



FROM SHADOWS and SYMBOLS to the TRUTH



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*A History of*

*Western Philosophy*



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*Western Philosophy*

PHILOSOPHY FROM ST. AUGUSTINE TO OCKHAM

*by*

Ralph M. McInerny

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*To the Kunerts*



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# Introduction

Our basic reason for undertaking the authorship of this work is to promote the return of the history of philosophy to its rightful place of honor and usefulness in the academic program. This return is long overdue; it is becoming painfully clear that philosophy cannot be pursued in an historical vacuum. Indeed, in a very real sense philosophy is identical with its history and torn from this context it loses its particular character and force.

Philosophy pursued in an unhistorical or ahistorical manner cannot help but warp the individual and social consciousness at whose heightened refinement it is aimed. To pursue philosophy, one must either enter into the rich heritage of its history or run the risk of falling victim to a kind of speculative barbarism.

The form of these works has been determined by the authors' conviction that the history of philosophy itself can be fully appreciated only when taken as a basic element in the whole cultural complex of the West. Philosophy is not a specialized but a pervasive discipline. It finds its interest everywhere in the life of the spirit and it takes form as a response to all of the needs of the spirit. Philosophy is never a *part* of a culture but a pervading influence and mode of awareness. For this reason, in these volumes the chief architectural principle has been to place philosophy as firmly as possible in the cultural context, seeing it in this living relation to all the interests of culture and the life of the spirit.

It is our belief that the division of the work into four volumes and the articulations of the history of culture within which the history of philosophy has been placed is justified and even demanded by that history itself and has nothing artificial or contrived about it. For this reason, the student and the general reader will, we believe, be able to relate the flow of philosophical speculation directly to what he already knows about the general architecture of the history of Western Culture and will immediately experience the history of philosophy as an enrichment in depth of his cultural consciousness. It is hoped that the student will come to perceive that it is precisely the quality of its philosophical experience which gives an age its special character and it is precisely its philosophical discontent which, stirring in one age, prepares and induces the vast labors which usher in a new.

While the volumes have been so planned that they may be read profitably by the general reader, they have a special orientation toward the academic world of the classroom. It is the authors' conviction that the basic book used in an academic course ought to be the meeting ground for the minds of both teacher and student. To this end, both will find that these volumes contain something which suits their particular needs and functions.

The particular need of the student is background; he can profit little from any contact with even the best of teachers unless he brings the richest possible preparation to this encounter. Therefore, these volumes are addressed to him in the hope that he will be drawn into them by a natural and spontaneous response. Frankly, we hope that the student will enjoy reading them and not find that reading a chore.

The need of the teacher, by contrast, is for an instrument of focus; something which will enable him, in the limited time at his disposal, to select the points of greatest impact with the student mind and those which will bring about the most significant student discussion and mutual exchange. The flexible construction of these books should meet this need. The teacher may assess and evaluate the whole and/or parts according to his own needs and interests and select for treatment in the classroom those articulations which will give him the greatest direct access to the minds of his students. In this process of selection, the volumes may be used as a guide to serve him by indicating the structure of the history of philosophy. They do *not* undertake to *make that selection for him* or dictate to him, by their structure, what his selection should be. He too, it is hoped, will enjoy teaching with this book (note we carefully avoid saying *teaching this book*) because it ministers to his own irreplaceable activity and does not dictate or constrain it.

In the text, reference to original sources and to the best secondary sources has been constant. In every way the authors have made an effort to place the student in contact with these sources in the context in which they will be most beneficial. In addition, lists of supplementary readings have been appended at important junctures. The quality of these reading lists should be clear from the start. They are not mere bibliographical lists nor are they "outside readings" in the current, vague sense of that term. These readings have a utilitarian purpose; they are closely related to the process of the narrative of the text itself. It is the authors' hope that as specific issues arise in class discussion, corresponding readings may be found which may extend the discussion or give it direction and emphasis. Again, it is hoped that the composition of studies will always be made a part of the student obligation in any course in the history of philosophy. The supplementary readings are so planned that the student will find in them direct help in the researching, planning and composition of such papers.

In closing, the authors would emphasize again one salient point:

they hope that from these pages the reader will derive above all a renewed sense of the universal relevance of philosophy to the life of the mind and of the spirit.

Philosophy is above all a humanistic pursuit in the basic sense of that term; namely, philosophy takes for its own all that touches man. Only when seen in this perspective can philosophy be appreciated and enjoyed. Only in this way will it inevitably be recognized by every man as the supreme human discipline, the one activity of mind and spirit from which he cannot isolate himself and still achieve stature and maturity as a human being.

*Notre Dame, Indiana*

A. ROBERT CAPONIGRI  
and  
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PART ONE  
THE AGE OF AUGUSTINE



## CHAPTER I

# *Faith and Philosophy*

In a witty inaugural lecture C. S. Lewis spoke of the difficulties that attend dividing history into periods.<sup>1</sup> With less wit than embarrassment we call attention to the fact that the period of philosophy whose history we hope to sketch in the present volume requires that we begin by saying something of a number of men who lived before Plotinus, whose philosophy provided the final discussion of our Volume One. We do have, as it happens, a reason for excluding those men before and including them now, a reason we alluded to when we made the briefest of mentions of Philo Judaeus. (Cf. Vol. I, p. 341.) That reason is this: all of the men who are included in this volume were heavily influenced in their philosophical thinking by revealed religion. Indeed, so decisive is this influence that it is only gradually that anything like an independent charter is reissued to philosophy, and, after its issuance, it is seemingly the rare thinker who pursues philosophy in any independent fashion. The men we shall be considering are believers, religious men, who claim to have an access to truths got not by strenuous intellectual effort but by the gratuitous gift of God. In short, their faith gives them answers at the outset to many of the questions that the pagan philosopher posed. It may well be asked how such men can be considered figures in the history of philosophy, and indeed for centuries the great stretch of time from Plotinus to Descartes was regarded as an exclusively theological period of no interest to the historian of philosophy, at least in any substantive sense. This assessment has not completely disappeared today.

Prior to addressing ourselves to the problem just foreshadowed—the possible coexistence of faith and rational thought—in the period that interests us, it may be useful to allay our fears in a generic way by recalling an aspect of ancient thought we were concerned to underline in our first volume. Ancient philosophy did not spring full-formed from the brow of Thales nor were its problems got by a free and unfettered gaze at the natural world. From its inception ancient philosophy was theological in orientation—the very term suggests the pursuit of a wis-

<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *De descriptione temporum* (Cambridge, 1955).

dom which consists in knowledge of the divine—and this orientation can be looked upon as the bequest of mythical thought which both antedated and to some degree was concomitant with the origin of philosophy. Mythical thought had become, as it were, institutionalized in literature as well as in the official religion, and ancient philosophers can be regarded as pursuing their task with an eye on these institutionalized attitudes. It would be difficult to say how tongue in cheek is Plato's statement that the poet is a vehicle of something like a divine revelation, or how unserious is Aristotle's notion that mythical tales are allegories of profound philosophical thought which alone survive in fallow periods. Both men, though Aristotle to a far far less degree, were prone to treat the poetic statement as an allegory of a straightforward literal truth.

Both men, too, and in this they were tributaries of earlier efforts, saw their philosophies as a replacement of popular religion, almost we might say as a better kind of religion: a way of life, a total commitment to the ultimate acquisition of knowledge of the divine. Differences there were between these two giants of ancient thought and certain it is that ancient philosophy is not perfectly homogeneous, but it is nonetheless a safe generalization that ancient philosophy did not proceed, either in fact or in desire, in complete isolation from ancient religion. There was a quarrel between them, to be sure, but it was a quarrel between a dreamt-of norm and a degenerate instance.

Viewing ancient philosophy from this angle, we can see a slight similarity between the pagan philosopher and the man of faith who began to meditate on the content of his beliefs. However, a fundamental difference can be introduced. The Christian thinker did not regard his faith as something in need of a firm rational footing, as if what he had accepted out of trust in the word of God must finally be deduced by him from the evidence of things seen. This is a generalization and therefore a simplification; one of the major motifs of the study before us is contained in that assertion, and there will be many variations on it. What will emerge in the golden period of medieval thought is the hard-won conviction that it is faith which measures natural reason and that it is eminently reasonable that this be so. For the Christian it is philosophy which must first be justified, not the faith, and if this period opens with men called Apologists, men who defend the faith, it is the addressee of the apologia, not its writer, who is thought to be in need of what is said. It is almost as if the difficulties are thought to reside only in the mind of him who has not the faith.

But of course since the recipient of faith is a man, a rational creature, it is as right as it is inevitable that he will meditate on revealed doctrines, apply natural reason to them, and that this effort will have intramural ramifications and benefits. For one thing, it is necessary that believers retain a clear and accurate knowledge of what has been pro-

posed for their faith. The orthodox expression of the content of revelation is something which, from the beginning, is attained against the background of the heterodox, the heretical understanding. It is in this sense that there is and must be a development of Christian doctrine, a gradual clarification in the light of hitherto unthought-of difficulties and interpretations of what the true sense of Scripture is. This true sense is not had merely by pointing at biblical passages; it is the interpretation of the passages that is at issue, and the orthodox interpretation, as much as the heterodox, will consist in bringing to bear on the documents of revelation an apparatus of interpretation which is not itself revealed. From the beginnings of the Christian period there is fairly widespread agreement that this apparatus is something which can be provided by philosophy.

We do not mean to suggest that there is at the outset a clear understanding of philosophy as an autonomous and legitimate activity. Far from it. Tertullian (c.160–c.240), one of the first Christian writers to present his thought in Latin, had little but contempt for pagan philosophy. For him philosophy was the locus of error, Christianity the summation of truth, and what has truth to learn from error? It may have been this contempt for natural reason that led Tertullian to hyperbolic excess in the claim that the truths of Christianity are absurd.

A far more widespread attitude was that expressed by Eusebius (c.265–c.339) in the title of a book, *Praeparatio evangelica*. Ancient wisdom, pagan philosophy, should be regarded as struggling toward the truth which has been revealed whole and entire, once and for all, by Christ. Christianity is the true philosophy, the telos toward which antiquity tended. St. Justin Martyr (c.100–164) was an early exponent of this view; St. Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.219) was another; St. Gregory of Nyssa (c.335–c.395), who was to have such influence on John Scotus Erigena, yet another. Men who felt as they did can be expected to show a sympathetic interest in the writings of the philosophers and, generally speaking, they do exhibit such an interest. By the same token, of course, such an attitude implies that philosophy, in the Greek sense, is an historical moment that has been surpassed, since whatever there is of good in ancient philosophy is contained in an eminent and perfect fashion in Christianity.

Before describing further the thought of men who saw some positive good in ancient philosophy, it might be well to indicate how they can be grouped together. First, there are the Greek Apologists, the most important of whom are Justin Martyr, already mentioned, St. Irenaeus (born c.126), and Hippolytus (died c.236). Second, note must be made of Clement of Alexandria and Origen (c.185–254) of the Catechetical School of Alexandria. Of the Latin Apologists, Tertullian, Arnobius (c.260–c.327), and Lactantius (c.250–c.325) are the most important. Other men of importance in what we may call the pre-Augustinian

period are St. Athanasius (died 373), St. Gregory of Nazianzus (died 390), St. John Chrysostom (died 406), St. Basil (died 379), and his brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa.

Justin Martyr's own route to Christianity is presented by him in such a way that it exhibits the historical process writ small. As a pagan he went to philosophers in the expectation that they would speak to him of God, and though he was dissatisfied with the Stoic, the Peripatetic, and the Pythagorean he encountered, his needs were met when he came under the tutelage of a Platonist. Here at last he had the sense of being introduced to immaterial things, and in his efforts to contemplate the Ideas he half expected to see God. He then describes an encounter with a Christian who casts doubt on salient features of Plato's thought: his views on the nature of creation, the soul, and its immortality. The man speaks with such assurance that Justin asks him where he has learned so much, and he is directed to the Scriptures. Upon reading them, his soul was set aflame, and he concludes that he has found the safe and profitable philosophy. Besides seeing Christianity as the true object of the philosophical quest, Justin points out similarities between statements of Scripture and the theories of Plato. Justin felt that the reason for such similarities was that the Greeks had borrowed ideas from the Jews. His suspicion that Greek philosophy had been influenced by the Old Testament was shared by Clement of Alexandria, as it would be by St. Augustine.

Clement, however, held that the pagan thinkers were influenced by the divine Logos in somewhat the same way that Moses and the Jewish prophets had been influenced. Pagan philosophy, like the Old Law, was a preparation for Christianity. Clement is one of the first to insist that philosophy may also provide an instrument for understanding the faith. With the aid of philosophy the truths of faith can be approached in an effort to understand them. The result is a negative rather than a positive knowledge, Clement feels, thus opening a question which will be asked again and again by later Christian thinkers. What is the import of the various names attributed to God? Can the things of this world provide us with an access to what God is? Clement's answers here are cautious, as most subsequent answers will be, and it is possible to see him anticipating the negative theology which is developed by Gregory of Nyssa and later by the Pseudo-Dionysius and which, mediated to some degree by Scotus Erigena, is continued in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and beyond.

Origen exhibits some of the dangers for the faith that can follow attempts to reconcile it with philosophy, for he reads into Scripture the Neoplatonic view that creation is a necessary process, an emanation from the Divine Monad that could not not have taken place. Origen also maintained that men are in effect fallen angels, their souls being imprisoned in bodies because of some sin prior to birth. Furthermore, perhaps influenced by the Neoplatonic doctrine of return, which com-

plements emanation, he held that ultimately all creatures would be reconciled with God, thus denying the eternity of punishment for the wicked.

Gregory of Nyssa allows the rightness of bringing philosophical conceptions to bear on revealed truths but insists that an interpretation, to be valid, must be consonant with Scripture. There is, indeed, considerable optimism on the part of Gregory as to the reach of reason, for he seems to suggest that it is possible to establish the Trinity of Persons in God on the basis of natural reason alone. There will be later attempts along the same lines, attempts which betray an unorthodox view and which tend to blur the difference between the realms of faith and reason.

Generally speaking, those of the early Fathers who look with favor on pagan philosophy, particularly that of Plato, see it as a way station to Christianity, which is the true philosophy. Moreover, when they find sympathetic doctrines in pagan thinkers, they are inclined to treat these as borrowings from the Old Testament. Finally, the utility of philosophy as an instrument for interpreting the Scriptures and clarifying the nature of belief is stressed. It is this use of philosophy to explicate and defend the faith which constitutes theology according to a definition which will emerge; thus, the question arises whether philosophy is considered an autonomous pursuit by the Christian. This is a difficulty which crops up repeatedly in the period whose history we are attempting to sketch. It has often been said that during the Middle Ages it is the theologians who do such philosophizing as is done and that by and large they do so as an adjunct to developing their theology. Philosophical contributions there may be, it will be said, but they are made *ad hoc*, with a view to their theological utility. Consequently, a man's original philosophy, as well as what he borrows, is to be found scattered through his theological writings, and it becomes difficult to determine what organizational principles we can use to construct a system of these fragments should they be extracted from their theological context.

There is some justice to this observation, but the outlook is not as bleak as it implies. We will find many philosophical works in the period before us, and we will often find more than a hint as to the structure of the philosophical system to which fragmentary contributions are made in theological writings. Moreover, there will be many commentaries on ancient philosophical works which are their own kind of contribution to philosophy. There is, in short, a great deal of autonomous philosophy in the medieval period.

Nowadays it is particularly necessary to insist on this. From many quarters come statements which, if true, would call for an ironic reversal of recent assessments of the medieval period. As has been mentioned, until fairly recent times it was fashionable to dismiss the Middle Ages as a period when only theology was done and no philosophy. Much

careful scholarship has made clear that there were any number of philosophies maintained in the Middle Ages. This variety told against the view that medieval world outlooks were simply explications of what was believed, since if the matter were that simple, we would expect but one philosophy, not several. The Middle Ages thus slowly gained recognition as a period when much vigorous philosophizing took place. Of late, however, some men whose work had much to do with this recognition have been asserting that medieval philosophy cannot be considered autonomous, that not only did it flourish in a theological context but it is inseparable from that context. If there was philosophy in medieval times, this position would have it, it was a Christian philosophy. Presumably, a major note of Christian philosophy is that one must be a Christian to accept its arguments. If this is the implication, the only conclusion must be that this is not what is meant by philosophy—least of all in the golden period of medieval thought.

Generalities are difficult on the threshold of our task, but the tone of the preceding paragraph will indicate our lack of sympathy with the latter-day notion of Christian philosophy. If that phrase accurately described the philosophical contribution of the Middle Ages, we would see little point in writing the present book. Our conviction is that the Middle Ages saw a genuine flourishing of philosophical thought. There are peaks and valleys, of course; social and political upheavals rendered any unbroken development impossible—but that is true of any period in the history of philosophy. What will particularly interest us in this, as in the other volumes of this series, are the giants of the period. As we move toward the thirteenth century, we will discern an evolving clarity as to the relation between philosophy and theology and the limits of the two. Quite unabashedly we will find the highest peak on the medieval terrain in the thirteenth century, particularly in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. In our treatment of his doctrine we will attempt to underline the fact that his is a philosophical as well as a theological achievement, that in his thought we find the clearest and most lasting answer to the puzzles we have seen emerging so far in the present chapter. There is no need to discount the Christian faith of medieval thinkers, or to deny its encompassing influence on whatever they did, to maintain that throughout the period there is a striving toward the position which reaches its full clarity in Aquinas: that philosophy is independent and autonomous. A kind of *praeparatio thomistica*, if you will. If we take Thomas as the telos of this development, we are better able to appraise his predecessors, just as his predecessors give the clue to the comprehensive and synthetic nature of his philosophizing.

Much could be gained from a close and thorough study of the early Christian writers we have mentioned in this chapter. However, given the nature of our objective, we turn now to the thought of Augustine, who is beyond contest the greatest thinker of the early Church.

## CHAPTER II

# *Saint Augustine*

### A. *The Man and His Work*

When Augustine died in 430, the Vandals were laying siege to Hippo, his episcopal city; the Roman Empire, overextended and moribund, was soon to be a thing of the past; the Western world stood at the edge of its Dark Ages. If the empire is taken as symbolic of past pagan splendor, the dying Augustine reciting the penitential psalms represents a major effort to juxtapose the Christian revelation and the wisdom of the ancients, an effort which would be renewed after the Dark Ages and would culminate in the thirteenth century in such men as Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Albert. Augustine has a lasting appeal because his own life is a dramatic representation of the triumph of grace over nature. In his *Confessions* Augustine has described his struggle against the flesh, a struggle which forms the background for his intellectual development.

Augustine was born in 354 in Tagaste, Numidia, to Patricius, a pagan who was to die baptized, and Monica, already a Christian. Since infant baptism was not the custom, Augustine was simply enrolled as a catechumen, but his mother endeavored to instill in him a reverence and love of Christ which, as he attests, was indelible. Augustine had a Christian education and once even asked to be baptized when he fell ill, but he got well and baptism was put off. But if his mother was teaching him the tenets of Christian truth, his official education was quite another matter. Augustine does not paint a flattering picture of himself as a student, describing himself as giddy, lazy, and a hater of Greek. He studied grammar in his native city and then went to Madaura, where, in his early teens, his moral life went into decline. Despite his attachment to the flesh, Augustine did well at school, and his father decided to send him to Carthage. Since he could not immediately take on the expense, he brought his son home for a year of leisure before he continued his studies at Carthage. Augustine looked back on this year of idleness as a disastrous one. In 370 he went to Carthage where he was to study rhetoric. The pagan atmosphere of the city completed Augustine's downfall, and he seemed forever beyond the influence of Christian doctrine. In 372, Augustine's son Adeodatus

was born of a woman with whom Augustine lived until his thirty-third year. A turning point in his life came in 373 when, at the age of nineteen, he read the *Hortensius*, a dialogue of Cicero, which exhorts to the love of immortal wisdom. He writes: "That book transformed my feelings, turned my prayers to you, Lord, changed my hopes and desires. Suddenly I despised every vain hope and desired with an unbelievable fervor of heart the immortality of wisdom and I began then to rise and return to thee." (*Conf.*, III, iv, 7)

Augustine became a teacher of rhetoric in 373, first in Tagaste and the next year in Carthage, where he taught until 383. The change that the reading of Cicero brought about in him led him to embrace, not Christianity, but Manicheism. Augustine himself felt that he became a Manichean out of pride. The Manichean doctrine purported to be based on reason alone and did not demand that one first believe. This appeal to his intellectual pride was enhanced by the contradictions the Manicheans professed to find in the Scriptures. Perhaps the greatest attraction of the Manichean doctrine lay in the way it accounted for evil, lifting the burden of guilt from the sinner. Augustine was well disposed to accept the exoneration: "For before then it had seemed to me that it is not we who sin but some unknown nature within us and it soothed my pride to be guiltless and, having done something evil, not to have to confess I did it in order that you might heal my soul which sinned against thee; I loved to excuse myself and accuse that unknown something in me that was not I." (*Conf.*, V, x, 18) Augustine was a Manichean through 383. During the time he belonged to the sect he was a listener as opposed to one of the elect, but he devoted himself to the study of the doctrine with great gusto. When he encountered difficulties, he was assured that they could be resolved by a Manichean bishop, Faustus. After nine years Augustine withdrew from the sect. He was prompted by a number of factors, among which was that Faustus had been quite unable to answer his intellectual difficulties with Manichean doctrine; he found the Manichean bishop to be little more than a popular orator.

At the age of twenty-nine Augustine went to Rome to open a school of rhetoric. He hoped that he would attract more promising students than he had at Carthage, and, in a sense, he did. Whenever the fées came due, however, his clientele disappeared. Disgusted, Augustine applied for and received a position as teacher of rhetoric at Milan.

Having freed himself from the bonds of Manicheism, Augustine at first devoted himself to the study of Academic philosophy, but this led him only to doubt; he continued to associate with Manicheans for a time, but then drifted away from them. Having met St. Ambrose, Augustine attended his sermons, became once more a catechumen, and pondered over arguments to refute the Manicheans. Fervor came into his life once more when he read some Platonic writings, probably

translations of Plotinus made by Marius Victorinus. If the Academics had led him to despair of the possibility of finding truth, his present reading rekindled in his breast the hope he had first felt upon reading the *Hortensius*. Filled with a passion for philosophy, Augustine desired nothing but to devote his life to the quest for truth. He thought of a common life with friends of like mind, a community ordered to the pursuit of truth. But, alas, he had not yet conquered his flesh. He sent away the mistress of his youthful years, the mother of Adeodatus, and on the urging of his mother was contemplating marriage. In the meanwhile he took on another mistress.

The attraction of Platonism served to lead Augustine to a reading of Scripture, and he began to struggle against his passions. When he was told the story of the conversion of Victorinus to Christianity, Augustine yearned to be baptized; the story of St. Anthony of the Desert made Augustine see his own carnal enslavement and to long to be freed from it. A struggle at once intellectual and moral raged within him. All was resolved when he found himself in his garden, with the Scriptures beside him. From over the wall a child's voice repeated insistently, "Take and read, take and read." It occurred to Augustine that the phrase belonged to no child's game, that the voice was addressing him. He picked up the Scriptures and read from the Epistle to the Romans 13:13: "not in revelry and drunkenness, not in debauchery and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh, take no thought for its lusts." With one blow all Augustine's incertitude was swept away. It was 386; he was thirty-three-years old.

Shortly after his conversion Augustine took the occasion of an illness and a vacation to resign his post at Milan; he retired with his mother and son and a few friends to the country home of one Verecundus located at Cassiciacum. There Augustine prepared himself for baptism while he and his friends engaged in philosophical disputes which were taken down and preserved. We shall turn to those dialogues in a moment. On Holy Saturday of 387, St. Ambrose baptized Augustine. We can imagine the joy her son's baptism gave Monica; it was truly the fulfillment of her lifetime wish. When they were returning to Africa shortly afterwards, she died en route at Ostia.

At Tagaste, Augustine set up what amounted to a monastic community, striving to realize that ideal which had presented itself to him shortly before his conversion. Augustine enjoyed this solitary life for a few years until he was ordained a priest by popular petition in 391. This caused Augustine to move to Hippo, but there he once more set up a monastery. His life was devoted to preaching and to writing against the enemies of the faith. He wrote polemical works against Manichean doctrines and against the Donatist heresy, beginning the literary activity which would continue throughout his long life. Augus-

tine was consecrated coadjutor bishop of Hippo in 396 and succeeded the following year. He remained as bishop of this obscure diocese for the rest of his life, profoundly influencing the history of the Church in Africa, and finally that of the whole Church, becoming one of her most authoritative doctors. Augustine's inclination toward a monastic existence did little to prevent his ceaseless activity in the cause of truth. His conviction that there is a changeless truth made him an indefatigable adversary of anyone who would call that truth into question, pervert or dilute it in any way. Manicheans, Donatists, Pelagians—Augustine dealt with each in turn, but always with an eye to bringing the person in error into the truth. Augustine was seventy-six when he died on August 28, 430.

*Writings.* It is convenient to group Augustine's writings according to the major phases of his life. Augustine published one prose work prior to his conversion, *De pulchro et apto*. The writings dating from Augustine's stay at Cassiciacum (386–387) are *Contra academicos*, *De beata vita*, *De ordine*, *Soliloquia*, *De immortalitate animae*, *De musica*. The period from his baptism to his ordination (387–391) includes among others *De quantitate animae*, *De libero arbitrio*, *De magistro*, *De vera religione*. As a priest, Augustine wrote, among others, the following works: *De utilitate credendi*, *De duabus animabus contra Manichaeos*, *De fide et symbolo*. Only the very earliest works of Augustine could be called purely philosophical efforts, for as his life becomes that of priest and then of bishop, his interests become almost exclusively theological, homiletic, etc. We shall shortly say something about the possibility of distinguishing faith and philosophy in Augustine; for the moment we must cite, from the period of his episcopacy, the following works as pertinent to the history of philosophy: *Confessions* (400), *De doctrina christiana* (397–426), *De trinitate* (400–416), *De civitate dei* (413–426), *Retractationes* (427).

## B. Philosophy and the Arts

One way of approaching Augustine's views on the nature of philosophy is to examine his teaching on the arts which are propaedeutic to philosophy. This approach has chronological justification, since at Cassiciacum Augustine and his companions occupied themselves with the liberal arts. As he says in the *Retractationes* (I, 6): "At the same time, when I was preparing for baptism at Milan, I tried to write books on the arts (*disciplinae*) by interrogating those who were with me and who had no distaste for such pursuits, since they wished to arrive at the incorporeal through the corporeal by means of determinate stages. But of these I was able to finish only a work on grammar, which afterwards disappeared from my bookcase, six volumes on music, getting to that part called rhythm. But those six books were written after my baptism

and return to Africa; I had only begun them at Milan. Of the other five arts begun there in much the same way, namely on dialectic, on rhetoric, on geometry, on arithmetic, on philosophy, only the beginnings remained, which indeed we have lost but I think others have them." With one notable exception, what Augustine has given here as the arts or disciplines are what came to be called the liberal arts. Before examining the role these arts play in the doctrine of Augustine, it will be wise to recall the remote and proximate background of the notions involved.

The remote background is to be found in Plato and Aristotle. Both men stress the need for an orderly approach to the inner sanctum of philosophy. It seems to be only in Roman times that these arts begin to approach the limited number and codification which became so familiar in the scholastic period.<sup>1</sup> Varro (B.C. 116–27), a contemporary of Cicero, was the author of the lost work *Libri novum disciplinarum*, in which, together with the latter seven liberal arts, were listed medicine and architecture. Seneca (B.C. 8–A.D. 65), in his *Epistle to Lucilius* (*Epist. Moral*, Lib. XIII, Ep. 3, 3–15) mentions five arts: grammar, music, geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy—in that order. Quintilian (A.D. 35–96), a highly influential author in the Gaul of imperial times, his *Institutes of Oratory* forming the programme of studies in the provincial schools (cf. M. Roger, *L'enseignement des lettres classiques d'Ausone a Alcuin*, pp. 7–18), mentions many of the liberal arts but does not seem to have settled on seven as their number. The work which seems to have fixed the number of the liberal arts is that of Martianus Capella entitled *De nuptiis philologiae et mercurii*; this is thought to have been written in Carthage between 410 and 439 A.D., which would put its composition in the very lifetime of Augustine. It is assumed that Capella's work is inspired by the lost work of Varro, although Capella explicitly excludes architecture and medicine from the list of liberal arts.<sup>2</sup> Capella comes up with exactly seven liberal arts which are ordered thus: grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music. These arts, we are told,<sup>3</sup> formed the basis of the curriculum in the imperial rhetorical schools—such as that at Milan where Augustine taught.

The passage from the *Retractationes* already quoted expresses Augustine's intention, as he prepared for baptism at Cassiciacum, to write on each of the liberal arts, presumably in dialogue form. The passage certainly assumes that there are seven such arts, but it is note-

<sup>1</sup> Ozanam, *La civilization chretienne*, p. 389, would trace the seven liberal arts to Philo Judaeus, *De congressu*. Cited in Rashdall, I, p. 34, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> ". . . sed quoniam his mortalium rerum cura terrenorumque sollertia est nec cum aethere quicquam habent superisque confine, non incongrue, si fastidio respuuntur." Eyssenhardt's edition, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> See Margaret Deanesly, "Medieval Schools," *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 5, chap. 22, pp. 765–779.

worthy that "philosophy" takes the place usually occupied by astronomy. It has been plausibly suggested that this is a quite conscious substitution by Augustine prompted by his abhorrence of what we would nowadays call astrology. We can surmise that Augustine's whole career prior to his conversion would have put him into daily contact with the various arts. Indeed, we read in the *Confessions* (IV,xvi,30) that in his youth Augustine had read "all the books of the so-called liberal arts."

Following the lead of Marrou (*S. Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, pp. 187-193), we can find a fairly uniform doctrine on the arts in various statements of Augustine. In the second book of the *De ordine*, St. Augustine describes reason as discovering progressively grammar (nn.36-37), dialectic (n.38), rhetoric (n.39), music (n.40-41), and geometry (n.42). Earlier in the same work mention is made of arithmetic and astronomy as well as of the relation of the arts to philosophy. "Now in music, in geometry, in the movements of the stars, in the fixed ratios of numbers, order reigns in such manner that if one desires to see its source and its very shrine, so to speak, he either finds it in these, or he is unerringly led to it through them. Indeed such learning, if one uses it with moderation—and in this matter, nothing is to be feared more than excess—rears for philosophy a soldier or even a captain so competent that he sallies forth wherever he wishes and leads many others as well, and reaches that ultimate goal, beyond which he desired nothing else. . . ." (n.14, trans. R.P. Russell, O.S.A.) The acquisition of these arts is difficult, Augustine admits, but without them it is impossible to go on to philosophy. These arts comprise a twofold science, the science of reasoning and that of numbers; armed with this knowledge, one can turn to philosophy, "to which a twofold inquiry belongs, one having to do with the soul, the other with God." (n.47) These are the two great concerns of philosophy, to know ourselves and our origin, and the study of the liberal arts paves the way for the fruitful asking of those questions.

In the *De quantitate animae* Augustine is speaking of the seven degrees of the soul's perfection, and this prompts him to mention the liberal arts. The soul, in the first degree, vivifies the body; in the second, it makes use of the senses; thirdly, the degree proper to man, the soul is possessed of arts and sciences; then, by purgation, purity, and conversion to God, the soul finally comes into possession of the Supreme Good. It is the third degree that interests us now. "Rise now to the third plane of the soul's power and think of memory, which is proper now to man, not in the way of a habit of things usual, but by way of reverting to notes and signs of innumerable things treasured and retained:—so many arts of skilled workers, the tilling of the soil, the building of cities, the manifold marvels of varied constructions and their achievement: the invention of so many signs in letters, in words,

in gesture, in the sound of such things, in paintings and things moulded (or carved).—Note the languages of so many peoples, the manifold teachings, some new, some renewed.—Note the great number of books and such like documents for the safeguarding of memory, and all this provision for posterity.—Note the order of duties and powers and honors and dignities, in family life, in the state, in peace and in war; in the administration of things profane and things sacred.—Note the power of reasoning and of thinking out reasons.—Note the flowing streams of eloquence, the varieties of poetry; the thousands of means of imitation for purposes of play and of jest, the art of music, accuracy of measurements, the science of numbers, the conjecturing of things of the past and the future from the present. Great are these things and distinctively human. But yet this abounding property common to (rational) souls is shared in degrees by the learned and the unlearned, by the good and the bad.” (Trans. F.E. Tourscher, O.S.A.) Augustine indicates at the close of this lengthy enumeration that he is not confining himself to the arts possessed by the learned; thus we find mechanical and fine arts side by side on his list. Also listed are grammar, reasoning (dialectic), eloquence (rhetoric), arithmetic, music, geometry, and astrology. So too in the *Confessions* Augustine mentions the liberal arts. “Whatever was written either on rhetoric, or logic, geometry, music, and arithmetic, by myself without much difficulty or any instructor, I understood. . . .” (IV,16) We find Augustine reflecting what appears to have been the common attitude of his time with respect to the liberal arts; of course, his enumerations of the arts have importance for medieval thought since his authority dictates that an interest be shown in the arts he mentions. More important for our present purpose is the attitude Augustine takes toward the liberal arts as conducive, not simply to the wisdom of the philosophers, but to Christian wisdom itself.

### C. *Philosophy and Beatitude*

In his *De civitate dei* (XIX,1) Augustine writes, “Quandoquidem nulla est homini causa philosophandi nisi ut beatus sit.” It is man’s desire for happiness which explains his philosophizing. Thus, even while arguing for the role played by the liberal arts, Augustine does so by showing that they prepare the mind for the two great questions of philosophy which have to do with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. The ability to answer these questions gives one knowledge of the self, knowledge of whence he has come and whither he is going. The importance of these two questions, the fact that they sum up man’s desire for truth, is clear in the following famous passage from the *Soliloquies* (I,ii,7) where Augustine and Reason are conversing. “A. My prayer is finished. R. What then do you wish to know? A. All those things I have prayed to know. R. Sum them up briefly. A. I want to know God and the soul. R. Nothing more? A. Absolutely nothing.”

Concern with God and the soul is what sets philosophy off from the liberal disciplines or arts; unlike them, apparently, philosophy is concerned with the intelligible order. It is because Plato stressed the existence of the intelligible order and its distinction from the sensible order that he was able to devise the perfect philosophy.

It was the failure to achieve this intelligible order which led to the skepticism of later Academic philosophy. Just as Augustine himself had been rescued from skepticism by the reading of Plato and Plotinus, so he felt each man must overcome the temptation to skepticism. Indeed, he sees the achievement of Plato precisely against this background:

Plato, the wisest and most learned man of his time, spoke in such a manner that whatever he said took on importance and he spoke of such things that, no matter how they were treated, they could not become trivial. This Plato, after the death of his beloved master Socrates, learned, we are told, much more from the Pythagoreans. Pythagoras, dissatisfied with Greek philosophy, at the time either quiescent or too obscure, was persuaded by the arguments of Pherecydes, a Syrian, to believe in the immortality of the soul. Plato listened, moreover, to a great many wise men in the course of extensive travels. He thus added to what he already possessed of socratic charm and subtlety in moral matters, the knowledge of things human and divine diligently learned from the men just mentioned. He crowned these elements with a discipline capable of organizing and judging them, namely, dialectic, which is, he thought, wisdom itself, or at least that without which wisdom is impossible, and he composed thereby the perfect philosophy. Leaving that aside for now, it is sufficient for my present purpose that Plato thought there were two worlds, one intelligible, another manifest to us by sight and touch. The former is the principle of pure and serene truth in the soul which knows itself, whereas the latter can engender opinion in the minds of the foolish but not science.<sup>4</sup>

One's ability to grasp the existence of the intelligible world was dependent on one's moral condition; a person given over to sensuality would not be able to come to knowledge of intelligible truth. Skepticism and moral turpitude are rather closely linked.

Augustine's praise of Plato's achievement as the perfect philosophy would seem to indicate that he sees no difficulty in relating faith and reason. Philosophy, Augustine has said, is concerned with God and soul. Let us look at Augustine's appraisal of some philosophical statements about God. In the *De civitate dei* (VI,5) he accepts from Varro a threefold division of theologies. There is a mythical theology fabricated by the poets suitable for the theater; there is a natural theology taught by the philosophers; there is a civil theology which is for the people as citizens. Augustine has difficulty seeing the difference between mythical and civil theologies (VI,6) and goes into a lengthy criticism of the pagan deities. It is not until the eighth book that he returns to the question of natural theology. He notes that "philosophy"

<sup>4</sup> *Contra academicos*, III, xvii, 37; cf. *De civitate dei*, VIII, 4.

means love of wisdom. "But if God is wisdom, through whom all things are made, as the divine authority and truth have shown, the true philosopher is one who loves God. But since the reality of which this is the name is not to be found in all those who glory in the name (for surely not anyone who is called a philosopher is a lover of true wisdom), we should select from all those whose opinions and writings can be known by us those who have treated this question not unworthily." (VIII,1)

If we look to what philosophers have had to say on the matter of God, we find some who surpass Varro's notion of natural theology. He had defined natural theology as concern with the world and its soul; some philosophers, however, speak of a God above nature, cause not only of the sensible world but of souls as well, even of human souls which are beatified by participation in the divine light. "There is no one who has even a slender knowledge of these things who does not know of the Platonic philosophers who derive their name from Plato. Concerning this Plato, then, I will briefly state such things as I deem necessary to the present question, mentioning beforehand those who preceded him in time in this kind of writing." (VIII,1) Augustine praises the Platonists for recognizing that God is incorporeal, immutable, surpassing every soul, cause of all else, life, understanding, and beatitude. (VIII,6)

If God is beatitude and men philosophize only that they might become happy, is it possible that men can attain happiness by means of philosophy? But Christians have been warned about philosophy (Cf. VIII,10). St. Paul has said that we must be wary lest we be led astray by philosophy: "Take care not to let anyone cheat you with his philosophizings, with empty phantasies drawn from human tradition, from worldly principles." (Col. 2:8) We need not think that every philosopher falls under the censure of St. Paul, for the Apostle has also written: "The knowledge of God is clear to their minds; God himself has made it clear to them; from the foundations of the world men have caught sight of his invisible nature, his eternal power and his divineness, as they are known through his creatures." (Romans 1:19-20)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In chapter 2 of book VIII Augustine discusses the theories that Plato's theology resulted from hearing Jeremias when Plato was traveling in Egypt, or perhaps from reading his book. Augustine points out that he himself had embraced this theory in some of his works (cf. *De doctrina christiana*, II, xxviii, 43), but he feels it certain that Plato lived at least a hundred years after Jeremias and thus could not have listened to him. Nor could he have read his book, since it had not yet been translated into Greek. Nevertheless, Augustine argues, Plato could have learned of the Jewish faith through interpreters, and this would explain the similarities between Genesis and the *Timaeus*. In chapter 12, however, Augustine concedes that Plato could have come to his views about God without any contact with revealed truth, and he cites Romans 1:20 again. Augustine is reluctant to say that knowledge of God is easily attained except through revelation; indeed, his whole attitude here exhibits his conviction that it is a matter of the utmost difficulty to reason to the existence of God.

The same Paul, speaking to the Athenians those difficult words "in whom we live and move and have our being," added "as some of your own have said." (Acts 17:28) Philosophers are to be feared only in their errors. It is a sad fact that even when they have come to know the existence of God, philosophers have not adored and thanked him as they ought; thus, their wisdom has been turned to folly. (Romans 1:21-23) Nevertheless, there is no reason to be suspicious of philosophers who teach truth and thereby agree with us. This is why Augustine singles out the Platonists for praise: "This, therefore, is the cause why we prefer these to all the others, because, whilst other philosophers have worn out their minds and powers in seeking the causes of things, and endeavoring to discover the right mode of learning and living, these, by knowing God, have found where resides the cause by which the universe has been constituted, and the light by which truth is to be discovered, and the fountain at which felicity is to be drunk." (*De civ. dei*, VIII,10)

Augustine's defense of philosophy is not reluctant; the role that Platonism, or, more accurately, Neoplatonism, played in his own conversion led him to effuse and, as he later remarked, exaggerated praise of Plato and his followers. "Many centuries and much discussion were required in order that a perfectly true philosophy be achieved, but I believe it has been done. For this is not a philosophy of the world, which our mysteries properly condemn, but of another and intelligible world to which the subtlety of reason could never have led souls blinded by the manifold darkneses of error and weighted down by bodily sordidness, if the most high God, animated by mercy for his people, had not bent down and subjected the authority of the divine reason to a human body, so that souls, stirred up not only by his precepts but also by his deeds, might without the disputes of the schools turn within to themselves and find the kingdom." (*Contra academicos*, III,xix,42) This easy transition on Augustine's part from the efforts of the pagan philosophers to the Incarnation and Christian revelation has caused interpreters to multiply opinions as to Augustine's own position at Cassiciacum (was he converted to Christianity or to Neoplatonism?) and as to his doctrine on the relation between faith and reason.

#### D. *Criticism of Platonism*

While it is possible, particularly in his early writings, to find praise of Plato and Platonism flowing from the pen of Augustine, from the outset there are also criticisms of Plato. At the end of his career, surveying his various works and commenting on them in the *Retractationes*, the aging bishop regrets the unqualified character of his earlier praise. He expressed regret that he had spoken of learning as remembering and the soul's ascent after death as a returning, since this seems to involve acceptance of the Platonic view that the soul antedates its

imprisonment in the body and that death is the soul's return to its natural habitat. Significantly too, he regrets the emphasis he had put on the liberal arts as propaedeutic to philosophy, since the simple faithful are capable of attaining wisdom without them.

Augustine believes that the Platonists were aware of the difference between God the Father and the Word; in the *Confessions* (VII,ix, 13-14) he comments that he found in Neoplatonic texts the equivalent of the prologue to the Gospel of John in which we read, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." He found nothing in these texts, however, concerning the Word become flesh. As he brings these philosophic gropings toward revealed truth into perspective we sense that he thought that Neoplatonism paved the way for acceptance of revelation: it achieves knowledge of a realm above the sensible. While Augustine seems at times to suggest that the metaphysical success of pagan philosophy almost attains the supernatural order, this is not Augustine's true opinion. Although he once interpreted the remark "My kingdom is not of this world" as a reference to the world of Ideas, he later thought better of it. (Cf. Portalie, p.98.) He feels that the Platonists, though they knew the Father and Son, were ignorant of the Holy Spirit and thus of the doctrine of the Trinity. (*De civ. dei*, X,23) Portalie in his excellent guide to Augustine provides us with a list of items from Neoplatonism which were either accepted or rejected by Augustine. There are besides, as we have already indicated, a number of alterations in viewpoint on Augustine's part. Perhaps it is enough to indicate that Augustine, even while he was virtually overwhelmed by the reading of Plotinus, not only for the beauty he found in the style and thought but also for the crucial role this reading played in lifting him out of a stultifying skepticism and restoring the passion for truth earlier instilled by the *Hortensius* of Cicero, was nevertheless a critical reader. Portalie has put the matter succinctly: "The *Confessions* describe the enthusiasm enkindled in him by Platonic writings; this enthusiasm, a source of magnificent and repeated eulogies, was to die a slow death in the heart of Augustine." (p.95)

The same author has pointed out that Augustine borrowed the Neoplatonic conception of philosophy and never seriously questioned it. This can be seen quite clearly in the connection Augustine makes between moral rectitude and a grasp of the truth. The goal of philosophy, as we saw above, is happiness; not a dispassionate correctness of judgment, but the fulfillment of all our deepest aspirations, those of will as well as intellect. Thus, the beauty of order "will be seen by him who lives well, prays well, studies well." (*De ordine*, II,xix,51) One who wants to see the truth must take pains lest the eye of his soul be clouded by sensual attachments, by vanity and pride; with these beams removed, one may come to contemplate the truth and experience that

*gaudium de veritate* which is the end and purpose of human life. Now the truth in which he must rejoice is none other than God. "The happy life consists in rejoicing in the truth, that is, rejoicing in you who are the truth, my God, my light, my salvation. All want this happy life, this life which alone is happy each one wants, everyone wants to rejoice in the truth." (*Conf.*, X,xxiii,33)

To love truth is to love God; is philosophy then religion, is there a transition from philosophy to faith? At the end of the *De beata vita* to be wise and to be happy are identified, and true wisdom is identified with the Son of God, who is truth as well. In the *De ordine* (II,v,16) we find the following comparison of philosophy and faith. "There is a twofold path we can follow when the obscurity of things bothers us; reason or, in any case, authority. Philosophy promises us reason but it frees scarcely a few; nonetheless it leads them not only not to condemn the Christian mysteries but to understand them as they ought to be understood. No other task falls to true philosophy, to authentic philosophy, if I may so put it, than to teach that there is a supreme principle of all things, itself without a principle, and how great an intelligence dwells therein and that all flows from it, without any diminution, for our salvation. This principle is the one God, omnipotent and tri-potent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of which the venerable mysteries teach, the sincere and unwavering profession of which frees people, without confusion (as some assert) or humiliation (as many claim)." In this passage Augustine sees philosophy as a fitting preparation for Christian faith, disposing the mind for it and equipping it to deal with mysteries as they deserve. Thus, in the *Contra academicos* (III,xx,43) he writes that truth can be approached by way of reason or authority. "Now in the matter of authority I have chosen Christ for my leader, from whose direction I will never deviate. . . . As regards the matters which are to be investigated by close reasoning, I am such that I impatiently desire to grasp the truth not only through faith but also through understanding, and I am confident that there will be found in the Platonists nothing repugnant to our faith."

Despite fluctuating attitudes toward Platonism and some of its doctrines, Augustine teaches with increasing clarity a distinction between what is believed and what is understood: not everything that is believed by the Christian has been or could be known by the non-Christian philosopher, and one who believes may nevertheless concern himself with the arguments of philosophers as at least dispositional toward a more lively faith. Both philosophy and faith aim at the same goal, beatitude; if the latter is more efficacious, it is because it can direct man toward an incarnate wisdom unknown to philosophy. The two questions of philosophy remain the great questions of faith, however, and we want to turn now to what Augustine had to say of God and man, for this provides at least an outline of what can be called the philosophy of St. Augustine.

E. *What Is Man?*

When Augustine says that philosophy has two concerns, the soul and God, he does not mean that these are distinct and separable problems; indeed, we will find it quite impossible to concentrate on Augustine's doctrine of man to the exclusion of what he has to say about God, and vice versa. It is convenient to begin our discussion of what he had to say about man by examining what he had to say about the distinctive character of Platonic philosophy, the Ideas or Forms. In the forty-sixth of the 83 *Diverse Questions* St. Augustine discusses the Ideas in a way which was to be decisive for scholastic philosophy. The question turns on four points: the word "Idea," its definition, the location of the Ideas, how we can know the Ideas.

1. *Augustine and Plato's Ideas.* Augustine says that although Plato was the first to use the term "Idea" in the sense that now interests him, the Ideas existed before Plato and were known by men. It is inconceivable that philosophers did not know them since "unless these be known no one can be wise." The journey of Plato which took him to Southern Italy and Sicily and to the Pythagorean communities in those places makes it at least probable, Augustine feels, that these philosophers knew of the Ideas, though they might have had another name for them. If we are interested only in transliteration, the Latin terms "*species*" and "*forma*" are equivalents of the Greek "idea." To call them "*rationes*" (reasons, notions) is to give the Latin term for the Greek "*logoi*," but, for all that, "*ratio*" expresses what is often meant by "idea." This is clear from the definition of Ideas: "The Ideas are the chief forms or the stable and unchangeable notions of things which have not themselves been formed and thus are eternal and unalterable; they are contained in the divine intelligence."<sup>6</sup> We notice immediately some characteristics of the Platonic Ideas: they have not come to be and will not cease to be and consequently are necessary, incapable of being other than they are. However, the remark that the Ideas are in the divine intelligence goes beyond Plato. It makes little difference whether or not Augustine was the first to identify the Platonic Ideas and God's creative knowledge.<sup>7</sup> We are told that this identification was first made by Philo Judaeus (*Opif. mundi*, 24) and was a commonplace among the Christian Alexandrines (see, for example, Clement, *Strom.*, VII,2). Nevertheless, it is an identification of great importance, and it was largely thanks to Augustine that it became a commonplace in the

<sup>6</sup> See too *Retractationes*, III, 2: "Plato called the intelligible world the sempiternal and changeless plan according to which God made the world. If anyone should deny it he must by way of consequence maintain that God did irrationally what he did, since if there was in him no plan of making while he created or before he created, he would not know what he was doing. If there is such a plan, and there is, Plato seems to have called it the intelligible world."

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Oeuvres de S. Augustin*, Ier Series, Opuscules, vol. 10, *Melanges Doctrinaux* (ed. Bardy, Beckaert, Boutet), p. 726.

Middle Ages; clearly, when by Ideas a writer means God's creative knowledge, it becomes almost equivocal to characterize his remarks as Platonist.

How can the Ideas be known by us? They are knowable only by the rational soul because of its inner or intelligible eye. (Cf. *Soliloq.*, I,i,3.) The rational soul is not by its nature alone equipped to know the Ideas, however; it must be prepared for this vision by holiness and purity whereby its inner eye is made healthy, clear, serene. Before saying more on the fitness of the rational soul to see the Ideas, St. Augustine points out why the man of religion, even when he himself does not have the vision of the Ideas, cannot deny their necessity. He above all will know that God has created and gives being to all things. Thus he must admit that God had a notion of what he created and that the *ratio* of man is not that of horse. These different notions are precisely the Ideas of creatures, and they can exist only in the divine mind. Since whatever is contained in the divine mind is eternal and unchangeable, the Ideas must be so. Such precisely are the Platonic Ideas, St. Augustine concludes, and it is by participation in such Ideas that all other things exist.

Of all created things the rational soul, at least when it is pure, is closest to God. To the degree that the soul is united to God by charity it can contemplate the Ideas, and in this contemplation consists that beatitude which all men seek. When it possesses charity, the rational soul is illumined by an intelligible light which renders the vision of the Ideas possible. We are all free to select our own name for them, be it "Ideas," "Forms," "Species," or "Rationes." Few indeed are able to grasp them as they are.

Needless to say, this doctrine of St. Augustine is a very difficult one to interpret. He seems to be speaking of a terrestrial vision, a knowledge of the Ideas which man can attain *in via*. By linking this knowledge of the Ideas essentially to the theological virtue of charity and by speaking of illumination, Augustine seemingly prevents us from viewing his remarks as a philosophical doctrine. The Augustinian doctrine of illumination is as vexing a problem for historical interpreters as it is influential among philosophers and theologians. When Augustine speaks of illumination, he is not necessarily concerned with explaining some privileged kind of knowledge; rather, his concern is to defend the validity of knowledge as such. This is made quite clear in the *De magistro*.

How do we come to know what we did not know before? We can answer quite easily, it would seem; we come to know things by means of experience. Experience seems to connote sensation, and it is just that which would make Augustine hesitate. The knowledge he is interested in defending is unchanging knowledge, and the examples which come immediately to mind are mathematical. If we have certain knowledge

of numbers, can we attribute this to experience, to the influence of sensible things? "In no wise; for even if I perceived numbers by the bodily senses, I was not able by these same senses to perceive the laws of the division and addition of numbers. For it is by the light of the mind [*luce mentis*] that I correct anyone who gives me the wrong result of adding or subtracting. Moreover, I know nothing of how long sensibly perceived things like the heaven, this earth, and the other bodies therein will endure, but seven and three are ten, not only now but always, nor was it ever true in the past that seven and three were not ten nor will seven and three sometime in the future not be ten. Such then is the incorruptible truth of number which, as I have said, is common to me and anyone else who reason." (*De lib. arb.*, II, viii, 21) What distinguishes intellect from sense is that intellect grasps truth and the senses do not; if there are truths about numbers, and there are, they are not grasped by the senses. Knowledge of numbers is not drawn from sense perception, something easily seen when we consider that every number involves the one. A true notion of unity cannot be formed from perceptions of corporeal things.

