all of apple.

So too I say that what pertains to the nature of any material thing, for example, a stone, a man or a horse, can be considered apart from the individuating principles which are not of the notion of the species. This is to abstract the universal from the particular, or the intelligible species from phantasms: namely to consider the nature of the species without a consideration of its individuating principles, which are represented by phantasms.

Therefore when it is said that the understanding is false which grasps the thing otherwise than as it is, this is true if *otherwise* is taken to refer to the thing understood. For the understanding is false when it understands the thing to be otherwise than as it is. Thus the intellect would be false if he should abstract the species of stone from matter and understand it not to be in matter, as Plato thought. But the claim is not true if *otherwise* is taken on the side of the one understanding. That the thing is understood in a way different from the way it exists does not involve falsity, because what is understood is in the thinker immaterially, not materially as in the material thing.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Selected Writings of Aquinas, the commentary on the *De hebdomadius*, lesson 2 [Selection 7].

Suggested Writing Assignment

While abstraction and separation in their broad senses are found in all the sciences, Thomas assigns each of them a narrow sense which enables him to distinguish metaphysics from mathematics and natural philosophy. Explain.

Lesson 9: The Unity of Metaphysics

The Primacy of Substance

Under the first head, I shall simply recall the crucial resolution of the charge that a science of being is simply too intractable to fall to a single science. The charge seems well grounded. One who says that he is embarking on a science that will deal with everything would doubtless be taken to be talking in a Pickwickian manner. The great scholar G. E. L. Owen pointed out that Aristotle leveled a similar charge against Plato's claim to be treating the good. Good like being is as broad as a term gets and Aristotle effectively asked Plato what meaning of the term he had in mind when he offered to speak of good. The suggestion was that one could only speak of a kind of good, not of all good things at once.

Owen found this Aristotelian reaction all the more interesting because the Aristotle who made it already had in hand the means that would enable him to speak intelligibly of a science of being, that is, a science of everything.

Aristotle knew that such a term as "healthy" was shared by many subjects in virtue of a plurality of meanings. It didn't mean the same thing as said of each of them. But neither did it mean wholly different things in its many uses. There was a controlling meaning of the term and once this is isolated, it serves as a unifier of the plurality of meanings, not reducing them to the sameness of a univocal term, but rather to a unity of order. The many meanings form, in Yves Simon's usage, an ordered set.

When Aristotle saw the applicability of this kind of analysis to the word "being" he was able to find a sufficient unity. A thing called being is going to be a substance or, if not, it will bear a meaning which relates it to substance, as a property, as a process toward or away from it, or as the negation of any of these. Thus, the inability to provide a univocal meaning for "being" thanks to which it would apply to everything to which it applies, did not prevent Aristotle from arguing that the primacy of substance lent sufficient unity for the science of metaphysics to get under way.

Defense of First Principles

If we were able to go systematically through the books of the *Metaphysics* -- something you will want to do, now that you have, as a result of this course, an initial grasp of the science in question -- we would have dwelt on Book Beta, which is called Book Three because Book Two is Little Alpha -- Big Alpha is Book One. Book Three or Beta is called the book of problems. In it Aristotle makes a list of the various things that the science he is seeking is thought to have to deal with. Among the more or less randomly listed problems we find the question as to whether the science should deal with the first principles of reasoning, like the principle of contradiction. The answer is yes and indeed in Book Four or Gamma, after the considerations about the unity of the science we have just recalled, Aristotle undertakes an extensive and complicated discussion of the first principle:

1] It is impossible for a thing to be and not to be at the same time and respect.

This principle is called the axiom of axioms. It is expressed in a number of ways.

2] It is impossible to affirm and deny the same predicate of the same subject simultaneously and in the same sense.

3] Contradictories cannot be simultaneously true.

Call these the ontological, epistemological and semantic versions of the principle. They are related insofar as knowledge is knowledge of being, and propositions are expressive of thought. Thus, 2 and 3 may be said to depend upon 1, but not as conclusions depend upon premisses.

Thus, insofar as the first principle is a principle of logic, it falls to this science because of the affinity of being and being known at this high level of generality. The mind is governed by this principle because everything is.

Ontology and Theology

We spent time in an earlier lesson on the hypothesis of Werner Jaeger regarding the development or evolution of the thought of Aristotle. Our discussion did not deal with this claim in all its amplitude, but only insofar as it bore directly on our subject. If Jaeger were right, the assumptions of this course about the unity of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the guidance we take from Thomas's commentary on that work would be rendered somewhat mad. We would be treating a hodgepodge as a unity, shuffling through confetti for the unifying theme.

Jaeger, we saw, has no case in claiming that Aristotle wavered between two conflicting views of the metaphysics and then papered over his dilemma by simply embracing both views. On the one hand, metaphysics is a special science, dealing with one kind of being, divine being; on the other hand, it is a general science that deals with being as being. Since the idea of a science which would have separated or simple substance as its subject is a non-starter for Aristotle, Jaeger's dilemma dissolves.

