



**PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
IN URBE**

ANGELICUM

Faculty of Philosophy

PROF. ALESSANDRO SANMARCHI

Handouts* for the Course of

METAPHYSICAL THEOLOGY I

Second Semester
Anni Academici 2011-2012

*Please be aware that handouts are not intended as a complete exposition of course contents: only the main points and quotations will be included.

«Deum et animam scire cupio»

Saint Augustine of Hippo
Soliloquia, I, 2, 7

«In nullo alio quaerenda est
ultima felicitas quam in
operatione intellectus: cum
nullum desiderium tam in
sublime ferat sicut desiderium
intelligendae veritatis. [. . .]
Desiderium autem praedictum
non quiescit nisi ad summum
rerum cardinem et factorem
Deum pervenerit»

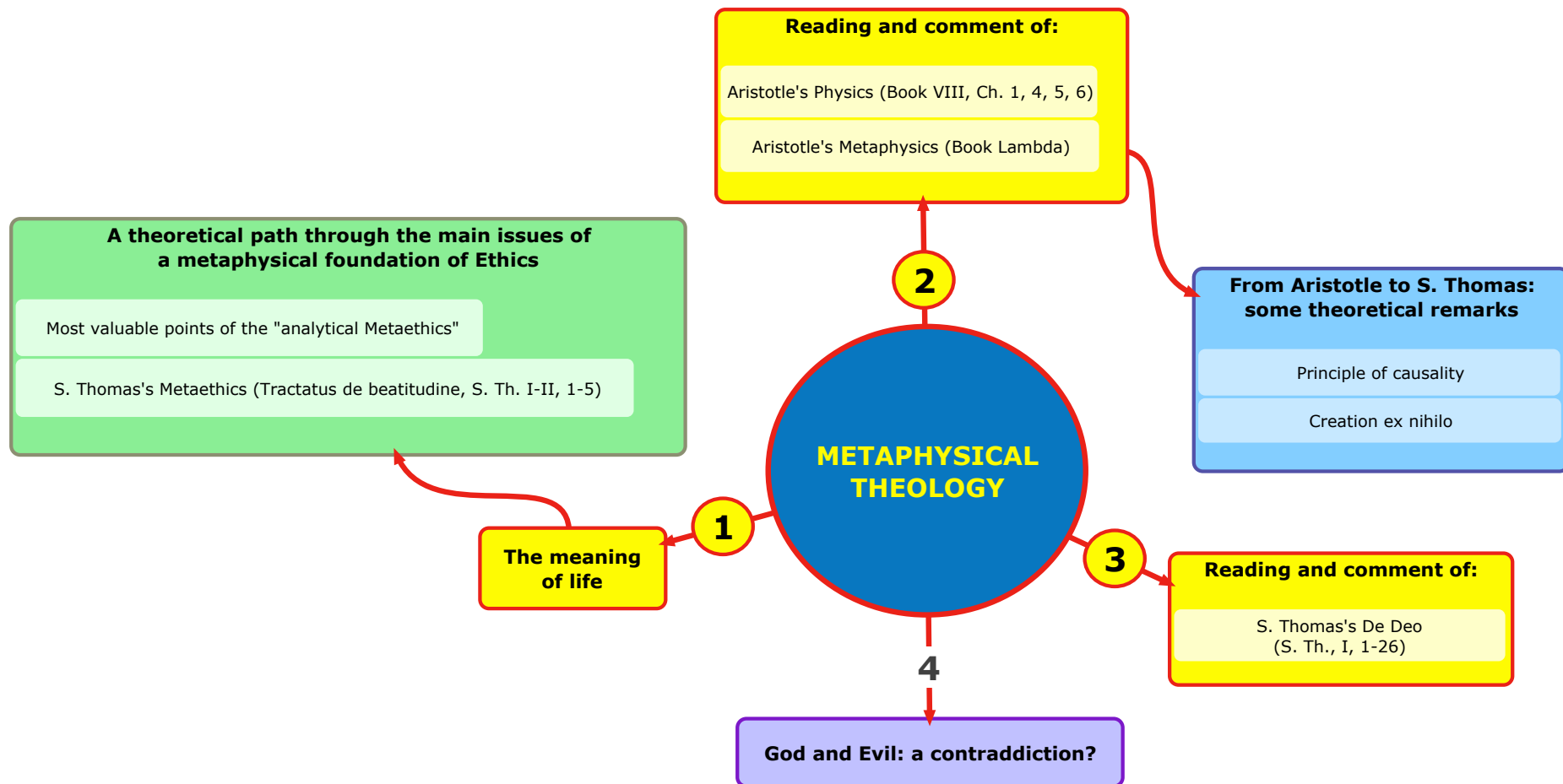
Saint Thomas Aquinas
Summa Contra Gentiles, III, 50

Contents

0.1	Mind Map 1: General Overview of Course Topics	1
1	Basic definitions and some dogmatic remarks	
1.1	Definitions	2
1.2	Saint Thomas «lumen Ecclesiae» and «apostolus veritatis»	4
1.3	Constitutio dogmatica <i>Dei Filius</i> (Conc. Vaticanum I: 24 Apr. 1870)	5
2	About the Meaning of Life	
2.1	Brief remarks about Idealism as the Philosophy of Romanticism VS Enlightenment	7
2.2	Mind Map 2: Existentialism and Analytic Philosophy as Reactions to Absolute Idealism	9
2.3	Meaning of life, Ethics, God	10
3	For a Metaphysical Foundation of Ethics	
3.1	Contributions of the Analytical Philosophy to an «Ontological Metaethics»	14
3.1.1	The «Is–Ought Question» (Hume’s law)	14
3.1.1.1	The «Foundational Interpretation» of the Mountain Range Effect	16
3.2	St. Thomas’s Moral Realism	17
3.3	The Aporia of the «Ontical Vacuity»	21
3.4	St. Thomas’s Metaethics: the <i>Tractatus De Beatitudine</i>	23
3.5	Mind Map 3: Overview of the five theoretical levels concerning the Is–Ought Question	32
3.6	Mind Map 4: Aristotelian-Thomistic Metaethics among Analytical Metaethics	33
4	Aristotle on Happiness and the Prime Mover	
4.1	Introduction: the Ultimate End	34
4.1.1	Aristotle VS Lawrence «the Magnificent»	37
4.2	The Prime Mover or Unmoved Mover (Physics, Book VIII)	38
4.2.1	Chapter 1 and Lectiones 1-3	38

4.2.2	Chapter 4 and Lectiones 7-8 – Whatever is moved is moved by another	47
4.2.3	Chapter 5 and Lectiones 9-11 – The Prime Mover . . .	49
4.2.4	Chapter 6 and Lectiones 12-13 – The eternity of the Prime Mover	55
5	St. Thomas's Metaphysical Theology	
5.1	Epistemological status of the Metaphysical Theology: <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , I, q. 2, articles 1–2	57
5.2	The five «ways» for demonstrating the existence of God . . .	61
5.2.1	Some remarks concerning the first way <i>from motion</i> (ex parte motus) of the <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i>	61
5.2.2	The five ways within the <i>Summa Theologiae</i>	62
5.3	Mind Map 5: General Structure of the <i>Summa Theologiae</i> . .	76
	References	77

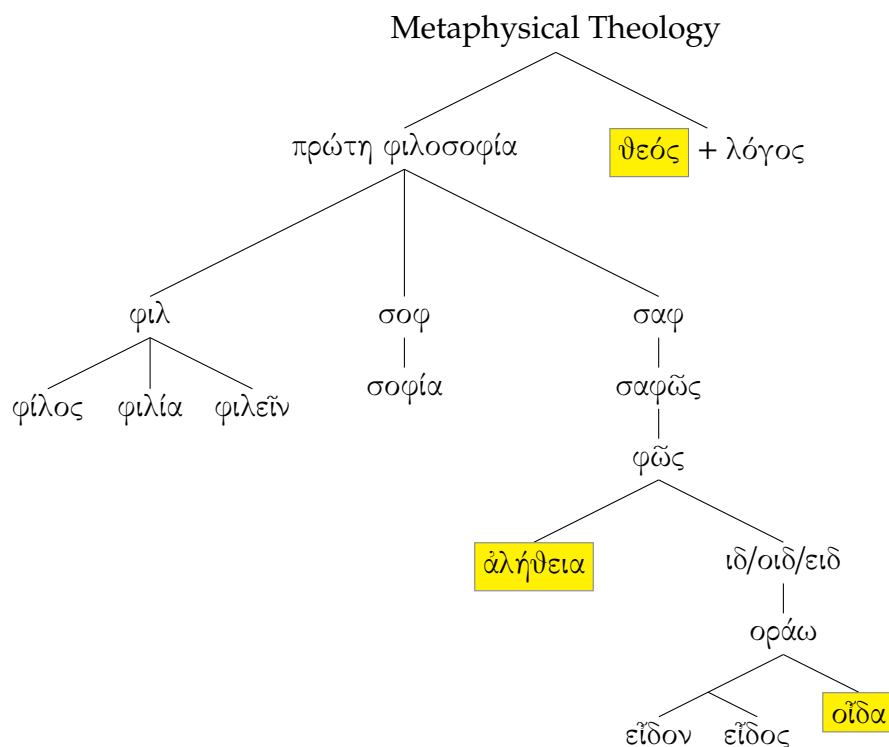
Overview of Course Main Topics



Unit 1

Basic definitions and some dogmatic remarks

1.1 Definitions



1. Metaphysical Theology

⇒ **Metaphysics** = τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά (tà metὰ tà phusiká = the things after the physical things = what comes after the *Physics*), a word coined by Andronicus of Rhodes. Aristotle was using other ex-

pressions for his Metaphysics: πρώτη φιλοσοφία (prôtē philosophía = primary **philosophy**) or theology too.

⇒ Theology = θεός (god) + λόγος (argument, discourse).

2. Philosophy = φιλοσοφία

⇒ φιλ ↦ φίλος (fílos) = dear, beloved; φιλία (filía) = friendship; φιλεῖν (fileîn) = to love, to take care of.

⇒ σοφ ↦ σοφία (sofía) = wisdom in a strict rational sense (= not concerning practical wisdom, but a theoretical knowledge of truth). A reference to **truth**, seen as «plain **light**», seems to be entailed in the same word stem «σοφ», because through an *apophony* it turns in the stem «σαφ» of «σαφῶς» (saphôs), an adverb meaning «evidently», «clearly» due to its reference to «φῶς» (light): σοφία is what is known in plain light, without ambiguity and so is true.

⇒ All of which seems to be a very consistent etymology, due to other two reasons.

- (a) The etymology of the word «ἀλήθεια» (alétheia = truth) means the state of not being hidden, that is to say the state of being highlighted (evident), because of having been disclosed ↦ α-λήθεια, where «α» = privative alpha and «λήθεια» comes from the verb «λανθάνειν» (lanthânein) = to hid.
- (b) Other Greek words related with knowledge like «εἶδος» (idea) come from the verb root ἰδ/οιδ/ειδ (from the sanscrit «vedah»), which in Greek is used both to form the aorist's tense stem (aorist II: εἶδ-ον) of the defective verb ὁράω (to see) and alone. When used alone, its perfect tense form (οἶδα) means «I know», assumed that what has been seen in the past is what is known in the present (I have seen, so I know). This etymology shows very well the realistic character of the Greek's culture, because intellectual truth and knowledge are conceived in analogy with the most valuable relation (sight) between our senses and the concrete reality.

Thus **Metaphysical Theology** means «primary philosophy as a **theoretical** discourse concerning God», which, due to the etymological analysis just done, may be also understood as «searching, loving or taking care of the highest light of truth, which is God». Something that corresponds to the «highest peak at which human investigation can arrive» like Saint Thomas clearly says at the beginning of his *Contra Gentiles*:

«[...] The highest peak at which human investigation can arrive, namely, the knowledge of God. [...] In order to know the things that

the reason can investigate concerning God, a knowledge of many things must already be possessed. For almost all of philosophy is directed towards the knowledge of God, and that is why metaphysics, which deals with divine things, is the last part of philosophy to be learned. This means that we are able to arrive at the inquiry concerning the aforementioned truth only on the basis of a great deal of labor spent in study» (C. Gent., I, 4).

1.2 Saint Thomas «lumen Ecclesiae» and «apostolus veritatis»

«St. Thomas saw it as his life's purpose to pursue the truth and serve it with all his powers and he carried out his mission in an extraordinary way by his teaching and his writing. His zeal won for him the well-deserved title "apostle of truth" and the privilege of being proposed to all the teachers of the world as their model. But beyond this he stands before us also as a marvellous example of the Christian scholar who, in his openness to the new forces shaping his age and his response to the new demands of a developing culture, thinks it in no wise necessary to abandon the path marked out by faith, tradition and the Magisterium. All of these, after all, bring him the riches of antiquity and bear the seal of divine truth. In remaining faithful to this divine truth the Christian scholar does not reject the truths which reason has uncovered in the past or the present for he knows (as the Angelic Doctor tells us) that the truth whoever may speak it, originates in the Holy Spirit: "Every truth, no matter who utters it, is from the Holy Spirit, since he bestows the natural power of knowing and moves the person to understand and express the truth"¹. Thomas's deep roots in divine faith also kept him from ever being a slavish follower of human teachers, ancient or modern. Even Aristotle is no exception. St. Thomas's mind was certainly open to all truth, from whatever doctrinal source it might come; that is a first element in his universalism. But there is a second, equally important, that perhaps shows his personal genius even more clearly: the supreme freedom with which he approached all authors, refusing to let himself be overawed by the statements of any earthly authority. This liberty and independence of mind in philosophy is a mark of his real greatness as a thinker. His first concern in philosophy was the truth and his judgement on any opinion was based "not on the authority of the speaker but on the reasons given for the position"².

¹«Omne verum, a quocumque dicatur, est a Spiritu Sancto sicut ab infundente naturale lumen, et movente ad intelligendum et loquendum veritatem» (S. Th., I-II, 109, 1, ad 1).

²«[...]in quantum sacra doctrina utitur philosophicis documentis propter se, non recipit ea propter auctoritatem dicentium, sed propter rationem dictorum» (Super Boetium De Trinitate, I-II, 109, 1, ad 1).

Consequently, he was completely free in dealing with the views of Aristotle, Plato and others and never became an Aristotelian or a Platonist in any strict sense of these terms» (Paolo VI 1974, I, 10-11).

1.3 **Constitutio dogmatica Dei Filius (Conc. Vaticanum I: 24 Apr. 1870)**

1. Dogmatic value (strict infallibility is here implied) of the document, due to its *Proemium*:

«[...] Nunc autem, sedentibus Nobiscum et iudicantibus universi orbis episcopis, in hanc oecumenicam Synodum auctoritate Nostra in Spiritu Sancto congregatis, innixi Dei Verbo scripto et tradito, prout ab Ecclesia catholica sancte custoditum et genuine expositum accepimus, ex hac Petri cathedra in conspectu omnium salutarem Christi doctrinam profiteri et declarare constituimus, adversis erroribus potestate Nobis a Deo tradita proscriptis atque damnatis».

«[...] But now it is our purpose to profess and declare from this chair of Peter before all eyes the saving teaching of Christ, and, by the power given us by God, to reject and condemn the contrary errors. This we shall do with the bishops of the whole world as our co-assessors and fellow-judges, gathered here as they are in the Holy Spirit by our authority in this ecumenical council, and relying on the word of God in Scripture and tradition as we have received it, religiously preserved and authentically expounded by the Catholic Church».

2. About our very point:

«**Eadem sancta mater Ecclesia tenet et docet, Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali humanae rationis lumine e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse**; “invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur” [Rm 1, 20]: attamen placuisse eius sapientiae et bonitati, alia eaque supernaturali via se ipsum ac aeterna voluntatis suae decreta humano generi revelare, dicente Apostolo: “Multifariam multisque modis olim Deus loquens patribus in Prophetis: novissime diebus istis locutus est nobis in Filio” [Hb 1, 1s; can. 1]. Huic divinae revelationi tribuendum quidem est, **ut ea, quae in rebus divinis humanae rationi per se impervia non sunt, in praesenti quoque generis humani condicione ab omnibus expedite, firma certitudine et nullo admixto errore cognosci possint**»³ (DH 3004).

³St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 1 (Editio Leonina 4, 6b).

«The same Holy mother Church holds and teaches that God, the source and end of all things, can be known with certainty from the consideration of created things, by the natural power of human reason: “ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” [Rm 1, 20]. It was, however, pleasing to his wisdom and goodness to reveal himself and the eternal laws of his will to the human race by another, and that a supernatural, way. This is how the Apostle puts it: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son” [Heb 1, 1-2]. It is indeed thanks to this divine revelation, that those matters concerning God which are not of themselves beyond the scope of human reason, can, even in the present state of the human race, be known by everyone without difficulty, with firm certitude and with no intermingling of error».

- (a) «Si quis dixerit, Deum unum et verum, creatorem et Dominum nostrum, per ea, quae facta sunt, naturali rationis humanae lumine certo cognosci non posse: anathema sit» (DH 3026).

«If anyone says that the one, true God, our creator and lord, cannot be known with certainty from the things that have been made, by the natural light of human reason: let him be anathema».

- (b) «Si quis dixerit, fieri non posse aut non expedire, ut per revelationem divinam homo de Deo cultuque ei exhibendo doceatur: anathema sit» (DH 3027).

«If anyone says that it is impossible, or not expedient, that human beings should be taught by means of divine revelation about God and the worship that should be shown him: let him be anathema».

3. The previous first and final statements at point 2 are quoted in the *Constitutio Dogmatica Dei Verbum* (18 Nov. 1965) of the Conc. Vaticanum II (DH 4206).

