

# The Given and the Thought

Reflections on faith and reason, or their analogues,  
in Robert Crouse, Augustine and the Platonic Tradition, Aquinas and Aristotle

## Some Texts

### *Metaphysics I.2*

#### *Aquinas In Metaphysica*

##### **On wonder, myth and philosophy**

Further, he points out that perplexity and **wonder** arise from ignorance. For when we see certain obvious effects whose cause we do not know, we wonder about their cause. And since wonder was the motive which led men to philosophy, it is evident that the philosopher is, in a sense, a philo-myth, i.e., a lover of myth, as is characteristic of the poets. Hence the first men to deal with the principles of things in a mythical way, such as Perseus and certain others who were the seven sages, were called the theologizing poets. Now the reason why the philosopher is compared to the poet is that both are concerned with wonders. For the myths with which the poets deal are composed of wonders, and the philosophers themselves were moved to philosophize as a result of wonder. And since wonder stems from ignorance, they were obviously moved to philosophize in order to escape from ignorance. It is accordingly evident from this that “they pursued” knowledge, or diligently sought it, only for itself and not for any utility or usefulness.

Now we must note that, while this science was first designated by the name wisdom, this was later changed to the name philosophy, since they mean the same thing. For while the ancients who pursued the study of wisdom were called sophists, i.e., wise men, Pythagoras, when asked what he professed himself to be, refused to call himself a wise man as his predecessors had done, because he thought this was presumptuous, but called himself a philosopher, i.e., a lover of wisdom. And from that time the name “wise man” was changed to “philosopher,” and “wisdom” to “philosophy.” This name also contributes something to the point under discussion, for that man seems to be a lover of wisdom who seeks wisdom, not for some other reason, but for itself alone. For he who seeks one thing on account of something else, has greater love for that on whose account he seeks than for that which he seeks.

##### **On God without envy and participation in the Divine knowing**

But the basis of this opinion is most false, because it is not fitting that any divine being should be envious. This is evident from the fact that envy is sadness at someone else’s prosperity. But this can occur only because the one who is envious thinks that someone else’s good diminishes his own. Now it is impossible that God’ should be sad, because He is not subject to evil of any kind. Nor can His goodness be diminished by someone else’s goodness, since every good flows from His goodness as from an unfailing spring. Hence Plato also said that there is no envy of any kind in God.’ But the poets have lied not only in this matter but in many others, as is stated in the common proverb.

Here he proves the fourth attribute, namely, that this is the most honorable science, by the following argument. That science which is most divine is most honorable, just as God Himself is also the most honorable of all things. But this science is the most divine, and is therefore the most honorable. The minor premise is proved in this way: a science is said to be divine in two ways, and only this science is said to be divine in both ways. First, the science which God has is said to be divine; and second, the science which is about divine matters is said to be divine. But

it is evident that only this science meets both of these requirements, because, since this science is about first causes and principles, it must be about God; for God is understood in this way by all inasmuch as He is one of the causes and a principle of things. Again, such a science which is about God and first causes, either God alone has or, if not He alone, at least He has it in the highest degree. Indeed, He alone has it in a perfectly comprehensive way. And He has it in the highest degree inasmuch as it is also had by men in their own way, although it is not had by them as a human possession, but as something borrowed from Him.

*Sententia Metaphysicae, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 13 Deinde cum dicit nec ea aliam ostendit quartum, scilicet quod haec scientia sit honorabilissima, tali ratione. Illa scientia est maxime honorabilis, quae est maxime divina, sicut etiam Deus honorabilior est rebus omnibus: sed ista scientia est maxime divina: ergo est honorabilissima. Minor sic probatur. Aliqua scientia dicitur esse divina dupliciter; et haec sola scientia utroque modo divina dicitur. Uno modo scientia divina dicitur quam Deus habet. Alio modo, quia est de rebus divinis. Quod autem haec sola habeat utrumque, est manifestum; quia, cum haec scientia sit de primis causis et principiis, oportet quod sit de Deo; quia Deus hoc modo intelligitur ab omnibus, ut de numero causarum existens, et ut quoddam principium rerum. Item talem scientiam, quae est de Deo et de primis causis, aut solus Deus habet, aut si non solus, ipse tamen maxime habet. Solus quidem habet secundum perfectam comprehensionem. Maxime vero habet, in quantum suo modo etiam ab hominibus habetur, licet ab eis non ut possessio habeatur, sed sicut aliquid ab eo mutuatum.*

### *Metaphysics XII.7*

The first mover, then, exists of necessity; and in so far as it exists by necessity, its mode of being is good, and it is in this sense a first principle.... On such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And it is a life such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time (for it is ever in this state, which we cannot be), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And for this reason are waking, perception, and thinking most pleasant, and hopes and memories are so on account of these.) And thinking in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thinking in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense. And thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same....The act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.

### **Metaphysics XII**

1074b "A tradition has been handed down by the ancient thinkers of very early times, and bequeathed to posterity in the form of a myth, to the effect that these heavenly bodies are gods, and that the Divine pervades the whole of nature. [[1074β] [1] παραδέδοται δὲ παρὰ τῶν ἀρχαίων καὶ παμπάλαιων ἐν μύθου σχήματι καταλελειμμένα τοῖς ὕστερον ὅτι θεοὶ τέ εἰσιν οὗτοι καὶ περιέχει τὸ θεῖον τὴν ὅλην φύσιν.] The rest of their tradition has been added later in a mythological form to influence the vulgar and as a constitutional and utilitarian expedient; they

say that these gods are human in shape or are like certain other animals, and make other statements consequent upon and similar to those which we have mentioned.

Now if we separate these statements and accept only the first, that they supposed the primary substances to be gods, we must regard it as an inspired saying and reflect that whereas every art and philosophy has probably been repeatedly developed to the utmost and has perished again, these beliefs of theirs have been preserved as a relic of former knowledge. To this extent only, then, are the views of our forefathers and of the earliest thinkers intelligible to us. [ὧν εἴ τις χωρίσας αὐτὸ λάβοι μόνον τὸ πρῶτον, ὅτι θεοὺς ὄντο τὰς πρώτας οὐσίας εἶναι, θείως ἂν εἰρηῆσθαι [10] νομίσειεν, καὶ κατὰ τὸ εἶκος πολλάκις εὐρημένης εἰς τὸ δυνατόν ἐκάστης καὶ τέχνης καὶ φιλοσοφίας καὶ πάλιν φθειρομένων καὶ ταύτας τὰς δόξας ἐκείνων οἷον λείψανα περισεσῶσθαι μέχρι τοῦ νῦν. ἡ μὲν οὖν πάτριος δόξα καὶ ἡ παρὰ τῶν πρώτων ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἡμῖν φανερὰ μόνον. [15]]"

### *Aquinas In Metaphysicorum*

He shows how the points discovered about an immaterial substance compare with both the ancient and common opinions. He says that certain traditions about the separate substances have been handed down from the ancient philosophers, and these have been bequeathed to posterity in the form of a myth, to the effect that these substances are gods, and that the divine encompasses the whole of nature. This follows from the above points, granted that all immaterial substances are called gods. But if only the first principle is called God, there is only one God, as is clear from what has been said. The rest of the tradition has been introduced in the form of a myth in order to persuade the multitude, who cannot grasp intelligible things, and inasmuch as it was expedient for the passing of laws and for the benefit of society, that by inventions of this kind the multitude might be persuaded to aim at virtuous acts and avoid evil ones. He explains the mythological part of this tradition by adding that they said that the gods have the form of men and of certain other animals. For they concocted the fables that certain men as well as other animals have been turned into gods; and they added certain statements consequent upon these and similar to the ones which have just been mentioned. Now if among these traditions someone wishes to accept only the one which was first noted above, namely, that the gods are immaterial substances, this will be considered a divine statement, and one that is probably true. And it is so because every art and every philosophy has often been discovered by human power and again lost, either because of wars, which prevent study, or because of floods or other catastrophes of this kind.