When we looked at Thomas's comment on the passage Jaeger took to be a mere papering over of the difficulty, we mentioned that Thomas had anticipated and answered Jaeger's question in Thomas's preface to the commentary. I now propose to look at the liminal discussion.

In the *Politics* Aristotle puts a premium on the ability to command and order. One who orders unifies a plurality, directing many things to one: thus there is the orderer and the ordered, the ruler and the ruled. This hierarchy can be described in the union of soul and body, for the mind naturally commands and the body responds. Morally, our lower desires are brought under the sway and command of reason. Ordering in short implies reason. What to make then of the order among the sciences? They all involve knowledge, and thus mind, so it cannot be the presence and absence of mind that explains the hierarchy. No, it is the quality of the mind. The science that orders and commands all the others is called wisdom. Wisdom is concerned with the most intelligible objects. But in virtue of what are things most intelligible?

Thomas suggests they are so in one of three ways: from the point of view of the order of understanding; by a comparison of intellect and sense; from the very knowledge of intellect.

The order of understanding -- That which makes the mind certain seems to be especially intelligible. But the mind acquires certitude by grasping the causes of events and things. Can we not say, then, that the most intelligible objects will be the first causes of things?

Comparison of intellect and sense -- Sense perception gives us knowledge of singulars whereas our intellect grasps the universal. That science, then, would seem to be most intellectual which is most universal.

Quae quidem sunt ens, et ea quae consequuntur ens, ut unum et multa, potentia et actus. Huiusmodi autem non debent omnino indeterminata remanere, cum sine his completa cognitio de his, quae sunt propria alicui generi vel speciei, haberi non possit. Nec iterum in una aliqua particulari scientia tractari debent: quia cum his unumquodque genus entium ad sui cognitionem indigeat, pari ratione in qualibet particulari scientia tractarentur.

But these are being and what follows on being, for example, the one and many, potency and act. Such like things ought not to be left wholly unexplored, since without them complete knowledge of what is proper to any genus or species cannot be had. Nor do they seem such that they ought to be treated in one of the particular sciences; moreover, since any genus of beings needs these for knowledge of it, as good a case could be made that they should be treated by every particular science.

These are what Professor Joseph Bobik has called the "left-over problems" that metaphysics must consider.

From intellect's knowledge itself -- It is removal from matter that makes something intelligible, so it would seem that things farthest removed from matter will be most intelligible. And, Thomas says, sufficient to recall to his reader the familiar doctrine on the division of the theoretical sciences.

The application of these three, seems to give us three rivals for the title of most intelligible. The first causes, the most abstract, the most immaterial.

Haec autem triplex consideratio, non diversis, sed uni scientiae attribui debet. Nam praedictae substantiae separatae sunt universales et primae causae essendi. Eiusdem autem scientiae est considerare causas proprias alicuius generis et genus ipsum: sicut naturalis considerat principia corporis naturalis. Unde oportet quod ad eandem scientiam pertineat considerare substantias separatas, et ens commune, quod est genus, cuius sunt praedictae substantiae communes et universales causae.

But this threefold consideration ought not to be attributed to different sciences but to the same one. For the aforesaid separated substances are the first and universal causes of being, and it falls to the same science to consider the proper causes of a genus as well as that genus, just as the natural philosopher considers the principles of natural body. Thus the same science considers separated substances and common being, which is the genus of which those substances are the common and universal cause.

In one fell swoop, Thomas relates divine being and being as being: the latter is the subject of the science, the former are its causes. The same science studies a subject and the causes of that subject. But there were three senses of most intelligible.

Ex quo apparet, quod quamvis ista scientia praedicta tria consideret, non tamen considerat quodlibet eorum ut subiectum, sed ipsum solum ens commune. Hoc enim est subiectum in scientia, cuius causas et passiones quaerimus, non enim ipsae causae alicuius generis quaesiti. Nam cognitio causarum alicuius generis, est finis ad quem consideratio scientiae pertingit. Quamvis autem subiectum huius scientiae sit ens commune, dicitur tamen tota de his quae sunt separata a materia secundum esse et rationem. Quia secundum esse et rationem separari dicuntur, non solum illa quae nunquam in materia esse possunt, sicut Deus et intellectuales substantiae, sed etiam illa quae possunt sine materia esse, sicut ens commune. Hoc tamen non contingeret, si a materia secundum esse dependerent.

From which it is clear that although this science considers the three things mentioned, it does not consider each of them as its subject, but only common being. For that is the subject of a science whose causes and properties we seek, but not the causes themselves of the genus studied. The knowledge of the causes of any subject is the end to which the science tends. However, although the subject of this science is common being, the whole of it is said to concern things separate from matter both in being and understanding. Things are said to

be such, not only if they can never exist in matter, e.g. God and intellectual substances, but also things that can exist apart from matter, such as common being. But this could not be if it depended on matter in order to be.

It is thanks to the subject matter and reference to it that these various matters can be reduced to one science. Moreover, the science takes different names from the three. It is called divine science, or *theology*, insofar as it considers the kind of substances mentioned.

