

ARTICLE FOURUtrum divina scientia sit de his quae sunt sine materia et motu

The present article presents a problem that comes into perspective with the solution of the preceding difficulties. It was actually there from the beginning. When dividing the speculative sciences in article one, St. Thomas takes pains to point out that the third member of the division has many names, and this for distinct reasons. It is called theology inasmuch as God is most perfect among all that this science can come to know. Because we first know and define sensible things, the science that deals with what lies beyond the scope of natural science is called metaphysics. Though following the other sciences in the order of acquisition, it is prior to them according to nature and hence is called first philosophy. These diverse denominations forewarn us of the difficulties to be encountered. Yet we can take courage from St. Thomas who says apropos of the science in question: "Illud tamen modicum quod ex ea habetur, praeponderat omnibus quae per alias scientias cognoscuntur." ¹

1. A twofold problem

If we are to benefit from these words, we must bear

1. St. Thomas, In 1 Metaph., lect. 3, n. 60.

in mind St. Thomas's viewpoint in this context. To disregard this would be to compound the difficulty by oversimplifying it. The difficulty at hand is twofold: whether there actually is a third science, and if there is, how it is possible for this science to consider without matter things which are without matter and motion. Pursuing his investigation from the sapiential vantage point, St. Thomas can presuppose the first as resolved. One less discerning could not do so, however, without the risk of misunderstanding St. Thomas's solution of the second. The sciences, it will be recalled, are distinguished according to their modes of defining. It has been suggested that there is a science which defines without sensible matter things which are without matter. But we are not sure of such a science until this manner of defining has been verified. Now such a manner of defining is not immediately evident. Unlike the mathematical mode of defining, the present one cannot be guaranteed by means of a construct that would demonstrate that there is a reality without matter. That whose existence is made known by mathematical construction is as the proper passio in a quasi operational demonstration. Only after being thus established can it be known as subject for other properties. This is not possible in the present case. "Id autem quod est ita subiectum, quod nullius est accidens, substantia est. Unde in illis scientiis, quarum subiectum est aliqua substantia, id quod est subiectum

nullo modo potest esse passio, sicut est in philosophia prima,
et in scientia naturali, quae est de subiecto mobili.²

The similarity between this science and natural philosophy, in that each has for its subject something substantial,³ does not mean that both subjects are known in the same way. From the preceding articles it is clear that the mode of defining in natural philosophy can be readily verified. Although the definition of man is not the definition of this man, it is applicable to him as he is known with dependence upon sensation. The possibility of defining without sensible matter and yet to deal with reality must await proof. Such proof can only be furnished through demonstration of the fact that there is such a reality and that it exists without sensible matter. This puts the lie to any illusion of a rarefaction of physical definitions revealing a hidden, more profound dimension that would certify this third manner of defining.

2. The existence of metaphysics is not immediately evident

The awareness of supersensible realities is obviously part of our historical and especially our Christian situation. But this is hardly the positive verification required for the

2. St. Thomas, In I Post. Anal., lect. 2, n. 5.

3. "...Naturalis et philosophus primus considerant essentias secundum quod habent esse in rebus...." St. Thomas, In Boeth. de Trin., q. 6, a. 3, c.

origins of metaphysics as a science acquired by unaided reason. Sciences are not to be multiplied without reason. The systematic origin of metaphysics must be a development to which the philosopher is led in his search for an adequate explanation of reality as he knows it. Whatever is involved in this approach must spring from and be justified in the natural development of science. The justification of a third sort of speculative science with its own mode of defining is found in the proof that there are realities separate from matter. Short of such a proof, what need is there for this science? There is no reason for a science if there is no subject matter for it. And if there is no subject matter there are no special difficulties to be solved and no special principles with which to solve them.

The proof in question is not a simple undertaking. It derives, on the one hand, from the investigation of things proportioned to our intellect; things material in themselves as well as the human soul which, while not itself material, is united to a body. Together with this is the realization that things demanding sensible matter for their existence and their definition point only a partial picture of reality. ⁴

4. Here in the De Trinitate, St. Thomas is not concerned with the basis of this proof but only with its result. In other places he is more explicit, indicating where the development of this pre-existing knowledge, requisite for the existence of metaphysics as a science, is exposed. See in I Metaph., lect. 12, n. 181; IV, lect. 5, n. 593. See also in I De Anima, lect. 1, n. 7.

Otherwise, what logic would inaugurate a search for causes and principles of nature outside of nature itself? In the absence of this proof the principles of natural philosophy are adequate to interpret our experience of the mobile world. Without it, as St. Thomas frequently remarks, natural philosophy would be the supreme science.⁵ However, this "break-through" dethrones natural philosophy since it not only shows that there is a third and distinct mode of defining, hence a third science, but also establishes this science as dealing with what is first in itself to be the first science. Once the real existence of something prior to the subject of natural philosophy has been guaranteed, the science which considers this reality is thereby recognized as prior to natural philosophy. The reason is that this prior reality is the cause of those things considered by the other sciences.⁶ Being first, this science is also the common science. In other words,

5. St. Thomas, *In III Metaph.*, lect. 6, n. 398; VI, lect. 1, n. 1170; XI, lect. 3, n. 2204; lect. 7, n. 2267.

6. "Si autem est aliqua talis natura in entibus, scilicet quae sit separabilis et immobilis, oportet quod 'talis natura sit alicubi', idest quod attribuaturs alicui substantiae. Et id quod habet istam naturam erit quoddam divinum, et quoddam principalissimum omnium; quia quanto aliquid est simplicius et formalius in entibus, tanto est nobilius et prius et magis causa aliorum. Et sic patet quod haec scientia quae considerat huiusmodi entia separabilia, debet vocari scientia divina, et scientia de primis principiis." St. Thomas, *In XI Metaph.*, lect. 7, n. 2263.

although divided over and against the particular sciences as a part of speculative science, it is more than simply another science. It is the universal science. Inasmuch as it comes to know the first being, it considers all other beings of which the first is the cause. Since it eventually considers the one who is most perfectly, all else will henceforth be considered as participations. No other science could be the common science since to consider only what lies this side of the first being, the cause of all else, would not be a consideration of all being.