These remarks may seem to owe their tone to the peculiar character of mathematical entities, yet Augustine speaks in much the same way of our knowledge of other things: "If therefore it is certain that we wish to be happy, it is also certain that we desire wisdom, for no one is happy without the highest good which is known and possessed in that truth we call wisdom. Thus, just as before we are happy, the notion of happiness is impressed on our minds (thanks to which we firmly and without hesitation know and say that we desire to be happy), so too before we are wise, we have impressed on our minds the notion of wisdom thanks to which each of us, asked if he wants to be wise, replies without a shadow of a doubt that he does." (*Ibid.*, II, ix, 26). The suggestion here that if we did not already know what wisdom is we could not seek it, is reminiscent of the Platonic doctrine of *anamnesis* which had particular application to knowledge of mathematical and moral ideals. Learning was equated with recalling for Plato; if one already knew what he is said to learn, the problem of the genesis of knowledge is conveniently postponed; he can say that the soul came to the body with knowledge impressed upon it and has forgotten what it knew because of the drag and weight of the body.

In the *De quantitate animae* (XX, 34) Augustine underlines a disagreement with Evodius: "You raise there a great problem, so great indeed that I know of none greater. With respect to it our opinions are quite opposed, for it seems to you that the soul brings no knowledge with it, to me that it brings with it every art. Nor is that which is called learning anything other than recalling and remembering." The same position is maintained more elaborately in the *Soliloquies* (II, xix, 35). Despite the obvious reliance on Plato, Augustine does not accept from

reminiscence the transition to the assertion that the soul existed before its union with the body, a transition made, we remember, in the *Phaedo*. In the *Retractationes*, it should be stressed, Augustine came to regret his youthful choice of words. He wishes that he had not spoken of the soul's "returning" to heaven because there are those "who think that human souls have fallen or been ejected from heaven and been placed in bodies as punishment for their sins." (I,i,3)<sup>8</sup>

Augustine's reflections in the *Retractationes* on the *Soliloquies* and *De quantitate animae* bring the doctrine of illumination to the fore. Augustine is unhappy that he had suggested that students of the liberal arts were simply recalling knowledge which had fallen into oblivion. "I disapprove of that statement. Is it not more credible that those who are ignorant of certain disciplines and yet reply correctly when well interrogated do so because there is present in them, to the degree that they lay hold of it, the light of eternal reason [*lumen rationis aeternae*] in which they see immutable truths?" (I,iv,4) The remark that what is called learning is nothing but recalling and remembering "should not be understood as an approbation of the opinion that the soul at some time lived either here below in another body or elsewhere in a body or outside of a body, such that it would have learned in another life the answers to questions it has not studied here below." (I,viii,2) The idea of a light within the human soul replaces the idea of remembered knowledge. In the *De trinitate* (XII,xv,24) Augustine compares the mind with the eye and notes that just as the eye grasps things because a light is proportioned to it and its objects, the mind grasps incorporeal things with which it has affinity in a light of the same order as itself and its objects. We would not say that the eye, because it can distinguish black from white without being taught, must have known colors before receiving life in a body; no more should we say that the soul's grasp of truths previously unknown argues that it existed prior to its creation with the body. In each case it is the appropriate light which enables eye or mind to attain its objects.

2. *Augustine on the Teacher*. In the *De magistro*, a dialogue between Augustine and his son Adcodatus, there is a fairly extensive discussion of illumination. The dialogue begins with the fairly innocent question "What are we trying to do when we speak?" The answer, that we are trying to teach or be taught, leads to a discussion of what is happening when we learn something. Augustine prefixes this discussion of the learning process with a long section on words as signs. Although sensible things are incapable of bringing about thought, we make use of words, which are sensible things, presumably to express our thoughts. What effect do words have on the one hearing or seeing them? We might expect Augustine to brush aside the difficulty posed by language

<sup>8</sup> In *De civitate dei* (XI, 23) Augustine takes issue with Origen, who maintained that souls are consigned to bodies as punishment for sins committed in a pure state.

as quickly as possible; his actual procedure is quite the opposite, revealing, we may suppose, his former professional interests as a master of rhetoric. The greater part of the dialogue is concerned with words as signs and then with various other kinds of signs.

The *De magistro* contains fourteen chapters and can be conveniently divided into two parts at n. 33 of chapter ten; at that point the dialogue form is dropped and the apparent implications of the preceding discussion are dismissed. The dialogue begins by asking for the purpose of speech. We speak to teach, it is decided, for even when we ask questions we are teaching what we want to know. This teaching takes place by reminding. In speaking "we do nothing but remind, since memory in which words inhere causes by revolving them to come to mind the things of which the words are signs." (I,2) A sign is that which signifies something, and words are signs. What then of "nothing"? Augustine suggests (II,3) that this word signifies an affection of the mind, a point to which they can return. First, he draws his son's attention to the fact that when he asks him what one word ("*de*") means he answers with another word ("*ex*"), that is, a sign is explained by appeal to another sign. Is it possible to convey something without the use of a sign? Well, one can point, use gestures; in fact by means of pantomime one can dispense with words entirely. This does not dispense with signs, however, for gestures too are signs. Yet if someone should ask me what walking is, I could rise and show him the thing itself rather than a sign of it. Augustine allows this possibility, as long as we are not asked what walking is while we are walking, for then if we would speed up, the velocity and not the activity might be understood. Talking does not seem to be demonstrable in this way; nevertheless, persistence can make clear that it is the activity of speaking itself which we are trying to exhibit. At the beginning of chapter four Augustine divides things which can be shown without signs from signs which can be shown through other signs. The second class is discussed first.

Signs can be shown by means of signs. Words are signs either of other signs or of things. "Stone" is an example of the latter, "gesture" and "letter" of the former. Romulus is signified by "Romulus," "Romulus" by "noun," and "noun" by "word." Things which are not signs can be called signifiabiles. Some signs signify themselves as well as other signs, for example, "word" signifies itself and other things, as does "noun." Although "word" signifies "noun" and vice versa, there is a restriction on their reciprocity, since every noun is a word but not every word is a noun. Each signifies itself as well as other things and each is an instance of the other, but they do not appear to have the same extension. There is, however, a way of understanding "noun" and "verb" which gives them the same extension. If "noun" (*nomen*) is thought of as imposed from knowing (*noscendo*) and "word" (*verbum*) from reverberation (*verberando*), then any vocal sound is a word inso-

far as it is audible and a noun insofar as it makes something known. The dialogue has now to discover signs which are fully reciprocal, that is, signs which signify one another, which signify themselves as well as other parts of speech, and which differ only in sound. This has not yet been achieved with "noun" and "word" since they are imposed from different things, as we have seen. Perfect reciprocity of signification is thought to be achieved with "noun" and "vocalable."

This summary conveys most inadequately the lively development of the dialogue, which contains, as every effective dialogue must, an artful balance of play and earnestness.<sup>9</sup> Chapter eight extracts the earnest by warning in effect that since signs sometimes signify other signs and sometimes things, what are to be called signifiables, it is important to be aware of this and in disputations honor only questions which bear on things. The reason for this is that signs are for signifiables, and that which is for something else should not be preferred to its end. But is this always true? Is it not better to know "filth" than filth? This objection enables Augustine to be more explicit about the triadic character of signification: there is the thing, the sign, and cognition, and the last consequently is the end or purpose of the sign and is always to be preferred to it.

Thus in the middle of chapter ten Augustine can say that they have settled a number of things: they have seen that some things can be shown without signs, they have asked whether some signs should be preferred to the things they signify, and they have concluded that cognition of things is always superior to signs. Indeed, the meager reward of their effort can be summarized as follows. "It is established therefore that nothing can be taught without signs and that the knowledge itself ought to be dearer to us than the signs by which we know, although not everything that can be signified is better than its sign." (X,31) At this point a major shift in the direction of the dialogue occurs. Augustine asks whether what they think they have established is beyond doubt. First of all, he attacks the contention that nothing can be taught without signs. The activities which had earlier been thought to manifest themselves when one asks for the meaning of a word have been argued to be signs of that meaning. Nevertheless, we do learn from observation. If I watch a man fish or hunt, observe his equipment, his movements, and so forth, I can come to knowledge of the arts involved. Some things then, indeed a veritable infinity of things, can be learned without signs. Now the fundamental question is posed: Can anything in fact be learned by means of signs? "If we should consider the matter more

<sup>9</sup> In view of the fact that Wittgenstein begins his *Philosophical Investigations* by quoting a passage from the *Confessions*, which he then proceeds to criticize as expressing a whole theory of language, it is important to notice that Augustine has many extensive treatments of language and is highly sensitive to its many subtleties. Of course, Augustine does not come within hailing distance of the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein.

diligently, perhaps you will discover nothing which is learned through its sign." (X,33) Augustine will attempt to show this.

His point can be reduced to this. If I do not already know what the sign signifies, I cannot be apprised of that thing by the sign alone; but if an understanding of the sign presupposes knowledge of the signifiable, the signifiable cannot be conveyed by the sign. Words do not exhibit things; they can only remind, direct us to things. We learn, not from the signs, but from the truth within. "Concerning all things that we understand, we do not consult the one speaking without but the truth presiding within the mind itself, admonished perhaps by the words to do so. He who is consulted teaches: Christ it is who is said to dwell in the interior man, that is, the changeless power of God and the sempiternal wisdom, whom indeed every rational soul consults and he reveals himself to each according to his capacity due to his good will or bad." (XI,38) Thus, he vindicates the verse: *Magister vester unus est Christus*.

When speech is concerned with present sensible things, we learn from these things, not from the words; if speech is concerned with absent sensible things, we learn by consulting our memory for images of them. Finally, when speech is concerned with things perceived by the mind itself, these things are seen, if at all, in the interior light of truth by which the interior man is illumined. In no case, then, do the words themselves teach. If someone learns from me, he does so, not from the words I speak, but from the things which the words recall. Questions and discussion can be useful to direct the mind to things, and from the inner light it can learn. By learning within, the listener becomes a judge of the spoken word. Finally, Augustine observes that words are not always signs of what is in the speaker's mind; indeed, even when they are, the purpose of teaching is to exhibit, not what the teacher thinks, but the way things are. That words are an indispensable instrument of teaching Augustine does not wish to deny; his purpose has been to show that they are but instruments to remind, that they do not exhibit that of which they are signs, and that, consequently, the human teacher is not the principal cause of learning.

Augustine's interpretation of the nature of the Ideas and his doctrine of illumination exhibit his dependence on Plato as well as his originality. That his views on the guarantee of knowledge and the learning process owe much to Plato is obvious; nevertheless, we should stress that his identification of the Ideas with the creative ideas of God is an important adjustment of the Platonic doctrine. Moreover, it is productive of a number of problems. We may say that the Ideas played a double role for Plato, what can be called an ontological and an epistemological role. It is through participation in the Ideas that sensible things exist in the deficient way they do exist, and the Ideas give a fixed object of knowledge. This latter role led Plato to what may have

been only a myth of the preexistence of the soul; prior to its incarceration in the body the soul was acquainted with things themselves, with the Ideas. The soul's incarnation induces forgetfulness, and learning is the recollection of what is already known, with sensible things playing a role similar to that assigned to words in the *De magistro*: they neither produce knowledge nor are they the objects of knowledge, but they can point the mind to its true object.

By identifying the Ideas with God's knowledge Augustine forces us to ask if we learn by contemplating the divine Ideas. He retains the Platonic vocabulary, speaking of learning as recalling. However, as he warns later (*Retract.*, I, viii, 2), this "should not be understood as an approbation of the opinion that the soul at some time lived either here below in another body or elsewhere in a body or outside of a body, such that it would have learned in another life the answers to questions it has not studied here below." The doctrine of an interior light is intended to replace the appeal to a previous existence and a view of learning as remembering what was once known. In the *De trinitate* (XII, xv, 24) Augustine compares the mind with the eye and notes that just as the eye grasps things because a light is proportioned to it and to its objects, the mind grasps incorporeal things with which it has affinity in a light of the same order as itself and its object. We would not say that the eye, because it can distinguish black from white without being taught, must have known this distinction before being created with the body; no more should we say that the soul's grasp of truths previously unknown argues that it existed prior to its creation with the body. In each case it is the appropriate light which enables eye or mind to attain its objects. The participation in the divine light which enables man to come to knowledge of immutable truths is seen to be necessary since the mutable things perceived by the senses cannot be the cause of immutable truths in the mind. Is the divine illumination a miraculous intervention in the natural order? It seems perfectly clear that Augustine invokes the inner light to explain the natural activity of the mind. It is something at the disposal, so to speak, of Christian and pagan alike. As we shall see later, St. Thomas Aquinas in his own *De magistro* (*Q.D. de veritate*, q. 11) will interpret the light of which Augustine speaks in terms of Aristotle's doctrine of the agent intellect, to which Aristotle was led for reasons analogous to those of Augustine. It has been objected that this is a misleading identification because Aristotle recognizes that our intellectual knowledge depends upon an abstraction from sense images, whereas Augustine explicitly denies that what is sensibly perceived can cause knowledge of eternal truths. Perhaps this difference is not as great as it seems. Although Augustine's light cannot be simply identified with what Aristotle and St. Thomas call the agent intellect, Augustine, nevertheless, arrived at his doctrine for much the same reason that prompted Aristotle to recognize the need for an agent intellect.

In response to a difficulty raised a moment ago, it can be said with some certainty that Augustine does not wish to attribute our knowledge of truth to a knowledge of things in the divine creative Ideas. Augustine denies that our mind is capable, in the natural course of things, of seeing God directly. Some men have such knowledge due to a rare and mystical privilege. The divine illumination, on the other hand, is an abiding and natural phenomenon common to all men. On at least one occasion (*Contra Faust.*, XX,7) Augustine explicitly denies the identity of the light in which we grasp the truth and the light which is the Divine Word. Speaking of the former, he says, "this light is not that light which is God."

Portalie, who does not think too highly of Augustine's doctrine of illumination (p.114), summarizes it as follows. "In our opinion, Augustine's doctrine is the theory of divine illumination of our understanding, so much in favor in the Middle Ages which borrowed it from him. It can be formulated this way: Our soul cannot attain to intellectual truth without a mysterious influence of God which does not consist in the objective manifestation of God to us, but in the effective production of a kind of image in our soul of those truths which determine our knowledge. In Scholastic language, the role of producing the impressed species which the Aristotelians attribute to the agent intellect is assigned to God in this system. He it is, the teacher, who speaks to the soul in the sense that He imprints that representation of the eternal truths which is the cause of our knowledge. The ideas are not innate as in the angels, but successively produced in the soul which knows them in itself." (pp.112-113)

3. *Faith and Understanding.* Earlier we touched on Augustine's apparently conflicting doctrine on the relationship between faith and understanding, authority and reason. It is important for us to grasp Augustine's thought on this matter in order to grasp better his teaching on the nature of faith and to see its implications for the possibility of philosophical truths apart from revelation.

Augustine teaches that there is a twofold impetus to learn: authority and reason (*Contra academicos*, III,xx,43). The question then arises as to the relation between these: Are they simultaneous or does one precede the other, and, if so, which takes precedence? "Likewise with regard to the acquiring of knowledge, we are of necessity led in a twofold manner: by authority and reason. In point of time, authority is first; but in the order of reality, reason is prior. What takes precedence in operation is one thing; what is more highly prized as an object of desire is something else. Consequently, although the authority of upright men seems to be the safer guide for the uninstructed multitude, yet reason is better adapted for the educated. And furthermore, since no one becomes learned except by ceasing to be unlearned, and since no unlearned person knows in what quality he ought to present himself to instructors or by what manner of life he may become docile, it hap-

pens that for those who seek to learn great and hidden truths, authority alone opens the door." (*On Order*, II,9,26; trans. Russell [Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press]) What has been accepted and lived on authority can come to be understood. Faith in authority precedes understanding, and since it is reasonable that we proceed in this way, we can say that reason precedes the faith that precedes understanding. "God forbid that He should hate in us that faculty by which He made us superior to all other living beings. Therefore, we must refuse so to believe as not to receive or seek a reason for our belief, since we could not believe at all if we did not have rational souls. So, then, in some points that bear on the doctrine of salvation, which we are not yet able to grasp by reason—but we shall be able to sometime—let faith precede reason, and let the heart be cleansed by faith so as to receive and bear the great light of reason; this is indeed reasonable. Therefore the Prophet said with reason: 'If you will not believe, you will not understand' [Isa. 7:9]; thereby he undoubtedly made a distinction between these two things and advised us to believe first so as to be able to understand whatever we believe. It is, then, a reasonable requirement that faith precede reason, for, if this requirement is not reasonable, then it is contrary to reason, which God forbid. But, if it is reasonable that faith precede a certain great reason which cannot yet be grasped, there is no doubt that, however slight the reason which proves this, it does precede faith." (*Letter 120; The Fathers of the Church: Saint Augustine*, Volume 10, Letters 83–130; trans. Sr. Wilfrid Parsons, S.N.D. [N.Y., 1953], p.302) Prior to belief, reasons for credibility must be given, and these reasons bear, not on the content of the statements in question, but on the authority of the one uttering them. It will be noticed that the process Augustine outlines is applicable not only to revealed truth but also to philosophy. Thus, he will distinguish between human and divine authority; human authority, however, is often deceiving. Despite this parallel, Augustine's interest is the faith which bears on what God has revealed to us. Faith is *cum assensione cogitare* (*On the Predestination of the Saints*, 2,5), to think with assent, and although we know what we see and may believe what we do not see, the reward of faith is to see what we believe. (*Sermon 43,1*)

These few words indicate that Augustine's position on the relations between faith and understanding, while subtle and nuanced, has an obvious meaning and truth. The reasonableness of the assent of faith must be established before that assent is given; once given, the mind can go on to examine the believed truths with an eye to understanding them. Faith opens the door to greater understanding, even of things which in principle can be understood without divine faith.

It is possible to say that Augustine holds that divine faith is necessary even with respect to truths which the philosophers have been able to foreshadow. Thus, we have seen that Augustine held that Plato had

arrived at striking truths in the absence of all supernatural aid. For the most part, however, men need the help of the Christian faith to overcome the mental darkness and proclivity to vice consequent upon sin. We have seen the stress he puts on the need for rectitude of life if one is to understand: the virtuous life removes the impediments to understanding, clears the eye of the soul so that it might contemplate truth. The Christian religion enables us to prepare for understanding. "Since the blindness of our minds is so great, by reason of the gluttonous excess of our sins, and the love of the flesh, that even those monstrous ideas [of some pagan philosophers] could make learned men waste their time discussing them, will you, Dioscorus, or anyone gifted with an alert mind, doubt that there was any better way to seek the welfare of the human race than that Truth Itself should have ineffably and miraculously become man and, playing His part on our earth by teaching right principles and performing divine actions, should persuade us to believe, for our own advantage, what could not yet be understood by human wisdom?" (*Letter 118; ed.cit.*, pp.291-292) In the same letter he indicates that Plato and Plotinus had arrived at truth, but since the faith was lacking to them, many of their followers fell into error. If we believe by divine faith things which philosophers were able to know, it seems to follow that the man of faith can search for cogent reasons and come to understanding. This does not mean that whatever is believed can be understood in the way in which the philosophers understand, however. Yet the possibility of philosophical proofs is not prejudiced by the role Augustine assigns to faith. What is most striking in his view, perhaps, is the implication that the Christian is in a privileged position with respect to philosophy itself.

4. *Immortality of the Soul.* To complete this sketch of Augustine's teaching with respect to the first great question of philosophy, What is man?, let us turn to his proof of the immortality of the human soul.

Man is composed of body and soul; neither alone is man. (*De moribus eccl.*, I,4,6) The view that the soul is in the body as a result of previous sins is vigorously repudiated. However, if the natural state of the human soul is to be in a body, the soul itself is not a body, but spirit. The soul, therefore, is far more perfect than body and is, indeed, similar to God himself: *vicina est substantiae Dei.* (*En. in Ps.*, 145,4) It is the mind's ability to grasp truth which enables Augustine to maintain the preeminence of soul over body as well as the incorruptibility of the soul itself.

Augustine's discussion in *On the Immortality of the Soul* is not always persuasive; indeed, often his reasoning is sophistical. Perhaps the very fact that he piles argument upon argument indicates that he was far from satisfied with some that he sets forth. If we were to extract the common thread from all the arguments there given, it would run as follows. The mind is able to contemplate truth, and in this activity

it turns away from body, for body can contribute nothing to this activity. In its operation the mind is capable of grasping truth, of knowing the unchangeable. Consider, for example, our knowledge of mathematical truths; of these we do not say that they were or will be but rather that they *are*, immutably, eternally. For the soul to know such immutable truths demands an affinity between it and its object. The subject of immutable knowledge must itself be immutable. This is not to say that knowledge of the truth is constitutive of the immutability of the soul, for the soul does not perish when it makes false judgments. The capacity of the soul is exhibited in its actual grasp of truth, its substantial affinity with what is immutable and eternal. Given this, the soul cannot perish; it must be as lasting as the truth which is its object.

Although Augustine is unwavering in his view of the destiny of the soul, the same cannot be said of his view of its origin. We have already seen that early in his career as an author he adopted Platonic modes of speech which suggest that the soul antedates its union with the body. While he later repudiated this, he had great difficulty in explaining the origin of the souls of the descendants of Adam, since any theory had to allow for the transmission of original sin. This is a problem which can best be treated when we speak of Augustine's view of creation and his doctrine of the *rationes seminales*.

## F. God

Man is made for God and, as a rational creature, he is made to know God and to love him: "you have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (*Conf.*, I,1,1) Given man's destiny, Augustine believes that only a few men can deny God's existence: "There can be found only a few of such impiety that these words of Scripture would be verified of them, 'The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.' This madness is restricted to a few." (*Sermon* 69, 2,3) Even before the spread of the Christian faith most men knew of God; we can see in this a sign of the divine power. God cannot be wholly hidden to the man who uses his reason. Except for a few depraved individuals, the world called men to a recognition of God. (*On the Gospel of John*, 106,4) God is closer to us than is the world he made: "He who made us is closer to us than the many things which have been made. 'In him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28); from which it follows that it costs us more labor to discover them than it does to find him by whom they were made. . . ." (*Literal Com. on Genesis*, V,16,34) This is a hint of the distinctively Augustinian approach to a proof of God's existence; however, texts in great number can be cited which speak of the world as directing our mind immediately to its maker. The following is typical: "Behold the heaven and earth: they cry out that they have been made, for they are changed and

altered. Whatever has not been made, yet is, contains nothing within itself which before was not, which would be to be changed or altered. So they cry out that they have not made themselves: Therefore we are because we have been made, nor were we before we were that we might have come to be by ourselves. The words of the speakers is evidence itself. You then, Lord, have made them, and you are beautiful since they are beautiful, you are good since they are good, you are since they are." (*Conf.*, XI,4)

In connection with the idea that the things of this world call us to knowledge and love of God, Augustine makes frequent use of a famous passage of St. Paul: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those men who in wickedness hold back the truth of God, seeing that what may be known of God is manifest to them. For God has manifested it to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen—his everlasting power and also his divinity—being understood through the things that are made." (Romans 1:18–20) Augustine explains that an inspection of this world, of the heaven and earth and the creatures in both, forces the mind to recognize that God exists. "It is this that noble philosophers have sought and from the art have known the Artificer." (*Sermon* 142,2,2) If men have known God and then not gone on to honor him, their wisdom is turned into folly; they make idols and fall into the most bestial vices. If we then say they are ignorant of God, this ignorance is consequent upon vice and is, as the Apostle says, inexcusable.

Augustine teaches that it is relatively easy for men to come to a knowledge of God from the world around them. This knowledge can become distorted and be an indictment if men take pride in their wisdom or fall into other vices. Augustine is very sensitive to the errors into which philosophers have fallen concerning the nature of God. He even attributes the materialism of Democritus to viciousness. This leads one to conclude that the recognition of God, which Augustine feels is widespread, is compatible with a good deal of error. Only a few philosophers, notably Plato and Plotinus, have arrived at a proper conception of God. In the absence of an authority to inform the multitude of what they had learned they made their doctrine a secret, a matter for the initiate. Christianity remedies this complex situation, for now the existence of God as well as his attributes are made known to all men on the authority of God himself, the Truth Incarnate.

Since the Christian accepts on divine authority many things which can be understood, he can go on to seek understanding. If the man of faith sets forth an argument to show that God exists, he will not have to proceed from what he believes or demand that the conclusion be accepted on faith. It is because Augustine attempts proofs of the immortality of the soul and of the existence of God which are of this

nature that we can speak meaningfully of the *philosophy* of Augustine, despite the fact that it seems impossible to maintain that he taught a separation between philosophy and theology with anything like the clarity of an Aquinas. The note of Augustinian philosophizing is struck in the following remark: "Although I hold these things with unwavering faith, since I do not yet grasp them with knowledge, let us so inquire as if all these things were uncertain." (*On Free Choice*, II,ii,5) What will make them certain is evidence, not an appeal to the faith that has not wavered during the inquiry.

Augustine is clearly guided in his philosophizing by his faith; thus, if we define philosophy in terms of not knowing how the argument will turn out, Augustine will not be a philosopher. If we define philosophy in terms of the quality of the evidence adduced to support a proposition, however, evidence which can be grasped whether or not one has faith (Augustine would insist that good moral dispositions are supposed, although these are not constitutive of assent), then we can expect to find philosophy in Augustine. Much will be said later on whether one can understand and believe the same truth. Augustine does not seem to have been bothered by that question. Given the fact that one who believes God exists can seek to prove this fact, as can one who does not have divine faith, it seems to follow clearly that there is no formal difference in their mode of argumentation—if both are unsuccessful. Whether or not Augustine succeeded in discovering proofs of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God, it seems clear that he was seeking proofs which did not require divine faith for their acceptance. The fact that philosophical proofs are advanced by a man who has the gift of faith does not add anything intrinsic to those proofs. These comments must suffice for now; the problem of a Christian philosophy is one to which we shall return later in terms of the efforts of the thirteenth century.

While the passages we have cited thus far indicate that Augustine feels we can be led directly from the world around us to God, this is not his most characteristic approach to the proof of God's existence. He usually maintains that one must retreat from the world to oneself and from thence to God. The role the mind plays in the ascent to God becomes central: "Go not abroad but enter into yourself: truth dwells in the inner man; and if you should find your nature mutable, transcend yourself." (*On True Religion*, 39,72) The Augustinian approach to God receives one of its most developed expressions in *On Free Choice* (II, ehaps. 3-18). His argument moves in steps to the assertion that God exists.

This argument exhibits how intimately the two great issues of philosophy, God and the soul, are intertwined in the thought of Augustine. The first point established is my certainty of my own existence. St. Augustine notes that the fact of my existence is indubitable since I

would have to exist to doubt it or to be deceived in regard to it. (II,3) He says in the *De trinitate* (XV,12,21): "He who is not can certainly not be deceived; therefore, if I am deceived, I am." It is customary to suggest a parallel between these remarks and Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. The resemblance is at best superficial. Augustine is not saying that things other than my existence are dubitable, for he adds immediately that other things are just as certain as the fact that I exist. Our awareness of our soul, of the principle of life in ourselves, is derived from observation of corporeal movements. (*En.in Ps.*,73,25) Augustine's principle was formulated to overcome the skepticism of others; it does not reflect even a methodical doubt of his own.<sup>10</sup>

It is indubitable that I exist; equally evident are the facts that I am living and that I understand. This indicates three levels of being: some things simply exist; others exist and live; yet others exist, live, and understand. Man falls under the final heading and is more perfect than things on the first two levels. In man there are bodily senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, each with its proper object. As well as these there is an inner sense. When we see we do not see seeing, so that if we are sensibly aware that we are seeing, this must be accomplished by another and, Augustine argues, interior sense. This inner sense is said to be common to beasts and men. In man, over and above the exterior and interior senses, there is reason. A sign of its presence is the fact that man seeks to define seeing and the interior sense, something which neither of these senses would themselves attempt. Augustine sums up: "These things have been shown: by the sense of the body corporeal things are sensed; this sense cannot be sensed by itself; however by means of an inner sense corporeal things are sensed through sense as well as the sense of the body itself. By reason all these things as well as itself are made known and brought under knowledge. . . ." (*De trin.*, II,4,10)

This hierarchy is now elaborated. The object of the senses is something which is: sense itself is an instance of living being. Moreover, the inner sense is more perfect than the outer senses, and reason more perfect than sense. Now, if we can prove that there is something more perfect than our reason, something eternal and unchangeable, that will be God.

Augustine turns once more to the senses and notes this difference among them. Although several men cannot simultaneously touch the same portion of a body or eat the same food, several can hear the same sound and see the same color simultaneously. (II,7) In much the same fashion one truth is common to many minds. For example, many minds can possess a common truth about numbers; each man does not have his own private mathematics. (II,8) Is there one wisdom for all men?

<sup>10</sup> See Michael Mason, *The Centre of Hilarity* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1959), p. 88.

“If there is a highest good common to all, so too the truth whereby it is discerned and held, that is, wisdom, is one and common to all.” (II,9)  
 Truth is what is more perfect than our mind or reason, and if there is something more excellent than truth, that will be God. Or, if there is nothing more excellent than truth, God will be truth. (II,15)

We have already seen Augustine cite numbers to illustrate a truth which is common to many minds. This is not a casual allusion. The role of number in Augustine’s proof is difficult to overestimate. We are asked to move from the number that we encounter in the sensible world to the eternal realm of number: “Every changeable thing you see can only be grasped by the senses or considered by the mind because it has received from number a certain perfection without which it would fall back into nothingness. If this is so, doubt not that for these changeable things not to cease to be but to continue with measured movements and a variety distinct from their perfection to travel the grooves of time, as it were, requires an unchangeable and eternal perfection which is not limited and extended in space or prolonged and diversified in time. By it all these things are capable of receiving their perfection and fulfill it while realizing, each according to its own species, the numbers of place and time.” (II,16)

The argument reaches its crescendo in the following passage: “But if you can find creatures other than those which exist without life, those which exist and have life but not understanding, and those which have existence, life, and understanding, then you might dare affirm that there is some good which does not come from God. These three types can be designated by two names: body and life. The name ‘life’ applies properly either to those beings having only life without intelligence, like the animals, or to those having intelligence, like men. But these two, namely body and life, insofar as they pertain to creatures (for the creator too has life and that is life supreme), these two creatures, then, body and life, being perfectible, as we have seen above, and such that they would fall into nothingness if they should completely lose their perfection, sufficiently indicate that they derive their existence from that which exists ever the same. That is why every good, be it ever so great or ever so small, can come only from God. For what in creation is greater than the life of understanding and what less than the body? And no matter what their deficiency whereby they tend to nothingness, it is no less true that some form belongs to them such that in a certain manner they are. That which is from being, however little, is from the perfection which knows no deficiency and does not allow the changes of things which corrupt and are perfected to exceed the laws of number. Therefore, whatever worthy of praise be found in the natural world, whether it be deemed worthy of greater praise or less, ought to be referred to the ineffable and incomparable praise of the creator.” (II,17,46)

Insofar as the rational soul recognizes truth as something more perfect than itself, for it is the measure of the soul, it has come to a recognition of God. (*On True Religion*, 30,56) The recognition of truth, of God, is the recognition of something immutable and eternal, and the good of the soul is seen to consist in being joined to God.

Augustine's view that recognition of God's existence is had by the majority of men has been seen not to exclude a good deal of error concerning the nature of God. This error, Augustine feels, can be largely explained in terms of moral turpitude. But of what quality is the knowledge of God that is had when knowledge is at its best, as with the philosophers whether Christian or not? This is a question we must pose, particularly since the supposed parallel between Augustine and Descartes on the certitude of our own existence may seem to suggest a further parallel with respect to our knowledge of God. Descartes suggests that the divine nature is known in much the same way as the nature of the triangle is known. Such a remark would be an abomination to Augustine.

Although nothing in this life is to be preferred to knowledge of God, our knowledge of and talk about God is quite imperfect: "God is known more truly than he is spoken of and he is more truly than he is known." (*De trin.*, VII,4,7) It is not remarkable that when God is spoken of, we do not understand. If we could understand, it would not be God who is the object of our knowledge. When we speak of God, it is more pious to confess our ignorance than boldly to claim knowledge. Nevertheless, while comprehension of God is quite impossible, our happiness consists in whatever knowledge of him we can attain. (*Sermon* 117,3,5) We must come to realize that what we can know is what God is not rather than what he is. (*Letter* 120,3,13; *On John's Gospel*, 23,9) "We understand God, if we can, to the degree that we can, as good without quality, great without quantity, creating without needing to, present but not located, containing all things without 'having' (*habitu*), wholly everywhere but not contained, sempiternal without time, making mutable things without himself changing, altered by nothing. Whoever thinks thus of God, though he cannot yet discover in every way what he is, is piously cautious to think of him as far as possible in terms of what he is not." (*De trin.*, V,1,2) God said to Moses "*Ego sum qui sum*" (I am who am); his name is "*Qui est*" ("He who is"). Being is God's proper name because God cannot change; there is no past nor future for God, since the dimensions of time are revealed by change. God is wholly unchangeable and immutable: he is. (*Sermon* 6,3,4) The perfection of God is such that any perfections we encounter in creatures are one and simple in God, a fact which makes our language inevitably inept to express even our imperfect knowledge of God. Even the most common or universal terms tend to express a perfection distinct from others and

so fall short of expressing God; thus, to call God a substance connotes a perfection differing from accidents, from other perfections, and seems prejudicial to the divine simplicity. (*De trin.*, VII,5,10) It is better then to call God essence or being and to realize that he does not *have* the perfections attributed to him but *is* each of them, for example, God *is* wisdom.

The name God attributes to himself, being, indicates that in God there is no distinction between the divine nature and the various perfections we are constrained to affirm of God. The attributes Augustine stresses are the divine simplicity, immutability, omnipresence, eternity, and providence. Augustine insists that God's foreknowledge of our free acts does not lessen their freedom, since what God foresees is precisely our free choice. (*On Free Choice*, III,3,8)

While we will not enter here into St. Augustine's remarkable and influential doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in the divine nature, something must be said of his procedure in discussing this mystery. We have seen that Augustine holds that man can come to knowledge of God even apart from revelation; indeed, the one who has the gift of faith can seek understanding of what he believes, can regard as doubtful things in which he has unwavering belief, in order to learn reasons for them. That God exists is a truth which can be known by philosophical reasons as well as by faith. Philosophical knowledge does not lead to comprehension of the divine nature; the term here is an understanding that our knowledge of God is its own kind of ignorance. The characteristically Augustinian approach to God proceeds via man. Now if the divine nature always retreats before our efforts to understand it, it surely follows that we cannot understand how there can be three persons in one divine nature. If we seek in creatures things to proportion this mystery to our minds, analogies to the Trinity, what we find will not be conclusive in the way arguments for the existence of God and for attributes of the divine nature may be. True, Augustine sometimes speaks as if philosophers had arrived at a recognition of the Trinity, but finally he denies that even the Platonists grasped this. The man to whom this truth has been revealed by God himself will seek created analogies of this truth, but any certitude concerning it will always be a result of faith. Typically, Augustine seeks analogies of the Trinity in man, who has been made in the image of God. Thus, he finds in man these trinities: mind, knowledge, love; memory of self, understanding, will; memory of God, understanding, love. (See Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* [New York, 1960], pp.219 ff.) Concern with the Blessed Trinity thus leads Augustine to an extensive analysis of the human soul.

Our suggestion is that Augustine's procedure lays the basis for the later distinction between the *praeambula fidei* and truths which are of faith alone. The role of reason is appreciably different with respect to

each of these. Although the distinction is not explicitly made by Augustine, he appears to have honored it in practice.

### G. Creation

Augustine holds that an inspection of the world reveals at once that it has been made; things virtually cry out that they have been made, pointing beyond themselves to their maker. Not only have things been made by God, they have been made from nothing. They were made from no subject matter which was not also made by God; nothing apart from God is but what has been made by God. "Some have tried to argue that God the Father is not omnipotent; not because they have dared to say this, but they are convinced by their traditions to feel and believe this. For they say that there is a nature which the omnipotent God has not created and of which he fabricated this world . . . thus they deny that God is omnipotent, for they do not believe the world could be made unless in the making of it he made use of some other nature already given which he had not made. . . . In this way they understand that the fabricator of this world is not omnipotent, since they hold that he could not make the world save by using as matter some nature unmade by him." (*On Faith and the Creed*, 2,2) If God is omnipotent, he can create from nothing; if his creative action presupposes matter, God is not omnipotent.

That God creates from nothing is an index of his omnipotence. We know from Scripture that the world had a beginning. What is the relation of creation and time? "For if eternity and time are rightly distinguished by this, that time does not exist without some movement and transition, while in eternity there is no change, who does not see that there could have been no time had not some creature been made, which by some motion could give birth to change—the various parts of motion and change, as they cannot be simultaneous, succeed one another—and, thus, in these shorter or longer intervals of duration time would begin? Since then, God, in whose eternity is no change at all, is the creator and ordainer of time, I do not see how he can be said to have created the world after spaces of time had elapsed, unless it be said that prior to the world there was some creature by whose movement time could pass. And if the sacred and infallible Scriptures say that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, in order that it may be understood that he had made nothing previously—for if he had made anything before the rest, this thing would rather be said to have been made 'in the beginning'—then assuredly the world was made, not in time, but simultaneously with time. For that which is made in time is made both after and before some time—after that which is past, before that which is future. But none could then be past, for there was no creature by whose movements its duration

could be measured." (*Civ. dei*, XI,6) Augustine says that the six days of creation cannot be understood as days in the ordinary sense, for then there would have been three days without the heavens according to which we measure our days. Creation is instantaneous. However, Augustine does not hold that a fully organized world came into being at once. He puts the notion of instantaneous and simultaneous creation together with the fact of the gradual appearance of things as a result of change and the coming into being of human souls which do not simply arise out of preexisting matter. "Contrary to most of his contemporaries, however, he does not presume that the instantaneous act of the Creator produced an organized universe such as we see today. He distinguishes between creation properly so called and the formation or development of the world. This second action is due, at least in great part, to forces placed by the Creator in the depths of nature which have gradually and progressively passed through the various phases to which the Mosaic account gives an approximation." (Portalie, p. 137)

God, in producing the world, has produced not only a certain number of things but things which are causes of other things to appear in the course of time; the things which will come to be only in time are present in their causes at the very outset and, thus, do not escape the creative causality of God. Augustine speaks of the primitive elements, of seminal reasons (*rationes seminales*): "All things were created by God in the beginning in a kind of blending of the elements, but they cannot develop and appear until the favorable circumstances are realized." (*De trin.*, III,9,16) Just as there is invisibly present in the seed everything which will later appear fully developed in the tree, so the world at the beginning of time contained in seed everything which would one day appear, including what has not yet appeared.

Augustine does not hesitate to apply his interpretation to Adam and Eve, who were not made in the very beginning of time. He must make certain adjustments in his theory, however, since he will not allow that the human soul was precontained in a causal principle. A special intervention of God is required for the formation of man. Augustine is guided in his remarks by the account of creation in Scripture. Man's body is formed from the slime of the earth, but his soul does not come into being in this way. It must be created in the same way as the primitive elements, out of nothing. This is true not only of the souls of the first parents but of every soul. Augustine is careful not to suggest, however, that all human souls are created at the outset and exist prior to their union with a body.

#### H. *The City of God*

In 410 A.D. Rome was sacked by Alaric the Goth, himself a Christian. Historians assure us that this was not the worst invasion of Rome,

but the effect of this fall on the times of Augustine cannot be underestimated. There was a great exodus from Rome and all of Italy, and refugees appeared in North Africa and in Jerusalem filled with tales of horror. What explained the fall of Rome, the seat of what had been so proud and farflung an empire? A conviction spread that the conversion of Rome to Christianity may have been responsible, that disloyalty to the old gods under whose aegis the city had been built and the empire spread accounted for the present ignominious fall.

The suspicion that Christianity had brought political and military disaster was not confined to pagans. Rickaby suggests that the Christianity of the converts within the empire could still have amounted to little more than a patina covering a good deal of latent paganism. This conjecture would explain the vigor with which Augustine undertook to refute the argument when he began composing *The City of God* in 412. This work was to occupy him sporadically over the next fifteen years. The polemic tone dictated by its immediate occasion and the fairly negative purpose with which he began were gradually replaced; thus, the work took on an uneven, frequently erratic tone but retained its fundamentally unified purpose. Augustine wanted not only to show the inadequacies of the pagan religion but to emphasize the perfection of Christianity. The book that had been occasioned by the fall of Rome became the tale of two cities, the city of man and the city of God. In the course of describing the origins, goals, and ends of these two cities Augustine brought to bear such immense erudition and indefatigable zeal that the result is one of the great classics of all times; *The City of God* is, perhaps, the most influential work of the great bishop of Hippo.

This is Augustine's own account, in the *Retractationes*, of the writing of *The City of God*:

Meanwhile Rome was overthrown by a raid of Goths, led by King Alaric, a most destructive invasion. The polytheistic worshippers of false gods, whom we commonly call pagans, endeavored to bring this overthrow home to the Christian religion, and began to blaspheme the true God with unusual sharpness and bitterness. This set me on fire with zeal for the house of God, and I commenced to write the books *Of the City of God* against their blasphemies or errors. This work occupied me for a number of years, owing to numerous interruptions of businesses that would not brook delay and had a prior claim on me. At last this large work *Of the City of God* was brought to a conclusion in twenty-two books. The first five of them are a refutation of their position who maintain that the worship of many gods, according to the custom of paganism, is essential to the prosperity of human society, and that the prohibition of it is the source and origin of calamities such as the fall of Rome. The next five books are against those who, while allowing that such calamities are never wanting, and never will be wanting, to the page of mortal history, and are now great, now small, under varying conditions of place, time, and person, yet argue that polytheistic worship, and sacrifice to many gods, is profitable for the

life that follows after death. These first ten books, then, are a refutation of these two vain opinions adverse to the Christian religion. But not to expose ourselves to the reproach of merely having refuted the other side, establishing our own position is the object of the second part of this work, which comprises twelve books; though, to be sure, in the former ten, where needful, we vindicate our own, and in the latter twelve we confute the opposite party. Of the twelve following books, four contain the origin of the two cities, the one of God, the other of this world. The next four contain the course of their history; the third and last four their several due ends. Thus the whole twenty books, though written of two cities, yet take their title from the better of the two, and are entitled by preference *Of the City of God*.

This succinct sketch of the work does not indicate its patchwork character, but it provides us with a generally accurate and convenient division for the following presentation.

*Refutation of Paganism.* As Augustine indicates, a twofold defense of pagan polytheism has been put forward. On the one hand, it is maintained that the worship of many gods is more profitable in this world; on the other, that it is more profitable for the next. St. Augustine attempts to dispose of the first contention by indicating that the plight of Rome at the hands of Alaric might have been far worse if it had not been for the Christian influence, thanks to which at least some mercy was shown the conquered. Although the women of Rome were objects of the conqueror's triumph, Augustine is concerned to dismiss the pagan belief that in such an extreme situation a woman should prefer death to dishonor. An unconsenting suffering of rape is preferable to the great sin of suicide, since if consent is not given, true chastity is not destroyed. Anticipating what will be conceded by the second defense of paganism, Augustine observes that in this life misfortune comes to both the just and the unjust and that even the true religion is no guarantee against external evils. We have here, after all, no lasting city, though another city whose destiny is eternal is intertwined with the earthly city.

This first allusion to the great opposition which is the theme of the work and the source of its title indicates that Augustine is not distinguishing between time and eternity, this life and the next. He has in mind the extension beyond this life of the option men make here below where the city of God is becoming a living reality in time, destined to continue in eternity. Men become citizens of the earthly city by preferring self to God; they become citizens of the eternal city of God by preferring God to themselves according to the true religion established by Christ. The populations of these two cities are fluid in time; not all those who are now members of the city of God will remain in that camp, and many who presently ally themselves with the earthly city will, with time and God's grace, become citizens of the eternal city. Thus, the import of the dichotomy goes beyond the political. Augus-

tine's view of history is a Christian one; beneath the visible and evident political dispositions he is able to discern the more meaningful politics constituted by the priorities recognized by men in their minds and hearts. The city of God is not, however, something hidden and secret. Its expression is the Church. The state is not, as such, opposed to the city of God. The earthly city is not a political reality but the congress of those whose lives are governed by self-love to the detriment of God.

Augustine describes in some detail the public spectacles of indecency which had been engaged in as worship of the pagan gods and indicates that the secret rites were even less worthy of men, let alone of gods. In a vein reminiscent of the Greek philosophers, Augustine says that such gods are not fit models of imitation for men. Indeed, the Roman heroes have been worthier models than the Roman gods. The vast number of pagan deities and the conflicting and confusing roles assigned them is discussed at some length. Under paganism Rome knew much adversity and injustice; moreover, under Christianity the city and empire enjoyed much success. The main point of these first five books is that good and bad fortune befall both the just and the unjust according to God's providence.

Providence is not to be confused with fate, however. Augustine is interested to show that human freedom is not jeopardized by God's causality. God has foreknowledge of the evil men will do, but that does not diminish their responsibility for it, and the same must be said of the good men do. Augustine does suggest that the Romans were rewarded with temporal goods for the natural virtues they practiced, but he sees this as a poor substitute for the eternal felicity which awaits the elect.

When he has finished his reply to those who would argue that worship of the pagan gods insures temporal success, Augustine turns to a variant of the argument. Some agree that good and bad fortune in this life come equally to pagan and Christian, but they maintain that we shall be better off in the next life if we worship the pagan gods in this. Augustine's reply to them is twofold. First, he shows that the pagan theology can scarcely pass as a spiritual religion. Second, he turns to the philosophers who have attempted to transform the popular religion into something more exalted. His principal concern here is Neoplatonism.

In books eight, nine, and ten of *The City of God* Augustine gives a sketch of ancient philosophy to which we have already had occasion to refer. A matter which looms large in these books is Augustine's interpretation of the airy spirits or daimons in religious Neoplatonism. These daimons occupy a middle region between the gods and men. Augustine interprets this teaching as a crude attempt to assign an intermediary between the human and the divine. A need for an intermediate is seen both from the point of view of man, who is so much less than the gods that he is sensible of his inability to approach the gods

directly, and from the point of view of the gods, to whom it would seem unfitting that they should concern themselves directly with men. We are already acquainted with Augustine's praise of Plato, a good deal of which is to be found in these books. Though he praises Plato, Augustine feels constrained to reprimand the Platonists, especially Porphyry. From this critique emerges a deep appreciation of the fundamental inadequacy of any human attempt to bridge the gap between man and God. The attempts of the Neoplatonists, while partially commendable, seem a mere parody of the Christian revelation. Man is, indeed, in need of a mediator, but that mediator is Christ, and it was necessary for God to humble himself and lift man up if there was to be any intimate converse between creature and creator.

This is the negative or critical part of *The City of God*. The pagan religion has been shown to be no guarantee of good fortune in this life and wholly inadequate as a commencement of eternal life. Christianity cannot promise an absence of misfortune in this life, but by providing knowledge of the end that awaits us and the grace to achieve it, it enables us to assess both temporal goods and evils as of little moment when compared with permanent citizenship in the eternal city.

*The Two Cities*. "Two loves therefore have given origin to these two cities, self-love in contempt of God unto the earthly, love of God in contempt of one's self to the heavenly. The first seeks the glory of men, and the latter desires God only as the testimony of the conscience, the greatest glory. That glories in itself, and this in God." (XIV,28) With book eleven Augustine begins the discussion of the origin, progress, and ends of the two cities. First, the question arises as to how we can know God; this leads to a discussion of revelation and the canonical books of Scripture. After that, though not in an altogether orderly fashion, Augustine discusses the nature of God and the Trinity of Persons in God. He then turns to the doctrine of creation, speaking of the work of the six days. He writes of the fall of some angels and the consequent division of them in terms of light and darkness. The fall of the angels is portentous for the subsequent fall of man and the constitution of the city which is the opposite of the heavenly city. The creation of man and man's fall involve lengthy treatments of the nature and possibility of original sin, of man's state prior to it, and the consequences for the race of that first sin. With the advent of sin, two contrary courses open up for the human race: men divide themselves into the sons of flesh and the sons of promise, symbolized by Cain and Abel. Augustine sees a parallel in the fact that Cain, the murderer of his brother, founded the first earthly city, just as the founder of Rome killed his brother. Political society is seen by Augustine as a result of sin; he traces private property to the same root. Through book eighteen he provides a narrative of the history of the human race, which is derived largely from the Old Testament. The goal of part of

mankind is the heavenly city and bliss with God, while the other part of mankind elects to find its lot with the fallen angels.

This is the main line that Augustine follows in the second part, the last twelve books, of *The City of God*. We shall discuss some points in detail, starting with book nineteen, which is an extended development of Augustine's view of order and is sometimes said to contain Augustine's notion of morality.

The controlling question is: In what does human happiness consist? Augustine accepts without question the Greek eudaimonistic interpretation of human action. In their moral life, in their choices and decisions, men aim for felicity or happiness. The philosophers have said much on this question. Augustine appeals to Varro, a favorite source of his in *The City of God*. (Unfortunately, Varro's *Antiquities*, a work of forty-one books, has been lost.) Augustine is clearly impressed by Varro's manner of asserting that there are 288 distinct views on the primary good held by philosophers, which can, nevertheless, be reduced to three. Either man's elementary desires are sought for the sake of virtue, virtue is sought for the sake of man's elementary desires, or each is sought for its own sake. Varro holds that human happiness consists in both bodily pleasures and the practice of virtue; thus, elementary desires are pursued for their own sake, although virtue is the best good of man. Human happiness, as described by Varro, is a well-rounded thing: health of body and soul, and a harmonious family life in the wider context of an ordered and peaceful society.

Augustine agrees that this is a most attractive statement of human happiness, but he adds that it is little like reality. Bodily health is at best imperfect, and even the most exemplary men seem to have but a tenuous hold on virtue. A man's wife and children are too often unfaithful, and in society at large, injustice seems rampant. There is never an end to lawsuits, which often cause the innocent to suffer. Worst of all is war, which seems endless. The Stoic may judge such evils to be of little or no account, but we know he is wrong. The absence of these evils is a very real good—that is the strength of Varro's description of happiness. However, even if Varro's ideal could be reached, it would still not assuage the deepest desires of man.

The harmonious life that we accept as the ideal cannot be perfectly achieved in this life. Consequently, happiness must be redefined in terms of the degree of harmony possible to man in an exceedingly imperfect situation. God has given us a desire for human happiness, and it is unlikely that this desire is given only to be frustrated. In pursuing the peace and harmony of the good life we are, at least implicitly, longing for the true peace of the eternal city.

Peace is the key word in Augustine's account of what men finally seek. Even the evil man seeks it, though his goal may be but the parody of peace as found, for instance, in the domination of others. (Chap. 11)

“The body’s peace therefore is an orderly disposal of the parts thereof; the reasonable soul’s, a true harmony between knowledge and performance; that of body and soul alike, a temperate and undiseased habit of nature in the whole creature. The peace of mortal man with immortal God is an orderly obedience unto his eternal law performed in faith. Peace of man and man is a mutual concord; peace of a family an orderly rule and subjection amongst the parts thereof; peace of a city an orderly command and obedience amongst the citizens; peace of God’s city a most orderly coherence in God and fruition of God; the peace of all things is the tranquillity of order.” (Chap. 13)

The concept of peace and harmony is the thread that must run through the whole of society. If we are to have a total view of the peace of society, our view must be theological. Again, we have here no lasting city; the ultimate purpose is achieved, if at all, only in an inchoative fashion in this life. We are destined for eternity, and only in the fullness of time will peace, order, and harmony establish themselves in a definitive way. The citizens of the city of God are one people here below in a far more perfect fashion than men can be citizens of a nation or empire. What constitutes one people is their union in pursuit of a common object of love. This community can transcend national boundaries and differences in language.