It is called *metaphysics* insofar as it considers being and what follows on it, for this comes after physics. It is called *first philosophy* insofar as it considers the first causes of things. So it is, Thomas concludes his preface, that it is clear what the subject of this science is, how it compares to other sciences, and how it is named.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Read Thomas's proemium to his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Selection 28, pp. 719-721.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Show how the teaching on analogous names enables Aristotle and Thomas to assign a sufficiently unified subject of metaphysics.

Lesson 10: On Being and Essence

"And indeed the question which was raised of old and is raised now and always, and is always the subject of doubt, is just the question, what is substance?"

-- *Metaphysics*, 7, 1

When it has been determined that substance is the main concern for metaphysics, the primary focus of a science which has being as being for its subject, the study of substance begins. What is it? "The word 'substance' is applied, if not in more senses, still at least to four main objects; for both the essence and the universal and the genus are thought to be the substance of each thing, and fourthly the substratum" (7, 3). In the *Categories*, chapter 5, Aristotle distinguished primary and secondary substances. The primary substance was said to be "that which is neither predicable of a subject nor present in a subject" but "in a secondary sense those things are called substances within which, as species, the primary substances are included; also those which as genera, include the species." Particular things, on the one hand, and their universal designations on the other. So too, the substratum, the fourth item in the list given in

Book Seven, is said to be that of which everything else is predicated, while it is not itself predicated of everything else. Are the first three entries to be identified with the secondary substances of the *Categories*?

Essence and Universal

Let us go then, you and I, to the little work Thomas wrote while still a young man, *On being and essence*. You will find this as selection 3 in *Thomas Aquinas Selected Writings*. The best modern interpretation of this work remains that of Joseph Bobik, *Aquinas On Being and Essence* which was first published in 1965.

A being is that which is, something concrete; its essence is that thanks to which it is and is what it is. Only things that fall into the categories will have an essence, but it is in the category of substance that essence will be found most properly. In concentrating on the essence of substance, we begin of course with material substances, substances composed of matter and form, but in metaphysics this inquiry is undertaken with an eye to being able to say something of simple substances. The question that presses upon us is this: how do matter, form and composite relate to genus, species and difference? A substance has an essence and this will be expressed by the definition that tells us what it is. The definition of a composite substance will include matter and form. If man is a substance composed of matter and form, his definition would not be matter + form, or body + soul, but rather rational animal. Why is this?

While of course there is nothing wrong with saying that a man is a composite of body and soul, we cannot predicate either taken singly of him. It would be false to say that man is matter, and it would be false to say that man is soul. These are constituents of what he is. A definition is predicated of that whose definition it is, for example, Man is rational animal, but the parts of the definition can also be predicated of the subject. We will know why. A definition would express precise knowledge of the thing defined, but we advance toward such knowledge by a series of stages. First of all we know a thing most generally, as a substance, say, then as a living substance, then as animal and finally as rational animal.

[1] Substance is the highest genus.

[2] Living substance is a genus.

[3] Rational animal is a species.

What is the status of the predicate in those three statements. Of course, we could get rid of them and say

[4] Man is a substance.

[5] Man is animal.

[6] Man is rational animal.

The predicate of [6] states the essence of man, that which is stated in his definition. The essence is what the individual has; it is what many individuals have. [6] can be exemplified by

[7] Xanthippe is a rational animal.

[8] Rollo is a rational animal.

[9] Flannery O'Connor is a rational animal.

There was a time when [7], [8] and [9] were true. "Rational animal" is common to these individuals; it is something one said of many individuals. But that is the definition of universal. Is the essence a universal? That is the question.

For a number of reasons, but basically because of the demands of knowledge, Plato famously held that since the essences of things are universally common to many material individuals, they exist apart and separately from them. This is the doctrine that Aristotle denies. He found it odd to say that a thing and what it is are two things. But that is what the distinction between the individual and its essence, a distinction that must be made, seems to commit us to.

If it were indeed true that our common nouns commit us to the separate existence of essence, such separate beings would be divine, that is, changeless, and would be numbered among the things we ultimately want to know. Being and Good and One are similarly common to many individuals with which they cannot be identified and these will be the ideal entities the philosopher primarily aspires to know. On the other hand, if the claim that there are such separate entities is based on a mistake, there will have to be another and doubtless more difficult route to the knowledge of separate substances. And numbered among them will *not* be the separated essences of material singulars.

But how can we avoid going where Plato went? If human nature is the essence of Socrates and the essence of Plato, it could not be identical with either on penalty of their being identical with one another. But each taken singly is a human being. Plato is right, accordingly, in seeing that with such individuals and such essences, there cannot be an identity of the two. And must we not say that the difference is one between individuals and a universal? Where is human nature?

The question is rather: what is the relationship between human nature and universality. Consider the following sentences.

[10] Man is seated.

[11] Man is a species.

[12] Man is rational.