Although roughly sketched, this prospectus of metaphysics culled from natural science, mandatory by way of foreknowledge, has a more authentic ring than the product of a purely mental exercise protracted until the supposed equivalent of some pre-determined immateriality is reached. Obligated from the beginning to return to its starting point to reappraise things known heretofore only as changeable and material, the primacy of this science is in no way contravened by the fact that it reaches to the extremes of reality.

Nobilitas enim scientiae attenditur secundum ea ad quae principaliter scientia ordinatur, at non ad omnia quaecumque in scientia cadunt: sub nobilissima enim scientiarum, apud nos, cadunt non solum suprema in entibus, sed etiam infima; nam Philosophia Primo considerationem suam extendit a primo ente usque ad ens in potentia, quod est ultimum in entibus. 7

3. The same science considers its subject and the principles of that subject

The possibility of this science to consider things which are without matter is the subject of inquiry in the present article. To face this question St. Thomas must delineate each facet of the science mentioned above, as well as distinguish it from the science of Sacred Théology with which it has a certain likeness. For this reason he begins by determining the sense in which this science is called divine science or theology.

Every science has its proper subject, taken from its mode of defining, about which it seeks scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge, we have seen, is attained in the conclusion of a demonstration wherein properties and attributes are predicated of their subject. The terms of the conclusion are related necessarily and per se, inasmuch as that signified by the predicate is an accident which is predicated of its proper matter or subject. Now since the being of an accident is to be in a subject, an accident can't be understood without its subject. A subject must be included in the definition of accidents. When there is question of a proper passio the subject must be the proper subject. In a strict demonstration, that which is represented as subject of the conclusion is both the actual subject and cause of the property represented by the predicate. Because of this twofold

relationship, the subject is called a subject genus inasmuch as it is included in the definition of the property as its genus. Thus each science has its proper subject genus taken from its manner of defining.⁸ Though a cause of properties, the subject genus has its own principles and causes which are investigated by the same science. "Eiusdem autem scientiae est considerare causas proprias alicuius generis et genus ipsum."⁹ The movement of science is to demonstrate the properties of its subject genus starting from the principles of that subject.¹⁰

4. Principles that are only principles and principles that are more than principles

The word 'principle', like many words already encountered, is analogical. Aristotle, after considering the various meanings of the word, gives as the common notion of principle the following: "the first point from which a thing either is or comes to be or is known".¹¹ Those things to which the word is applied differ considerably. Some, while being principles in relation to something else, are nonetheless complete natures in themselves. To manifest this kind of principle St. Thomas uses examples taken from the physics

8. "Distinguuntur autem genera scibilium secundum diversum modum cognoscendi. Sicut alio modo cognoscantur ea quae definiuntur cum materia, et ea quae definiuntur sine materia." St. Thomas, In I Post. Anal., lect. 41, n. 12.

9.- St. Thomas, In Metaph., Prooemium.

10. See St. Thomas, In I De Caelo et Mundo, lect. 1, n. 2; In V. Metaph., lect. 7, n. 749.

11. Aristotle, Metaph. V, c. 1, 1013a 18.

of Aristotle, according to which the celestial bodies were considered as principles of terrestrial bodies and the four elements were regarded as principles of mixed bodies. Scientific knowledge was believed possible in regard to the celestial bodies and the four elements not only as principles but also as to what they were in themselves. Hence the science which considers only those things of which the principles are principles is not an exhaustive knowledge of the principles themselves. For this a separate science is required. And so in his treatise on the universe Aristotle devotes a separate consideration to the celestial bodies apart from the study of terrestrial bodies. The four elements likewise receive a separate consideration.

Besides these, there are principles which are only principles and which in themselves are incomplete natures. Of these, the only science possible is that acquired in considering things of which they are the principles. Such are the unit and the point in mathematics as well as the matter and form of physical bodies. The limitation of Aristotle's conception of the celestial bodies and the basic elements in no way reflects upon the argumentation proposed here by St. Thomas. In order to manifest the scientific consideration of principles, those mentioned here are merely taken by way of exempla, and the validity of exemplum as a form of argumentation abstracts from the particular subject from which

It is taken. ¹²

Before applying this distinction of principles as relevant to the science in question, St. Thomas points out that just as there are common principles which extend to all the principles of a particular genus, such as the unit, the point and the surface in the genus of quantity, so too, of all beings, considered not in any determinate genus but precisely under the aspect of being, there are principles which are common. A point previously made, but deserving of reaffirmation here, is the flexibility of the words used by St. Thomas to express his thought in the present study. To appreciate this is to have found the key which opens the door to an understanding of what might otherwise remain locked up in apparent contradiction. St. Thomas is seldom more categorical than when he asserts that being is not a genus. Yet the comparison just drawn between being and particular genera must have some foundation. As the following passage shows, this comparison cannot be explained away

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12. The force of example derives from similarity. The more precise the similitude, the better the example. "Hoc autem exemplum non procedit secundum sententiam Aristotelis qui existimavit utrumque esse ens: et ideo subjungit quod nihil differt ad propositum talia exempla vel alia supponere. Querimus enim, inducendo exempla, modum, sed non subiectum; non curantes scilicet utrum sic se habeat in his terminis, vel in quibuscumque aliis. Et propter hoc etiam in libris Logicae utitur exemplis secundum opiniones aliorum philosophorum; quae non sunt inducenda quasi sint verba Aristotelis." St. Thomas, In I De Generatione, lect. 8, n. 2.

as being merely ad hoc.

...Si in aliquo genere aliquod primum invenitur quod sit causa aliorum, eiusdem considerationis est commune genus et id quod est primum in genere illo: quia illud primum est causa totius generis, oportet autem eum qui considerat genus aliquod, causas totius generis considerare. Et inde est quod Philosophus in Metaphysica simul determinat de ente in communi et de ente primo, quod est a materia separatum. 13

Genus in this sense does not mean predicable genus. Nor does it mean natural genus which was discussed earlier. Both meanings are too strict. Genus is said of being in the sense of what is proportionately one in reference to some first thing which is the cause of all others. Here we see the impossibility of restricting the amplitude of words. In this particular case, the alternative would be a univocal conception of being. We can also foresee what this will mean in relation to definition in metaphysics. In metaphysics we are far from the definition by genus and difference that characterizes the intellect's mode of knowing its proper object. This is already foreshadowed in natural definition.¹⁴

13. St. Thomas, In De Generatione et Corruptione, Prooemium.

14. "Logicus enim considerat absolute intentiones, secundum quas nihil prohibet convenire immaterialia materialibus et incorruptibilia corruptibilibus. Sed naturalis et philosophus primus considerant essentias secundum quod habent esse in rebus, et ideo ubi inveniunt diversum modum potentiae et actus et per hoc diversum modum essendi, dicunt esse diversa genera." St. Thomas, In Boeth. de Trin., q. 6, a. 3, c.

