

NOTE FOR WORD NATURE

The word *nature* is extremely important for philosophy. Every part of philosophy requires an understanding of this word.

Heraclitus, the central thinker in human history, said that *wisdom is to speak the truth and to act in accord with nature giving ear thereto*. What is meant by nature in this royal fragment? But *nature loves to hide*. Why?

Natural philosophy is about things that are by nature. What is meant by nature here?

Is there a natural law? In what sense of *nature* is some law natural?

What is the distinction between reason as a nature and reason as reason? What is the distinction between will as a nature and will as will?

Definition is speech signifying or making known the nature of a thing. What is meant by *nature* here?

Why is the nature of a thing what is first in it?

How do *nature* and *substance* have some meanings in common?

The word *nature* does not seem to be carried over in one way. It is carried over to the second meaning by its ratio to the first. It is carried over from the second to the third by dropping its particular meaning so to be more general. It is said of the fourth and fifth by other ratios to the same. And it is carried over to the last meanings by a likeness of ratios to earlier meanings.

In the following text from the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas recounts most of the senses of nature:

Amplius. Nomen *naturae* primo impositum est ad significandum ipsam generationem nascentium.

Et exinde translatum est ad significandum principium generationis huiusmodi.

Et inde ad significandum principium motus intrinsecum mobili.

Et quia huiusmodi principium est materia vel forma, ulterius natura dicitur forma vel materia rei naturalis habentis in se principium motus.

Et quia forma et materia constituunt essentiam rei naturalis, extensum est nomen *naturae* ad significandum essentiam cuiuscumque rei in natura existentis: ut sic natura alicuius rei dicatur *essentia, quam significat definitio*. [II Physics., I, 10; 193a] ¹

How do the senses Thomas reports from Boethius in this text fit into those in the fifth book of *Wisdom*?:

...nomen naturae multipliciter dicitur, ut Boetius, I lib. *De duabus naturis et una persona Christi*, cap. 1, col. 1341, t. II, dicit.

Primo enim modo dicitur natura, secundum quod communiter ad omnia entia se habet, prout natura definitur omne id quod intellectu quoquo modo capi potest.

Secundo modo prout tantum substantiis convenit: et sic natura dicitur esse quod agere vel pati potest.

Tertio modo dicitur natura quod est principium motus vel quietis in eis in quibus per se est, et non secundum accidens.

Quarto modo unumquodque informans specifica differentia dicitur natura.

Secundo igitur et tertio modo peccata natura dici non possunt: quia in genere substantiae non sunt...Sed primo modo et quarto quodammodo potest dici natura peccatum, et quodammodo non.²

¹ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Liber IV, Capitulum XXXV

² *Scriptum Super Lib. II Sententiarum*, Distinctio XXXVII, Quaest I, Art. I, Solutio

Since the wise man and philosopher most of all seek order, they take a great interest in nature. Aristotle says in the eighth book of *Natural History* (the *Physics*):

But none of the things by nature and according to nature is disordered. For nature is a cause of order in all.³

Thomas unfolds this in commenting on Aristotle's text:

Manifestum est enim quod cum ponitur aliquid esse quasi principium, oportet accipere quod hoc sit secundum rei naturam; hoc est, ut natura rei sit talis quod hoc ei conveniat. Sic enim accipimus quasi principium, quod omne totum maius est sua parte, quia hoc est de ratione et natura totius, quod excedat partis quantitatem....

Sed manifestum est quod nulla res naturalis, nec aliquid eorum quae naturaliter rebus conveniunt, potest esse absque ordine; quia natura est causa ordinationis. Videmus enim natura in suis operibus ordinate de uno in aliud procedere: quod ergo non habet aliquem ordinem, non est secundum naturam, nec potest accipi ut principium.⁴

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³ 252a 11-12

⁴ *In VIII Physicorum*, Lectio III, n. 993