It was also necessary for Aristotle to maintain this view in order to save the eternity of the world. For it was evident that at one time men began to philosophize and to discover the arts; and it would seem absurd that the human race should be without these for an infinite period of time. Hence he says that philosophy and the various arts were often discovered and lost, and that the opinions of those ancient thinkers are preserved as relics up to the present day.

Last, he concludes that "the opinion of our forefathers," i.e., the one received from those who philosophized and after whom philosophy was lost, is evident to us only in this way, i.e., in the form of a myth, as has been stated above

*Sententia Metaphysicae, lib. 12 l. 10 n. 31 Deinde cum dicit tradita sunt comparat ea quae inventa sunt de substantiis immaterialibus ad opiniones antiquas et ad vulgares. Et dicit, quod ab antiquis philosophis quaedam sunt tradita de substantiis separatis, et dimissa posterioribus per modum fabulae, scilicet quod dii sunt, et quod id quod est divinum, continet totam naturam. Et hoc*

*quidem habetur ex superioribus, si omnes substantiae immateriales vocentur dii. Si autem solum primum principium vocetur Deus, est unus tantum Deus, ut ex praedictis patet. Reliqua vero introducta sunt fabulose ad persuasionem multitudinis, quae non potest capere intelligibilia, et secundum quod fuit optimum ad leges ferendas, et ad utilitatem conversationis humanae, ut ex huiusmodi adinventis persuaderetur multitudini, ut intenderent virtuosius actibus et a vitiis declinarent. Et quid sit fabulose introductum exponit subdens, quod dixerunt deos esse conformes hominibus et quibusdam aliorum animalium. Posuerunt enim fabulose homines quosdam deificatos, et quaedam animalia, et quaedam consequentia istis et alia similia dixerunt. Ex quibus si aliquis hoc solum velit accipere quod primo ostensum est in praehabitis, scilicet quod dii sunt quaedam substantiae immateriales, putabitur esse dictum divine et secundum verisimilitudinem. Et hoc ideo est, quia quaelibet ars et etiam philosophia, saepe fuit inventa secundum possibilitatem humanam, et iterum fuit corrupta, vel propter bella impediencia studium, vel propter inundationes, vel alia huiusmodi excidia.*

*Sententia Metaphysicae, lib. 12 l. 10 n. 32 Et hoc necessarium fuit ponere Aristoteli ut possit salvare aeternitatem mundi. Manifestum enim erat quod a quodam certo tempore inceperant homines philosophari et artes adinvenire. Inconveniens autem videbatur, quod infinito tempore fuisset absque his humanum genus. Et ideo dicit quod philosophiae et aliae artes fuerunt multoties inventae et corruptae, et quod opiniones illorum antiquorum quasi reliquiae salvantur usque nunc.*

*Sententia Metaphysicae, lib. 12 l. 10 n. 33 Et ultimo concludit quod praedicta opinio, idest quae a philosophantibus habita est, post quos destructa fuit philosophia, solum sic manifesta est, scilicet per modum fabulae, ut supra dictum est.*

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### *De Caelo*

Aristotle *On the Heavens* I,327ob1 The reasons why the primary body is eternal and not subject to increase or diminution, but unaging and unalterable and unmodified, will be clear from what has been said to any one who believes in our assumptions. Our theory seems to confirm experience and to be confirmed by it. For all men have some conception of the nature of the gods, and all who believe in the existence of gods at all, whether barbarian or Greek, agree in allotting the highest place to the deity, surely because they suppose that immortal is linked with immortal and regard any other supposition as inconceivable. If then there is, as there certainly is, anything divine, what we have just said about the primary bodily substance was well said. The mere evidence of the senses is enough to convince us of this, at least with human certainty. For in the whole range of time past, so far as our inherited records reach, no change appears to have taken place either in the whole scheme of the outermost heaven or in any of its proper parts.

Aristotle *On the Heavens* I,3 27ob15

The common name, too, which has been handed down from our distant ancestors even to our own day, seems to show that they conceived of it in the fashion which we have been expressing. The same ideas, one must believe, recur in men's minds not once or twice but again and again. And so, implying that the primary body is something else beyond earth, fire, air, and water, they gave the highest place a name of its own, aither, derived from the fact that it 'runs always' for an eternity of time. Anaxagoras, however, scandalously misuses this name, taking aither as equivalent to fire.

Aquinas *On the de Caelo* 75. Then at [37] he manifests the proposition through signs. And he says that both reason and things that appear to be probable seem to support one another on this point. And he gives three signs. The first of which is taken from the general opinion of men, who posit many gods or one God, whom the other separated substances serve. All who believe thus, whether Greeks or barbarians, assign the highest place, namely, the heavenly, to God, namely, all those who believe there are divine beings. But they assign the heavens to the divine substances as though adapting an immortal place to immortal and divine beings. In this way God's habitation in the heavens is understood as appropriate according to likeness, that is, that among all other bodies this body more closely approaches to a likeness to spiritual and divine substances. For it is impossible for the habitation of the heavens to be assigned to God for any other reason, as though He should need a bodily place by which He is comprehended. If therefore divine beings are to be posited, and since, indeed, they certainly must, the consequence is that the statements made about the first bodily substance, namely, the heavenly body, were well made, namely, that the heavenly body is ungenerated and unalterable. Although men suppose that temples are the place of God, they do not suppose this from God's viewpoint but from that of the worshippers, who must worship Him in some place. That is why perishable temples are proportioned to perishable men, but the heavens to the divine imperishability. 76. The second sign he gives at [38] and it is taken from long experience. And he says that what has been proved by reason and common opinion occurs, i. e., follows, sufficiently - i.e., not absolutely but to the extent of human faith, i.e., so far as men can testify to what they have seen for a short time and from afar. For according to the tradition which astronomers have passed on concerning their observations of the dispositions and motions of heavenly bodies, in the whole time past there does not seem to have been any change affecting either the entire heavens or any of its own parts. Now this would not be, if the heaven were generable or perishable - for things subject to generation and corruption arrive at their perfect state little by little and step by step, and then gradually depart from that state, and this could not have been concealed in the heavens for such a long time, if they were naturally subject to generation and corruption. However, this is not necessary but probable. For the more lasting something is, the greater the time required for its change to be noted, just as change in a man is not noticed in two or three years, as it is in a dog or other animals having a shorter life-span. Consequently someone could say that, even though the heavens are naturally corruptible, nevertheless they are so lasting that the whole extent of human memory is not sufficient to observe their change. 77. The third sign is given at [39] and is based on a name given by the ancients, which endures to the present, and which gives us to understand that they thought the heaven to be imperishable just as we do. And lest anyone object that some before their time thought the heavens were subject to generation and corruption, he adds that true opinions are revived according to diverse times not once or twice but infinitely, supposing that time is infinite. For the studies of truth are destroyed by various changes occurring in these lower things, but because the minds of men are naturally inclined to truth, then when obstacles are removed, studies are renewed and men at last arrive at the true opinions which previously flourished, but false opinions need not be revived.

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Aristotle *De Caelo*

I,9 279a17 Whatever is there [in the heavens], is of such a nature as not to occupy any place, nor does time age it ; nor is there any change in any of the things which lie beyond the outermost

motion ; they continue through their entire duration unalterable and unmodified, living the best and most self-sufficient of lives. On the same principle the fulfilment of the whole heaven, the fulfilment which includes all time and infinity, is 'duration'-a name based upon the fact that it is always-duration immortal and divine. From it derive the being and life which other things, some more or less articulately but others feebly, enjoy. So, too, in its discussions concerning the divine, popular philosophy often propounds the view that whatever is divine, whatever is primary and supreme, is necessarily unchangeable. This fact confirms what we have said.