5. Common principles: according to predication and causality

Because the term 'common principle', connoting something prior or more universal, is extremely equivocal, at this juncture in the text St. Thomas makes the important distinction between principles common or universal according to predication and those that are universal in causality. The community in each case pertains to a different order, namely, the logical and the real, and as regards science, extends in the opposite directions of confused and distinct knowledge. According to predication, form is a common principle of all forms because it can be predicated of any one. But to know man, for example, only as animal is very confused as to knowledge of man as such. On the other hand, to know man according to his universal causes would be a most distinct knowledge because such causes would account for even the slightest determination and distinction. "*Quanto enim aliqua causa est altior, tanto est communior et efficacior, et quanto est efficacior, tanto profundius ingreditur in effectum, et de remotiori potentia ipsum reducit in actu.*"¹⁵

If all genera of being, considered precisely as being, there are common principles both according to predication and according to causality. According to predication there are common principles in the sense that all beings are said to have intrinsic and extrinsic causes. That is, of

15. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 7, c; See also St. Thomas, In De Divinis Nominibus, c. 5, lect. 11, n. 662.

every kind of being something is predicated either as a constitutive element or as a moving principle.

...Quia non solum sunt causae ea quae dicta sunt intrinseca rei, sed etiam ea quae sunt extrinseca, sicut movens, manifestum est quod principium et elementum differunt. Nam principium proprie dicitur quod est extra sicut movens. Nam ab eo est principium motus. Elementum autem proprie dicitur causa intrinseca et qua constituitur res.

Sed ambo dicuntur causae, scilicet tam principia extrinseca quam intrinseca. Et principium quodammodo dividitur in ea, scilicet intrinsecas causas et extrinsecas. Sunt enim quaedam principia intrinseca, ut in quinto ostensum est. Sicut fundamentum est principium domus secundum materiam, et animal hominis secundum formam. Sed id quod est movens, aut sistens, id est quiescere faciens, est principium quoddam, sed non est elementum; quia elementum est ex eo quo fit aliquid, et est in eo....16

But these principles are common only proportionately or according to analogy because it is not the same thing which is predicated of all beings as an element or as a principle.

Sic igitur causae et principia omnium secundum analogiam sunt quatuor; scilicet materia, et forma, et privatio, et principium movens. Non tamen haec sunt eadem in omnibus, sed alia in aliis. Sicut enim supra dictum est, quod species et materia et privatio sunt alia in aliis, ita etiam prima causarum, quae est quasi movens, est alia in aliis.

Et hoc manifestat per exemplum. Sicut in sanatis sanitas est sicut forma, infirmitas sicut privatio, corpus sicut materia; sicut movens autem ars medicinalis. In aedificativis autem est species domus sicut forma, 'inordinatio talis', id est opposita ordini quem requirit domus, est privatio, lateres autem sicut materia, movens autem est ars aedificatoria. Et sic in ista quatuor dividitur principium. 17

Because these principles are common only according to proportion, they are not common simply, i.e., they are not,

16. St. Thomas, In XII Metaph., lect. 4, nn. 2463-69; See De Principiis Naturae, c. 3. (In Opuscula Philosophica).

17. St. Thomas, In XII Metaph., lect. 4, n. 2471-72.

in the measure that they are common, one and the same thing in reality. There are, however, principles of all being which are simply the same. These are principles which are common or universal according to causality. Actually existing one and the same numerically, they are extrinsic moving causes to which their effects are irreducible according to species. These principles are the same for all beings but in a certain order.

The principles of accidents are reducible to the principles of substance. Substance exists per se, while accidents cannot exist without substance and the destruction of substance means the destruction of accident. Thus the principles of substance, matter and form, are causes of accidents. It is to be noted that the reduction of accidents to substance does not mean that substance exists as a universal. Rather, substance which exists per se is considered universally.

"...Licet universalia non per se existant, tamen naturas eorum quae per se subsistunt est considerare universaliter. Et secundum hoc accipiuntur genera et species in praedicamento substantiae, quae dicuntur secundae substantiae, de quibus est scientia." 18

Aristotle's injunction to reduce particular effects to particular causes and universal effects to universal causes¹⁹

18. Ibid., XI, lect. 2, n. 2139.

19. See Aristotle, Physics, II, c. 3, 195b 25.

does not mean that of all particular men there is a universally existing man who is their cause. The cause of this singular man is another singular man.²⁰ Father considered universally is not the cause or principle of a child considered universally unless we understand that to be a father is to be the cause of a child, and this is true universally. So too in the case of accidents, the principles of my accidents are different numerically from those of your accidents because my body and soul are numerically different from yours. But specifically they are not different. Considered universally they are the same. Just as body and soul are matter and form of man, so this body and this soul are the matter and form of this man. Thus the principles of substance are universally the principles of accidents. "Unde manifestum est quod principia prima in genere substantiae sunt etiam causae omnium aliorum generum, non solum quantum ad primam causam moventem, sed etiam quantum ad causas intrinsecas. Nam materia et forma substantiae sunt causae accidentium."²¹

If it is not possible to reduce a particular substance such as a singular man to a universally existing man, still there must be something prior to which the principles of corruptible substance can be reduced as to their principles.

20. St. Thomas, In XII Metaph., lect. 3, n. 2454.

21. Ibid., lect. 4, n. 2475.

Singular men are particular causes. A man, in begetting, causes another man but he does not cause 'what it is to be a man' in the begotten. Of two things in the same species one cannot be the per se cause of what makes them both belong to that species. To do so a man would have to be the efficient cause of his own being a man.