Unit 2

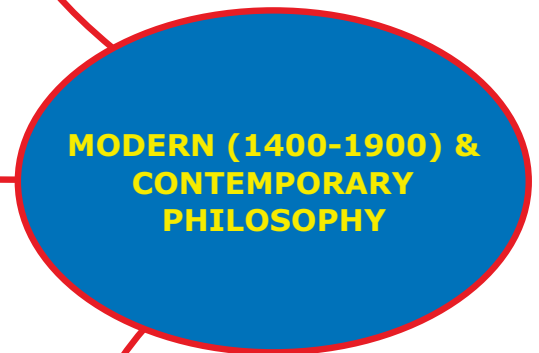
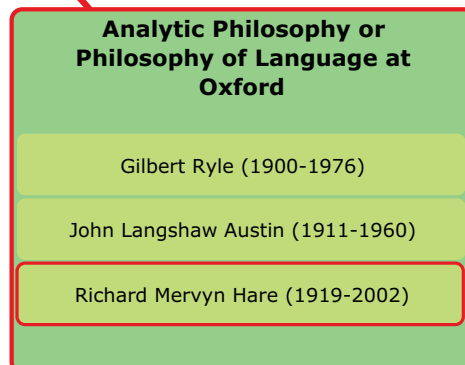
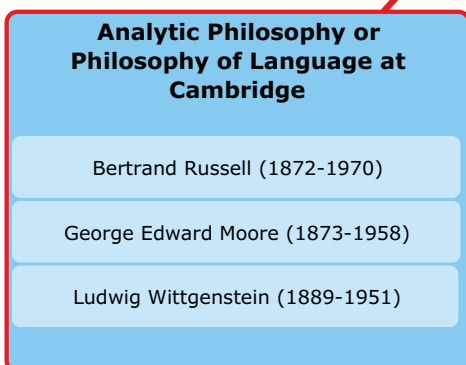
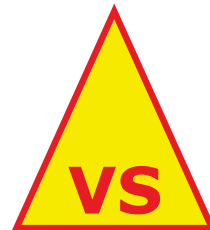
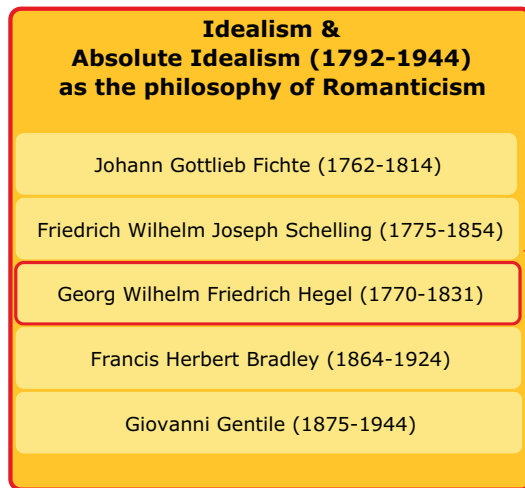
About the Meaning of Life

2.1 Brief remarks about Idealism as the Philosophy of Romanticism VS Enlightenment

1. Enlightenment Reason = pure naturalistic reason, excluding the existence of a metaphysical level of reality (= atheistic materialism) or excluding the possibility to grasp it (= agnosticism of theoretical reason: Kant).
 - (a) Thus here we have an «excluding» reason.
2. Idealistic Reason (Hegel) = intended as Spirit (pure thought), through a dialectical auto-movement (triadic «*exitus-reditus*» process) of necessary progress, human reason become aware of being the Absolute Spirit.
 - (a) Triadic «*exitus-reditus*» process = (I) «*Aufhebung*» (overcoming) of the «Abstract moment» (the «staying in itself» moment of the Spirit) passing through (II) the «Negative moment» (the «going out of itself» moment of the Spirit, which is also the moment of the double negation, because the *negative determination*¹ of the Abstract is overcome, and so «denied», by the Spirit's movement), for reaching (III) the «Concrete moment», where the Spirit is come back to (a superior) itself.
 - (b) Reason here absorbs everything within itself = no «*Gegenstand*» (*gegen* = against, *stand* = standing $\mapsto$ the thing standing against the observer = object) = a sort of «eating» reason.

¹Spinoza was saying that «*omnis determinatio est negatio*» (every determination corresponds to a denial), because to be «A» is to be a determinate state of being that entails «not-being» all the remaining reality.

- (c) Each of these passages is a necessary one = necessity of the different passages of history = idolatry of the State = Totalitarianism



2.3 Meaning of life, Ethics, God

The radical tone of Albert Camus's existentialism is a sound recall to the element that has always been subtended and has given unity to the different aspects of philosophical research: the question concerning the **meaning of human life**.

«There isn't but one philosophical matter really serious: suicide. *To judge whether life is worth living or not is to answer the main question of philosophy.* Everything else, if the world has three dimensions or the spirit has nine or ten categories, comes after. These are games; first it is necessary to answer. And if it's true, as Nietzsche maintained, that to deserve to be held in high esteem a philosopher has to preach by setting an example, it is easy to understand the importance of such an answer, because this answer would precede the final deed. [...] I see many people dying because they think life is not worth living. Paradoxically, I see others who prefer to be killed for the ideas or the illusions that give them a reason for living (what is called reason for living is at the same time an excellent reason for dying). *Therefore I judge that the meaning of life is the most urgent question of all*» (*The Myth of Sisyphus*, English translation of: Camus 1997a, p. 99).

Such a question is the basis, at least implicit, for any philosophical approach to the foundations of reality, because any conception of the being (whether the being of the universe, as for presocratic philosophers, or the material-metaphysical being of platonic socraticism, aristotelism and christian philosophy, or the purely material or purely idealistic being of certain currents of modern philosophy) includes a placing of the human being and therefore also a certain vision of his perfect fulfilment (from which simply ensues *ethics*, that is to say the «guiding lines» (for our everyday actions) to be followed for reaching the perfect fulfilment).

Empiric sciences can investigate reality lacking a direct reference to the meaning of human life, but this is not the case of philosophy, which by nature develops (itself) according to a prospect of investigation which is global and ultimate. In other words, the need to understand the causes and therefore the final meaning of reality (need in which consists philosophizing) necessarily entails in its carrying into effect also the rising of a specific meaning for human life, without which research itself would lack its propulsive element: the wonder before the being (which, according to Plato and Aristotle, is the reason for philosophizing) couldn't lead to rational research, if it didn't structurally imply also a reference to the meaning of human life.

The problem concerning the meaning of human life therefore involves both

theory and existential praxis, because to find out what man is, is also to discover the meaning of the growing movement that belongs to him, that is to understand if there is, and which one it is, the preferential direction towards which every man, as such, should direct his development and his maturation. In other words the problem concerning the meaning of life is strictly connected to the one of the foundations of morality (ethics), that is to the question whether there is a future way for man to be, which would be, in preference to all the others possible, morally compulsory.

All this implies the answer to a series of theoretical matters, of which the main two are with no doubt the one on the existence of God and the one on the immortality of human soul.

In particular, developing what I've called «a theoretical path through the main issues of a metaphysical foundation of Ethics», we shall see that the existence of God is the only rational chance to found ethics, giving therefore a meaning to human life; and therefore that the logical coherence, deriving from an atheistic position, can only correspond to what the philosophies of the absurd of Sartre and Camus explicitly asserted: if God and an immortal soul do not exist, everything is allowed (that is, there is no difference between good and evil) and human life is absurd (meaningless).

A conclusion, this, of enormous relevance at least for three reasons.

1. At a first general level it will be necessary to realize that without God it is not possible to *rationally* find any type of individual, social or political choice. Leaving God out of consideration, any ethical view can't but reduce itself to pure irrationalism (voluntarism, sentimentalism, pagan-naturalistic mysticism) or to a mere contractualistic formalism. Hence with respect to a real theoretical foundation of ethics what remains to be said, couldn't be better explained than through Camus's words:

«Awareness of the absurd, when we first claim to deduce a rule of behaviour from it, makes murder seem a matter of indifference, to say the least, and hence possible. If we believe in nothing, if nothing has any meaning and if we can affirm no values whatsoever, then everything is possible and nothing has any importance. There is no pro or con: the murderer is neither right nor wrong. We are free to stoke the crematory fires or to devote ourselves to the care of lepers. Evil and virtue are mere chance or caprice. [...] Since nothing is either true or false, good or bad, our guiding principle will be to demonstrate that we are the most efficient, in other words, the strongest. Then the world will no longer be divided

into the just and the unjust, but into masters and slaves» (*The Rebel*, English translation of: Camus 1997b, p. 415).

- (a) These are not words applicable only to the political dictatorships of the last century. They're perfectly representative of nowadays **relativistic** mass democracies, where, lost the theoretical principle of a necessary relationship between knowledge and an objective reality (= truth = *adaequatio rei et intellectus* = equation or adequation of things and intellect), on behalf of a pure «subjectivistic and individualistic perception» of things, the moral principles of **natural law** one after the other are consequently falling into nonsense for people. Finally, whatever goes under the category of «individual right» is assuming always more clearly the character of a *subjectivistic law system* imposed by the strongest, as it happens with the modern laws concerning divorce, where the individual rights of parents prevail over children's rights, or concerning abortion, where claimed «women rights» override even child's right to life. Thus the notion of *individual right* isn't but the claim of asserting one's will/wish/desire/opinion with no relation to an objective reality (= voluntarism), because finally everything is intended as changing, as liquid (πάντα ῥεῖ, *pánta reî* = everything flows – Heraclitus –) and so reality is at men's disposal.
- (b) Needing to be noticed: to say «natural law» it's not equivalent to saying «natural rights» (*rights* in the plural), because the two expressions make reference to very different philosophical traditions. The first doctrine comes from the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, whereas the latter comes from the modern liberalistic tradition (Grozius, Pufendorf, Locke, Hobbes). **Natural law** $\mapsto$ moral rules known by human reason because of its subduedness to the final end of human nature. The final end, which is common to the whole humanity as such, hence at a political level become the «common good or weal» of the society. **Natural rights** $\mapsto$ what is common here to human nature is on one hand the fear of a violent death (Hobbes) or of hunger and on the other the aspiration after accomplishment of one's own individualistic needs or desires (which are not necessary related with a common view of what makes sense of human life). Consequently a good political order is not any more the one concerned about guiding individuals to the accomplishment of the final and common end of their nature, but the one concerned about defeating fears, making hence possible the realization of individualistic (= subjectivistic) needs or desires.

2. With respect to Metaphysical Theology the above conclusion, though it could not be considered a direct proof of God's existence, nevertheless is the closest introduction to any account of God's existence, because to demonstrate that God, if existent, would be the only one who could give meaning to human life (and to the universe), corresponds to state the (hypothetical) necessity that rationality itself is an intrinsic quality of reality (to give sense to something is to put it into a rational order). If existent, in fact, God, who is the Pure Act and Creator of everything, is also the infinite intelligence first cause of everything. Thus if from another point of view is actually possible to account for the rationality of the universe, then to conclude to the existence of God as the intelligent first cause of everything, would not be any more a simple hypothesis, but at least a probable truth (*intelligent design*).
3. Saint Thomas Aquinas himself has strictly linked the foundation of moral philosophy to God as the final end of human nature. This is particularly evident in his *Tractatus de beatitudine* (S. Th. I-II, 1-5).

Unit 3

For a Metaphysical Foundation of Ethics

3.1 Contributions of the Analytical Philosophy to an «Ontological Metaethics»

3.1.1 The «Is–Ought Question» (Hume’s law)

1. Hume’s original text:

«I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation, which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, it is necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceived by reason» (Hume 1739, Book III, Part I, I).

2. The «Mountain Range Effect» (probably the best formulation of Hume's law in the form of an Open Question Argument):

«When the empiricist – as his language so often suggest that he is doing – simply identifies goodness with any such factual characteristic as pleasantness, or when he reduces a normative statement to a descriptive assertion, there arises, according to his critics, a particularly worrisome predicament which we may call the Mountain Range Effect in ethics. If the empiricist defines the intrinsically good as the pleasant, so it is asserted, we can always ask him, “Yes, but is this a good pleasure?” or “Is it good to seek pleasure?”. If the empiricist says that “x is right” means that “x will harmonize the interests of all concerned” or “x will lead to the maximum of happiness” the rejoinder is: “But is it always right to seek harmony (or happiness)?”. Since such questions do not seem to be mere meaningless tautologies, the critic concludes that the empiricist in his definitions and analyses is begging the question, and that in attempting to explain the normative he is leaving out its essential characteristic. *Whatever reply the empiricist makes to such question, he must either characterize the normative further in descriptive terms – in which case a new normative question can be asked – or else he smuggles a normative term into his analysis without admitting it.* Just as the mountain climber in trying to cross the Alps or the Rockies struggles to the top of a ridge only to see another and higher range looming before him, and conquers that only in order to be confronted by still another range, and so on indefinitely; likewise with the empiricist in trying to subdue normative expressions. *Behind every factual meaning to which he claims to have reduced the meaning of a value term, there looms up a new value to be accounted for; after every resolution of the “ought” into an “is”, the empiricist seems to be confronted by a new “ought”, and so he appears to be enmeshed in a hopeless regress.* The Alps rise ever higher and higher, and by this route, it is claimed, we can never pass over the watershed to descend to the flatland in possession of a workable theory which would enable us to dispense with further theoretical problems and get on with the practical business of living. The empiricist, if his critics are right, is condemned to an ever wilder debauch in the winter resort country of meta-ethics, and forced to befuddle himself with ever more heady stimulants, until finally he must collapse and be enveloped by the eternal snows» (Rice 1955, pp. 45-47).

3.1.1.1 The «Foundational Interpretation» of the Mountain Range Effect

If instead of these kinds of questions a real foundational one is repeatedly asked, then the argument of the Mountain Range Effect reaches its strongest version: «Why are you defining the intrinsically good as the pleasant?»; «Which are the reasons that make this definition a true one?».

Whatever answer may follow, it will be a statement (or a sequence of statements) that, if expressed in pure descriptive terms, will always imply at least a normative term. That's always the case, because it's not possible to invoke a descriptive remark, in justifying a previous normative sentence, without ascribing normative value to the state of affairs indicated by the descriptive statement.

Let us consider this example of dialogue between person A and person B.

A: «It's a good thing to stop at a red lamp»;

B: «Why should be a good thing to stop at a red lamp?»;

A (descriptive sentence): «Otherwise serious car crashes may occur and people involved might be seriously injured too»;

B: «And why to avoid risks of getting injured should be considered a good thing?»;

A (descriptive sentence): «Because nobody desires to suffer and to die»;

B: «And why avoiding sufferings and death should be a good thing?»;

A (descriptive sentence): «Because all living beings naturally tend to survive both as individuals and as species»;

B: «And why observing one's own laws of nature would be a good thing (if it is possible, like *de facto* at least in some cases it is, to go beyond and against laws of nature)?».

Thus every answer of A only apparently is a pure factual or descriptive one, because it is not possible to avoid the disclosure of the implied normative term, due to the following question posed by B.

If no entailment (between the descriptive sentence and an implied normative term) had to be supposed, then every new (and always more universal) descriptive explication tried by person A, instead of representing a possible foundation of the moral statement for which it was invoked, at the contrary

would simply deprive it of any ethical relevance: in fact, if the risk of getting injured by crossing with red lamp were neither a good thing nor a bad one, then it would be possible to take one or the other of the two opposite decisions (crossing or not crossing) with the greatest indifference or even by chance or just on the base of our personal preferences.

3.2 St. Thomas's Moral Realism

The theoretical upshot deriving from the correct formulation of the Hume's law seems to consist in an irreducible distinction between ontical and moral language, so that their phenomenological connection finally appears an illusion on a strict theoretical level, something incapable of being accounted for both logically and philosophically. And if we weren't able to justify that kind of connection on a realistic basis, that would immediately lead to subjectivistic theories of morals and even to forms of absolute relativism.

However on the other hand it seems that we can appeal to St. Thomas's moral Realism, which is suitable of an immediate approach due to its analysis of the goodness in moral actions:

Question Title: OF THE GOOD AND EVIL OF HUMAN ACTS IN GENERAL (*S. Th.*, I-II, 18)

First Article Title: Whether every human action is good, or are there evil actions?

It seems that (*Videtur quod*): every human action is good, and that none is evil.

I answer that (*Respondeo*): «We must speak of good and evil in actions as of good and evil in things: because such as everything is, such is the act that it produces. **Now in things, each one has so much good as it has being: since good and being are convertible**, as was stated in the FP [Q. 5, A. 1, 3; Q. 17, A. 4, ad 2]. **But God alone has the whole plenitude of His Being in a certain unity** [Solus autem Deus habet totam plenitudinem sui esse **secundum aliquid unum et simplex**]: whereas every other thing has its proper fullness of being in a certain multiplicity [unaquaeque vero res alia habet plenitudinem essendi sibi convenientem **secundum diversa**]. Wherefore it happens with some things, that they have being in some respect, and yet they are lacking in the fullness of being due to them. **Thus the fullness of human being requires a compound of soul and body, having all the powers and instruments of knowledge and movement**: wherefore if any man be

lacking in any of these, he is lacking in something due to the fullness of his being. **So that as much as he has of being, so much has he of goodness: while so far as he is lacking in goodness, and is said to be evil:** thus a blind man is possessed of goodness inasmuch as he lives; and of evil, inasmuch as he lacks sight. That, however, which has nothing of being or goodness, could not be said to be either evil or good. But since this same fullness of being is of the very essence of good, if a thing be lacking in its due fullness of being, it is not said to be good simply [*simpliciter*], but in a certain respect [*secundum quid*], inasmuch as it is a being; although it can be called a being simply, and a non-being in a certain respect, as was stated in the FP [Q. 5, A. 1, ad 1]. **We must therefore say that every action has goodness, in so far as it has being; whereas it is lacking in goodness, in so far as it is lacking in something that is due to its fullness of being; and thus it is said to be evil:** for instance if it lacks the **quantity determined by reason**, or its due place, or something of the kind».

Objection 1: «For Dionysius says (Div. Nom. IV) that evil acts not, save in virtue of the good. But no evil is done in virtue of the good. Therefore no action is evil».

Reply: «**Evil acts in virtue of deficient goodness.** For if there were nothing of good there, there would be neither being nor possibility of action. On the other hand if good were not deficient, there would be no evil. Consequently the action done is a deficient good, which is good in a certain respect [*secundum quid*], but simply [*simpliciter*] evil».

Objection 2: «Further, nothing acts except in so far as it is in act. Now a thing is evil, not according as it is in act, but according as its potentiality is void of act; whereas in so far as its potentiality is perfected by act, it is good, as stated in Metaph. IX. Therefore nothing acts in so far as it is evil, but only according as it is good. Therefore every action is good, and none is evil».

Reply: «Nothing hinders a thing from being in act in a certain respect, so that it can act; and in a certain respect deficient in act, so as to cause a deficient act. Thus a blind man has in act the power of walking, whereby he is able to walk; but inasmuch as he is deprived of sight he suffers a defect in walking by stumbling when he walks».

Objection 3: «Further, **evil** cannot be a **cause**, save **accidentally**, as Dionysius declares (Div. Nom. IV). But every action has some effect which is proper to it. Therefore no action is evil, but every action is good».

Reply: «An evil action can have a **proper effect**, according to the goodness and being that it has. Thus adultery is the cause of human generation, inasmuch as it implies union of male and female, but not inasmuch as it lacks the **order of reason**».

Here we have a first approach to what good and evil are in human actions by introducing the general notions of good and evil: 1) «goodness» is a synonymous of «being», whereas 2) «evilness» corresponds to the lack of one's own «**debita** plenitudo essendi» (**due** fullness of being).

1. Concerning God we don't have to speak of a «due» fullness of being (*debita plenitudo essendi*), but of a fullness (of being) which is something one and simple = not composed in any sense (in particular not composed of the real distinction between being and essence, *esse et essentia*) = Infinite Act of being = such as doesn't have to become something which already is not = perfection (no movement of perfecting) = God is moral in the only sense that he is already perfect and so not in the sense in which creatures should be: moving, without deficiencies in their actions (= goodness), in the direction of the final end suitable for their specific nature.
2. Creatures $\implies$ *simpliciter* being (substance) = goodness *secundum quid* (*substantialis bonitas*) and being *secundum quid* (accidents) = *simpliciter* goodness (*bonitas completa vel absoluta*). To better understand these distinctions is worth reading the question devoted by St. Thomas to the clarifying of goodness in general.