All of these sentences are true. Since Socrates is comfortable in his Barca-lounger, [10] is true. [11] is also true, but what does it say? What is the meaning of "species"? The

definition given by Porphyry in his *Isagoge* or *Introduction* to the *Categories* is this: A species is something one that is predicated of many numerically different things. A genus on the other hand is something one that is predicated of many specifically different things. In discussing these and other predicate universals -- difference, property, and accident -- as propaedeutic to understanding Aristotle's *Categories*, Porphyry included a fateful passage.

The problem of Universals

Noting that there is disagreement between Plato and Aristotle on the status of the universals mentioned, Porphyry adds that the problem is simply too difficult to be taken up in an introductory work. There are three questions about genera and species that Porphyry formulates but will not discuss.

- * Are genera and species real or simply products of the imagination?
- * If real, are they immaterial or material?
- * If immaterial, are they present in singulars or do they exist apart?

Porphyry's became one of the *auctores* and hence *auctoritates* of the liberal arts curriculum which defined medieval education from the Dark Ages until the rise of universities and of course never entirely disappeared. The task of the *scholasticus* was to read (*legere*, *lectio*) the authoritative works in which one of the arts was set forth. The student could be accounted versed in an art when he understood the authoritative books passing it on to him. Porphyry's three questions -- which constitute the Problem of Universals -- were irresistible attractions to those explaining Porphyry. One can almost write the history of early medieval philosophy in terms of the various solutions that were offered to it over the centuries. Thomas Aquinas will give his solution to the problem by analyzing statements [10], [11] and [12].

If we should construct an argument, using [10] as a premise, we might get:

[10] Man is seated.

[10a] Plato is a man.

[10b] Plato is seated.

[10b] might be true, Plato might be sitting in his chair, but then again he might not be, and then [10b] is false. If it is true, it happens to be true; if it false, it happens to be false.

If we did the same thing with [12], the result would be different.

[12] Man is rational.

[12a] Socrates is a man.

[12b] Socrates is rational.

No problem. Why not? Rational is part of the definition of man and that of which the term can be predicated essentially will be such that the definition or its parts can be predicated of it. This is simply a way of expressing why the argument based on [12] strikes us as working, while that based on [10] makes us uneasy. We know that it isn't simply in virtue of being a man that it is true that Plato is seated. There are lots of people standing up. If any of them is seated -- or standing, for that matter -- this is true only incidentally of them insofar as they are human. This is clear, because one can be a man and be standing or not standing, seated or not seated.

If we construct a similar argument on [11], we now have some resources for assessing it.

[11] Man is a species.

[11a] Socrates is a man.

[11b] Socrates is a species.

[11b] is false if to be a species means that one is predicated of many numerically different things. Lots of individuals might receive the name "Socrates", but this fellow is not predicated of anyone or anything - other than himself, perhaps, "Socrates is Socrates." For all that, [11] is true. How should we understand it. When we said that [10] was true, we agreed only because it happened that some individual of that nature was seated, but this was not part and parcel of his nature. It was incidentally true of human nature that it is found in a seated individual. Something like that is the explanation of the truth of [11].

A species is something one that is common to many numerically different individuals. The nature is one as it is abstracted and known by a human intellect. We know many individuals intellectually in virtue of grasping their nature or essence. As it exists, the essence is always individuated: this instance of human nature or that, Plato or Socrates. The two men are really similar of course, for reasons having to do with physics and biology. In grasping their similarities, especially their essential similarity, the mind forms a notion which is signified by the common term "man." The many individuals are truly called men because the nature is truly found in them. But it is only one and distinct from the individuals as it is known. It is not numerically the same nature that is found in Socrates and Plato. The nature owes its unity, its abstraction from individuating notes and its predicability to the mind. These are true of it insofar as it is known by us. They are incidentally true of the nature. That means that "to be predicated of many" is not part of the essence of man. If it were, the argument we constructed on [11] would work and [11b] would be true. But it is false. The argument seeks to predicate of the individual something that is only incidentally true of the nature as it is known.

If we should say that words like "universal," "genus," "species" and the like are second-order words, whereas words like "Socrates," "man" and "seated" are first order terms,

we would know what we mean. First order terms stand for things as they are: they are, Thomas would accordingly say, *first intentional*. The second-order terms mentioned do not stand directly for things as they exist, but only as they are known, talked of, predicated, and the like. In the light of this, we can see why Thomas Aquinas sums up Aristotle's complaint against Plato by saying that the latter confused the order of being with our order of understanding.

Such considerations as these are part of the effort to understand substance as it is found in compound things. The point of the analysis, again, is to arrive at knowledge of separated substances. Such knowledge is said to be acquired on analogy with material substances. It is to that claim that we must now turn.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Read all of *On being and essence* which is Selection 3 in the Penguin *Selected Writings of Thomas Aquinas*.

Suggested Writing Assignment

What is the "problem of universals" and what is Thomas's solution to it?

Lesson 11: The Analogy of Being

There are two crucial places in metaphysics where the notion of analogy comes into play. We will discuss these in turn, clarifying what is meant by analogy as we do so.