Nullum particulare agens univocum potest esse simpliciter causa speciei; sicut hic homo non potest esse causa speciei humanae; esset enim causa omnis hominis, et per consequens sui ipsius; quod est impossibile. Est autem causa hic homo huius hominis, per se loquendo. Hic autem homo est per hoc quod natura humana est in hac materia, quae est individuationis principium. Hic agitur homo non est causa hominis, nisi inquantum est causa quod forma humana fiat in hac materia. Hoc autem est esse principium generationis huius hominis. Potest ergo quod nec hic homo, nec aliquod aliud agens univocum in natura, est causa nisi generationis huius vel illius rei. Oportet autem ipsius speciei humanae esse aliquam per se causam agentem: quod ipsius compositio ostendit, et ordinatio partium, quae eodem modo se habet in omnibus, nisi per accidens impediatur. Et eadem ratio est de omnibus aliis speciebus rerum naturalium. 22

Besides the particular cause whose causality consists in constituting the individual within the species, there must be a prior principle responsible for the species itself. As its cause, this principle cannot be contained within the species and so is said to be equivocal in relation to its effects which receive its form only according to a generic similitude.²³

22. Contra Gentiles, III, c. 65, n. 2400.

23. "...Agens aequivocum oportet esse prius quam agens univocum, quia agens univocum non habet causalitatem super totam speciem, alias esset causa sui ipsius, sed solum super aliquod individuum speciei; agens autem aequivocum habet causalitatem super totam speciem; unde oportet primum agens esse aequivocum." De Potentia, q. 7, a. 7, ad 7.

According to the physics of Aristotle the incorruptible celestial bodies were the equivocal or non-univocal causes to which the principles of material substances are reducible. The shortcomings of his physics notwithstanding, Aristotle did recognize the need for principles which are universal causes, even though he erroneously identified them. The causality of the celestial bodies could be impeded per accidens due to a lack of proper disposition on the part of the matter in material things. Moreover there are certain particular causes, rational agents, to whom this causality could extend only per accidens.²⁴ Whence the necessity of prin-

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24. "Quando enim agens aliquod inducit effectum suum ut in pluribus, et non semper, sequatur, quod deficiat in paucioribus, et hoc per accidens est. Si igitur corpora caelestia effectos suos inducunt in inferiora corpora, ut in pluribus, et non semper, propter materiae indispotionem, sequatur, quod ipsum sit per accidens, quod virtus caelestis effectum suum non consequatur. Licet etiam ex hoc inveniantur aliqua per accidens, facta reductione ad corpus caelestes quia in istis inferioribus sunt aliquae causae agentes, quae possunt per se agere absque impressione corporis caelestis, scilicet animae rationales, ad quas non pertingit virtus corporis caelestis (cum sint formae corporibus non subiectae), nisi forte per accidens, inquantum scilicet ex impressione corporis caelestis fit aliqua immutatio in corpore, et per accidens in viribus animae, quae sunt actus quarundam partium corporis, ex quibus anima rationalis inclinatur ad agendum, licet nulla necessitas inducatur, cum habeat liberum dominium super passionem, ut eis dissentiat. Illa igitur, quae in his inferioribus inveniuntur per accidens fieri reducendo ad has causas, scilicet animas rationales, prout non sequuntur inclinationem, quae est ex impressione caelesti, non inveniuntur per se fieri per reductionem ad virtutem corporis caelestis." St. Thomas, In VI Metaph., lect. 3, nn. 1212-13.

ciples to which all beings, including these less universal causes, are reducible, and ultimately, of one principle which is absolutely universal.²⁵ Of this principle St. Thomas says, "Id, quod est principium essendi omnibus, oportet esse maxime ens...." That is said to be maxime in any genus which is the cause of whatever is within the genus. "Unumquodque inter alia maxime dicitur, ex quo causatur in aliis aliquid univoce praedicatum de eis; sicut ignis est causa caloris in elementatis. Unde, cum calor univoce dicatur et de igne et de elementatis corporibus, sequitur quod ignis sit calidissimus."²⁶

As a cause which exceeds all genera and species and which communicates with its effects according to an analogical similitude only, this simply universal principle is not merely maxime in a given genus of being but is maxime ens absolutely. A principle which is universal according to causality, it must be most complete or perfect inasmuch as it is the measure of whatever is more or less in the order of being; something is more or less perfect in proportion to its proximity to the measure which lacks nothing of the given perfection. As most perfect it is most actual, being either without potency entirely, or having only the least possible. "Secundum hoc enim dicitur aliquid esse perfectum, secundum

25. For a detailed exposition of proofs for an absolutely universal cause, see De Potentia, q. 3, a. 5, c.

26. St. Thomas, In II Metaph., lect. 2, n. 292.

quod est actu; nam perfectum dicitur, cui nihil deest secundum modum suae perfectionis." 27 Although potentiality precedes actuality in the order of generation, actuality is prior absolutely.²⁸ Consequently the first principles of all being must exist without matter, which is potential, and without motion, which is the actuality of that which exists in potency. Having thus briefly described the first principles, universal according to causality, St. Thomas, paraphrasing Aristotle, concludes: "Et huiusmodi sunt res divinae; 'quasi divinum alicubi existit, in tali natura', immateriali scilicet et immobili, maxime 'existit' ".²⁹ The equation of these principles with the divine represents a significant development of metaphysics beyond earlier theogonies. Stimulated by wonder at forces which appeared to transcend man and by the desire to know something about them, the great speculative minds of the Greeks gradually succeeded in disengaging the divine from matter and purely material forces with which less perceptive minds had more or less identified all reality.

27. Ia, q. 4, a. 1, c.

28. "Principium materiale, quod apud nos imperfectum invenitur, non potest esse simpliciter primum, sed praeceditur ab alio perfecto. Nam semen, licet sit principium animalis generati ex semine, tamen habet ante se animal vel plantam unde deciditur. Oportet enim ante id quod est in potentia, esse aliquid actu: cum ens in potentia non reducat in actum, nisi per aliquid ens in actu." Ia, q. 4, a. 1, ad 2.