Question Title: OF GOODNESS IN GENERAL (*S. Th.*, I, 5)

First Article Title: Whether goodness and being are the same really

It seems that (*Videtur quod*): goodness differs really from being.

I answer that (*Respondeo*): «Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea; which is clear from the following argument. The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable. Hence the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* I): "Goodness is what all desire". Now it is clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire **their own** perfection. But **everything is perfect so far as it is actual**. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual, as is clear from the foregoing [Q. 3, A. 4; Q. 4, A. 1]. Hence it is clear that goodness and being are the same really. But goodness presents the aspect of desirableness, which being does not present».

Objection 1: «For Boethius says (De Hebdom.): “I perceive that in nature the fact that things are good is one thing: that they are is another”. Therefore goodness and being really differ».

Reply: «Although goodness and being are the same really, nevertheless since they differ in thought, they are not predicated of a thing absolutely in the same way. Since being properly signifies that something actually is, and actuality properly correlates to potentiality; a thing is, in consequence, said simply to have being, accordingly as it is primarily distinguished from that which is only in potentiality; and this is precisely each thing’s substantial being. Hence by its substantial being, everything is said to have being simply; but by any further actuality it is said to have being relatively. Thus to be white implies relative being, for to be white does not take a thing out of simply potential being; because only a thing that actually has being can receive this mode of being. But goodness signifies perfection which is desirable; and consequently of ultimate perfection. Hence that which has ultimate perfection is said to be simply good; but that which has not the ultimate perfection it ought to have (although, in so far as it is at all actual, it has some perfection), is not said to be perfect simply nor good simply, but only relatively. In this way, therefore, viewed in its primal (i.e. substantial) being a thing is said to be simply, and to be good relatively (i.e. in so far as it has being) but viewed in its complete actuality, a thing is said to be relatively, and to be good simply. Hence the saying of Boethius (De Hebdom.), “I perceive that in nature the fact that things are good is one thing; that they are is another”, is to be referred to a thing’s goodness simply, and having being simply. Because, regarded in its primal actuality, a thing simply exists; and regarded in its complete actuality, it is good simply—in such sort that even in its primal actuality, it is in some sort good, and even in its complete actuality, it in some sort has being».

Objection 2: «Further, nothing can be its own form. “But that is called good which has the form of being”, according to the commentary on *De Causis*. Therefore goodness differs really from being».

Reply: «Goodness is a form so far as absolute goodness signifies complete actuality».

Objection 3: «Further, goodness can be more or less. But being cannot be more or less. Therefore goodness differs really from being».

Reply: «Again, goodness is spoken of as more or less according to a thing’s superadded actuality, for example, as to knowledge or

virtue».

3.3 The Aporia of the «Ontical Vacuity»

The appeal to St. Thomas's moral Realism, which has a strong connection with ontology and with philosophical anthropology, seems to give, in despite of Hume's law, a complete account of the phenomenon of morality: man finds in the tendency to the final end of his nature the basic rule by which, both on a biological and on a spiritual level, moral reason can, first, «become aware»¹ of natural law and, second, adapt it to the great variety of concrete moral situations.

But is this all really enough to give the final account of moral obligation? Is the *pure* fact of an existing human nature (with its laws) the most important fact, able to make sense of human life? The answer has much to do with the cause of such an oriented reality (everything is finalized in reason of the existing natures = **Finalism**: «*omne agens agit propter finem*»)².

If everything were existing purely by chance (= not intelligent first cause)³, would it be morally compelling to respect natural laws (even when we have the possibility, due to our freedom, to act against them)? In other words, if our human nature were the result of a casual aggregation of atoms, why should we feel at all compelled to respect the needs of those

¹«Become aware» is here intended as a general expression that has to be specified with respect to the two different areas of reality to which natural law refers: the biological one, which man has in common with the animals, and the one proper to man, which is the spiritual one. Speaking in defence of marriage St. Thomas claims that love affairs occurring out of marriage are wrong not because they are against the right order of the biological laws of nature which control procreation, but only because they're against the rational order that natural law expresses with respect to the higher part of human essence. In fact human (spiritual) education («*instructio quantum ad animam*» = education concerning the soul), unlike the kind proper to other animals, requires a definitive stability of the relation between the two parents (see *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Cap. 172 and followings).

²«Sicut autem ens est primum quod cadit in apprehensione simpliciter, ita bonum est primum quod cadit in apprehensione practicae rationis, quae ordinatur ad opus: omne enim agens agit propter finem, qui habet rationem boni. Et ideo primum principium in ratione practica est quod fundatur supra rationem boni; quae est: bonum est quod omnia appetunt» (*S. Th.*, I-II, 94, 2)

³We are now formulating again the fundamental question according to a very general terminology, valuable also for people who don't recognize a metaphysical *status* to human soul and thereafter not even the necessity of there being an intelligent first cause. Doing so, our answer will not need to assume immediately (before better considering St. Thomas's thought in the next paragraph) a metaphysical anthropology, so that it could be considered valuable in the wider sense (even for atheists).

atoms (if perhaps, for any motive, we want and can act against those kind of natural requirements)?

Let's try to justify the negative answer to those questions (= under those conditions there would be no moral obligation) in a systematic way.

Hypothesis 1: God doesn't exist, hence everything: (a) exists by chance, that is chance is the first not intelligent and not free, but not absolutely necessitated (= probabilistic laws of nature), cause of everything; or (b) derives from an absolute necessitated first cause (not intelligent, not free, not probabilistic); or (c) comes from an intelligent first cause that, however, is not the Infinite Act of Being (= God = infinitely Intelligent and morally Infallible).

Hypothesis 2: There are moral evidences (by means of intuition or knowledge of reality or feelings, etc.) of the form: $\exists x \exists p (Rp \wedge \hat{E}(x, Bp))$ = Exists an x and exists a p such that p is a state of affairs and is evident to x that p is good; where: x = human being, $\hat{E}$ = «having as evident», R = to be a thing (*res*) or a state of affairs, B = to be good⁴.

Thesis (demonstrandum): It is meant to be demonstrated that by **only** having as evident the goodness of a determinate state of affairs p is not possible to decide about the moral obligation of doing p , because if everything were by chance or came from the pure necessitated or were caused by a not-Infinite (Act of Being) the last foundation of moral obligation would be impossible = under the alternative conditions $C \vee N \vee \neg I$ we would have only a *prima facie* (= seeming and therefore not validly grounded) moral obligation:

$$\overbrace{\forall x \neg (\exists p (Rp \wedge \hat{E}(x, Bp)) \rightarrow O(x, p))}^{C \vee N \vee \neg I}$$

Formula that can be read like this: «Under the alternative conditions C , N or $\neg I$ (= not I) for all the x is not true that if at least a p exists, been p an R and been evident to x that p is B , then it is O (morally Obligatory) for x to do p ».

⁴The symbols $\exists$ and $\forall$ are called «quantifiers», because they bound variables producing propositions of the form $\exists x(P(x))$ or $\forall x(P(x))$, which respectively mean «There is an x such as (or «For some x » or «For at least one x ») x is P » and «For all x (or «For every x » or «For each x ») x is P ». It is thus clear why they're called respectively «existential» and «universal» quantifier: in the first case at least of one x it can be said that it has the property P , whereas in the second case of all the x it can be said that they have the property P .

1. If everything were existing by chance, there would be no reason for which the existing ontological order couldn't have been totally different; so that what is evidently good in our hypothetical case (= the state of affairs p) could have been, without a rational reason, another (for example the state of affairs q) or even the opposite of p ($\neg p$ = not p). That means that under the condition C (Chance) the ontical content (the state of affairs) to which the notion of goodness is applied doesn't have a real reason (= a rational reason and not a merely probabilistic one) to be a specific one, instead of another = «**aporia of the ontical vacuity**»: the ontical content of the notion of goodness is virtually empty, precisely because it could be indifferently of any kind.
 - (a) With respect to this situation, where things come to existence at random, there's no means by which moral obligation could arise for a moral agent, who is such because of his possibility to choose (freedom) in a rational way (= not at random, even when influenced by not purely rational motives).
2. Ethics arises when moral responsibility is possible and that is the case only if moral agents have the capabilities of being both intelligent and free. That's the reason why whatsoever source of ontological laws (laws of nature) even lacking one of these two properties, would be also lacking in giving to those natural laws any moral importance. In other words originating, establishing or creating a moral order (over an ontical one) necessary implies at least to having the capabilities of recognizing it (intelligence) and of approving it as such, that is as a good one (free will); something simply impossible if originally everything came to existence by chance.

3.4 St. Thomas's Metaethics: the *Tractatus De Beatitudine*

From St. Thomas's point of view the problem about the meaning of human life arises immediately, while appealing to the ontological fact consisting in the existence of human nature, because in the mean time that means wondering about the identity of our **final end**. Is that one perhaps the best development of the higher part of the same human nature (the intellectual part like stated by Aristotle), or is that perhaps an external «object»?

In accounting for the second hypothesis St. Thomas exposes his metaethical doctrine. In fact the «*Tractatus de Beatitudine*» (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 1-5), due to the constant references on one hand to the demonstrations of the

spirituality of human soul, and on the other to God as final end, has to be considered as based on metaphysical assumptions, even if inserted within a theological (*doctrina sacra*) context. In particular the necessity of a metaphysical foundation of ethics is due to the fact that according to St. Thomas, being our soul essentially rational, its appetitive part is ordered to desire not only a particular goodness, but the universal good (the *bonum in universali*), that is what is perfectly good under every possible point of view (= absolute perfect). That's, as humans, our final end. A conclusion this one that takes us immediately at the heart of metaphysics, because absolutely good (*bonum in universali* or *bonum universale*), according to the fact that «everything is perfect so far as it is actual» (= definition of goodness as really coincident with being), can only be the «pure act» (the *purus actus*), that is such a being that its essence is pure act of being without potentiality of any kind: the «Infinite in Act» («*infinitus in sua actualitate*») = God's philosophical name.

And «since it belongs to the reason to direct to the end, which is the first principle in all matters of action»⁵, the last end represents also the first principle of order to which every other intermediate end or mean has to be referred to through the ordering operation of practical reason. Without identifying the last end, it would be impossible any kind of ethics and so, once the final end is identified as God (by means of a pure philosophical path), it becomes immediately evident that Metaphysical Theology is necessary connected with the foundation of ethics.

Let's take a better look to how all this is developed within the essential parts of the *Tractatus*⁶.

1. The first question of the *Tractatus* is devoted to the definition of what «man's last end» is («*De ultimo fine hominis*). In replying to the third objection St. Thomas briefly exposes the reason why the «good in universal», which later will be demonstrated to be God, is the only adequate object of human will:

«The object of the will is the end and the good in universal. Consequently there can be no will in those things that lack reason and intellect, *since they cannot apprehend the universal*; but they

⁵«*Rationis enim est ordinare ad finem, qui est primum principium actuum humanorum*» (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 90).

⁶It has to be noticed, however, that, since we shall consider only the main points related to our present topic (illustration of the fact that according to St. Thomas ethics depend upon metaphysics), the complexity of the *Tractatus* and the connections between its theoretical passages will be lost. One can have a general view of the structure going here: <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/FS/FS002.html>

have a natural appetite or a sensitive appetite, determinate to some particular good» (S. Th., I-II, 1, 2, ad 3)⁷

2. In the fourth article it is demonstrated that there has to be a final end of human life, because «in whatsoever things there is an *essential order* of one to another, if the first be removed, those that are ordained to the first, must of necessity be removed also» (S. Th., I-II, 1, 4; the next two quotations are extracted from this text too). In fact without a final end the moral agent, with respect to the order of intention, wouldn't be able to desire anything («if there were no last end, nothing would be desired») and, with respect to the order of execution, wouldn't be able to act, because it would be impossible to choose the first mean to be executed in order to reach the final end («if there is no first thing among those that are ordained to the end, none would begin to work at anything»).
3. In the eighth article of the first question St. Thomas gives us the definition of the final end, naming it as «beatitude», in comparison with irrational creatures.

«As the Philosopher says (Phys. II, 2), the end is twofold: the end "for which" and the end "by which"; viz. the thing itself in which is found the aspect of good, and the use or acquisition of that thing. [...] If, therefore, we speak of man's last end as of the thing which is the end, thus all other things concur in man's last end, since God is the last end of man and of all other things. If, however, we speak of man's last end, as of the acquisition of the end, then irrational creatures do not concur with man in this end. For man and other rational creatures attain to their last end by knowing and loving God: this is not possible to other creatures, which acquire their last end, in so far as they share in the Divine likeness, inasmuch as they are, or live, or even know. Hence it is evident how the objections are solved: since happiness [*beatitudo* = beatitude, blessedness] means the acquisition of the last end» (S. Th., I-II, 1, 8).

4. The second question is devoted to the understanding of what beatitude consists in. In excluding that, after wealth (article 1), honour (article 2), fame or glory (article 3), power (article 4) and any good of the body (article 5), it consists also in pleasure (*voluptas corporalis*), St. Thomas within the sixth article exposes the reasons why the capability

⁷«Obiectum voluntatis est finis et bonum in universali. Unde non potest esse voluntas in his quae carent ratione et intellectu, cum non possint apprehendere universale: sed est in eis appetitus naturalis vel sensitivus, determinatus ad aliquod bonum particulare».

of knowing universals implies some kind of infinity peculiar to human mind and soul.

«[. . .] Now good pertaining to the body, and apprehended by sense, cannot be man's perfect good. For since the rational soul excels the capacity of corporeal matter, *that part of the soul which is independent of a corporeal organ, has a certain infinity in regard to the body* and those parts of the soul which are tied down to the body: just as immaterial things are in a way infinite as compared to material things, since a form is, after a fashion, contracted and bounded by matter, so that *a form which is independent of matter is, in a way, infinite. Therefore sense, which is a power of the body, knows the singular, which is determinate through matter: whereas the intellect, which is a power independent of matter, knows the universal, which is abstracted from matter, and contains an infinite number of singulars.* Consequently it is evident that good which is fitting to the body, and which causes bodily delight through being apprehended by sense, is not man's perfect good, but is quite a trifle as compared with the good of the soul. [. . .] And therefore bodily pleasure is neither happiness [beatitude] itself, nor a proper accident of happiness [beatitude]» (S. Th., I-II, 1, 8).

- (a) What is worth noticing is that the argument used here corresponds exactly to the one used in several others of his works by St. Thomas to demonstrate, from a strait philosophical point of view, the immateriality, and consequently immortality, of human soul. That's a very important point, because clearly shows the metaphysical roots of St. Thomas's metaethics. Let's recall the argument stated in the *Summa contra Gentiles*:

«[. . .] If an intelligent substance is a body, it is either finite or infinite. Now, *it is impossible for a body to be actually infinite*, as is proved in the Physics [III, 5]. Therefore, if we suppose that such a substance is a body at all, it is a finite one. But this also is impossible, since, as was shown in Book I of this work, infinite power can exist in no finite body. And yet **the cognitive power of the intellect is in a certain way infinite**; for by adding number to number its knowledge of the species of numbers is infinitely extended; and the same applies to its knowledge of the species of figures and proportions. Moreover, *the intellect grasps the universal, which is virtually infinite in its scope, because it contains individuals which are potentially infinite.* Therefore, the intellect is not a body» (C. Gent., Book II, 49).

Attention please! The being «virtually infinite» of the universal it is not due to the mere fact that it is possible to add an individual to another (under the universal) like numbers endlessly: that would be only the **potential infinity** (not an actual infinity) belonging to the quantity and to the counting of material quantities by means of numbers (= there isn't the greatest number likewise potentially there isn't the greatest heap of stones, if we would go on adding number to number or putting stone over stone). The universal, which is an accident (produced by) of the human intellect, is virtually infinite because as (accidental) being it has to be considered void of the kind of individuality characteristic of material things. The idea of «chair» is predicable of any existing (real) chair, precisely because whatever idea it is not «able» of grasping what make material reality individual. The description of a whatsoever member of extra-mental reality consists in fact in a collection of ideas that are «able» to locate an individual only on the base of the probabilities (increasing in reason of their resultant complexity, but not in reason of their singularity = every single idea can be predicated of others material individuals).

- (b) It is very interesting the fact that St. Thomas refers to the virtual infinity of human soul even in proving that God is Infinite (C. *Gent.*, Book I, 43):

«Our intellect, furthermore, extends to the infinite in understanding; and a sign of this is that, given any finite quantity, our intellect can think of a greater one. But this ordination of the intellect would be in vain unless an infinite intelligible reality existed. There must, therefore, be some infinite intelligible reality, which must be the greatest of beings. This we call God. God is, therefore, infinite».

«Again, an effect cannot transcend its cause. But our intellect can be only from God, Who is the first cause of all things. Our intellect, therefore, cannot think of anything greater than God. If, then, it can think of something greater than every finite thing, it remains that God is not finite».

Once demonstrated the existence of God, something that St. Thomas had already done within the 13th paragraph of the first chapter of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, appealing to this argument is not any more an attempt of establishing an ontological argument (for the existence of God, like for St. Anselm), but it is simply the demonstration of the existence of an appropriate object for the somehow infinite power of our human intellect. Otherwise it wouldn't make sense that an effect (human soul) could be more perfect than its

cause (God) or that a perfect cause (God) had created a natural tendency to an infinite end that were not existing.

5. Moreover in the last article of the second question the metaphysical demonstration of soul's immateriality through the argument concerning universals clearly appears determinant in establishing definitely that only God can be the adequate object of human will:

«It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether⁸; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now **the object of the will**, i.e. of man's appetite, **is the universal good**; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. *Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation*. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man [...]. Therefore God alone constitutes man's happiness [beatitude]» (S. Th., I-II, 2, 8).

And because saying «by participation» is the same of saying that something is not universal but particular⁹, the relation between the «cognitive power in a certain way infinite» («*potentia quodammodo infinita in intelligendo*») of the human intellect (due to its capability of thinking through universals) and the fact of being God the only adequate object of human will finally appears to be of the higher evidence in its theoretical necessity. **If the final end is what gives sense to human life, making possible ethics, and human soul can only have God as its final end, that simply means that God is necessary to the foundation of ethics.**

6. This conclusion is, however, not completely void of difficulties, if a forward and fundamental step, consisting in clarifying that the «final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the divine essence» (S. Th., I-II, 3, 8), is followed some questions later by a negative answer to the doubt *whether man can attain happiness by his natural powers* (S. Th., I-II, 5, 5).

⁸«But since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will. Consequently to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied. And this everyone desires» (S. Th., I-II, 5, 8).

⁹«[...] Good which is the last end, is the perfect good fulfilling the desire. Now man's appetite, otherwise the will, is for the universal good. And any good inherent to the soul is **a participated good**, and consequently **a portioned good** [*bonum participatum, et per consequens particulatum*]. Therefore none of them can be man's last end» (S. Th., I-II, 2, 7).