Aquinas *On the de Caelo*[217].

With respect to the first it should be known that among the philosophers there were two kinds of teachings. For there were some which from the very beginning were proposed according to the order of doctrine to the multitude and these were called "encyclia"; others were more subtle, and were proposed to the more advanced hearers and were called "syntagmatica," i.e., co-ordinal, or "acromatic," i.e., hearable, teachings. The dogmas of the philosophers are called "philosophemata." He says, therefore, that in the "encyclia" [or popular] philosophic discussions concerning divine things the philosophers very often in their arguments showed that everything divine must be "untransmutable," as not subject to motion, and "first," as not subject to time, and "highest," as not contained by place. And they called every separated substance "divine." And this confirms what has been said about such beings.

Aquinas *On the de Caelo* [conclusion of Book One]

It should be noted that these arguments of Aristotle are directed against the position that posits a world produced by generation and indestructible either of its very nature or through the will of God. But according to the Catholic faith, we hold that it began to be, not through a process of generation as from nature, but by flowing from a first principle whose power was not bound to give it existence in infinite time but as it willed, after previous non-existence, in order to manifest the excellence of its power over the totality of being, namely, that the totality of being depends entirely on it and its power is not confined or determined to the production of some given being. Now the things produced by it so as to exist forever have the potency and power to exist forever, and in no way at some time not to exist. For as long as they did not exist, they had no such power; but when they now exist, they have no power with respect to non-existence in the past but to the existence which now prevails or will be - for potency does not look to the past, but to the present or future, as the Philosopher says.

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*Ethics*

Aristotle *Nico Ethics X.7*

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.

Aquinas on Aristotle *Nico Ethics X*

*Aquinas Sententia Ethicorum Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 11 n. 8 ... Dicit ergo primo, quod talis vita, quae vacat contemplationi veritatis, est melior quam vita quae est secundum hominem. Cum enim homo sit compositus ex anima et corpore, habens sensitivam naturam et intellectivam, vita homini commensurata videtur consistere in hoc, quod homo secundum rationem ordinet affectiones et operationes sensitivas et corporales. Sed vacare soli operationi intellectus videtur esse proprium supernarum substantiarum in quibus invenitur sola natura intellectiva, quam (homo) participat secundum intellectum.*

He says first that the kind of life that has leisure for the contemplation of truth is higher than the human level. Since man is composed of soul and body with a sensitive and intellectual nature, life commensurate to him is thought to consist in this, that he directs by reason his sensitive and bodily affections and activities. But to engage solely in intellectual activity seems proper to the superior substances possessing only an intellectual nature that they participate by their intellect.

*Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 11 n. 9 Et ideo manifestans quod dictum est, subdit quod homo sic vivens, scilicet vacando contemplationi, non vivit secundum quod homo, qui est compositus ex diversis, sed secundum quod aliquid divinum in ipso existit, prout scilicet secundum intellectum divinam similitudinem participat. Et ideo quantum intellectus in sua puritate consideratus differt a composito ex anima et corpore, tantum distat operatio speculativa ab operatione quae fit secundum virtutem moralem, quae proprie est circa humana. Sicut ergo intellectus per comparisonem ad hominem est quiddam divinum, ita et vita speculativa, quae est secundum intellectum, comparatur ad vitam moralem, sicut divina ad humanam.*

For this reason in explaining his statement he adds that man living in this manner, i.e., occupied in contemplation, does not live as man, composed of diverse elements, but as something divine is present in him, partaking in a likeness to the divine intellect. And on that account, as the intellect considered in its purity differs from a composite of soul and body so the contemplative activity differs from the activity following moral virtue, which is properly concerned with human affairs. Therefore, just as the intellect compared to man is something divine, so the contemplative life, which is based upon the intellect, is compared to the life of moral virtue as divine to human life.

*Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 11 n. 10 Deinde cum dicit: oportet autem etc., excludit quorundam errorem, qui suadebant, quod homo debeat intendere ad sapiendum humana et mortalis ad sapiendum mortalia. Et fuit hoc dictum Simonidis poetae, ut patet in principio metaphysicae. Quod quidem philosophus dicit esse falsum, quia homo debet tendere ad immortalitatem quantum potest, et secundum totum posse suum facere ad hoc quod vivat secundum intellectum, qui est optimum eorum quae sunt in homine, qui quidem est immortalis et divinus. Quamvis enim hoc optimum sit parvum mole, quia est incorporeum et simplicissimum, et per consequens caret*

*magnitudine molis, tamen quantitate virtutis et pretiositatis multum excedit omnia quae in homine sunt.*

... he rejects the error of some philosophers who advised man that he must strive to know the things of man, and mortals the things of mortals. This was the advice of the poet Simonides, as appears in the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. But the Philosopher calls it false, since we must strive to attain immortality so far as possible, and exert all our power to live according to reason—the best of all the elements in man who is truly divine and immortal. For, though this best element is a small part, being incorporeal and most simple, and consequently lacking greatness, nevertheless it surpasses everything human in the extent of its power and value.

*Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 11 n. 11 Virtute quidem sive potentia excedit in suis operationibus, quibus superioribus coniungitur, et inferioribus principatur, et sic quodammodo omnia complectitur; pretiositate autem quantum ad dignitatem suae naturae, quia intellectus est immaterialis et simplex, incorruptibilis et impassibilis. Unumquodque autem, idest totus homo videtur esse hoc, scilicet intellectus, si ita est, immo quia ita est, quod intellectus est principalis et melius, quod sit in homine.*

It excels in power by its activities, which are akin to superior beings and have authority over inferior beings, and so in a way it embraces all things. Likewise, it excels in value as regards the excellence of its nature, since the intellect is immaterial and simple, incorruptible and incapable of suffering. Now each human being, i.e., the whole man, seems to be the intellect if it is true—nay rather because it is true—that the intellect is the principal and better part of man.

*Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 11 n. 12 Dictum est enim supra in nono quod unumquodque potissime videtur esse id quod est principalis in eo, quia omnia alia sunt quasi instrumenta illius. Et sic dum homo vivit secundum operationem intellectus, vivit secundum vitam maxime sibi propriam. Esset autem inconveniens si aliquis eligeret vivere non secundum vitam propriam suiipsius, sed secundum vitam alicuius alterius. Unde inconvenienter dicunt qui suadent, quod homo non debeat vacare speculationi intellectus. Et cum hoc dictum sit prius in nono, quod id quod est secundum intellectum est proprium homini, congruit etiam et nunc in proposito. Illud enim quod est optimum secundum naturam in unoquoque est maxime proprium sibi: quod autem est optimum et proprium, consequens est quod sit delectabilissimum, quia unusquisque delectatur in bono sibi convenienti; sic igitur patet quod, si homo maxime est intellectus tamquam principalissimum in ipso, quod vita, quae est secundum intellectum, est delectabilissima homini, et maxime sibi propria.*

*Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 11 n. 13 Nec hoc est contra id quod supra dictum est, quod non est secundum hominem, sed supra hominem: non est enim secundum hominem quantum ad naturam compositam, est autem propriissime secundum hominem quantum ad id quod est principalissimum in homine: quod quidem perfectissime invenitur in substantiis superioribus, in homine autem imperfecte et quasi participative. Et tamen istud parvum est maius omnibus aliis quae in homine sunt. Sic ergo patet, quod iste qui vacat speculationi veritatis est maxime felix, quantum homo in hac vita felix esse potest.*

We have stated in the ninth book (1868, 1872) that each thing is thought to be especially that which constitutes its chief part, since all other parts are its tools, so to speak. And so when man lives in accordance with the activity of the intellect, he lives in accordance with the life most proper to him; for it would be strange if a person were to choose to live not his own life but the life of some other. Hence they give unwise counsel who say that man should not engage in

intellectual contemplation. And the statement made in the ninth book (1807, 1847, 1869-1872) that what accords with reason is proper to man is applicable also to our present purpose. For that which is best in each thing's nature is most proper to it. But what is best and proper consequently is most delightful because everyone delights in a good that is pleasing to him. So then, if man is especially his intellect, since this is the principal element in him, evidently life according to the intellect is most delightful and proper to him in the highest degree.