29. Aristotle, Metaph., V8, c. 1, 1026a 20.

In light of the distinction previously made, St. Thomas points out that these principles can be considered scientifically in two ways: as common to all being and as complete natures in themselves. There is, however, an important difference between those principles mentioned in the examples used to manifest this distinction and those to which the distinction is here applied. The latter, though most intelligible in themselves, are least intelligible for the human intellect, whose ineptitude Aristotle likens to the eyes of a bat in the brilliance of the sun.³⁰ Unaided, the human intellect can only attain such principles, i.e., universal causes, through a knowledge of their effects. "...Consideratio speculativae scientiae non se extendit ultra virtutem principiorum illius scientiae: quia in principis scientiae virtualiter tota scientia continetur. Prima autem principia scientiarum speculativarum sunt per sensum accepta.... Unde tota consideratio scientiarum speculativarum non potest ultra extendi quam sensibilibus cognitio ducere potest."³¹ Knowledge of sensible things can lead us to the existence of these first principles and to some of their conditions, but no further. It is incapable of revealing what they are in themselves. Knowledge of the 'what it is' of sensible things is knowledge through genus and difference. This knowledge implies matter and form and is consequently ill-proportioned

30. Aristotle, Metaph., II, c. 1, 993b 9-11.

31. Ia IIae, q. 3, a. 6, c.

to express the simple and immaterial nature of these first principles.³² The philosopher can thus consider them as causes known, not in themselves, but only inasmuch as they are proportional to the effects as we know these. "Quaedam etiam per se existentes sunt principia, quae, quia immateriales, pertinent ad intelligibilem cognitionem, licet excedant intellectus nostri comprehensionem."³³

6. The subject of metaphysics is ens in quantum est ens

How then does speculative science consider such principles? St. Thomas states: "Et ideo pertractantur in illa doctrina, in qua ponuntur ea quae sunt communia omnibus entibus, quae habet subjectum ens in quantum est ens...."

The word 'doctrine' is important. In his commentary on the Posterior Analytics St. Thomas explains it. "Nomen autem doctrinae et disciplinae ad cognitionis acquisitionis pertinet. Nam doctrina est actio eius, qui aliquid cognoscere facit; disciplina autem est receptio cognitionis ab alio."³⁴

32. "Multa enim sunt ad quae sensus pertingere non potest, de quibus per sensibilia non nisi modicam notitiam accipere possumus, ut forte sciamus de eis quod sint, non autem quid sint, ea quod substantiarum immaterialium quidditates alterius generis sunt a quidditatibus rerum sensibillium, et eas quasi improporcionabiliter transcendentis." Compendium Theologiae, c. 104, n. 208 (In Opuscula Theologica).

33. St. Thomas, In XI Metaph., lect. 2, n. 2139.

34. St. Thomas, In I Post. Anal., lect. 1, n. 9.

Doctrine and discipline are two aspects of one and the same thing but that does not mean that they must be simultaneous in every way. The teacher is properly said to teach when he recreates in the mind of the disciple his own process of discovery.³⁵ But what is known per modum doctrinae need not be presented in that fashion, as the present situation bears out. It is true that the subject as subject, i.e., something to be subsequently investigated, is the beginning of a science, but the student ready to begin metaphysics is not beginning science entirely. That ens in quantum est ens is the subject of the science which seeks the common properties as well as the first causes of all being is not immediately apparent. Quite the contrary, it presupposes proof of a way of knowing that is irreducibly different from that of either natural science or mathematics and, hence, responsible for a distinct science.

As stated, it is the study of natural things which provides the loci for this proof. Considering changeable things, the living as well as the non-living, according to their principles, causes and elements, the mind comes to recognize that this is but a partial view. Motion in the mobile requires

35. De Veritate, q. 11, a. 1, c; De Spiritualibus Creaturis, a. 9, ad 7.

a first mover unmoved.³⁶ The intellectual soul, though the form of a body, is nevertheless, the principle of acts subjectively independent of matter and it can also be apart from matter.³⁷

That the rational soul is separable from matter and that there is a first mover unmoved are truths, neither of which is known without demonstration, and while they are attained within natural science, what they are about is a term of the science, not a subject. Without knowing what the first mover is in itself or what the soul is in its state of separation, the mind is alive to the fact that the material

36. "...De primo motore non agitur in scientia naturali tamquam de subiecto vel de parte subiecti, sed tamquam de termino ad quem scientia naturalis perducit. Terminus autem non est de natura rei, cuius est terminus, sed habet aliquam habitudinem ad rem illam sicut terminus lineae non est linea, sed habet ad eam aliquam habitudinem, ita etiam et primus motor est alterius naturae a rebus naturalibus, habet tamen ad eas aliquam habitudinem, in quantum influit eis motum, et sic cadit in consideratione naturalis, scilicet non secundum ipsum, sed in quantum est motor." St. Thomas, in Boeth. de Trin., q. 3, a. 2, ad 3.

37. "...Terminus considerationis scientiae naturalis est circa formas quae quidem sunt aliquo modo separatae, sed tamen esse habent in materia. Et huiusmodi formae sunt animae rationales: quae quidem sunt separatae in quantum intellectiva virtus non est actus alicuius organi corporalis, sicut virtus visiva est actus oculi; sed in materia sunt in quantum dant esse naturale tali corpori.... Sed quomodo se habeant formae totaliter a materia separatae, et quid sint vel etiam quomodo se habeat haec forma, idest anima rationalis, secundum quod est separabilis et sine corpore existere potens, et quid sit secundum suam essentiam separabile, hoc determinare pertinet ad philosophum primum." St. Thomas, in II Physic., lect. 4, n. 10.

and the changeable are not coextensive with the real. To be is not necessarily to be changeable, for, sensible matter, which is essential to motion, is not part of some things that are. Here we see the sense of the distinction that is called 'separation': "...per hoc quod [intellectus] intelligit unum alii non inesse." Though reaching such a term, natural science is unable to find among its own principles what is needed to go beyond this term. Yet it brings the mind into possession of new principles, i.e., a new but negative manner of defining. As the point is known by negating properties of the line,³⁸ metaphysics, in somewhat the same fashion, defines by negating or excluding all matter from things known to exist or to be able to exist separately from matter.