For clearing up the matter let's first consider what St. Thomas says in the *respondeo* of the eighth article, question 3, which title is: *Whether man's happiness consists in the vision of the divine essence.*

«*Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the divine essence.* To make this clear, two points must be observed. *First*, that man is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek: *secondly*, that the perfection of any power is determined by the nature of its object. Now the object of the intellect is "what a thing is" [quod quid est], i.e. the essence of a thing, according to De Anima III, 6. Wherefore the intellect attains perfection, in so far as it knows the essence of a thing. If therefore an intellect knows the essence of some effect, whereby it is not possible to know the essence of the cause, i.e. to know of the cause "what it is"; that intellect cannot be said to reach that cause simply, although it may be able to gather from the effect the knowledge of that the cause is [cognoscere possit de causa an sit]. Consequently, when man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause, there naturally remains in the man the desire to know about the cause, "what it is". And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry, as is stated in the beginning of the Metaphysics (I, 2). For instance, if a man, knowing the eclipse of the sun, consider that it must be due to some cause, and know not what that cause is, he wonders about it, and from wondering proceeds to inquire. Nor does this inquiry cease until he arrive at a knowledge of the essence of the cause. *If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than "that He is"; the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach simply the First Cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. Wherefore it is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists*, as stated above (Q. 2, Art. 8)» (S. Th., I-II, 3, 8).

Let's then quote also the second text:

«Imperfect happiness that can be had in this life, can be acquired by man by his natural powers, in the same way as virtue, in whose operation it consists [...]. But man's perfect Happiness, as stated above (Q. 3, Art. 8), consists in the vision of the Divine Essence. Now the vision of God's Essence surpasses the nature not only of man, but also of every creature, as was shown in the FP, Q. 12, Art. 4. For the natural knowledge of every creature is in keeping with the mode of his substance: thus it is said of the

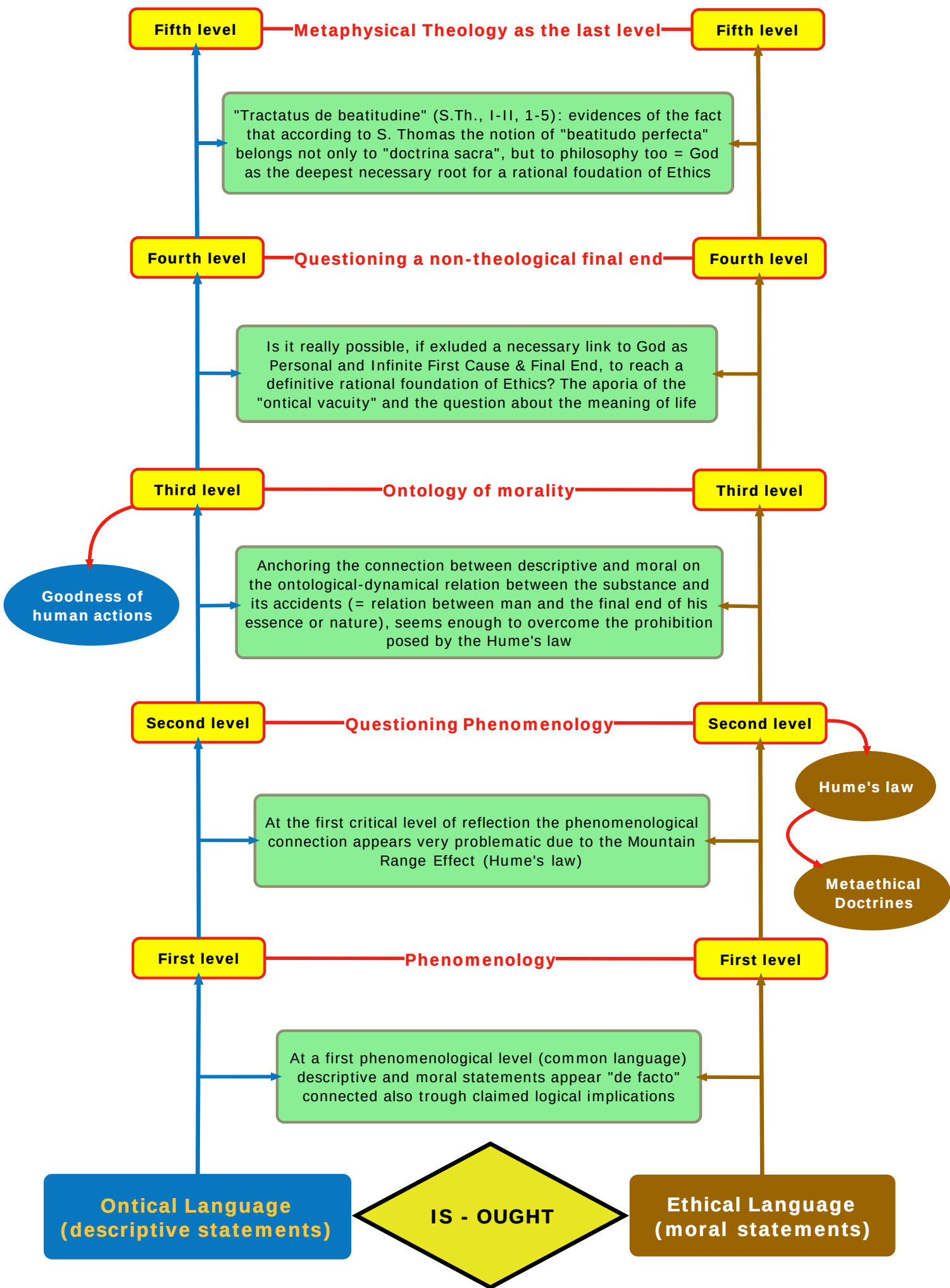
intelligence (De Causis; Prop. VIII) that “it knows things that are above it, and things that are below it, according to the mode of its substance”. But every knowledge that is according to the mode of created substance, falls short of the vision of the divine essence, which infinitely surpasses all created substance. **Consequently neither man, nor any creature, can attain final Happiness by his natural powers»** (*S. Th.*, I–II, 5, 5).

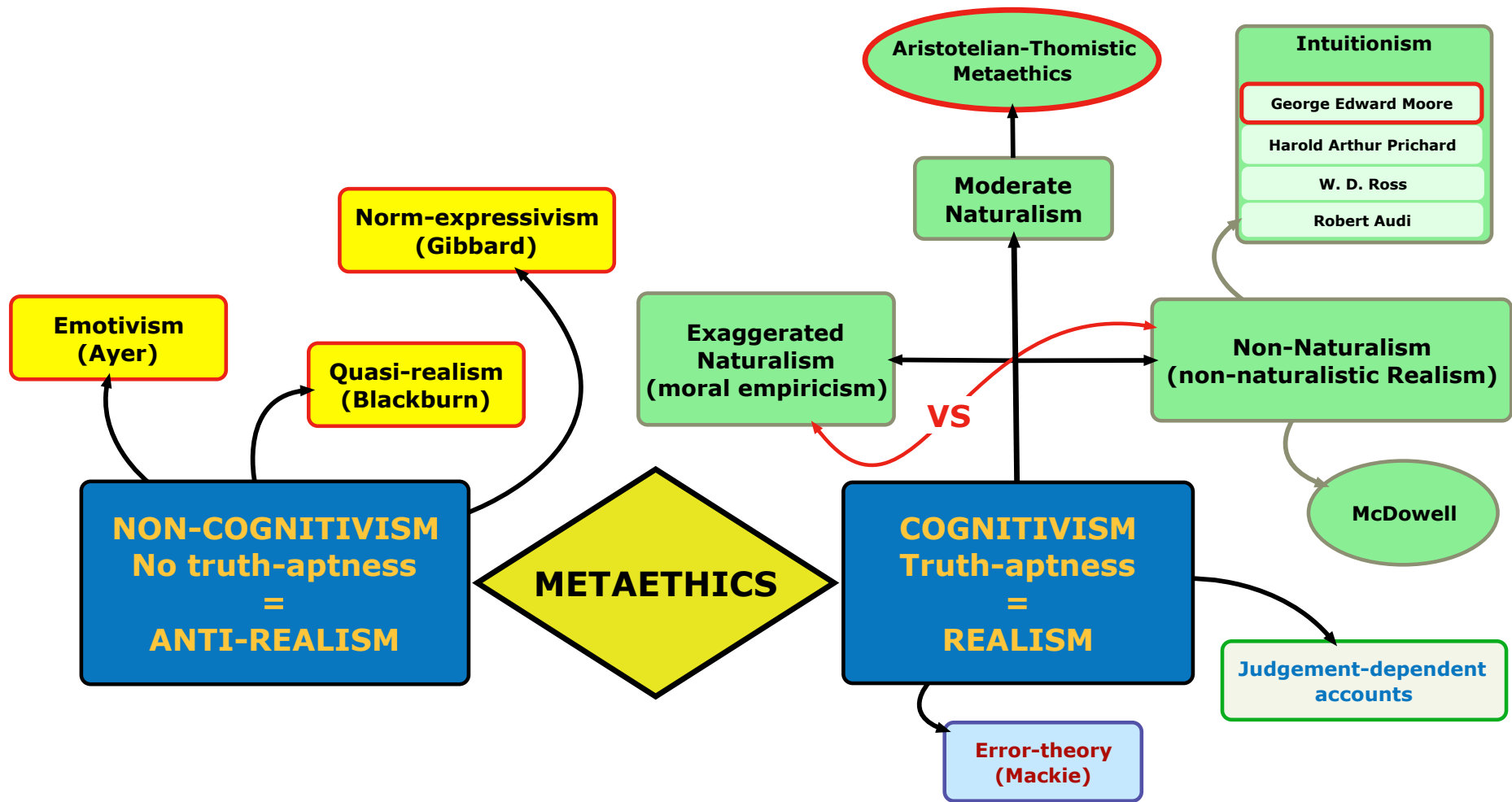
Well, at the first glance it seems that the attempt of matching the two texts with each other turns out in a contradiction, because on the one hand St. Thomas is speaking of a «**natural desire**» for reaching the «very essence of the First Cause» (= the natural desire for reaching the «union with God», which is something that the simple *natural knowledge* of God by means of a demonstration concerning His existence could never satisfy), whereas on the other hand he demonstrates that it is impossible for whatever creature to attaining final happiness (beatitude) by means of its own **natural powers**. However it has to be noticed that here there’s no contradiction at least for the following reasons:

- (a) According to the answer to the first objection in *S. Th.*, I–II, 5, 5, it has to be pointed out that nature (and hence the Creator of it), not giving to man the possibility to reach perfect happiness by his own natural powers, hadn’t failed in providing man with anything necessary, because it would have been simply impossible to make a creature *naturally* capable of acquiring what «infinitely surpasses all created substance».
- (b) Moreover God is by no means obliged to create beings totally self-harmonic and self-sufficient in their natural order, like if the distinction between natural and supernatural order were in any sense a rigid protocol to be respected by His side. Thus, according to St. Thomas, such a being like man has not to be considered somehow inferior to the animal, due to the fact that the former needs an exterior help (grace) to reach its final end whereas that’s not the case for the latter; but, at the contrary, men are belonging, precisely for that reason, to a superior ontological *status*: «The nature that can attain perfect good, although it needs help from without in order to attain it, is of more noble condition than a nature which cannot attain perfect good, but attains some imperfect good, although it need no help from without in order to attain it» (*S. Th.*, I–II, 5, 5, ad 2).
- (c) Hence this natural desire of knowing the very essence of God

(which burst out from intelligence itself)¹⁰, albeit it cannot be efficacious by merely natural means, it has not to be considered a pure velleity (empty wish) precisely because of its natural roots, that is, because it wouldn't be reasonable to think that God had created natures with their specific tendencies, for finally leaving them unsatisfied.

¹⁰«So, too, those acquainted with the fact that something exists naturally desire to know what this thing is, and this is to understand its substance. Therefore, the natural desire to know does not rest in that knowledge of God whereby we know merely that He is» (*C. Gent.*, Book III, 50). «But, no matter how fully we know that God exists [...] we do not cease our desire, but still desire to know Him through His essence» (*C. Gent.*, Book III, 50). «[...] Ultimate felicity is to be sought in nothing other than an operation of the intellect, since no desire carries on to such sublime heights as the desire to understand the truth. Indeed, all our desires for pleasure, or other things of this sort that are craved by men, can be satisfied with other things, but the aforementioned desire does not rest until it reaches God, the highest point of reference for, and the maker of, things» (*C. Gent.*, Book III, 50).





Unit 4

Aristotle on Happiness and the Prime Mover

4.1 Introduction: the Ultimate End

First of all let's consider how happiness is conceived in his *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), who, like any other ancient Greek, was a pagan polytheist.

I, 1, 1094a 1-7: «Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. But a certain difference is found among ends; some are activities, others are products apart from the activities that produce them. Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities. Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth».

I, 2, 1094a 17-25: «If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object».

I, 10, 1100b 4-11: «For clearly if we were to keep pace with his fortunes, we

should often call the same man happy and again wretched, making the happy man out to be chameleon and insecurely based. Or is this keeping pace with his fortunes quite wrong? Success or failure in life does not depend on these, but human life, as we said, needs these as mere additions, while virtuous activities or their opposites are what constitute happiness or the reverse. The question we have now discussed confirms our definition. For no function of man has so much permanence as virtuous activities (these are thought to be more durable even than knowledge of the sciences), and of these themselves the most valuable are more durable because those who are happy spend their life most readily and most continuously in these; for this seems to be the reason why we do not forget them. The attribute in question, then, will belong to the happy man, and he will be happy throughout his life; for always, or by preference to everything else, he will be engaged in virtuous action and contemplation, and he will bear the chances of life most nobly and altogether decorously, if he is truly good and four-square [τετραγώνος = *tetrágōnos*] beyond reproach. Now many events happen by chance, and events differing in importance; small pieces of good fortune or of its opposite clearly do not weigh down the scales of life one way or the other, but a multitude of great events if they turn out well will make life happier (for not only are they themselves such as to add beauty to life, but the way a man deals with them may be noble and good), while if they turn out ill they crush and maim happiness; for they both bring pain with them and hinder many activities. Yet even in these nobility shines through, when a man bears with resignation many great misfortunes, not through insensibility to pain but through nobility and greatness of soul».

X, 6, 1176a 30-1176b 5: «Now that we have spoken of the virtues, the forms of friendship, and the varieties of pleasure, what remains is to discuss in outline the nature of happiness, since this is what we state the end of human nature to be. Our discussion will be the more concise if we first sum up what we have said already. We said, then, that it is not a disposition; for if it were it might belong to some one who was asleep throughout his life, living the life of a plant, or, again, to some one who was suffering the greatest misfortunes. If these implications are unacceptable, and we must rather class happiness as an activity, as we have said before, and if some activities are necessary, and desirable for the sake of something else, while others are so in themselves, evidently happiness must be placed among those desirable in themselves, not among those desirable for the sake of something else; for happiness does not lack anything, but is self-sufficient».

X, 7, 1177b 15-1178a 7: «If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said. Now this would seem to be in agreement both with what we said before and with the truth. For, firstly, this activity is the best (since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects); and secondly, it is the most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can do anything. And we think happiness has pleasure mingled with it, but the activity of philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities; at all events the pursuit of it is thought to offer pleasures marvellous for their purity and their enduringness, and it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire. And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity. For while a philosopher, as well as a just man or one possessing any other virtue, needs the necessities of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case, but the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient. And this activity alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action. [...] So if [...] the activity of reason, which is contemplative, seems both to be superior in serious worth and to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its pleasure proper to itself (and this augments the activity), and the self-sufficiency, leisureliness, unweariedness (so far as this is possible for man), and all the other attributes ascribed to the supremely happy man are evidently those connected with this activity, *it follows that this will be the complete happiness of man*, if it be allowed a complete term of life (for none of the attributes of happiness is incomplete). But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of virtue. If

reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything. This would seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of his self but that of something else. And what we said before will apply now; that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest».

4.1.1 Aristotle VS Lawrence «the Magnificent»

A very famous poem by Lorenzo de' Medici (Lawrence «the Magnificent»: 1448-1492) perfectly represents the idea that life has to be intended as a «carpe diem», that is as a sort of always «take-it-easy» attitude finalized only to «take» what everyday life can give in terms of pleasures and thoughtless-ludic joy. To be noticed: the quality and the quantity of the same refrain, which seems like a hymn inside a hymn («Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell»)

«Youth is sweet and well // But doth speed away! // *Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell.* // Bacchus and his Fair, // Contented with their fate, // Chase both time and care, // Loving soon and late; // High and low estate // With the nymphs at play; // *Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell.* // Laughing satyrs all // Set a hundred snares, // Lovelorn dryads fall // In them unawares; // Glad with wine, in pairs // They dance the hours away; // *Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell.* // Not unwillingly // Were these nymphs deceived; // From Love do but flee // Graceless hearts aggrieved; // Deceivers and deceived // Together wend their way; // *Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell.* // Fat Silenus nears // On an ass astride; // Full of wine and years, // Come and see him ride; // He lolls from side to side // But gleefully alway; // *Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell.* // Midas following, // Turneth all to gold; // What can treasure bring // To a heart that's cold? // And what joy unfold // For who thirsteth, pray? // *Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell.* // Ears be very bold, // *Count not on to-morrow:* // Let both young and old, // Lads and lassies, borrow // Joy and banish sorrow. // Doleful thoughts and grey; // *Let who will be gay, // To-morrow, none can tell.* // Lads and lassies all, // Love and Bacchus

Hail!// Dance and song befall!// Pain and sadness fail!// Tender hearts prevail,// Happen then what may!// *Let who will be gay,// To-morrow, none can tell.*// Youth is sweet and well// But doth speed away».

Against such an attitude towards life the words of Aristotle, one of the greatest exponent of the classical Greece, were already sounded very explicit in their condemnation:

Nicomachean Ethics X, 6, 1176b 27-1177a 10: «Happiness, therefore, does not lie in amusement; it would, indeed, be strange if the end were amusement, and one were to take trouble and suffer hardship all one's life in order to amuse oneself. For, in a word, everything that we choose we choose for the sake of something else except happiness, which is an end. Now to exert oneself and work for the sake of amusement seems silly and utterly childish. But to amuse oneself in order that one may exert oneself, as Anacharsis puts it, seems right; for amusement is a sort of relaxation, and we need relaxation because we cannot work continuously. Relaxation, then, is not an end; for it is taken for the sake of activity. The happy life is thought to be virtuous; now a virtuous life requires exertion, and does not consist in amusement. And we say that serious things are better than laughable things and those connected with amusement, and that the activity of the better of any two things – whether it be two elements of our being or two men – is the more serious; but the activity of the better is ipso facto superior and more of the nature of happiness. And any chance person [. . .] can enjoy the bodily pleasures no less than the best man [. . .]. For happiness does not lie in such occupations, but, as we have said before, in virtuous activities».