The Subject of Metaphysics

Let us recall the difficulties that confronted Aristotle when he asserted that, beyond the special sciences, each of which studies a particular kind of being, there is a further science which studies being as being. The primary obstacle to this assertion is the fact that "being" seems simply too unwieldy, vague and wide-ranging to provide a sufficient focus for a science. Aristotle agreed, in the sense that he insists that the problem is overcome by the fact of the primacy of substance. Being in the primary sense is substance so a science of being can effectively become a science of substance.

While this is familiar enough to you by now, I want to revisit it by calling attention now to the way in which Aristotle and Thomas establish this result. Aristotle concedes -- indeed insists -- that "being is said in many ways," that is, it is a term that has a plurality of meanings. As opposed to what? When I predicate "man" of Socrates, Xanthippe and Galileo, I would understand the same thing in each assertion. The common term would have exactly the same meaning in each use. Terms so shared are called univocal

terms. We can sum this up in a definition. "Things are said to be named univocally which have both the name and the definition answering to the name in common." This is a quotation from the first chapter of Aristotle's *Categories*. But he has begun the discussion with another definition. "Things are said to be named equivocally when, though they have a common name, the definition corresponding with the name differs for each."

If I should say that there is a lock on my door, a lock on your forehead and a lock in the river, the common term "lock" exhibits Aristotle's definition of things named equivocally. The same would be true if I should say that when the boy stood on the burning deck he cut the deck or if I should speak of the key in my lock and one off the coast of Florida. Almost any dictionary entry of an English monosyllable will turn up such possibilities. There is nothing to be alarmed about in this, needless to say. To know the language is to know about the behavior of such words. It is true, however, that in an argument, recurring words have to bear the same meaning on penalty of committing the fallacy of equivocation. If I should speak of well-oiled locks you have to be on the *qui vive* lest I seek to conflate a security feature of doors and the golden hair that lies upon my lady's shoulder. Puns and verbal jokes depend upon such equivocation and we respond to them because we are both surprised and understand what is being done.

The fallacy of equivocation -- using a term in an argument with a number of meanings -- sums up the problem Aristotle faced. If "being" like "lock" and "key" have many meanings, it would look as if he has to choose one of them and stick with it, and then he won't be talking about being as being, but about being of the kind meant by a single meaning of the term.

The way out of these particular woods is suggested by thinking of the way in which "healthy" and "medical" are sometimes used. While we can easily imagine uses which would lead us to say that they are functioning univocally and others where they are functioning equivocally, there are uses such that we would hesitate to say either. If I say that Fido and Pluto and Bowser are healthy, and "healthy" gets the same meaning in each use, it is functioning univocally. But what about this list:

[1] Bowser is healthy.

[2] Gravy Train is healthy.

[3] A sleek coat is healthy.

All these sentences are true, but this is not the case because "healthy" means the same thing in each use. On the other hand, it would be odd to say that there is no more similarity between the meanings we might assign it and those we would assign "lock" and "key" in our earlier examples. We seem to have uses which exemplify neither univocal naming nor equivocal naming. This is what Aristotle refers to as "things said in many ways but with reference to something one." Sometimes he speaks of on-purpose equivocals. His suggestion is that the analysis of such common terms will provide us with a way of handling the difficulties we face when we want to have a science of being

as being. Thomas Aquinas calls names which behave in the way "healthy" does in the above list analogous names.

Such names are different from univocal and equivocal names -- indeed, they can be thought of as midway between them. They will be like equivocal terms in having a variety of meanings and they will be like univocal terms because this plurality is not destructive of unity. While there are indeed many meanings of an analogous term, those meanings are partly the same and partly different.

Thomas spells this out in the case of "healthy" by first noting that "healthy" is a concrete term which could be unpacked as: "that which has health." On this basis we can think of a kind of function of health Hx or a form like "_____ health" such that the several meanings of "healthy" represent different values of the variable x or different ways of filling in the blank. We could then restate our list as follows:

[1a] Bowser is the subject of health.

[2a] Gravy Train is preservative of health.

[3a] A sleek coat is indicative of health.

While the term "healthy" has this plurality of meanings as so used, they all involve health but differ in referring to it in a variety of ways.

Call that the first condition of a name's being used analogously. The second condition is this: one of those meanings is regulative or controlling of the others. That is, the many meanings of the common term form an ordered set, with one meaning primary and the others secondary. The meaning in [1a] is primary, something that can be seen by noting that while it is presupposed by other others, the verse is not true. When we say that a dog food is preservative of health, we may be taken to be saying *sotto voce* "preservative of health in the subject of health" and so too with [3a]. A sleek coat is indicative of health in the subject of health. Thomas will call this primary meaning the primary analogate of the shared term.

While "healthy" is the favorite example of both Aristotle and Thomas in this matter, it is of course the example of something that can be stated independently of it. Thomas proposes a second-order or logical language which captures what is true of "healthy" and states what is found in any analogous name.