The last three books of *The City of God* deal with judgment, hell, and heaven. Hell and heaven are the respective terms of the earthly and heavenly cities; the goal of history is beyond history; in this life man is a pilgrim. The distinction between the two cities is not one between the political order here below and a heavenly city somewhere yonder; nor is it a distinction between two kinds of political organization here below. Charlemagne loved to have *The City of God* read to him, and it is thought to have played a great role in the elaboration of the concept of a Christian Empire, but this is an adaptation of Augustine rather than his own teaching. According to Augustine, what distinguishes the inhabitants of these two cities is their response to a basic moral choice. Does an individual serve himself to the detriment of God or God to the detriment of self? The earthly city consists of all those who make the first choice; the city of God claims all those who make the second choice. Membership in the city of God is not identical with membership in the Catholic Church. Many Catholics, nominal Catholics, as we should say, have actually made the first choice, and many of those currently outside the Church have or will make the choice that gives them membership in the city of God. Thus, here below in time the situation is fluid. With the end of time, at the final judgment, man’s ultimate choice is ratified by God. One who has chosen the earthly city has chosen hell; one who has chosen to serve God rather than self has chosen heaven. Thus, what Augustine means, while it is not something covert or secret, cannot be translated into simple political terminology

He has any number of significant asides on the relation between Church and state, but that is not the real burden of his book and that is not the significance of the distinction between the earthly city and the city of God.

### I. *Conclusion*

Augustine's influence on subsequent ages is due entirely to the force of his thought. While he lived, he was bishop of what has been called a third-rate city, and he had little or no impact on the course of practical affairs. In another see, in another post, he would have been attended as a matter of course. Surprisingly, as Bishop of Hippo, men turned to him constantly for the resolution of theoretical and principally theological difficulties, even though he did not seek their notice. However, the influence he had on the thought of his own times is as nothing compared with the undiminishing influence he has had through the centuries, even to our own day. The fact that he is today held in almost equal esteem by Catholics and Protestants suggests the hope that he may yet have his greatest role to play in the current movement toward Christian reunion.

Together with Boethius, who lived about a century after him and professed the hope that his doctrine would be identical with the great bishop's, Augustine was destined to be the vehicle whereby some knowledge of classical antiquity was transmitted to the men of the Dark and Early Middle Ages, when most direct contact with the early sources had been lost. This was a role that Boethius deliberately assumed, but in the case of Augustine it is merely one of the significant, if adventitious, effects of his prodigious scholarly efforts. In the High Middle Ages Augustinianism was the traditional approach to theology, and if his prominence seems temporarily eclipsed by the problems and opportunities consequent upon the introduction of the works of Aristotle into the West at the end of the twelfth century, this eclipse is, if not merely apparent, certainly temporary. Aquinas, the greatest of the thirteenth-century synthesizers of the old and new, is actually proceeding in the spirit of Augustine and doubtless would have been surprised to have what he was doing assessed as an alternative to Augustinianism. For, while it does not achieve the clarity in Augustine's thought that one might wish, the thirteenth-century distinction between philosophy and theology, as well as the conception of the nature of speculative theology, owes a great deal to the efforts of Augustine.

There can be little doubt that what is called the philosophy of Augustine is principally Platonic in inspiration, although some Aristotelian elements are apparent. The philosophy of Aquinas, on the other hand, is principally Aristotelian. Whether the Thomistic philosophical synthesis is devoid of Platonism or whether Platonism is one of its principal components is a point we shall examine later. What cannot

be questioned is the massive impact of the thought of Augustine on Aquinas. Indeed, it may be said that anything like an understanding of Aquinas depends on a previous understanding of Augustine. Thus, these two chief Christian Doctors must be regarded as complementary, rather than opposed, inspirations in the continuing Christian task of bringing to bear on truths of faith whatever of validity can be found in natural thought.

### *Bibliographical Note*

Augustine's works can be found in Migne *PL*, 32-46, but better editions of many of his works exist. For English translations one can go to M. Dods, *The Works of Aurelius Augustinus*, 15 vols. (Edinburgh, 1871-1876). Individual works of Augustine have been put into English by so many hands and under so many imprints it would be impossible to mention anything like a representative sampling here. J. J. O'Meara has made a list of available translations in his version of H. I. Marrou, *Saint Augustine* (London, 1958). The excellent introduction to Augustine's thought written by Portalie for *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* has been brought out in English by Henry Regnery: *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Chicago, 1960). Of profound importance, of course, is E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (New York, 1960). For recent work on Augustine see *Augustinus magister: Communications et actes du congrès international augustinien* (Paris, 1954). For the nonspecialist the *Confessions*, *The City of God*, the philosophical dialogues, are of first importance.

## CHAPTER III

# *Denis the Areopagite*

Our only certitude regarding this author concerns who he was not. For long centuries he was believed to have been Denis or Dionysius the Areopagite, a convert of St. Paul, and the *Corpus Areopagiticum* received the attention and respect commensurate with that belief. The works were translated into Latin by John Scotus Erigena in the ninth century and were commented on by him and many other outstanding medievals, among them, Hugh of St. Victor, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Denis the Carthusian. Internal evidence suggests that the works of Dionysius could not have been written much before the end of the fifth century. By placing his *floruit* in the year 500 we are being intentionally conservative.

The works of the Pseudo-Dionysius are the following: *De coelestia hierarchia* (*On the Celestial Hierarchy*), *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* (*On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*), *De divinis nominibus* (*On the Divine Names*), and *De mystica theologica* (*On Mystical Theology*). There are also ten letters.

Dionysius is a theologian; the whole burden of his works might be described as the exposition of what man can know of God and how, knowing him, he can name God. He is interested in proceeding, not according to the words of human wisdom, but in terms of Scripture. (*Div. nom.*, 1) In search of knowledge of God in terms of what Scripture has said, however, he will also appeal to the efforts of philosophers. The most striking point about Dionysius is his insistence that the object of his concern is wholly beyond the ability of man to comprehend. The language Scripture uses to speak of God cannot express with any degree of adequacy what he is; a fortiori the attempts of men to speak of God must fail. His thought on this subject represents a division of theology which was to have a profound influence.

Dionysius says that to see and know God is to be accomplished through not seeing and not knowing him, for not to see God is truly to see him, not to know him is truly to know him, for we can adequately praise what is above all being by removing from him everything which pertains to existent things. In other words, our ignorance of God is something which must be achieved, for we will best know what he is

not by attempting to work up to him through the grades of being. (*Myst. theol.*, 2) First, there must be an affirmative theology (*theologia kataphatika*) in which we argue that God is a unique nature, that he is a Trinity of Persons. In the *Divine Names* Dionysius attempts to show what words can be applied to the divine nature, for example, Good, Light, Love, Being. Besides these names of intelligibles, we must discuss those words which are transferred from creatures to God in what may be called symbolic theology, that is, the many metaphorical names of God. Dionysius asks his reader to consider how names for God become more numerous as we move into metaphorical language. Negative theology (*theologia apophatika*) begins on the level of symbolic theology and ascends upwards, denying as it goes, until it becomes clear that God is ineffable, uncomprehended by our names taken singly or together.

While Dionysius' mystical works present the negative theology just described and the other works are all seemingly part of affirmative theology, these are not wholly distinguishable theological activities. The name of anything that is can be transferred to God as to its cause; this is simply a symbolic way of speaking. However, when God is named by means of "intelligibles," such as one, good, and so forth, he is indeed named from a created perfection, but there must be an accompanying denial understood: God is intelligent, and he is thereby named from what we know as intelligence, created and therefore limited intelligence, but the limitation must be denied of God. We end then with the assertion that God is superintelligent, that is, intelligent wholly above our ability to understand. That he escapes our ken is even more clear when we consider that he is superlife and supergood as well, and that in him these are but one perfection. The twofold theology thus implies a threefold procedure in naming God: affirmation, denial, and then the affirmation of a perfection which wholly exceeds our experience and ability to name.

The defect in our language and knowledge of God is explained with reference to us; on the side of God there is, of course, no defect. He is imperfectly named because he surpasses in perfection our ability to understand. The supreme Monad, he is the source of all the perfections we find scattered and distinct in creation; creation refers us back to him as the source of what we know only as limited and separate. The emanation of all things from God as their source and the return of all things to him as to their end is but one Neoplatonic note struck by Dionysius. His preference for the word One as the name of God, his utilization of the metaphor of light, with creatures as so many rays springing from a source too strong for our intellectual eye, the view that creatures are images—all these reveal the influence of Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus. There is a *processus* or emanation of creatures from God (*Div. nom.*, 5), and God, while one, indeed superunity, is

thereby multiplied in his effects. We will find this extremely delicate concept in John Scotus Erigena as well, with the latter arguing that in this sense God can be called created. In phrases which will echo in Erigena, Dionysius speaks of God as "all in all" and of the divine Ideas as "predestinations." There is the distinct reminder of a stratified world, with the Ideas emanating from God as primordial caused causes and other things from them, as if existence-in-itself exists between God and the things that are. Moreover, the voluntariness of creation is somewhat diminished by Dionysius, and one detects a Neoplatonic suggestion that the levels of creation proceed from God in some necessary way.

Perhaps these few remarks will suffice to indicate the power as well as the obscurity of the thought of Dionysius. By far the most influential aspect of these writings is their doctrine on the unnameability of God, and thinkers of all persuasions will make an effort to adjust their thought to this claim. Those who find in Dionysius grounds for steering between the extremes of denying that we can know anything about God and claiming that God is a proportioned object of our mind would seem to be most faithful to him. That our knowledge of God is, compared to its object, no knowledge at all, in the sense that we cannot comprehend him, does not mean that creation provides no indirect way to meaningful language about its cause. In Cusa's phrase, our ignorance of God is a learned one, and Dionysius would hardly deny that we are better off after the efforts of affirmative and negative theology than we were before. It is a matter of some importance to note that not even Scripture, which is God's revelation to man, transcends the human mode of naming, which is to apply to God names of perfections best known to us in creatures.

### *Bibliographical Note*

For the works of Pseudo-Dionysius see Maurice de Gandillac, *Oeuvres complètes du Pseudo-Denys l'Areopagite* (Paris, 1943); J. Parker, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite* (London, 1897). See too A. B. Sharpe, *Mysticism, Its True Nature and Value* (London, 1910); E. C. Rolt, *Dionysius the Areopagite: On the Divine Names and The Mystical Theology* (New York, 1951); René Roques, *L'univers Dionysien* (Lille, 1954); and Denys Rutledge, *Cosmic Theology* (London, 1964).

## CHAPTER IV

# Boethius

### A. *The Man and His Work*

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c.480–524), “the last of the Romans and the first of the Scholastics,” in the famous phrase, was born in Rome of a politically prominent family. His father had been a consul, he himself became one in 510, and his two sons achieved the same distinction in 522. Boethius married a woman named Rusticana, the daughter of Symmachus; as will appear, Boethius held his father-in-law in more than ordinary esteem. Boethius was a consul under Theodoric the Ostrogoth and came to an untimely end when he was accused of conspiring with Justin, Emperor of the East, against Theodoric. There were theological undertones to his fate since Theodoric subscribed to the Arian heresy, while Boethius, like Justin, was a Catholic. Boethius protested his innocence, but he was cast into prison and executed without a trial in 524.

Although he was a statesman, Boethius produced a surprisingly large and influential body of work in philosophy. His major task was to translate Plato and Aristotle into Latin and, their teachings having been made available, to show the fundamental agreement of the two philosophers. While Boethius did not, so far as we know, even approach this awesome goal, what has come down to us indicates that he conceived his role to be considerably more than that of a middle man. His surviving translations are of logical works of Aristotle. We can conveniently divide his total production into philosophical and theological works.

*Philosophical Works.* Boethius translated the following logical works of Aristotle: *Categories* and *On Interpretation*. While translations of the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics*, and the *Sophistical Refutations* are included in editions of Boethius’ work, scholars are now inclined to cast doubt on their authenticity. Boethius also translated the *Isagoge*, an introduction to the *Categories* of Aristotle, written by the Neoplatonist Porphyry. Besides translating, Boethius wrote a number of excellent commentaries: two on Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, one on Aristotle’s *Categories* (a second was projected), two on *On Interpretation*. He is also credited with a commentary on the *Topics* of Cicero.

The following independent logical works are included in editions of his work: *Introduction to Categorical Syllogisms*, *On Categorical Syllogisms* (2 books), *On the Hypothetical Syllogism* (2 books), *On Division*, *On Definition*, *On Topical Differences*, *On Rhetorical Connexion*, *The Distinction of Theoretical Loci*. Besides these logical works, a work on arithmetic and another on music are attributed to Boethius. Finally, there is the great *Consolation of Philosophy*.

*Theological Works.* The theological writings of Boethius comprise works on the Trinity, on the union of the divine and human nature in Christ, and on the participation of goodness. We shall mention their titles later.

Our discussion of Boethius will center on two points: the relation between faith and reason and the problem of universals. Not only are these central concerns of his own effort, but they contain factors which were highly influential in the Middle Ages.

### B. Faith and Reason

The problem of the relationship between faith and reason acquires curiously personal overtones in Boethius. We have mentioned that Boethius set as the great task of his lifetime the translation of the works of Plato and Aristotle. This task is of such magnitude that we may doubt that Boethius could have seen it through to completion even if he had not devoted much of his time to statesmanship and, as a result, come to an untimely end. As Boethius languished in prison, aware of the end that awaited him, he, like Socrates in a similar position, first devoted himself to the writing of verse. After a time, however, he turned to the composition of the work which ever since has constituted his claim to widespread fame, the *Consolation of Philosophy*. While the *Consolation* must be classified as a philosophical work, the fact that this can be done is, given the circumstances of its composition, somewhat of a mystery. The difficulty was well stated by Samuel Johnson, quoted of course by Boswell: "Speaking of Boethius, who was the favorite writer of the middle ages, he said it was very surprising, that upon such a subject, and in such a situation, he should be *magis philosophus quam Christianus*." That Boethius, on his own insistence the victim of gross injustice, should have attempted to reconcile himself to his condemnation and approaching execution by appeal to philosophical truths alone, and indeed to the example of philosophers alone, is quite surprising. We should expect that the innocent victim par excellence would have provided him consolation and example, yet no mention is made of Christ, no explicit quotation from Scripture is to be found in the *Consolation*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gilson, in *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 102, finds one quotation from Scripture (Wisdom 8:1), in book three, prose twelve.

What is the explanation of this strange situation? Does philosophy in the *Consolation* stand for a wisdom which would embrace both sacred and profane knowledge? We shall see that this is not the case. Was Boethius perhaps not a Catholic at all, and the theological tractates are incorrectly ascribed to him? We have the statement of Boethius' contemporary Cassiodorus that these tractates are from the hand of Boethius. Any solution to this puzzle can be at best conjectural. H. M. Barrett, in *Boethius, Some Aspects of His Times and Work* (Cambridge, 1940), gives a good sampling of proposed solutions and offers one of her own. Hers appears to be no more cogent than those she sets aside. She argues that Boethius had devoted his life to translating Plato and Aristotle into Latin and that this, by his own word, constituted his overriding interest. (In the *De syllogismo hypothetico*, PL, 64, 831A, he refers to his titanic effort as *summum vitae solamen*, the greatest consolation of his life.) It is not surprising, therefore, the argument continues, that in his extremity it would be to philosophy, to Plato and Aristotle, that Boethius would turn. Without any intention of offering a solution of our own, we might note that we are far from convinced by Barrett's. Whatever the explanation of this enigma, however, its very existence underlines the fact that a distinction between reasoning which depends upon faith and reasoning without such dependence is unquestionably present in the work of Boethius.

The *Consolation* is so purely philosophical that at one time scholars doubted that it could have been written by a Christian in the circumstances in which the text and tradition say it was written. Some of his other works, however, are clearly attempts by a believer to make intelligible in the light of truths taken from philosophy central objects of Christian faith. Thus, there is *prima facie* evidence that Boethius recognized a distinction between what is held by reason and what is held by faith. Moreover, the theological tractates provide overt statements about the relationship between these two areas. We intend to examine in turn the tractates and the *Consolation* in order to express as explicitly as possible the views of Boethius on the relationship between faith and reason.

*The Theological Tractates.* The theological tractates are five in number and seem generally to meet the description of Cassiodorus: "He wrote a book on the Holy Trinity, certain dogmatic treatises [*capita*] and a book in refutation of Nestorius." The *Quomodo trinitas unus deus et non tres dii* (or, more simply, *On the Trinity*); its apparent sequel, *Utrum pater et filius et spiritus sanctus de divinitate substantialiter praedicentur* (Are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Predicated Substantially or Essentially of the Divine Nature?) and the *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium* (or, more simply, *On the Two Natures*) are mentioned by name; there is no doubt that the *How Substances Are Good Insofar As*

*They Are* (called the *De hebdomadibus*) is by Boethius. There is still doubt as to the authenticity of *On the Catholic Faith*. Our brief discussion will rely only on the four tractates of uncontested authenticity.

What is Boethius attempting to do in these tractates? Their subject matters are, first, the doctrine of the Trinity, second, a discussion of the Incarnate Word, and, finally, a treatment of the proposition that whatever is good precisely insofar as it is. St. Thomas Aquinas, in the prologue to his exposition of the *On the Trinity* of Boethius, attributes an order to these tractates not unlike the order of his own *Summa theologiae*. First of all, Boethius is concerned with the one nature of God and the three Divine Persons: this is accomplished in *On the Trinity*. In *Utrum pater* Boethius “treats of the mode of predication we use in the distinction of the Persons and the unity of the essence.” Secondly, in the *De hebdomadibus* St. Thomas sees Boethius treating of “the procession of created goods from the good God.” The third division of the tractates has to do with the reparation of creatures through Christ. The faith taught by Christ is presented in *On the Catholic Faith*, and the way in which the human and the divine nature are united in the person of Christ is discussed in the work directed against Eutychus and Nestorius. Whether Boethius intended this order is irrelevant to our ability to see that the tractates do so arrange themselves. It is important to notice, moreover, that St. Thomas regards these tractates as theological.

How does Boethius go about the discussion of the tenets of the Christian faith? In the dedication of *On the Trinity* to his father-in-law, Symmachus, Boethius says, “You must however examine whether the seeds sown in my mind by St. Augustine’s writings have borne fruit.” The reference of course is to Augustine’s work on the Trinity, but St. Thomas sees a methodological import in this reference. “There are two ways to discuss the Trinity, as Augustine says in *De trinitate*, I,2, namely by appeal to authorities or through argumentations [*rationes*], both of which Augustine used, as he himself pointed out. Some of the holy Fathers, like Ambrose and Hilary, pursued the one only, namely appeal to authorities; Boethius chooses to proceed according to the other manner, namely argumentations, presupposing what has been set forth by others by means of authority.” This is not to say that Boethius does not accept the fact of the Trinity on the authority of faith as something taught by Scripture, interpreted by the Church, and expounded by tradition and the Fathers. In the first chapter the point is clearly made that it is a matter of Christian belief that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but that there are not thereby three gods, but one only. Boethius does not proceed by showing that this doctrine is contained in Scripture and has been taught by the Church or by collecting what others have said about this belief. Instead, he wants to show the intelligibility of this accepted belief by appeal to argumentation. From what then will he argue? “So I pur-

posely use brevity and wrap up the ideas I draw from the profound inquiries of philosophy in new and unaccustomed words which speak only to you and to myself. . . .” (*Proemium*) Boethius appeals to philosophical truth to explain the unity of the divine nature and the Trinity of Persons. He does not intend these arguments to lead to the conclusion that there *must* be a Trinity of Divine Persons: this is ever assumed as a belief. Nor will his arguments eliminate the necessity of belief in the Trinity. At the end of the tractate he writes: “If with God’s help I have furnished some support in argument to an article which stands by itself on the firm foundation of faith, I shall render joyous praise for the finished work to him from whom the invitation comes. But if human nature has failed to reach beyond its limits, whatever is lost through my infirmity must be made good by my intention.” Boethius’ method amounts to an effort to speak in a manner intelligible to one trained in philosophy of those things which every Christian firmly believes. The article of faith is not held more firmly because of the arguments given, yet Boethius sees the attempt to “conjoin” faith and reason as something incumbent on himself and others. “If I am right and speak in accordance with the faith, I pray you to confirm me,” he writes to the deacon John at the end of the second tractate. “But if you are in any point of another opinion, examine carefully what I have said, and if possible, join faith and reason [*et fidem si poterit rationemque coniunge*].”

The *rationes* of Boethius in these tractates are undertaken with a view toward supporting belief; in this they differ from the efforts of philosophers. The points he considers would not even be discussed apart from divine faith, and the arguments adduced do not so ground the truths in question that faith becomes unnecessary to hold them as certainly true. When Boethius remarks that he is borrowing from the inquiries of philosophers, we must not understand him to mean that his task consists simply of the application of ready-made philosophical views. Many of the philosophical points he makes appear to be original contributions. An indication of the philosophy which enters into the tractates may be had by examining somewhat closely *On the Trinity*.

In the first chapter of the tractate Boethius states that it is a matter of Christian faith that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God and that nevertheless there are not three gods but one only. This dogma is simply asserted as a proposition of Christian belief; it is no part of Boethius’ task to establish that it is contained in Scripture. Given this revealed truth, which is accepted on the authority of God, a man who is trained in philosophy will reflect on it in such a way that he will bring it into juxtaposition with naturally known truths. The term of such reflection will not be a knowledge of the Trinity of Persons which is independent of faith. Faith in the doctrine is the starting point of the tractate, and, at its end, it is by faith alone that one accepts the Trinity as a truth.

Many of the naturally known truths which Boethius brings to bear on the doctrine of the Trinity have an Aristotelian origin. For example, in the first chapter, having noted that Catholics maintain that the unity of three Persons in the Trinity involves an absence of difference, Boethius undertakes an analysis of three kinds of difference whose immediate source is probably Porphyry but which derive ultimately from Aristotle. The denial of difference in the Persons of the Trinity is ambiguous until we have examined the kinds of difference and seen that none of them is applicable to the Divine Persons. Things differ generically, specifically, and numerically; similarly, things are generically, specifically, or numerically the same. Since sameness and difference are correlatives, Boethius can proceed by analyzing these types of sameness. Things are generically the same which share a common form which admits of further formal differentiation. For example, a man and a horse are generically the same with respect to animality. Things are specifically the same which share a common form which is not susceptible of further formal differentiation. For example, Cato and Cicero share the common form humanity. Things are numerically the same which differ only in name. For example, Tully and Cicero are but one person. Individuals of the same species differ because of their accidents.

Before applying these distinctions to the dogma of the Trinity, Boethius begins his second chapter by recalling Aristotle's division of theoretical philosophy into physics, mathematics, and theology. We will return to this subject later. All we need note now is the characterization of divine things, the objects of theology, as things which are free of matter and motion. Therefore, in treating them we must relinquish any appeal to the imagination. Material things are compounds of matter and form which owe their being principally to their form. That which is not pure form is not identical with its essence (a man is not humanity), but that which is form alone is identical with its essence. God, being pure form, is his own essence, and specific and generic differences cannot apply to God. In composed things we must trace their possession of accidents, not to their form, but to their matter or substratum. Thus, while it may be true to say that a man is white, it is not humanity that is white. Therefore, to be white is accidental to man and inheres in him because of the subject of the form and not because of the form itself. God, since he is pure form and without subject or substratum, will not be the subject of any accidents. But numerical difference has been said to arise from accidents. Therefore, there can be no numerical difference in God.

God is completely one because no difference or plurality of the admitted kinds is applicable to him. Nevertheless, Boethius observes in chapter three, when we say the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, we use the term "God" three times. Since three is a number, this seems to predicate numerical difference of God, whose

nature is supposed not to permit numerical diversity. In response to this difficulty Boethius distinguishes two kinds of number. They are exemplified by the abstract and concrete terms "unity" and "one." A thing is one; unity is that whereby the oneness of the thing is signified. So too with "duality" and "two." Now, in speaking of one and the same thing we may say of it that it is one coat, one garment, and one vestment. This verbal repetition does not multiply the thing we are talking about. Neither does the repetition of "God" in the statement that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God mean that we are enumerating three Gods.

The point Boethius has tried to make is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must be the same God because none of the modes of difference is applicable to them. Nevertheless, the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, nor is either or both the Holy Spirit. Belief in the unity of the divine nature does not, therefore, exclude the difference of Persons, and where there is difference there is number. But the only source of numerical difference mentioned so far is that which follows on the possession of accidents, and God cannot have any accidents since there is no subject or substratum of the divine form. Boethius will return to this difficulty, but first he wants to discuss the manner in which predicates are applied to God.

In chapter four Boethius has recourse to the Aristotelian doctrine of categories, the ten categories which can be universally predicated of things. As predicated, some of the categories are substantial predicates, namely, substance, quantity, and quality, while the rest are accidental predicates. Boethius states that none of these categories can mean the same thing as predicated of God and creature. Thus, while "God" predicated of God would seem to denote a substance, Boethius suggests that we think of it as a supersubstantial predicate. Likewise, when we say that God is just or great, these predicates must be taken to signify supersubstantial quality and quantity since we do not mean to suggest any composition of the divine substance or any accidental attribute. God is justice; God is greatness. Boethius goes on to discuss the rest of the categories with a view to denying that any of them has application to God. He tentatively concludes that substance is the only category that applies to God, although this must not be taken to mean that he is a subject. That is, again, the term "substance" does not mean the same thing as predicated of God and creature.

In running through the categories in chapter five Boethius omits any discussion of relation; he turns to this category in his sixth chapter, indicating that this has been his goal all along. Relative terms, it may be said, do not alter the substance to which they are applied. For example, a man is called a master because of his relation to a servant. If the servant dies or leaves his employ, the man ceases to be a master, but this does not alter his substance in any way. From this observation

Boethius wants to conclude that the category of relation does not increase, decrease, or in any way alter the substance to which it is applied, and on this basis he can say that if Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to the divine nature as predicates of relation, they will not introduce any difference into the divine nature itself, although they indicate a difference between the Persons in that nature.

Boethius' general conclusion is that the category of substance preserves the unity of the divine nature and the category of relation differentiates the Persons without introducing difference into the divine nature as such.

This glance at *On the Trinity* gives an indication of the way in which Boethius employs philosophy in meditating on the truths of faith. We have stressed his use of philosophical doctrines already at hand. Boethius made any number of philosophical contributions himself; however, his definitions may have the greatest influence, especially those he gave of eternity and person. In the third chapter of his work on Nestorius and Eutychus he defines person as *naturae rationalis individua substantia* (an individual substance of a rational nature). With that definition in hand he was able to refute the two heresies. The tractates generally, along with Augustine's works, figure in all subsequent theological discussion on the Trinity and Incarnation.

The theological tractates of Boethius reveal a use of reason and a reliance on philosophy in discussions of doctrines of faith which justify calling Boethius the first Scholastic. Let us turn now to the work which, as we have indicated, is almost disturbingly restricted to the philosophical level.

*The Consolation of Philosophy*. This work is divided into five books, in each of which a prose section alternates with a verse section. This literary form can be traced back through Martianus Capella (who wrote a work on the liberal arts in this form) to Varro and on to a Greek origin in the Menippean Satire. (See Barrett, p. 76.) Quite apart from its content, on which we shall concentrate, the *Consolation* enjoyed an almost unparalleled fame during the Middle Ages as a work of art. The meters of its verse are varied and the result highly esteemed; the style of its prose passages is a thing of beauty. One is reminded of the *Phaedo* of Plato, but with this overwhelming difference. Socrates did not compose his immortal epitaph; Plato did—and in retrospect. The *Consolation*, on the other hand, must have been composed by the victim in his cell. This increases the enigma of Boethius. That a man, particularly a man of Boethius' talent and background, should have the thoughts expressed in the *Consolation* is understandable enough; that he might write them down does not unduly strain the imagination; but that he should cast them into the exacting literary form he did is a severe test of our credulity. Nevertheless, there seem to be no grounds for skepticism about the facts.

The central question to which the *Consolation* addresses itself is this: What rational explanation can be found for the fact that the innocent suffer while the wicked not only go unpunished but prosper? This seemingly irrational state of affairs must be examined to see if it is not, after all, reasonable and tolerable.

In the opening poem of book one Boethius laments his outcast state. In the prose section following he describes the entry into his cell of a woman, tall, majestic, her eyes flashing and her manner authoritative. She is Dame Philosophy and she grandly dismisses the poetical muses who have been attempting to give solace to a man brought up by Eleatic and Academic studies. The muses can only increase his sorrow and self-pity. " 'But it is rather time,' saith she, 'to apply remedies than to make complaints.' " (I, pr. 2) She reminds Boethius that he should know this, since he has spent much time under her tutelage. Boethius' spirits begin to rise slightly when he is reminded that Philosophy did not abandon Socrates, Anaxagoras, and Zeno in their hour of need, and no more will she abandon him. Encouraged, Boethius responds with a lengthy account of the evils that have befallen him despite his many contributions to the public weal and asks Dame Philosophy why the sovereign harmony which is apparent in the cosmos is so conspicuously and sadly absent from the affairs of men (pr. 4). Dame Philosophy is distressed to find that Boethius has sunk so low, and she undertakes a gradual process of consolation.

The therapy begins with a number of questions which will enable her to ascertain the present condition of Boethius. Boethius is asked if he would say that the world is merely the arena of chance and caprice or that it is ordered and directed; he replies that it is governed by reason. The world is the handiwork of God who has fashioned it and now directs and governs it. What then is man? Boethius knows that he is a rational animal, but that is the extent of his answer. Philosophy remarks that he is in worse straits than she had thought. Confused about the end of things, Boethius has become so forgetful of himself that he thinks the prosperity of the wicked a good and the misfortune of the virtuous an evil. "But thanks be to the author of thy health, that nature hath not altogether forsaken thee. We have the greatest nourisher of thy health, the true opinion of the government of the world, in that thou believest that it is not subject to the events of chance, but to divine reason. Wherefore, fear nothing; out of this little sparkle will be enkindled thy vital heat." (pr. 6) Nonetheless, given the depths of his depression, the first remedies will not be the strongest.

In book two Philosophy uses the "sweetness of Rhetoric's persuasions" to prepare Boethius for more solid consolation. First, they must examine the nature of fortune or luck, a natural topic since Boethius considers his present plight to be a misfortune and professes surprise at what has befallen him. Philosophy assures him that fortune has not

changed but with consistent inconsistency now takes away without cause what was bestowed without cause. Whether good or bad, fortune is beyond man's control and comes to him from outside. Boethius' difficulty is that he does not see that his prior state, when he was the recipient of the goods of fortune, was just as irrational as his present unfortunate condition. In these restless times Boethius should have been impressed by the inconstancy of luck and learned thereby to seek happiness within, in an arena where his own efforts can play an essential role. "If blessedness be the chiefest good of nature endowed with reason, and that is not the chiefest good which may by any means be taken away, because that which cannot be taken away is better, it is manifest that the instability of fortune cannot aspire to the obtaining of blessedness." (pr. 4) Fortune is more profitable to man when she takes away what has been given because then a man must ask what true happiness is.

Again and again in the sequel he returns to the idea that happiness does not simply happen to a man. The third book makes the point in great detail. Happiness cannot be a matter of riches or honor or worldly power. Nor can carnal pleasure of whatever sort make a man happy. The true good, that in which human happiness lies, cannot be found in terrestrial things. Indeed, when we seek the marks of the good we find that they must all be found in one substance and that this substance must exist outside the material world. God is the sovereign good, and he is also true human happiness. All beings aspire to rejoin their source; since all things have the same source, God is the universal or common end of everything in the universe. Boethius is urged to turn his eyes from earth to heaven if he would find consolation in his darkest hour.

This sunny view becomes clouded as book four begins. The idea of a benevolent God who is the source of the universe and who continues to direct each thing in it seems to be contradicted by the existence of evil. Dame Philosophy must be able to solve the problem of evil, or what has been said up to now is as nothing. She bends her best efforts to the task. If God is the benign governor of the universe, it would seem to follow that the good are never without reward and that the evil never go unpunished. To see that this is actually the case, we must acquire a perspective which will reveal the prosperity of the wicked as only apparent and the suffering of the virtuous as something less than unhappiness. Dame Philosophy urges Boethius to the heights where he may gain the proper perspective. Boethius is dubious but willing. Philosophy argues that it can be shown that if the virtuous are strong, the bad must be weak. He is strong who is able to attain the end he seeks, and the end sought by all men is nothing else than true happiness. But who can attain this good if not the virtuous, and who fail to attain it if not the vicious? Therefore, good men attain the object of their desires and evil men do not. The change of perspective Phi-

losophy is trying to induce follows on the judgments made in the second and third books. The judgment that happiness cannot be constituted by honor, fame, riches, bodily pleasures, and so forth must be stringently applied; one must see that though wicked men enjoy any or all of these things, they are not thereby happy. The wicked want happiness yet are powerless to attain it since they are committed to pseudo-goods. There is an echo of Plato and Aristotle in this section. Boethius realizes that the wicked are not and cannot be happy. How silly then to envy them. What they require is our pity.

That Boethius is able to acquiesce to all these conclusions is a sign to Dame Philosophy that his sanity is returning. She urges him to recognize that whatever happens happens because God wills it, and, consequently, everything is ultimately ordered to the good. Both good fortune and bad fortune play an edifying role if we have the eye to see it. In a profound sense there is no misfortune for the virtuous who, similarly, do not view good fortune as a true good.

The final book of the *Consolation* takes up the question of the compatibility of providence and human freedom. If God directs all things, if his providence encompasses everything in the universe, it must direct the acts of men as well. But are not human acts precisely those which cannot be directed from without but have their source within man? We seem forced to say that free human acts either escape the providence of God or, being included in it, are not what they appear, namely, free. Dame Philosophy will try to show the compatibility of providence and free will by beginning with a discussion of chance events. Aristotle's definition of the chance event is accepted. Aristotle had taught that when a determined cause, called such because it is ordered to producing a determinate effect, brings about as well or instead an unintended result, that result is said merely to happen, to be a chance effect. If it is referred back to the cause, the cause is not a determinate explanation of it. If I dig for water and strike oil, the discovery of oil is the result of my digging for water, but it is unintended and accidental to my intention. Such accidental events may be unintended and unforeseen by me, but this does not prevent their being foreseen and intended by God. In somewhat the same way, Dame Philosophy suggests, we can find a compatibility between our undeniable certitude that we are free agents and the fact that our free acts come within the scope of divine providence.

As the *Consolation* reaches its term, Boethius is a changed man. At the outset he was a sobbing, self-pitying, broken man who was convinced that everything had turned against him, that the world, which had hitherto been a fairly reasonable place, had become suddenly and inexplicably absurd. Dame Philosophy has led him gradually from the view that external events and what other men can confer constitute happiness. Good luck is as absurd, finally, as bad luck. Happiness is

not thrust upon us; it is something we must earn. We learn from considering this world that our happiness consists in something beyond this world. A reversal of fortune can be a stroke of good luck if we take its occasion to reassess the nature of luck and reflect that the world is a whole whose order demands a governor. Our sense of values must alter when we contemplate God's governance of the world. The wicked are not happy; the unlucky virtuous man is not less virtuous, less truly happy. We can come to see that in this world all things work together for good, though it is not our part to grasp this truth in detail. Thus, Boethius, unjustly accused and condemned to death, draws consolation from these philosophical considerations and is able to face death with equanimity.

As befits philosophy, there is no discussion in the *Consolation* of the punishment of the souls of the wicked after death (IV, pr. 4). The immortality of the soul is said to be demonstrable (II, pr. 4). Let us conclude by examining the way in which the *Consolation* treats God, its theology, to determine if it is an example of a theology different from that exhibited in the tractates.

The most striking thing about the *Consolation*, when compared with the tractates, is the absence of any concern with the Trinity. God is often referred to as Father in the *Consolation*, but the word seems to function as the name of a nature, not of a person; moreover, it is Plato who suggests the appellation. What attitude is expressed in the *Consolation* with respect to the attainment of philosophical knowledge of God's existence? Some have suggested that Boethius has no intention of offering a proof for the existence of God since his existence is assumed from the very beginning of the work. It is true that God's existence is taken for granted from the very outset, but Boethius also argues to that fact on several occasions in the *Consolation*. In prose ten, book three, a proof is found which has been likened to the later proof of St. Anselm.

In prose twelve of the same book another argument is presented. Boethius had said in *Quomodo substantiae*, with respect to the First Good, that his "being is admitted by the universal consensus of learned and unlearned opinion and can be deduced [*cognosci potest*] from the religious beliefs of savage races." In the *Consolation* he gives a learned basis for the assertion that God exists: "This world could never have been compacted of so many divers and contrary parts unless there were one that doth unite these so different things; and this disagreeing diversity of natures being united would separate and divide this concord unless there were one that holdeth together what he united. Neither would the course of nature continue so certain, nor would the different parts hold so well-ordered motions in due places, times, causality, spaces, and qualities unless there were one who, himself remaining quiet, disposeth and ordereth this variety of motions. This, whatsoever

it be, by which things created continue and are moved, I call God, a name which all men use." (III, pr. 12)

It seems legitimate to conclude that Boethius recognizes in the *Consolation* that God's existence can be known from reason alone. Although he was a Christian, the *Consolation* seems a conscious attempt to remain on the level of natural reason, unaided by faith, in order to show that a rational preparation for faith is possible. There is a God who governs all things, and it is in him that perfect happiness is to be found. Christian faith teaches us far more of God than philosophy can and elevates us to the level of friendship with God. Nevertheless, one can find the beginnings of consolation in philosophy.

### C. Division of Philosophy

Having seen Boethius' de facto recognition of the autonomy of philosophical reasoning, let us turn now to his remarks on the nature and division of philosophy. While these remarks are fairly schematic and derivative, they are important because they were the vehicles whereby the Aristotelian division of philosophy was made known to later thinkers to whom the treatises of Aristotle containing the doctrine which makes the division meaningful were unknown. This fact led to some rather curious commentaries on the texts of Boethius which we want now to examine. However, because of the influence of Boethius the way had been more or less paved for the Aristotelian *corpus* as it became known at the end of the twelfth century.

In his first commentary on Porphyry, Boethius must ask what philosophy is and what its main divisions are to explain the role the *Isagoge* was intended to perform: "First of all we must ask what philosophy itself is. For philosophy is the love, pursuit of, and, in a certain way, friendship with wisdom." (PL, 64,10D) This love of wisdom is described as an illumination of the intelligence by pure wisdom itself and is, therefore, the study of divinity. Truth in speculation is caused by this illumination as well as by rectitude of action: "For philosophy is a genus having two species, one which is called theoretical, the other practical, that is, speculative and active." (11A) Each of the species of philosophy is further subdivided into three parts. In the second chapter of his *De trinitate* Boethius had written:

There are three parts of speculative philosophy. Natural philosophy considers things in motion which are not abstract; it considers the forms of bodies together with their matter since such forms cannot be actually separated. These bodies are in motion (for example, earth is borne downward, fire upward) and a form conjoined to matter is in motion. Mathematics considers inabstract things without motion, for it speculates on the forms of bodies without the matter and therefore without motion. These forms, since they are in matter, cannot be separated from it. Theology is concerned with abstract things separable from motion since the substance of God lacks both matter and motion.

Thus, in this text Boethius seems to be giving a fairly straightforward statement of the Aristotelian position according to which the division of the speculative sciences does not argue for three distinct realms of entities. However, the approach of the commentary on Porphyry links the three theoretical sciences to three types of things: "There will be just as many species of speculative science as there are things worthy of speculation." (*PL*, 64, 11B) He names these types of things intellectibles, intelligibles, and naturals. Intellectibles are defined as things which always subsist one and the same in their proper divinity and are grasped, not by the senses, but by intellect alone. Examples are God and the soul. Intelligibles are causes of sublunary things, and soul is mentioned here too because, due to its contact with body, it degenerates from the state of being an intellectible and becomes an intelligible. Beatitude will consist in turning toward intellectibles. A third branch of theoretical science is concerned with bodies and their properties and can be called physiology. It is noteworthy that Boethius, while he associates intellectibles with theology and bodies with physics, does not align intelligibles with mathematics.

The passage in the commentary on Porphyry suggests a Neoplatonic declension toward matter, and we seem faced with a real hierarchy. This impression is strengthened by a passage in *On Arithmetic*, one quoted, incidentally, by Scotus Erigena (*PL*, 122,498C). Here we read that qualities, quantities, forms, magnitudes, places, times, and such are, in their proper nature, incorporeal, immutable substances; they are changed, however, by their participation in body. (*PL*, 63,1079D–1081A)

Boethius has presented the Aristotelian division of theoretical philosophy in the *De trinitate* in terms of abstraction or nonabstraction from matter in being and in thought. Elsewhere, however, he speaks of a hierarchy of entities in terms of degeneration from true being, a falling off into matter, which is redolent of Neoplatonism. Which of these positions Boethius himself held has been the object of lengthy discussion. We will be able to propose an answer against the background of Boethius' treatment of the problem of universals.

#### D. *The Status of Universals*

Pascal once mused that the whole history of the world would have been different if Cleopatra's nose had been a bit longer. It is far less remote to say that much of the philosophy of the Early Middle Ages would have been utterly different if it had not been for a brief remark of Porphyry in his *Isagoge*, that is, introduction, to the *Categories* of Aristotle. In this work Porphyry proposes to discuss the notions prerequisite to an understanding of Aristotle's work on the ten genera of being. Porphyry mentions the five predicables: genus, species, difference, property, and accident. Before getting down to them, however,

he sets aside the problem posed by two widely different opinions regarding the status of the predicables, the opinions of Plato and Aristotle: "For the present I shall not discuss the question whether genera and species really exist or are bare notions only; and if they exist, whether they are corporeal or incorporeal beings; whether they are separate from sensible things or exist in them and in relation to them. Such matters are of the highest difficulty and demand a higher kind of inquiry." What could be more challenging to a reader than to be told that there is a profound and difficult problem, namely, such and such, which will not be treated in the present work? Boethius rose to the bait twice in his commentaries on Porphyry, and, because of the influence of Boethius, the problem was transmitted to the Christian schools, where many were to follow his example and propose solutions to the problem Porphyry considered too difficult to discuss in an introductory work.

The problem of universals, as it is stated by Porphyry, comprises three questions: Are genera and species subsistent entities, and, if so, are they separate from the things of sense experience or is the universal somehow present in sensible singulars? What explains Porphyry's reluctance (and distinguishes Boethius' treatment from most others until the end of the twelfth century) is the recognition that the quarrel to which he alludes is as much or more a metaphysical than a logical one. Boethius was acquainted with the works of Plato and Aristotle, but for centuries during which the problem of universals was discussed all the Aristotle known to the disputants was a few logical works translated by Boethius. Of Plato, all that was directly known was the *Timaeus* in the translation of Chalcidius. (Of course, much "Platonism" was known.) While the various theories on the status of universals, which grew ever more complex, were presented in a time when the historical background in Greek thought was but dimly perceived, they cannot be viewed as a mere waste of time. The problem involved logic, psychology, and metaphysics; moreover, its association with the divine Ideas and creation makes proposed solutions important.

Boethius' first commentary on the *Isagoge* opens as a dialogue, but there is less and less concession to that literary form as the commentary proceeds; the second commentary is a straightforward one by previous design. We shall concern ourselves with the second commentary. (*PL*, 64,82A-86A) The discussion is organized as follows: having noted Porphyry's reluctance to treat the problem of universals, Boethius first indicates the triple question involved. Next, he undertakes the solution of the three difficulties, first by noting the ambiguity of the question and then by presenting his solution. In following his division we shall make some mention of Boethius' first commentary and rely as well on other writings of his. Finally, because of his closing statement, we will seek elsewhere indications of disagreement with the Aristotelian solution Boethius here sets forth.

*The Questions.* In dismissing the problem of universals Porphyry

has indicated that it involves three questions. In his first commentary Boethius is content with a clarification of these three questions; in the second, this clarification is prefatory to a solution. Three activities of the mind (*animus*) are mentioned. Mind conceives with the understanding or intellect (*intellectus*), describes to itself what has been so conceived with the reason (*ratio*), or depicts for itself by empty imagination (*imaginatio*) what is not. To which of these activities of mind should genera and species be ascribed? Are they due to true understanding or to the empty play of imagination? In this fashion Boethius sets up the first Porphyrian problem: Do genera and species exist or are they bare notions only, that is, are they had by true understanding or made by mendacious imagination? If we decide that they are objects of true understanding, it remains to determine the nature of genus. Whatever is is either corporeal or incorporeal: if genera exist, they must fall under one of these headings. And this is the second question.

The third question, arising on the assumption that genera exist and are incorporeal, is this: Do genera subsist only in bodies or in themselves? There are, Boethius points out, two kinds of incorporeal things, namely, those which subsist separately from bodies—for example, God, mind (*mens*), and soul (*anima*)—and those which cannot exist separately—for example, line, surface, particular qualities. The latter are incorporeal in the sense that they are not tridimensionally extended in space.

*The Solution.* If these are the three questions to be answered, there remain certain ambiguities which must be dispelled before a solution can be proposed. By ambiguity Boethius here means dichotomy or antinomy, for he examines the apparent impossibility of either the existence or truth of genera and species. Genera and species either subsist and exist, or they are products of understanding (*intellectus*) and thought (*cogitatio*) alone. Arguments are adduced to show that genera and species cannot exist and that they cannot be true notions.

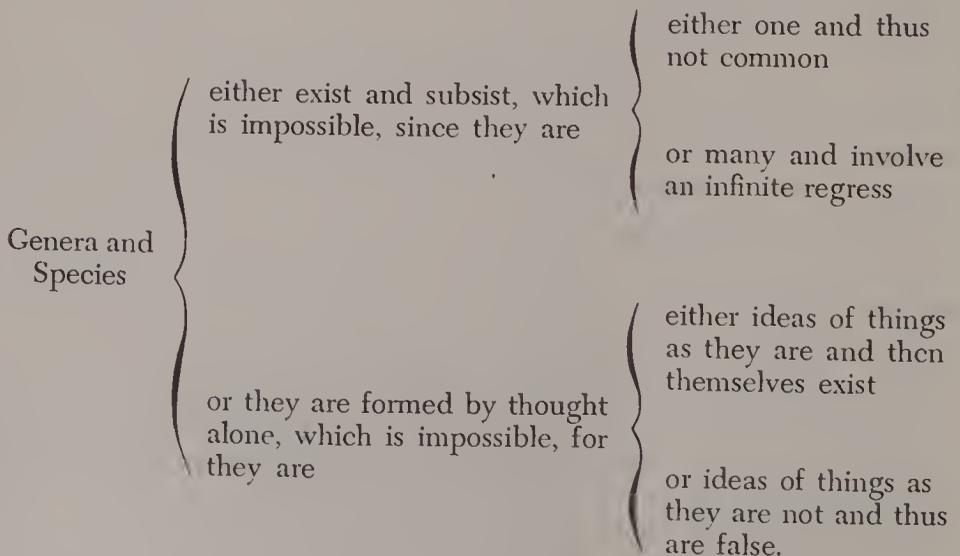
To show that it is impossible for genera and species to exist, Boethius argues that if genus, for example, is common, it cannot be one, and if it is one, it cannot be common. Whatever is common cannot be one. But the genus is in many species, and wholly not partially in each of them. Therefore, the genus cannot be one. But if it is not one, it simply cannot exist, for whatever is, is one. Moreover, if the genus is not numerically one, but multiple, we shall always have to seek *its* genus, and we would thereby be involved in an infinite regress.

If, to avoid this, we say that the genus is numerically one, we compound the difficulty, for how then could it be common? Boethius enumerates three modes of community: (1) If a single thing is common, it is common by parts and not as a whole. Thus, a common dish at the table is common to all the diners in that each will receive part and not in that each will receive the whole dish. (2) Or it is common successively; for example, several men may share the same automobile, each having the use of the whole car, but at different times. (3) Or a

thing can be simultaneously and totally common, as a film is common to everyone seated in the theatre—but of course it is not substantially common to them. None of these ways in which something numerically one is common to many can explain the community of genus, for the latter must be wholly, simultaneously, and substantially common to individuals. Such a mode of community seems impossible. The genus cannot be one because it is common, and its community prevents our ever arriving at a supreme genus; if taken to be one, the genus cannot be common. Either way, then, it seems that the genus cannot be said to exist.

Turning now to the other side of the original dichotomy, Boethius examines the possibility that genera and species do not exist but are merely products of thought. This too involves an ambiguity or dichotomy. Whatever is in a concept (*intellectus*) refers to a subject thing and either reflects the way the subject itself is constituted or the way in which it is not constituted. If genera and species are *intellectus* of the subject as it exists, they cannot be simply in the mind but are truly in things as well. In other words, they would exist, and we are thus led back to the previous consideration. The alternative, then, is to say that the *intellectus* of the genus is not taken from the thing as it exists, that it is a vain idea. This cannot be the solution, for it consists in understanding the thing otherwise than as it exists.

The upshot of these analyses is that genus and species neither exist nor, when thought, are true ideas, conclusions which, as Boethius points out, are calculated to disturb one about to investigate the predicables. If he cannot solve these problems, whose difficulty Boethius has just heightened remarkably, he will be in the position of examining what may neither exist nor be true. The following schema summarizes Boethius' presentation of the "ambiguities" which attend the Porphyrian problem:



Boethius leads us out of the dilemma by denying the exhaustiveness of the division. Relying on Alexander but using primary Aristotelian doctrine, Boethius argues that not every idea which is not of a subject as it exists is false. The truth of this is established by noting the difference between the mind's act of understanding and its act of composition. Only the latter can properly be said to involve true or false opinion. Boethius' example is the composition of man and horse in the notion of centaur. (Of course, false opinion is had only in the assertion that centaurs really exist.) Mental acts of division and abstraction are productive of ideas not constituted as the thing is, but such ideas are not thereby false. Thus, the mind can consider line apart from sensible bodies, although the line could not actually subsist in this way. This example is a familiar one in Aristotle. (See *Physics*, II, 2.) The line, then, is an incorporeal thing which the mind can separate and distinguish from the confused thing given to the senses. Thus genera and species are found either in incorporeal or in corporeal things; in the latter case the mind abstracts "the nature of incorporeals from bodies, and beholds it alone and pure as the form itself is in itself." (85A)

Genera and species are gathered from the individuals in which they are, not by a mental composition, but by abstractions and divisions. Genera and species are in the individuals, that is, and become universal insofar as they are thought: "Species must be seen to be nothing other than the thought collected from the substantial likeness of individuals unlike in number, and genus the thought collected from the similarity of species." (85C) In things this similarity is sensible; in universals it is intelligible. Thus, genera and species subsist in individuals: what becomes universal when it is thought subsists only in sensibles. We have here the solution of Porphyry's problem. Boethius has indicated in which sense genus and species subsist (in sensibles, not as universals), that although incorporeal in themselves, they are found in sensible bodies, and that they are not false, though they do not reflect things as they exist.

The solution proposed by Boethius is intended to be an Aristotelian one. From this point of view the likening of line and man on the basis of incorporeality seems to pose a great difficulty. In his first commentary, while discussing the first question, Boethius observed that man's mind understands things present to sense through sensible qualities and that concepts formed from these prepare a way toward understanding incorporeal things; thus, when I see singular men, I also know that I see them and that they are men. The species man, we are told, should not be called corporeal because it is grasped by the mind and not by the senses. "Incorporeal things are those which can be grasped by none of the senses, but what they are is made known solely by the consideration of the mind." Nevertheless, in pursuing the question whether the genus is corporeal or incorporeal, Boethius begins

to speak of the corporeal genus. Substance, he notes, is a genus, and its species are corporeal and incorporeal. Since the genus is not identical with that which divides it into species, that is, the differences, substance is neither corporeal nor incorporeal *qua* substance. "But some species are corporeal, others incorporeal. For if you place man under substance, you would introduce a corporeal species; if God, an incorporeal one."