4.2 The Prime Mover or Unmoved Mover (Physics, Book VIII)

4.2.1 Chapter 1 and Lectiones 1-3

Arist. text I. «Was there ever a becoming of motion before which it had no being, and is it perishing again so as to leave nothing in motion? Or are we to say that it never had any becoming and is not perishing, but always was and always will be? Is it in fact an immortal never-failing property of things that are, a sort of life as it were to all naturally constituted things?».

Arist. text II. «We must consider, then, how this matter stands, for the

discovery of the truth about it is of importance, not only for the study of nature, but also for the investigation of the First Principle».

St. Th. comment 1. «After showing in the preceding book that it is necessary to posit a first mobile, and a first motion, and a first mover, the Philosopher intends in this present book to inquire after a description of the first mover, and first motion, and first mobile. The book is divided into two parts: in the first he premises something necessary to the following investigation, namely, that motion is sempiternal; in the second he proceeds to investigate what is proposed» (*Lectio 1*).

St. Th. comment 2. «[. . .] It should be known that Averroes says that Aristotle in this book does not intend to inquire whether motion is sempiternal universally, but limits his question to the first motion[*]. But if one considers both the words and procedure of the Philosopher, this is entirely false. For The words of the Philosopher speak of motion in a universal sense. He says in effect: “Was there ever a becoming of motion before which it had no being and is it perishing again so as to leave nothing in motion?”. From this it is clear that he is not inquiring about one definite motion but about motion universally, asking whether at any time there was no motion» (*Lectio 1*).

[*] «*Local motion* is the first [in importance] of the motions» (from *Lectio 2* of St. Thomas’s comment to *Physics*, Book VII).

Note 1. Clarifying this point is important, because if Averroes had been right in referring Aristotle’s words only to local motion, then proving the existence of a First Principle, would mean having proved only the first cause of local motion and not the necessary existence of a First Principle of everything, that is the existence of the universal cause.

St. Th. comment 3. «[. . .] He [Aristotle] shows the usefulness of considering the question he has proposed. And he says that we must consider just what is the truth about this question, for to know the truth about it is most necessary not only for natural science but the science of the first principle as well, since both here and in the *Metaphysics* *he uses the eternity of motion to prove the first principle. This method of proving the existence of a first principle is most efficacious and irresistible*. For if on the supposition that both motion and the world existed forever, it is necessary to posit one first principle, then, if the eternity thereof should be rejected, it is all the more necessary, for it is clear that every new thing requires a principle bringing it into being. Now the only reason why it could seem that no first principle would be necessary, would be if things were *ab aeterno*. But if the existence of a first principle follows even on that supposition, i.e., that the world existed *ab aeterno*,

it is clear that the existence of a first principle is absolutely necessary» (*Lectio 1*).

Arist. text III. (General premiss) «Let us take our start from what we have already laid down in our course on Physics. Motion, we say, is the fulfilment [the act] of the movable in so far as it is movable. Each kind of motion, therefore, necessarily involves the presence of the things that are capable of that motion [Necessarily thus those things exist that are potentially capable of being moved according to each kind of motion]. In fact, even apart from the definition of motion, every one would admit [to be necessary] that in each kind of motion it is that which is capable of that motion that is in motion: thus it is that which is capable of alteration that is altered, and that which is capable of local change that is in locomotion: and so there must be something capable of being burned before there can be a process of being burned, and something capable of burning before there can be a process of burning [and so is necessary that something is yet capable of being burned before being burned and yet capable of producing combustion before producing it]».

St. Th. comment 1. (Explication) «He assumes [...] that motion is the act of a mobile precisely as such. From this it appears that *in order for motion to exist there must exist things which can be moved with some sort of motion*, because an act cannot exist without the thing of which it is the act. Accordingly, from the definition of motion it is evident that there must be a subject of motion, if there is to be motion at all» (*Lectio 2*).

St. Th. comment 2. (Explication) «And because the subject is by nature prior to what is in the subject, we can conclude that in individual changes – both from the viewpoint of the mobile and of the mover – the combustible subject is prior to its being set afire, and the subject capable of setting it afire is prior to its setting afire, *prior, I say, not always in time but in nature*» (*Lectio 2*).

Note 1. For anything to be in motion, it is necessary a pre-existing potentiality relative to that kind of motion.

Arist. text IV. (Argument in favour of the eternity of motion) «Moreover, these things also must either have a beginning before which they had no being, or they must be eternal. Now *if there was a becoming [generation] of every movable thing*, it follows that before the motion in question another change or motion must have taken place in which that which was capable of being moved or of causing motion had its

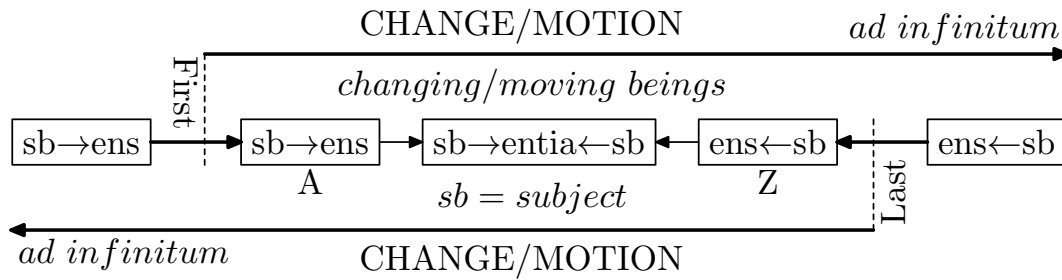


Figure 4.1: Before-after-eternity of motion according to Aristotle: a first change (and a first being) it's not possible, because a process of generation (like anyone of corruption) is yet a change and so there must always be a previous change (and a previous being as its cause) before the one (erroneously) supposed to be the *first* (caused by A) and so on *ad infinitum*; exactly like there must always be a subsequent change (and a subsequent being) to the one (erroneously) supposed to be the *last* (caused by Z) of corruption and so on *ad infinitum*.

becoming. [...] *Therefore, before this first change there will be a previous change*».

Arist. text V. «The same reasoning will also serve to show the imperishability of motion: *just as a becoming of motion would involve, as we saw, the existence of a process of change previous to the first, in the same way a perishing of motion would involve the existence of a process of change subsequent to the last*: for when a thing ceases to be moved, it does not therefore at the same time cease to be movable – e.g. the cessation of the process of being burned does not involve the cessation of the capacity of being burned, since a thing may be capable of being burned without being in process of being burned – nor, when a thing ceases to be moved, does it therefore at the same time cease to be motive. Again, the destructive agent will have to be destroyed, after what it destroys has been destroyed, and then that which has the capacity of destroying it will have to be destroyed afterwards (so that there will be a process of change subsequent to the last), for being destroyed also is a kind of change. If, then, view which we are criticizing involves these impossible consequences, it is clear that motion is eternal and cannot have existed at one time and not at another: in fact such a view can hardly be described as anything else than fantastic».

St. Th. comment 1. (Explication) «Then assuming that a mobile and a mover are required in order that there be motion, Aristotle argues in the following manner: If motion has not always existed, it is necessary to say either that mobiles and movers were at some time made, having previously not existed, or are eternal. *If, therefore, it is held that each mobile*

has been made, it is necessary to say that previous to the change which is taken as the first, there was another change and motion according to which was made the very mobile which is able to be moved and to have been moved. This inference, indeed, depends on the preceding. For if it is granted that motion has not always been but that there is some first change before which there was none, it will follow that that first change involved a mobile, and that that mobile was made, for previously it did not exist – since it is being supposed that all mobiles have been made. *Now, whatever comes to be after having previously not existed, comes to be through a motion or a change.* But the motion or change through which a mobile comes to be, is prior to the change by which the mobile is moved. Therefore, prior to the change which was presumed to be first is another change *and so on ad infinitum*» (Lectio 2).

St. Th. comment 2. (Explication) «For just as from the assumption that motion began it followed that there was a change prior to the change assumed to be first, so too, if it be supposed that motion at some time ceases, it follows that a change will occur after the one assumed to be the last. [...] He says that both the actual motion and the mobile do not pass away simultaneously, but just as the generation of a mobile is prior to its motion, so the ceasing-to-be of a mobile is subsequent to the passing away of its motion. This is so because something combustible can remain after combustion ceases. And what was said of the mobile must also be said of the mover, because a mover in act does not in ceasing to be cease at the same time to be a mover in potency. Accordingly, it is evident that if even the mobile cease to be after the destruction of its motion, then there has to be a process by which the mobile passes out of existence. And again, because we are supposing that all mobiles and motions are ceasing to be, it will be necessary later that even the cause of their ceasing-to-be cease to be. But because ceasing-to-be is a type of motion, it will follow that after the final change, other changes occur. But since this is impossible, it follows that motion endures forever» (Lectio 2).

St. Th. comment 3. (An enforcing argument by Averroes) «From this argument of Aristotle, Averroes took occasion to speak against what is held by faith about creation. For *if coming-to-be is a kind of change and every change requires a subject, as Aristotle here proves, it is necessary that whatever comes to be does so from a subject, therefore, it is not possible for something to come to be from nothing*» (Lectio 2).

St. Th. comment 4. (Answer 1) «But if one considers rightly, he [Averroes] was deceived [...] by considering particular things. For it is clear that a particular active power presupposes the matter which a more

universal agent produces, just as an artisan uses the matter which nature makes. From the fact therefore, that every particular agent presupposes matter which it does not produce, one should not suppose that the first universal agent – which is active with respect to all being – should presuppose something not caused by it» (*Lectio 2*).

St. Th. comment 5. (Answer 2) «Nor, moreover, is this in keeping with the intention of Aristotle who in *Metaphysics II* proves that the supremely true and the supreme being is the cause of being for all existents. Hence the being which prime matter has – i.e., a being in potency – is derived from the first principle of being which is in a supreme way a being. Therefore, it is not necessary to presuppose for its action anything not produced by it» (*Lectio 2*).

Note 1. This is probably too much, because it would mean then that Aristotle could have had an idea of creation (even if not of a creation *ex nihilo*), which doesn't appear to be the case¹.

St. Th. comment 6. (Answer 3) «*And because every motion needs a subject* – as Aristotle proves here, and as is the truth of the matter – *it follows that the universal production of being by God is neither motion nor change, but a certain simple coming forth* [quaedam simplex emanatio]. Consequently, “to be made” and “to make” are used in an equivocal sense when applied to this universal production of being and to other productions» (*Lectio 2*).

St. Th. comment 7. (Answer 4) «Therefore, just as, *if we should understand the production of things to be from God ab aeterno* – as Aristotle supposed, and a number of the Platonists – *it is not necessary, indeed, it is impossible, that there have been a pre-existing but unproduced subject of this universal production*, so also, in accord with the tenets of our faith, if we posit that he did not produce things *ab aeterno* but produced them after they had not existed, it is not necessary to posit a subject for this universal production. It is evident, therefore, that what Aristotle proves here, namely, that every motion requires a mobile subject, is not against a tenet of our faith – for it has already been said that *the universal production of things, whether ab aeterno or not, is neither a motion nor a change*. For in order that there be motion or change, it is required that something be other now than previously, and thus there would be something previously existing, and consequently this would not be the universal production of things about which we are now speaking» (*Lectio 2*).

¹«If the question be asked, whether Aristotle thinks of God as creator of the world, the answer must certainly be that he does not. For him matter is ungenerated, eternal; he expressly argues against a creation of the world» (Ross 1995, p. 191).

Arist. text VI. (The same argument applied to time) «Further, how can there be any “before” and “after” without the existence of time? Or how can there be any time without the existence of motion? If, then, time is the number of motion or itself a kind of motion, it follows that, if there is always time, motion must also be eternal. [...] Now since time cannot exist and is unthinkable apart from the moment, and the moment a kind of middle-point, uniting as it does in itself both a beginning and an end, a beginning of future time and an end of past time, it follows that there must always be time: for the extremity of the last period of time that we take must be found in some moment, since time contains no point of contact for us except the moment. *Therefore, since the moment is both a beginning and an end, there must always be time on both sides of it.* But if this is true of time, it is evident that it must also be true of motion, time being a kind of affection of motion».

St. Th. comment 1. (Explanation) «Then he [Aristotle] explains his proposition with an argument from time. [...] Namely, from the fact that it is impossible to say or to understand time to exist without the “now”, just as it is impossible that there be a line without a point. The “now”, however, is something intermediate, having as part of its nature that *it be at once a beginning and an end, i.e., the beginning of a future time, but the end of a past.* From this it appears that it is necessary for time always to be. For *whatever time is taken, its boundary is a “now” in both senses.* And this is clear from the fact that nothing is actual in time but the “now”, because what is past has gone by, and what is future does not yet exist. *But the “now” which is taken as the boundary of time, is both a beginning and an end,* as has been said. Therefore it is necessary that from both aspects of whatever time is taken, time always be; *otherwise the first “now” would not be an end, and the last not a beginning* But from the fact that time is eternal, he concludes that motion too must be eternal; the reason for this conclusion being that time is a property of motion, for it is its number, as was said» (*Lectio 2*).

St. Th. comment 2. (Critique) «*But the argument of Aristotle does not appear efficacious.* For the “now” is to time as the point is to the line, as was explained in Book VI. But it is not necessary that a point be an intermediate, for some points are merely the beginnings of lines and others the ends, *although every point would be both a beginning and an end if the line were infinite.* One could not, therefore, prove that a line is infinite from the fact that every point is a beginning and an end; *rather it is the other way around:* from the fact of a line’s being infinite, one would go on to prove that every point would be both a beginning and an end. *Accordingly, it also appears that the claim that every “now” is a beginning and an end is not true, unless time is assumed*

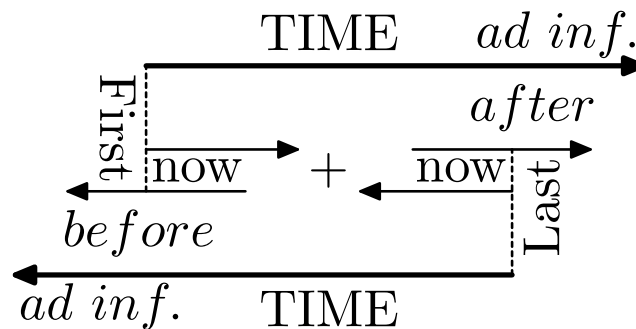


Figure 4.2: Before-after-eternity of time according to Aristotle.

to be eternal. Therefore in assuming this as a middle term, i.e., that every “now” is a beginning and an end, Aristotle seems to suppose the eternity of time – the very thing he ought to prove» (*Lectio 2*).

St. Th. comment 3. (Invalid defence of Aristotle by Averroes) «Now Averroes, in trying to save Aristotle’s argument, says that the attribute of always being both a beginning and an end belongs to the “now” inasmuch as time is not stationary like a line but flowing. But this does not pertain to the proposition. For from the fact that time is flowing and not stationary, it follows that one “now” cannot be taken twice in the way that one point is taken twice, but the flow of time has nothing to do with the “now” being at once a beginning and an end. For the notion of beginning and end is the same in all continua whether they be permanent or flowing, as is clear from Book VI» (*Lectio 2*).

St. Th. comment 4. (The argument that matches Aristotle’s intention) «And therefore another explanation must be furnished in accord with the intention of Aristotle, which is that he wishes to derive the fact that every “now” is a beginning and an end from what he had first supposed, namely, that “prior” and “subsequent” would not be, if time did not exist. For he uses this principle which he supposes for no other purpose, but deduces from it that every “now” is a beginning and an end. For let us suppose that some “now” is the beginning of a time; but it is clear from the definition of a beginning, that the beginning of a time is that before which nothing of the time existed. Therefore, there must be taken something “before” or “prior” to the “now” which is assumed as the beginning of the time. “Prior”, however, does not exist without time. Therefore, the “now” which is taken as the beginning of a time is also the end of a time. In the same way, if a “now” be taken as the end of a time, it too will be a beginning, because an end is by definition that “after which” nothing of a thing exists; but “after” cannot be without time. Therefore, it follows that the “now” which is the end of a time is also a beginning» (*Lectio 2*).

- St. Th. comment 5.** (Invalidity of the preceding argument: first reason)
«Now we have already shown, in explaining the text, that what Averroes says to bolster this argument is inefficacious. But neither is there any efficacy in what Aristotle cites to bolster his own position, namely, that “before” and “after” do not exist without time. For when we say that a time’s beginning is “that before which nothing of the time existed”, we are not thereby compelled to say that the “now” which is the beginning of the time, is preceded by a time signified by the word “before”, any more than in magnitudes, if I say that the beginning of a magnitude is “that beyond which nothing exists of that magnitude”, it is necessary to say that the phrase, “beyond which beginning”, signifies some real place existing in nature – for it signifies an imaginary one only. [. . .] Similarly, the first “now” which is the beginning of time is not preceded by a time existing in reality but only in our imagination. And this is the time that is described when one says that the first “now” is the beginning of time, “before which” nothing of time exists» (*Lectio 2*).
- St. Th. comment 6.** (Invalidity of the preceding argument: second reason)
«Or it may be said that in the expression, “the beginning of time is that before which nothing of time exists”, the word, “before”, is not affirmed but denied – and so it is not necessary to posit a time before the beginning of time. For in things which exist in time, it happens that some certain time precedes their beginning, as, when it is said that the beginning of youth is that before which there was nothing of youth, the word “before” can be taken in an affirmative sense, because youth is measured by time. But time is not measured by time; hence no time preceded its beginning; hence the word “before” in the definition of time is not taken affirmatively but negatively» (*Lectio 2*).
- St. Th. comment 7.** (Final specification 1) «But before time there does exist a duration, namely, the eternity of God. But this eternity has no extension or any before or after as time does; rather, it is all at once – and is not of the same nature as time any more than the divine magnitude is of the same nature as a bodily magnitude» (*Lectio 2*).
- St. Th. comment 8.** (Final specification 2) «Therefore, just as when we say that “outside” the universe there is nothing but God, we are not positing some dimension outside the world, so too, when we say that “before” the universe nothing existed, we are not positing any sort of successive duration before the universe» (*Lectio 2*).
- St. Th. comment 9.** (Further specification 1) «[. . .] When we say that things have not always been produced by God, we do not understand that an infinite time preceded, in which God refrained from acting and that later, at a definite time, He began to act; rather, we understand that

God produced at once both time and things after they did not exist. Accordingly, we must not consider in the divine will that it willed to make things not then but later, as though time were already existing; rather, we must solely consider the fact that he willed that things and the time of their duration should begin to be after they had no existed at all» (*Lectio 2*).

St. Th. comment 10. (Further specification 2) «But if one rightly considers the arguments here given, the truth of the faith is not assailed by them, For they prove that motion did not begin through the way of nature, as some taught it did, but that it did not begin by things being created by a first principle of things, as our faith holds, cannot be proved by these arguments. And that will be evident to anyone who considers each of the inferences here drawn by Aristotle. For when he asks whether, if motion did not always exist, the movers and mobiles always existed or not, the reply must be that the first mover always existed; other things – movers or mobiles – did not always exist, but began to exist from the universal cause of all existence. But it has been pointed out above that the production of all being by the first cause of being is not a motion, whether this coming-forth be taken to be *ab aeterno* or not. Accordingly, it does not follow that before the first change there was a previous change. But this would follow if the movers and mobiles were newly brought into existence by some particular agent acting upon some presupposed subject that would be changed from non-being to being, or from privation to form – and Aristotle’s argument concerns this way of coming into existence» (*Lectio 2*).