"That which has health" = the *ratio nominis*, the meaning of the term. It is a second order term because it relates the meaning to a name, and that of course is not part of the meaning of the name.

"Health" = the *res significata*, the reality signified, the denominating form.

The blank or function of health = the *modus significandi*, the manner of signifying the denominating form.

With this terminology in hand, Thomas offers the following definitions:

...quando aliquid praedicatur univoce de multis, illud in quolibet eorum secundum propriam rationem invenitur, sicut *animal* in qualibet specie animalis. Sed quando aliquid dicitur analogice de multis, illud invenitur secundum propriam rationem in uno eorum tantum, a quo alia denominantur. Sicut *sanum*...

...something is predicated univocally of many things it is found in each of them according to its proper notion, as 'animal' is found in every species of animal. But when something is said analogically of many it is found according to its proper notion in one of them alone, from which the others are named. For example, 'healthy'...

Summa theologiae, I, 16.6.

The one and the same meaning signified by a common term when it is used univocally is here called its proper notion, that is, the combination of *res significata* and *modus significandi* the word usually bears. Thomas sometimes defines univocals in just that way: there is the same *res* and *modus* in the meaning of the name in each of its uses. By contrast, the analogous use of a term involves one *res significata* and several *modi significandi*. The first and controlling meaning is here called the *ratio propria*. It is a truth universally observed that when a term is used analogously, its proper notion, the primary analogate, is found in only one of the things named.

Being Is an Analogous Term

When "being" is used analogously it would have a plurality of meanings, one of which will be primary and controlling. Some such list as the following raises the problem.

[4] Substance is being.

[5] Size is being.

[6] Temperature is being.

Not sentences you might utter down at McDonald's perhaps, but the list is meant to make explicit a less unlikely list of statements:

[4a] Socrates is a substance.

[5a] Socrates is 5'9".

[6a] Socrates is warm.

In these sentences, various ways of being are attributed to Socrates and our initial list simply put those in the subject position. But "is substance", "is quantity", "is quality" and the like express the different modes of being which initially seemed to militate against a science of being as being.

If "being" is used analogously in such sentences, we can begin by unpacking the concrete term into "that which has existence." Then we fashion the function x Existence or "_____ existence." The *res significata* of being or *ens* is *esse* or existence. The *modi significandi* or the *modi essendi* will differ. One way of being, one mode of signifying existence will be primary and productive of the primary analogate or *ratio propria* of the term. It is because all other modes of being presuppose substantial being, but not vice versa, that substance emerges as the first and controlling meaning of the term. Thomas offers this as the *ratio propria entis* as it is predicated of substance: *that to which existence belongs in itself and not in another*. We recognize the account of substance we saw in both the *Categories* and in *Metaphysics 7*. Existence belongs to other things insofar as they relate in some way to substantial existence.

So it was that the analysis of so homely a term as "healthy" provided a second-order analysis which when applied to "being" overcame the principal objection against there being a science of being as being. Not everything that is is a substance, but whatever is is either a substance or related to it in some way that justifies calling it a being. Thus, in concentrating on substance, the metaphysician attends to that which is either meant when being is spoken of or is implied.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Selection 14, *Selected Writings of Thomas Aquinas*.

Suggested Writing Assignment

Compare univocal, equivocal and analogous terms, assigning the appropriate second-order or logical vocabulary to their elements.

Desideratum

You may want to read *Aquinas on Analogy*, published by the Catholic University of America Press in 1997.

Lesson 12: The Names of God

The previous lesson has explained how the doctrine of analogous names enabled Aristotle and Thomas to provide sufficient unity for a science of being as being. This initial application to the subject of the science opens the way for another crucial application. Can the term "substance" be analogically common to material and immaterial substance?

It is in pursuit of this -- and of course if such an ascent cannot be made, metaphysics fails -- that we find Aristotle subjecting material substance to a surprising analysis in Book Seven. We find him stressing a truth about material or composite substance. The form, matter and composite itself can be called "substance", but not univocally. The primary and controlling meaning of the term is form. So it is that we can say that form is more substance than is matter or the composite (the composite gets tugged down in the scale because it includes matter which is least deserving of the appellation substance).

Of itself -- that is, with reference to material substance itself -- this is of minor consequence. It is not as if the form of a composite substance could exist by itself and thus be itself a full-fledged substance -- that is, that which neither exists in nor is predicated of another. But if there should be substances beyond material substances, we now know that we can call them substances properly. The reason is that they will be subsistent forms. But of course, to undertake metaphysics is already to have proved that there are things beyond the physical that relate to them as cause to effect. Accordingly, the analysis we are alluding to is the quest for a better understanding of such separate things and the fashioning of a vocabulary to speak of them.

Speaking of God

The ultimate aim of metaphysics, as we have seen, is such knowledge of God as the human mind can acquire. Let us look at the way the doctrine of analogous names enables Thomas to give an account of the divine attributes. Those attributes are wisdom, justice, mercy, being, one, true, good, etc. etc. Thomas approaches the question by asking in effect how such a term as wise can be common to God and creature.