Nor is it contrary to our previous assertion (2106) that this is not on the human level but above man. Indeed it is not on the human level considering man's composite nature, but it is most properly human considering what is principal in man—a thing found most perfectly in superior substances but imperfectly and by participation, as it were, in man. Nevertheless this small part is greater than all the other parts in man, Thus it is clear that the person who gives himself to the contemplation of truth is the happiest a man can be in this life

*Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 12 n. 5 Unde patet, quod tam virtus moralis quam prudentia sunt circa compositum. Virtutes autem compositi proprie loquendo sunt humanae, inquantum homo est compositus ex anima et corpore, unde et vita quae secundum has, id est secundum prudentiam et virtutem moralem, est humana, quae dicitur vita activa. Et per consequens felicitas, quae in hac vita consistit, est humana. Sed vita et felicitas speculativa, quae est propria intellectus, est separata et divina. Sententia Ethic., lib. 10 l. 12 n. 6 Et tantum dicere ad praesens de ipsa sufficiat. Quod autem magis per certitudinem explicetur, est aliquid maius quam pertineat ad propositum. Agitur enim de hoc in tertio de anima, ubi ostenditur, quod intellectus est separatus. Sic igitur patet, quod felicitas speculativa est potior quam activa, quanto aliquid separatum et divinum est potius quam id quod est compositum et humanum.*

It is obvious then that both moral virtue and prudence are concerned with the composite. Now virtues of the composite, properly speaking, are human inasmuch as man is composed of soul and body. Hence life in accordance with these, namely, prudence and moral virtue, is also human (and is called the active life). Consequently happiness consisting in this kind of life is human. But contemplative life and contemplative happiness, which are proper to the intellect, are separate and divine.

It should suffice for the present to say this much on the matter, for a fuller explanation would be more than what belongs to our purpose. The question is treated in the third book *De Anima* (Ch. 5, 43- a 22; St. Th. Lect. 10, 742-743), where it is shown that the intellect is separate.

Therefore it is evident that happiness of contemplative living is more excellent than happiness of active living according as something separate and divine is more excellent than that which is composite and human.

*Aquinas On the Posterior Analytics I*

As the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics I* (980b26), “the human race lives by art and reasonings.” In this statement the Philosopher seems to touch upon that property whereby man differs from the other animals. For the other animals are prompted to their acts by a natural impulse, but man is directed in his actions by a judgment of reason. And this is the reason why there are various arts devoted to the ready and orderly performance of human acts. For an art seems to be nothing more than a definite and fixed procedure established by reason, whereby human acts reach their due end through appropriate means.

Now reason is not only able to direct the acts of the lower powers but is also director of its own act: for what is peculiar to the intellective part of man is its ability to reflect upon itself. For the intellect knows itself. In like manner reason is able to reason about its own act. Therefore just

as the art of building or carpentering, through which man is enabled to perform manual acts in an easy and orderly manner, arose from the fact that reason reasoned about manual acts, so in like manner an art is needed to direct the act of reasoning, so that by it a man when performing the act of reasoning might proceed in an orderly and easy manner and without error. And this art is logic, i.e., the science of reason. And it concerns reason not only because it is according to reason, for that is common to all arts, but also because it is concerned with the very act of reasoning as with its proper matter. Therefore it seems to be the art of the arts, because it directs us in the act of reasoning, from which all arts proceed.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 1 Sicut dicit Aristoteles in principio metaphysicae, hominum genus arte et rationibus vivit: in quo videtur philosophus tangere quoddam hominis proprium quo a caeteris animalibus differt. Alia enim animalia quodam naturali instinctu ad suos actus aguntur; homo autem rationis iudicio in suis actionibus dirigitur. Et inde est quod ad actus humanos faciliter et ordinate perficiendos diversae artes deserviunt. Nihil enim aliud ars esse videtur, quam certa ordinatio rationis quomodo per determinata media ad debitum finem actus humani perveniant. Ratio autem non solum dirigere potest inferiorum partium actus, sed etiam actus sui directiva est. Hoc enim est proprium intellectivae partis, ut in seipsam reflectatur: nam intellectus intelligit seipsum et similiter ratio de suo actu ratiocinari potest. Si igitur ex hoc, quod ratio de actu manus ratiocinatur, adinventata est ars aedificatoria vel fabrilis, per quas homo faciliter et ordinate huiusmodi actus exercere potest; eadem ratione ars quaedam necessaria est, quae sit directiva ipsius actus rationis, per quam scilicet homo in ipso actu rationis ordinate, faciliter et sine errore procedat.*

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 2 Et haec ars est logica, idest rationalis scientia. Quae non solum rationalis est ex hoc, quod est secundum rationem (quod est omnibus artibus commune); sed etiam ex hoc, quod est circa ipsum actum rationis sicut circa propriam materiam.*

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 3 Et ideo videtur esse ars artium, quia in actu rationis nos dirigit, a quo omnes artes procedunt. Oportet igitur logicae partes accipere secundum diversitatem actuum rationis.*

Now there are three acts of the reason, the first two of which belong to reason regarded as an intellect. One action of the intellect is the understanding of indivisible or uncomplex things, and according to this action it conceives *what* a thing is. And this operation is called by some the informing of the intellect, or representing by means of the intellect. To this operation of the reason is ordained the doctrine which Aristotle hands down in the book of *Predicaments*, [i.e., *Categories*]. The second operation of the intellect is its act of combining or dividing, in which the true or the false are for the first time present. And this act of reason is the subject of the doctrine which Aristotle hands down in the book entitled *On Interpretation*. But the third act of the reason is concerned with that which is peculiar to reason, namely, to advance from one thing to another in such a way that through that which is known a man comes to a knowledge of the unknown. And this act is considered in the remaining books of logic.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 4 Sunt autem rationis tres actus: quorum primi duo sunt rationis, secundum quod est intellectus quidam. Una enim actio intellectus est intelligentia indivisibilium sive incomplexorum, secundum quam concipit quid est res. Et haec operatio a quibusdam dicitur informatio intellectus sive imaginatio per intellectum. Et ad hanc operationem rationis ordinatur doctrina, quam tradit Aristoteles in libro praedicamentorum. Secunda vero operatio intellectus est compositio vel divisio intellectus, in qua est iam verum vel falsum. Et huic rationis actui deservit doctrina, quam tradit Aristoteles in libro perihermeneias. Tertius vero*

*actus rationis est secundum id quod est proprium rationis, scilicet discurrere ab uno in aliud, ut per id quod est notum deveniat in cognitionem ignoti. Et huic actui deserviunt reliqui libri logicae.*

### **Lecture I (71a1-10)**

Now the need for anything directed to an end is caused by that end. But the end of the demonstrative syllogism is the attainment of science. Hence if science could not be achieved by syllogizing or arguing, there would be no need for the demonstrative syllogism. Plato, as a matter of fact, held that science in us is not the result of a syllogism but of an impression upon our minds of ideal forms from which, he said, are also derived the natural forms in natural things, which he supposed were participations of forms separated from matter. From this it followed that natural agents were not the causes of forms in natural things but merely prepared the matter for participating in the separated forms. In like fashion he postulated that science in us is not caused by study and exercise, but only that obstacles are removed and man is brought to recall things which he naturally understands in virtue of an imprint of separated forms.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 8 Necessitas autem cuiuslibet rei ordinatae ad finem ex suo fine sumitur; finis autem demonstrativi syllogismi est acquisitio scientiae; unde, si scientia acquiri non posset per syllogismum vel argumentum, nulla esset necessitas demonstrativi syllogismi. Posuit autem Plato quod scientia in nobis non causatur ex syllogismo, sed ex impressione formarum idealium in animas nostras, ex quibus etiam effluere dicebat formas naturales in rebus naturalibus, quas ponebat esse participationes quasdam formarum a materia separatarum. Ex quo sequebatur quod agentia naturalia non causabant formas in rebus inferioribus, sed solum materiam praeparabant ad participandum formas separatas. Et similiter ponebat quod per studium et exercitium non causatur in nobis scientia; sed tantum removentur impedimenta, et reducitur homo quasi in memoriam eorum, quae naturaliter scit ex impressione formarum separatarum.*

But Aristotle's view is opposed to this on two counts. For he maintains that natural forms are made actual by forms present in matter, i.e., by the forms of natural agents. He further maintains that science is made actual in us by other knowledge already existing in us. This means that it is formed in us through a syllogism or some type of argument. For in arguing we proceed from one thing into another.