4.2.2 Chapter 4 and Lectiones 7-8 – Whatever is moved is moved by another

St. Th. comment 1. «He had indeed showed above, in the beginning of Book VII, that whatever is moved is moved by another, by a generic argument based on motion itself, but because he has now begun to apply motion to mobile things, he here shows that what was previously proved in a universal way is verified universally in all mobiles and movers» (*Lectio 7*).

This table synthesizes the whole analysis of the mobiles made within the chapter.

THINGS (THAT CAUSE MOVEMENT OR ARE BEING MOVED) MOVE			
«PER ACCIDENS» (κατὰ συμβεβηχός)		«PER SE» (καθ' αὐτόν, καθ' αὐτά) <i>derive their motion</i>	
What merely belongs to a thing that causes or suffers motion	What contains as a part something that causes or suffers motion	From themselves:	moving naturally → animals: what moves is not what is being moved
		From someth. else:	moving naturally moving unnat.lly

Arist. text I. (Conclusion) «If then the motion of all things that are in motion is either natural or unnatural and violent, and all things whose motion is violent and unnatural are moved by something, and something other than themselves, and again all things whose motion is natural are moved by something – both those that are moved by themselves and those that are not moved by themselves (e.g. light things and heavy things, which are moved either by that which brought the thing into existence as such and made it light and heavy, or by that which released what was hindering and preventing it); *then all things that are in motion must be moved by something*».

St. Th. comment 1. «[. . .] Among movers and mobiles some move or are moved per accidens, and some per se. And he takes “per accidens” in a wide sense include what moves or is moved with respect to a part. Hence in explaining what he means by “per accidens”, he adds that things cause motion or are moved per accidens in two ways. (1) Whatever things are said to cause motion by virtue of being present in things which move are said to cause it per accidens, as when it is said that a musician causes health, because a knowledge of music is present in the one who heals; and likewise things are said to be moved per accidens either on account of existing in what is being moved in the way that an object in place exists in a place, e.g., when we say that a man is being moved, because the ship on which he is is being moved, or on account of being an accident in a subjects as when we say that the white is being moved, because a body is being moved. (2) In another way, things are said to move or to be moved per accidens, because they move or are moved with respect to a part, as a man is said to strike or be struck, because his hand strikes or is struck» (Lectio 7).

St. Th. comment 2. «[. . .] With respect to things that are moved by themselves – such as are animals, which move themselves – he says that

they are moved according to nature. And he proves this on the ground that they are moved by an intrinsic principle, and since things whose principle of motion is within are said to be moved by nature, it follows that an animal's motion, by which it moves itself, if it is compared to the whole animal, is natural, because that motion proceeds from the soul which is the nature and form of the animal» (*Lectio 7*).

St. Th. comment 3. «Leaving aside things that are moved *per accidens*, because such things are not moved but are merely said to be moved when other things are moved, and confining ourselves to those which are moved *per se*, it is clear, especially in things moved by compulsion and outside their nature, that what is moved is moved by another» (*Lectio 7*).

St. Th. comment 4. «He says therefore [...] that, since it is in things moved by compulsion, and after them in things which move themselves, that it is especially evident that whatever is being moved is moved by another, *the greatest doubt appears to be in the remaining member of the last division, namely, in things that do not move themselves, but yet are moved naturally* [...] Heavy and light objects are moved to their proper places according to nature – i.e., the light upwards and the heavy downwards – and into contrary places by compulsion; but the source of their motion when they are moved according to nature is not clear, as it is when they are moved contrary to nature» (*Lectio 7*).

St. Th. comment 5. «[...] To move itself pertains to the notion of life and is peculiar to living things; for it is through motions and sensations that we distinguish the animate from the inanimate, as is said in *On the Soul I*. But it is manifest that the heavy and light as such are not alive, or animate. Therefore, they do not move themselves».

4.2.3 Chapter 5 and Lectiones 9-11 – The Prime Mover

Arist. text I. (About Mover's chain 1) «Now this[*] may come about in either of two ways. Either the movent is not itself responsible for the motion, which is to be referred to something else which moves the movent, or the movent is itself responsible for the motion. Further, in the latter case, either the movent immediately precedes the last thing in the series, or there may be one or more intermediate links: e.g. the stick moves the stone and is moved by the hand, which again is moved by the man: in the man, however, we have reached a movent that is not so in virtue of being moved by something else».

[*] The fact that «all things that are in motion must be moved by something».

Arist. text II. (About Mover's chain 1) «Now we say that the thing is moved both by the last and by the first movent in the series, but more strictly by the first, since the first movent moves the last, whereas the last does not move the first, and the first will move the thing without the last, but the last will not move it without the first: e.g. the stick will not move anything unless it is itself moved by the man».

St. Th. comment 1. «Now he premises two things, of which the first is a division of movers. For *since it has been said that whatever is moved is moved by something*, a thing might be a mover in two senses. In one sense, when it moves not on its own account, i.e., not by its own power, but because it has been moved by some other mover. This is a second mover. In another sense, something moves on its own account, i.e., by its own power and not because it has been moved by another. Now, such a mover can cause motion in two ways. First, in such a way that the first mover moves the one [mobile] next to the last [mover], i.e., the one [mobile] which is nearest to itself after the second mover; this happens when the first mover moves a mobile through just one intermediate. Secondly, in such a way that the mover moves a mobile through a number of intermediates, as when a stick moves a stone and the stick is moved by a hand, which is moved by a man who does not move as being moved by something else. In this way the man is a first mover on his own account and he moves the stone through a number of intermediates; however, if he moved the stone with his hand, he would be moving the stone through one intermediate only» (*Lectio 9*).

St. Th. comment 2. «Secondly, at he compares the first mover with the second. For since both the first mover and the ultimate are said to cause motion, we say that the first mover is more a mover than the ultimate mover. This is clear for two reasons: first, because the first mover moves the second mover but not vice versa; secondly, because the second mover cannot cause motion independently of the first, but the first can cause it independently of the second. For example, the stick cannot move the stone unless it is moved by the man, but the man can move the stone without using the stick» (*Lectio 9*).

Arist. text III. (First argument: whatever is being moved is being moved by another) «If then everything that is in motion must be moved by something, and the movent must either itself be moved by something else or not, and in the former case there must be some first movent that is not itself moved by anything else, while in the case of the immediate movent being of this kind there is no need of an intermediate movent that is also moved (for it is impossible that there should be an infinite series of movents, each of which is itself moved by something else,

since in an infinite series there is no first term) – *if then everything that is in motion is moved by something, and the first movent is moved but not by anything else, it much be moved by itself*».

St. Th. comment 1. «Then at he proves his proposition in the light of the foregoing. For it has been shown that whatever is being moved is being moved by another. But that by which it is moved is itself either moved or not moved; and if it is moved, it is either moved by another or not. Now these two, namely, being moved by another or not being moved by another, are such that if one is posited the other must be and not vice versa: that is, *if there is something which is moved by another, it is necessary to come to a first that is not moved by another*; but if such a first is posited, namely, a first that is not moved by another, it is not necessary further to posit another, namely, one that is moved by another» (*Lectio 9*).

Arist. text IV. (Second argument: not every mover is being moved) «But the series must stop somewhere [. . .]; and *if we say that the process is reversible, and that that which is causing alteration is in process of locomotion, we do no more than if we had said at the outset that that which is causing locomotion is in process of locomotion, and that one who is teaching is in process of being taught*: for it is clear that everything that is moved is moved by the movent that is further back in the series as well as by that which immediately moves it: in fact the earlier movent is that which more strictly moves it. But this is of course impossible: for it involves the consequence that one who is teaching is in process of learning what he is teaching, whereas teaching necessarily implies possessing knowledge, and learning not possessing it. [. . .] It is not necessary, therefore, that that which is moved should always be moved by something else that is itself moved by something else: so there will be an end to the series. *Consequently the first thing that is in motion will derive its motion either from something that is at rest or from itself*».

St. Th. comment 1. «[. . .] It would follow that the teacher is learning while he is teaching, which is impossible. For this involves a contradiction, since it is the property of a teacher that he have science, and of a learner that he not have it. Accordingly, it is clear that it is not necessary for a mover to be moved» (*Lectio 9*).

St. Th. comment 2. «Accordingly, having considered the foregoing arguments, the first of which concluded that this process – that whatever is being moved is being moved by another – must not go on *ad infinitum*, and the second of which concluded that not every mover is being

moved, we can conclude from all the foregoing arguments that it is not necessary *ad infinitum* that what is being moved be moved by another in such a way that it is always being moved by a mover that is being moved. Therefore, it is necessary to stop at some first. However, this first must either be immobile or be moving itself» (*Lectio* 9).

Arist. text V. «We must therefore make a fresh start and consider the question; *if a thing moves itself, in what sense and in what manner does it do so?*».

Arist. text VI. «Now everything that is in motion must be infinitely divisible, for it has been shown already in our general course on Physics, that everything that is essentially in motion is continuous. Now *it is impossible that that which moves itself should in its entirety move itself*: for then, while being specifically one and indivisible, it would as a whole both undergo and cause the same locomotion or alteration: thus it would at the same time be both teaching and being taught (the same thing), or both restoring to and being restored to the same health».

St. Th. comment 1. «After showing that in mobiles and movers there is no going on to infinity, but that a first is reached which is either immobile or self-moving, *the Philosopher now shows that even if a first that moves itself is reached, it is nevertheless necessary to come to a first which is immobile*» (*Lectio* 10).

St. Th. comment 2. «Because whole and part have no place except in things that are divisible, Aristotle, therefore, from what he had proved in Book VI, concludes first that whatever is moved is necessarily divisible into parts that are always further divisible – for this pertains to the very notion of a continuum. Now, whatever is being moved is a continuum, if it is being moved per se (for it is not impossible for an indivisible, for example, a point or whiteness, to be moved *per accidens*). And this was shown previously in Book VI [...]. Accordingly, since what is moved is divisible, a whole and a part can be found in everything that is being moved. If, therefore, there is anything that moves itself, we shall be able to take a whole and a part in it; *but a whole cannot move its whole self*, i.e., in its entirety move itself» (*Lectio* 10).

St. Th. comment 3. «The motion of a thing that moves itself at one time and in one motion is numerically one; if, therefore, a thing should move itself in such a way that the whole moves the whole, it will follow that one and the same will be mover and moved with respect to one and the same motion, whether it be local motion or alteration. But this is seen to be impossible: for mover and moved are mutually opposite, and opposites cannot exist in the same thing with respect to the same.

It is therefore not possible that some same thing be mover and moved with respect to the same motion» (*Lectio* 10).

St. Th. comment 4. «For when something is at once moving and being moved, the motion according to which it moves is different from the one according to which it is being moved, as when a stick, moved by the hand, moves a stone, the motion of the stick is numerically different from the motion of the stone. Accordingly, it will follow further that someone will be both teaching and be taught at the same time with respect to one and the same knowable thing, and, similarly, that someone will heal and be healed with respect to one and the same numerical health» (*Lectio* 10).

Arist. text VII. «Moreover, we have established the fact that it is the movable that is moved; and this is potentially, not actually, in motion, but the potential is in process to actuality, and motion is an incomplete actuality of the movable. The movent on the other hand is already in activity: e.g. it is that which is hot that produces heat: in fact, that which produces the form is always something that possesses it. Consequently (if a thing can move itself as a whole), the same thing in respect of the same thing may be at the same time both hot and not hot. So, too, in every other case where the movent must be described by the same name in the same sense as the moved. *Therefore when a thing moves itself it is one part of it that is the movent and another part that is moved*».

St. Th. comment 1. «It has been determined in Book III that what is being moved is a mobile, i.e., something existing in a state of potency, since what is being moved is being moved precisely because it is in potency and not in act, for a thing is considered to be in motion when, being in potency, it is tending toward act. However, that which is being moved is not in potency in such a way that it is in no wise in act, because the very motion is a kind of act of the mobile precisely as being moved; but it is an imperfect act, being the act of the mobile inasmuch as it is still in potency. But what causes motion is already in act, for what is in potency is not reduced to act except by something in act, namely, the mover; for example, the hot causes heat and that generates which has the form to be generated, as one who has the human form generates a man, and so on for other things. If, therefore, the whole moves its whole self, it follows that the same thing is, with respect to the same, at once hot and not hot, because, insofar as it moves, it will be hot in act; insofar as it is moved, it will be hot in potency» (*Lectio* 10).

St. Th. comment 2. «The same is true in all other cases in which the mover is univocal, i.e., agreeing in name and species with the thing moved, as

when the hot makes the hot and a man generates a man. And he says this because there are some agents which are not univocal and which do not agree in name and notion with their effects, as the sun generates a man. In such agents, nevertheless, even though they do not possess the form of the effect according to the same notion, they do so in a higher and more universal sense. Consequently, it is universally true that the mover is somehow actually what the mobile is potentially. If, therefore, the whole moves its whole self, it follows that the same thing is at once in potency and in act – which is impossible» (*Lectio 10*).

St. Th. comment 3. «From this he concludes the main proposition that, with respect to a thing that moves itself, one part is mover and the other part moved» (*Lectio 10*).

Arist. text VIII. «But it is not self-moving in the sense that each of the two parts is moved by the other part: the following considerations make this evident».

Note 1. Let's skip these passages, just not to make our reading too complex.

Arist. text IX. (Conclusion 1) «[. . .] As a matter of fact that which primarily moves itself cannot contain either a single part that moves itself or a number of parts each of which moves itself».

Arist. text X. (Conclusion 2) «*Therefore in the whole of the thing we may distinguish that which imparts motion without itself being moved and that which is moved: for only in this way is it possible for a thing to be self-moved*».

Arist. text XI. (Conclusion 3) «From what has been said, then, it is evident that that which primarily imparts motion is unmoved: for, whether the series is closed at once by that which is in motion but moved by something else deriving its motion directly from the first unmoved [whether what is in motion, but moved by something else, immediately takes to the first unmoved], or whether the motion is derived from what is in motion but moves itself and stops its own motion, on both suppositions we have the result that in all cases of things being in motion that which primarily imparts motion is unmoved».

St. Th. comment 1. (Explication of the last conclusion) «Then at he infers the conclusion mainly intended from all this. And he says that from the foregoing it is clear that it is necessary to posit a first mover that is immobile. For since there is not an infinite process in movers and moved things, but a halt must be made at a first which is immobile or self-moving, then, whether the movers and moved stop at some first

immobile or at some first that moves itself, in either case it turns out that the first mover is immobile, because one part even of a thing that moves itself is an immobile mover, as has just been proved».

4.2.4 Chapter 6 and Lectiones 12-13 – The eternity of the Prime Mover

Arist. text I. «Since there must always be motion without intermission [since it is necessary for motion to always exist and to be without intermission], there must necessarily be something [eternal], one thing or it may be a plurality, that first imparts motion, and this first movent must be unmoved».

We'll read Aristotle's central argument directly from St. Thomas's words:

St. Th. comment 1. «And he says that if some things which move themselves exist at one time and not at another, then there must be a cause of their generation and ceasing-to-be, by virtue of which they exist at one time and do not exist at another, because whatever is moved [whatever is said to be moving] has a cause of its motion [quia omne quod **movetur**, habet causam sui motus]. But what exists at one time and not at another, if it is a composite, is generated and ceases-to-be. [. . .] But if there is a cause of the generation and perishing of things that move themselves, then there must also be a cause to account for their generation and perishing being continued forever» (*Lectio 12*).

St. Th. comment 2. «But it cannot be said that the cause of this continuity is one of those immobiles that do not always exist, nor can it be said that the cause of the eternal generation and perishing of some things that move themselves are certain immobile movers which do not always exist, and of that of others, certain others. And he explains this when he says that not one, nor all of them, can be the cause of this continuous and eternal generation» (*Lectio 12*).

St. Th. comment 3. «That one of them cannot be the cause he thus proves: What does not exist forever cannot be the cause of what is forever perpetual and necessary. That all cannot be the cause he proves for the reason that all such perishable principles, if generation is perpetual, are infinite and do not all exist at once. But it is impossible for one effect to depend on an infinitude of causes. And again, things that do not exist at once cannot be the cause of one thing, although it could be said that when things do not exist all at once, some dispose and some cause, as is plain with respect to drops that fall successively and wear

away a stone. But if a number of things are a direct cause of anything, they must exist all together» (*Lectio 12*).

St. Th. comment 4. «Accordingly, therefore, it is manifest that if there are a million principles that are movers and immobile, and if there are many things that move themselves, of which some perish and others come to be, and among these, some are mobile and some movers, nevertheless there must be something above all of them that by its power contains all the things which are generated and perish in the above-mentioned way and which would be the cause of the continual change affecting them by which they sometimes are and sometimes are not and through which these latter are the cause of coming-to-be and of motion for others, and these for yet others. For every generator is a cause of generation to the thing generated, but it is from some imperishable first principle that perishable generators possess the characteristic of being causes of generation. *If, therefore, the motion through which some things at one time exist and at another do not is perpetual, as has been shown above, and a perpetual effect cannot exist except from a perpetual cause, then, necessarily, the first mover is perpetual*, if it is one; and if there are more than one first mover, they too are perpetual» (*Lectio 12*).

Unit 5

St. Thomas's Metaphysical Theology

5.1 Epistemological status of the Metaphysical Theology: *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, articles 1–2

QUESTION TITLE: THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

First Article: Whether the existence of God is self-evident (*S. Th.*, I, 2, art. 1)

It would seem that (*Videtur quod*): the existence of God is self-evident.

I answer that (*Respondeo*): «A thing can be self-evident in either of two ways: on the one hand, self-evident in itself, though not to us; on the other, self-evident in itself, and to us. A proposition is self-evident because the predicate is included in the essence of the subject, as “Man is an animal”, for animal is contained in the essence of man. If, therefore the essence of the predicate and subject be known to all, the proposition will be self-evident to all; as is clear with regard to the first principles of demonstration, the terms of which are common things that no one is ignorant of, such as being and non-being, whole and part, and such like. If, however, there are some to whom the essence of the predicate and subject is unknown, the proposition will be self-evident in itself, but not to those who do not know the meaning of the predicate and subject of the proposition. Therefore, it happens, as Boethius says (*Hebdom.*), that there are some mental concepts self-evident only to the learned, as that “incorporeal substances are not in space”. Therefore I say that this proposition, “God exists”, of itself is self-evident, for the predicate is the same as the subject, because God is His own existence as will be hereafter shown (Question 3, Article 4). Now because we

do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature, namely, by effects».

Objection 1: «It seems that the existence of God is self-evident. Now those things are said to be self-evident to us the knowledge of which is naturally implanted in us, as we can see in regard to first principles. But as Damascene says (*De Fide Orth.* 1,3), “the knowledge of God is naturally implanted in all”. Therefore the existence of God is self-evident».