This is dictated by a truth that Thomas never tires of repeating. We name things as we know them, and what we first know and name are the sensible things around us. Knowledge of the world provides us with a vocabulary that we then apply even to living and mental activities, which are reflexively known insofar as we know the world. Thus we use the language of matter and form to speak of sensation and intellection as we saw in Lesson 5. And it is truths about the world which provide the premises for the argument that, given these truths about the world, there must be a first mover unlike any of the moved movers in the world. The slow and painstaking ascent from the things of this world to God is tracked by the language we employ to express the stages of that knowledge.

A corollary of this is that there is no language that is proper to God. Our knowledge of God is oblique, gained from knowledge of creatures, and it is the language expressing first our knowledge of creatures that is extended to talk about God. That is why the problem of the divine names is one of asking how names are common to God and creature. Whether it is God telling us about himself or man trying to achieve knowledge of God, in either case the language used is common to God and creature.

Thomas distinguishes three categories of divine names: the negative, the relative and the affirmative or positive. Negative terms like infinite, timeless and incorporeal deny of

God limiting features of his effects. Terms like Lord and Creator are said of God because of a real relation of creatures to him. We think of a relation going in the other direction, from God to creature, but this is merely due to our way of thinking. For God to be really related to something else would be for him to depend on that other thing, but this would be an imperfection and God is perfect being. It is the positive or affirmative terms to which the doctrine of analogous names applies. This can be discussed in terms of the following list:

[1] Socrates is wise.

[2] God is wise.

How does the recurrent term "wise" signify here? We reject the possibility that it is univocally common to God and his creature, for reasons that will emerge. Is it used equivocally? If this were so, there would be no relation between the two uses of the term. But surely God applies such terms to himself in order to tell us something about him. But how are we to understand [2].

Relying on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Thomas uses a three stage understanding of the affirmation:

[2] God is wise.

[2a] God is not wise

[2b] God is eminently wise.

The relation between [2] and [2a] should surprise, since it seems to express a clear contradiction. In order to see that it is not a contradiction, we make appeal to the second-order vocabulary devised to express the doctrine of analogous naming. [2] is true because it affirms the *res significata* of wise and [2a] is true because it denies the *modus significandi* the term has as applied to Socrates.

This enables us to see why a univocal understanding of [1] and [2] was rejected. If the term were univocally common to God and Socrates, it would have the same *res* and *modus* in both uses. But wisdom as Socrates has it is an incidental characteristic. There was a time before Socrates was wise although he was Socrates and it is conceivable that he should cease to be wise while remaining Socrates. When God is called wise, it is the perfection of wisdom we have in mind, not the limited way in which Socrates has it. Hence [2a].

This indicates why "wise" is said to be analogically common to God and Socrates. The first condition of analogous names is met. There is a plurality of meanings which are partly the same and partly different. The sameness is found in the *res significata*, the difference in the *modi significandi*. But what of the second condition according to which the plurality of meanings of the analogous term make an ordered set, one of which takes priority over the others? What is the primary analogate of "wise?"

If we ask ourselves what the controlling meaning of the term is, it is obviously the meaning as it applies to Socrates. It is from the meaning that we work variations in order to make the term applicable to God. What is prior in the meaning of the name, however, is not what is ontologically prior. Our wisdom is a sharing in, an effect, of God's wisdom, and ontologically a cause is prior to its effect. But we come to know and name the cause from knowledge of its effects, so there is of course a dependence in the order of naming of God on creatures. This reversal is clear when we look into [2b]. In the case of names shared analogously by creatures, we can express the secondary mode as well as the primary, but this is not possible in the case of God. This is why, in [2b] we admit that we cannot grasp the way the perfection is had by God. We know that it is not an incidental attribute, as it is with creatures. This means that we can equally well say

[3] God is wisdom

as that he is wise. But we can also say

[4] God is justice

[5] God is mercy

[6] God is truth

and so on. All these terms signify the same perfect being. Are they synonyms? This would be the case if they were imposed to signify from the perfections as found in God, where they are identical. But the words are fashioned to express a perfection found in creatures and in creatures justice and mercy and truth really differ.

God as Subsistent Existence

The plurality of divine names suggests that the only way we can express the divine being is by saying that God "is just", "is merciful" and so on, with his being signified by way of the plurality of perfections from which such names are formed. Thomas has a further suggestion to make, guided by what God told Moses when he asked how he should describe the one who was sending him. "Tell them that He who is has said this." God is being; not just this sort of being or that, but being in all its amplitude. Here is the route Thomas takes to clarifying that claim.

Thomas wrote a commentary on the work of Boethius' that was called *De hebdomadibus*. He does not here employ the kind of exposition he used when commenting on Boethius's *De trinitate*. That, we remember, involved a *divisio textus* or literal commentary followed by a discussion of questions raised by the text. The exposition of the *De hebdomadibus* stays close to the text but amounts to both an explication and the embracing of its contents.