In regard to the statement that "metaphysics defines without sensible matter things which are without sensible matter", it should be noted that that which is without sensible matter is not primarily like the substance which is defined logically and really without sensible matter. We are in metaphysics as in a science sui generis only on the condition of having first demonstrated the existence of some being separate from all matter and subsisting in itself the

38. "...Punctum privative definitur, punctum est cuius pars non est: et similiter ratio unius est quod sit indivisible, ut dicitur in X Metaphys. Et huius ratio est, quia tale indivisibile habet quandam oppositionem ad rem corporalem, cuius quidditatem primo et per se intellectus accipit." Ia, q. 85, a. 8, c.

way that Socrates exists with sensible matter. In this same connection, we are sometimes inclined to speak of immaterial things as excluding all matter somewhat as though it were these things themselves which actively exclude matter when actually it is we who define them without matter; that which, on our part, is a negation because these things are positively, purely immaterial and they themselves have no need to exclude matter.

Once this way of defining has been secured, the subject of this science can be formulated.³⁹ Ens inquantum est ens, that which is, substance simply and primarily, accidents secondarily,⁴⁰ is thus distinguished from the subjects of particular sciences such as ens mobile, subject of natural philosophy. Like the subject of every science, common being has its proper accidents and attributes as well as its proper principles and causes. And as in all sciences, there is an orderly way of proceeding. At the beginning of metaphysics, for instance, a knowledge of the first principles

39. "Patet ergo quod ad diversificandum scientias sufficit diversitas principiorum quam comitatur diversitas generis scibilis." St. Thomas, In I Post. Anal., lect. 41, n. 11.

40. "Quaecumque communiter unius recipiunt praedicationem, licet non univoce, sed analogice de his praedicatur, pertinent ad unius scientiae considerationem: sed ens hoc modo praedicatur de omnibus entibus: ergo omnia entia pertinent ad considerationem unius scientiae, quae considerat ens inquantum est ens, scilicet tam substantias quam accidentia." St. Thomas, In IV Metaph., lect. 1, n. 34.

or universal causes of common being as such cannot be had. Metaphysics does not presume the title of scientia divina. It earns it.

Quia particulares scientiae quaedam eorum quae perscrutatione indigent praetermittunt, necesse fuit quendam scientiam esse universalem et primam, quae perscrutetur ea, de quibus particulares scientiae non considerant. Huiusmodi autem videntur esse tam communia quae sequuntur ens commune (de quibus nulla scientia particularis considerat, cum non magis ad unam pertineant quam ad aliam, sed ad omnes communiter), quam etiam substantiae separatae, quae excedunt considerationem omnium particularium scientiarum. Et ideo Aristoteles huiusmodi scientiam nobis tradens, postquam perscrutatus est de communibus, accedit ad tractandum specialiter de substantiis separatis, ad quarum cognitionem ordinantur non solum ea quae in hac scientia tractata sunt, sed etiam quae in aliis scientiis tractantur. 41

At this point the question might well arise as to why the foregoing discussion regarding the subject of metaphysics is not mentioned in the text of the De Trinitate. St. Thomas is content to state matter-of-factly that the treatment of universal principles pertains to the science whose subject is ens in quantum est ens. Such a question would not be out of place, for it would refocus our attention to the fact that St. Thomas is here concerned with ordering sciences already somehow known, not with teaching them. And metaphysics is not formally or intrinsically dependent on the other sciences but only materially and in the order of learning. 42

41. Ibid., XI, lect. 1, n. 2146.

42. "...Scientia divina... quae alia nomine dicitur metaphysica, id est trans physicam, quia post physicam discenda occurrit nobis, quibus de sensibilibus oportet in insensibilibus devenire. Dicitur etiam philosophia prima, in quantum illae res philosophiae ad ea prima principia accipientes... In Boeth. de Trin.

The fact that metaphysics is the common science, having for its subject common being, aspects of which are studied by the particular sciences each according to its proper mode, does not rule out the possibility of its being divided over and against these latter. Although metaphysics is not a particular science, it is a special science nonetheless, specified by a proper object. And it is from this point of view that the comparison of the kinds of speculative science is made.

Quia autem per operationem animae dividuntur quandoque quae secundum rem conjuncta et summe unum sunt; ideo contingit quod ubi est res eadem, sunt diversae rationes objecti, sicut eadem res objectum est liberalitatis, ut est donabilitas et iustitiae, ut habet rationem debiti.

Et similiter ubi res est communis, est ratio objecti particularis et propria; sicut philosophia prima est specialis scientia, quamvis consideret ens secundum quod est omnibus commune, quia specialem rationem entis considerat secundum quod non dependet a materia et motu. 43

7. Metaphysics and Sacred Theology both consider without matter things that are separate from matter in reality

Res divinae, besides being considered as universal cause of being, can also be known in another way, namely, in sacred doctrine, whose principles are given in revelation.

"...The things of God no one knows but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the

43. In III Sent., dist. XXVII, q. 2, a. 4, qua 2, sol.

See St. Thomas. In Boeth. de Trin., "I. 1. 1, ad 2;
In I Post. Anal., lect. 17, n.

spirit that is from God that we may know...."44 Presumption is to be avoided even here. Although revelation provides knowledge about God beyond anything which might be suspected when considering him simply as first principle, this is not quidditive knowledge.

Unde quamvis per revelationem elevemur ad aliquid cognoscendum, quod alias esset nobis ignotum, non tamen ad hoc quod alio modo cognoscimus nisi per sensibilia.... Via autem quae est per sensibilia non sufficit ad ducendum in substantias immateriales secundum cognitionem quid est. Et sic restat quod formae immateriales non sunt nobis notae cognitione quid est, sed solummodo cognitione an est, sive natural ratione ex effectibus creaturarum sive etiam revelatione quae est per similitudines a sensibilibus sumptas. 45

This difference in approach to the knowledge of separated substance constitutes two essentially different sciences, both of which are called theology. In one, res divinae are considered, not as subject of the science but as principles of the subject. This is the speculative science which, by reason of its subject, is also called metaphysics. The other has Divine Being itself for its subject and this is the science of Sacred Theology.

44. The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, 2, 11.

45. St. Thomas, In Boeth, de Trin., q. 6, a. 3, c. Even at the height of speculation St. Thomas is keenly aware of the capacity of the human intellect; "...haec est cumque cognitio quam de ipso in stato via habere possumus, ut cognoscimus Deum esse supra omne id quod cogitamus de eo...." De Veritate, q. 2, a. 1, ad 9.