Reply: «To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature, inasmuch as God is man’s beatitude. For man naturally desires happiness, and what is naturally desired by man must be naturally known to him. This, however, is not to know absolutely that God exists; just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching, even though it is Peter who is approaching; for many there are who imagine that man’s perfect good which is happiness, consists in riches, and others in pleasures, and others in something else».

Objection 2: «Further, those things are said to be self-evident which are known as soon as the terms are known, which the Philosopher (*1 Poster.*, 3, 7) says is true of the first principles of demonstration. Thus, when the nature of a whole and of a part is known, it is at once recognized that every whole is greater than its part. But as soon as the signification of the word “God” is understood, it is at once seen that God exists. For by this word is signified that thing than which nothing greater can be conceived. But that which exists actually and mentally is greater than that which exists only mentally. Therefore, since as soon as the word “God” is understood it exists mentally, it also follows that it exists actually. Therefore the proposition “God exists” is self-evident».

Reply: «Perhaps not everyone who hears this word “God” understands it to signify something than which nothing greater can be thought, seeing that some have believed God to be a body. Yet, granted that everyone understands that by this word “God” is signified something than which nothing greater can be thought, nevertheless, *it does not therefore follow* that he understands *that what the word signifies exists actually, but only that it exists mentally*. Nor can it be argued that it actually exists, unless it be admitted that there actually exists something than which nothing greater can be thought; and this precisely is not admitted by those who hold that God does not exist».

Objection 3: «Further, the existence of truth is self-evident. For whoever denies the existence of truth grants that truth does exist: if in fact truth does not exist, it's true that truth does not exist. And if there is anything true, there must be truth. But God is truth itself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6). Therefore that God exists is self-evident» [my translation]¹.

Reply: «The existence of truth in general is self-evident but the existence of a Primal Truth is not self-evident to us».

Second Article: Whether it can be demonstrated that God exists (*S. Th.*, I, 2, art. 2)

It would seem that (*Videtur quod*): the existence of God cannot be demonstrated.

On the contrary (*Sed contra*) : «The Apostle says: "The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (*Rm.* 1:20). But this would not be unless the existence of God could be demonstrated through the things that are made; for the first thing we must know of anything is whether it exists».

I answer that (*Respondeo*): «Demonstration can be made in two ways. One is through the cause, and is called "a priori" [*propter quid*], and this is to argue from what is prior absolutely [from what is ontologically prior]. The other is through the effect, and is called a demonstration "a posteriori" [*quia*]; this is to argue from what is prior relatively only to us. When an effect is better known to us than its cause, from the effect we proceed to the knowledge of the cause. And from every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God, in so far as it is not self-evident to us, can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us».

¹Original text: «Praeterea, veritatem esse est per se notum, quia qui negat veritatem esse, concedit veritatem esse, si enim veritas non est, verum est veritatem non esse. Si autem est aliquid verum, oportet quod veritas sit. Deus autem est ipsa veritas, Ioann. XIV, "ego sum via, veritas et vita". Ergo Deum esse est per se notum». Original English translation: «Further, the existence of truth is self-evident. For whoever denies the existence of truth grants that truth does not exist: and, if truth does not exist, then the proposition "Truth does not exist" is true: and if there is anything true, there must be truth. But God is truth itself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (*Jn.* 14:6) Therefore "God exists" is self-evident».

Objection 1: «It seems that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated. For it is an article of faith that God exists. But what is of faith cannot be demonstrated, because a demonstration produces scientific knowledge; whereas faith is of the unseen (*Heb.* 11:1). Therefore it cannot be demonstrated that God exists».

Reply: «The existence of God and other like truths about God, which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles; for faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected. Nevertheless, there is nothing to prevent a man, who cannot grasp a proof, accepting, as a matter of faith, something which in itself is capable of being scientifically known and demonstrated».

Objection 2: «Further, the essence [*quod quid est*] is the middle term of demonstration. But we cannot know in what God's essence consists, but solely in what it does not consist; as Damascene says (*De Fide Orth.* 1, 4). Therefore we cannot demonstrate that God exists».

Reply: «When the existence of a cause is demonstrated from an effect, this effect takes the place of the definition of the cause in proof of the cause's existence. This is especially the case in regard to God, because, in order to prove the existence of anything, it is necessary to accept as a middle term the meaning of the word, and not its essence, for the question of its essence follows on the question of its existence. Now the names given to God are derived from His effects; consequently, in demonstrating the existence of God from His effects, we may take for the middle term the meaning of the word "God"».

Objection 3: «Further, if the existence of God were demonstrated, this could only be from His effects. But His effects are not proportionate to Him, since He is infinite and His effects are finite; and between the finite and infinite there is no proportion. Therefore, since a cause cannot be demonstrated by an effect not proportionate to it, it seems that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated».

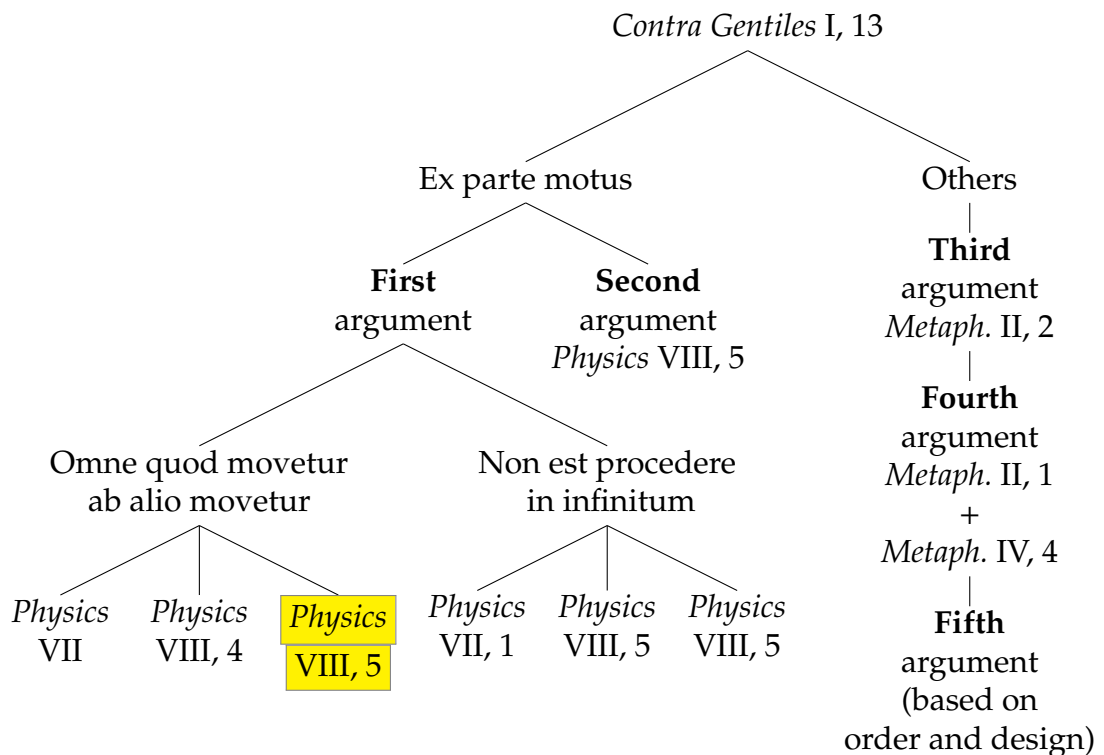
Reply: «From effects not proportionate to the cause no perfect knowledge of that cause can be obtained. Yet from every effect the existence of the cause can be clearly demonstrated, and so we can demonstrate the existence of God from His effects; though from them we cannot perfectly know God as He is in His essence».

5.2 The five «ways» for demonstrating the existence of God

5.2.1 Some remarks concerning the first way *from motion* (ex parte motus) of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*

First quotation taken from *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 13:

«[Omne quod **movetur**, ab alio movetur] Everything that is moved is moved by another. That some things are in motion – for example, the sun – is evident from sense. Therefore, it is moved by something else that moves it. This mover is itself either moved or not moved. If it is not, we have reached our conclusion, namely, that we must posit some unmoved mover. This we call God. If it is moved, it is moved by another mover. We must, consequently, either proceed to infinity, or we must arrive at some unmoved mover. Now, it is not possible to proceed to infinity. Hence, we must posit some prime unmoved mover. In this proof, *there are two propositions that need to be proved*, namely, *that everything that is moved is moved by another* [quod omne **motum** movetur ab alio], and that in movers and things moved one cannot proceed to infinity».



Second quotation taken from *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 13:

«In the third way, Aristotle proves the proposition as follows [*Physics* VIII, 5]. The same thing cannot be at once in act and in potency with respect to the same thing. But everything that is moved is, as such, in potency. For motion is the act of something that is in potency inasmuch as it is in potency. That which moves, however, is as such in act, for nothing acts except according as it is in act. Therefore, with respect to the same motion, nothing is both mover and moved. Thus, nothing moves itself».

5.2.2 The five ways within the *Summa Theologiae*

Third Article: Whether God exists (*S. Th.*, I, 2, art. 3)

It would seem that (*Videtur quod*): .

On the contrary (*Sed contra*) : «It is said in the person of God: “I am Who am” (*Ex.* 3:14)».

I answer that (*Respondeo*): «The existence of God can be proved in five ways».

First way: «The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion.

It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion [Certum est enim, et sensu constat, aliqua moveri in hoc mundo]. Now *whatever is in motion* [whatever is moved] is put in motion by another [Omne autem quod movetur, ab alio movetur], for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. *Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects.* For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. *It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, or that it should move itself* [Impossibile est ergo quod, secundum idem et eodem modo, aliquid sit movens et motum, vel quod moveat seipsum]. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another [Omne ergo quod movetur, oportet ab alio moveri]. If that by which it

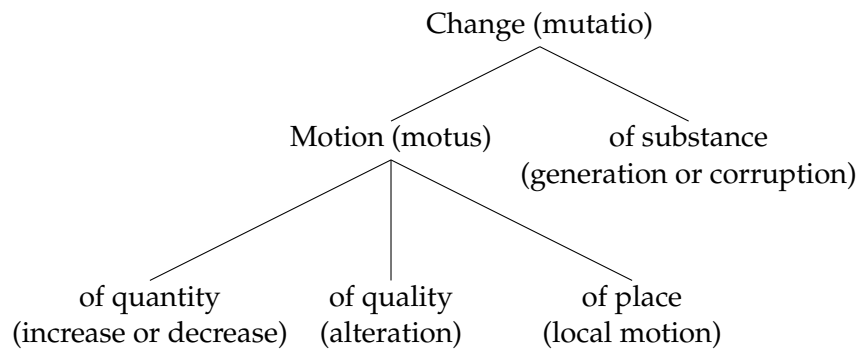
is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. ***But this cannot go on to infinity***, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other [Ergo necesse est devenire ad aliquod primum movens, quod ***a nullo movetur***: that is the first mover doesn't move]; and this everyone understands to be God».

Note 1. The *present passive* form of the Latin verb *movere*, *movetur*, can be translated in three ways into English: passively («whatever is moved»), intransitively («whatever is in motion») or even impersonally («whatever it is said to be in motion»). Well,

«some commentators reason that if the subject is taken in a strictly passive sense, the proposition will beg the question. In effect it will state that whatever is moved (by something else, as implied by the passive) is moved by something else. Others [...] reject this charge, arguing that when we are dealing with something which is being moved, two alternatives must still be considered. Either it is moved by itself, or it is moved by something else. It is only by excluding the first that Thomas establishes the second and thereby the truth of the proposition itself» (Wippel 2000, p. 414).

Note 2. There's anyway an important objection by David Hume (1711-1776) which has to be considered, because it corresponds to a third possibility. We'll consider it after the exposition of the next way of proving God's existence, because Hume expresses his objections more in terms of efficient causality than in terms of motion, although, as we'll see immediately, from a strait theoretical point of view the second way can be reduced to the first.

Note 3. Appealing only to the difference between potentiality and actuality, St. Thomas's first way can be applied to every kind of *change*, not only to *motion* strictly intended.



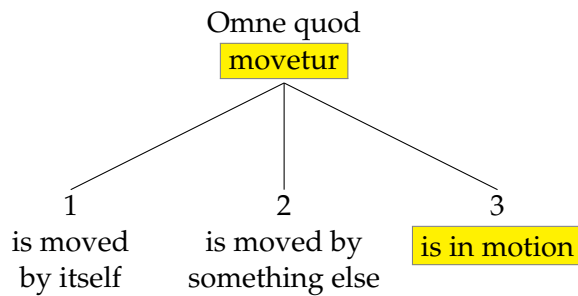
Second way: «The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God».

Note 1. As we have just seen, the notion of motion, from which the first way begins, can be intended in a broader sense as including change in general. That's probably the reason why St. Thomas doesn't spell out any kind of example about efficient cause within his second way. To speak about efficient causality is just another way to describe actuality in its ontological relation of primacy upon potentiality (primacy of the act)² and in fact if *practical* examples should be given, they won't concern but substantial change or various instances of motion taken more strictly (alteration, local motion, increase or decrease), that is the same kind of

²As we have already seen, every change can be described like the «act of the being which is in potentiality» («ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, κίνησις ἐστίν»: Aristotle, *Physics*, III, 1), where the change itself depends upon the act, so that without the corresponding act no change would be ever realized (even if potentially possible), because being in potentiality means «not being yet». And precisely because of this meaning, the act upon which change depends, must always correspond to an external cause being already in act with respect to the particular change considered. Hence we can properly speak of a *primacy of the act upon potentiality*.

examples that can be given with respect to the first way. That's why from a strait theoretical point of view the second way can be reduced to the first one. We can consider the second way the most general mode in which is possible to speak about efficient causality, whereas *in particular* the first and the forth way as more detailed modes of understanding it.

Note 2. Let's consider now how Hume conceives the question of efficient causality, claiming for the possibility of a third theoretical alternative.



This is the original text within which Hume exposes his objections as the occasion for a third alternative: simply there would be no cause at all (things are not moved by anyone, but precisely «are in motion»). A possibility that, according to Hume, wouldn't be in deed excluded by the first two, which, when presented under the form of a conclusive argument, in reality at a better consideration appear to have been developed only in a vulgar paralogism.

«[...] We shall find upon examination, that every demonstration, which has been produced for the necessity of a cause, is fallacious and sophistical. All the points of time and place, say some philosophers [...] [*]. The second argument [Dr. Clarke and others], which I find used on this head, labours under an equal difficulty. *Every thing*, it is said, *must have a cause; for if any thing wanted a cause, it would produce itself; that is, exist before it existed; which is impossible.* But this reasoning is plainly unconvulsive; because it supposes, that in our denial of a cause we still grant what we expressly deny, viz. that there must be a cause; which therefore is taken to be the object itself; and that, no doubt, is an evident contradiction. But to say that any thing is produced, or, to express myself more properly, comes into existence, without a cause, is not to affirm, that it is itself its own cause; but on the contrary in excluding all external causes, excludes a fortiori the thing itself, which is created. An object, that exists absolutely without any cause, certainly is not its own cause; and when you assert, that the one follows from the other, you suppose the very point in questions and take it for granted, that it is utterly impossible any thing can ever begin to exist without a cause, but that, upon the exclusion of one

productive principle, we must still have recourse to another. It is exactly the same case with the third argument [Mr. Locke.], which has been employed to demonstrate the necessity of a cause. *Whatever is produced without any cause, is produced by nothing; or in other words, has nothing for its cause. But nothing can never be a cause*, no more than it can be something, or equal to two right angles. By the same intuition, that we perceive nothing not to be equal to two right angles, or not to be something, we perceive, that it can never be a cause; and consequently must perceive, that every object has a real cause of its existence. I believe it will not be necessary to employ many words in showing the weakness of this argument, after what I have said of the foregoing. They are all of them founded on the same fallacy, and are derived from the same turn of thought. It is sufficient only to observe, that when we exclude all causes we really do exclude them, and neither suppose nothing nor the object itself to be the causes of the existence; and consequently can draw no argument from the absurdity of these suppositions to prove the absurdity of that exclusion. If every thing must have a cause, it follows, that upon the exclusion of other causes we must accept of the object itself or of nothing as causes. But it is the very point in question, whether every thing must have a cause or not; and therefore, according to all just reasoning, it ought never to be taken for granted» (Hume 1739, Book I, Part III, Section III, pp. 108-110).

[*] This is the first argument criticized by Hume (and proposed by Hobbes), argument which, anyway, is not of our interest in this case.

- If Hume has no doubt in saying that «the notion of a thing's bringing itself into existence is an evident contradiction», nevertheless he doesn't seem to note that not having at all a cause would lead immediately to a worst contradiction, because one deriving its own being *ex nihilo* would mean to imply the perfect identity of nothing and of being. In fact, because not having cause at all, is equivalent to not having relation with anything which could be in any sense a reason for one's existence, if one is supposed to exist without cause, that means it comes *ex nihilo*. But, without supposing a cause, to come *ex nihilo* corresponds to a contradiction, because it means being and not being with regard to the same thing. In other words, here one should not only «exist before it existed», but it should exist without existing.
- Against what reported in the two arguments criticized by Hume, «*ex nihilo*» does not mean «by nothing» but «from nothing» in a figurative sense, hence no causal power is necessary implied in this expression.

Fourth way: «The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. *But “more” and “less” are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum*, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph.* II. Now *the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus*; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God».

Note 1. More and less good = not moral but *ontological goodness*, that is things are more or less desirable object of appetite.

Note 2. More and less true = not logical truth (truth as it exists in the knowing intellect) but ontological truth, that is the «quality present in any being in virtue of which it can be grasped by intellect or, to put in other terms, the intelligibility of being» (Wippel 2000, p. 471).

Note 3. Being, goodness and truth are convertible with one another and can only conceptually distinguished = transcendental properties of being (*res, unum, aliquid, bonum, verum*).

Note 4. Noble: «I would suggest that by this term Thomas wants to signify the varying degrees of pure ontological perfection or excellence we discover in the different beings we experience in the world about us. Just as some share more fully in ontological goodness and truth than others, so too they may be regarded as being more perfect or more excellent, ontologically speaking, than others. Excellence (*nobilitas*) should not be regarded as a distinct transcendental» (Wippel 2000, p. 472).