The apparent contradiction involved in saying that genera and species are incorporeal and that some species are corporeal, when resolved, will resolve as well the difficulty inherent in likening line and man on the basis of incorporeality. Boethius himself asks how the incorporeal can be called corporeal. When one says the genus is incorporeal, he explains, the genus is not being considered insofar as it represents some nature, but insofar as it is a genus. Therefore, when substance is the genus, we do not consider it insofar as it is substance, but insofar as it has species under it. This surely distinguishes being predicable of many from the corporeal nature to which this relation attaches; the relation of predicability is not itself corporeal nor is the nature as it actually takes on this relation, that is, in the mind. This distinction should allay the reader's fear that Boethius, by likening line and man on the basis of incorporeality, means to suggest that Aristotle taught their definition would exhibit an equal freedom from sensible matter. What line and man have in common is that each involves considering apart from sensible things what cannot exist apart. As species, that is, given their condition in the mind and the relation of predicability attributed to them in that state, they can both be called incorporeal. Nevertheless, the nature reflected by the *intellectus* will in one case be incorporeal (insensible) and in the other corporeal.

#### E. *Plato or Aristotle?*

By saying that he has presented an Aristotelian solution to the problem of universals, not because he agrees with it, but because the *Isagoge* is an introduction to an Aristotelian work (86A), Boethius leaves the impression that he himself may prefer Plato's position on the matter. And Plato's position, according to Boethius, is that "genera and species and the rest not only are understood as universals but also are and subsist without bodies." (86A) To settle this question, we are referred to texts in the *Consolation* and in *De trinitate*.

In the fifth book of the *Consolation* Boethius is concerned in a particular way with the relationship between God's providence and man's free will. Already in the third poem of this book a Platonic note has been struck, for it invokes the preexistence of the soul and knowledge as remembering.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, earlier, having written in a poem (III,

<sup>2</sup> "Now beclouded by body, it (the soul) has not wholly forgotten its pristine state but keeps the memory of the whole, though it has lost the detail. He who seeks truth finds himself therefore in an intermediary state: he knows not and yet

xi), "If the muse of Plato does not mislead, whatever we learn is a science forgotten that we but recall to memory," he goes on to say in prose twelve: "But I passionately ascribe to the view of Plato,' I cried, 'for this is the second time you have recalled what my spirit had forgotten, first due to its contact with the body, then when I was crushed under the weight of woe.'"

Such remarks form the basis for judgments that Boethius is at heart a Platonist. Prose four of book five of the *Consolation* is most frequently cited as indicating that Boethius personally favored the Platonic solution to the problem of universals. Boethius is speaking of divine foreknowledge and our free acts. He points out that we ourselves foresee things which do not come about by necessity. For example, we watch an artisan at work and know that soon he will do such and such, although he is not compelled to do so. "There you have facts known in advance the realization of which is free. For, if present knowledge does not impose any character of necessity on events, foreknowledge of the future does not render future facts necessary." But is it not wrong to think one has certain knowledge of what will not come about necessarily? "If facts whose realization is uncertain are foreseen as certain, we are faced with the obscurity of conjecture and not the truth of science; for you believe that to think something to be other than it is is to fall short of the integrity of science. The cause of this error is that all one knows is thought to be known from the very nature and essence of the object, which is false. In fact every known object is grasped not in terms of its own essence but in terms of the capacity of the knower."

He goes on to illustrate the different ways in which sense, imagination, reason, and intelligence know man: "The senses pronounce on the form constituted in a particular subject matter, whereas imagination judges the form without the matter. Reason goes beyond this and, by a universal examination, determines the species which is in the singulars. The eye of intelligence is at a yet higher level; it perceives, by the unique penetration of its proper activity, the simple form itself." Now in this cognitive hierarchy the upper stages comprise and go beyond the lower: "Reason, once it distinguishes the universal, no longer has need of sense or imagination to understand the objects of sense and imagination. Reason it is that gives the definition as its proper work: man is a two-footed animal endowed with reason. Once the general notion is had, no one is unaware that it is an object pertaining to sense and imagination, but reason examines it without the aid of sense and imagination." The point of this passage is that the existing man does not, as such, explain the different ways he is known by sense, imagination, and reason.

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he is not wholly ignorant; he consults the whole of which he has retained the memory, by recalling what he saw above, so that it might be able to add what has been forgotten to what has been retained."

The passage just quoted, moreover, throws light on a point we discussed earlier and seems to argue for an abstractive view of knowledge while at the same time cautioning against taking knowledge as a mere passive reflection of reality. The next poem (v. 4) stresses this point, taking issue with the Stoics. Knowledge requires that the knower be agent as well as patient. "Here is a power far more efficacious than that which receives the imprint of matter." There must be a prior passion of our living body if knowledge is to take place, a passion which incites the first motions of the mind.<sup>3</sup> Aroused by impinging colors or noises, the mind forms species intrinsic to itself which can then be applied to exterior things. The use of the participle *excitans* could seem to suggest something innate and dormant in the mind. This impression is strengthened by the next prose section (v. 5). Boethius (more accurately, Dame Philosophy) argues that if our mind has its own inner forms, although it requires the prior passion of the body, so much the more independent of body will be those minds which are not in bodies. The description of the coming into being of inner forms from a quiescent state suggests a Platonic view of human intellection.<sup>4</sup> This and not the previous prose section could be cited as exhibiting a Platonic rather than an Aristotelian bent in Boethius.

This same prose section indicates that intelligence is not a human faculty. Reason is proper to man, and reason is concerned with the universal. Once more we are reminded that reason comprises in itself the objects of sense and imagination. Then follows this passage, important for the problem of universals:

What would happen if sense and imagination would resist reason and deny the universal reason sees? What pertains to sense and imagination cannot have the status of universality; therefore, either the judgment of reason is true and nothing sensible exists, or since it knows that the majority of its notions depend on sense and imagination, it is the work of reason which is vain when it considers what is sensible and imaginable as universal. If reason reply that it considers the data of sense and imagination from a universal point of view but that these faculties cannot pretend to a universal knowledge since they cannot transcend corporeal forms, if it says that in knowledge it is necessary to prefer the most sure and advanced judgment—given such a debate, would not we who enjoy both reason and sensing incline to the cause of reason?

<sup>3</sup> "*Praecedat tamen excitans/ Ac vires animi movens/ Vivo in corpore passio.*" (11, 30-33)

<sup>4</sup> "If in the perception of objects the organs of sense are struck by exterior impressions and the activity of spiritual energy is preceded by a physical sensation which provokes the action of intelligence and awakes in it the inner forms sleeping there, if, I say, in the perception of objects the mind is not informed by sensation but judged by its proper power, the data of sense, so much the more will beings free from all physical influence be independent of the external world in their judgments. . . ." (v. pr. 5)

It will be noticed that Boethius, while insisting on the *sui generis* activity of reason, always allows for the necessary precedence of sensation and imagination. Taken as such, this permits either the Platonic or Aristotelian theories, but in the *Consolation* abstraction does not loom as large as the view that forms, quiescent in mind, are awakened when the mind considers the data of sensation.

Turning now to the *De trinitate*, let us recall first that, in his *proemium* to the tractate, Boethius asks Symmachus to seek in the work the fruit of the seed sown in his mind by the doctrine of Augustine. In the second chapter, having distinguished the three kinds of theoretical sciences, Boethius goes on to distinguish God, who is pure form, from all other beings which are not pure forms but images. Nevertheless, everything is because of its form. "*Omne namque esse ex forma est.*" A statue is a statue because of its shape or form, not because it is bronze; bronze is bronze, not because of the earth which is its matter, but because of its form. Earth is not earth because of prime matter but due to the forms of weight and dryness. "Nothing is said to be because of its matter but because of its proper form." The divine substance is form without matter, one, its own essence:

Other things are not what they are, for each of them has its being from those things of which it is made, that is, from its parts; it is this and that, a compound of parts, but neither this nor that alone, as earthly man is made up of soul and body, he is soul *and* body, and neither soul nor body alone; therefore, he is not identical to what he is. What is not this and that, but only this, truly is what it is and is best and most because dependent on nothing.

E. K. Rand, in his edition of Boethius, tells us that this passage shows that Boethius is definitely committed to Plato's position regarding universals. It is difficult to accept this without qualification. Does Boethius, by speaking of "earthly man," mean to imply that there is another man not composed of body and soul? A man subsisting separately from the singular men of our experience? Boethius does point out that humanity can appear to have properties which are really accidents of the man whose form humanity is and not those of humanity as such. Other forms, those which are without matter, "cannot be subjected to or be in matter, for they would then be images not forms. From these forms outside of matter those forms come which are in matter and body." Does this mean that the form, humanity, subsists separately from singular men? In a sense, yes; indeed, forms in matter are properly speaking not forms but images. "For the others which are in bodies we abusively call forms; in fact they are images. They are assimilated to those forms which are not constituted in matter." What the things of this world image, surely, are the divine Ideas.

We have here, it would seem, the fruit of Augustine's seeds of doctrine, a Platonism, perhaps, but again a highly modified one.

#### F. *Conclusion*

Boethius, even more than Augustine, is a bridge between the world of classical philosophy and the medieval world to come. Many centuries will intervene before we will encounter another figure in whose mind a thorough knowledge of Greek philosophy combines with theological interests and talents. It is a cause for lamentation that Boethius had hardly the time to begin the massive task of translation he had set himself, although we can only speculate on what the results of a complete knowledge of Aristotle and Plato would have meant in the immediately following centuries. Perhaps it is better to be grateful that Boethius did manage to translate some works of Aristotle, for, in periods when men had at least a fleeting leisure for such pursuits, these works provided a basis for speculation and generally interesting discussion. Moreover, something of Greek philosophy is passed on in the independent works of Boethius, and even when the context of those fragmentary retentions is unknown, some intellectual benefit was derived from attempting to grasp their meaning. In sum, the writings of Boethius may be said to be a reminder of a soon-to-be-lost philosophical greatness and the promise of a theological flowering to come many centuries later. Before that later renaissance could come, there were many centuries during which the best that men of the West could do was to strive to preserve what had been handed down to them. Infrequently, but sometimes, a man arises who surmounts the restrictions of his time, but it will not be until the twelfth century that we encounter thinkers who approximate the stature of Boethius.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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recent and important work on Boethius we can mention the following. P. Courcelle, "Étude critique sur les commentaires de Consolation de Boece, IX–XV siècles," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire de Moyen Age*, XII (1939); Gangolf Schrimpf, *Die Axiomenschrift des Boethius (De hebdomadibus) als Philosophisches Lehrbuch des Mittelalters* (Leiden, 1966); Siegfried Neumann, *Gegenstand und Methode* (Münster, 1965); Karl Durr, *The Propositional Logic of Boethius* (Amsterdam, 1951).

## CHAPTER V

# *Cassiodorus, Isadore, Bede*

A contemporary of Boethius, as we have already noted, Cassiodorus Senator (c.480–c.570) is sometimes thought to have been a student of Boethius as well. Like Boethius he was engaged in political affairs under the Goths, in the tradition of his family, but unlike Boethius he managed to survive his service. Various reasons are given for this, and it is not uncommon to accuse Cassiodorus of obsequiousness and opportunism, a charge which finds some foundation in his flattering appraisal of the Goths in his historical works. The importance of Cassiodorus for our purposes resides in the fact that he was the founder of a monastery at Vivarium, his family estate in Southern Italy, where the finest library in the West was collected. While he himself seems to have never become a monk, Cassiodorus was the patron of the monastery and lived in its neighborhood. For the monks he wrote a book called the *Institutiones*, the first part of which dealt with Scripture, the second with the liberal arts. In urging the monks to intellectual pursuits Cassiodorus was instrumental in making the monastery the repository of ancient culture during the ages when contact with the past might quite easily have been wholly lost. Indeed, the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus begins a tradition of summarizing and epitomizing ancient wisdom. Of this work Cassiodorus said that he would not there command his own doctrine but that of the ancients. This heritage must be praised and taught, for it would be impious to shrug off what the ancients did by way of praise of God.

The second part of the *Institutiones*, which deals with the liberal arts, was particularly influential, often being copied separately. Although Cassiodorus, true to his promise, gives us very little in it that cannot be found in earlier writers, he passed on the divisions of philosophy, both the Stoic and the Aristotelian, the division of the liberal arts into the trivium and quadrivium, and had something to say under each heading which was of increasing interest when the original sources were lost from view.

Cassiodorus is insistent that the number of the liberal arts is seven, going so far as to adduce scriptural passages to support it.<sup>1</sup> If there are seven liberal arts, what is meant by "liberal" and what by "art"? When he says that he will first speak of grammar since it is the source and basis of liberal letters, Cassiodorus pauses to discuss the meaning of "liber." In Latin this term can mean either book or free, and Cassiodorus is concerned to explain this equivocation. Book is signified by "liber" because in early times writing was done on bark freed from trees. Thus, "liberal" in the phrase "liberal arts" refers to the fact that books are involved in their pursuit. Cassiodorus thus does not attach the same significance to the term in this context as did the Greeks.

With respect to the etymology of "art" Cassiodorus suggests that the word has come from the fact that art binds and limits (*artet*) us with its rules, or it may come from the Greek term for excellence or skill (*arete*). From this passage, then, one might conclude that liberal arts are those skills or rules gathered in books. Whatever the case, there is a most interesting problem raised if not solved by Cassiodorus, namely, what is the relation between art and science? Are they the same or different; can we speak interchangeably of seven liberal arts and seven liberal sciences, or are some of the seven arts and some sciences? The question is raised first with regard to logic, "which some prefer to call a discipline and others an art, saying that when someone discourses in apodictic or true disputations it ought to be called a discipline, and when it is something likely and of opinion, it takes on the name art. Thus it has either name depending on the quality of its argumentation." (II.e, n. 17) He notes that Augustine speaks of grammar and rhetoric as disciplines (that is, sciences) as Varro had, and that Capella entitled his work (which Cassiodorus did not have an opportunity to see) *On the Seven Disciplines*. Discipline indicates that it can be learned, and something will be called such insofar as it attains to unchangeable things by the rule of truth. The difference between art and science, in short, is that science involves necessity while art does not. Insofar as some arguments are certain and some probable, logic can, on this basis, be sometimes called science, sometimes art. Cassiodorus returns to this point later, referring to Plato and Aristotle: "Between art and science Plato and Aristotle, esteemed masters of secular literature, intended this difference, namely, that art is concerned with the relations of contingent things, which can be otherwise than as they are, whereas discipline is concerned with things which cannot be otherwise." (II, 3, n. 20)

<sup>1</sup> *Institutiones*, II, praef., n. 2 (ed. Mynors, p. 89) points out that Scripture makes it clear that there are seven arts. Do we not read in the Psalms that David praised God seven times a day and that Wisdom has built herself a house, erected on seven pillars? So too, in Exodus God tells Moses to make seven lights to illuminate his way. The utility of each art for reading Scripture is stressed in the preface to the first book, and we sense the influence of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*.

Whether this settles much is extremely doubtful. Given that art is concerned with the contingent and science with the necessary, the question remains whether we can call geometry, for example, a liberal "art." It would certainly not be said to concern itself with the contingent. With respect to logic itself, for which Cassiodorus elaborates the distinction, he can be said to have confused the logic of probable argumentation and a probable argument.

On the basis of this one sounding in search of a personal contribution, Cassiodorus does not reveal himself to have been an astute thinker. However, his claim to fame lies rather in his patronage of the monastery at Vivarium, his concern that the monks there devote themselves to both divine and liberal letters, and his pointing the way to the encyclopediac type of epitome which performed so useful a function throughout the Early Middle Ages. Some attention has also been paid to Cassiodorus' attempts in his *De anima* to prove the immortality of the soul. He shows that the soul cannot be material because it can know spiritual being and must therefore have affinity with such an object. This spiritual soul is diffused throughout the body, but everywhere distinct from it. Cassiodorus is thought to be trying in this work to reconcile conflicting traditions according to which the soul is on the one hand a substance in its own right and on the other the form of the body. This difficult reconciliation is not achieved by Cassiodorus and indeed must await the advent of St. Thomas in the thirteenth century. In the final analysis, then, Cassiodorus deserves mention as patron, compiler, and preserver of ancient culture and not as an independent thinker of any magnitude.

In continuity with Cassiodorus, we may mention here the efforts of Isadore of Seville (died 636) and the Venerable Bede (673-735), Anglo-Saxon monk of the monastery of Yarrow. Isadore's work on *Etymologies* covered in twenty books a vast range of subjects and has been called the first encyclopedia. The first three books of the work are devoted to the liberal arts, and Isadore's dependence on Cassiodorus is immediately apparent. Indeed, his general method is to reproduce his sources verbatim. We find here that art is concerned with the contingent and science with the necessary.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Isadore may seem to be straddling the distinction when he says, "*Disciplinae liberalium artium septem sunt*" (there are seven sciences of the liberal arts). (I, 2) It is interesting to watch Isadore collate the liberal arts with the divisions of philosophy. (See *Differentiae*, PL, 83,93-94.) He has

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, in his *Differentiae* Isadore does not contrast science and art.

been discussing the difference between eloquence and wisdom (col. 93, n. 148) and goes on (n. 149) to point out that the ancients identify wisdom and philosophy, which is the science of things human and divine. Moreover, they held that there were three parts of philosophy: physics, logic, and ethics. Natural philosophy is ordered to the contemplation of the natures of things, logic determines the true from the false, ethics is ordered to correct living, its theory and practice. "This three-fold genus of philosophy is divided thus by the wise of this world. They say that to physics pertain the seven disciplines, of which the first is arithmetic, the second geometry, the third music, the fourth astronomy, the fifth astrology,<sup>3</sup> the sixth mechanics, the seventh medicine." (Col. 94, n. 150) The seven disciplines here listed are, of course, not the traditional liberal arts. One wonders if the distinction of eloquence from wisdom does not relegate the trivium to the former and demand an expansion of the quadrivium to attain the number seven. Under the heading of ethics, Isadore discusses the four cardinal virtues.

Isadore's sources in this discussion are Cassiodorus and the Augustine of book eight of *The City of God*, but the attempt to fit the seven liberal arts into the threefold division of philosophy, derived from the Stoics and ultimately perhaps from Plato, appears to be original with him. The attempt raises a good many questions. Do the divisions of the arts assigned to a part of philosophy produce subdivisions of that part of philosophy? For example, if the quadrivium belongs to physics, are there sciences of nature which are not mathematical? Isadore adds that not all the arts he refers to physics are suitable for a monk. We may close this brief mention of Isadore by noting that Isadore finds the threefold division of philosophy verified in Scripture: physics may be found in Genesis and Ecclesiastes, ethics in Proverbs, and logic in the Canticle of Canticles and the Gospels.

The Venerable Bede, like Isadore in Spain, was lucky enough to be living away from the turmoil on the Continent, and he is the beneficiary of a continuous tradition of learning in England. Bede is perhaps best known for his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, but he also wrote on the liberal arts, composing works on orthography, prosody, and figures of speech. His *De natura rerum*, an encyclopedia after the manner of Isadore, is an ambitious compilation. He wrote as well on time and on the computation of the date of Easter.

The works of Bede were to have great influence both at home and on the Continent, the last in large part thanks to Alcuin. Through Bede, Isadore, and Cassiodorus, as well as independently, Augustine and Boethius emerge as the great authorities in the liberal arts.

<sup>3</sup> "Astronomy is the law of the stars. Astrology defines the changes of the heavens, their signs, powers, the rise and fall of stars." (Col. 94, n. 152)

*Bibliographical Note*

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PART TWO  
THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE



## CHAPTER I

# *Alcuin and Rhabanus Maurus*

### A. *Charlemagne and the Schools*

Already in the time of Boethius, it is fair to say, the lights of learning were out or going out across the European continent—a fact that indicates the urgency as well as the poignancy of Boethius' plan to put into Latin the writings of the two greatest philosophers of antiquity, Plato and Aristotle. His failure to complete even a significant portion of that task is understandable but portentous. The age called for a holding operation, and this commences with the plan of Cassiodorus to have the monks of Vivarium devote a good part of their time to the copying of books, a way of preserving the cultural heritage which was to become particularly important. Isadore of Seville and the Venerable Bede were not original thinkers; they were primarily concerned with transmitting in summary form the lore that had come down to them. The period known as the Dark Ages, those centuries when learning in any formal or institutional sense was all but unknown, may be considered to extend to the ninth century, when Charlemagne made a concerted and momentarily successful effort to reestablish the schools.

During the Dark Ages there were, of course, isolated instances of learned men; Gregory of Tours (539–594), for instance, who wrote a *History of the Franks*. Gregory chronicled the sad plight of the Church in a disruptive and violent age and lamented the limits of his own intellectual formation. An individual priest teaching a gifted youngster could hardly be expected to turn the tide of the times, even if the times were conducive to learning; what was needed was the establishment of schools, of formal education, a systematic and sustained effort to roll back the barbarism brought on by successive waves of invaders. The motives for this increasing concern for education were at once ecclesiastical and political, and the greatest beneficiaries of education were the present and future clergy. However, the move to reestablish the schools was extremely important, and its consequences justify talk of

a Carolingian Renaissance. As will become apparent, the curriculum Charlemagne instituted was hardly more than elementary, and the level of instruction, particularly at the beginning, remained low; yet, considered against its historical background, Charlemagne's reestablishment of schools marked a dramatic forward step, without which the later and gradual rise in the quality and quantity of instruction would scarcely have been possible.

The chief mentor and instrument of Charlemagne's plan was Alcuin, but it should not be thought that the Emperor's interest in learning began with his contact with Alcuin. Prior to the great Briton's arrival on the scene a number of Italian masters who were brought back by Charlemagne laid much of the groundwork for later efforts. The first of these was Peter of Pisa, who was an old man when Charlemagne induced him to come to his court to teach grammar. Peter was also a poet, as was Paul the Deacon, another Italian, a monk of Monte Cassino. Paul the Deacon was an historian of some accomplishment, the author of a *History of the Lombards* and a *Roman History*. He wrote a history of the bishop of Metz which traces the origins of the Carolingian dynasty, and a homiliary, a book of lessons for the Divine Office which also served as a book of sermons. A third Italian, Paulinus, a grammarian, was at the court at the same time as Alcuin.

Alcuin was to speak of the palace school that he directed at Aachen as not only equal to that of ancient Athens but, because of its Christianity, the superior of even the cultural milieu that produced Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. He was doubtless in a sanguine mood when he penned those lines; the historical facts render the parallel ridiculous. Indeed, we have to wait until that later Renaissance which has come to usurp the very name before we encounter similarly inflated self-estimates. In the so-called capitulary of 787 we find a description of what Charlemagne set out to accomplish. This document, probably written by Alcuin, gives a clear picture of the modesty of their aims. The capitulary addresses the bishops and abbots as follows:

Be it known to your devotion, pleasing to God, that in conjunction with our faithful we have judged it to be of utility that in the bishoprics and monasteries committed by Christ's favor to our charge care should be taken that there shall be not only a regular manner of life and one conformable to holy religion but also the study of letters, each to teach and learn them according to his ability and the divine assistance. For even as due observance of the rule of the house tends to good morals, so zeal on the part of the teacher and the taught imparts order and grace to sentences; and those who seek to please God by living aright should also not neglect to please him by right speaking. It is written "by thine own words shall thou be justified or condemned," and although right doing be preferable to right speaking, yet must the knowledge of what is right precede right action. Everyone, therefore, should strive to understand what it is that he would fain accomplish, and this right understanding will be the sooner gained according as the

utterances of the tongue are free from error. And if false speaking is to be shunned by all men, especially should it be shunned by those who have elected to be the servants of truth. During past years we have often received letters from different monasteries informing us that at their sacred services the brethren offered up prayers on our behalf, and we have observed that the thoughts contained in these letters, though in themselves most just, were expressed in uncouth language, and while pious devotion dictated the sentiments, the unlettered tongue was unable to express them aright. Hence there has arisen in our mind the fear lest if the skill to write rightly were thus lacking, so too would the power of rightly comprehending the Sacred Scriptures be far less than were fitting, and we all know that though verbal errors be dangerous, errors of the understanding are yet more so. We exhort you, therefore, not only not to neglect the study of letters but to apply yourselves thereto with perseverance and with that humility which is well pleasing to God, so that you may be able to penetrate with greater ease and certainty the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures. For as these contain images, tropes, and similar figures, it is impossible to doubt that the reader will arrive far more readily at the spiritual sense according as he is the better instructed in learning. Let there, therefore, be chosen for this work men who are both able and willing to learn, and also desirous of instructing others, and let them apply themselves to the work with a zeal equaling the earnestness with which we recommend it to them. . . .

The capitulary obviously aims at the very rudiments of learning. Subsequent instructions are somewhat more specific regarding the content of the schooling envisaged. Psalms, musical notation, chant, computation of the seasons of the liturgical year, and grammar were to be taught. Parish priests were later enjoined to set up schools for the children and to teach without payment, although they were allowed to accept small gifts from grateful parents. At the same time, teachers were cautioned to make certain that they had corrected copies of the books used.

We will return to the effects of Charlemagne's exhortations; we want now to indicate something of the background which produced Alcuin, who was induced to leave his native England by Charlemagne and who, more than anyone else, was the spirit behind the letter of such capitularies.

The Barbarian invasion of the British Isles did not extend to Ireland, where learning continued to flourish when it had been all but extinguished elsewhere. The Irish monks were missionaries, moreover, and it was through their efforts that the learning retained in Ireland was brought to Scotland and Northern England. This is not to say that England was totally devoid of remnants of past splendor. In the seventh century, with the appointment to the archbishopric of Canterbury of Theodore of Tarsus, learning experienced a forward surge in England. The twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, founded by Benedict Biscop (628-690), soon became a repository of books, and it was there that one of Benedict's pupils, the Venerable Bede, acquired

the learning that enabled him to write his great compilations and thesauri. Bede's friend, Egbert, became archbishop of York in 732 and founded the cathedral school there, amassing a great library for it. Aelbert was his *scholasticus*, or schoolmaster, and it was there that Alcuin studied and later taught, becoming in time the *scholasticus*. Thus, when he was asked by Charlemagne to become master of the palace school at Aachen in 782, he brought to it a training in divine and secular learning perhaps as great as could be had at that time.

#### B. Alcuin (735-804)

Little is known for certain of Alcuin's origins, although he is thought to have been born of noble Northumbrian parents. He was a young boy when he entered the cathedral school at York where he was to become master in 767. For fifteen years he devoted himself to this school, putting considerable emphasis on the expansion of the library. He made several trips to the Continent to seek copies of books. In his poem "On the Saints of the Church of York" he describes the life at his school and indicates the contents of its library. The curriculum consisted of liberal studies and Scripture, the same general plan that was to be followed in the palace school. Alcuin met Charlemagne in Parma while he was returning from a trip to Rome, and the following year he accepted the invitation to Aachen.

We have commented that the liberal arts formed the basis of instruction both at York and later at the palace school. In earlier chapters we have indicated the traditional content of the liberal arts and the work of Martianus Capella, which had set down the doctrine in an allegorical fashion. It is a matter of some interest to see how Alcuin speaks of these arts and how he relates them to philosophy.

Among Alcuin's pedagogical writings is a dialogue entitled *On Dialectic*,<sup>1</sup> in which he is being questioned by Charlemagne. Before turning to the subject of the dialogue, the king asks about more general matters, and when he asks "What is philosophy?" Alcuin replies with the words of Isadore (*Etym.*, VIII, 6), who in turn had borrowed them from Cassiodorus (*Inst.*, III, 3, n. 5), who is expressing yet earlier views: "Philosophy is an inquiry into natures, knowledge of things human and divine insofar as this is possible for man." (*PL*, 101, col. 952) Moreover, it is rightness of life concerned with living well, meditation on death, and contempt for the world, "which is especially fitting in Christians who have with discipline conquered secular ambition and live in imitation of a future life."

Alcuin goes on to say that philosophy is made up of science and

<sup>1</sup> Besides the *De dialectica* there are two dialogues on grammar, one on orthography, another on rhetoric and the virtues, and an astronomical work. See Migne's *Patrologiae latinae cursus completus* (*PL*), 101.

opinion and proceeds to define each. Asked what the parts of philosophy are, he replies that they are three: physics, ethics, and logic. At this point he attaches the discussion to the liberal arts. There are, he notes, four parts of physics: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Logic, on the other hand, has two parts: dialectic and rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> Finally, he reduced the quadrivium to physics and the trivium to logic. Since philosophy is also divided into inspective and actual, that is, theoretical and practical, ethics would presumably fall within the practical part of philosophy. Elsewhere, in *On Grammar* (PL, 101, 853), Alcuin calls the liberal arts *septem gradus philosophiae*, the seven stages on the way to wisdom; they are the seven pillars which support wisdom, and one will acquire science only if he is lifted up by the seven arts. But if the liberal arts are considered a necessary preparation for the reading of Scripture, the Scriptures themselves are thought to be divisible according to the threefold division of philosophy. Thus, Genesis and Ecclesiastes are concerned with nature, Proverbs as well as other books with morals, and (believe it or not) the Canticle of Canticles and the Gospels with logic. All this is quite derivative, of course, and it seems that Alcuin had only the haziest notion of the relation of the liberal arts to the divisions of philosophy with which his sources acquaint him.

What books were used to convey these various arts? To learn grammar, the students used texts by Priscian and Donatus and studied reading and composition in Latin prose and verse. Cicero and Quintilian were read for rhetoric, and logic, or dialectic, was studied by using Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, together with the commentaries on them by Boethius. Bede's *Liber de temporibus* and *Liber de ratione temporum*, which dealt with the liturgical cycle, were studied after the rudiments of arithmetic were acquired. Some Euclid was studied for geometry, and Pliny and Bede were the sources for astronomy. Boethius and Bede provided the texts for music. Despite the scope indicated by the curriculum and booklist, not all of the arts were studied with equal thoroughness. Actually, the emphasis was placed on grammar and rhetoric, with not only the quadrivium but also dialectic treated lightly. Later, when a shift from rhetoric to dialectic occurs, a shift of no little significance for the development of scholastic theology, there will be impassioned

<sup>2</sup> "In his quippe generibus tribus philosophiae etiam eloquia divina consistunt.—C. Quomodo?—A. Nam aut de natura disputare solent, in Genese et in Ecclesiaste; aut de moribus, ut in Proverbiis et in omnibus sparsim libris; aut de logica, pro qua nostri theologiam sibi vindicant, ut in Cant. Cant. et in sancto Evangelio.—C. Theologia quid sit?—A. Theologia est, quod latine inspectiva dicitur, qua supergressi visibilia de divinis et coelestibus aliquid mente solum contemplamur. Nam et in his quoque partes philosophia vera dividitur, idest in inspectivam et actualem." (col. 952) The text fairly echoes with echoes, of course, and however faintly we can catch Boethian strains.

resistance to the change. Alcuin's dialogue on rhetoric, which is basically an adaptation of Cicero, relates the art of preaching but conveys as well something of the scope rhetoric had in antiquity.<sup>3</sup>

In 796 Alcuin was made abbot of St. Martin of Tours and, what was unusual at the time, took up residence there. He devoted himself to strengthening the monastery school and collecting books. There are grounds for believing that the palace school was now divided, with an Irishman named Clement undertaking the instruction of the young at the palace while Alcuin gave theological instruction at Tours. As previously at York and Aachen, students came from far and near, and Alcuin's influence spread through them when they left to set up their own schools and/or to become prominent churchmen. Rhabanus Maurus studied under Alcuin at Tours, and later the Abbey of Fulda, to which he returned, was to exercise a tremendous influence. Fredegisus was Alcuin's successor at Tours. Other important men of the time may be mentioned here, notably Theodolphus of Orleans, a Spaniard by birth, and the author of the *Gloria, Laus* which is sung on Palm Sunday. There was also one Dungal the Recluse, another Irishman, to whom Charlemagne was to write concerning Fredegisus' strange little work, *De nihilo et tenebris*.

Before discussing other figures, however, we must attempt a summary statement on Alcuin. While no original contributions to philosophy were made by him, Alcuin's pedagogical work helped to remove from eclipse some of those disciplines without which philosophy in the classical sense is not even a possibility. It would be wrong to adopt a condescending attitude toward Alcuin because of the derivative character of his writing on the arts. While his own understanding of the ultimate sources of what he passes on seems in many cases to be severely limited, his own efforts were deliberate attempts to proportion to the recently awakened interest of his contemporaries the content of works summarizing a lost tradition. Through his teaching Alcuin played a great part in feeding the spark of curiosity in his students, acquainting them with the achievements of an all-but-forgotten time and thereby preparing remotely for the resurgence which was to begin several centuries later. A second Athens the court of Charlemagne assuredly was not, and there is something at once delightful and sad in the report that the men gathered there were wont to appropriate the names of ancients; Alcuin was called Horace, Charlemagne David, others Homer, and so on. But this palatine parody was unintentional, and what we should see in the picture this report induces is a sincere delight in learning, an openness to pagan and secular learning, always in conjunction with the Christian vocation. How

<sup>3</sup> See Wilbur Samuel Howell, *The Rhetoric of Alcuin and Charlemagne: A Translation, with an Introduction, the Latin Text, and Notes* (Princeton, 1941).

easily the effort might not have been made, and if not. . . . If we cannot discern in history the cunning of Reason, we can at least appreciate the contingent character of important efforts.

We cannot leave Alcuin without mentioning his theological endeavors. He was an exegete of power, and his commentary on John's Gospel is said to betray the salutary influence of that great man the Venerable Bede. Alcuin's works on the Trinity and the procession of the Holy Ghost and his views on the Adoptionist heresy have won praise for their sureness and force. Finally, he was a poet, and if not the best, nevertheless interesting and good.

### C. *Fredegisus of Tours*

We have already mentioned that Fredegisus succeeded Alcuin as abbot of St. Martin of Tours. He wrote a letter to the scholars at the palace school entitled *De nihilo et tenebris* (*On Nothing and Darkness*; *PL*, 105, 751-756), which is curious but of some interest because it raises questions concerning the signification of terms, questions which have their importance for the dispute about universals which was later to engage the attention of many.

Few words suggest the problems attached to meaning more clearly than "nothing," as Augustine suggested in his dialogue *On the Teacher*. What do we mean by "nothing"? What is signified by the term? If we say that "nothing" means nothing, we begin to appreciate the difficulties that attracted Fredegisus.

Is nothing something or, indeed, nothing? If we say it is nothing, we seem to get into the position of saying that there *is* something which is *not*. In other words, in order to affirm that nothing is not, it seems necessary to suggest that somehow it is. Fredegisus suggests that we admit that nothing is indeed something. He will endeavor to show that is the case both by argument and by an appeal to authority. The argument moves from the assertion that every finite noun signifies something to the inevitable conclusion that the finite noun "nothing" signifies something. As soon as a finite noun is uttered, we understand at once what it means. The noun "man," we are told, designates the "universality of men placed outside any difference." So too "rock" and "wood" are said to "include their generality." In the same way, "nothing" refers to what it signifies; it means something. And since every signification is of something which is, "nothing" signifies an existent thing.

Fredegisus then appeals to Scripture to bolster his point. God, we read, created the world from nothing. Consequently, nothing must be one of the first and principal creatures. Since Fredegisus also reads in Scripture that darkness lay over the face of the deep, we are prepared for his defense of the reality, indeed, the corporeality, of darkness. His argument is quite grammatical. Whatever functions as the subject of

an affirmative proposition is, according to Fredegisus, asserted to exist. "Darkness" can function as the subject of an affirmative sentence. Therefore, darkness is asserted to exist.

This rather crude theoretical flight was rebutted by Agobard of Lyon. Agobard is the author of *Contra objectiones Fredegisi* (PL, 104, 159–174), in which the Archbishop takes the Abbot to task for a number of theological errors. Fredegisus' thought has detained us only because he anticipates disputes to come. Quite apart from the example of "nothing," the little work suggests the problems associated with the recognition that such common nouns as "man" involve a universality whose source and locus are not easy to determine.

#### D. *Rhabanus Maurus* (784–856)

Rhabanus Maurus, called the Teacher of Germany (*Praeceptor Germaniae*), entered the monastery at Fulda when quite young. After studying under Alcuin at Tours, he returned to his own monastery, where he was put in charge of the monastic school. The zeal with which Rhabanus performed his task was apparently unshared by his abbot, Ratgar; the latter felt that monks were more profitably employed in building than in study. The monastic school was shut down for a time, and, it is said, Rhabanus' notebooks were confiscated by the Abbot. The setback was temporary, however, and eventually Rhabanus himself was elected abbot. In his new capacity he not only put the monastic school on a firm footing but also completed the building program started by his predecessor. Rhabanus became archbishop of Mainz in 847. He was a voluminous writer—five volumes are devoted to his works in the collection of Migne. There are many commentaries on Scripture, an encyclopedia, and the *De clericorum institutione* (*On the Formation of the Clergy*). This last work, despite its immediately clerical goal, became a model of German education and won for Rhabanus the title mentioned above.

Before considering the *De clericorum institutione*, let us pause for a moment before Rabanus' encyclopedic work, *De universo*. The title could be translated *On Everything*, and the twenty-two books of the work justify the title. The work begins with a discussion of the Triune God and ends with a discussion of garden tools and bridles and reins. In between, Rhabanus has treated the important figures of the New and Old Testaments, discussed the matter of the canonical books of Scripture, and spoken of man's body, the ages of man, procreation, family relations, and death. He treats of beasts, serpents, worms, fish, birds, and bees; in successive books he takes earth, time, water, and world as leading ideas and scoops into the discussion whatever can conceivably be attached to those ideas; languages, rocks, weights and measures, agriculture, the military—everything is brought into play. The procedure is noteworthy. Rhabanus will appeal to Scripture as to a source

book of biology. In book fifteen, when he gives a list of philosophers, he quotes verbatim from Isadore. (*Etym.*, VIII, 6) One pages through this massive work with fascination and disbelief, trying to imagine what lay behind the industry that is almost palpable even on the yellowing pages of Migne with their crowded, cracked type and intimidating double columns. There is a drive toward unity certainly, a zestful desire to dominate knowledge and to turn it to religious advantage. Perhaps it is not fanciful to catch a different tone here, or at least a sharpening of the tone one hears in Cassiodorus. This encyclopedist looks backward still, but there is that naive optimism of the Carolingian Age which makes the *De universo* seem less like twenty-two sandbags against a seige than a summary of the basis from which one may proceed.

The *De clericorum institutione* is, as has been mentioned, a manual outlining what the monk should know. It is a kind of seminary curriculum, we might say, and its first two books are almost exclusively concerned with the religious life; the third sketches the profane knowledge which can also be of use to the religious. The first book deals with ecclesiastical orders, with vestments, and with sacraments. It emphasizes baptism, the Eucharist, and the Mass according to the Roman rite. The second book deals with the Divine Office, or canonical hours, and goes on to discuss fasting, confession and penance, lessons and chant. It ends with a discussion of the Catholic faith with reference to various heresies. Of the third book Rhabanus in his preface says, "it teaches how all the things written in the sacred books is to be investigated and learned as well as whatever in profane studies and arts is useful to a churchman." From chapters eighteen through twenty-five (*PL*, 107, 395-403) Rhabanus devotes himself to the liberal arts. Grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, mathematics (arithmetic), geometry, music, and astronomy—Rhabanus devotes a chapter to each. The influence of the Augustine of *De doctrina christiana* is evident in this third book of the *De clericorum institutione* as are traces of Cassiodorus, Isadore, and Bede. The great justification for studying the liberal arts remains religious and utilitarian. One well-versed in these arts is better equipped to understand Scripture. This is the purpose and ideal that was contained in the capitulary quoted earlier, of course, and it would be surprising indeed if Rhabanus would have thought otherwise, particularly in a work aimed as his was at the formation of monks.

Rhabanus Maurus figured in the Eucharistic controversy which began after the appearance of Paschasius Radbertus' work *De corpore et sanguine Christi* (*PL*, 120, 1255-1350). Paschasius insisted on the identity of the Sacrament of the Altar with the Body of Christ that had been born of Mary and been crucified. Rhabanus, in a difficult statement, speaks of the reception of the sacrament as uniting us in faith with Christ, so that we form with him one body. Gottschalk, in *Dicta cujusdam sapientis*, flails Paschasius, whom he makes to mean that

Christ on the altar suffers again and dies again. Yet Gottschalk does not in any way deny that the body and blood of Christ are an objective reality on the altar. Ratramnus of Corbie, in his own *De corpore et sanguine domini* (*PL*, 121, 125–170), continues the criticism of Paschasius, who took the occasion of a commentary on Matthew for a reply (*PL*, 120, 890–899). The controversy is of interest because it exhibits the need for a precise language if theological debate is to be effective; moreover, it presages the later debate between Berengar and Lanfranc when the nature and status of reason in settling such matters will be the real topic of discussion.

Another theological controversy of the time centered on the question of predestination and involved Gottschalk, Rhabanus Maurus, Hincmar of Rheims, John Scotus Erigena, and many others. Far more bitter and involved than the Eucharistic controversy had been, it is yet another instance of theological debate which had not yet found its method and vocabulary.

Candidus of Fulda is known to us through an opusculum entitled *Dicta Candidi de imagine dei*, which Hauréau printed in his *Histoire de la philosophie scolastique* (vol. 1 [Paris, 1872], pp. 134–137). It proceeds in fairly catechetical fashion through twelve *dieta*, relying heavily on Augustine. The twelfth is entitled *Quo argumento colligendum sit deum esse?* (From What Argument Can It Be Inferred That God Exists?). Here is Candidus' reply: "The totality of things can be divided into three kinds: what is, what lives, what understands; and these, as they differ in power, differ as well in goodness. For example, as the beast which lives can do more than the stone which does not, so man who both lives and understands can do more than the beast who lives but does not understand. Moreover, in the same way, just as that which is and lives is better than that which is alone and does not live, so what lives and understands is better than that which lives and does not understand. The least among things with respect to power and goodness, then, is that which is alone and is not alive; in the middle range falls what is and lives; the highest is that which is, lives, and understands. Therefore, as this argument shows, the most perfect among things is that which has understanding, namely, man who understands, and he attempts to understand his understanding and to examine the power of understanding itself. He asks if he who because of understanding is better and more powerful than other things is omnipotent, that is, capable of doing whatever he wishes. Now if he finds, as indeed he would, that he cannot do whatever he wills . . . he knows that there is one superior to and better than himself possessing the power which permits man to remain in the bodily realm so long as he wishes and, when he wishes, causes him to leave it. No one can doubt that this omnipotent one who dominates those who live and understand is God." We recognize here the influence of Augustine, of

course, but the repetition of the proof is important. Gilson tells us that it is the first dialectically developed proof we come across in the modern part of the Middle Ages. (*History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 608, n. 4)

### E. *The Carolingian Heritage*

Under the impetus of imperial decrees two kinds of schools came into being in northern Europe. First, there were the monastic schools, which had a twofold purpose. Primarily they were intended for the instruction of oblates (literally, the "offered," the children offered to the religious life by their parents) and young boys who lived in the monastery; the monastery also provided schooling for young men who did not live in the monastery, although this second purpose was the first to be dropped in difficult times. Secondly, there were cathedral schools, set up by the bishop and presided over, as we saw to be the case at York, by a schoolmaster, a *magister scholarum* or *scholasticus*. On rare occasions this was the bishop himself. Of these two main types of schools the more permanent was the monastic. Not every bishop had a school, but it was a rare monastery which did not have at least a school for its oblates. We have seen that Alcuin himself came to be situated at the monastery at Tours, and Rhabanus Maurus at that of Fulda. From the latter the influence spread to Reichenau, where Walafriid Strabo lived. Rhabanus' influence was also felt in France, where Lupus Servatus was abbot of Ferrières. Schools were also set up at Rheims, Auxerre, Laon, and Chartres, some of which would eventually provide an education for the most illustrious men of the Early Middle Ages. Schools came into being in the Lowlands and, to the south, in Northern Italy. Thus did the leaven of the palace school spread throughout the empire, renewing what already existed but principally causing centers of learning to be inaugurated. The invasions from the north prevented a continuous development, and the great beginning was checked, receding for the most part back to the monastic schools during the period known as the Benedictine centuries. Despite this gloomy end to the Carolingian revival there are many figures of interest to us as the darkness closes again. The most important by any standards is John Scotus Erigena, to whom we now turn.

## CHAPTER II

# *John Scotus Erigena*

### A. *His Life and Works*

We know very little of the life of John Scotus Erigena. As his name redundantly suggests, he was Irish; the date of his birth is approximately 810. It seems fairly certain that he was educated in his homeland before coming to France, where he became head of the palace school under Charles the Bald. We have already seen the salutary influence on Continental schooling that Alcuin had when he came earlier to the court of Charlemagne. But if Alcuin was a luminary, John Scotus Erigena was a good deal more. Indeed, there is no one like him in the ninth century, and historians quite properly marvel that a man of Scotus Erigena's intellectual range and daring should appear when he did. Nor is his brilliance merely a comparative thing, as if he were "fair as a star when only one is shining in the sky." His work is an authentic landmark in the Early Middle Ages, great not only in its immediate historical context but in the broader sweep of time which includes the twelfth century.

Scotus Erigena knew Greek well, a rare accomplishment and one which he put to good purpose. He translated into Latin the *Celestial Hierarchy*, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *Mystical Theology*, and *Divine Names* of Denis the Areopagite as well as his ten letters; he also wrote commentaries on the *Celestial Hierarchy*. Other works include translations of the *De hominis opificio* of Gregory of Nyssa and the *Ambiguities* of Maximus the Confessor and a commentary on the work of Martianus Capella. His translations from the Greek made the basic tenets of Neoplatonism known in the West. The thought of Scotus Erigena himself reveals the strong influence of Denis and Maximus the Confessor, particularly in his masterpiece, the work that assures Scotus Erigena a place as one of the great original thinkers of the Early Middle Ages, his *On the Division of Nature*. Also among his writings are *On Predestination*, in which he disputed the position of Gottschalk, only to have his own position condemned by two councils, and fragments of a commentary on St. John's Gospel.

The major characteristic of Scotus Erigena's original work is the

attempt to combine Christian revelation and Neoplatonic elements in a speculative synthesis. The result is a panoramic view of the whole of being or nature which cannot fail to impress the modern reader with its philosophical daring. We can imagine how Scotus Erigena's contemporaries must have reacted to a work of such strangeness and comprehension. His influence is difficult to trace, but it is thought to be visible in the School of Chartres and elsewhere, notably in Hugh of St. Victor. This is not to say that the work of Scotus Erigena was ever accepted as a whole; rather, certain elements of his system were taken over and introduced into other, more familiar contexts. Indeed, it was the fate of his *On the Division of Nature* to be condemned by the Council of Paris in 1210. The council ordered that all copies of the book be burned. The command was apparently not obeyed with alacrity, for Pope Honorius III in a letter of January 23, 1225, to the archbishops of France ordered that copies of the book—complete or incomplete—be sought out and sent to Rome to be solemnly burned.

Scotus Erigena is thought to have died around 877, perhaps after returning to his native land. Many legends surround the story of his life, among them a story that he was attacked and killed by his students with their pens. Whether or not he died by the pen, he has managed to survive in his writings, to the content of which we will now turn.

### B. *Faith and Philosophy*

We recall that Alcuin, having accepted a threefold division of philosophy, applied a similar division to Scripture: Genesis and Ecclesiastes treat of nature, Proverbs and similar books of morals, the Canticle of Canticles and the Gospels of logic. Moreover, Alcuin and Rabanus Maurus considered the liberal arts to be preparatory to the study of Scripture. Scotus Erigena, although he was a thinker of far greater sophistication than his predecessors in the palace school, seems to hold to the same identity of faith and reason. There is, for example, his famous identification of true religion and true philosophy: "For what else is it to treat of true philosophy than to set forth the rules of true religion by which God, the chief and highest cause of all things, is at once humbly served and rationally investigated? Conclude, then, that true philosophy is true religion and, conversely, that true religion is true philosophy." (*On Predestination*, chap. 1; *PL*, 122, 357–358)

Sacred Scripture contains the whole of the liberal arts (*Exposition of Celestial Hierarchy*; *PL*, 122,140); in fact, it contains everything philosophy is thought to contain: "Divine Scripture is like an intelligible world composed of four parts as its elements. The earth which is found in the middle in the manner of a center is history around which, like water, flows the sea of the moral sense: this the Greeks call *ethike*. Beyond history and ethics, which are as it were the inferior parts of

this world, extends the air of natural science, called *physike* by the Greeks. Beyond and above all these is found the subtle and ardent fire of the empyrean heaven, that is, the highest contemplation of the divine nature called *theologike* by the Greeks. Beyond that no intelligence can go." (*Homilies on John; PL*, 122,291) Given all this, we are not surprised to read "*Nemo intret in celum nisi per philosophiam*" (No one enters heaven save through philosophy). (*Notes on Martianus*, 38,11)

Despite this identification of faith and philosophy Scotus Erigena was for a long time considered one for whom reason is the measure of faith. He has said that "true authority cannot contradict true reason nor can true reason contradict true authority." (*Div. Nat.*, I,66,511) Such contradiction is impossible because both stem from the same source, the divine wisdom. Such an opinion does not suggest rationalism, surely, but there are times when Erigena reduces authority to reason: "But reason never proceeds from authority, for every authority which is not approved by reason is seen to be inferior. Therefore, authority proceeds from true reason." (*Div. Nat.*, I,69,513) True reason, on the other hand, stands by itself. Now if "authority" were meant here to stand for faith and Scripture, Erigena would be saying that Scripture can be acceptable only if it can be measured by our reason. This would indeed be rationalism, but it is difficult to see how such a position could be reconciled with the quotations we have given earlier. That the suggested understanding of "authority" in the present passage is unacceptable is clear from Erigena's admonition that the authority of Sacred Scripture is to be followed in all things. (*Div. Nat.*, I,64,509)

What authority is it which must be subjected to reason? Cappuyns has argued that for Erigena Scripture is simply given and its authority is never to be questioned. When Erigena compares reason and authority, he has in mind two methods of interpreting Scripture: rational argumentation or appeals to the Fathers. Erigena holds that the authority of the Fathers must commend itself to reason if it is to be accepted. Where such authority is true, it cannot disagree with true reason, since both proceed from a common source. Reason and authority are complementary, and it is necessary to use both to arrive at pure knowledge, that is, of course, pure knowledge of Scripture. (*Div. Nat.*, I,56,499) Erigena is, therefore, arguing for the use of reason as well as of the Fathers in the interpretation of Scripture. And, although the authority of the Fathers must be tested by reason, Scripture itself is an authority which must never be subjected to the doubt of reason.

Does Erigena think that man can come to knowledge of God apart from Scripture? Consider the following passage:

I would not say that this world surpasses the intellectual capacity of our rational nature since it was for this it was made. Not only does divine authority not forbid it, it counsels us to seek knowledge of both visible and invisible things. The Apostle says that it is through that

which has been made that the terrestrial creature comes to knowledge of the invisible things of God. This is not something small, then, but something great and most useful, namely, that the knowledge of sensible things is ordered to the understanding of intelligible things. For just as one proceeds from sense to understanding, so by way of the creature one goes to God. We ought not then like irrational creatures only consider the surface of visible things but seek to comprehend what is perceived by our bodily senses. The eagle sees more clearly the form of the sun; so the wise man sees more clearly its position and movement in space and time. Are we to think that if man had not sinned and by falling become like unto the beasts he would then have ignored what is proper to him, namely, the world which he should govern justly according to the laws of nature? Another angel would have been required to praise God in sensible creatures. Man did not lose completely the dignity of his nature after sin. He still has a rational appetite which seeks to know things and does not want to be mistaken, although it often but not always is. If at the moment of transfiguration Christ's two vestments appeared as white as snow, namely, the letter of Divine Scripture and the form of visible things, why should we be obliged so carefully to attach ourselves to one of these vestments and merit to find him who wears it, and prevented from considering the other, namely, the visible creature? I do not see clearly for what reasons this could be maintained. Abraham, for example, knew God not by the letter of Scripture, which did not yet exist, but by the movement of the stars. Or did he perhaps, in the manner of the animals, consider only the forms of the stars, unable to comprehend their natures? I would not have the temerity to say that of this great and wise theologian. And if someone thinks we are wrong for employing philosophical arguments, let him consider the people of God fleeing Egypt, admonished by divine counsel to gather spoils and irreprehensibly use them. Much more those who take up the wisdom of the world ought to be accused not of wandering among visible creatures but of not having sought sufficiently in these creatures their author, for then they will have found the creator by means of the creature, something, we read, that Plato alone has been able to accomplish. (*Div. Nat.*, III, 23, 689)

This is a very tantalizing passage. Abraham, the father of faith, can hardly be considered to have been in the same position as a Plato. By referring to Plato, who has found God by means of the study of creatures, Erigena seems to be recognizing a distinction between philosophy and the knowledge of faith. The passage can also be construed as a defense of the use of reason, that is, rational argumentation, in the interpreting of Scripture.