*Sententia autem Aristotelis est contraria quantum ad utrumque. Ponebat enim quod formae naturales reducuntur in actum a formis quae sunt in materia, scilicet a formis naturalium agentium. Et similiter ponebat quod scientia fit in nobis actu per aliquam scientiam in nobis praexistentem. Et hoc est fieri in nobis scientiam per syllogismum aut argumentum quodcumque. Nam ex uno in aliud argumentando procedimus.*

Therefore, in order to show the need for demonstrative syllogism Aristotle begins by stating that some of our knowledge is acquired from knowledge already existing.

First (71a1), he asserts a universal proposition containing his thesis, namely, that the production of knowledge in us is caused from knowledge already existing; hence he says, "Every doctrine and every discipline..." He does not say, "all knowledge," because not all knowledge depends on previous knowledge, for that would involve an infinite process: but the acquisition of every discipline comes from knowledge already possessed.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 9 Ad ostendendum igitur necessitatem demonstrativi syllogismi, praemittit Aristoteles quod cognitio in nobis acquiritur ex aliqua cognitione praesistenti. Duo igitur facit: primo, ostendit propositum; secundo, docet modum*

*praecognitionis; ibi: dupliciter autem et cetera. Circa primum duo facit. Primo, inducit universalem propositionem propositum continentem, scilicet quod acceptio cognitionis in nobis fit ex aliqua praeexistenti cognitione.*

For the names “doctrine” and “discipline” pertain to the learning process, doctrine being the action exerted by the one who makes us know, and discipline the reception of knowledge from another. Furthermore, “doctrine” and “discipline” are not taken here as pertaining only to the acquisition of scientific knowledge but to the acquiring of any knowledge. That this is so is evidenced by the fact that he explains the proposition even in regard to dialectical and rhetorical disputations, neither of which engenders science. Hence this is another reason why he did not say, “from pre-existent science or intuition,” but “knowledge” universally. However he does add, “intellectual,” in order to preclude knowledge acquired by sense or imagination. For reason alone proceeds from one thing into another.

*Et ideo dicit: omnis doctrina et omnis disciplina, non autem omnis cognitio, quia non omnis cognitio ex priori cognitione dependet: esset enim in infinitum abire. Omnis autem disciplinae acceptio ex praeexistenti cognitione fit. Nomen autem doctrinae et disciplinae ad cognitionis acquisitionem pertinet. Nam doctrina est actio eius, qui aliquid cognoscere facit; disciplina autem est receptio cognitionis ab alio. Non autem accipitur hic doctrina et disciplina secundum quod se habent ad acquisitionem scientiae tantum, sed ad acquisitionem cognitionis cuiuscumque. Quod patet, quia manifestat hanc propositionem etiam in disputativis et rhetoricis disputationibus, per quas non acquiritur scientia. Propter quod etiam non dicit ex praeexistenti scientia vel intellectu, sed universaliter cognitione. Addit autem intellectiva ad excludendum acceptionem cognitionis sensitivae vel imaginativae. Nam procedere ex uno in aliud rationis est solum.*

In regard to the first it should be noted that the object of which scientific knowledge is sought through demonstration is some conclusion in which a proper attribute is predicated of some subject, which conclusion is inferred from the principles. And because the knowledge of simple things precedes the knowledge of compound things, it is necessary -that the subject and the proper attribute be somehow known before knowledge of the conclusion is obtained. In like manner it is required that the principle be known from which the conclusion is inferred, for the conclusion is made known from a knowledge of the principle.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 2 n. 2 Circa primum sciendum est quod id cuius scientia per demonstrationem quaeritur est conclusio aliqua in qua propria passio de subiecto aliquo praedicatur: quae quidem conclusio ex aliquibus principiis infertur. Et quia cognitio simplicium praecedit cognitionem compositorum, necesse est quod, antequam habeatur cognitio conclusionis, cognoscatur aliquo modo subiectum et passio. Et similiter oportet quod praecognoscatur principium, ex quo conclusio infertur, cum ex cognitione principii conclusio innotescat.*

### **Lecture 3 (71a24-b9)**

Having shown the manner in which certain other things must be known before knowledge of the conclusion is obtained, the Philosopher now wishes to show how we know even the conclusion beforehand, i.e., before knowledge of it is obtained through a syllogism or induction. Concerning this he does two things:

First (71a24), he establishes the truth of the fact, saying that before an induction or syllogism is formed to beget knowledge of a conclusion, that conclusion is somehow known and somehow not known: for, absolutely speaking, it is not known; but in a qualified sense, it is known. Thus,

if the conclusion that a triangle has three angles equal to two right angles has to be proved, the one who obtains science of this fact through demonstration already knew it in some way before it was demonstrated; although absolutely speaking, he did not know it. Hence in one sense he already knew it, but in the full sense he did not. And the reason is that, as has been pointed out, the principles of the conclusion must be known beforehand. Now the principles in demonstrative matters are to the conclusion as efficient causes in natural things are to their effects; hence in *Physics* II the propositions of a syllogism are set in the genus of efficient cause. But an effect, before it is actually produced, pre-exists virtually in its efficient causes but not actually, which is to exist absolutely. In like manner, before it is drawn out of its demonstrative principles, the conclusion is pre-known virtually, although not actually, in its self-evident principles. For that is the way it pre-exists in them. And so it is clear that it is not pre-known in the full sense, but in some sense.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 1 Postquam ostendit philosophus quomodo oportet praecognoscere quaedam alia, antequam de conclusione cognitio sumatur, nunc vult ostendere quomodo ipsam conclusionem contingit praecognoscere, antequam cognitio sumatur de ea per syllogismum vel inductionem. Et circa hoc duo facit. Primo namque determinat veritatem, dicens quod, antequam inducatur inductio vel syllogismus ad faciendam cognitionem de aliqua conclusione, illa conclusio quodammodo scitur, et quodammodo non: simpliciter enim nescitur, sed scitur solum secundum quid. Sicut si debeat probari ista conclusio, triangulus habet tres angulos aequales duobus rectis; antequam demonstraretur, ille qui per demonstrationem accipit scientiam eius, nescivit simpliciter, sed scivit secundum quid. Unde quodammodo praescivit, simpliciter autem non. Cuius quidem ratio est, quia, sicut iam ostensum est, oportet principia conclusioni praecognoscere. Principia autem se habent ad conclusiones in demonstrativis, sicut causae activae in naturalibus ad suos effectus (unde in II physicorum propositiones syllogismi ponuntur in genere causae efficientis). Effectus autem, antequam producat in actu, praeeexistit quidem in causis activis virtute, non autem actu, quod est simpliciter esse. Et similiter antequam ex principiis demonstrativis deducatur conclusio, in ipsis quidem principiis praecognitis praecognoscitur conclusio virtute, non autem actu: sic enim in eis praeeexistit. Et sic patet quod non praecognoscitur simpliciter, sed secundum quid.*