Having distinguished metaphysics from Sacred Theology, it remains for St. Thomas to show how the former considers without matter things which are separate from matter in reality. This he does by comparing the subjects of the two sciences just distinguished. There are two ways according to which something can be separate from matter: first, that it can never be in matter, when 'what it is' renders existence in matter impossible and thus God and angels are said to be without matter; secondly, that it can be without matter although sometimes it does exist in matter. Things are said to be separate from matter in the first way inasmuch as what is understood of them includes their condition of 'existence without matter' in such manner that any notion that would not negate the possibility of existence in matter would not be a notion of res divinae considered as subject of Sacred Theology. That which is without matter in the second way is similar to these first separata and yet quite different from them. It is similar to them in the sense that it is not of the nature of 'what it is' to be in matter. It is different because 'what it is' does not demand that it be without matter. The understanding of substance, for example, does not include 'existence with matter'. It does not include 'existence without matter' either because otherwise nothing existing in matter would be a substance since

this would be contrary to its definition. Substance is thus common. Although to be in matter is not of the notion of substance, this notion is of things that do exist in matter. In fact, it is of such things, e.g., a man or a horse, that the meaning of substance is verified first for us. But this meaning is equally verified by that reality, prior to sensible substance, whose existence had to be demonstrated in order to guarantee a mode of defining distinct from that of natural philosophy. Then and then only could a third kind of definition be known positively to be more than logical.⁴⁶ This new manner of defining is thence responsible for a new kind of reasoned immateriality in regard to separata such as being, substance, potency and act, namely, that of non-dependence upon matter secundum esse which is different again from that of mathematics; even though mathematicalia can be understood without sensible matter they cannot be that way.

When treating sensible substance metaphysics considers it not as sensible but as substance. That is, it provides positive knowledge of what horse is as substance without as-

46. "...Forma generis de cuius ratione est materia, non potest esse extra intellectum nisi in materia, ut forma plantae aut metalli. Sed hoc genus substantiae, non est tale de cuius ratione sit materia; alioquin non esset metaphysicum, sed naturale. Unde forma huius generis non dependet a materia secundum suum esse, sed potest inveniri etiam extra materiam." De Spiritualibus Creaturis q. 1. ad 18? See also ad ...

suming the task, proper to the natural scientist, of distinguishing between horse and cow.

Ad hoc notandum est, quod aliqua cognitio quanto altior est, tanto est magis unita et ad plura se extendit: unde intellectus Dei, qui est altissimus, per unum quod est ipse Deus, omnium rerum cognitionem habet distincte. Ita et cum ista scientia sit altissima et per ipsum lumen inspirationis divinae efficaciam habens, ipsa unita manens, non multiplicata, diversorum rerum considerationem habet, nec tantum in communi, sicut metaphysicus, quae considerat omnia in quantum sunt entia, non descendens ad propriam cognitionem moralium, vel naturalium. Ratio enim entis, cum sit diversificata in diversis, non est sufficiens ad specialem rerum cognitionem....⁴⁷

The difference between that theology which is part of speculative philosophy and Sacred Theology is generic, i.e., a difference according to subject genus. The subject genus of the former is not God or separated substance but ens in quantum est ens of which God is the cause. "Theologia ergo philosophica determinat de separatīs secundo modo sicut de subiectis, de separatīs autem primo modo sicut principiis subiecti...." The subject genus of Sacred Theology is God as he manifests himself, so that whatever principles this science may have must be received from him. "Unde sequitur quod Deus vere sit subiectum huius scientiae. Qued etiam manifestum fit ex principiis huius scientiae, quae sunt articuli fidei, quae est de Deo: idem autem est subiectum principiorum et totius scientiae, cum tota scientia virtute contineatur in principiis."⁴⁸ Known, not as subject, but as

47. In I Post., Prologus, n. 2, col. See St. Thomas, In IV Metaphy. lect. 1, n. 347.

principle of the subject, God is nevertheless attained by metaphysics in a scientific way. As St. Thomas says in article one, God is the praecipuum cognitorem in metaphysics.

Though considering as their proper subjects things which are without matter, both sciences will of necessity treat things which are in matter, but only for the sake of manifestation. It is not possible to know of the existence of the cause of material being, that it is prior to material being or that it is without matter unless material beings are in some way considered. The necessity of this consideration derives from the manner of human knowing which has its origin in sensation. This necessity does not, however, extend to the term or the judgment in all human knowledge. And for this reason the consideration of things in matter is accidental to metaphysics as such inasmuch as it judges things as they are known by the intellect and not as they are apprehended in sensation. Such judgments are accomplished by resolving things to their first and highest causes and merit for this science the title of first philosophy or Wisdom.⁴⁹

49. "Est autem considerandum quod in omni iudicio ultima sententia pertinet ad supremum iudicatorium: sicut videmus in speculativis quod ultima sententia de aliqua propositione datur per resolutionem ad prima principia. Quandiu enim remanet aliquod principium altius, adhuc per ipsum potest examinari id de quo quaeritur: unde adhuc est suspensum iudicium, quasi nondum data finali sententia." Ia IIae, q. 34, a. 7, c.

This is not to impugn the validity of conclusions reached in the particular disciplines. Each has its own principles into which its scientific conclusions are resolved and in whose light they are judged. However, the proper principles of the particular sciences are themselves judged and defended by metaphysics. St. Albert makes a striking observation in this connection saying that without metaphysics, the particular sciences neither truly know what they know nor do they truly demonstrate what they demonstrate. 50

A discussion of this resolution is well beyond the intention of article four. Its purpose has been to indicate in broad outline the opposite features of the science that defines without all matter things which are separate from matter according to understanding and being. Its

50. " [Particulares scientiæ] non quaerunt de ente simpliciter nec in quantum est ens: de ipso enim quod est in quantum simpliciter est, nullam omnino faciunt orationem diffinitivam: quia quamvis forte aliquando utantur diffinitione substantiæ in quantum substantia est, non accipiunt tamen tunc substantiam in quantum est substantia, sed ad genus determinatum appropriant eam: et ideo utentes substantia simpliciter non percipiunt substantiam simpliciter: propter quod etiam non vere quod sciunt sciunt, nec vere demonstrant quod demonstrant sine primæ philosophiæ sapientia." St. Albert, In VI Metaph., tract. I.