If we consider reason and authority, with the latter comprising both Scripture and the Fathers' interpretation of it, we can say that reason comes before the authority of the Fathers—we do not blindly accept their views—but that in the study of Scripture faith must precede reason. Erigena uses the example of John and Peter running to Christ's tomb on the first Easter morning. John arrives before Peter, but he waits and allows Peter, the symbol of faith, to go in before him. John

is the symbol of understanding. "For thus, since it is written, 'Unless you believe, you shall not understand,' faith necessarily precedes and goes first into the monument of Sacred Scripture, and reason, taking second place, follows along behind, its entrance being prepared by faith." (*Homilies on John*, 284–285)

But what precisely is the value of rational argumentation in relation to Scripture? At the end of an argument in astronomy, Erigena writes, "Such are the philosophical arguments concerning the spaces of the universe. If someone should find them superfluous because they are neither transmitted nor confirmed by Scripture, he should not thereby blame us. For he can no more be assured that they are false than we are able to affirm that they are true." (*Div. Nat.*, II,34,723) If we can generalize on this, we would say that Erigena grants only a borrowed cogency to rational argumentation. If also explicitly taught by Scripture, the conclusions of an argument are true; if the contrary of the conclusion is taught by Scripture, the argument is invalid. If Scripture says nothing one way or the other, the conclusion is neither true nor false. True reason is such due to its conformity with Scripture; there seems to be no way for reason to arrive at a body of doctrine independently of Scripture, and a philosophy other than that already contained in Scripture is not possible. It would be difficult to say whether this means that the pagan philosophies can be judged true only by the test of revealed truth. Thus, the reference to Plato in the earlier quotation does not have any clear meaning. What is quite clear, however, is that Erigena himself is uninterested in any philosophy other than that revealed in Scripture. When his arguments conclude to something not contained in Scripture, he considers them neither true nor false. This brings us inexorably back to the identification of true reason and true religion: "I greet nothing more gladly than an argument bolstered by the firmest authority." (*Div. Nat.*, I,64,509)

### C. *The Division of Nature*

As has been mentioned, the single most important work of John Scotus Erigena, the one to which he owes his claim to our particular attention, is the *De divisione naturae*. It is a long work, comprising five books, in the literary form of a dialogue between master and pupil. However, it has nothing like the give-and-take between the participants in a Platonic dialogue. The master is just that: he pronounces, asserts, states his views. The pupil, while not a simple foil—he is the vehicle of much of what Scotus Erigena wants to say—is not the occasion for dialectical progression.

*The Meaning of "Nature."* This term is employed by Erigena to mean everything that is and everything that is not. This may seem to be a curious definition, but Erigena presents five different understandings of the opposition of being and nonbeing which make his usage under-

standable: (1) In the first place, if by “being” one understands only what can be grasped by the senses, then whatever is immaterial will be nonbeing. Erigena goes further, however, thus bringing us face to face with one of the main difficulties in *On the Division of Nature*. Whatever escapes reason and intelligence will also be called nonbeing; as examples, Erigena gives the essences of things. He reasons here that God surpasses the reach of both reason and understanding; God is the essence of all things; therefore, the essences of all things escape reason and understanding. Only God truly is, Erigena continues, to quote Denis the Areopagite (*esse omnium est superesse divinitas*) and to cite Gregory of Nyssa: “Just as God as he is in himself is beyond the comprehension of any created intellect, so too in the deepest recesses of the creature made by him the essence considered as existing in him is incomprehensible.” (I,3,443) The difficulty here is that by speaking of God’s eminent being as the being of all things, as Denis had before him, Erigena seems to become involved in pantheism. This point will come up again in the sequel.

(2) A second way to understand the being/nonbeing dichotomy is drawn from the fact that creatures are hierarchically ordered, that a given creature is more perfect than another and less perfect than yet another on the scale of reality. Thus, the affirmation of one thing, say an inferior thing, is the negation of a superior thing. That is, to be a man is not to be an angel and vice versa.

(3) A third way in which what is can be distinguished from what is not is by confining existence to the material order. That is, we may restrict the range of the term “being” to those things which have achieved their own perfection and are independent of the causes that brought them into being. Those things which are not yet, which have not yet been perfectly formed, will then be instances of nonbeing.

(4) A fourth and more philosophical usage is that whereby only those things which do not come to be, which are not spatial and temporal, are called beings. Changeable, spatiotemporal things are then instances of nonbeing.

(5) A fifth and final way of making this distinction pertains to human nature alone. To be in the state of grace is for a man to be, whereas to be in a sinful condition is for a man not to be.

Nature for Erigena, as the foregoing indicates, is the totality of reality. The initially strange statement that nature includes both being and nonbeing can now be seen as a necessary remark if both God and creature are to be brought within the scope of a single term. To complete these preliminary but necessary remarks about the title of the work, we should understand that by “division” Erigena means a separation or emanation which has as its counterpart a resolution or return. From this we can conclude that the title of the work is not intended to convey simply a distinction of the various meanings of “nature” or a

list of the various things which fall under the scope of the term. What Erigena suggests in the title is the characteristic Neoplatonic doctrine that there is a One, a first principle, from which all things emanate in such a way that a hierarchical scale is created by the graded falling away from this first principle. At the term of emanation the route is retraced by the process of return. That this is indeed the implication of the title becomes clear when we consider the fourfold division of nature that Erigena proposes, a division which provides the basic structure of the work.

Nature, which includes whatever is and whatever is not, is divided thus: first, there is the nature which creates and is not created; second, the nature which is created and creates; third, the nature which is created but does not create; finally, the nature which neither creates nor is created. When we see that these refer, respectively, to God as efficient cause, the divine Ideas, external creatures, and God as final cause, it becomes clear that in the system of *On the Division of Nature* Erigena is attempting a panoramic description of the way things have taken their origin from God, how this is accomplished, what such things are, and how creatures necessarily return to their source.

*Nature Which Creates and Is Not Created.* This phrase pertains truly to God alone, for he alone is *anarchos*, without any cause. (I,11, 451) Himself without cause, God is the beginning, middle, and end of all other things: the efficient, sustaining, and final cause of all things. By making this identification Erigena would seem to have made the essential point. Once more, the question he chooses to raise is surprising: Cannot God be said to be created in some sense of the term? Erigena asks after the etymology of the Greek term for God, "*theos*," and suggests that it comes either from the Greek word for seeing or from the word meaning to run. The latter possibility makes at least metaphorical sense if we think of God as running through or permeating all creatures. "God is said to run, therefore, not because he literally runs outside himself, he remains always and immutably in himself, but because he makes all things run from being nonexistent to being existent." (I,12,453) It is necessary to point out now that God is not created in the sense of being dependent on anything other than himself. However, insofar as in making things he, in a certain fashion, comes to be in them, it is possible to say that God is created in his effects.

This suggestion becomes the occasion for raising the broader question concerning the possibility of talking about God. Erigena adverts to previous remarks of his own and to the nature of the theologian's task in stating that since it seems clear that assertions about God are based only on what we can know of him in his effects, no statement about God can be expressive of what God is like in himself. From the essences of things we can conclude that God is, from the marvelous order among creatures we conclude that He is wise, and from their activity that God

is life. Erigena attaches these attributes to the various Persons of the Trinity, but his point, once more, is the broad one that none of our names can be applied to God in such a way as to be expressive of what he is. His source here is Denis the Areopagite.

Erigena says that we must either refrain from saying anything at all about God or speak of him with great caution in terms of the twofold division of theology made by Denis, affirmative and negative. Affirmative theology takes names from creatures and applies them to God on the assumption that what is found in the effect must also be found in some fashion in the cause. Affirmative theology will say of God that he is truth, goodness, being, light, justice, sun, star, spirit, water, lion, and innumerable other things. Erigena says that such predicates, a list of which could be derived from Scripture alone, all involve metaphor. By metaphor he means simply transference from creatures to God. His general assumption is that our language is fashioned to signify the things we know first, and, of course, what we know first are finite things; thus, our names are the names of creatures. Any use of them to speak of God must involve transference, or metaphor. If affirmative theology comes up with a vast number of terms which can be predicated of God, negative theology will deny the same predicates of God. It is considered nevertheless, as complementary to affirmative theology, for the negations serve to remind us that our terms cannot be applied to God in the same way that they are applied to things that exist. He is beyond our ken, incomprehensible, accessible only indirectly and imperfectly by way of his effects.

Nothing can be coeternal with God, Erigena observes, for this would be prejudicial to the divine unity and absolute transcendence. This observation leads Erigena to introduce the third moment in any attempt to talk about God. First, it would appear, we affirm predicates of God because they express what is found in his effects. Second, noticing that there is always something in the meaning of these terms which is not appropriate to God—if only because all our terms are appropriate to creatures—we deny these same predicates of God. Third, we can prefix these terms to suggest that what the term signifies is found in God in a fashion which surpasses our understanding. Thus, an illustration of these stages would be: “God is truth,” then “God is not truth,” and, finally, “God is supereminent truth.” Without such additions, Erigena says, such names are metaphorical; with them they are, *as it were*, proper names of God.

Erigena continues by raising the objection that it does not seem right to say that God is ineffable and then go on to discuss how we can speak of him. Moreover, he claims, the distinction between affirmative and negative theology seems to get us into the position of making contradictory statements about God, for example, that he is truth and that he is not truth. “This appears to be a contradiction, but if we consider the

matter closely this is seen not to be the case. For one who says 'he is truth' does not affirm that the divine substance is properly truth but that such a term can be transferred by way of metaphor from creature to creator; considered with respect to their proper signification, such terms simply do not attain the divine essence. On the other hand, to say 'he is not truth,' knowing clearly that the divine nature is incomprehensible and ineffable, is to say, not that he does not exist, but that he cannot properly be called or be truth." (I,14,461) To which of the two kinds of theology, negative or affirmative, belong the statements that God is more than truth, is supergoodness, and so on? Erigena replies that such statements encompass the two theologies, for they have both affirmative and negative overtones. God is goodness, but his goodness is of a much more eminent kind, utterly unlike created goodness.

In an attempt to determine what predicates can be attributed to God, Erigena appeals to the Aristotelian categories. These categories are taken to be the most general predicates applicable to finite or creaturely being and thus are examined in terms of possible transference to God as cause of the things to which the categories properly apply. Augustine is quoted to the effect that the categories lose their power when we attempt to speak of God, but Erigena gets rid of his objection by appealing to the general assumption that whatever can be properly predicated of creatures can be transferred metaphorically to their creator. However, Erigena is swift to agree that none of the categories, not even that of relation, can be attributed to God properly. God transcends the limited mode of being which is involved in the signification of any and all of the categorical names. The conclusion is the familiar one: the categories do not in any way call into question the general truth that creaturely names cannot provide us with knowledge of what God is in himself. God is transcendent, ineffable, incomprehensible. This is Erigena's point from first to last, and if we rightly hear the echo of Denis in this section, we are also hearing what will remain the orthodox view. The human mind, in this life, whether it be considered in its own nature or as elevated by grace, cannot know God as he is in himself.

In the first book of *On the Division of Nature*, however, Erigena is not content with a general statement concerning the inadequacy of the categories to give us knowledge of God; he proceeds to take up the ten categories one by one. This thoroughness lands him in a difficulty he might have avoided had he settled for the universal statement. One of the Aristotelian categories is action, the Latin term for which is also the term for making. Of course, God makes all things, being the Creator of all things. Must we say however that God does not properly make things because the category of action pertains to him only metaphorically? Erigena is not faced with a serious difficulty. He points out that making in the categorical sense involves motion and that motion cannot

be found in God. It is his further statement concerning the nature of God's making that is troublesome. When we read that God makes all things, says Erigena, we should take this to mean that God is in all things, that he is in fact the essence of all things. "He alone truly is in himself, and everything which is truly said to be in the things that are is him alone, since none of the things that are truly is in itself." (I,72, 518) Once more we encounter one of the most difficult aspects of the doctrine of Erigena. Such statements as this have led interpreters to find pantheism in his writings. In the context of the foregoing quotation it should be pointed out Erigena says that things other than God are and are what they are by participation in God.

But we do not want to dwell on the putative pantheism of Erigena. The first book of *On the Division of Nature* concludes with a reiteration of some of the points we have stressed: the transference of names of creatures to God and the need for both affirmative and negative theology. This will suffice for Erigena's doctrine on the nature which creates and is not created.

*Nature Which Is Created and Creates.* This phrase signifies what Erigena calls the primordial causes. These are the predestinations or patterns of external creation which are formed in the divine Word; as formed, they are created. As the patterns or ideas of external creatures, they can be called causes.

The Neoplatonic influence on Erigena is particularly clear in his discussion of this division of nature. When he speaks of primordial causes, he has in mind such ideas as Wisdom itself, Goodness itself, and so on. For the Neoplatonist, we may generalize, such entities were considered subsistent and apart from the first principle. Erigena, in orthodox fashion, locates these patterns or ideas in the Second Person of the Trinity. While the Son is coeternal with the Father, Erigena maintains, however, that the primordial causes or ideas are not quite coeternal. As creatures, they are theophanies, that is, manifestations or appearances of God. The notion of theophany as the chief characteristic of the creature should be referred to the earlier contention that God can be said in some sense to be created. He comes to be in his manifestations, or theophanies. We will return to this notion when we discuss the charge of pantheism which has been made against Erigena.

Erigena is set definitively apart from the Neoplatonism which is exercising at least an indirect influence on him by his insistence that God creates freely. The Neoplatonic tendency was to assert that God could not not create, that things emanate from him necessarily, independently of his will. Erigena indicates his opposition to this view by the very language he uses in speaking of the primordial causes. They are the wishes of God, the predestinations of God, who is a free cause. Of course, we are reminded here that it would be less inaccurate to speak of God as a supercausal principle.

The second division of nature deals with created creating causes. The primordial causes occupy a station midway between God and the creature proper; they are intermediaries. External creatures exist by way of participation; that in which they participate are the primordial causes. Here Erigena is quite close to the Neoplatonic view that the lower creature is referred to the first principle not directly but by way of an intermediary hierarchical order. This goes a long way—some would say too far—toward preserving an ontological distance between God and external creation.

The primordial causes or Ideas are in the Word; while they are many, the Word is one. In a fashion that will become common, Erigena suggests that the multiplicity of primordial causes should be read in the direction of external effects. He feels that by so saying he is calling into question neither the oneness of the Word nor the simplicity of the divine nature.

He makes a further point about the primordial causes as patterns of external creatures. Creatures exist in a more perfect fashion in the primordial causes than in matter. Erigena considers existence apart from God a diminished sort of being. Such a remark is a recognition of the need to return to the source which is the other side of the created coin.

*Nature Which Is Created and Does Not Create.* The universe to the Neoplatonic eye and to a certain extent to Erigena's eye is a declension from the incomprehensible and ineffable unity of God, a declension which begins with the Ideas or primordial causes and then in a graded falling away from completeness and simplicity, which implies increasing complexity, arrives finally at material individuals. This concept of intermediates involves for Erigena a ceaseless flirtation with the reification of the Porphyrian tree, as if more universal terms named a higher and more perfect type of being. This third division of nature, that which is created and does not create, is the whole of external creation; in this realm man occupies a privileged position.

Erigena wants to maintain that the meaning of the statement in Genesis that man has been created in the image of God is that all things have been created in man. Man is not merely an element in the cosmos; in a sense the reverse is true, for man is a microcosmos, a world writ small. We may think that this position of Erigena's would lead to the conclusion that man is the only creature in the cosmos, that other things have whatever existence they have in man, but Erigena does not opt for this kind of idealism. Nevertheless, there is a kind of parallel here to his earlier contention that the better being of creatures is the existence they have in the primordial causes, their being as known. Similarly, with respect to external creation, the better being of things other than man is had in man's knowledge of them. This will have dramatically important consequences in Erigena's theory on the return of things to God. The Ideas exist in man insofar as he is united to the Word. As a conse-

quence of sin, man is unaware of the presence of the Ideas in himself, although they are innate to him. Furthermore, knowledge of the Ideas could not be derived from material things. The most important aspect of this teaching of Erigena's is the conviction that the substance of things, their real being, consists in their being known. This is preeminently the case with the primordial causes, which are the true essences of things, but it is also true with respect to man's cognitive relation to material creatures.

*Nature Which Is Neither Created Nor Creates.* This phrase refers to God, not as the source of creatures, but as that to which all creatures must ultimately return. At this point the profound import of Erigena's insistence that man is a microcosm is revealed. Because all things have been created in man, it is through man that they will be returned to God until that final stage is reached when, in the words of the Apostle, God will be all in all. The Incarnation is introduced here; Christ's reparation of our nature makes possible the return of man which is described as a deification. Here we must dispose of the charge of pantheism. Erigena insists that the individual soul does not lose its individuality when it has returned to God. Moreover, while Erigena employs in surprising ways the Pauline statement that God will be all in all, his firm view on the transcendence of God and the vast difference between him and creatures is as clear as anyone could wish in his treatment of the failure of our names to express what God is. It is this very incomprehensibility of God, on which Erigena insists in talking about the reach of our language, that leads him to speak of creatures as manifestations of God, or theophanies. Although he is unknowable in himself, God can be known in his effects. Furthermore, when God is said to be the essence or being of creatures, Erigena does not seem to intend an identification in being of God and creature; rather it is the dependence of creatures on God which he wants to emphasize.

The return of being to God through human nature is accomplished in five stages according to Erigena. First, at death there is a dissolution of the material body into the four elements. Second, at the resurrection the soul reclaims once more its body, gathering it from the elements so that, third, the body is changed to spirit. Fourth, there is a return of the spirit, and the whole of human nature which has become spirit, to the primal causes. Finally, there is the passage of the spiritualized nature, together with its causes, into God, *quando nihil erit nisi solus deus* (when there will be nothing save God alone).

In *On the Division of Nature* Erigena gives a view of reality as rhythmic movement, the emanation of creatures from the One, a cascading away from the source which is productive of a hierarchy, with an ultimate overcoming of this diversity in the return of everything to the source via man, creation's lieutenant. A satisfying picture,

perhaps, but dissatisfying as well; it is a blend of nature and grace, and the assertions of otherness seem to clash in the final apotheosis when creation apparently dissolves into God. Erigena's departure from orthodoxy was not merely imagined, for no matter how genial an interpretation we attempt, there are too many passages which do not lend themselves to irenic treatment. Nonetheless, Erigena's influence on later men was significant, though in a somewhat underground fashion. Eric and Remigius of Auxerre exhibit that influence, as does Berengar. Anselm of Laon and, more importantly, Gilbert of Poitiers and Abelard take from the thought of Erigena; indeed, the Victorine school as a whole can be said to come under the influence of Scotus Erigena. Thus, Erigena was not an isolated and insulated ninth-century phenomenon; he cannot be read from the lists as an aberration and excursus from the mainstream of medieval thought. However hidden, he is in that mainstream, one influence among others, but always one to be reckoned with.

### *Bibliographical Note*

The works of Scotus Erigena may be found in *PL*, 122. See Henry Bett, *Johannes Scotus Erigena* (Cambridge, 1925); M. Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Erigene* (Paris, 1933); J. Huber, *Johannes Scotus Erigena: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie* (Munich, 1861); M. Del Pra, *Scoto Erigeno ed il neoplatonismo medievale* (Milan, 1941).

## CHAPTER III

# *Other Ninth and Tenth Century Figures*

What had been begun in the Carolingian Renaissance was never fully extinguished during the subsequent difficult centuries, and it is a fairly widespread opinion nowadays that the Twelfth-Century Renaissance, to which we shall turn in the next part of this volume, had its roots in the Carolingian. The present chapter will attempt to touch briefly on selected figures who insured that continuity.

### A. *Heiric of Auxerre* (c.835–c.887)

Heiric studied at Fulda, not under Rhabanus Maurus, but under one of his students; afterwards he repaired to Ferriere, where he studied under Servatus Lupus, whose humanism had a lasting effect on Heiric. He wrote home to his abbot in verse, extolling Servatus Lupus and the recreation to be had from profane studies. Heiric also wrote a life of Saint Germanus in verse which Manitius does not hesitate to call his masterpiece. When he returned to his own monastery to teach, he made its school famous. Charles the Bald is said to have sent his son Lothar to study under Heiric. Perhaps Heiric's most famous student was Remigius of Auxerre. Only fragments of the writings of Heiric are preserved, and very little has been edited. Nevertheless, it is possible to gain some small appreciation of Heiric and thereby to understand the magnitude of his reputation in his own and later times.

In a marginal note to his poem on the life of Saint Germanus, Heiric penned what was thought to be a remarkable anticipation of the Cartesian *cogito*.<sup>1</sup> "In every rational intellectual nature these three are seen always and inseparably to obtain: essence, power, and act (*ousia, dynamis, energeia*). By way of example, no nature whether rational or intellectual can ignore that it itself exists, though it may

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this doctrine of Descartes see volume three of this series (pp. 168–174).

be ignorant of what it is. When I say therefore 'I understand myself to be,' does not the verb 'I understand' signify three things inseparable from one another? For I show myself to be and to be capable and to understand myself to be. For I could not understand if I were not, not understand if I lacked the capacity to understand; nor is that power at rest in me, but it bursts forth in the activity of understanding." Haureau, having quoted the passage (vol. 1, p. 182), makes short work of its claim to originality by showing that it was borrowed almost verbatim from Scotus Erigena (*De divisione naturae*, I, 50), who in turn got it from Augustine. Well, we have already seen the relevant passage in Augustine, but Haureau seems to be rather insensitive to the liveliness of minds which would seize on this provocative Augustinian suggestion.

Heiric wrote glosses on Boethius' translation of Aristotle's *On Interpretation* and on the *Categoriae decem*, which was wrongly attributed to Augustine. Heiric is aware that Aristotle was the author of the *Categories* and is also aware that the work before him is not a translation of the Greek work. However, he considers it a free version in Latin of the Greek work and suggests that it be considered an exposition rather than a translation. This caution would, of course, have been suggested by a close reading of the work itself. In setting out to gloss the work, Heiric is delayed by a verse of Alcuin's which was placed as prologue to it and which serves him as an occasion to say something of the word *nature*. What he has to say indicates the strong influence on him of Scotus Erigena, for he provides us with a contracted version of the meanings with which the *De divisione naturae* begins. The influence of Erigena is also apparent when Heiric glosses the remark stating the permanent character of substance. This permanence must be ascribed to simple substances, such as the four elements; bodies composed of the four elements are not permanent but can be resolved into their elements. However, with respect to the problem of universals Heiric shows himself more independent. The categories other than substance are general or common modes of being and have whatever being they have thanks to the subjects which enjoy those modes of being. Of course, they may be said to enjoy some kind of being in the mind of God, but they have no real existence apart from their subjects. In short, Heiric is not disposed to increase the created population by listing alongside particular substances their common attributes as if the latter too enjoyed some independent mode of existence. Furthermore, when he comments on the statement that whatever can be said of animal can be said of man, Heiric raises the following difficulty. "Genus" can be predicated of animal, but we would not thereby wish to say that man is a genus. He resolves the difficulty by saying that "genus" is not predicated of animal as to its reality or substance (*secundum rem, id est substantiam*).

“Genus” does not express part of what animal is; it does not enter into its definition anymore than “species” enters into the definition of man. These predicates advert to the predicability of what is defined as “animate sensitive substance,” for example, in the case of animal. Without forcing what he says, we can conclude that for Heiric “genus” and “species” are not names of real things. Haureau concludes from this, surprisingly it would seem, that Heiric is not only a nominalist but a naive one. Let us pursue the matter.

There are three things, Heiric writes, which are involved in any speech or disputation: things, concepts (*intellectus*), and words. Since words may be either spoken or written, we may say that there are four things, thus involved. Written words signify spoken words which in turn signify the concepts whereby the mind grasps things. Of these four, two are natural, namely, things and concepts, and two, spoken and written language, are conventional (*secundum positionem hominum*). Disputes arise, then, from three sources: from what is, from what is perceived, from what is said. Now, if we can attribute to Heiric, as Haureau feels we can, the definition of genus as knowledge gathered from the similarity of its parts (*genus est cogitatio collecta ex singularum similitudine partium*), the most we can say is that we have insufficient evidence for saying what Heiric’s views are. One would want to know whether Heiric distinguished between “animal” as expressive of something real in such entities as Socrates, Lothar, and Fido, and “animal” as predicable of many specifically different things. That is, did he feel that “animate sensitive substance” is a concept of something real, whereas “predicable of many specifically different things” is not a concept of anything out-there? What we do know of Heiric suggests that he was drawing attention to the different status of such words as “animal” and “man” on the one hand, and “genus” and “species” on the other. Once this different status is recognized, the perplexities that can arise from considering the statement “animal is a genus” can be handled. Heiric clearly does not want to say that “Socrates” and “man” and “animal” name three distinct individual substances; they are three names which can be applied to one single thing. That reluctance separates him from the blatant realist, to be sure, but it does not of itself make Heiric a nominalist.

#### B. Remigius of Auxerre (c.841–c.908)

Remigius was a monk of Auxerre, where he had the good fortune to study under Heiric, whom he succeeded as master of the school in 876. About 883, together with his fellow student, Hucbald, he was called to Rheims, where Archbishop Fulco wanted to restore the cathedral school. Remigius’ task was to instruct young clerics in the liberal arts, and it is said that Fulco himself became his student. Under the direction of Hucbald and Remigius the school flourished, but it

appears that Remigius left Rheims, perhaps after the death of Fulco in 900, to go to Paris, where once more his fame as a teacher caused the school to flourish. The school must have been a monastic one, and it is the first school in Paris of which there is any record. Rashdall conjectures that it was the monastic school of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Among his Parisian students mention must be made of Odo of Cluny. A vast number of works are attributed to Remigius, and his fortune among editors has been a good deal happier than Heiric's. First, there are a number of commentaries on Scripture: on Genesis, Psalms, the Canticle of Canticles, the Epistles of Paul, the Gospel of Matthew, and the Apocalypse. He also wrote homilies, a work on the celebration of the Mass, commentaries on Boethius, Donatus, and Priscian, and many other works.

Remigius' commentaries on Boethius convey to us the flavor of his teaching. Two things strike one about Remigius as commentator: first, his dependence on others, especially, in at least one notable instance, on Scotus Erigena; second, the almost complete lack of speculative originality on his part. Let us confine ourselves to Remigius' commentary on the ninth poem of the third book of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. This poem, the "O qui perpetua," provides something like a sketch of Plato's *Timaeus*. Together with Chalcidius' commentary on the *Timaeus*, Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, and the so-called Hermetic writings, this poem of Boethius is one of the sources of the Platonism of the Middle Ages.

As we have seen, Boethius is an enigmatic figure; it is a matter for amazement that the same man could write the theological tracts and the *Consolation of Philosophy*. Moreover, the Platonism of Boethius is a matter of interest since, while it is Aristotle he translated and on whom he commented, it is by no means clear that Boethius accepts without qualification key Aristotelian doctrines. For example, the division of speculative science in chapter two of the *De trinitate* seems at first blush simply Aristotelian, but when we read it more closely, when we compare it with remarks Boethius makes in a commentary on Porphyry, the initial interpretation seems questionable. A more important aspect of Boethius' Platonism is revealed in the "O qui perpetua." Is the doctrine of this poem compatible with Christian faith? There are many who maintain that it is not, that the pagan and Platonic view presented there is quite opposed to what Christians believe about the relationship between God and the world.

Erigena, in his commentary on this poem, has little difficulty in seeing its compatibility with Christianity. Remigius seems to have borrowed liberally from the commentary of Erigena; however, as H. Silvestre has argued, Remigius' version is in many ways inferior to that of Erigena. Like Erigena, Remigius reads Boethius in the light of Christian faith, but to move from Erigena's to Remigius' commen-

tary is like moving from the clear to the smudged. Both men, it must be said, are less concerned to clarify the intention of Boethius than to take off from the poem to develop more or less related ideas. In this they are in striking contrast to Bovo of Corvey. Bovo, whose commentary on the "O qui perpetua" may have been intended as an answer and antidote to Erigena's, is noteworthy for two things. First, he is convinced that the content of Boethius' poem is Platonic and that it is contrary to Christian doctrine. Second, Bovo's commentary is a good deal more faithful to the text of Boethius; he provides us with a great quantity of historical material so that we can grasp the meaning of the poem. Once we see what it means, Bovo feels, it will be quite clear to us that no easy adjustment can be made of this Platonic doctrine and what Christians believe about God and the world, creation and time.

Consider what Erigena and, consequently, Remigius do with the following verses (13-17):

Thou in consenting parts fitly disposed hast  
The all-moving soul in midst of threefold nature placed,  
Which, cut in several parts that run a different race,  
Into itself returns, and circling doth embrace  
The highest mind, and heaven with like proportion drives.

This allusion to the world-soul is said to be susceptible to two interpretations. Philosophers take it to be the sun; it can also be understood in terms of the human soul. The first interpretation is reported at some length, but the second is said to be better, by Erigena, and more prudent, by Remigius. We are then given a highly imaginative but quite ungrounded dissertation on the human soul as divisible into irascible, concupiscible, and rational parts. And so forth. This has little or nothing to do with what Boethius has written and less of course with Plato, on whom Boethius is depending. It is instructive to compare Erigena and Remigius, on the one hand, with each other, and, on the other, with Bovo of Corvey. How odd that Bovo, who is convinced the text is dangerous and incompatible with Christianity, should give us a closer and more accurate reading of it, while those who would assimilate it to Christian teaching seem only slightly detained by the text before them. And yet, if one is going to use a text as an occasion for speaking of things only tenuously connected with or grounded on it, how much better to do this on one's own, as Erigena did, than simply to borrow, as Remigius did.

When we turn to Remigius' commentaries on the theological tracts of Boethius, we find him staying so close to the text that what he has to say about it seldom goes beyond suggesting synonyms, making the most obvious kind of statement, or quoting Scripture and the Fathers. One cannot fail to be impressed with Remigius' learning; at the same time he strikes us as one whose learning is not an instrument for independent thought.

C. *Gerbert of Aurillac* (c.940–1003)

Gerbert, who was to end his life as Pope Sylvester II, was one of the most famous teachers of his time, a tireless collector of books, and an intimate of the great of his day. Having entered the monastery at Aurillac at an early age, he was taken to Spain by a visiting noble on the recommendation of his abbot in order that he might receive what instruction could be had there. It is certain that he studied at Barcelona, but the story that he studied under Arabian masters at Cordova and Seville is mere legend. Nevertheless, he seems to have been acquainted, indirectly at least, with Arabian science, particularly astronomy and mathematics. From Spain he went to Rome, where the pope recommended him to the Emperor Otto I, who sent him to Rheims. As a teacher in the cathedral school there, Gerbert continued to seek far and wide for books to broaden his knowledge. It was while he taught at Rheims that he took part in the dispute with Otiric to which we shall return. In 983, Otto II appointed him abbot of Bobbio. This was a rich abbey, possessing lands throughout Italy, but the wealth was illusory since it required an army to collect. Upon the death of Otto II, Gerbert resigned and returned to Rheims. There he once more taught, became deeply involved in secular and ecclesiastical political affairs, and, after the deposition of Archbishop Arnulph, a natural son of King Lothar, in 991, Gerbert was elected archbishop of Rheims. In 995 he was temporarily suspended from his episcopal office, and subsequently Arnulph's deposition and Gerbert's election were declared invalid. Gerbert then repaired to the court of Otto III, where he became the teacher of the youthful Emperor. He was named archbishop of Ravenna in 998, and in 999 was elected pope.

Richer, the biographer of Gerbert, recounts a public dispute between Gerbert and Otiric which had to do with the division of philosophy. Picavet develops the hints of Richer in such a way that Otiric appears intimidated by the fame of Gerbert, a fame which had spread from Rheims into Saxony. Otiric, older than Gerbert, had reason to expect that his years of teaching would be crowned by the award of a bishopric, and Gerbert's fame might have seemed a threat to this ambition. So he planted a spy in Gerbert's class and was supplied with a schema purporting to give his supposed rival's views on the parts of philosophy. Considering Gerbert's views in error, Otiric hastened to take the matter to the Emperor as evidence of Gerbert's incompetence. The upshot was that Otiric and Gerbert were summoned to settle the matter in a debate before the imperial court.

When we try to get at what the dispute was all about, we seem to find that it involves Otiric's acceptance of a division of philosophy which was known to the West through Augustine and which is ultimately the Stoic division of philosophy. According to this division

philosophy has as its parts physics, ethics, and logic. Gerbert, on the other hand, accepted the Aristotelian division of philosophy as made known by Boethius. He puts his position thus: "Philosophy is a genus whose species are the practical and theoretical; I assign the dispensive, the distributive, and the civil as species of the practical. Under theoretical, on the other hand, it is not surprising that we should place physics (natural science), mathematics (the science of intelligibles), and divinity (the science of intellectibles)." (*PL*, 138, 107C) Apparently what bothered Otiric was that physics, which for him was one of the three genera of philosophy, should be presented as a species. The source of the dispute, again, would seem to be two different notions of how philosophy is divided. In the report of the disputation that Richer gives, there is an indication that Gerbert is suggesting the basic compatibility of the two divisions, but this is not developed. What does come out quite clearly is Gerbert's assumption that the division handed on by Boethius is the most complete and nuanced schema of philosophy.

Aside from its further importance for Gerbert's own thought, which we will develop in a moment, the dispute with Otiric foreshadows a difficulty which seems never to be faced head-on during the Carolingian period and its more or less immediate wake, but which occupies men considerably more during the twelfth century. We have seen in Alcuin, for example, a stress on the importance of the seven liberal arts for describing the nature of philosophy; furthermore, he will allude to the threefold division of philosophy passed on by Augustine. A third factor is the Aristotelian division of philosophy transmitted through Boethius. What is the reconciliation, if any, between these various traditions? Although Gerbert's dispute with Otiric seems to have swung around certain aspects of this problem, it is hard to see that Gerbert proposed even a partially definitive solution.

A point that arose in the dispute with Otiric was further developed by Gerbert in his *De rationali et ratione uti*, which could be translated as *On Being Rational and Reasoning*. (*PL*, 139, 159-168) The topic under discussion in this little work can be summed up in the following question: How can "to use reason" or "reasoning" be predicated of "rational" if every predicate is wider than its subject? Some have suggested that "to use reason" is broader than "rational" because the former signifies a capacity together with its use, while the latter signifies the capacity alone. Gerbert himself resolves the difficulty by distinguishing between substantial and accidental predicates. On that basis, just as one can say "man sits" because it is true to say "Socrates sits," so one can predicate actual reasoning of what is rational because some rational being is reasoning. Predicates like "sits" and "using reason" are not part of the definition of the subject of which they are predicated, and since the rule that the predicates must be broader

than or at least equal to its subject in predicable scope refers to the hierarchy of substantial predicates, the difficulty as stated is not a real one.

What is of interest in this opusculum is not so much the difficulty it sets out to resolve as (1) the wide acquaintance with Aristotelian thought it evidences and (2) the fact that it has been used as an occasion to assert that Gerbert was a realist with respect to the status of universal terms. As for the knowledge of Aristotle, this far exceeds what one would expect from acquaintance with the *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, and the Boethian and Porphyrian adjuncts to these works. Gerbert observes that "potency" is equivocal when we take it as common to an act which is always actualized and an act which is temporarily consequent upon a capacity. So too he distinguishes between simple things whose actuality is such that they can never not be and things which, so long as they are, manifest a given activity (for example, fire is always hot; water is always wet) but which can not be, and things which are and may or may not perform an act which they are capable of performing. "To use reason" is an activity of the last kind. Gerbert had a penchant for schemata (he is said to have enjoyed using the abacus and other mathematical machines), and he provides us with a summary outline of the ontology just sketched.

Hauréau views the *De rationali et ratione uti* as a resolute but premature attempt to reconcile Aristotle and Plato, but he observes that Gerbert is far better acquainted with Aristotle than he is with Plato. Where does Gerbert stand with respect to the opposition between Plato and Aristotle on universals? "Do not we find firmly stated, in the passages of this treatise we have quoted, the thesis of universals *ante rem*, separated from the divine intelligence? He says it; he believes in eternally substantial intelligibles, in forms of forms, permanent acts, which are located in the vaguely described circumscribed space through which man's reason passes when it attempts to elevate itself to God. We must then definitively place this odd interpreter of the *Categories* in the ranks of the declared realists." (Hauréau, vol. 1, pp. 218-219) The passage Hauréau has in mind constitutes chapter eleven of the treatise, and he takes it to mean that "rational," or what the term signifies, exists eternally and necessarily in the sempiternal form of man, which exists elsewhere than in individuals like Socrates and Plato. Gerbert could be taken to mean this by one who reads the passage independently of what has gone before it if he omits, as Hauréau does in citing the passage, a rather important portion of it. Prior to this passage, Gerbert had distinguished between eternal and necessary entities on the one hand, and contingent entities on the other. The latter have some activities without which they are never found and others which they sometimes exercise and sometimes do not. "To use reason" is the second kind of activity.

Now, in chapter eleven Gerbert uses the terms Boethius had used, namely, "*intellectibles*," "*intelligibles*," and "*naturals*," which in Boethius were the respective objects of divine science, mathematics, and physics. Gerbert begins with intelligibles and says that rational can be a specific difference of sempiternal and necessary entities. Surely he can be taken to refer to objects higher than man which are also rational. Rationality, however, which is always actuated in sempiternal and necessary things (they are always actually reasoning), alters when it enters into the corporeal order as a capacity which is sometimes actuated and sometimes not. At this point Gerbert mentions intellectibles. All the things which are genera, species, and differences are in (or as) intellectibles the forms of things. Imagine now that Gerbert is here referring to the divine Ideas, the creative patterns or archetypes of creatures. He then suggests another meaning for *intelligible*: this may be the status of something as understood by man. There follows this remark: "*Rational* therefore is considered in one way in the sempiternal species of man, whether in intellectibles or intelligibles, and in another way in natural things. There forms or acts are sempiternal, here a power which may be actualized." The sempiternal form of man may be understood either as a divine Idea (intellectible) or as the mental concept (intelligible) or better the object or content of the concept, whereas the form as it is found in individuals is spoken of by Gerbert as natural. On this interpretation there is no need or clear warrant for making the assertion Hauréau has made, and it is noteworthy that he omits the passage in which Gerbert speaks of intelligibles in terms of mental concepts (*passiones animae*).

The *De rationali et ratione uti* remains an obscure and difficult work, and the difficulty is compounded by its employment of the Boethian triad: intellectibles, intelligibles, and naturals. There is some plausibility in Hauréau's interpretation of it; we hope there is at least equal plausibility in the interpretation we have suggested. Perhaps the safest summary remark on it is that it is deliciously obscure as to Gerbert's views on the status of universals.

It is hardly surprising that Gerbert entered into the Eucharistic dispute we mentioned earlier. In his *De corpore et sanguine domini* (PL, 139, 179-188) Gerbert sides with Paschasius, but at the same time he attempts to show that the position of Paschasius is not as different from that of Ratramnus of Corbie as these men, and others, had thought.

Our impression of Gerbert is that of a man of immense erudition with an indefatigable desire for new sources of knowledge, a builder of libraries, an inspiring teacher, an able dialectician. At the same time he is a political animal both in the secular and ecclesiastical worlds, worlds which were not far separated in his day. His career has some aspects of a roller-coaster ride, but when it ends with Gerbert

in the papacy, he exhibits his magnanimity by certifying his old rival's right to the archbishopric of Rheims. In a bleak period Gerbert was an undeniable source of light; even if much of it was reflected light, he nonetheless forms an important link in the chain binding the Carolingian Renaissance with that of the twelfth century.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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PART THREE  
THE TWELFTH CENTURY



## CHAPTER I

# Introduction

What links the twelfth century with Carolingian times is the survival of the monastic and cathedral schools which had been the objects of imperial concern. The cathedral school of Chartres is one of the most important centers of learning and inquiry, more so than the cathedral school of Paris. In Paris the monastery of St. Victor is the locus of continuing intellectual liveliness, with William of Champeaux and Hugh of St. Victor as outstanding instances of the type of men who taught there. Abelard is a moveable feast, teaching at Laon, Paris, and elsewhere, but, wherever, it is he who enhances the school rather than vice versa. There is a split in the monastic influence in the twelfth century. When we consider St. Victor and Cluny, the influence is a positive and fairly conservative one; when we consider Bernard of Clairvaux and the monastic reform with which he is associated, the monastery appears as an alternative to the learning of the schools.

The Eucharistic controversy of the eleventh century with its opposition between dialectician and nondialectician carries over into the twelfth. Berengar of Tours appeared to elevate reason above authority in discussing matters of faith; Roscelin, in discussing the Trinity from a logical point of view, arrived at tritheism. The question then arose as to whether heresy was a necessary product of applying logic to objects of faith or was simply an indication that a legitimate endeavor had gone astray. In the twelfth century men who are in most senses opponents grope toward a proper understanding of the relation between faith and reason. St. Anselm of Canterbury, who in the context of the century seems the least polemical of men, sums up what will be the shared attitude in a phrase: *fides quaerens intellectum*. The believer is a creature endowed with reason, and it is fitting and natural that he should meditate on what he believes in an effort to grasp its meaning. There is much room for diversity within the sense of the phrase. Is the meditation on what is believed to be understood as the spiritual life, a meditation on Scripture with the aid of the Fathers in order to incorporate its message into one's own life? Or is this meditation something more abstract, making an appeal to logic and philosophy generally? These two attitudes agree that faith is not

a result of natural reasoning; it is that from which one begins, what is firmly held before, during and after the meditation. Bernard of Clairvaux represents the view that pagan philosophy not only has nothing to contribute to the Christian's effort, but is a temptation to pride and vanity. In varying ways, Hugh of St. Victor, Anselm of Canterbury, the men of Chartres, and, of course, Abelard will see philosophy as something of positive importance. Its importance is one more or less controlled by its relevance for understanding the faith. There are a number of logical writings which can be counted as purely philosophical, but by and large the writings of the men we have mentioned are theological in character. Actually, such a judgment cannot be made in terms of any clear-cut distinction between philosophy and theology operative in the twelfth century. That distinction, the distinction between knowledge of God attainable by natural reason, philosophical theology, and knowledge of God gained by faith, does not become truly effective before men of the West are confronted with the documents exhibiting philosophical theology as it was developed by the Greeks.

Much of the importance of Chartres lies in its Platonism, a Platonism revealed in the interest shown in the *Timaeus*. That dialogue, surely one of the most difficult of Plato's writings, conveys a picture of the universe that many of the teachers at Chartres tried to put into relation with the creation story of Genesis. As we examine their efforts, we can get some notion of the awakening that will follow the influx of Aristotle, his Neoplatonic commentators, Plotinus and Proclus, and the philosophy of Islamic thinkers. It is not easy to trace the introduction into the West of Islamic thought.

The points of contact are Southern Italy and Sicily, on the one hand, and Spain, on the other. Already with Gerbert there is the possibility of contact; Islamic medical writings are translated into Latin very early in Italy. It is held that we can see an acquaintance with Avicbron's *Fons vitae* in Gilbert of la Porrée's commentary on the *De trinitate* of Boethius. Peter the Venerable will be instrumental in having the Koran translated into Latin. But it is at Toledo that the work of translation is first systematically undertaken, and later at the court of Frederick II. Gundissalinus, who was connected with the translating effort in Spain, also tried to bring the new sources into contact with the traditional ones in the West, and in that he is truly a harbinger of the work of the thirteenth century.

From the middle of the twelfth century onward we are faced with the emerging situation that will define the thirteenth. The universities come into being at the end of the twelfth century, having their antecedents in the cathedral schools whose masters, at Paris, gain autonomy from the chancellor and form a guild which is self-governing. The new entities are not recognized or granted charters until the thir-

teenth century, but in many cases, notably that of Paris, they are already there to be recognized. The university, with its division into various faculties, the faculty of art and that of theology particularly, provides the scene for the effort to absorb the new sources which come from antiquity through Islam to the Latin West.

If the relation between faith and reason is the fundamental motif of medieval thought, the context within which the relation is discussed shifts and varies, so that although we seem to see the same questions asked over and over, the sense of the questions alters as new data are brought to bear on their discussion. The important variable for our purposes is the amount of weight that is attached to natural reason: Of what is unaided reason capable? The answer to that question is in large part controlled by the amount of Greek philosophy that is known. That is why there is such a decline in the quality of the discussion from Augustine and Boethius to Alcuin and Rhabanus Maurus; that is why Scotus Erigena looms so large in the Carolingian period—his knowledge of Greek enables him to bring into play Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa. What this means, of course, is further variations on a basically Platonic or Neoplatonic theme, and since this is the tenor of thought emanating from Augustine as well, it is possible to speak of the tradition in the West as a Platonic one. The employment of the *Timaeus* at Chartres in the twelfth century, while it introduces novelties, does not really disturb that tradition. The increase in knowledge of Aristotle's logical writings relates to the ongoing tradition, although it alters the emphasis in instruction in the trivium. A far more disturbing alteration of the discussion of faith and reason is due to the introduction into the West of Islamic and medieval Jewish attempts to reflect on objects of faith in the light of the philosophy of Aristotle. We will see in the next part that Islamic versions of Aristotle are in fact Neoplatonic, but together with these interpretations came what was being interpreted, the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle as well as his writings on physical nature. After that point, things would never be the same again: the relation of faith and reason would be discussed in terms of philosophy and theology understood in quite new ways.

The twelfth century, then, is a complex one. It seems a continuation of the Carolingian effort—and it is—yet the quality of discussion and the caliber of the men involved is so much higher that it seems discontinuous with what had gone before. But much more importantly, from roughly the middle of the century onward new factors begin to be introduced into the West, a whole new statement of the problem of faith and reason. Because these factors are not widely and fully known until the thirteenth century, the men of the twelfth suffer by comparison with those of the thirteenth. For the moment, however, we want to look at them in their own terms. When we do so, we find an impressive group of thinkers.

## CHAPTER II

# *Saint Anselm of Canterbury*

### A. *The Man and His Work*

Saint Anselm was born near Aosta in 1033. His education commenced under the tutelage of the local Benedictines. When his mother died, Anselm knew a period of grief and sadness and, after three years of wandering, came to the monastery at Bec, drawn there by the reputation of Lanfranc. He became a monk of Bec in 1060 and, when Lanfranc went to Caen in 1063, succeeded him as prior of the abbey. He was a teacher in the monastery and became abbot in 1078. After fifteen years in this post he was summoned to England in 1093 to become the archbishop of Canterbury. His years at Canterbury were filled with controversy, and it was in that post that death overtook him in 1109. A rather extensive biography by his pupil Eadmer has come down to us.

This skeletal outline of the life of Anselm seems to present us with a busy ecclesiastic. Despite this impression, it is generally held that Anselm was a reluctant administrator and that he had no real relish for the many controversies into which he was drawn. He seems to have been prompted by a sense of obligation rather than by any deep inclination of his own nature. His essential self, it would seem, was inclined to withdraw into study and contemplation. Eadmer suggests that Anselm was so intent on the life of a teacher that he considered leaving Bec because Lanfranc already occupied the teaching post there. Later Anselm was to chastise himself for this worldly ambition, which he felt to be incompatible with the cloistered vocation that was his. Nonetheless, that ambition symbolizes his deep-seated desire for study, for teaching, for the calm of contemplation.

Anselm's dislike for administration and active posts was based on his conviction that he had no real competence for leadership. Twice he asked the pope to relieve him of the see of Canterbury. He sought to return to the peace and tranquillity of the cloister, to prayer, medita-

tion, and the teaching that awaited him there. Although he was a reluctant archbishop, his troubles in the post seem not to have been due to any incompetence of his. He was nonetheless twice exiled from his see, something that caused him no little anguish, but perhaps he derived a kind of ambiguous pleasure from those absences, for during those periods he recaptured in some measure the life he truly desired. But even in his active periods as archbishop he was as much theologian as spiritual administrator, composing some of the works on which his fame was to repose.

Of the writings of Anselm the following are the most important for our purposes. First, the *Monologion*, written for the monks at Bec, completed in 1076. Second, the *Proslogion*, written around 1077–1078, with the replies to his objector, Gaunilo, coming in subsequent years. Third, between 1080 and 1085, three works: *De grammatico*, *De veritate*, and the *De libertate arbitrii*. Fourth, the *De casu diaboli*, written perhaps between 1085 and 1090. Fifth, begun in 1092 and completed in 1094, the *Epistola de incarnatione verbi*, more frequently referred to as the *De fide trinitatis*. Sixth, the famous *Cur deus homo*, which reached its completion in 1098. Finally, the *De conceptu virginali et de originali peccato*, written between 1099 and 1100. There are other works, notably prayers and meditations, as well as official letters. Those we have mentioned are easily the most important, some obviously more important than others for an assessment of Anselm the philosopher.

Just as the sketch of his life can mislead us into thinking that in Anselm we are confronted principally with a Church leader, so this seemingly meager list of writings could cause us to think that we will not find Anselm to be a significant thinker. He is a major figure nonetheless. His teaching represents one of the highest points reached by what may be referred to as the Augustinian tradition. It has often been suggested that Anselm has suffered unfairly from the tendency of students to hurry past him in order to arrive at the giants of the thirteenth century. But Anselm is a man of the eleventh century, and it is in its terms that he must be viewed. Thus regarded, he looms above the men of his own time. If we must say, as we must, that the men of the thirteenth century knew much more than Anselm, we may add that Anselm was one of the sources of their knowledge.

## B. Faith and Reason

The list of his writings makes it immediately evident that Anselm's major contributions must be classified as theological. This is not to say that he had no philosophical contributions to make, of course, and with respect to the major methodological question of the Middle Ages, the relative status of philosophy and theology, reason and faith, Anselm has much to say that is of abiding importance.

Anselm is a thinker who has submerged himself in the writings of Augustine. One scholar feels that we would be struck by the Augustinian influence on Anselm even if he did not stud his works with overt references to his great predecessor. If we were to seek a motto for the total effort of Anselm, we could do no better than to select the original title of the *Proslogion*, a phrase which Anselm felt was the best expression of the spirit of Augustine: *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding. Anselm, like Augustine before him, is a believer; he accepts on faith and without the slightest wavering or doubt whatever God has revealed. Yet, since he is a man, a rational animal, he must meditate and reflect on what has been proposed for his belief. Out of such study and meditation, understanding issues.

The very simplicity of this motto conceals the difficulty of grasping its meaning. Is faith merely the starting point, a transient condition, which is to give way when understanding has been achieved? Or is faith as present at the end of the effort as it is at the beginning? In his preface to the *Monologion* Anselm says that he is seeking to base truths, not on Scripture, but on arguments and the necessity of reason (*rationis necessitas*). Anselm will also say that Scripture is the source of every problem he discusses. His method, however, is so to consider what Scripture has taught that his considerations will not derive their persuasive force from the authority of Scripture. This makes it clear that faith, the acceptance of Scripture as true, is the starting point.