Secondly (71a28), in virtue of this established fact, he settles a doubt which Plato maintained in the book, *Meno*, which gets its title from the name of his disciple. The doubt is presented in the following manner: A person utterly ignorant of the art of geometry is questioned in an orderly Way concerning the *per se* known principles from which a geometric conclusion is concluded. By starting with principles that are *per se* known, to each of which this person ignorant of geometry gives a true answer, Aid leading him thus by questions to the conclusion, he gives the true Answer step by step. From this, therefore, he would have it that even those who seem to be ignorant of certain arts really have a knowledge of them before being instructed in them. And so it follows that either a man learns nothing or he learns what he already knew.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 2 Secundo; ibi: si vero non etc., excludit ex veritate determinata quandam dubitationem, quam Plato ponit in libro Menonis, sic intitulato ex nomine sui discipuli.<sup>1</sup> Est autem dubitatio talis. Inducit enim quendam, omnino imperitum artis geometricae, interrogatum ordinate de principiis, ex quibus quaedam geometrica conclusio concluditur,*

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<sup>1</sup> The Leonine editors conclude that Aquinas does not know the *Meno*. Like Augustine and Anselm who are responsible for the immense role its argument plays in establishing the necessity of faith for knowledge in the Latin world, he has its doctrine indirectly Cicero's *Trusculan Disputations* are the indicated source.

*incipiendo ex principiis per se notis: ad quae omnia ille, ignarus geometriae, id quod verum est respondit: et sic deducendo quaestiones usque ad conclusiones per singula verum respondit. Ex hoc igitur vult habere, quod etiam illi, qui videntur imperiti aliquarum artium, antequam de eis instruantur, earum notitiam habent. Et sic sequitur quod vel homo nihil addiscat, vel addiscat ea quae prius novit.*

In dealing with this problem he [Aristotle] does four things. First, he suggests that it cannot be settled unless we grant the truth established above, namely, that the conclusion which a person learns through demonstration or induction was already known, not absolutely, but as it was virtually known in its principles concerning which a person ignorant of a science can give true answers. However, according to Plato's theory the conclusion was pre-known absolutely, so that no one learns afresh but is led to recall by some rational process of deduction. This is similar to Anaxagoras' position on natural forms, namely, that before they are generated, they already pre-existed in the matter absolutely, whereas Aristotle says that they pre-exist in potency and not absolutely.

Secondly (7100), he shows that the way some have answered Plato's problem is false, namely, by saying that a conclusion is not in any sense known before it is demonstrated or learned by some method or other.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 3 Circa hoc ergo quatuor facit. Primo enim, proponit quod praedicta dubitatio vitari non potest, nisi supposita praedeterminata veritate, scilicet quod conclusio, quam quis addiscit per demonstrationem vel inductionem, erat nota non simpliciter, sed secundum quod est virtute in suis principiis: de quibus aliquis, ignarus scientiae, interrogatus, veritatem respondere potest. Secundum vero Platonis sententiam, conclusio erat praecognita simpliciter; unde non addiscebatur de novo, sed potius per deductionem aliquam rationis in memoriam reducebatur. Sicut etiam de formis naturalibus Anaxagoras ponit, quod ante generationem praeexistebant in materia simpliciter. Aristoteles vero ponit quod praeexistunt in potentia et non simpliciter.*

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 4 Secundo, cum dicit: non enim sicut etc., ponit falsam quorundam obviacionem ad dubitationem Platonis: qui scilicet dicebant quod conclusio antequam demonstraretur vel quocunque modo addiceretur, nullo modo erat cognita...*

Fourthly (71b5), he presents the true solution of the problem under discussion in terms of the truth already established, saying that there is nothing to prevent a person from somehow knowing and somehow not knowing a fact before he learns it. For it is not a paradox if one somehow already knows what he learns, but it would be, if he already knew it in the same way that he knows it when he has learned it. For learning is, properly speaking, the generation of science in someone. But that which is generated was not, prior to its generation, a being absolutely, but somehow a being and somehow non-being: for it was a being in potency, although actually non-being. And this is what being generated consists in, namely, in being converted from potency to act. In like fashion, that which a person learns was not previously known absolutely, as Plato preferred; but neither was it absolutely unknown, as they maintained whose answer was refuted above. Rather it was known in potency, i.e., virtually, in the pre-known universal principles; however, it was not actually known in the sense of specific knowledge. And this is what learning consists in, namely, in being brought from potential or virtual or universal knowledge to specific and actual knowledge.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 6 Quarto, ibi: sed nihil etc., ponit veram solutionem dubitationis praedictae secundum praedeterminatam veritatem, dicens quod illud quod quis*

*addiscit, nihil prohibet primo quodammodo scire et quodammodo ignorare. Non enim est inconueniens si aliquis quodammodo praesciat id quod addiscit; sed esset inconueniens si hoc modo praecognosceret, secundum quod addiscit. Addiscere enim proprie est scientiam in aliquo generari. Quod autem generatur, ante generationem neque fuit omnino non ens neque omnino ens, sed quodammodo ens et quodammodo non ens: ens quidem in potentia, non ens vero actu: et hoc est generari, reduci de potentia in actum. Unde nec id quod quis addiscit erat omnino prius notum, ut Plato posuit, nec omnino ignotum, ut secundum solutionem supra improbatam ponebatur; sed erat notum potentia sive virtute in principiis praecognitis universalibus, ignotum autem actu, secundum propriam cognitionem. Et hoc est addiscere, reduci de cognitione potentiali, seu virtuali, aut universalis, in cognitionem propriam et actualem.*

#### Additional Texts from Aquinas on the Posterior Analytics

##### Lecture 5 (72a8-24)

To clarify this division it should be noted that any proposition whose predicate is included within the notion of its subject is immediate and known in virtue of itself as it stands. However, in the case of some of these propositions the terms are such that they are understood by everyone, as *being* and *one* and those other notions that are characteristic of being precisely as being: for *being* is the first concept in the intellect. Hence it is necessary that propositions of this kind be held as known in virtue of themselves not only as they stand but also in reference to us. Examples of these are the propositions that “It does not occur that the same thing is and is not” and that “The whole is greater than its part,” and others like these. Hence all the sciences take principles of this kind from metaphysics whose task it is to consider being absolutely and the characteristics of being.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 5 n. 7 Ad huius autem divisionis intellectum sciendum est quod quaelibet propositio, cuius praedicatum est in ratione subiecti, est immediata et per se nota, quantum est in se. Sed quarundam propositionum termini sunt tales, quod sunt in notitia omnium, sicut ens, et unum, et alia quae sunt entis, in quantum ens: nam ens est prima conceptio intellectus. Unde oportet quod tales propositiones non solum in se, sed etiam quoad omnes, quasi per se notae habeantur. Sicut quod, non contingit idem esse et non esse; et quod, totum sit maius sua parte: et similia. Unde et huiusmodi principia omnes scientiae accipiunt a metaphysica, cuius est considerare ens simpliciter et ea, quae sunt entis.*