Note 5. The first principle, upon which the proof depends («But “more” and “less” are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum»), refers to what has been called *exemplar causality* = the causal influence exercised by a model or an exemplar (extrinsic formal causality). *But can this principle really prove the existence of a first exemplar cause (being to the maximum degree)?* If on one hand «Thomas offers no justification in that context for the general claim that where there is a good and a better, there must be a best» (Wippel 2000, p. 474), on the other that principle doesn't seem to be self-evident. *Cornelio Fabro suggests the possibility of referring to St. Thomas's metaphysics of participation*, through which the fourth way could reach its best theoretical value. Fabro indicates in particular two texts, among others, which can be considered the latest

version of the argument that in the *Summa Theologiae* is ranked fourth: the first appears in the *Introduction* to the *Lectura* on St. John's Gospel and the second in the *Treatise on Separate Substances*. Both the arguments belong to the last production of St. Thomas and are clearly based upon the metaphysics of participation:

«Quidam autem venerunt in cognitionem Dei ex dignitate ipsius Dei: et isti fuerunt Platonici. Consideraverunt enim quod *omne illud quod est secundum participationem, reducitur ad aliquid quod sit illud per suam essentiam, sicut ad primum et ad summum*; sicut omnia ignita per participationem reducuntur ad ignem, qui est per essentiam suam talis. Cum ergo omnia quae sunt, participant esse, et sint per participationem entia, necesse est esse aliquid in cacumine omnium rerum, quod sit ipsum esse per suam essentiam, idest quod sua essentia sit suum esse: et hoc est Deus, qui est sufficientissima, et dignissima, et perfectissima causa totius esse, a quo omnia quae sunt, participant esse» (*Prologus Lecturae in Evangelium Joannis*).

«Still others came to a knowledge of God from the dignity of God; and these were the Platonists. They noted that *everything which is something by participation is reduced to what is the same thing by essence, as to the first and highest*. Thus, all things which are fiery by participation are reduced to fire, which is such by its essence. And so since all things which exist participate in *esse* and are beings by participation, there must necessarily be at the summit of all things something which is *esse* by its essence, i.e., whose essence is its being. And this is God, who is the most sufficient, the most eminent, and the most perfect cause of the whole of existence, from, whom all things that are participate *esse*».

«Posuit enim Plato omnes inferiores substantias immateriales esse unum et bonum per participationem primi, quod est secundum se unum et bonum. *Omne autem participans aliquid, accipit id quod participat, ab eo a quo participat: et quantum ad hoc, id a quo participat, est causa ipsius*; sicut aer habet lumen participatum a sole, quae est causa illuminationis ipsius. Sic igitur secundum Platonem summus Deus causa est omnibus immaterialibus substantiis, quod unaquaeque earum et unum sit, et bonum. Et hoc etiam Aristoteles posuit: quia, ut ipse dicit, "necesse est ut id quod est maxime ens, et maxime verum, sit causa essendi et veritatis omnibus aliis"» (*De substantiis separatis*, Ch. 3).

«For Plato held that all lower immaterial substances are one and good by participation in the first, which is essentially one and good. *Now whatever participates in something, receives that which it participates from the one from whom it participates; and to this extent that from which it participates is its cause*, just as air has light which it participates from the sun which is the cause of

its illumination. Therefore, according to Plato, the highest God is the reason why all immaterial substances are each one of them one and good. Aristotle, too, held this opinion because, as he himself says, “that which is most being and most truth is the cause of being and truth for all other things”».

Note 1. As it is immediately evident, here the metaphysics of participation is strictly connected with exemplar causality, because the thing «by essence», to which everything «by participation» has to be reduced, also represents the «first and highest» thing in its category (exemplar cause); so that finally everything that has its «esse» by participation can be reduced to the «esse per essentiam» (*esse* by essence) like its cause.

Note 2. But immediately other two problems arise, because on the one hand (1) many scholars hold that, both theoretically and according to St. Thomas himself, the metaphysics of participation (and hence the «real distinction between *esse* and *essentia*», which is its very heart) can be developed only after God’s existence has been already proved and, on the other, (2) it seems that here (in both texts) no prove is given for the (only) stated causal dependence of what is by participation from what is by essence (efficient causality). It is possible to answer to both questions, considering what Thomas says about the real distinction in his early writing *De ente et essentia* Ch. 4. Against the *universal hylemorphism* St. Thomas is here concerned with the problem of showing how essence is realized in separate substances (soul, intelligences and First Cause). But if *universal hylemorphism* has to be rejected, on the other side it seems that, like God, simple substances or forms are perfectly simple.

«It is in responding to this difficulty that Thomas introduces his argumentation for distinction and composition of essence and *esse* in all such entities. Even though such substances are pure forms and lack matter according to Aquinas, he refuses to admit that they are so simple in themselves as to be identified as pure actualities. He insists that they do include some degree of potentiality. It is important for the reader to note this point, since it indicates that if Thomas is to achieve his objective in developing the argumentation which follows, he will have to establish some kind of real and ontological, as distinguished from any purely mind-dependent or logical, act-potency composition or admixture within such beings» (Wip-pel 2000, p. 140).

Let’s read and comment the original text.

First part «Whatever is not of the understood content of an essence or quality is something which comes from without and makes a composition with the essence, because no essence can be understood

without the things which are parts of it. Now, every essence or quiddity can be understood without anything being understood about its existence. For I can understand what a man is, or what a phoenix is, and yet not know whether they have existence in the real world. It is clear, therefore, that existence is other than essence or quiddity, unless perhaps there exists a thing whose quiddity is its existence».

Note 1. Among scholars it is controversial if this text has to be taken as an independent argument or only as the first *formal* phase of it (an introduction to the subsequent strongest part of the argument). In fact this argument «seems to move very quickly from its recognition of the distinction between knowing what something is and knowing that it is to the conclusion that there is a corresponding extramental distinction of an essence principle and an *esse* principle within any such being» (Wippel 2000, p. 141).

Second part: demonstration of real distinction «And there can be but one such thing, the First Thing, because it is impossible to plurify a thing except: (1) by the addition of some difference, as the nature of the genus is multiplied in its species, or (2) by the reception of a form into diverse matters, as the nature of the species is multiplied in diverse individuals, or (3) by this: that one is absolute and the other is received into something; for example, if there were a separated heat, it would by virtue of its very separation be other than heat which is not separated [that is, instances of heat which are received in something else which is heated]. Now, if we posit a thing which is existence [*esse*] alone, such that this existence [*esse*] is subsistent, this existence will not receive the addition of a difference because it would no longer be existence [*esse*] alone, but existence [*esse*] plus some form. And much less will it receive the addition of matter because it would no longer be a subsistent existence [*esse*], but a material existence. [Si autem ponatur aliqua res, quae sit esse tantum, ita ut ipsum esse sit subsistens, hoc esse non recipiet additionem differentiae, quia iam non esset esse tantum, sed esse et praeter hoc forma aliqua; et multo minus reciperet additionem materiae, quia iam esset esse non subsistens sed materiale] Whence it remains that such a thing, which is its own existence [*esse*], cannot be but one. Whence it is necessary, that in every thing other than this one its existence [*esse*] be other than its quiddity, or its nature, or its form. Whence it is necessary that existence[*esse*] in the intelligences be something besides the form, and this is why it was said that an intelligence is form and existence [*esse*]».

Note 1. «Owens has maintained that Thomas's argumentation in the *De ente* presupposes and must presuppose that God's existence has already been established before it can conclude to a real distinction between essence and *esse* in other entities. Owens and I continue to differ on this issue. On my reading, until this point in the argumentation, God's existence has entered in only as an hypothesis. At most there can be one being in which essence and *esse* are identical. In all other beings they must differ. *But if God's existence enters in at this point only as a working hypothesis, this does not mean that the conclusion itself is only hypothetical.* On the contrary, Thomas's point is to show that it is impossible for there to be more than one being in which essence and *esse* are identical. If we grant the fact of multiplicity, then in all existing things, with this single possible exception, essence and *esse* must differ. *Nor is this to reason from possibility to actuality.* It is rather to reason from the impossibility of there being more than one thing in which essence and *esse* are really identical to the conclusion that in all other things, with this one possible exception, essence and *esse* are not identical. It is only in what I shall call phase three of Thomas's argumentation that he attempts to prove that God does in fact exist» (Wipfel 2000, pp. 145-146).

Third part: prove of God's existence through real distinction «Omne autem quod convenit alicui vel est causatum ex principiis naturae suae, sicut risibile in homine, vel advenit ab aliquo principio extrinseco, sicut lumen in aere ex influentia solis. Non autem potest esse quod ipsum esse sit causatum ab ipsa forma vel quidditate rei (dico sicut a causa efficiente) quia sic aliqua res esset sui ipsius causa et aliqua res seipsam in esse produceret, quod est impossibile. Ergo oportet quod omnis talis res, cuius esse est aliud quam natura sua habeat esse ab alio. Et quia omne, quod est per aliud, reducitur ad illud quod est per se sicut ad causam primam, oportet quod sit aliqua res, quae sit causa essendi omnibus rebus, eo quod ipsa est esse tantum. Alias iretur in infinitum in causis, cum omnis res, quae non est esse tantum, habeat causam sui esse, ut dictum est. Patet ergo quod intelligentia est forma et esse et quod esse habet a primo ente, quod est esse tantum. Et hoc est causa prima, quae Deus est».

«Now, whatever belongs to a thing is either caused by the principles of its nature, as the ability to laugh in man, or comes to it from some extrinsic principle, as light in the air from the influence of the sun. But it cannot be that the existence of a thing is caused by the form or quiddity of that thing – I say caused as by an efficient cause – because then something would be its own

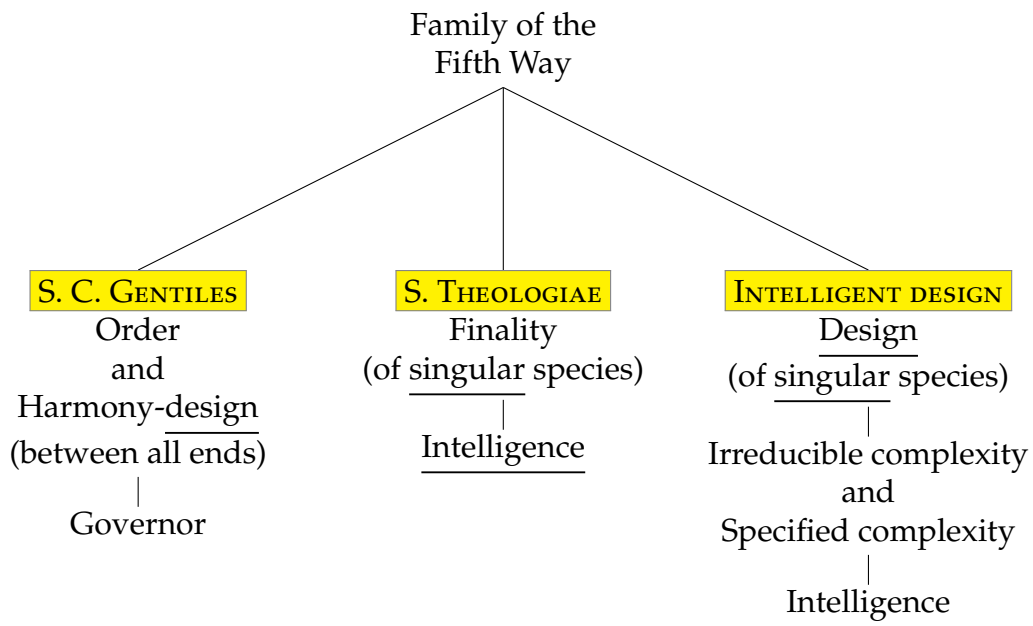
cause, and would bring itself into existence, which is impossible. *It is therefore necessary that every such thing, the existence of which is other than its nature, have its existence from some other thing.* And because every thing which exists by virtue of another is led back, as to its first cause, to that which exists by virtue of itself, it is necessary that there be some thing which is the cause of the existence of all things because it is existence alone. Otherwise, there would be an infinite regress among causes, since every thing which is not existence alone has a cause of its existence, as has been said. It is clear, therefore, that an intelligence is form and existence, and that it has existence from the First Being, which is existence alone. And this is the First Cause, which is God. *Now everything which receives something from another is in potency with respect to what it receives, and what is received into it is its act.* It is necessary therefore that the quiddity itself or the form, which is the intelligence, be in potency with respect to the existence which it receives from God; and this existence is received as an act. It is in this way that potency and act are found in the intelligences, but not form and matter, unless equivocally».

Fifth way: «The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God».

Note 1. The first point which is worth noticing is the difference between this formulation of the argument and the version that appears in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 13. Whereas here the argument is clearly based on the notion of finality, in his older work Thomas seems to build the proof giving greater relevance to the notions of order and design than to the one of finality.

«Contrary and discordant things cannot, always or for the most part, be parts of one order except under someone's government, which enables all and each to tend to a definite end. But in the world we find that things of diverse natures come together under one order, and this not rarely or by chance, but always or for the most part. There must therefore be some being by whose providence the world is governed. This we call God».

Note 2. If we are to include in our consideration of the matter also the arguments elaborated under the paradigm of the so called «intelligent design», we could sketch the characteristics of this family of proves in this way:



Third way: «The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. *But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence.* Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence, which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God».

Note 1. «If all things are possibles (capable of existing and not existing), at some point in the past nothing would have existed. This statement goes considerably farther than the previous one. If we suppose that every individual being is a possible and therefore has not existed at some point in the past, how does it follow from this that the totality of existing things will all have been nonexistent at the same point in the past? While some have defended Thomas against the charge of committing the fallacy of composition or a quantifier shift in this step, it is difficult to regard such defenses of his reasoning as successful» (Wippel 2000, p. 465).

Objection 1: «It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word “God” means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore God does not exist».

Reply: «As Augustine says (*Enchiridion* XI): “Since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil”. This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good».

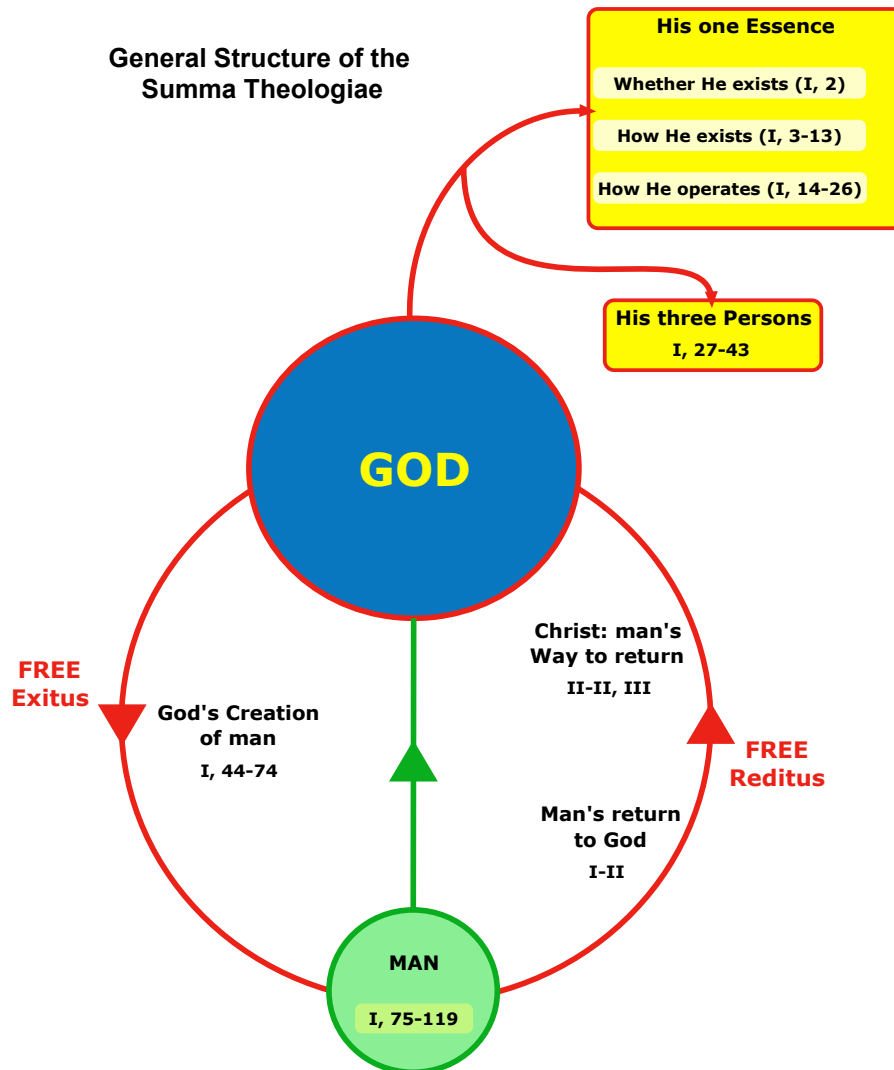
Note 1. Main reason why the existence of evil isn’t in contradiction with God’s existence: (1) Evil = lack of perfection or privation of something which a being should have (a privation exists whenever a being, which by nature and at a given time should possess an attribute, does not have it) $\implies$ (2) The existence of evil requires the existence of the particular being with respect to which evil is the lack of something $\implies$ (3) Conclusion: if the being affected by evil needs a cause for its existence (God as prime cause), then the existence of evil can’t be contradictory to the existence of that cause (= God), because that would mean being contradictory to the cause (=God) of what upon which (= that particular being) evil’s existence itself is necessary dependent.

Objection 2: «Further, it is superfluous to suppose that what can be accounted for by a few principles has been produced by many. But it seems that everything we see in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing God did not exist. For all natural things can be reduced to one principle which is nature; and all voluntary things can be reduced to one principle which is human reason, or will. Therefore there is no need to suppose God’s existence».

Reply: «Since nature works for a determinate end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever is done by nature must needs be traced back to God, as to its first cause. So also whatever is done voluntarily must

also be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason or will, since these can change or fail; for all things that are changeable and capable of defect must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle, as was shown in the body of the article».

General Structure of the
Summa Theologiae



Bibliography

- AQUINAS St. Thomas (1947). *The Summa Theologica*, Benziger Bros. Edition, <http://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/index.html>, where not otherwise specified: Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Electronic Edition by Sandra K. Perry, Perrysburg, Ohio.
- (1955-57). *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Hanover House, <http://www.josephkenny.joyeurs.com/CDtexts/ContraGentiles.htm>, Translated by Anton C. Pegis, James F. Anderson, Vernon J. Bourke and Charles J. O’Neil; updated by Joseph Kenny, O.P.
- CAMUS Albert (1997a). *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, in *Essais*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- (1997b). *L’homme révolté*, in *Essais*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- HUME David (1739). *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, MDCCCLIV ed., 4 vols., Boston-Edinburgh: Little-Brown Company, Adam and Charles Black, vol. I.
- PAOLO VI (1974). *Lumen Ecclesiae*, Apostolic letter.
- RICE Philip Blair (1955). *On the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, New York: Random House; repr. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1975.
- ROSS David (1995). *Aristotle*, VI ed., London and New York: Routledge, with an introduction by John L. Ackrill, first edition 1924.
- THOMAE Aquinatis. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Textum Leoninum emendatum ex plagulis de prelo Taurini 1961 editum ac automato translatum a Roberto Busa SJ, <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/>.
- *Summa Theologiae*, Textum Leoninum Romae 1888 editum ac automato translatum a Roberto Busa SJ, <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/>.
- *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, Textum a Bruno Decker Lugduni Batauorum 1959 editum ac automato translatum a Roberto Busa SJ, <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/>.
- WIPPEL John F. (2000). *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas. From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.