Given faith, one can concern himself dialectically with what he believes. This is why, after the Apostles, the holy Fathers and Doctors have said so much about the content of faith. Their writings are ordered not only to confuting the foolish and correcting the hardness of heart of those who do not have the faith but also to nourishing those whose hearts are already cleansed by faith and who can take delight in reasoning about their beliefs. That we ourselves may undertake to reason about our faith is clear from the fact that the Fathers and Doctors have certainly not exhausted the matter. Far from it. Mortals could spend an infinite time on revealed truths without exhausting their content. The scriptural basis for his position is the same as Augustine's: "Unless you believe, you shall not understand." (Is. 7:9) This text is seen by Anselm as a clear invitation to reason about our beliefs, and he goes on to suggest that such reasoning can bring us to a point midway between blind faith and the perfect vision of the next life. (See the dedicatory letter to Pope Urban II prefacing *De incarnatione verbi*.) Faith provides the conclusion, Anselm holds, and one seeks reasons for that conclusion. Chiding others, he remarks that no Catholic should entertain the possibility that what the Church believes and confesses is untrue; rather, holding tenaciously to the faith, humbly loving and living according to its truth, he can seek reasons why it is so. If understanding be achieved, one should thank God; if under-

standing is not forthcoming, one must nevertheless submit his reason to the incomprehensible truth. It is a vast mistake to attempt to reverse the order given in the scriptural passage quoted above, as if reason unaided by faith could bring us to a firm adherence to revealed truth.

Nor is it enough, Anselm continues, to be confirmed in the faith (*fide stabilitus*) in order to undertake reasoning about revealed truths safely and profitably. One must also possess wisdom and moral maturity lest by sophism and levity he be led astray even to the point of embracing falsehood. That is the difference between those who commendably and continuously approach Holy Writ and those "dialecticians of today, indeed those heretical dialecticians." (*PL*, 158, 265)

In chapter six of the *De fide trinitatis* there is a passage in which Anselm describes what he had tried to do in the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*. Having said that many of the Fathers, especially Augustine, have given irrefutable arguments that there is but one God though the Persons be three, he continues: "If anyone would deign to read two short works of mine, namely, the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, which were written precisely to show that what we hold by faith concerning the divine nature and Persons, apart from the Incarnation, can be proved by necessary arguments [*necessariis rationibus*] and without the authority of Scripture—if, I say, one should read them, I think he will find there nothing that he can disprove nor would wish to reject." That is one of the strongest statements—though it is by no means isolated or unique—of Anselm's doctrine of *fides quaerens intellectum*. An obvious understanding of his claim would be that while faith is necessary to come into acquaintance with the fact of the Trinity, once one has developed necessary arguments he would accept the Trinity on the basis of those arguments and not because it has been revealed. But is that what Anselm wishes us to find in his remarks? Some of the passages mentioned above would suggest that this is not his meaning.

There can be little doubt that Anselm wishes to surpass faith in some sense and to arrive at what he calls reason or understanding. Nevertheless, he seems to want this understanding to be supported by faith. Furthermore, the understanding he seeks assumes a number of different forms. Sometimes the understanding at which he aims is of the *fact* of the revealed truth and not *what* that truth is, as if he had comprehended it. In the *Proslogion*, for example, having given a proof for God's existence, Anselm, addressing God, says that now even if he chose not to believe that God exists, he would still know that he exists. But the argument he has given does not enable him to penetrate to an understanding of the God about whose existence he has no doubt. At other times, Anselm notes, our arguments consist merely in the presentation of analogies to and approximations of the truth that we firmly believe. "Often too we see an object only imperfectly as to

what it is, only by way of image and semblance, as when we see someone's face in a mirror." (*Monologion*, chap. 65) In such cases we cannot understand the thing in terms of its essential properties. Thus, in attempting to know God we can never attain to what is proper to him but can only approach him by way of the similarities we find in other things.

The "necessary arguments" that Anselm mentions quite often have as their purpose to exhibit the coherence of the objects of faith. Thus, in *Cur deus homo* he will try to give reasons for the Incarnation, will try to show that it was necessary for God to become man. The arguments are sought by Anselm against the background of his own firm faith in the Incarnation. He seeks them because those without the faith deride this belief, and many of the faithful wonder in their hearts about the grounds and reasonableness of it. Such arguments, then, will silence the infidel and reassure the faithful concerning the reasonableness of the objects of faith.

What in sum is Anselm's view on the relation between faith and reason? Not only does faith happen to precede reason in the case of the Christian but faith must always precede reasoning about the highest matters. However, unless faith is conjoined with rectitude of life, the effort to understand what is believed will have disastrous consequences. In reflecting on the content of his faith one becomes aware of the reasonableness of what God has done to effect our salvation. The way God has chosen, one becomes sure, is the best way. In collating the various objects of his faith he will see their interconnections, the compatibility of these various truths. The expression of the recognition, the attempt to show the reasonableness of faith—it is this that Anselm has in mind when he speaks of "necessary arguments." He does not use the phrase loosely. In his writings he is striving for the greatest possible rigor. Moreover, he is aware when he is presenting only an analogy or semblance.

Anselm's arguments are addressed to the infidel, not with the idea that they may lead him into faith, but rather to silence his objections. If such an objector acquired faith, he might then return to Anselm's arguments and see them in a new and more positive light. The term of argumentation, of the search for understanding, is such that one realizes he has not exhausted the object of faith, has not comprehended it. Anselm's remark, after having offered a proof for the existence of God, that he would now have to affirm it even if he did not have faith, may be interpreted in several ways. First, it may refer to that truth alone and not be a generalization about every effort to understand what is believed. Second, if we should want to think of the remark as applying as well to Anselm's "proofs" of the Trinity and the Incarnation, we would have to stress what he stressed, namely, that he in no way comprehends the truths of whose factual existence he feels certain.

One check to the interpretation that Anselm felt reasoning goes beyond faith is found in his insistence that faith is always the guide of the search for understanding. Anselm does not seem to hold, with Erigena, that we can conclude truly only to what has been revealed, but he will say that when we think we have a good argument which concludes to something contradictory to the faith, we can be sure by that fact alone that our argument is faulty. "We accept everything which is clearly demonstrated and that Holy Writ does not contradict, for since it is not opposed to the truth, it does not favor any falsehood, and from the fact that it does not deny any affirmations of reason, it sustains them by its authority. But if Scripture were evidently repugnant to our senses, no matter how irrefutable our reason may seem, we must believe to be sure of truth." (*De concord. grat.*, 6) St. Anselm's *fides quaerens intellectum* does not elevate reason into an absolute criterion of truth. To have done that would have been to engage in that philosophy against which St. Paul warns us lest it lead us astray.

Anselm's position on faith and reason is complex and not in every way clear. Nevertheless, it contains a good many precisions which will be operative in later, more definitive resolutions of the question. In the light of his views, can we say that Anselm was a philosopher? If the question means Did Anselm consider himself a philosopher? the answer would likely be negative. Given his principal purpose, to show the reasonableness of what is believed, we must call him a theologian. This does not, of course, preclude the possibility that much philosophy will be found in his writings—that is, arguments which do not bear on the object of faith as such and whose cogency is independent of faith, antecedent or concomitant.

### C. *The Proof of God's Existence*

It is not only a convenience historians avail themselves of, or invent, that explains our tendency to identify a thinker with one point or item of his doctrine, however extensive that doctrine may be. The historian considers the chronological progression of thinkers, and this consideration brings to light what in a given doctrine has been most influential on later thought. Whether or not what has been most influential in a doctrine is the key to that doctrine itself is another question, of course, although its otherness is not always recognized by historians. At any rate, the single most influential item in Anselm's works is the so-called ontological argument for the existence of God. In his own lifetime it quickly became a source of controversy, and in later ages it is almost possible to classify philosophers in terms of their response to it. It has had its champions, and there are champions of it today; it has never been without its critics, and there are critics of it today. Its historical importance, gauged in terms of its influence, is accordingly beyond dispute. Moreover, it is perfectly clear that Anselm himself

regarded it as a most important achievement of his thought. This is not to say that it provides us with a key which will unlock every door of Anselmian doctrine, but it is certain that we are not faced with a position which, while of little importance to the man who first held it, came to loom large in later estimates of his accomplishments.

In concentrating on the ontological argument (Anselm never called it that), we would not want to convey the impression that it represents Anselm's only attempt to prove that God exists. There are a number of proofs offered in the *Monologion*, but there is nothing particularly novel or original in them or in Anselm's presentation of them. The proof of the *Proslogion*, which came to be called the ontological argument, is both novel and original, and we will go into some detail in our presentation of it.

In his preface to the *Proslogion*, which, as we have seen, was first entitled *Fides quaerens intellectum*, or faith seeking understanding, Anselm recalls that in the *Monologion* there was a great concatenation of arguments which lead to knowledge that God truly exists. This complexity bothered him when he looked back on it, and the thought grew in his mind that it would be desirable to have a single, self-sufficient proof of this truth. This thoughtful wish seemed doomed to frustration, however; Anselm sought in vain over a period of time for that single clinching proof, and though often he had the feeling it hovered just out of reach, he was unable to formulate it. Yet he could not set aside the hope. However he tried to turn his mind to other things, he found himself importuned anew by that drive for simplicity and cogency and self-sufficiency. And then, as is the way with thought, with inspiration both good and bad, one day he had it whole: the proof of which he had despaired simply came. Out of the charity that motivated his intellectual life, Anselm wanted to convey this proof to others and thus communicate to them the joy he had felt in discovering it. He presents the proof in the role of one seeking to elevate his mind to contemplation of God, of one seeking to understand what he believes. This explains the style of the *Proslogion*, where we find Anselm communing with his God, addressing him as the object of love and faith, the Being toward which Anselm's whole being tends. The first chapter is an exhortation and prayer in which Anselm approaches the God of his faith. He wishes some degree of understanding of the truths he believes since he believes in order that he might understand, and unless he believed, he would not understand.

What believed truth is it that Anselm would understand? That God is as he believes him to be and that God is that which he believes him to be. How can the God of belief be described? He is that being than which nothing greater can be conceived. Can anyone who knows that this is what the word "God" means possibly think that God does not exist? Perhaps, but as the psalmist has sung (14: 1), it is the fool

who says in his heart there is no God. But even the fool, hearing God described as that than which nothing greater can be conceived, understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding, even if he does not understand God to exist. What Anselm is getting at is the difference between two modes of existence: existence in the mind and existence outside the mind. He illustrates the distinction by reference to the painter who, before he executes something on canvas, has in mind what he will paint. Idea precedes execution in this case; existence in the mind precedes existence outside the mind. Furthermore, this example shows that something can exist in the mind prior to, and thus without, its being instanced outside the mind. We may surmise that Anselm would also agree that, at least with respect to human minds, existence out-there can be independent of, or unaccompanied by, mental existence. Once the painter has executed his idea, the subject may be said to exist both in the mind and on canvas.

Anselm now returns to the fool, for whom God enjoys at least mental existence since he knows that God is said to be that than which nothing greater can be conceived, but who would deny that the idea is exemplified or instanced outside his mind. Anselm's argument attempts to show that the fool is indeed a fool if he thinks his denial is reasonable. That than which nothing greater can be conceived cannot, Anselm maintains, exist only in the mind. Why? Because if that than which nothing greater can be thought existed only in the mind, it would not be that than which nothing greater can be thought; for if it exists only in the mind, it can be conceived to exist in reality as well, which is more. "Consequently, if that than which nothing greater can be thought is in the mind alone, that than which nothing greater can be thought is something than which something greater can be thought. It is beyond doubt, consequently, that there exists something than which nothing greater can be thought, and it exists both in the mind and in reality." (Chapter 2)

This is Anselm's first statement of the proof. No one can deny its simplicity, and few have failed to be at least momentarily attracted by it. The word "God" means something, involves an idea, such that whoever gets that idea lodged in his mind cannot, except at the risk of contradicting himself, deny that there is an entity, something outside the mind, which responds to or instances the idea. In short, the argument as stated relies on the validity of a passage from the conceptual to the real order, from the grasping of a definition or description to the assertion that there exists outside the mind something which this description describes. One can appreciate the elation of Anselm at having come up with so succinct an argument. The term "God" means, to put it in a less indeterminately comparative way, the summation of all perfection. Surely then, our notion of God must include existence outside the mind, since not to exist outside the mind would be to lack

a basic perfection. Say then that God is the greatest existent being. Is it not at the least odd to suggest that the greatest existent thing does not exist? It is that oddity that struck Anselm. So there you are, Anselm would say. To know that by the term "God" is meant the greatest possible existent is to know that it makes no sense to deny that such an entity exists. Only a fool would do so, and his denial must be considered merely verbal. One can say that two and two are five, but one cannot really *mean* it if he knows what he is saying.

The objection to Anselm's argument that comes fairly quickly to mind is one that can be found already in the work of his contemporary Gaunilo, who wrote a reply to the opening of the *Proslogion* which he entitled *On Behalf of the Fool*. In a number of ways Gaunilo points out the truth that it is indeed possible to think of the greatest existent thing, to entertain the notion of something which lacks no perfection, without thereby being committed to the judgment that such a thing exists. We will try to convey the apparent purpose and content of Gaunilo's reply without great concern for putting the matter in his exact words.

Both the believer and the unbeliever can agree on this: the term "God" means the greatest existent thing, the most perfect existent. In Anselm's terminology, then, they both can be said to agree that God exists in their understanding. Now, it should be noticed that "to exist in the understanding" is no part of what either means by "God," although this is obscured by the phrase Anselm uses to express the meaning of the term "God," namely, that than which nothing greater can be thought or conceived. Surely he does not mean by this description the limit of our abilities to think of objects. So we have the believer and unbeliever established on a common ground; they both know that when men speak of God they are speaking of the greatest existent. Now to say either that there is nothing in reality responding to this idea or that there *is* something in reality responding to it is to go beyond a grasp of what the term "God" means. Only in this going beyond would the unbeliever claim that God is only an idea, and when he says this, he should not be taken to mean that other men, particularly believers, mean to speak of some mental activity of theirs when they use the term "God." By the same token, when the believer says that God exists, he is not claiming that an idea of his exists outside his mind as well as in it, but that there is something in reality which responds to the content of the idea he has when he uses the term "God."

The objections of Gaunilo enable us to see an ambiguity latent in Anselm's presentation of this thought. The unbeliever understands that the believer means the greatest existent thing when he uses the term "God." External existence, consequently, is built right into the concept in the way most of us would think merely imaginary existence is built into the concepts of elves and unicorns. In short, Anselm means

by the term "God" the greatest existent you can think of, but the "you can think of" is only the usual concomitant of attending to any object and not part of what the object is or is presumed to be. Now Gaunilo has trouble in grasping Anselm's insistence that simply by allowing that he is thinking of the greatest existent he is committed to asserting that there is such a thing. For him "Does the greatest possible existent exist?" is still a fair question. That is, is there something which is all perfect and good and on which everything else depends for its being? Gaunilo cannot allow that *that* question is answered as soon as one understands that by the term "God" men mean an all-perfect and good being on which everything else depends for its being. In summary, Gaunilo is expressing his misgiving about the view that a mental act whereby we understand the meaning of the word "God" necessitates the further mental act whereby we affirm that God exists.

The objection of Gaunilo may be thought of as more or less the usual reaction to the argumentation of Anselm. So forceful and obvious has the objection seemed that many have been content with the curtest dismissal of the ontological argument. For example, St. Thomas Aquinas, after having pointed out that it is by no means obvious that just anybody would take the term "God" to mean what Anselm wishes it to mean, since after all there have been men who thought of trees as divine, proceeds on the assumption that the desired meaning of the term can be presupposed. "Once it is granted that everyone would understand the term 'God' to mean what has been mentioned, namely, that than which nothing greater can be thought, it does not from that fact follow that everyone would understand that what is signified by the name exists in the external world [*esse in rerum natura*] rather than in the mind alone. It cannot be argued that it exists in reality unless it is granted that there is given in reality that than which nothing greater can be thought, something which would not be granted by those who maintain that God does not exist." (*Summa theologiae*, Ia, 2, 1, 2m)

Recently there has been a growing chorus of voices suggesting that such a dismissal of the ontological argument is cavalier because it takes Anselm's weaker presentation of his argument as the definitive one. In other words, it is suggested that, despite his avowal that he had hit on one simple proof, Anselm, perhaps in a way of which he himself was insufficiently aware, actually stated his proof in two ways and that, however weak and vulnerable his first statement of it may be, the second is a different kettle of fish entirely. That second statement has been called, by Professor Charles Hartshorne, the "modal proof" for the existence of God. He maintains that if it were presented without any allusions to the history of the Anselmian argument, it would meet with a far more favorable reception than is actually the case.

The second statement of the proof is made in terms of possibility,

impossibility, and, by implication, necessity. The merit of this alternative statement is that it brings out what is so easily overlooked in the first, namely, that by the term "God" one means a being for whom it is impossible not to exist. In short, God is a necessary being, and his existence cannot be confused with the mere factual givenness of anything else, of any creature, since presumably of any creature it can be said that, however true that it now exists, it is possible for it not to exist and possible for it not to have existed. Now those who have difficulty seeing that existence without qualification can function as a predicate (by which they mean a further descriptive note of an entity) do not have the same difficulty in seeing that necessary existence, the impossibility not to exist, is significantly descriptive. Consequently, those passages in which Anselm makes it clear that God is such that for him to exist is not some merely factual matter, something that happens to be the case, but that God is such that it is impossible for him not to exist—these passages are considered to contain an alternative presentation of his argument that is not open to the criticisms we mentioned earlier. Thus, it is the *kind* of existence that is God's that functions in the proof, not mere existence. When this is considered, things are not so bad with the proof as may have been thought. Peter exists. Let us take this as a true statement signifying that there is in the external world an individual man and his name is Peter. While Peter exists, it is impossible for Peter not to exist, that is, only in virtue of some Pickwickian sense could it be true that Peter exists and does not exist. Yet it does not require any exhaustive acquaintance with Peter to realize that he could very easily not have been and that, however true that he now exists, he can in the future cease to be. His existence, on this basis, may be described as possible or contingent. Accordingly, there are things, and by far the vast majority of things, of which we can say that it is possible for them to be or not to be. But God is not one of those things. He is a being such that it is impossible for him not to exist; he is a necessary being; he necessarily exists. That, it has been suggested, is the full meaning of Anselm's phrase "that than which nothing greater can be thought": that which is thought of as necessarily existing.

One must agree that this is a far more nuanced way of putting the matter than we find at the end of chapter two of the *Proslogion*. But does it follow that we are faced with an ineluctable need to agree that once we grasp the significance of God being defined as a necessary being, we must affirm that God exists? Is it not possible to retort that now we have definitions of necessary and contingent being, but we still do not know if the definition of necessary being applies to anything? My own view is that concentration on the modal statement of the proof changes nothing at all with respect to the central move Anselm wants to make, namely, from the conceptual to the real order.

That movement remains suspect, and the valuable precision we have just sketched does nothing to validate the desired move. In saying this, I think I am expressing what underlies Aquinas' admittedly peremptory dismissal of Anselm, namely, that it is only by examining that region of being populated by entities of which it is true to say that their existence is contingent and by coming to knowledge of their constituents that one will find grounds for claiming that an ultimate cause of them must be present. Thus, what provides the nexus for assenting to the proposition that there exists something which is the first cause of all we survey is precisely our knowledge of what we survey, and not concentration on the descriptions we may have ready at hand for that cause should it come to be learned that it does indeed exist.

While a foreshadow of the ontological argument has been discovered in Augustine (*De moribus Manichaeorum*, II, xi, 24; *PL*, 32), the proof itself is fittingly ascribed to Anselm. We have already mentioned that in subsequent ages this proof has had its champions and its opponents. Descartes offers a variant of the proof; Spinoza and Leibniz thought some version of the ontological proof valid. In addition to the opponents we have already mentioned, it should be stated that Kant and Schopenhauer were convinced that the proof is invalid. Kant's criticism, which has been perhaps the most influential in modern times, is the more serious because he maintains that other attempts to prove the existence of God participate in the flaw he finds in the ontological argument and thus, together with it, must be consigned to the wastebasket of history. In our own times there has been a remarkable renewal of interest in the argument, an interest which is so intense that a strident note enters both the refutations and defenses of it. We can be certain that the discussion will continue so long as men philosophize and, in philosophizing, recognize that it is such ultimate questions as that concerned with the existence of God which must occupy us. If the treatment of such questions makes us aware of both the grandeur and debility of the human mind, the persistent role of the ontological argument in the discussion amply attests to the importance and influence of Anselm of Canterbury.

#### D. *Anselm and Dialectics*

Anselm lived at a time when the quarrel between the dialecticians and antidialecticians was raging, and it was doubtless inevitable that he would be drawn into it. There is some reluctance in Anselm's entry into the fray, and it is certain that his language was a good deal more moderate than that of other disputants. This has led to the following judgment: "Thus Anselm's interest lay in a field above the controversies of logic; his thoughts did not readily move within that formal circle. He joined of necessity in debates to which one cannot believe that he devoted his best faculties." (R. L. Poole, *Illustrations of the*

*History of Medieval Thought and Learning* [New York: Dover Publications, 1960], p. 92). Anselm, in short, was not only a reluctant logician; he was a poor one. To counter this unfortunate attitude, we want to consider two things: first, Anselm's treatment of the errors of Roscelin with respect to the Trinity; second, Anselm's little work *De grammatico*.

*Refutation of Roscelin.* The position of Roscelin concerning the doctrine of the Trinity is as follows. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must be three things and not merely one; if this were not so, if they were but one thing, then we could not say that only the Son became man; rather the one thing which is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was united with human nature. Since our faith forbids us to accept this consequence, we must agree that the three Persons are not one thing, but three, and that if usage permitted it, we could say there are three Gods. The three Persons are three things in the same way as there may be three angels or three souls.

In presenting this position Roscelin invoked the authority of Lanfranc and Anselm, and, as De Vorges has shown (pp. 74-75), there is some basis for Roscelin's appeal to Anselm in the latter's preface to the *Monologion*. There Anselm notes that the Greek phrase "*mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*" can be rendered in Latin as "*una essentia, tres substantiae*." In short, a transliteration of the Greek into the Latin suggests that the persons of the Trinity can be referred to as three substances in one essence. Now this is quite misleading, since the traditional rendering of the Greek term "*hypostasis*" had been "*persona*," while "*substantia*" had quite another function in Latin. That this is indeed ambiguous had been pointed out to Anselm, but he was not convinced of the possible danger until Roscelin put the translation to such alarming use. Roscelin took it as warrant for claiming that the three Persons are three substances in exactly the same way as three men or three angels are three substances.

Before launching his refutation, Anselm expatiates on the proper approach to an analysis of truths of faith, a discussion we drew on in speaking Anselm's views on the relation between faith and reason. First, Anselm forestalls the misunderstanding that he is out to establish the truth of the Trinity of Persons in God. This is something he accepts on faith, a truth which cannot be grounded on pure reason. Nevertheless, although this truth exceeds the comprehension of reason and because it seems to be repugnant to reason, it is important to show that this repugnance is only apparent. Second, he warns against temerity in undertaking such a discussion. The Christian ought not to undertake to show that any truth believed and confessed by the Church is impossible; rather, holding any such truth to be indubitable, loving that truth and living in humble accord with it, he may rationally seek to understand the fact. If he succeeds, let him give thanks to God; if he does not succeed, his head should be lowered, not in preparation for a

defiant charge, but in venerating submission. Third, he observes that one who presumes to combat a truth confessed by the universal Church cannot be considered a Catholic; further, one who, without faith, undertakes to dispute about believed truths, simply cannot be dealt with as if he had the faith. We have already seen Anselm's insistence that faith is a prerequisite for doing theology; without faith one simply does not have the appropriate experience of what is up for discussion. "For he who does not believe does not experience; and he who is not an expert [*qui expertus non fuerit*] will not know." (*De incarn. verb.*, 1) This suggests his approach to Roscelin, who Anselm bluntly says is not a Catholic. If he were of good faith, it would be a simple matter to show him on the authority of Scripture that there is one God and three divine Persons. Lacking this simple approach, being unable to avail himself of it, Anselm proposes to show Roscelin's error in a rational manner (*ratione*), which is here opposed to showing it by appeal to authority.

There are dialecticians nowadays, Anselm begins, indeed heretical dialecticians, who maintain that universal substances are nothing other than vocal sounds (*flatus vocis*), who are unable to distinguish between a body and its color, who see no difference between a man's soul and the knowledge he has. It is such men as these who presume to discuss spiritual questions, men for whom reason is unable to rise above bodily imaginings. How, Anselm rhetorically asks, how can men who are unable to understand that many men are specifically one man grasp how it is that in the exalted and hidden nature of God there are several Persons, each of whom is God, and yet that there is but one God? A mind so dim that it cannot distinguish a horse from its color cannot be expected to be able to distinguish the one God and his several relations. He who identifies man and individual man can only think of man as person. How then can he understand the assumption of human nature by the Word of God? Christ is not a union of two persons, but the union of a divine Person with human nature. But how could a nominalist grasp that?

With respect to trinitarian doctrine as such Anselm's reply can be briefly stated. When it is said that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three things, what is meant by *thing*? If thing refers to Persons which are diverse relations, there is no difficulty in the phrase, but if it refers to the divine substance, to what the Persons possess in common, then the statement is heretical. Anselm's remarks on the analogues to which Roscelin appeals are of interest from the point of view of opposition to nominalism. Roscelin argues that the Persons are three as three angels or three souls are. In what way are three members of the same species one for Anselm? The question is directed at the possible realism of Anselm. A realistic answer to the question would maintain that there is some one thing which is referred to by the common name. Is there,

over and above individual men, a human nature which is referred to by "man"? Given his attitude toward Augustine, as well as the general tradition, we would expect that Anselm will accept the doctrine that in the Divine Word are to be found the exemplars of whatever is. In fact, Anselm holds this. (*Monologion*, 10) Furthermore, with respect to individual men he will maintain that however much they may be alike with respect to human nature, they differ from one another because of the collection of accidents peculiar to each. (*De proc. spirit. sancti*, 28) Thus, we have already seen Anselm asking rhetorically how those who cannot understand how many individual men are one man in species can expect to understand the Trinity. But in what sense are all men one man? "*Specie*," Anselm says: specifically. But what does that mean? The fact is that it is difficult to come up with a clean-cut answer when we ask how Anselm stands on the question of universals.

*De grammatico.* The remark of Poole that we quoted earlier concerning Anselm's general disinterest in dialectics and his obvious incompetence when he overcomes his disinterest and indulges in it expresses a widespread estimate which is currently being questioned. The negative assessment of Anselm's talent as a logician was in large part based on a little dialogue, *De grammatico*, but the recent edition of that text with a commentary by Desmond P. Henry provide grounds for believing that it is Anselm's critics who may come out badly.

In the first place, the *De grammatico* is solid proof that Anselm was interested in logic apart from current debates. In the preface to his *De veritate* Anselm suggests that the *De grammatico* could be useful for introducing people to the study of dialectics. If, contrary to received opinion, that dialogue presents us with an Anselm not only adept at logic but original and exciting when he turns his mind to it, a reappraisal is obviously called for. Furthermore, the dialogue may cast some light on Anselm's position with respect to the problem of universals.

The topic under discussion in the *De grammatico* is the meaning of denominative terms, and the title is taken from the common example of such terms, "grammatical" or "literate." The dialogue revolves around the difficulties which ensue when one fails to distinguish between the qualities signified by such terms and the bearers of these qualities. "White," for example, signifies whiteness and is applied to such things as cloth, skin, clouds, and so on. Since so many different things can possess the quality, it would be a mistake to identify the meaning of "white" with any of its possible bearers, for then it might seem to follow that we must identify cloth and skin, for example. If we think that whatever can possess the quality is a substance and notice that when we use the concrete quality-word (as "white"), we do so to speak of substances (for example, of skin, cloth, clouds, and so forth), then we may seem forced to accept both (1) "white is a substance" and (2) "white is a quality." The difficulty with (1) is that we think of any substance without thinking of it as white, and the diffi-

culty with (2) again is that what is white is always a substance. Anselm suggests two kinds of meaning to dissolve these difficulties. First, there is precise meaning. In this kind of meaning "white" only signifies "what possesses whiteness." Second, he speaks of oblique meaning. In this sense the vehicle or bearer of the quality is meant by the denominative term. Anselm's point is that no determinate type of bearer is included in the precise meaning of a quality-word or denominative term. When a particular bearer of the quality is referred to and thus meant in a given context, it is only the context and not the precise meaning of such a denominative as "white" which enables us to see what is referred to. Anselm gives the following example. We are standing with someone and looking at two horses, a black one and a white one. He says, "Hit it." We look confused, and he adds, "Hit the horse." We ask which one, and he replies, "The white." It is not the meaning of "white" (precisely it means only what possesses whiteness) but the context which enables us to know that it is the white horse which is meant.

So far so good. Substances are named or denominated from qualities which are not part of what they are, not part of their essence or nature. A man may be and be called short, fat, learned, and so forth. "Short" and "fat" do not have human nature in their meanings and cannot, in the sense of precise signification, be said to signify or mean man. In certain contexts they are used to speak of man; we can then say that man is obliquely signified or referred to by them, but this does not commit us to the view that whatever is short is man and vice versa. Now Anselm wants to equate "*grammaticus*," or "literate," with "short." We may find it difficult to agree with him in this. If, as is sometimes held, "literate" is a proper accident of man, then man must enter into the definition of "literate." Anselm denies this. He explicitly says that "literate" is just like "white" and "short" and the like. One way he employs to show this is by comparing the relation between genus and species, on the one hand, and the denominative term and the denominated, on the other. He observes that while it would be silly to say of man that he is animal man, it is not silly to say that he is literate man. This is because man is not part of the definition of "literate." But, of course, with respect to the former example, we could say that man, or a man, is a human animal.

There may be restrictions on the applicability of the point Anselm makes in the dialogic. What comes through clearly is the point that a denominative word signifies chiefly the denominating form and not anything which happens to possess that form. Such a term as "white" may be taken to mean "whatever possesses whiteness." If it were taken to mean, in the strong sense of "mean," the bearer of the quality, at least one of two absurdities would follow. Either there are different bearers of the quality, which we will then be committed to identifying, or, given there is but one bearer, we will find ourselves involved in

infinite repetitions. To exemplify the first undesirable consequence, given that snow is white and swans are white, if these bearers are involved in the meaning of "white," or indeed if only one of them is, we would seemingly have to say that to be a swan and to be snow are the same. If there should be but one bearer of the quality and it be understood to be part of the meaning of the denominative, or quality, word, then "snow is white" can be analyzed into "snow is white snow" and that into "snow is white snow snow," and so on. Our earlier qualms about Anselm's generalization may be reexpressed now in terms of a distinction between qualities which just happen to have a single bearer and a quality which could not have more than one bearer. If "literate" be an example of the second type, then its analysis would have to proceed differently than the *De grammatico* suggests.

It is not our intention to enter into a formal discussion of the logical doctrine of Anselm's little dialogue. Our principal historical point is that this dialogue exhibits, in a manner which cannot be gainsaid, Anselm's interest in dialectics for its own sake. Thus, not only did he employ dialectics in his other works but he was interested in the study of dialectics itself. Furthermore, and this is the point of Henry's study, he does so with an expertise and fruitfulness which ought to be appreciated. In commending this reassessment, Henry employs devices of recent logic and experiences none of the misgivings we have shown in our brief exposition of the subject matter of the *De grammatico*.

In his work on free will Anselm is concerned to analyze a definition of Augustine's according to which free will is a power to do good and evil, a definition which would seem to preclude our speaking of God and the angels as free. In his work on truth Anselm distinguishes many meanings of "true" and extracts from them the core meaning of rectitude or correctness. He is thereby able to compare and distinguish the meanings involved in speaking of God as truth, of judgments and statements as true, of willing as correct or true. Both works repay close study and exhibit a fine mind at work.

The thought of St. Anselm by and large proceeds within a context provided by faith, but if his is a believing intelligence, his writings give us the fruit of an activity which is not simply a reiterated act of faith. He wanted to understand what he believed, and this ideal, as we saw at some length above, is not a simple or uniform one. Furthermore, with respect to the controversy between the dialecticians and the anti-dialecticians, the placement of Anselm is not a black-and-white matter. He was understandably harsh with those he felt were trying to subject matters of belief to the canons of natural reason in a crude and distasteful manner, but his writings exhibit, deliberately and consciously, the bringing to bear of a questioning intelligence on matters of faith. Finally, Anselm wrote a logical work which, though it was for a long time dismissed as unimportant and inept, has recently undergone a significant reappraisal.

It is not the task of the historian to predict the influence Anselm may have on future philosophy, but it can be asserted that it could be a broader and consequently different influence than he has exercised up to the present. Looking backward, it is safe to say that the single most important Anselmian doctrine is the proof of God's existence attempted in the *Proslogion*. We can be certain that Anselm's ontological argument will continue to be discussed. For the Christian, Anselm can be a model of the intellectual life; his was an intellect captivated by faith but not, for all that, indisposed to range as far and wide as possible. His writings convey, not so much by an argument to this effect as by their pervading spirit, that no rational truth could be inimical to or incompatible with what God has chosen to reveal to man. That conviction and his efforts to exhibit its grounds in particular matters are indication enough that obscurantism and narrowness are not necessary concomitants of religious faith.

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## CHAPTER III

# *Peter Abelard*

### A. *The Man and His Work*

His name should be spelled "Abailard," but it is as "Abelard" that he is known, Peter Abelard, and just as he was wont to distinguish between *vox* and *rēs*, word and reality, we must take into account the difference between the myth or reputation of Abelard and what the man really was. The tradition of misspelling his name can be taken as almost symptomatic. Abelard has been for a long time a personality, an interesting, even tragic, character; there is a temptation, which few resist, to take sides first and then view the controversies in which he was involved from the vantage point of the *parti pris*. Was he the victim of William of Champeaux, of Anselm of Laon, of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, of the uncle of Heloise? Or was he the victim of his own pride and vanity, of the *hubris* which seemed to characterize him until his last year? To such questions we should perhaps respond with the title of one of Abelard's works: *Sic et non*, yes and no. He was an exceedingly complex character, at once congenial and abrasive, and no event of his life seems free of a fundamental ambiguity. Heloise and Abelard have been called the first modern couple—I believe this is intended as a compliment—and perhaps they were; perhaps that explains the ambivalence which marks not only their doomed affair but other events of his life as well. There is no label that has been attached to Abelard that cannot be questioned or at least qualified. He may not in this differ from others—the convenience of labels seems inseparable from their inconvenience—but here as elsewhere what may be true of many seems particularly true of Abelard. There is an element of exaggeration in the man, no matter how we view him. Always controversial, seldom dull, he seems never to have run out of surprises for his contemporaries. One is tempted to say that his ultimate trick was to end his life in so edifying a way that he elicited the unstinting praise of Peter the Venerable, and one wants to think that St. Bernard of Clairvaux, if not William of St. Thierry, must finally have come to admire his enemy.

Peter Abelard was born in Palais, or Le Pallet, in Brittany in 1079.

The stock from which he came was said to produce men good for the clerical life and not much else. Peter was early interested in things of the mind, and it may have been in 1094, at the age of fifteen, that Peter studied under Roscelin. There is reason to believe that he studied under Thierry of Chartres as well, and this too may have occurred while he was still a boy. We are not certain when exactly he first went to Paris. During this first stay he studied under William of Champeaux, at which time a characteristic of his manifested itself in a dramatic way. He began to quarrel with his teacher, to take exception to him, and, by his own account, to get the better of William. The upshot was that Abelard set up his own school, first at Melun, soon after at Corbeil in order to be closer to Paris; for his school, begun around 1104, was intended to rival that of William. Sometime before 1106 Abelard fell ill and returned to Brittany, where he remained for several years.

In 1108 Abelard returned to Paris and to the classroom of William of Champeaux. William was now teaching at St. Victor in Paris, having become a monk. Abelard attended William's lectures on rhetoric, and the old quarrel began anew. Abelard forced William to change his view on the status of universals and, thus triumphant, once more set up his own school, this time just outside Paris at Mont Ste. Genevieve. He continued to teach and to cause consternation among William's loyal students until his mother summoned him home. His father had joined a religious order and his mother intended to do so, and she seems to have wanted him home before she took the step.

Abelard returned from home around 1113, but now he had an entirely different ambition. He had decided at the age of thirty-four to study theology, and for this purpose he went to Laon, where Anselm and his brother Ralph taught. Their reputation was high, and it seemed a good choice, but almost immediately upon arriving at Laon, Abelard began to voice his criticism of Anselm. Taunted by the other students, he offered to comment on the Book of Ezekiel to show them how theology should be taught. They laughed when he sat down to the Bible. And yet, Abelard assures us, he dazzled his putative peers. They came to chortle; they stayed to take notes; they urged him to continue. Anselm was not to be counted among those elated at this outcome and became, in his turn, critical of Abelard.

Predictably, Abelard's next move was to set up his own school of theology. Actually he was offered a chair at the cathedral in Paris, students from Laon followed him, and his career was on the ascendant. Then, as eventually it does to most men, love came to Abelard. He was no callow youth; he was mature in years, he had devoted his life to study and teaching, and his academic and ecclesiastical future looked bright indeed. But Heloise, when he met her, seemed brighter still and certainly preferable. She was the niece of Fulbert, a canon of Notre Dame, a girl of much talent and some education. Abelard sug-

gested to Fulbert that he, Abelard, move into the house where he could direct the education of Heloise. Abelard's teaching was the first casualty, he tells us. He no longer prepared; he taught only what he had taught before; he wrote poetry. Heloise became pregnant, and Abelard took her off to Brittany, where in the house of his sister their son Astralabe was born. Fulbert, who had been flattered by Abelard's interest in his niece, was infuriated by this turn of events. Abelard wanted to marry Heloise, but she refused. Her reasons came down to this, that a married Abelard could not achieve the heights beckoning to an unmarried Abelard. She was not suggesting a clandestine relationship; she did not propose to be his mistress or his wife; rather, she wanted the affair to end. Heloise emerges as a genuinely selfless young lady, while Abelard in his *Historia calamitatum* confesses that his own attitude was essentially selfish. Nonetheless, he refused to accept the self-effacing offer of Heloise, insisted they marry, but agreed that it should be kept secret. The marriage seems to have taken place in Paris, to which they had returned, having left little Astralabe in Brittany with his aunt. Fulbert would have nothing to do with a secret marriage, however, and he bruited about that the nuptials had taken place. Heloise and Abelard, for a multitude of reasons, were incensed by this, and Abelard took Heloise to a nunnery at Argenteuil, the abbess of which he knew and where Heloise had been raised. Infuriated by this, Fulbert in company with friends burst into Abelard's room and emasculated him. The uncle's rage is surely curious in its intensity—and of course its effect on Abelard was decisive and permanent.

In the wake of his maiming, Abelard repaired to the Abbey of St. Denys near Paris, where, he tells us, he reflected on the justice of the punishment that had been inflicted upon him. He made his profession as a monk at St. Denys around 1118, devoted himself to study and prayer—and became critical of the house. It is generally agreed that this time his criticism had an unequivocal target. Bernard of Clairvaux was also critical of the mode of life at St. Denys. Old students sought out Abelard at the monastery, and he resumed teaching; it was at this time that he wrote his first theological work, in response to student requests and in criticism of Anselm of Laon. In 1121 he was summoned to a council at Soissons, where he expected to engage in public debate with Bernard of Clairvaux but where, to his surprise, he found a tribunal already convinced of his guilt. The charge was Sabellianism, but Abelard insists he was not found guilty of heresy. It was the fact that he had no license to teach theology that seems to have been his undoing, and in the event his book was burnt. As punishment he had to recite the Creed publicly and was entrusted to the abbot of St. Medard. Eventually he was freed by the papal legate and sent back to St. Denys. There he wore out his welcome by assuring the brethren that their St. Denys could not possibly have been Denys the Areopagite.

One night he slipped away to Champagne and, once there, petitioned his abbot for permission to lead a monastic life elsewhere than at St. Denys. This was refused, but by the time Abelard got back to Paris there was a new abbot, permission was granted, and Abelard built an oratory at Quincey dedicated to the Paraclete. Once more students sought him out and Abelard resumed teaching, but he seems to have been somewhat nervous about doing so, perhaps mindful that he was again teaching theology without papal authority. In 1125 the monks at St. Gildas invited him to come as their abbot, and he agreed. It is conjectured that sometime during his stay at the Paraclete Abelard was ordained a priest. The monastery of which he became abbot was a literal nightmare. The monks kept concubines, and the place was impoverished. There was reason to suspect that the monks had both imagined that Abelard was a lenient religious and expected that students, with their fees, would follow him to St. Gildas. Abelard at this time gave the Paraclete to Heloise and her nuns. His attempts to reform his monastery put Abelard's very life in danger, and in 1131 he requested a papal investigation of the place. He himself left St. Gildas, in either 1131 or 1132, intending to go to Paris. It is here that the *Historia calamitatum* ends, and it has been conjectured that Abelard wanted the book to precede him to Paris and pave his way.

Our next firm word about Abelard comes from John of Salisbury, who studied under Abelard at Mont Ste. Genevieve in 1136. Abelard seems to have taught until the convening of the Council of Sens in 1140. William of St. Thierry had written to Bernard of Clairvaux concerning Abelard's teaching, to receive encouragement, and Abelard once more was headed for trouble. There is reason to believe that Abelard and Bernard met to discuss the former's teaching, but Bernard was unsatisfied and Abelard was charged. Abelard appealed immediately from the council to the pope, but the council was upheld. Abelard was condemned and excommunicated, and his works were burnt at St. Peter's in Rome. Abelard set out for Rome to see if he could not reverse the judgment. He never got there. En route, he stopped off at Cluny, where Peter the Venerable was abbot. The abbot persuaded Abelard to make his peace with Bernard, and this was done. Abelard settled at Cluny, where his humility and devotion were a source of edification to the monks and to Peter the Venerable himself. Abelard died on April 21, 1142.

Putting the *Historia calamitatum*, his poetry and letters to one side, the writings of Abelard fall into two main groups: logical and theological. Reliable editions of Abelard's logical writings are of fairly recent date, all within the present century, some within the decade. They fall into four groups: the so-called *Introductiones parvulorum* (1114), which are glosses of a fairly close type on Porphyry, Aristotle, and Boethius; the *Logica ingredientibus* (1120), containing glosses

of increasing originality on Porphyry and Aristotle; the *Logica nostrorum petitioni* (1124), a very elaborate gloss on Porphyry's *Isagoge*; finally, the *Dialectica*, which is thought to have achieved its final form while Abelard was at Cluny. The dating of these works is, of course, conjectural and controverted. In 1958 two further works were attributed to Abelard. One of the most fruitful periods for historians of logic is the twelfth century, and for this reason it has been attracting so much attention that we may expect that our knowledge of Abelard's own logical work, and the context in which it was done, is bound to increase.

Among Abelard's theological writings are *De unitate et trinitate divina* (about 1120), *Sic et non* (1122–23), *Theologia Christiana*, *Theologia* (1124–1136), *Expositio ad Romanos*, *Scito teipsum* (this is Abelard's ethics), and *The Dialogue Between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*.

Since it was chronologically his first interest, we will begin our consideration of Abelard's doctrine with his logic and then go on to his theological work. Finally, we will have something to say about the ethical doctrine contained in his *Know Thyself*.

## B. Abelard's Logic

*The Nature of Logic.* In his *Dialectica* Abelard tells us that there are seven works which are in common use among the Latins when logic is engaged in. They are the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, the *Categories* and *On Interpretation* of Aristotle, and four works of Boethius—the *Book on Divisions*, the *Topics*, *Categorical Syllogisms*, and *Hypothetical Syllogisms*. Actually the influence of Boethius is very apparent in Abelard's logical works. Even in commenting on Porphyry and Aristotle he follows Boethius closely. It is a matter of curiosity whether Abelard knew any of Aristotle's logical works other than the *Categories* and *On Interpretation*. Fairly general agreement can be obtained that Abelard knew the *Sophistical Refutations* and that he had seen at least some of the *Prior Analytics*. Through Boethius he, of course, had some indirect knowledge of the complete *Organon*.

Abelard simply takes over Boethius' solution of the controversy between the Stoic and Peripatetic schools (which Boethius, in turn, probably took from Ammonius). Should logic be regarded as a part of philosophy or only its instrument? The Stoics, who subdivided philosophy into physics, ethics, and logic, felt that logic had as much reason to be regarded as an autonomous part of philosophy as physics and ethics. It had an end of its own which was irreducible to those of physics and ethics. The Peripatetics, on the other hand, insisted on the instrumentality of logic and maintained that its goal was simply to aid us in achieving the goals of speculative and practical philosophy. Boethius, following Ammonius, wanted it both ways. He invoked the anal-

ogy of the hand, which is at once a part of the body and its instrument.

More often than not, Abelard uses "dialectic" as synonymous with "logic." He is of course aware of the narrow use of the term "dialectic" when it refers to merely probable arguments; when he comments on the *Topics* he follows Boethius in likening the dialectician in the narrow sense to the rhetor or orator. In its broad sense, when dialectic *is* logic, it is a science. These two meanings of the term, the broad and the narrow, reflect Stoic and Aristotelian usage, respectively. When Abelard discusses the nature of logic, he appeals to the Stoic tripartite division of philosophy. Physics, or speculative philosophy, is concerned with the nature and causes of things; moral philosophy, or ethics, gives norms for the conduct of life. What does logic do? It treats of the way to construct arguments (*de ratione argumentorum compenenda*). It may be defined as *ratio disserendi*, that is, the science of discourse. Its task is to establish the truth or falsity of discourse. Abelard accepts from Boethius the notion that logic comprises both the art of discovering arguments and the art of confirming them, of judging their truth or falsity according to certain rules. These are constitutive parts of logic and not subdivisions of it, he says. What makes an argument true? Two things: the disposition of terms and the nature of things. If the goal of logic is the construction of true or scientific discourse, it is possible to see the task of logic subdivide into a study of names, propositions, the discovery of arguments, and, finally, their confirmation. Abelard goes to some trouble to distinguish logic from metaphysics, from psychology, from grammar and rhetoric, and from the mere ability to formulate arguments without knowing what it is that makes an argument valid or invalid.

The logic of Abelard, whether in the various glosses or in the independent work *Dialectica*, takes its scope and direction from the authoritative logical works then available in Latin. This is not to say that Abelard was not an independent and interesting logician. For a lengthy analysis of Abelard's *Dialectica*, the reader is referred to W. and M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic*, pp. 202–224. To give some flavor of Abelard the logician, we will devote ourselves here to an analysis of one of his glosses on Porphyry, that of the *Logica ingredientibus*.

The text being glossed is the famous one in which Porphyry states the problem of universals. Abelard lists the three questions raised by Porphyry and adds three of his own: (1) What is the common cause of our imposing universal names? (2) How do we understand universal names in which no particular thing seems to be conceived? (3) Would the name "rose" continue to have a meaning if all roses were destroyed? Promising to resolve these questions, Abelard notes that he will discuss the problem of universals only from the point of view of genus and species, leaving the other three predicables aside.

A definition of universal is needed at the outset. Abelard invokes

the definition given by Aristotle in *On Interpretation*: a universal is that which is naturally apt to be predicated of many. As for the particular, Porphyry's definition is taken to be accurate enough: the particular is that which is predicated only of one. Not only words but things too are called universals, Abelard says. What he has in mind is Aristotle's remark, "Since of things, some are universals and others are singulars, I call that universal. . . ." So too, Porphyry has located genus and species in the nature of things. From all this Abelard concludes that things themselves are contained in the universal name.

How can the universal definition be applied to a thing? It would seem that no one thing, or no collection of things, is predicated of many things taken one by one. Yet that seems to be the characteristic of the universal. How is one thing, or a collection of things, called universal? Abelard proposes to examine all the available opinions on the matter.

(1) *First Opinion*. Some have tried to resolve the difficulty by saying that things which differ from one another in form nonetheless have essentially the same substance. This is the material essence of the individuals in which it is; moreover, it is one in itself and diverse only through the forms of its inferiors. Were these forms removed, there would be absolutely no difference between the things, for their diversity is due simply to forms: the matter is in essence absolutely the same. Thus, the same substance is made to be Plato by these accidents and Socrates by those.

Abelard thinks Porphyry would agree to this solution since he had written, "By participation in the species many men are one, but in particulars the one and common is many." Boethius too would seemingly agree, for he maintained that the same universal is at the same time entirely present in the different things of which it constitutes the substance materially; though universal in itself, it is individual thanks to advening forms, without which it subsists naturally in itself. Apart from such forms it by no means exists actually; in actuality it is always individual, although by nature it is universal. According to Boethius, Abelard concludes, individuals subsist, whereas universals are understood.

We need not be terribly concerned with the degree of accuracy with which Abelard ascribes positions to his predecessors; our present interest is in his reaction to the position as he has formulated it. He objects to it by saying that it is contrary to nature. Consider this one nature which is said to be essentially the same beneath diverse forms. Where is it? It is in individuals and individuals are many, and that entails that some one thing which is affected by certain forms be another thing which is affected by other forms. For example, animal is a genus, a species of universal. All right. Animal is essentially the same thing as it takes on the form of rationality and as it takes on the

form of irrationality. But this is tantamount to saying that the irrational animal is the rational animal.

One might reply to Abelard by saying that irrational animal and rational animal can be identified to the extent that they are animal, but not insofar as they are rational and irrational. Abelard is ready. If substance is said to be the same and different only because of different qualities, we are merely postponing the problem. Quality too is a genus, and this would seem to entail that all qualities are the same. Finally, Abelard says, if difference is always something other than substance, how can we possibly talk about a plurality of substances? The import of that question is clear. If there are not many substances, there will not be many individuals for a universal to be common to.

(2) *Second Opinion.* Another opinion, one Abelard feels is close to the truth, would have it as follows. Individual things do not differ from one another because of forms; rather they are discrete personally in their essences. That which is in one is in no way to be found in another, whether it be matter or form. Even were all their forms removed, things would not subsist less discrete in their essences. Their personal differentness, that thanks to which this one is not that one, does not come from forms. It is the diversity itself of essence, just as the forms themselves are diverse one from another in themselves. If we do not say this, the diversity of forms would have to proceed *ad infinitum*, appeal always being made to further forms to explain the difference between these forms. Well, if forms can just simply differ from one another, why cannot individuals?

Abelard reacts to this opinion by wondering how those who hold it, hold namely that things are utterly different from one another, can admit universals at all. They do so by a distinction. True enough, they hold, things are not *essentially* the same, but they can be said to be *indifferently* so. Thus, individual men, different from one another in themselves, as individuals, are the same in man, that is, they do not differ (are indifferent) with respect to humanity. The universal is grounded on this indifference.

There is a subdivision of this second opinion. (a) Some hold that the universal is simply a collection of many individuals, for example, all men taken together are the species. Abelard thinks that Boethius would be in agreement with this. He quotes Boethius as follows, "Species must be considered to be nothing other than the thought collected from the substantial likeness of individuals, and genus from the likeness of species." That collected likeness, Abelard suggests, amounts to a collecting of many. (b) Others hold that the species is not only men brought together but the individuals also insofar as they are men. When it is said that what Socrates is is predicated of many, this has to be understood figuratively, that is, many are the same as he. This means that there will be as many species and genera as there are

individuals, but because of likenesses of nature those who hold this position would assign a smaller number of universals than there are individuals.

In replying or reacting to (a) Abelard asks how the whole collection of men together can be called the species if the species is predicated of each of them? The species is not predicated partially of an individual; what it expresses must be wholly in each one of them. Furthermore, why would not small groups of men constitute a species, with the result that the species, man, would contain a great number of species? And what happens to the species if one member of the collection is removed?

As for (b), Abelard asks how we are to distinguish the universal from the particular in terms of "predicated of many" if Socrates like man can be said of many things? That is, if what Socrates is as man is said of many because they are the same as he, why cannot other men be called Socrates for the same reason? To the possible retort that to say Socrates agrees with Plato "in man" means that he does not differ from him in man, Abelard replies that we could just as easily say that Socrates does not differ from Plato in stone.