Secondly (76a19), he shows the pre-eminence of this science which considers common principles, namely, first philosophy, over the others. For that through which something is proved must always be scientifically more known or at least more known. For one whose science of something proceeds from higher causes must understand those causes even better, because his science proceeded from the absolutely prior, since it is not through something caused that he knows these causes. For when one’s knowledge of causes proceeds from caused things, he does not derive his knowledge from the absolutely prior and better known, but from what is prior and better known in reference to us. But when the principles of a lower science are proved by the principles of a higher science, the process is not from caused things to causes, but conversely. Therefore, such a process must go from the absolutely prior and from the absolutely more known. Thus, those items of a higher science that are used in proving matters of a lower science must be more known. Furthermore, that by which all other things are proved and which is itself not proved by anything prior must be the most known. Consequently, a

higher science will be science in a fuller sense than a lower; and the highest science, namely, first philosophy, will be science in the fullest sense.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 17 n. 5 Secundo, cum dicit: et namque scivit etc., ostendit praeeminentiam huiusmodi scientiae, quae considerat principia communia, scilicet primae philosophiae, ad alias. Semper enim oportet illud, per quod aliquid probatur, esse magis scitum vel notum. Qui enim scit aliquid ex superioribus causis, oportet quod sit magis intelligens illas causas, quia scivit ex prioribus simpliciter, cum non sciat ex causatis causas: quando enim aliquis scit ex causatis causas, tunc non intelligit ex prioribus et ex magis notis simpliciter, sed ex magis notis et prioribus quoad nos. Cum autem principia inferioris scientiae probantur ex principiis superioris, non proceditur ex causatis in causas, sed e converso. Unde oportet quod talis processus sit ex prioribus et ex magis notis simpliciter. Oportet ergo magis esse scitum quod est superioris scientiae, ex quo probatur id quod est inferioris, et maxime esse scitum id, quo omnia alia probantur, et ipsum non probatur ex alio priori. Et per consequens scientia superior erit magis scientia, quam inferior; et scientia suprema, scilicet philosophia prima, erit maxime scientia.*

With respect to the first (76b23) it should be noted that the common. conceptions in the mind have something in common with the other principles of demonstration and something proper: something common, because both they and the others must be true in virtue of themselves. But what is proper to the former is that it is necessary not only that they be true of themselves but that they be seen to be such. For no one can think their contraries.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 19 n. 2 Circa primum considerandum est quod communes animi conceptiones habent aliquid commune cum aliis principiis demonstrationis, et aliquid proprium. Commune quidem habent, quia necesse est tam ista, quam alia principia per se esse vera.*

*Proprium autem est horum principiorum quod non solum necesse est ea per se vera esse, sed etiam necesse est videri quod per se sint vera. Nullus enim potest opinari contraria eorum.*

He says, therefore, that that principle of which it is not only required that it be in virtue of itself but further required that it be seen, namely, a common conception in the mind or a dignity, is neither a postulate nor a supposition. He proves this in the following way: A postulate and a supposition can be confirmed by a reason from without, i.e., by some argumentation; but a common conception in the mind does not bear on a reason from without (because it cannot be proved by any argument), but bears on that reason which is in the soul, because it is made known at once by the natural light of reason. That it does not bear on any reason from without is shown by the fact that a syllogism is not formed to prove such common conceptions of the mind. Furthermore, that these are not made known by an outward reason but by the inward he proves by the fact that it is possible to contest an outward reason, either truly or apparently, but it is not always possible to do so with the inward reason. This is so because nothing is so true that it cannot be denied orally. (For even this most evident principle that the same thing cannot be and not be has been orally denied by some). On the other hand, some things are so true that their opposites cannot be conceived by the intellect. Therefore, they cannot be challenged in the inward reason but only by an outward reason which is by the voice. Such are the common conceptions in the mind.

*Expositio Posteriorum, lib. 1 l. 19 n. 3 Dicit ergo quod illud principium, quod necesse est non solum per seipsum esse, sed etiam ulterius necesse est, ipsum videri, scilicet communis animi conceptio vel dignitas, non est neque petitio neque suppositio. Quod sic probat. Petitio et suppositio exteriori ratione confirmari possunt, idest argumentatione aliqua. Sed communis animi conceptio*

*non est ad exterius rationem, quia non potest probari per aliquam argumentationem, sed est ad eam, quae est in anima, quia lumine naturalis rationis statim fit nota. Et quod non sit ad exterius rationem patet, quia non fit syllogismus ad probandas huiusmodi communes animi conceptiones. Et quod huiusmodi non sunt notae per exteriorem rationem, sed per interiorem, probat per hoc, quod exteriori rationi potest instari vel vere vel apparenter: interiori autem rationi non est possibile semper instari. Et hoc ideo, quia nihil est adeo verum, quin voce possit negari. Nam et hoc principium notissimum, quod non contingat idem esse et non esse, quidam ore negaverunt. Quaedam autem adeo vera sunt, quod eorum opposita intellectu capi non possunt; et ideo interiori ratione eis obviari non potest, sed solum exteriori, quae est per vocem. Et huiusmodi sunt communes animi conceptiones.*

Texts from the *Sententia in de Anima* on III.5

Since then the intellectual part of the soul alternates between potency and act, it must include these two distinct principles: first, a potentiality within which all intelligible concepts can be actualised (this is the potential intellect already discussed); and then, also, a principle whose function it is to actualise those concepts. And this latter is the agent intellect,—being ‘a sort of state’.

*Sententia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 1 Sed anima secundum partem intellectivam quandoque est in potentia, et quandoque in actu. Necessesse est igitur in anima intellectiva esse has differentias: ut scilicet unus sit intellectus, in quo possint omnia intelligibilia fieri, et hic est intellectus possibilis, de quo supra dictum est: et alius intellectus sit ad hoc quod possit omnia intelligibilia facere in actu; qui vocatur intellectus agens, et est sicut habitus quidam.*

§ 729. This last phrase has led some to suppose that the agent intellect is one with the ‘intellect’ which is a habitual apprehension of first principles. But it is not so; for the latter ‘intellect’ presupposes the actual presence in the mind of certain intelligible and understood objects, which are the terms in understanding which we apprehend the truth of first principles. So the view in question would imply that the agent intellect was not, as Aristotle here maintains, the primary source, for us, of the actual intelligibility of anything. Therefore I hold that the term ‘state’ is used here in the sense in which Aristotle often calls any form or nature a ‘state’, to distinguish it from a privation or a potency. In this case the agent intellect is called a state to distinguish it from the intellect in potency.

*Sententia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 2 Huius autem verbi occasione, quidam posuerunt intellectum agentem idem esse cum intellectu qui est habitus principiorum. Quod esse non potest: quia intellectus, qui est habitus principiorum, praesupponit aliqua iam intellecta in actu: scilicet terminos principiorum, per quorum intelligentiam cognoscimus principia: et sic sequeretur, quod intellectus agens non faceret omnia intelligibilia in actu, ut hic philosophus dicit. Dicendum est ergo, quod habitus, sic accipitur secundum quod philosophus frequenter consuevit nominare omnem formam et naturam habitum, prout habitus distinguitur contra privationem et potentiam, ut sic per hoc quod nominat eum habitum distinguat eum ab intellectu possibili, qui est potentia.*

§ 730. So he calls it a state, and compares it to light which ‘in a way’ brings colours from potency to act;—‘in a way’ because, as we have seen, colour is visible of itself; all that light does is to actualise a transparent medium which can then be modified by colour so that colour is seen. The agent intellect, on the other hand, actualises the intelligible notions themselves, abstracting them from matter, i.e. bringing them from potential to actual intelligibility.

*Sententia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 3 Unde dicit quod est habitus, ut lumen, quod quodammodo facit colores existentes in potentia, esse actu colores. Et dicit quodammodo, quia supra ostensum est, quod color secundum seipsum est visibilis. Hoc autem solummodo facit lumen, ipsum esse actu colorem, in quantum facit diaphanum esse in actu, ut moveri possit a colore, ut sic color videatur. Intellectus autem agens facit ipsa intelligibilia esse in actu, quae prius erant in potentia, per hoc quod abstrahit ea a materia; sic enim sunt intelligibilia in actu, ut dictum est.*

§ 731. The reason Aristotle came to postulate an agent intellect was his rejection of Plato's theory that the essences of sensible things existed apart from matter, in a state of actual intelligibility. For Plato there was clearly no need to posit an agent intellect. But Aristotle, who regarded the essences of sensible things as existing in matter with only a potential intelligibility, had to invoke some abstractive principle in the mind itself to render these essences actually intelligible.