realization has been that and more, having provided St. Thomas with the occasion to suggest that this science does not appear out of the blue, but consonant with the order of systematic acquisition, follows natural science and has as its subject ens in quantum est ens; that in treating the principles of its subject it treats of first and universal causes; that it comes to the happy discovery that first among these causes is the Separated Substance who is "unus princeps totius universi, scilicet primum movens, et primum intelligibile, et primum bonum, quod supra dixit Deum, qui est benedictus in saecula saeculorum. Amen." 51

51. St. Thomas, In XII Metaph., lect. 12, n. 2663.

PART THREE
A COMPARISON

A. L. B. Geiger and J. D. Robert

When philosophy becomes less concerned with reality than with the words used to express it, it is already verbalistic, an allegation which no true philosopher would take as a compliment. St. Thomas's solicitude for external expression never compromises the primacy of what it is meant to signify. That is to say, the word is at the service of the mind's conception of things to be named. The signified, as known, is the rule and measure of the sign. Diverse shades of meaning taken on by a given word have been exemplified repeatedly in the text of the De Trinitate, showing the need to interpret words according to their context and not the context by words assumed to be inflexible.

For this reason, it is difficult to understand the importance with which both Father Geiger and Father Robert invest the word 'separatio'. It is not at all in keeping with the otherwise accurate interpretation of the teaching of St. Thomas for which we are indebted to them--Father Geiger in particular, since Father Robert provides little explanation for the unique situation of metaphysics that

he means to point out. It goes without saying that metaphysics occupies the privileged position among the sciences. Nor would there seem to be any doubt that in itself separation as described by St. Thomas in article 3 is different from and irreducible to the abstractions appropriated to the other sciences. We would agree with Father Geiger as to the need for pre-metaphysical proof that there is or must be a reality without sensible matter, and we would concur in his trenchant critique of the equivocation that "three degrees of abstraction" all too easily conveys. What we would take exception to is the singular importance ascribed to separation to the point of obscuring every similarity to the other types of abstraction and, more basically, the very reason that underlies this emphasis. For this would imply that the term "abstraction" is equivocal a casu, as opposed to analogical.

If we understand Father Geiger correctly, he interprets "separation", as discussed in article 3, as a doctrinal development wherein this process is definitively dissociated from abstraction. "Cette thèse de la separatio est donc bien, dans la pensée de S. Thomas, l'effet des exigences de certaines vues majeures. On ne saurait donc le tenir pour un détail sans importance et reprendre après lui, sans justifier une telle manière de faire, la triplex abstractio qu'il a explicitement décartée." ¹ The autograph manuscript is offered

1. Geiger, "Abstraction et separation d'après S. Thomas" p. 18.?

as evidence that the distinction between separation and abstraction properly so called represents a decision, originally unforeseen and reached only after considerable groping, which permits St. Thomas to recognize in negative judgment the subjective act capable of guaranteeing the objective validity of metaphysics.

It is true that separation, as appropriated to metaphysics, manifests the relation of the subject of this science to matter; nondependence on matter for being and understanding is different from the way that the subjects of the other sciences are related to matter. In this way separation serves to bring out the immateriality, and hence the intelligibility, proper to metaphysics. But are we not justified in asking whether separation itself is the formal element in specifying the science, or whether it is just one step, however important, toward the determination of its subject? It would seem that separation, described by St. Thomas in terms of the operation of composition and division, while necessarily involved in the process which leads to the object of the science, is not the ultimate factor in its specification; the intelligibility for which it is immediately responsible is still potential with regard to strictly scientific intelligibility as attained in the third operation. In this sense, metaphysics is no more dependent upon separation than mathematics, for instance, is de-

pendent upon abstraction. Without either process the respective science, for us, would not exist. In spite of extremely disparate manners of accomplishing it, mathematical abstraction and separation fulfill a similar function, that of excluding matter in the measure that the latter proves an obstacle to certain types of intelligibility. "Tamen si ex materia et forma angeli compositi essent, non tamen ex materia sensibili, a qua oportet et mathematica abstracta esse et metaphysica separata." ²

The detail of article three can be explained by the nuance that is required to show the similarity between each type of abstraction, including separation, without minimizing in any way their differences. That the intellect can understand one thing apart from another as regards science has already been discussed in connection with natural philosophy, but in a very general way. In view of the problem raised by mathematics it becomes necessary to go from this common notion, called at this point abstraction, to a more distinct knowledge of the particular ways in which it can be accomplished. To this end, St. Thomas carefully describes the first two operations of the intellect and, with the aid of pertinent examples, defines the competence of the intellect in each to know one thing without something else. To signify the difference in competence thus revealed,

2. St. Thomas, In Boeth. de Trin. q. 6, a. 4. ad 4.

he gives to the distinction accomplished by each operation a name that brings out something proper to it.³ These names are not chosen haphazardly. Both the word 'abstractio' and 'separatio' are recommended for their ability to convey that which is characteristic of the distinctions so named when these latter are subsequently appropriated to the different sciences. But in taking such care to name the various distinctions, it is not St. Thomas's intention so to insist upon their differences as to exclude what they have proportionally in common. It is not as though what has now been called separation can no longer be called abstraction. If a precision made in one place is to be taken as an absolute and irrevocable preference, and Father Gelger seems to maintain that it is, then St. Thomas should be found wanting. For if he recognized an obligation to express himself on every occasion in accordance with the circumscribed meanings established here in the De Trinitate, there is a conspicuous lack of supporting evidence in his other writings.⁴

3. The same comparison between operations of the intellect apropos of the manner in which one thing is understood without another is made elsewhere. See, for example, De Veritate, q. 21, a. 1, ad secundum in contrarium. There is no need, however, in this instance, to name the respective distinctions.

4. "Sciendum est igitur quod, cum omnis scientia sit in intellectu, per hoc autem aliquid fit intelligibile in actu, quod aliquantulum abstrahitur a materia; secundum quod aliqua diversa modo se habent ad materiam, ad diversas scientias pertinent." St. Thomas, In I Physic., lect. 1, n. 1,