Abelard feels that the discussion has brought us to a point where it seems clear that things cannot be called universals, whether things be taken singly or collectively. The only alternative is to ascribe universality to words alone. The grammarian distinguishes appellative from proper nouns, Abelard observes, and the logician has a similar distinction to make between universal and particular words. By a universal word is meant one that can be predicated of many, for example, the term "man" can be conjoined with the particular names of men because of the nature of the subject things on which it is imposed. Particular words, a proper noun like "Socrates," are predicable only of one thing unless it be used equivocally, in which case it is no longer one word but many. Abelard does not mean to equate the grammatical and logical distinctions. He points out that a construction satisfies the grammarian if it makes sense, even though it does not show the status of a thing. Thus, "Man is a stone" is good grammar; it clearly indicates a meaning, but it does not truly demonstrate the status of man. The universal is never just the appellative, for the appellative includes oblique cases which are of little interest to the logician, who is primarily concerned with the proposition.

Having defined words as universal and particular, we must inquire into the properties of universal words. The thing about universal words is that they seem to stand for no one thing and to constitute no clear meaning of anything. For it is clear that a universal word does not apply to something, insofar as it differs from something else to which the same universal word is applicable. Thus, it might seem that universals do not derive their meaning from things. "Man," for example,

does not stand for Socrates or any other individual or for the collection of individuals. We cannot infer from the proposition "A man sits in the house" that Socrates or any other particular man is sitting there. "Man," then, seems to signify no one thing, or even nothing. Where does it get its meaning? Abelard suggests the following. Universal words signify different things by naming them. Take the word "man." It names individual things for a common reason, namely, that they are men, and that is why it is called a universal. It also forms a certain conception which is common, not proper, and which pertains to the individuals in which it conceives the common likeness.

Abelard considers this sufficient preparation for answering the three questions he has added to those of Porphyry. First, what is the common cause of the imposition of the universal word? Abelard says that individual men are discrete in essence as well as in accidents, but are united insofar as they are men. He does not mean to say that they are united in man, since nothing is man except a discrete thing. They are united in being man. To be man is not the same as man or indeed as anything. "Not to be in a subject," one of the characteristics of substance, is not itself something; the same can be said of "not to undergo contrariety" and "not to be subject to more or less." Yet these phrases express what Aristotle says is true of substance. What Abelard is trying to avoid is the position according to which individuals are said to be the same because of some other individual thing. Socrates and Plato are alike in being man; horse and ass are alike in not being man. Consequently, for different things to agree is for the individuals to be the same or not to be the same, as to be white or not to be white, to be man or not to be man. Abelard is not desirous of avoiding the issue by appeal to negative phrases. When we say of two things that they agree in the status of man, we are saying that they are alike in being men, that in this they do not differ in the least. Abelard adds that we can make that assertion without any appeal to essence. We call it the status itself of man to be man and that is not some further thing. To be a man—that is the common cause of the imposition of the universal term "man" on individuals. It is in being man that the individuals agree with one another.

What is Abelard saying here? Is he denying that Socrates and Plato have the same nature? Is he denying that they agree in essence? Or is he simply saying that it is not human nature as it exists in Socrates or as it exists in Plato that is signified by "man"? And what does he mean by status? We shall return to these questions.

Abelard's second question had to do with the understanding of universal words. He begins by distinguishing understanding and sense. The former does not make use of a corporeal organ, and it bears on the likeness of things constructed by the mind for itself. Thus, if a tower we saw is destroyed, we can no longer see it, but we still have

the mental likeness formed of it. And, as seeing does not constitute the tower, neither is understanding the form or likeness. Abelard goes on to disagree with Aristotle, who, Abelard feels, equated an operation of the soul with the form by saying that the *passiones animae* are likenesses of things. Abelard prefers to call the image the likeness of the thing. Nonetheless, he concedes that understanding too can be called a likeness since it conceives what is properly called the likeness of the thing. Actually there is no disagreement with Aristotle here; the phrase "passions of the soul" which occurs in *On Interpretation* does not mean, as Abelard thinks, mental acts, but concepts. Abelard maintains that universal words are common and confused images of many things. Universality is achieved at the expense of distinctness. "Man" stands vaguely for this man, that man, and so on, and does not evoke a sharp image in the way "Socrates" does. Abelard would seem to have answered his third question as well: although the conception of rose would depend upon existent roses, once the mental image is formed, it can be retained and "rose" will preserve its meaning even if all roses should cease to exist.

Abelard's conclusion is that universal words signify the common form which is present to the mind, although he notes that the most forceful explanation of universals is that they are caused by a common conception formed in accord with the nature of things. Abelard feels that solution is closed to him, and he is left with the view that the universal word signifies a fuzzy, indistinct image which is formed by the mind.

These preliminaries done, Abelard turns to Porphyry's questions. He feels he can say, first of all, that universal words name existent things, but only in the way explained above. They owe their universality to the operation of our mind; the universality is not something existent in the sense of extramental. Are universals corporeal or incorporeal? This question, like the foregoing one, is ambiguous, Abelard observes. Some universal words may signify incorporeal substances, others corporeal substances. In the latter case, does the name common to many corporeal things signify something incorporeal? *Sic et non*, Abelard replies. It signifies individual corporeal things in a common fashion which presupposes an incorporeal image in our mind. The third question, whether universals exist in corporeal things, is answered by noting that the universal concept or image does not exist in corporeal singulars, although it represents what is in them. As for the dispute between Plato and Aristotle on this matter, Abelard has a swift reconciliation. Aristotle correctly maintained that what universals signify exists actually only in singulars; Plato just as correctly maintained that there is nothing to prevent their existing apart.

What, in sum, is Abelard maintaining with respect to universals? Few scholars discern an absolutely clear-cut doctrine emerging from

Abelard's several discussions of the problem. Perhaps the two outstanding difficulties with Abelard's position are (1) the view that the universal word signifies something vague and (2) that this vague something is the status rather than the essence of individuals. As for the first, are not we able to have a very distinct notion of what "house" or "rose" means without at the same time asserting that those meanings are snapshots of individual houses or roses? When Abelard discusses Boethius' treatment of universals, it becomes clear that Abelard sees no way in which things named by the same universal word can be said to have a common essence. And yet, what can he mean by his status theory if not something pertaining to the substance—that is, the essence—of individual men? He has emphatically excluded the view that this man is *this* one thanks to his accidents; by the same token, it would seem, he cannot maintain that "man" signifies a similarity among individual men based on their accidents. What is left save to say that they are essentially similar? At this point, Abelard hits on the notion that human nature is one and predicable of many due to our mental image; what the name stands for is the common conception, the result of understanding. But again we must ask, what does the common conception stand for, of what is it a conception? Abelard, it is true, admits that something other than the common conception causes the imposition of the universal word, but he is far from clear as to what this something is—except that it is the status of the individuals.

### C. *Faith and Reason*

In the controversy between dialecticians and antidialecticians Abelard must of course be counted among the dialecticians. It would indeed have been curious if one who had devoted himself to logic as long and profoundly as Abelard had did not, when he turned to theology, seek some relation between his new interest and his previous one. He was convinced of the utility of logic for theology because he wanted, not to reduce faith to the level of reason, but rather to defend and understand the faith with a most powerful weapon. Abelard's difficulties with ecclesiastical authorities should not lead us to think that he questioned authority or that he had an inadequate sense of the harmful effects of heresy. Indeed, much of his theological work was prompted by a desire to refute heresy. He wrote that he had no desire to be a philosopher if that entailed turning away from St. Paul; indeed, if it meant separation from Christ, he would not care to be Aristotle himself. But he had little patience with those who warned against the study of dialectic. In the prologue to the fourth tractate of his *Dialectica* Abelard gives a strong defense of logic in relation to faith. He asks why he should be forbidden to read authors by men who apparently read them assiduously themselves. More seriously, he observes that logic offers strong weapons against the sophisms of heretics. He

adds that many are foes of logic because they have not the talent to understand it.

Besides its defensive role, logic has a more positive part to play with respect to faith. Not only is its study useful in order that the believer may dispute well with those who attack the faith but logic also has a constructive role to play, insofar as the believer strives for an understanding of his faith. If Abelard finds it fairly easy to argue in favor of a conjunction of reason and authority when it is a matter of defending the faith, he is somewhat less clear on the constructive understanding of faith. Before considering this further, we must look at what Abelard had to say on the nature of faith.

Against the view that faith can be explained solely in terms of a voluntary assent to what is not understood, Abelard defines faith first in terms of intellectual assent: *id quod mente firmiter tenemus*. We must, he insists, know the meaning of what we believe. In writing to his son he says that faith comes not from force but from reason (*ratione*). To sustain this point, he will cite the persuasive efforts of apostolic and patristic writers. On another occasion Abelard defined faith as an *existimatio* of things unseen, and this drew fire from critics who felt that he was maintaining that belief is merely an opinion. How, they asked, can this square with the certainty of belief? Abelard may seem to have argued himself into a strange position here, holding both that we must understand what we believe and that faith is opinion. He makes a number of distinctions which make it clear that he is consistent with himself and is maintaining a position that is far from dangerous.

As others had before him, Abelard distinguishes three modes of faith which can be expressed by three phrases: *credere Deum*, *credere Deo*, *credere in Deum*. It is not easy to find English equivalents for these nuanced expressions. The first (*credere Deum*) covers acceptance of the existence of God, and this as a kind of minimal assent. The second (*credere Deo*) involves trust in God's words and promises. The third (*credere in Deum*) involves loving and cherishing God. As Sikes points out, the progression Abelard has in mind here is not unlike the distinction Aquinas will employ between *fides informata* and *fides formata*, the latter a faith informed by charity. Abelard is willing to say that faith in its minimal sense can be possessed by one who does not love God, one who is in a state of sin. This indicates that Abelard does not think of faith as some abstract, merely mental assent to what God has revealed. Beyond revealed truth is the revealing Truth, and we must convert ourselves to him by means of love. Thus, Abelard can speak of the *primordia fidei*, the beginnings of faith, which one has when one accepts the truth of Christian doctrine. But the term of faith is not a dialectical exercise on the contents of faith; it is a loving union with God.

As for the meaning of *existimatio*, we must take into account a distinction Abelard makes when he says that we must understand what we believe. The understanding referred to is contrasted with comprehension; Abelard, no more than any other medieval theologian, is not suggesting that we can comprehend what God has revealed. Since the understanding of faith falls short of comprehension, it is not altogether surprising that Abelard speaks of it as an *existimatio*. Later writers like Aquinas will say of faith that it is less than science and more than opinion. Since Abelard is not suggesting that what we believe is probable and is insisting that it is less than comprehension, his *existimatio* could be taken to foreshadow the view of Aquinas.

Abelard is thought to be a very important figure in the history of theology, particularly from the point of view of method. De Ghellinck writes, "The prologue as well as the content of the *Sic et non* had an enduring influence on the theological movement, even on the canonical." (*Le mouvement théologique du XIIIe siècle*, p. 164) The method of *Sic et non* is to set before the reader conflicting authoritative texts on a variety of points, a device calculated to stimulate the student to effect a resolution of seeming contradictions. Many of the passages brought into seeming contradiction are from Scripture, and in the prologue to the work Abelard has things to say about the language of Scripture. We must, he points out, take into account that copyists' errors may present us with difficulties. Beyond that, his view of the inspiration of Scripture is that it consists of an indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the sacred writer, an indwelling which does not amount to the dictation of what is to be written. Rather, thanks to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the sacred writer expresses in his own words and in his own way what he has learned. Scripture is extremely important for Abelard as the vehicle of what is to be believed, but he sees a need for interpretation and critique of it. And, after all, Abelard is a Catholic, and will insist on the role of tradition and of the Church in defining the content of faith.

We have already said that Abelard must be numbered among the dialecticians. Actually, his position may seem a little ambiguous on this controversy. In the *Theologia Christiana* we read: "Is God subjected to the rules established by philosophy? No, he breaks them and shows their vanity by every miracle. Is not the healing of a blind man in contradiction to that rule of Aristotle, 'For neither will one made blind see again'? And does not the divine maternity of Mary contradict this other rule: 'If she gives birth, she has been with a man'?" (*PL*, 178, 1245C-D) Furthermore, "It should suffice for human reason to know that human intelligence cannot comprehend him who so far surpasses all things and completely exceeds the powers of human discussion and comprehension." (1124B) It would be easy to multiply such texts in which Abelard sounds as negative as any antidialectician. However,

in the *Introductio* a different view is taken. Commenting on a remark of St. Gregory to the effect that faith loses its merit if grounded on reason, Abelard replies to those who would use this remark to counsel against thinking on what is believed: "If the interpretation given were true, St. Gregory would be in opposition to himself and to all the holy Doctors who have recommended the use of reason to establish and defend the faith. Moreover, St. Gregory opposes with arguments those who doubted the fact of the resurrection, although precisely on this question he had said 'Faith loses its merit if reason gives an argument for it.' Does not his procedure go contrary to the opinion attributed to him, namely, that one ought not to reason concerning the faith? No more has he said that it loses all its merit when it was engendered by rational argumentation rather than by divine authority and when one believes not because God has said it but because reason has been convinced." Those who condemn reasoning about faith are seeking an excuse for their own ignorance. "I think no one can ignore the fact that it is rational study rather than sanctity which has caused progress in those instructed in divine science."

The ambivalence here disappears when we consider the purpose of the two works. The *Theologia Christiana* was written to counter the abuses of Roscelin; in the *Introductio* Abelard is countering the abuses of the antidialecticians. Moreover, in the former work Abelard speaks of the utility of the arts, especially dialectic, for reading Scripture, and in the latter insists on the incomprehensibility of mysteries. There does not seem to be any strong basis for arguing that Abelard's thought developed on this point. Rather, we must consider his main target of the moment and the balance he strives to maintain.

For Abelard God is the source of all knowledge of faith. There is, however, much ambiguity in his position on the Trinity. Is the Trinity a mystery which can be attained only on the basis of faith or is it accessible to natural reason? Abelard says at least that the Trinity of Persons has been revealed by God through the Jewish prophets *and* through Gentile philosophers. He says explicitly that Plato came closest to the Christian faith in this matter. It is true that he makes this claim on the basis of what he has read in the Fathers. What is more important, however, is Abelard's insistence that if pagan philosophers possessed knowledge of the Trinity, this was because God had revealed it to them. But what does he mean by revelation? In commenting on the Epistle to the Romans 1:20, a passage where Paul says that the invisible things of God were available to the Romans through the visible things of this world, Abelard seems to mean by revelation that God's nature and the Trinity of Persons can be known by reflecting on God's effects. Scholars are at odds on the significance of such assertions. Some see here an explicit contradiction with Abelard's teaching elsewhere that a mystery cannot be comprehended; others try

to distinguish between factual awareness of the mystery and comprehension of it. The defender of Abelard's orthodoxy on this point has his work cut out for him.

#### D. *Abelard's Ethics*

Abelard was more impressed by the pagan philosophers in the area of morals than in divinity, however, and it is in their ethical concern that he sees the center of their philosophical effort. Indeed, the pagan philosophers were far closer to Christianity than were the Jews, because Jewish law is largely an external matter, whereas pagan philosophers saw the importance of interior justice, of chastity, of contempt for this world. This assessment of pagan moral philosophy betrays the salient feature of Abelard's own moral teaching.

In his *Ethics*, the subtitle of which is *Know Thyself*, Abelard insists on the priority of the interior in morals. It is our inner intention, our consent, that makes an external act good or bad and not vice versa. The measure of morality thus firmly located in the interior act, in intention and consent, Abelard had opened himself to the charge of subjectivism. And indeed among the propositions condemned at the Council of Sens was the contention that those who crucified Christ did not sin because they acted in ignorance, and we cannot ascribe guilt to those who know not what they do. Another stated that a man is not made good or bad by his acts, presumably his external actions.

Is Abelard's ethical position subjectivistic? He appears to be maintaining, not that our interior intention constitutes what is good or bad, but rather that one must personally recognize what is good and bad. The emphasis, nevertheless, is on the inner man. Purity of heart is what must be striven for, since, once it is had, perception of the true end is possible. Abelard will distinguish between vice and sin. Vice is a tendency to perform bad actions, but sin consists in consenting to the tendency and acting in accord with it. What this distinction enables Abelard to do is to separate himself from the position that sin resides in the will. This is not so, he maintains; it is possible to sin while having a good will or disposition and not to sin while having a bad will. The nub of the matter lies in consent and intention.

Abelard's ethical doctrine, with its strengths and weaknesses, has always been regarded as remarkable and as a further sign of his genius. It would not be long before ethical discussions would be carried on within the framework of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, something which will enable them to advance rapidly beyond the tentative steps Abelard took. And yet, when it is considered that Abelard's work on ethics was composed in the almost complete absence of a model, we must marvel at his accomplishment. This is not to say, of course, that Abelard did not draw on previous authors. The point is rather that, surprising as it may seem, there is a case that can be made for the contention that

Abelard was more original in ethics than in logic. His logical writings consist either of glosses or commentaries on the writings of others or, in his *Dialectica*, a more or less independent presentation of the contents of the works which had been previously commented on and largely in the same order as the commentaries. The *Dialectica* is, so to speak, a commentary without the text. The *Ethics* is Abelard himself, from beginning to end: the form is his, the problems and their order are his. If, as is charged, he emphasized the subjective in such a way that he seems to cut it adrift from adequate criteria of good subjectivity and bad subjectivity (a charge which is surely an exaggeration), it would have to be added that such an emphasis is always a salutary balance to the tendency to an excessive exteriorization of the criteria for good and bad action.

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## CHAPTER IV

# *The School of Chartres*

### A. *From Fulbert to Bernard*

The fame and influence of the cathedral school of Chartres during the twelfth century is beyond dispute. The writings of the men whom we shall consider in this chapter would be sufficient argument for the importance of the school, but we have as well the unstinted praise of John of Salisbury, himself a notable figure, who records the merits of the men under whom he studied at Chartres. There is, moreover, the opposition to Gilbert of Poitiers and William of Conches by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry, an opposition whose vigor witnesses to the importance of the target. Furthermore, there is the rivalry between Chartres and St. Victor at Paris to indicate that in the twelfth century the school of Chartres was widely recognized as a force to be reckoned with. Before speaking of the character of the twelfth century, something must be said of the first real fame of the school during a period straddling the millennium.

Fulbert (c.960–1028), who was bishop of Chartres from 1006 until his death, is generally recognized as the man who put Chartres on the map of medieval education. He was not, of course, the founder of the school. Fulbert studied under Gerbert at Rheims, came to Chartres about 990, and for about ten years was an assistant in the cathedral school. It is unlikely that Fulbert continued to teach after becoming bishop, but under his patronage the school achieved great fame. Its purpose was to prepare young men for the clerical life, and there was no ideal of a general secular culture. The course of studies was based on the liberal arts, and Fulbert himself seems to have known some medicine. The quality and scope of instruction at Chartres under Fulbert have probably been greatly exaggerated, as have the accomplishments of Fulbert himself. Chartres was not the only center of learning during the time of Fulbert, and the schools at Liège and Cologne were undoubtedly more advanced in mathematics than was Chartres. Qualifications in the usual estimate must be made accordingly, but when adjustments are made for the excessive praise of his contemporaries at Chartres, the fact still remains that Fulbert presided over a definite strengthening of the cathedral school. It should be

noted that Berengar of Tours, who was to provoke a lively theological controversy, studied at Chartres under Fulbert, although it is doubtful that Fulbert himself was then in the classroom.

A new flowering of the school took place under Bernard of Chartres (died before 1130), of whose teaching we know through John of Salisbury, although John himself had studied, not under Bernard, but rather under two of his pupils, William of Conches and Bernard Bishop. John gives us a description of Bernard's method of teaching grammar. There are, he writes, four things which are of chief importance in the pursuit of philosophy and the exercise of virtue. They are reading, doctrine, meditation, and good works. The first three lead to knowledge, and from knowledge good works flow; by the same token, the cultivation of virtue naturally precedes the quest for knowledge. Grammar is the foundation for and presupposition of all else and must therefore be learned first. Thus, reading (*lectio*) is the first step in the study of philosophy. In what does this reading consist? John suggests a distinction between prereading and reading, the former being the task of the teacher in the classroom, the latter solitary reading. Now what the *grammaticus* does in the prereading is this: he breaks the text into parts of speech, explains the metrics when it is verse, points out barbarisms and other breaches of the rules of language, explains tropes and figures of speech. A *grammaticus* like Bernard apparently employed the prereading as an occasion to discourse about all the arts.<sup>1</sup> John tells us that he would assess the arguments of the text (logic), comment on its eloquence and persuasiveness (rhetoric), and, when the text permitted it, expatiate on the quadrivium of mathematics and on physics and ethics. John assures us that this is the desirable way of prereading the *auctores*, the authors who came to function as authorities.

When he mentions the doctrine of the *Timaeus* of Plato, according to which the coming to be of the things of this world involves Ideas and matter, John of Salisbury calls Bernard the best Platonist of his time. He quotes some verse of Bernard in which a distinction is made between what is not and what truly is. What truly is comprises God, the Ideas, and matter.<sup>2</sup> Of these three, God alone is unqualifiedly

<sup>1</sup>“Sequebatur hunc morem Bernardus Carnotensis, exundantissimus modernis temporibus fons litterarum in Gallia, et in auctorum lectione quid simplex esset et ad imaginem regulae positum ostendebat; figuras grammatice, colores rhetoricos, cavillationes sophismatum, et qua parte sui propositae lectionis articulus respiciebat ad alias disciplinas, proponebat in medio; ita tamen ut non in singulis universa doceret, sed pro capacitate audientium dispensaret eis in tempore doctrine mensuram.” (*Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Metalogicon*, ed. Webb [Oxford, 1929], p. 55.)

<sup>2</sup> The verses of Bernard which John quoted are

Non dico esse quod est, gemina quod parte coactum  
Materiae formam continet implicitam:  
Sed dico esse quod est, una quod constat earum:  
Hoc vocat Idem illud Acheus et hylen.

(*Metal.*, IV; *PL*, 199, 938)

eternal, since Bernard is reluctant to speak of matter and Ideas as coeternal with him. John quotes a few lines from Bernard's exposition of Porphyry which cast some light on this. "There are two kinds of effect of the divine mind, one which he creates from a subject matter or which is created along with it, another which he makes of himself and contains in himself, requiring no outside aid. The heavens indeed he made in his intellect from the beginning, and to form them there he needed neither matter nor extrinsic form." (*Metal.*, IV, 35) The Ideas appear to be the patterns of external divine creativity, but as Ideas they are described as *velut quidam effectus*: as certain effects. John returns to the Platonism of Bernard in another text. "He posited Ideas, emulating Plato and imitating Bernard of Chartres, and said that apart from them there is no genus or species. An Idea, in the definition of Seneca, is an eternal exemplar of those things which come to be by nature. And since universals are not subject to corruption nor alterable by movements . . . they are truly called universals." (*Metal.*, II, 17) A common noun, then, names an unchanging reality, an Idea contained in God, though an effect of God and not quite coeternal with him; as for the sensible things around us, John agrees with Plato that they "await no naming due to their instability."<sup>3</sup>

The Platonism John of Salisbury attributes to Bernard is a common characteristic of the school in the twelfth century, and its source is, aside from the information that could be gleaned from the Fathers (principally Augustine) and Boethius, the *Timaeus* as translated and commented on by Chalcidius. Another source of Chartrian Platonism was Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*. Moreover, there is evidence that the so-called Hermetic writings exercised an influence on the school. The Plato of the *Timaeus* is of course a philosopher seeking to explain the cosmos. During this time Plato, as natural philosopher, is often contrasted with Aristotle, the dialectician. When the Chartrian thinkers employ Plato, it is to aid in understanding the content of their faith: the *Timaeus* is considered to be an explication of Genesis. In short, we must not expect to find in the twelfth-century school of Chartres anything like a clear distinction between philosophy and theology. The problem here, as with Anselm of Canterbury, is rather one of applying reason to faith in order to occupy a middle ground between the simple acceptance of what God has revealed and the full knowledge of truth. Full knowledge is not something that can be attained in this life. The pertinent dyad, then, is faith and reason. As a school, the men of Chartres are convinced that they have an obligation not only to believe but to understand, to the

<sup>3</sup> "Sed appellatione verbi substantivi non satis digna sunt, quae cum tempore transeunt, ut nunquam in eodem statu permaneant, sed, ut fumus, evanescent: 'fugiunt enim,' ut idem ait in Timaeo, 'nec expectant appellationem.'" (*Metal.*, IV, 35)

degree that this is possible, the contents of their belief. This approximation to an understanding is gained by appeal to such works as the *Timaeus*. In this effort they quite often offended the sensibilities of others who felt they were compromising the clear intent of revelation and ridiculing the faith of the simple. Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry are as shocked by some Chartrians as they are by Abelard himself—and often with good reason. Bernard and William feel that the way to explicate Scripture is to have recourse to the Fathers, not to pagan philosophers.

We will see some particular points of dispute later in this chapter and in the next; from a distance of centuries, and with the intermediary of much development in theology, the modern reader finds himself drawn sometimes to the side of the antidialecticians, sometimes to that of the dialecticians. There were excesses on both sides, to be sure; perhaps the greatest temptation to the historian is to look with lofty condescension on the whole dispute. That attitude is not a serious possibility for one who senses the utter seriousness of what is at issue in the clash of the dialecticians and antidialecticians. Perhaps the best attitude here is suggested in a remark attributed to Bernard of Chartres by John of Salisbury. "We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants; we see more things and more distant things than did they, not because our sight is keener nor because we are taller than they, but because they lift us up and add their giant stature to our height." (*Metal.*, III, 4) T. S. Eliot put the same thought more succinctly in replying to those who say we ought not read the old authors because we know so much more than they did: "Yes," Eliot said, "And they are what we know."

By stressing the efforts at cosmology at Chartres we do not mean to suggest that the schema of the seven liberal arts no longer provided the basic pattern of education. It did. But what differentiates the twelfth century from earlier ones, and what justifies calling it a renaissance, is the fact that the various arts were no longer considered to be summed up in encyclopedias or collections of statements by ancient authors. Each of the arts now achieves new vigor thanks to the introduction of fundamental works dealing with each of them. Pagan authors hitherto unavailable were read avidly, and with the increase of such material for the study of each of the arts there was a natural tendency toward specialization. The ideal of a cycle of education, a panoramic view of things to be gained by moving through each of the arts and arriving finally at a reading of Scripture, became jeopardized. From quite different viewpoints both William of Conches at Chartres and Hugh of St. Victor in Paris would speak out against the tendency to specialize, against the demand for a "quickie" course. When we realize that John of Salisbury devoted twelve years to study, moving from master to master, from school to school, we get a picture of what

was thought to be necessary for an adequate education. (Of course, there were not as yet set courses of study in the manner of the universities to come at the end of this century.) Thus, the dialecticians had enemies other than the antidialecticians; these others are the adversary John of Salisbury dubs with the name of an opponent of Virgil, Cornificius. The Cornificians wanted to be propelled through their studies in three, perhaps even two years; they wanted the emphasis put on the practical and useful, on what it takes for a man to get ahead in the world. The controversy was not merely one of educational theory. William of Conches actually had to give up teaching under the onslaught of Cornifician demands.

The men we shall now discuss are of great, if unequal, importance in the effort, which intensifies in the twelfth century, to conjoin faith and reason, in the phrase of Boethius. The old structure of the seven liberal arts as a preparation for biblical studies is retained, but it begins to be altered somewhat insofar as the Stoic division of philosophy into dialectics, physics, and ethics, and the Aristotelian division according to theoretical and practical sciences, takes on a growing meaning with the advent of more substantive ancient philosophical works. But no ultimate clarity with respect to a division between philosophy and theology is reached by the masters of Chartres.

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B. *Gilbert of Poitiers* (1076–1154)

Gilbert, a native of Poitiers, studied first at Chartres and then at Laon under Anselm. He started his teaching career in his native city but returned to Chartres as a teacher, becoming chancellor of the school in 1126. He held this post until 1138, and seems to have taught at Paris as well (John of Salisbury is our authority for that). In 1142 he was named bishop of Poitiers. In 1147 and 1148 his views on the Trinity were called into question, and he publicly retracted some of his statements.<sup>4</sup> These difficulties did not affect his reputation in his own day or his influence on men of the thirteenth century. Gilbert is often cited by the French and Latin versions of his name, which are, respectively, Gilbert de la Poree and Gilbertus Porretanus (or Gilbertus Pictaviensis). The works of Gilbert which are of unquestioned authenticity are his commentaries on the theological tractates of Boethius. The *Liber de sex principiis* was attributed to Gilbert, but most scholars express deep doubt that it is his.

Because Gilbert commented on the *De trinitate* of Boethius, we need only turn to his remarks on the three types of speculative science mentioned in chapter two of that work to find Gilbert's views on the scope and divisions of philosophy. He begins by observing that speculative sciences are opposed to practical science. In a speculative science we ask whether something is, what it is, what its properties are, and what its causes are (*intuemur an sint, et quid sint, et qualia sint, et cur sint singula creata*). (PL, 64, 1265C; Häring, p. 46) An active or practical science is ordered to operation, says Gilbert, who cites medicine and magic as examples. Having given these definitions, Gilbert sets aside practical sciences and says he will be interested only in the speculative. The first division of speculative science which he introduces is the familiar tripartite division into physics, ethics, and logic, and it is clear that for Gilbert moral science and logic are speculative sciences. He puts these two to one side now and, retaining only physics, says that what Boethius is doing in the text is giving us a subdivision of physics, or natural science. Physics is thus a generic name, one of whose species is also called physics, or natural science; the other two species of course are mathematics and theology. Scotus Erigena, at this point in his commentary, had linked the quadrivium with mathematics, but Gilbert makes no effort to connect the divisions of philosophy with the liberal arts. What is the principle of division whereby we arrive at physics, mathematics, and theology? "He describes these through motion, separation, and their contraries, placing a twofold difference in the definition of each." (1265C) Gilbert

<sup>4</sup> See Ganfredus' letter (PL, 185, 587–596) and *Libellus eiusdem contra Gilliberti Porretani Pietaviensis episcopi* (PL, 185, 596–617). This author was St. Bernard's secretary and later became abbot of Clairvaux.

indicates that the threefold division of speculative science given by Boethius is not a reference to three kinds of existing things. "It is not only as they are, but indeed sometimes otherwise than as they exist, that some things are often truly conceived. That is why the mind's speculation is divided and denominated either on the basis of the things inspected or on the manner of inspection." (1267A) When Gilbert turns to Boethius' remark that natural science is concerned with things in motion which are inabstract or inseparable, he proceeds to explicate this with reference to matter, because natural science considers forms together with their matter, and goes on to give a list of meanings of the term "matter." Moreover, he follows this up with a discussion of several meanings of the term "form."

In the first place, "matter" means that origin of all things that Plato calls necessity, receptacle, womb, mother, and the locus of all generation; his students call it *hyle*, that is, building material (*silva*), while Plato himself called it *prime matter*. Second, the four elements—fire, air, earth, and water—are called matter. Third, specifically different bodies—like bronze, wax, and stone—are called matter. Fourth, general and special subsistencies may be called matter. Now, this fourth type would seem to be peculiar to Gilbert, at least with respect to the term he uses; what he is referring to here are the common predicates which are genera and species and out of which, as out of something material, particular things may be thought to be constituted. Particular things exist owing to these subsistencies, but the subsistencies may be said to be owing to the existence of that which is constituted out of them. We will have to return to this.

"Form," too, has many meanings. First of all, it means the essence of God, the artificer due to whom whatever is something and whatever is a being is. "Nam essentia Dei, quo opifice est quidquid est aliquid, et quidquid est esse, unde illud aliquid est, et omne quod sic inest ei quod est aliquid, ut ei quod est esse adsit, prima forma dicitur." (1266B) Second, it refers to the forms of the four elements, which are as Ideas or exemplars to those unions of concrete form and prime matter which result in the four elements as they are named matter. Such forms Gilbert calls *substantiae sinceræ*. Third, that whereby subsistent things are something, namely, subsistencies, is called form. For example, corporeality is the subsistency thanks to which body is body. Finally, the fourth species of quality, namely, the shape or figure of bodies, is called form.

Of those things called matter there is one kind which is unformed and simple, namely, prime matter; there is another kind which is complex, for example, body. Only the first two meanings of "form," God and the Ideas, or exemplars of the four elements, signify *substantiae sinceræ*. In order to understand how Gilbert can speak of the four elements as true or pure (*sinceræ*) substances, we must distinguish

between the four elements and those imitations of them perceived by the senses. The pure forms, or Ideas, dwell in a region apart. (1266D) What we perceive possesses, not such a pure form, but rather an engendered form, a *forma nativa*. The *forma sincera* is naturally separate from matter, and it is only its image, the form of this composite, which is in sensible objects. The *forma nativa* is a participation in the pure form and therefore has its origin from it. The *forma nativa* which gives being to sensible body is not truly a form.

Before looking into what this means for the status of universals—and we will find Gilbert drawing the consequences for us—we must first see how he employs all this to explicate what Boethius had said of the distinction between the three speculative sciences.

Matter taken simply is not formed; pure forms are not in matter. Where matter and form are conjoined in sensible things, there is motion. It is formed matter which we first know, since it falls under the senses, but in knowing composites reason can abstract the forms from their matter, constructing in the process a concept of matter and a concept of form. The form thus abstracted is freed from motion and thus imitates things which can exist separately from motion and from matter. Primary matter and the primary form which is the substance, or *ousia*, of the creator, and the Ideas of sensible things, require neither forms nor matter in order to be and thus lack motion. (1266D) The form that is abstract thanks to an operation of our minds is not the *forma sincera*. It is because forms thus abstracted are considered otherwise than as they exist (*aliter quam sint*) that concern with them belongs not to physics but to mathematics. Gilbert is quite explicit that mathematics is concerned with native forms, but he considers them in a manner other than that in which they exist. He suggests a dependence of physics on mathematics in that the latter deals with corporeality and width, knowledge of which is presupposed by a physical concern with body and wide things. Having accounted for two speculative sciences by saying that physics deals with native forms along with their proper matter, while mathematics deals with native forms abstractly, Gilbert goes on to speak of theology. Theology goes beyond native forms to deal with true and pure forms (*formae sinceræ*). By intellectual intuition the mind, in theology, looks to God, to the exemplar Ideas and to simple or primary matter. In theology, in other words, the mind attains to what is simple, without matter, immobile, and eternal.

We have already seen Gilbert make reference to abstraction. The *forma nativa*, he holds, cannot exist apart from its proper matter; however, it can be considered apart by our mind (*ratione*). What is thus abstracted by the mind must, it would seem, be distinguished both from individual substances and from the Ideas. We have already alluded to the curious terminology Gilbert employs when he distinguishes particular existents and universals. Individual things are sub-

sistents and substances, for they “stand under” accidents; for example, this body is the “support” of this color. Besides substances there are subsistencies.<sup>5</sup> That this distinction is important for determining the status of universal is clear from the fact that Gilbert calls universal subsistencies. “Therefore genera and species, that is, general and special subsistencies, only subsist and are not truly substances [*non substant vere*], for accidents inhere neither in genera nor in species. That which is requires accidents in order to be, but genera and species have no need of accidents in order to be. It is individual things which truly subsist, for individuals no more than genera and species require accidents in order to be. That this is true of individuals supposes that they are already informed by the proper and specific differences whereby they subsist. However, they do not only subsist; individuals are substances as well since they confer being on accidents; while they are subject to these accidents, they are, in the reasonable order of creation, their causes and principles.” (1375C)

Does this mean that genera and species exist apart from individuals? To say that they are not substances is simply to deny of genera that they are supports of accidents. There seems to be every reason to say that Gilbert had no intention of giving separate existence to genera and species. He speaks of universals as what our mind collects (*colligit*) from particulars.<sup>6</sup> Universality is something which seems to be the sense of John of Salisbury’s remark: “He attributes universality to native forms. . . . A native form is an example of an original form and it is not something in the divine mind but inheres in created things. This is what the Greeks called “*eidōs*” (form) and is to the Idea as example to exemplar. It is sensible in the sensible thing but insensible as conceived by the mind; singular in singular things but common to all.” (*Metal.*, II, 17) Thus, it is amply clear that Gilbert does not identify universals and the divine Ideas, but it is seemingly by appeal to those Ideas that he justifies the applicability to individuals of the universal which has been collected from them, for the individuals are similar owing to imitation of the same Idea.

The verb and derivative noun “*colligere*” and “*collectio*” that Gilbert uses when he talks about universals are rather difficult to interpret. Does he mean that the mind gathers together the similarities to be found in the individuals and ends by forming an abstract concept common to all the individuals? Or is he identifying the universal with the collection or class of all similar individuals? De Wulf seems

<sup>5</sup> “Subsistit enim illud, et quadam ratione est per se, quod non indiget accidentibus ut esse possit; imo accidentia, eo quod hac ratione subsistere et per se esse dicitur, adeo indigent, quod nisi illa adsint, nulli inesse possunt.” (*In de duab, nat.*; *PL*, 64, 1375)

<sup>6</sup> “Genus vero nihil aliud putandum est, nisi subsistentiarum secundum totam earum proprietatem ex rebus secundum species suas differentibus similitudine comparata collectio. . . .” (*In de trin.*, )

to adopt the second alternative. "The genus and species are the sum total of the beings in which those similar realities (subsistencies) are found, belonging in proper to each of them." His basis for this interpretation is the text quoted earlier. It is probable, I think, that this is what Gilbert intends; if it be what he intends, if Gilbert holds that the species is a class, then "man," for example, would stand for the class of all men. On this interpretation, to say "Socrates is a man" would have to be unpacked in the following manner: Socrates belongs to the class of those objects called "man." Of course, this is not to say that "man" signifies "to be a member of the human class."

Gilbert himself approaches it as follows. Wishing to contrast the way in which "God" is predicated of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to the way in which "man" is predicated of three individuals, say Plato, Cicero, and Aristotle, he says that in the case of the Persons of the Trinity, although what is predicated is predicated of numerically diverse Persons, there is a repetition not merely of the predicate but of the *res* signified by the predicate. This is not the case when Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero have "man" predicated of them. The word is repeated, of course; *rem tamen predicatum non repetunt* (the same *res* or reality is not repeated): *sed quamvis conformes, tamen diversas: imo quia conformes, ergo numero diversas a se invicem natures de numero a se diversis affirmant, et haec trium de tribus praedicatorum necessaria differentia non patitur hanc adunationem, ut dicatur, Plato et Cicero et Aristoteles, sunt unus singulariter homo* (but though similar, yet diverse; indeed, because similar, therefore natures numerically diverse from one another, and this necessary difference between the predicates of the three prevents the unity which would lead to saying Plato, Cicero, and Aristotle are one single man). (1262B) Gilbert seems to want to read these affirmative propositions thus: Plato is this man, Cicero is this (other) man, and Aristotle is this (yet other) man. Thus, the *res* signified by the apparently common predicate, "man," is different in the three affirmations. Oddly enough, this makes Gilbert sound like a nominalist, and yet he is traditionally classified as a realist. Like most of us, he seems to have been a bit of both.

Perhaps his extremely nuanced views can be summarized as follows. Consider the statement "Socrates is a man." The predicate of that sentence can be regarded in at least three ways by Gilbert: (1) it refers to this singular instance of human nature which is Socrates, (2) it refers to the divine creative Idea which is more real and out-there than Socrates himself, (3) it involves an *intellectus*, or concept, that the mind has formed against the background of experiencing that Socrates is like Cicero, Aristotle, and so on. Now, if we ask if this third thing, this concept, answers just as such to something out-there, independent, real, but neither the divine Idea nor this singular human being or that, we are led inexorably to Gilbert's notion of subsistency. Do subsistencies exist? Does human nature exist elsewhere than in

individuals, where it is associated with collections of accidents which are signs of, if not causes of, that nature's individuation? There is no simple answer to this question in Gilbert of Poitiers. Subsistencies exist in individuals that are also substances. Gilbert *seems* to say that that is the only way subsistencies can exist. He wants to avoid saying that my concept of such a subsistency as human nature commits me to the view that there is some numerically one *res* existing in, say, Socrates, Cicero, and Plato. Many men are specifically but not numerically one. They are specifically one because they are *conformes*. Is not the concept the expression and recognition of that conformity, and are not the objective bases and guarantees of the concept singular men and the divine Ideas? If this suggests only that the utmost caution must be exercised in applying labels like "realist" or "nominalist" to Gilbert of Poitiers, my purpose will have been attained.

### *Bibliographical Note*

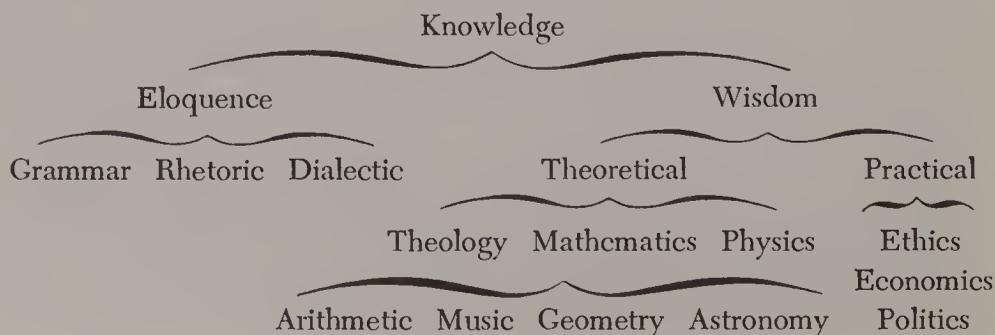
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#### C. William of Conches (c.1080-c.1154)

William, a native of Conches in Normandy, studied under Bernard of Chartres and stayed on at the cathedral school as a teacher of grammar. He speaks of having taught for twenty years and more, and his teaching was at last interrupted by the Cornifician controversy. Did he resume his teaching career? Tullio Gregory conjectures that he did not. The Cornificians were routed we know, but William had been charged with heresy by William of St. Thierry, and it is not impossible that, soured by this, he retired to his native Normandy, where he wrote his *Dragmaticon* under the protection of Geoffrey the Fair, Count of Anjou and a Plantagenet. An early work of William's, which he calls simply *Philosophia*, is printed as *De philosophia mundi* among

the works of Venerable Bede, and it is to be found as well among those of Honorius of Autun. The *Dragmaticon*, a more mature work, takes into account the objections that had been made to the earlier systematic work; indeed, William formally retracts a number of positions he had held as a younger man. We have as well some glosses on Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* as well as on the *Timaeus* of Plato. The *Moralium dogma philosophorum* (*Teachings of the Moral Philosophers*) has been attributed to William, but it is quite doubtful that this anthology is actually his. In the glosses on Boethius, William announces his intention to comment on Macrobius and Martianus Capella, but these glosses have not been found, if indeed he wrote them. For what comfort we may want to derive from it, books which are announced as forthcoming only to appear tardily or not at all are not a twentieth-century achievement.

*Division of Philosophy.* In his glosses on Boethius, William provides us with a schema of the sciences which tells us a good deal about his own predilections. There are two kinds of science, he begins, wisdom and eloquence. Wisdom is true and certain knowledge of things; eloquence is the science of expressing in ornate words and sentences what is known. William likes to quote Cicero on the relative value of these two. In the *De inventione* Cicero warns that eloquence without wisdom is dangerous, whereas wisdom without eloquence, while it can accomplish something, can accomplish much more with it. Consequently, both eloquence and wisdom are important, but wisdom is preeminent. Philosophy and wisdom are identical (*sapientia vero et philosophia idem sunt*). Eloquence, therefore, is an aid to and a requirement for philosophy, but not actually a part of it. The term "eloquence" is here taken to cover the arts of the trivium, but wisdom is not equated with the arts of the quadrivium. When he turns to wisdom, William introduces the Aristotelian distinction between theoretical and practical sciences; the former are pursued in contemplation by the leisured (*otiosi*), while the latter are the concern of the busy (*negotiosi*). The practical sciences are economics, politics, and ethics; the theoretical sciences are physics, mathematics, and theology. The arts of the quadrivium show up as subdivisions of mathematics. William takes a certain pedagogical pleasure in translating the divisions mentioned to diagram form.



A further division of music is given in the text of the glosses on Boethius.

Given now that philosophy comprises all these various sciences, can one begin just anywhere? "This is the order of learning," William writes at the end of *Philosophia*. "Because all teaching employs eloquence, we should first be instructed in eloquence. But there are three parts of it: to write correctly and correctly to pronounce what has been written; to prove what needs proving, which is taught in dialectics; to adorn words and sentences, and this rhetoric teaches. Therefore, we should be initiated in grammar, then be taught dialectics, and afterward rhetoric. Armed with these, we should proceed to the study of philosophy. The order to be followed here is such that we should first be instructed in the quadrivium, and, in it, first in arithmetic, secondly in music, thirdly in geometry, finally in astronomy, and thence in Holy Writ so that we might, from knowledge of creatures, come to knowledge of the creator." In the glosses on Boethius the order of learning is expressed somewhat differently by William. Speaking of the sciences which fall under wisdom, he says that one should first study the practical sciences and after that turn to contemplation. First, we contemplate corporeal things in our study of mathematics and physics, and then we move on to the incorporeal in theology.

*Our Knowledge of God.* In the preface to his *Philosophia* William says that he will begin with the first creation of things and continue the discussion until he reaches man, of whom he will have much to say. Philosophy is concerned with two sorts of thing, the invisible and incorporeal, on the one hand, and, on the other, the visible and corporeal. We begin with the first, and our discussion will bear on the creator, the world soul, angels, and human souls. The first concern of all will be God. Immediately we encounter difficulties. When we seek knowledge, William observes, there are eleven questions we can ask. Of the object at issue we must first ask if it exists; if this is answered in the affirmative, there remain ten further questions based on the Aristotelian categories: What is it? Of what kind? and so forth. But none of these questions seems to be pertinent when we are seeking knowledge of God. We must conclude that whatever knowledge we have of him will be both imperfect and indirect, and William suggests that there are two kinds of argument that can be devised to provide knowledge of God, one based on the creation of the world, the other on its daily course.

The *argument from creation* is as follows. The world is made up of contrary elements—hot, cold, wet, and dry—and their compounding is due either to the operation of nature, or to chance, or to some artificer. But nature avoids the contrary and seeks the similar, so the conjunction of contrary elements cannot be ascribed to nature. Nor can chance be the cause, since, in the first place, if chance could cause the world, it is surprising it does not produce simpler effects like houses.

William's more serious opposition to chance as the cause of the world is based on the explanation of chance which Boethius gives in the *Consolation of Philosophy*. According to that view of it, chance is an unlooked-for result of the crossing of two lines of causality; thus, if chance is the cause of the world, there are causes prior to the first cause of everything. But only the creator antedates the world, William says, so chance is out and the cause of the world must be some artificer. Could it be man or an angel? No, for man appears in a world already made, and angels are made simultaneously with the world. Consequently, God alone created the world.

When he is commenting on the *Timaeus*, William has no difficulty in interpreting the demiurge there described as God the creator; nor does he have any difficulty with the rather clear implication of the text that the demiurge finds a material chaos ready at hand, which he then fashions after the patterns of the Ideas into sensible things. For William, as for his contemporaries, the *Timaeus* is a creation story and, as the product of a pagan philosopher, a remarkable corroboration of what is revealed in Genesis. Whatever comes to be requires a cause; the world has come to be and its cause is the creator. But there are four kinds of cause: formal, efficient, final, and material. William proposes that we divide the causes into two classes. On the one side we have as efficient cause the divine essence, as formal cause the divine essence, as final cause the divine goodness. On the other side we have the four elements as material cause. The efficient, formal, and final causes are one with God, and there is no principle of his existence; we can say of these three causes of the world that they are eternal and uncaused, where by eternal we mean, not unending survival through time, but being free from time's tenses utterly. The eternal has no past and no future, and we can speak of it as always in the now or present. The material cause of the world, like everything fashioned from the elements, has a principle of its being. Matter, then, is a caused cause. This approach to creation through the *Timaeus* ends with the dyad creator and created. God depends on nothing outside himself in his act of creative causality.<sup>7</sup> The Ideas to which the demiurge looked as to entities independent of himself are now equated with the divine wisdom. The archetypal patterns of created things are explained by appeal to Augustine's interpretation of Plato's Ideas. Whoever sets out to make something works up in his mind beforehand what he would effect. The archetypal patterns of creatures, the Ideas, are one with the wisdom of God. So too, matter, or chaos, is not something which awaits

<sup>7</sup> ". . . haec tria scilicet *existens* id est archetipum mundum, *locum* id est primordiale materiam, *generationem* id est sensibilem materiam, ante *exornationem sensibilis mundi*, non dixit ante creationem quia etsi ante creationem fuit archetipus mundus, non tamen materia nee generatio potuit ante esse, sed dicit ante exornationem. . . ." (*In de trin.*, ed. Parent, p. 174, 26-31)

the divine causality as if it could exist apart from that causality. Everything other than God is an effect of God. Others in interpreting Plato here had spoken of chaos as the first effect of God out of which order gradually emerged. William of Conches emphatically rejects that view; he feels it is heretical and prejudicial to the divine goodness. Men like Hugh of St. Victor thought that God's gradual imposition of order would reveal the divine goodness rather than call it into question. The opposing views bear on Genesis as much as on the *Timaeus*, of course; the scriptural account speaks of God laboring for six days in creating the world. William thinks we ought not to think of six literal days here, whereas Hugh resists the view that the hexameron has merely figurative import. (Sec J. Taylor, p. 227, n.3.)

Given that the world has been created by God and that nothing other than God (save evil) escapes the divine causality, are we to say that the world has always been or that it had a beginning in time? If time measures the alterations of material things, time and material things come into being together, and we can say that there was no time when the world was not. This does not amount to the assertion that the world is eternal, however, if eternity is the prerogative of a being fully in possession of its perfection and thus beyond time.

The second proof of God's existence that William offers is drawn from the daily disposition of the world. Beginning with the observation that the things of this world are wisely disposed—that is what "world" means—he points out that this presupposes a wisdom responsible for it. There are three possible candidates: human, angelic, or divine wisdom. It can hardly be human wisdom; nor can it be the wisdom of some angel, since angels too are wisely ordered and what wisdom would be responsible for that? There remains only the divine wisdom. "This is the formal cause of the world, because according to it he forms the world by creation. Just as an artisan when he wishes to make something first conjures it up in his mind and then, having found the right material, works in accord with his conception, so the creator, before he creates anything, has it in his mind and then accomplishes it in an effect. It is this that Plato calls the archetypal world because it contains whatever is in the world; 'archetype,' that is, originative form, for 'archos' is first, and 'typos' form or figure." (*In Tim.*, cited by Parent, p. 50)

*The World Soul.* The demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus* is said to make but one world because he fashions the world after the model or Idea of living creature. The Idea of living creature contains within itself the Ideas of the many and various things found in the world. If the model for the world is the Idea of living creature, then the world as a totality can be spoken of as a living thing, a cosmic animal, and there will be a world soul.