*Sententia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 4 Inducitur autem Aristoteles ad ponendum intellectum agentem, ad excludendum opinionem Platonis, qui posuit quidditates rerum sensibilium esse a materia separatas, et intelligibiles actu; unde non erat ei necessarium ponere intellectum agentem. Sed quia Aristoteles ponit, quod quidditates rerum sensibilium sunt in materia, et non intelligibiles actu, oportuit quod poneret aliquem intellectum qui abstraheret a materia, et sic faceret eas intelligibiles actu.*

§ 735. Nor is it enough to say that the intelligible notions formed by the agent intellect subsist somehow in phantasms, which are certainly intrinsic to us; for as we have already observed in treating of the potential intellect, objects only become actually intelligible when abstracted from phantasms; so that, merely by way of the phantasms, we cannot attribute the work of the agent intellect to ourselves. Besides, the agent intellect is to ideas in act in the mind as art is to the ideas it works by; and obviously the things on which art impresses such ideas do not themselves produce the art; hence, even granted that we were the subjects of ideas made actually intelligible in us, it would not follow that it is we who produce them by means of an agent intellect in ourselves.

*Sententia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 8 Nec sufficit ad hoc, quod actio attribuatur homini per hoc quod species intelligibiles factae per intellectum agentem, habent quodammodo pro subiecto phantasmata, quae sunt in nobis; quia ut supra diximus, cum de intellectu possibili ageretur, species non sunt intelligibiles in actu, nisi quia sunt abstractae a phantasmatibus: et sic eis mediantibus actio intellectus agentis non posset nobis attribui. Et praeterea intellectus agens comparatur ad species intellectus in actu, sicut ars ad species artificiatorum, per quas manifestum est, quod artificia non habent actionem artis: unde etiam dato, quod species factae intelligibiles actu, essent in nobis, non sequeretur, quod nos possemus habere actionem intellectus agentis.*

§ 737. The chief difficulty arises from the fact that, while the potential intellect is in potency to intelligible objects, the agent intellect stands to the latter as a being already in act. And it would seem impossible that one and the same thing should be at once in act and in potency to the same object; and therefore that these two intellects should belong to the one substance of the soul.

*Sententia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 10 Sed contra hoc videtur esse praecipue, quod intellectus possibilis comparatur ad intelligibilia, ut in potentia existens ad illa; intellectus autem agens comparatur ad ea, ut ens in actu: non videtur autem possibile, idem respectu eiusdem posse*

*esse in potentia et in actu: unde non videtur possibile, quod intellectus agens et possibilis convenient in una substantia animae.*

§ 738. But there is really no difficulty in this if we understand aright how the potential intellect is potential with respect to intelligible objects, and how the latter are potential with respect to the agent intellect. In the former case the potentiality is that of the indefinite to the definite; for the potential intellect is not, as such, endowed with any definite and particular sensible thing's nature. Yet only definite particular natures are, as such, intelligible—hence Aristotle's earlier comparison' of the intellectual power's relation to intelligible objects with that of a sheet of paper to particular definite pictures. And from this point of view the agent intellect is not in act.

*Sentencia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 11 Sed hoc de facili solvitur, si quis recte consideret, quomodo intellectus possibilis sit in potentia ad intelligibilia, et quomodo intelligibilia sunt in potentia respectu intellectus agentis. Est enim intellectus possibilis in potentia ad intelligibilia, sicut indeterminatum ad determinatum. Nam intellectus possibilis non habet determinate naturam alicuius rerum sensibilium. Unumquodque autem intelligibile, est aliqua determinata natura alicuius speciei. Unde supra dixit, quod intellectus possibilis comparatur ad intelligibilia, sicut tabula ad determinatas picturas. Quantum autem ad hoc, intellectus agens non est in actu.*

§ 739. For if the agent intellect as such included the definite forms of all intelligible objects, the potential intellect would not depend upon phantasms; it would be actualised simply and solely by the agent intellect; and the latter's relation to intelligible objects would not be that of a maker to something made, as the Philosopher here says; for it would simply be identical with them. What makes it therefore in act with respect to intelligible objects is the fact that it is an active immaterial force able to assimilate other things to itself, i.e.. to immaterialise them. In this way it renders the potentially intelligible actually so (like light which, without containing particular colours, actually brings colours into act). And because this active force is a certain participation in the intellectual light of separated substances, the Philosopher compares it to a state and to light; which would not be an appropriate way of describing it if it were itself a separate substance.

*Sentencia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 12 Si enim intellectus agens haberet in se determinationem omnium intelligibilium, non indigeret intellectus possibilis phantasmatis, sed per solum intellectum agentem reduceretur in actum omnium intelligibilium, et sic non compararetur ad intelligibilia ut faciens ad factum, ut philosophus hic dicit, sed ut existens ipsa intelligibilia.*

*Comparatur igitur ut actus respectu intelligibilium, in quantum est quaedam virtus immaterialis activa, potens alia similia sibi facere, scilicet immaterialia. Et per hunc modum, ea quae sunt intelligibilia in potentia, facit intelligibilia in actu. Sic enim et lumen facit colores in actu, non quod ipsum habeat in se determinationem omnium colorum. Huiusmodi autem virtus activa est quaedam participatio luminis intellectualis a substantiis separatis. Et ideo philosophus dicit, quod est sicut habitus, vel lumen; quod non competeret dici de eo, si esset substantia separata.*

§ 740. Next, at 'Knowledge in act' he states his conclusions concerning intellect as in act; and first he states its properties; and then, it 'Only separated' how the intellectual part of the soul in general differs from the rest of the soul. Regarding the former point, he states three properties of intellect in act. First, its actual knowledge is identical with the thing known; which is not true of intellect as potential. Secondly, though in one and the same thing potential knowledge is prior in time to actual knowledge, yet, speaking universally, potential knowledge is not prior either in nature or in time. In Book IX of the Metaphysics, Aristotle had said that act is by nature prior to potency, but not in time in one and the same thing; for a thing is first in potency and afterwards in act. But universally speaking act takes priority even in time; because no potency would ever be actualised unless something were already in act. So, even in the case of potential knowledge, no one ever comes to know anything actually, whether through his own effort or another's teaching, except in virtue of some pre-existing actual knowledge, as it is said in Book I of the Posterior Analytics.

*Sententia De anima, lib. 3 l. 10 n. 13 Deinde cum dicit idem autem determinat de intellectu secundum actum. Et circa hoc duo facit. Primo ponit conditiones intellectus in actu. Secundo ostendit conditiones totius partis intellectivae, secundum quod differt ab aliis partibus animae, ibi, separatus autem. Circa primum tres ponit conditiones intellectus in actu: quarum prima est, quod scientia in actu, est idem rei scitae. Quod non est verum de intellectu in potentia. Secunda conditio eius est, quod scientia in potentia in uno et eodem, tempore est prior quam scientia in actu; sed universaliter non est prior, non solum natura, sed neque etiam tempore: et hoc est, quod philosophus dicit in nono metaphysicae, quod actus est prior potentia natura, tempore vero in uno et eodem potentia prior est actu, quia unum et idem prius est in potentia, et postea fit actu. Sed universaliter loquendo, etiam tempore actus est prior. Nam quod in potentia est, non reducitur in actum nisi per aliquod quod est actu. Et sic etiam de potentia sciente, non fit aliquis sciens actu, inveniendo, neque discendo, nisi per aliquam scientiam praeexistentem in actu; quia omnis doctrina et disciplina intellectiva fit ex praeexistenti cognitione, ut dicitur in primo posteriorum.*