This little work of Boethius's is sometimes called the first scholastic treatise. Boethius himself characterizes its method as mathematical. Having posed his question, he will

list a number of axioms and go on to develop an affirmative and negative answer to the question, after which he will resolve it and treat several corollaries. It is Thomas's discussion of the first axiom that interests us now. [You will find the exposition as selection 7 in *Thomas Aquinas Selected Writings*.]

Boethius's question is this: Is a thing good simply because it is? After explaining what is meant by an axiom, he gives this as the first: *diversum est esse et id quod est: to be and that which is are different*. This short sentence has generated an enormous amount of commentary but little agreement as to what it means and/or implies. Here is what Thomas says of it.

With respect to being, to be itself is considered something common and indeterminate, which is determined in two ways, first on the part of the subject, which has existence, and another way on the part of the predicate, as when we say of man, or of anything, not that it simply is, but that it is such and such, for example white or black.

Taking as his model "S is P", Thomas thinks of the infinitive to be [esse] as contracted in one way by the subject term and in another by the predicate. If we were to say simple "S is" this can be taken to stand for substantial existence, the existence of the subject. The predicate term, presuming the existence of the subject, adds incidental being to it. The substantial form is the measure of substantial existence as the accidental forms are of accidental existence. The infinitive to-be is made finite, determined, by form.

For a composite substance to exist is for its substantial form actually to inhere in its matter. To exist is not part of the essence or nature of the thing since if it were the thing it would exist necessarily. But composite beings are the very paradigm of contingent, that is, non-necessary being. Is simple substance, one that is subsistent form, not form in matter, necessary? Is the first axiom applicable to simple substance.

If we think of separate substances either on a Platonic or an Aristotelian model, we are confronted with forms which measure existence. "Therefore, if there should be found forms apart from matter, each of them is simple in that it lacks matter, and consequently quantity, which is a disposition of matter, nonetheless, because each form is determinative of to be itself, none of them is its own existence, but is something having existence." An angel is a pure form, but it is the form it is and its existence is measured according to that form. Thus it is a determinate kind or mode of existence -- Gabriel or Raphael or Michael. While simple in one sense, such entities are not wholly simple. They are in their way composite of form and existence, of to be and what is.

That will be truly simple which does not participate in existence as something inhering in it but is *subsistent existence*. But this can only be one. Because if existence itself has nothing added to itself besides existence, as has been said, it is impossible that that which is its own existence be multiplied by something diversifying it; and because it has nothing outside itself mixed with it, the consequence is that it is susceptible of no accident.

The suggestion is that if existence is, in the way displayed earlier, made finite and determinate by accidental and substantial forms, a simple substance -- one that has no matter -- will determine and restrict existence because of the form it has. For that form to subsist is of course the perfection of that thing, but its perfection is limited to the form it has. Now much the same thing, as we have seen, seems suggested by the plurality of divine attributes. Justice, mercy, truth, etc. are forms that determine and restrict existence. It is this we seek to go beyond when we say that God is subsistent existence. Not existence to this or that degree, but unlimited existence. It is as if we imagined to-be-just and to-be-merciful and to-be-true and all the other attributes to be returning to be coalescing in the infinitive to-be such that the infinite is no longer undetermined and undifferentiated but the fullness of all perfection.

The following passage discusses whether "He who is" is the most proper name of God.

Ad primum ergo dicendum quod hoc nomen *Qui est* est magis proprium nomen Dei quam hoc nomen *Deus*, quantum ad id a quo imponitur, scilicet ab esse, et quantum ad modum significandi et consignificandi, ut dictum est. Sed quantum ad id ad quod imponitur nomen ad significandum est magis proprium hoc nomen *Deus*, quod imponitur ad significandum naturam divinam. Et adhuc magis proprium nomen est Tetragrammaton, quod est impositum ad significandam ipsam Dei substantiam incommunicabilem, et, ut sic liceat loqui, singularem.

In reply to the first it should be said that this name "He who is" is a more proper name of God than the name "God" with respect to that from which it is imposed, namely, from existence, as well as with respect to its mode of signifying and consignifying. But with respect to that for which the name is imposed to signify, "God" which is imposed to signify the divine nature is the more proper. More proper still is the name Tetragrammaton which is imposed to signify God's incommunicable and, if it is permitted so to speak, singular substance.

Summa theologiae, I, 13, 11

With this subject -- our ability to speak about God -- we bring our introduction to metaphysics to a close. In the last year of his life, Thomas Aquinas had a vision after which he stopped writing. Everything that he had written now appeared to him, in comparison with what he had been allowed to glimpse, mere straw. The judgment, it should be stressed, is a comparative one. Still, considering the distance between Thomas and this poor effort to provide an introduction to his metaphysics, silence seems not merely desirable, but an obligation.

Suggested Reading Assignment

Selection 13, Selected Writings of Thomas Aquinas.

Suggested Writing Assignment

What is the distinction among divine names which are negative, relative and affirmative?