What does William of Conches make of this notion of the world

soul? There are, he notes, various possible interpretations. "According to some, the world soul is the Holy Ghost, for, as we have said, it is owing to the divine will and goodness, which the Holy Ghost is, that all the living things of this world live. Others say that the world soul is the natural force (*vigor*) which God has put in things whereby some only live, some both live and sense, some live, sense, and understand (*discernunt*). For there is nothing which lives or senses or understands in which such a natural force is not found. Yet others say the world soul is some incorporeal substance which exists as a whole in every body, although, because of the dullness (*tarditatem*) of some bodies, it does not effect the same thing in all. . . . Thus in man there would be both his own soul and the world soul, from which one might conclude that man has two souls. We think this conclusion is false, however; the world soul is not a soul anymore than the head of the world is a head. Plato speaks of it as being excogitated from the indivisible divine substance, composed of the same and the different: if one wants to know what that means, let him consult other works of ours." (*Philosophia*, I)

Now, William of Conches' own interpretation is (not without qualification) the first one given in his list, but the problem of the world soul leads us inevitably to his statements on the Persons of the Trinity, statements which called forth objections from such critics as William of St. Thierry. Speaking generally, we must say that what attracted William in Plato's talk of the world soul, what perhaps has an inevitable attraction for the Christian if we can gauge this by the many responses to it before and after William, is that it seems to express God's presence in the world. St. Paul is reported in Acts of the Apostles (17:23-30) to have likened God to the *deus ignotus* worshipped by the pagans. He goes on to say that God is he in whom we live and move and have our being, and he quotes a pagan poet: "*Ipsius enim et genus sumus.*" Knox translates this, "For indeed we are his children." God's children, his *kind*—this sense of man's kinship with God, of the world's kinship with its creator, of God's presence in his effects may be thought of as the essence of religion; it is surely a salient note of the Christian attitude. Just as St. Paul found in pagan thought suggestions of the true faith, so such interpreters of Plato as William of Conches will look for secular approximations of the Christian mysteries. It is in this light that we must approach his remarks about the world soul. The sestet of Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" expresses the same sense.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
 And though the last lights off the black West went  
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

In his glosses on Boethius, William suggests an interpretation of the world soul which blends two of the items on his list of possible interpretations. "The world soul is the natural force whereby some things have it in them to be moved, some to grow, some to sense, some to understand. But it is asked what force is. It seems to me that that natural force is the Holy Ghost, that is, the divine and benign harmony, which is that whereby all things have being, movement, growth, sense, life, and intelligence." This soul, which is the divine love, the diffusiveness of the divine goodness, grants existence to both corporeal and spiritual things. In explicating Plato's statement that the world soul is composed of the same and the different, William says that it is one and undivided in itself, but can be thought of as multiple in its effects. (*In Tim.*, ed. Parent, p. 170) Thus, the world soul is a philosopher's way of expressing the creative causality of God, and William does not feel that it in any way jeopardizes the distinction between creator and created, that what Plato said of the composition of the world soul in any way prejudices the divine simplicity and divisibility. The phrase is interpreted, not as symbolic in intent, but as naming the ultimate cause of the physical world. It can also draw our attention to the imitation of God by his effects, so that the natures of things, *vigor insita rebus*, in all their diversity, point toward the one simple cause of them all.

*Faith and Reason.* The effort of William of Conches to bring reason to bear on faith (*conjunge rationem et fidem*) was, if we can judge by the defenses of what he is doing which stud his *Philosophia* and other early works, an object of constant criticism. He asks, somewhat plaintively, how what he says can be construed to be contrary to Scripture if he is attempting to explain the manner in which that was done which Scripture tells us was done. More sharply, he writes of his critics, "Because they do not know the forces of nature, desiring that all men should be companions of their ignorance, they will not permit others to engage in research and want us to believe like countryfolk, asking no reason; thus would the prophecy be fulfilled: the priest shall be as the people. We say a reason must be sought in all matters, and then if failure ensues, we must entrust the matter to the Holy Ghost and to faith, as Divine Writ says." (*Philosophia*, PL, 172, 1002E) William does not feel intimidated by the reminder that God regards the wisdom of this world as foolishness. "The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God: not that God thinks the wisdom of this world is foolishness, but because it is foolishness in comparison with his wisdom; it does not follow on that account that it *is* foolishness." (*Philosophia*, I, 19)

There is a discernible difference in William of Conches after the attack on him by William of St. Thierry. The latter wrote a letter to St. Bernard of Clairvaux which has come down to us under the title

*De erroribus Gullielmi de Conchis* (*On the Errors of William of Conches*). (PL, 180, 333 ff.) In his letter William of St. Thierry objects to William of Conches' statements on the Trinity, and he takes violent exception to the master of Chartres' theory that the body of the first man need not be thought of as directly created by God (as the soul is): it can be thought of as immediately the effect of the stars and spirits, which are, of course, the effects of God. A further charge has to do with William of Conches' view that the biblical description of the creation of Eve from a rib of Adam should not be understood literally.

This attack had a great impact on William of Conches. He had written what he had written in all sincerity; he had no desire to be or to be considered a heretic. One is a heretic, not simply by writing error, he observes, but by defending it when it is pointed out. The *Dragmaticon* emerges as an attempt to go over the same ground as the *Philosophia* in such a way that he would not unduly offend the sensibilities of his fellow believers. "There is another book of ours on the same subject," he writes there, "one entitled *Philosophy*, composed in our youth, and it is, being the product of one imperfect, itself imperfect. In it truths were mixed with falsehoods, and many necessary things were not touched on. Our plan is to set down what was true in it, to condemn what was false, to add what had been overlooked." He goes on to list specific errors of the earlier work and to retract them; the list follows closely the accusations of William of St. Thierry. Moreover, he adds, any errors he does not now mention and retract but which may later be found ought to be brought to his attention and he will be prompt to root them out.

It would be easy to see here an obsequious and spineless capitulation to antidialecticians whose views William of Conches did not actually share. But there is something more, I think, and something quite edifying. Scholars have pointed out that the *Dragmaticon* continues to exhibit William's search for an understanding of what he believes. He has not dropped that ideal, nor is he simply masking it in a shrewd way. Rather it seems that he came to see the underlying justification of the charges that had been made against him, namely, that his earlier interpretations were too freewheeling, that what he had said could indeed endanger the faith more than it explicated it. William of Conches had no desire to do that. The *Dragmaticon* differs from *Philosophia*, not in substance, not in method, but in style; the youthful zip and vigor, the taunting tone, the suggestion that every invitation to caution indicates obscurantism—these are absent from the later work. In the *Dragmaticon* we find a remark that, perhaps as much as any other, gathers together the elements of this controversy and focuses on the essential. "I am a Christian," William writes, "not a Platonist."

*Bibliographical Note*

As was mentioned in the text, William's *Philosophia* is found in two places in Migne, each time attributed to a different author: *PL*, 90, 1127–1178, and as well as at *PL*, 172, 39–102. The *Dragmaticon philosophiae*, edited by Grataroli (Aregentorati, 1567); J. Holmberg, *Moralium dogma philosophorum* (Upsala, 1929). Glosses on the *Timaeus* and on the *Consolation of Philosophy* in J. M. Parent, *La doctrine de la création* (Ottawa, 1938). Of the secondary literature we may mention P. Duhem, *Le Système du monde*, t. 3, pp. 90–112; H. Flatten, *Die Philosophie des Wilhelm von Conches*; Tullio Gregory, *Anima mundi: La filosofia di Guglielmo di Conches e la scuola di Chartres*; Eugenio Garin, *Studi sul Platonismo medievale* (Florence, 1958). The last two are particularly important.

D. *Thierry of Chartres* (died before 1155)

Thierry, or Theodoric, was the brother of Bernard of Chartres and, like him, served as chancellor of the cathedral school of Chartres. Thierry is a mysterious figure on several counts: we know next to nothing about his life, and it is a matter of some difficulty to identify his writings. As for hard biographical data, apart from certainty that he taught at Chartres, we know that he was present both at Abelard's trial at Soissons in 1121 and at Gilbert of Poitiers' trial at Rheims in 1148 and that sometime between those two dates he taught briefly in Paris. He is said to have retired to a Cistercian monastery and to have died a monk.

Because he was not in the habit of signing his works, perhaps motivated by humility, a great deal of scholarly detective work has gone into identifying Thierry's writings. We know that he wrote an *Heptateuchon*, a work on the seven liberal arts; this has not yet been edited for the modern reader. He wrote a work on creation, the work of the six days recounted in Genesis, a critical edition of which is now available to us. Thierry's commentaries on Boethius have most recently become available owing to the labors of Nikolaus Häring; if Häring's arguments hold, we actually have three different commentaries by Thierry on the *De trinitate* of Boethius. John of Salisbury has nice things to say of Thierry, who seems to have enjoyed the reputation of being a good teacher, particularly of logic.

*Account of Creation.* In his commentary on the biblical account of creation Thierry proceeds in a manner similar to that of William of Conches. There is a preliminary reference to the opening sentence of Genesis, but, rather than continuing with an exposition of the text, Thierry turns immediately to a physical account of the origination of things in which he employs whatever science was available to him. Only after doing this does he turn to the text itself, and the impression

is given that the scriptural account can be seen as verifying the earlier physical doctrine.

There are four causes of the world. God is the efficient cause; the divine wisdom is the formal cause; the divine benignity is the final cause. The material cause of the world is the four elements. The things of this world, being changeable and perishable, must have an efficient cause; their order and arrangement show that they are effects of wisdom; and since creatures cannot be thought of as filling any deficiency in the creator, his motive in creating must be an overflow of his own goodness, the desire to let others participate in his fullness. Thierry attaches this interpretation to the opening sentence of Genesis by saying that there we are told of God as efficient cause and of the material cause. Wherever we read that "God said" we can take it that reference is made to God as formal cause; the remarks that God found what he had made good tell us of God as final cause.

First, God created matter. Heaven, being extremely light, did not proceed in its movement in a straight line but began to revolve, and one of its revolutions can be taken to represent one day. In the rotation which constituted the first day, fire assumes the highest location and illuminates air, which is just below it; this activity has the further effect of warming water and earth. Thus, matter and light are first created, and the heating of the water causes a vapor to be drawn up into the air; this is the origin of the clouds and, by way of consequence, of rain and snow. The drawing-up of water causes islands to emerge and then greater areas of earth. In subsequent rotations living things and stars are quite naturally brought into being by the natural activities of the elements. Thierry holds that the stars are formed from the water rising from below because of the heating effect of fire through the mediation of air. The visibility of the stars must be accounted for by their ability to refract light. Only water and earth have the necessary density to refract light; only water can be thought of as achieving the necessary elevation, and this came about by the process already mentioned.

Thierry's physical account of the coming into being of the world is thus an appeal to the natural activities of the elements created by God. A rotation begins immediately, thanks to the nature of the elements, and six such rotations are sufficient to account for the furniture of the cosmos. Every possible natural mode of becoming is employed during those six rotations; that is the meaning of the scriptural statement that after six days God rested. He employs no new method of generation after the first six rotations of the universe, for during this time seminal causes (*causae seminales*) are so embedded in the elements that all subsequent natural history is, in a sense, present from the beginning in natural causes.

Within the world, fire has a special role to play and may be thought of as the efficient cause and artificer of all other things. Earth is the

material on which it works. Thus, fire is the active element, and earth the passive element.

The foregoing speculation, although it involves references to Genesis, is obviously presented as natural, physical knowledge of the origin of things. The doctrine involved is not presented as a discovery of Thierry so much as a summation of what philosophers have been able to learn on the subject. Having stated the findings of physical or natural philosophy, Thierry then turns to an explication of the text of Genesis itself. What he does, in effect, is to attempt to show both that the biblical narrative bears out what physical philosophy teaches and that the text can be illuminated by the philosophical doctrine. Thus, when he reads that the Spirit of the Lord moved over the water, Thierry observes that this has been taken to be a reference to the element, air, which can be likened to the divine Spirit because of its spiritual qualities. His own view is that it is the world soul which is being referred to, since Plato's world soul is precisely what Christians call the Holy Ghost. Thierry identifies the Holy Ghost with the power of God, something for which both Abelard and William of Conches were severely criticized.

Having turned to the text of Genesis, Thierry must say something of God, since it is God to whom all this creative activity must be referred. It is the quadrivium, the mathematical arts, which leads to knowledge of the creator. Thierry's conviction that mathematics is the key to knowledge of God is clear in his employment of otherness or duality (*alteritas*) and unity (*unitas*). All multiplicity or otherness takes its rise from the number two, and one naturally precedes two. Thus, prior to all multiplicity and otherness is the one; moreover, we can say that the number one precedes all change, since change is consequent on otherness or multiplicity. To be changeable is to be capable of turning one way or the other, consequently to be multiple. Now if every creature is subject to change and if being in its totality comprises both the eternal and the created, the eternal must escape multiplicity and otherness. The eternal, which is the One, must precede all creatures. The upshot is that we can identify the One, the divine, and the eternal. The One is the cause of being in all creatures, their *forma essendi*, since for them to be is to derive their being from the divine or eternal. It is this pervasiveness of the divine causality which is meant when it is said that God is everywhere; it is the dependence of all else on the eternal and divine One which is meant when it is said that every being that exists exists because it is one.

To say that God is the *forma essendi* of creatures, to say that God is the One at the root of the duality or otherness any creature is, is to run the risk of being severely misunderstood, and Thierry knew it. He asked not to be understood to mean that God is some kind of intrinsic form of the creature; what he is insisting upon is that apart from the

divine causality there is nothing. Creatures, he says, exist neither in God nor apart from him. In short, Thierry attempts to forestall the pantheistic interpretation of his remarks. The vocabulary of his doctrine of participation has one expected and one unexpected result. Apart from the One, which is eternal and divine, there are also created units: things which are and are called ones. They are one and deserve the appellation owing to their participation in the One; a sign of the difference between created and eternal unity is that in the former case we can speak of a plurality of ones. But just as what partakes in the divine unity can be called a one, so too can it be called divine or a god. This is somewhat surprising, and it does not require a limber imagination to guess that misunderstandings of it will be plentiful. But these observations permit Thierry to stress the utter unity of God and to state the inappropriateness of speaking of any plurality or number in God. What consequences will that assertion have for the Trinity?

Thierry speaks first of square and oblong numbers; the former are obtained by the multiplication of a number by itself, for example, two times two, three times three, which generates tetragons, cubes, circles, and so on. The multiplication of a number by a different number generates oblong numbers. But what result is obtained when one is multiplied by itself? Obviously the result is simply one. The one considered as begetter and the one considered as begotten, then, are one and the same nature. This kind of multiplication (the generation of the Son by the Father) fittingly precedes all subsequent kinds of multiplication which refer to creatures. In speaking of the Trinity, then, Thierry arrives, in the manner sketched, at the One and the Equal One; these are spoken of as Persons because nothing can generate its own self. Since the generation of the Son precedes that of creatures, the Son is equally the cause of the existence of creatures; furthermore, as generated from the One, the Equal One is the image and splendor of the One. In the Equal One, then, are the patterns of all other things that can imperfectly reflect the One, and the Equal One is therefore called the divine wisdom. The little treatise we are relying on here promises to explain the third Person of the Trinity as the link (*connexio*) between the One and the Equal One, but at this point the manuscript ends.

Thierry's procedure in speaking of the physical origins of things prior to considering revelation is somewhat more risky when it is employed in speaking of the Trinity. The hope that, quite apart from revelation, men can arrive at knowledge of the natural origin of things may be easy enough to accept, even when we notice the crudity of the science Thierry uses; but it is quite another matter to agree that the kind of analysis he performs on unity and otherness secures us, just as such, anywhere near knowledge of divinity and of the divine Persons. It has been observed that Thierry concentrates on what Augustine would call a trinity of things, in this case, of numbers. This is opposed

to the more traditional and Augustinian manner of approaching the mystery of the Trinity via an analysis of intellection. Thierry seems to be proceeding in the direction of a mathematical proof of the Trinity.

Häring's conjecture that Thierry could not go on with his analysis because he had denied relations in God is interesting but not conclusive. Thierry, in his effort to distinguish the One from all multiples or creatures, had denied of God all consequences of otherness in things: among these consequences are form, weight, measure, place, time, and relation. To exclude relation from God, Häring thinks, cuts Thierry off from the traditional approach and dooms his own. But surely we can expect that Thierry could have overcome this, particularly since he has already employed the relation of equality between the Father and Son. Moreover, the exclusion of *forma* does not prevent talk of God as *forma essendi*. Häring's essential point, however, namely, that Thierry is off on a different and risky direction and is shoring up difficulties for himself, is beyond contest. Finally, Thierry's procedure in his trinitarian doctrine has been the cause of speculation about the possibility that a Latin translation of Plato's *Parmenides* was available to him; it is certain that indirectly, by way of references, something of that dialogue as well as of the doctrines of Pythagoras was known. However he would have handled it, Thierry's difficulty is not unlike that facing the Pythagorean doctrine: how to derive from a consideration of mathematical entities nonmathematical properties.

For whatever significance it may have, it may be pointed out that Thierry does not pursue this mathematical interpretation of the Trinity in the three works of his which deal with Boethius' *De trinitate*. Indeed, in his lectures on that Boethian opusculum, which their editor, N. Häring, calls the *Quae sit* version, the only allusion we have to a mathematical treatment comes in reply to a question. There are three ways of speaking of the Trinity, we read: theologically, mathematically, and ethically. Augustine is cited as one who speaks mathematically, and we are reminded that he maintained that unity is in the Father, equality in the Son, and the connection of unity and equality in the Holy Ghost. What follows is reminiscent of the One and the Equal One. As for the Holy Ghost, Thierry says that unity desires equality and equality unity, and that this desire or love is their connection.

*Man and Philosophy.* In commenting on Boethius, Thierry must face the division of speculative science set down in chapter two of the *De trinitate*. His remarks on the passage tend to be a description of man as much as anything.

Thierry's attempt to locate the *De trinitate* itself has interesting overtones. Boethius' opusculum belongs to speculative philosophy, Thierry says, and to precisely that part of speculative philosophy which is called theology. There are, he continues, three parts of philosophy: the ethical, the speculative, and the rational. The speculative

is subdivided into theological, mathematical, and physical. Now Thierry speaks of this division as of a declension. Theology takes its start from a consideration of the most high God and the Trinity and then descends to angelic spirits and souls, concerning itself with incorporeal things which are outside bodies (*de incorporeis quae sunt extra corpora*). The start of mathematics is a concern with numbers, whence it descends to proportions and magnitudes and is generally, concerned with incorporeal things which are in bodies (*circa corpora*). Physics is concerned with bodies themselves and takes its start from the four elements.

Answering this declension of the objects of a science, and the hierarchy among the speculative sciences consequent upon their range of objects, is an ascension described by man because of the multiplicity of his powers of knowing. Thierry says that we must know the powers of the soul and their modes in order that all things may be compared with them, that we might know how things can be grasped and by what knowing powers of our soul they are grasped. He mentions five powers of the soul: sense, imagination, reason, intelligence, and intelligibility. Sense is that power of the soul which is comprehensive of bodies, as when we see colors, touch, taste, and so on. Imagination is comprehensive of forms and of images, which are corrupted by their involvement in matter, though they are imagined without matter. Reason is a power of the soul which in its agility moves itself and abstracts from many things of the same general or special nature that very thing they partake in, a form which is immattered and subject to mutability, for example, when I abstract from all men the nature in which they agree (*conveniunt*), I consider it as participated by them, somewhat separated from mutability by mind. Intelligence (*intelligentia*, properly called *disciplina*) is a power of the soul which considers the single qualities and properties of forms, or the forms themselves as they truly are, in such a way, however, that the single terms (*terminos*) are not removed from them, for example, when I attend to "humanity" or "circle" in its true being. Thus, I see that neither is varied by the flux of matter, and I find the nature it cannot have in a subject matter: as that all the lines from the center to the circumference of the circle are equal or, in humanity, that every monstrosity is repelled by its nature. Intelligibility (*intelligibilitas*) is the power of soul which removes from forms all limits whereby they were distinct from one another, contemplating only *esse atque entiam*, rejecting all plurality and seeing only the union of all things, for example, if we ignore the limits of circle and humanity, their difference, only being remains. This is what all things have: being is the simple simplicity of all things.

The very definitions of these powers of the soul indicates the order Thierry sees among them. Sense leads to imagination and that to rea-

son, which bears on the universal; a higher truth beckons to intelligence, and then when the soul extends itself to the simple unity of all things, it becomes intelligibility, which is of God alone and had by few men.

The soul is made for the totality of things, and the totality of things is such that it exists in four manners. God is all things without being any of them singly; if he were any one of them, he would not be the totality, Thierry says. All things are made by God, and He Who Is is prior to them all and in some way the totality of them, for they were first in him and whatever is in God is God and is eternal. God's being, being being, is independent of all dependence: God is He Who Is. God is Absolute Necessity, the form of forms, eternity, unity. God is not, of course, an immattered form; things other than God are form and more. Possibility, that is, is included in all things, Absolute Possibility. Absolute Possibility is descriptive of primordial matter and, Thierry insists, is created by God. Thierry now has set up two poles, God and matter, Absolute Necessity and Absolute Possibility, and these are modes of the totality of things. Between these two poles he will locate two other modes of the totality of things, what he calls Determined Necessity and Determined Possibility. The former describes the realm of Ideas, the world soul; the latter, Determined Possibility, is the result of the fusion of Idea and matter, that is, the things of this world. Thierry can now speak of the three speculative sciences in terms of these modes of the totality of things. Physics, he says, considers both kinds of possibility; mathematics considers determinate necessity; theology considers Absolute Necessity.

Much more could be said of the ideas Thierry has brought into play here; there is much to be gained by comparing the treatments of these ideas in the different commentaries Thierry wrote on the *De trinitate* of Boethius. Perhaps enough has been said to indicate in an introductory fashion the flavor of Thierry's thought.

### *Bibliographical Note*

The edited writings of Thierry are the following: B. Hauréau published an edition of *De sex dierum operibus* in *Notices et extraits de quelques manuscrits latins de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, vol. 22, pp. 170–186. Thanks to the efforts of Nikolaus Häring our knowledge of Thierry has taken a quantum jump in recent years: "The Creation and Creator of the World According to Thierry of Chartres and Clar-enbaldus of Arras," *AHDL* (1955), pp. 137–216; "A Commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate* by Thierry of Chartres (Anonymus Berolinensis)," *AHDL* (1956), pp. 257–325; "The Lectures of Thierry of Chartres

on Boethius' *De trinitate*," *AHDL* (1958), pp. 113-226; "Two Commentaries on Boethius (*De trinitate* and *De hebdomadibus*) by Thierry of Chartres," *AHDL* (1960), pp. 65-136. The *Eptateuchon*, still unedited, discussed by A. Clerval, *Les écoles de Chartres* (Paris, 1895); its prologue has been edited by E. Jeaneau in *Medieval Studies*, 16 (1954), pp. 174 ff. Of the secondary literature, mention may be made of P. Duhem, *Le système du monde*, vol. 3, pp. 184-193; J. M. Parent, *La doctrine de la création dan l'école de Chartes* (Ottawa, 1938); Pare, Brunet, Tremblay, *La renaissance du XIIe siècle* (Ottawa, 1933) and, of course, Häring's introductions to the editions mentioned above.

#### E. Clarenbald of Arras (died c.1160)

The connection of Clarenbald with the school of Chartres lies both in that he studied there under Thierry of Chartres and in that he was a critic of Gilbert of Poitiers. He was an opponent of Abelard as well and a friend of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Besides having been a student of Thierry, Clarenbald studied under Hugh of St. Victor. Clarenbald is known to us through his commentaries on the *De trinitate* and *De hebdomadibus* of Boethius as well as through a work appended to one of Thierry's and called *Liber de eodem secundum* (*Another Book on the Same Subject*). This last work was just recently identified as Clarenbald's by Nikolaus Häring and published under the title *Clarenbaldi tractatulus*.

*Account of Creation.* Clarenbald refers to the teachers under whom he studied with a deference whose sincerity cannot be questioned; in the *Tractatulus*, which he appends to Thierry's account of creation, he promises no more than to collate the thoughts of others and to show that their doctrines are actually corroborated by Scripture. A modest task, we might expect, and certainly not likely to lead to an original book. Indeed, when we leaf through it, our eye is struck by passages reminiscent of William of Conches, of Thierry of course, and of others. Were we to be satisfied with this superficial estimate, we would be doing both Clarenbald and ourselves an injustice. Even what he takes from others has a way of altering in his hand and often of taking on a precision and clarity it did not have in its source.

Clarenbald's *Tractatulus* begins with a reference to Genesis, goes on to relate it to the other books of the Pentateuch, speaks of the various senses of Scripture, and promises to proceed in terms of the literal sense. But it is not really a commentary on Scripture. The comparison of the books of the Pentateuch to Roman law is apparently original with Clarenbald, although of course the notion of senses of Scripture is not. When these preliminary matters have been treated, Clarenbald turns to the opening line of Genesis and observes that the book can only gain in intelligibility if we discuss the creation of things. For

created things speak to us of their creator. Clarenbald then gives a faithful version of William of Conches' first argument for the existence of God. Ignorance of creation can lead to heretical views concerning the nature of God, Clarenbald continues, and he makes reference to the heresies discussed in Boethius' *De duabus naturis*.

Clarenbald speaks of three inchoative principles: primordial matter, seminal reasons (*rationes seminales*), and the beginning of time. These three inchoative principles have the Son of God as their creator. Relying on Augustine, Clarenbald speaks of God as forming all things in his Word and then as forming them in an unformed way in matter and seminally in seminal reasons. In the succession of time God operates actually and reparatively. In these four ways, he adds, the totality of things exists. We are reminded of Thierry. Indeed, Clarenbald employs the same quartet: Absolute Necessity, the Necessity of Concatenation (Determinate Necessity), Absolute Possibility, and Determined Possibility. The influence of Thierry is also evident in Clarenbald's use of what he calls the Pythagorean doctrine, but with the addendum of the number ten as the perfect number, since ten is the sum of the first four numbers. Clarenbald identifies Absolute Necessity as One; Absolute Possibility as Two, since matter is the source of otherness and otherness is reducible to duality; The Necessity of Concatenation with Three, since three is the first number to be connected by a middle term; Determinate Possibility with Four, since matter is first actualized by the forms of the elements—fire, air, earth, and water. Clarenbald's discussion of the meaning of the word "day" presents a variation on Thierry's account and a rejection of Augustine's speculation that it may refer to angelic knowledge.

For Parent the *Tractatulus*, not yet established as the work of Clarenbald, serves as yet another illustration of the spirit of the school of Chartres. Häring, who made the identification, agrees with Parent's estimate and puts the point stylistically: what the *Tractatulus* shares with the typical product of the Chartres of the day, and what sets it off from contemporary writings emanating from elsewhere, is the niggardly appeal to the Fathers and the prominence of quotations from the doctrines of the philosophers. This has as a general effect the seeming attempt to make Scripture agree with philosophy rather than the reverse; therein lay the so-called rationalism of Chartres, a tendency which, if Clarenbald himself displays it in his *Tractatulus*, he is suspicious and critical of in others. By his ties to his friends and his professors he was on both sides of the dialectician/antidialectician controversy of his day; in a sense, by his very existence he provides hope that the opposite tendencies of these factions would ultimately be reconciled.

*Being and Goodness.* In his commentary on the *De trinitate* of Boethius, Clarenbald again exhibits the influence of his mentors, and

once more it is Thierry who is perhaps most prominent, although he may be thought to share this honor with Gilbert of Poitiers. Given Clarenbald's opposition to the latter, the second influence is interesting; it is the opposition that seems to come to the fore, however, thereby obscuring Gilbert's positive influence on Clarenbald. Gilbert's teaching on the Trinity involved, as we have seen, the question of individuation. In a difficult doctrine Gilbert had sought to maintain that not only can we speak of a universal humanity but we must also speak of a humanity proper to Socrates, another proper to Plato, and so forth. Clarenbald finds this nonsense. What individuates is not part of the shared nature itself but is derived from accidents; therefore, there is one and the same humanity whereby individual men are men. Here as elsewhere we must be careful in employing the term "realism" to describe what Clarenbald is doing. He does not seem to be clear on the locus of that identical nature, and this very lack of clarity prevents unqualified ascriptions of an apriori definition of realism to him.

While the commentary on the *De trinitate* deserves and repays an attentive reading, we shall turn immediately to Clarenbald's commentary on the *De hebdomadibus*, one of his works which has not hitherto received much attention. This opusculum of Boethius asks, we remember, whether everything that is is good. The point of the question is this: How can things be good just insofar as they are unless they are substantially good, that is, good in their very substance? Posing the question in this way seems to force a denial, since only God is good in his very substance. But the reply that creatures are good only accidentally is not without its difficulties. Boethius will suggest as a satisfactory answer, which avoids the apparent options, that creatures are good by participation, by a participation which differs from that whereby they partake of accidents. In the opusculum Boethius says he is striving for mathematical rigor and, first, lays down axioms from which he hopes to deduce the desired result. Let us see what Clarenbald makes of this Boethian effort.

Clarenbald sees Boethius employing at the outset an *accessus*, or approach which, by stressing the obscurity of the question, renders the reader attentive. Furthermore, he renders the reader docile and benevolent in the appropriate rhetorical fashion. Now, what in the question is referred to by "the things that are"? Things may be said to be in three ways: in the divine mind, in matter, in existence. Only in the final way can they be said to exist absolutely, and it is on things thus existing that the question bears. Clarenbald then goes on to distinguish between things as existent and as understood; the passage is obscure, but it appears to be an effort to distinguish the logical or conceptual order from the real order rather than, as Häring suggests, an effort to distinguish substance from accidents. If our interpretation is correct, our earlier caveat about speaking of Clarenbald's realism is

strengthened. Clarenbald interprets the *hebdomads* of the title to refer to common mental conceptions, that is, axioms. How does Clarenbald now explicate the question Boethius sets out to answer?

The good of substances does not seem to be substantial goodness because good is not predicated of them as genus, species, difference, or definition. In this, "good" is like "being"; when we have a substantial predicate we know in virtue of it, at least in part, what the thing of which it is predicated is, but "being" does not give us this kind of knowledge of that of which it is predicated. If, further, we understand by substantial goodness that whose essence is goodness, the phrase can apply to God alone. How then can created substances be and be called good?

"*Diversum est esse et id quod est*" (being and that which is are diverse). Clarenbald takes this Boethian dictum to refer to the distinction between God and creatures. God is being, the *forma essendi*; creatures have being by partaking in the being God is. What is meant by partaking or participating? It is used here to signify the difference between God and creature; God does not partake of anything, whether prior to himself (there is nothing prior to God) or posterior (for this would indicate dependence on something which, being posterior to God, depends on him). "*Ipsum esse nondum est*" (being itself is not yet). This enigmatic remark of Boethius means that God who is being is not that which has being; he does not partake of being. The mark of the creature is found in participation or partaking. "*Quod est, participare aliquo potest.*" That which is, that is, created substance, can partake of something which is not constitutive of its nature, of accidents, that is. Boethius' doctrine of participation enabled him to distinguish between *what is* and *what is such and such*, with the former referring to substantial and the latter to accidental being. Clarenbald prefers to interpret *to be such and such* (*esse aliquid*) as covering both substantial and accidental determinations; prior to both modes of being there is participation in the *forma essendi*, thanks to which the thing is or exists. In short, Clarenbald argues that existential participation is prior to any essential or accidental participation. Thus, he can interpret Boethius' statement that in every composite its being is one thing and what it is is another as referring respectively to participation in the *forma essendi* and to participation in a determinate form.

Now to the question itself. What do we mean when we say that whatever is is good? Whatever is tends toward the good, but such a tendency is toward what is similar to that which has the tendency; therefore, whatever is, is good. Is that which is good good substantially or by way of participation? We can of course guess that the answer will be that they are good by way of participation, but before he gives that answer, Clarenbald carefully distinguishes between participation in the various substantial predicates which constitute the Porphyrian

tree and participation in accidents which are not constitutive of substance. The expected answer, moreover, is a nuanced one. That which is by participation in being; that which is good by participation in goodness. But it is by participation in being that created substances are substances, and we can say that these substances are good. The doctrine of participation, therefore, leads to the conclusion that created substances are substantially good, but this assertion cannot be understood as it would be in the case of God.

These few remarks may suggest something of the doctrine of Clarenbald. His reading of Boethius' *De hebdomadibus* makes it abundantly clear that, as Häring's introductory remarks imply, the view that prior to Aquinas no one had undertaken to speak of the existence of things is simply without historical foundation.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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#### F. *John of Salisbury* (1110-1180)

The connection of John of Salisbury with the school of Chartres is a multiple one: he studied there as a young man, he provides us with a sketch of the teachings of its masters, and he ended his life as bishop of Chartres. He also studied under teachers elsewhere, for example, Abelard; indeed, he seems to have been acquainted with most of the prominent thinkers of the time. But John was no mere academic. After

his studies he returned to England, where he lived in Canterbury and was associated with, among others, Thomas à Becket. When he fell out of favor with Henry II, John returned to the Continent and eventually was elected bishop of Chartres. His importance for medieval history in general is undeniable; here we are interested in what further light he can throw on the school of Chartres in the twelfth century.

In chapter seventeen of book two of his *Metalogicon* John gives a sketch of current views on the status of universals. His tone is one of gentle irony, his manner offhand; the general impression given is of tolerant condescension. The endless dispute is, John opines, largely verbal, the oppositions being not as clear-cut as proponents of the various positions believe. John suggests that with a little application of common sense the disputants could be shown to be in basic agreement. He chides the masters of the day for putting an impossible burden on beginners in philosophy by their tendency to launch immediately into the vexed and sophisticated questions connected with the problem of universals. When he himself decides to enter the dispute, John notes that he will thereby be liable to the same kind of picayune criticism that other contributors have invited when they commit their thoughts to writing. But enter it he does, and with the clear conviction that he can settle the matter definitively by pressing what he bills as the Aristotelian solution as against the Platonism he finds rampant with few exceptions among the current views on the status of universals.

In chapter twenty of the second book of the *Metalogicon* John of Salisbury argues that Aristotle's teaching on the status of genera and species is supported by reason, the facts, and much that has been written on the subject. The fact is, John writes, that genera and species do not exist, as Aristotle had said. How melancholy then to contemplate the array of opinions which have multiplied on the mode of existence proper to genera and species. Genera and species lack substance and, therefore, cannot be identified with *voces*, *sermones*, sensible things, ideas, native forms, or collections. Such identifications go contrary to the simple statement of Aristotle that universals do not exist, and, according to John; all those who made these identifications profess to be followers of Aristotle. However, although those genera and species do not enjoy any substantial existence, we need not fear that in attending to them our mind is empty. Recalling Aristotle's distinction between what can be called simple apprehension, the simple attending to what is thought, and affirmations and denials which follow on composing or dividing what has been simply understood, John of Salisbury says that in both kinds of mental acts we sometimes consider things as they are and sometimes otherwise than as they are. We can consider line or surface without considering the body to which it attaches, and when we do this, we need not be taken to affirm that line or surface exists apart from any such body. The mind just con-

siders the form without considering the matter. In much the same way, John suggests, the mind can consider man as this form does not exist, because no individual man is being considered in the process. There is simply no point in asking what in nature corresponds as such to man considered as a species, since for man to be considered as a species follows on the abstractive character of our thinking whereby we draw away, as it were, from the natural world. What happens in the formation of a species is that reason, considering the mutual substantial resemblances of a given range of individual things, formulates the resemblance in a general concept. Thus, species are mental representations of actual things in the natural world.

There is a good deal more to John of Salisbury's exposition, but this may suffice to indicate that his calm, common-sense approach to the matter does introduce some much-needed light. One may contest whether the Aristotelian position emerges in all its clarity, but surely the elements of a realist solution are present in John's lengthy chapter twenty. Furthermore, one sees the basis for his claim that his contemporaries are really not as far apart as they think. By the same token, it must be said, however, that many of the positions John criticizes are more alive to real difficulties in the problem than is John himself. One comes away from reading this section of the *Metalogicon* impressed by what John has to say concerning universals, of course, but rather more impressed by the mood he conveys that the problem of universals has been discussed beyond the point of fruitfulness. In a word, John seems to suggest a weariness with the dispute and the hope that dispute will pass to other and more rewarding and certainly less picked-over topics.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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## CHAPTER V

# Monastic Thought

If Abelard and the school of Chartres are indications of things to come, heralding as they do the age of the university, we must not think that the monastic centers were in decline. Abelard's experiences as monk and as abbot were not unique, but the twelfth century saw a great resurgence and reformation of the monastery. The Monastery of St. Victor in Paris was part and parcel of the intellectual life out of which the University of Paris would grow. However, at the very time when feudalism was breaking down and giving way to the rise of cities and communes, there was a flight to monasteries with the founding of hundreds of new monasteries and the sound of voices warning against some of the newer dialectical tendencies. In this chapter we want to look briefly at some men associated with this remarkable resurgence of the monastic ideal, men who were not simply criers in the wilderness but who made their presence known in the cities and, indeed, throughout Christendom.

### A. *Hugh of St. Victor* (1096–1141)

Hugh, already a canon regular of St. Augustine, came to the monastery of St. Victor in Paris in 1115, and it was there that he lived out his life. He was elected head of the school of St. Victor in 1133. Among his works are the *Didascalicon*, an introduction to the arts; a work on grammar; a work on the sacraments of the Christian faith; commentaries on Scripture and on Denis the Areopagite. His mystical writings include a work on contemplation and its kinds as well as a work on the vanity of this world.

The *Didascalicon* presents a survey of all the areas of knowledge and attempts to show that they are parts of a whole that is necessary for a man if he would achieve his natural perfection and his heavenly destiny. The work was written for students who came to the school of St. Victor, and its purpose was to provide them with a synoptic view of the object of their study. With the shift of the schools to urban centers there had come about both a specialization and secularization of knowledge, and Hugh, in the *Didascalicon*, may be regarded as combating such tendencies.

Knowledge is a whole, and it must be understood both with reference to man's fall in Adam and to the ultimate calling of mankind. Professor Jerome Taylor, in a magisterial introduction to his translation of the *Didascalicon*, shows how Hugh's insistence on the need for learning, in its totality and with reference to both temporal and eternal life, contrasts with a number of other tendencies. Various cathedral schools were becoming centers of specialization in law or medicine or the poetic arts; many influential authors advocated a more or less literary humanism; there was the Platonism of Chartres, on the one hand, and, on the other, the emphasis on dialectic by Abelard and others; finally, there was the retreat from secular learning—indeed, an impassioned opposition to it—in many monastic centers. By depicting the map of learning the *Didascalicon* provides a way to avoid both exaggerating and narrowing tendencies by retaining an ultimately religious telos in study.

The definition of philosophy which is the guiding principle of the *Didascalicon* is taken from tradition. "*Philosophia est disciplina omnium rerum humanarum atque divinarum rationes plene investigans.*" Philosophy is a thorough investigation into the nature of all things, both human and divine. Hugh takes this definition quite seriously and includes the mechanical arts within the scope of philosophy; on the other side, the study of Sacred Scripture is also a component of philosophy. This novelty conveys the flavor of Hugh's synopsis. He considers another definition of philosophy, this one taken from Boethius, according to which philosophy is the love, pursuit of, and friendship with wisdom. Boethius goes on, it would seem, to distinguish the knowledge that would be included in this definition from the arts of making. Hugh insists that such an exclusion is not intended. He adds that something can be included within philosophy in the sense that knowledge of it is included, even though its use or practice is excluded. For example, knowledge of agriculture is necessary to the philosopher, but the actual tilling of ground is the work of the farmer. Furthermore, artifacts may not be natural objects, but since they imitate nature, knowledge of them falls within the scope of philosophy.

Philosophy is divided into four basic kinds of science which include all others. First, there is the theoretical part of philosophy, which speculates on truth; second, there is practical philosophy, which considers moral discipline; third, there is the mechanical, which governs the action of this life and repairs part of the damage due to original sin; finally there is logic, the science of correct speech and disputation. Hugh proceeds to subdivide each of these.

The division of the theoretical part of philosophy is taken from Boethius. There is theology (*theologia, intellectibilis, divinalis*), mathematics (*mathematica, intelligibilis, doctrinalis*), and physics (*physica, physiologia, naturalis*). The theoretical sciences, far more

than logic and the practical and mechanical sciences, deserve the name of wisdom because they contemplate the truth of things.

There is a threefold division of the practical as well. Actually Hugh gives a number of alternative expressions of this division, perhaps to achieve symmetry with the data on the theoretical sciences which he took from the *De trinitate* of Boethius. The division may be said to be a division into the solitary, the private, and the public; into ethics, economics, and politics; or into moral, dispensative, and civil. The various options are combined in the manner suggested by the parentheses in the foregoing paragraph on the division of speculative or theoretical science.

Hugh gives a list of seven mechanical arts which is deliberately parallel to the traditional seven liberal arts. The mechanical arts are spinning, armor-making, navigation, agriculture, hunting, medicine, and the theatrical arts.

Logic, the fourth part of philosophy, is first divided into two parts: grammar and the art of discourse. The latter is subdivided into probable and sophistic, with rhetoric and dialectic falling under probable discourse. These are divisive or subjective parts of logic; the integral or constitutive parts of logic are discovery and judgment. Hugh raises the question whether discovery and judgment could be divisive as well as integral parts of logic and, in giving a negative reply, enunciates a general principle. Any science which is an art or discipline can be said to be a part or subdivision of philosophy, but not every instance of cognition is an art or discipline. In order to be a subdivision of philosophy, in order, that is, to be considered an art or discipline, an instance of cognition must have its own end and be complete in itself. Discovery and judgment do not satisfy these criteria: neither is complete in itself. Thus, they are elements of discourse and not special parts of philosophy. This discussion is reminiscent, of course, of Boethius' discussion, with which Hugh would have been familiar, of Ammonius' resolution of the dispute between Stoics and Peripatetics on the question of whether logic is a part of philosophy or merely its instrument. The devices used to solve that far broader question are applied by Hugh to the narrower question just mentioned.

Has Hugh accounted for the traditional liberal arts? He speaks of the quadrivium when he discusses mathematics, and notes that the four arts of the quadrivium are the divisions of mathematics. Moreover, he compares the seven liberal arts with the seven mechanical arts he lists. Three of the mechanical arts pertain to the extrinsic cloaking of nature (weaving, armament, and, presumably, theater), while four are concerned with sustaining inner nature (navigation, agriculture, hunting, and medicine). So too with the liberal arts. Three are extrinsic, being concerned with speech, while four are concerned with thought conceived within. The mechanical arts are concerned with

repairing the damage done to man's bodily nature by original sin, whereas the liberal arts are concerned with repairing the damage done to reasoning and its expression in speech. Hugh returns to the liberal arts when he has enumerated the various parts of philosophy, noting that of all the sciences listed, the ancients singled out certain ones for special attention because of their peculiar utility. One who was well-versed in these was well-disposed to acquire the others. These then are the rudiments as well as instruments whereby the soul is prepared for the full knowledge of philosophical truth. That is why they are called the trivium and quadrivium, respectively, being three and four ways whereby the soul is introduced into the secrets of wisdom. Thus, no one is thought to deserve the title "master" unless he is proficient in the knowledge of these seven. But men have lost sight of the appropriate way to concern themselves with these arts; that is why, while they spend much time on them, they come away with little wisdom.

With respect to the terms "art" and "science," Hugh recounts earlier efforts to explain their different meanings and adds something of his own. If philosophy is, as Isadore writes, the art of arts and science of sciences (*ars artium et disciplina disciplinarum*), we can say that an art can be called a science since art consists of precepts and rules. Hugh's own explanation is this. An art can be said to be anything which has a subject matter and is explicated by an operation, like architecture, whereas a discipline or science consists of speculation explicated through reason alone, like logic. Thus he succeeds in distinguishing mechanical art and science, but does not illuminate why logic is called a liberal "art." Later, Hugh distinguishes mechanical and liberal arts, but not as arts. Mechanical arts are those which alter the form of nature. The liberal arts are so called either because they require a liberated soul or because in antiquity free men and not slaves engaged in them.

Hugh's original breakdown of philosophy into four parts is not intended to replace the traditional emphasis on the liberal arts, as his eulogy of these arts adequately shows. The liberal arts are ways to, the mode of entrée to, the other parts of philosophy. Indeed, he writes, in the seven liberal arts we find the foundation of all learning. These above all must be acquired, since without them no one can explain or defend any other philosophical discipline.

It is difficult in this rather bloodless résumé to convey the impact of Hugh's *Didascalicon*, which, besides the careful divisions we have recounted, devotes a great deal of time to the moral virtues required for the intellectual life. Despite the fact that Hugh relies throughout his work on the doctrine of his predecessors, bringing to bear the whole testimony of the tradition, there is something peculiarly his own in every part of his book. Of particular interest is his insistence on the

broadest possible scope for philosophy, which does not lead him to depreciate the importance of the traditional liberal arts. Those arts are fundamental and propaedeutic to the other parts of philosophy. Why then does he list logic last? When he is setting down the four parts of philosophy, Hugh is not attending to the pedagogical order; in that order, as has been made clear, logic, or rather the liberal arts, would occupy pride of place.

In order to understand the broadening of philosophy that Hugh has effected, we must realize that for him the term "philosophy," the love of wisdom, has as its ultimate telos Wisdom in the sense of the Second Person of the Trinity. The learning Hugh is commending in the *Didascalicon* is part and parcel of the Christian vocation; he is recommending to the neophytes to whom the *Didascalicon* is addressed that they set out with their supernatural destiny firmly in mind and that they continue to assess and understand the pursuit of any science in the light of their calling to union with God. What philosophy seeks to do, the whole point of Christianity, is to restore man and to remedy the effects of sin. That is the basic reason for including the mechanical arts within the scope of philosophy; this is simply to show their importance for achieving our goal as Christians. Man must make his way in this world, he must heal the wound sin has opened between man and nature, and this is the task of the mechanical arts Hugh mentions. That task is, of course, a subservient one. All human tasks must work together for the attainment of man's ultimate good.

This orientation of Hugh's treatment of philosophy must be kept in mind when we compare him with his contemporaries. He is not irenic, as are certain Chartrians, regarding the compatibility of the *Timaeus* and Genesis. Hugh's mentor is Augustine; he will bring everything to the measure of the truth that has come down from above. Hugh has no interest in, indeed he is fundamentally suspicious of, any effort to update revelation by accommodating it to what is currently regarded as the last word of science. With respect to the dialecticians he would seem to be very dubious of efforts which seem to lose sight of the whole theological enterprise. Dispute for its own sake is a perversion, and any interpretation of Scripture which seems to explain it away or needlessly obscure it, or, perhaps worse, to treat it as if its function were to provide grist for dialectical mills, is repugnant to Hugh. For all that, he is no obscurantist. The various arts and sciences which men have discovered are viewed by Hugh as part of the divine economy of salvation. They are not to be condemned because of the abuses to which they are subject; rather, they are to be taken over by the Christian as his rightful possessions and put to the purpose for which they are intended. The attitude of the *Didascalicon*, if we may risk yet another generality, would seem to be a balanced one. Hugh counters the excesses of those who are overwhelmed by pagan knowl-

edge to a point where their adherence to it jeopardizes their faith; at the same time, he seems to be providing a corrective to excessive repudiations of the pagan sources of philosophy. To both extremes Hugh issues one fundamental reminder. Philosophy is the way to wisdom, and we know that Wisdom is the Second Person of the Trinity. The salutary consequence of this reminder is that the Christian cannot regard his interest in and study of pagan documents as a recess from or an alternative to his ultimate vocation. Hugh is a mystic, not in the sense that he depreciates secular learning, but in the sense that he insists on the ultimate ordering of every human effort to man's restoration in Christ.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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#### B. *Other Victorines*

Although Hugh of St. Victor is far and away the most important figure of this Parisian monastery in the twelfth century, there were, of course, other teachers associated with the school of St. Victor in this century. Richard of St. Victor, a Scot by birth, came to Paris around 1139. In 1162 he became master of theology at St. Victor. He died in 1173. His writings, which are to be found in Migne (*PL*, 196), include a *De trinitate*, the *Benjamin minor*, and *Benjamin maior*. The last two works deal expressly with the contemplative life and, as such, with man's ultimate concern. Like Hugh before him, Richard sees both reason and faith as necessary if we are to arrive at contemplation, at the *gaudium de veritate* in Augustine's phrase. Reason has a natural ordination to contemplation, and this natural ordination is aided and enhanced by grace. Man's effort is viewed as a drive toward understanding, toward vision. In speaking of the need to go beyond author-

ity to seeing, Richard is not denying the limits of reason nor is he suggesting that faith is something which can be surpassed in this life. Like Hugh, Richard both recognizes a distinction between nature and grace, reason and faith, and insists on a continuity between them in our drive toward contemplation, a drive which has to be sustained by love or charity. There is, consequently, a subordination of all knowledge to the experimental or loving, mystical knowledge of Wisdom, but this subordination is not a suppression. The Victorine impulse is to make all knowledge a component of man's effort to arrive at his true goal. Contemplation, of course, is not something man can achieve by his own power. In his works on contemplation Richard dwells on the various degrees or stages of the interior life whereby the soul is brought to spiritual perfection. In his work on the Trinity Richard proposes to proceed by reason alone, and he offers a number of proofs of the existence of God. There is also an effort to show by reason that there are three Persons in God.

Godfrey of St. Victor was born around 1130, entered the monastery of St. Victor shortly after the midpoint of the century, and died in 1194. His works can be found in Migne, *PL*, 196; the *Microcosmos* has been edited critically by Philippe Delhaye (Lille, 1951). In the *Fons Philosophiae* (*The Font of Philosophy*), having recorded the vagaries of his contemporaries, particularly on the nature of universals, Godfrey suggests that the best sources of philosophizing are ancient: Plato, Aristotle, Martianus Capella, and Macrobius. Godfrey seems to have had to combat obscurantist tendencies within his own monastery, but he himself remained faithful to the Victorine ideal as it had been set down by Hugh.

### C. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153)

Bernard, one of the dominant figures of the twelfth century, was born in Burgundy in 1090. At the age of twenty-two he entered the monastery of Cîteaux, which had been founded by a group of monks intent on adhering to the letter of the Rule of St. Benedict. Bernard, a nobleman, turned away from worldly possibilities of power and pleasure. His birth would have assured him of power, his looks of the latter. According to the Roman Breviary, in a second nocturne lesson for his feast, Bernard as a youth was so handsome the ladies lost their heads over him, but he never reciprocated this emotional decapitation. (Bernardus, Fontanis in Burgundia honesto loco natus, adolescens propter egregiam formam vehementer sollicitatus a mulieribus, numquam de sententia colendae castitatis, dimoveri potuit.) Scott Fitzgerald once compared himself with Hemingway by saying that Ernest speaks with the authority of success, I with the authority of failure. We could adopt the phrase, make it refer to the flesh, and have Abelard play Fitzgerald to Bernard's Hemingway. Characteristically,

Bernard did not seek the solitude of the monastery alone. He brought with him thirty-two other nobles whom he had convinced to leave the world. At the time of their arrival the reform of Citeaux seemed doomed, the house dying out. Its fortunes changed dramatically with the arrival of Bernard. At twenty-five, Bernard became abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux, and it was in this post that he became a leading spokesman for the monastic ideal, a leader of the Cistercian reform, and an influence as well on the abbeys of Cluny. If Bernard entered the monastery to leave the world, for much of his life he was nonetheless drawn into the disputes of the outside world, both ecclesiastical and secular. He preached the Second Crusade; he was consulted by kings and popes; he intervened in the disputes of the schools. He was, by any account, a fantastic man and one whose stature cannot be explained on a purely natural level. Bernard of Clairvaux was a saint. He died in 1153 and was canonized in 1174. He is known as the Mellifluous Doctor, as much for what he said as for the way he said it.

The writings of Bernard are for the most part sermons and letters, but there are also a number of treatises, written at the request of others. These exhibit his principal interest, which, of course, he did not see as a narrow or exclusive one. He wrote on the degrees of humility, on loving God, on conversion, on meditation, and on the errors of Abelard.

While it is risky to attempt a general definition, there may be some point in trying to say what is meant when Bernard is classified as a mystic. Bernard does not differ from Abelard in seeing that man's ultimate end is a supernatural one; the two do not differ because Bernard held that everything must be subordinated to man's religious calling. Where perhaps the difference lies, what leads us to call Bernard a mystical thinker but not Abelard, is the organic unity Bernard saw between the life of prayer, the spiritual life, and the intellectual life. For a thinker like Abelard there is a connection between studying the logical works of Aristotle and being a Christian, but it is an adventitious, almost extrinsic, connection. For Bernard it is not so. Everything the Christian does must be intimately and essentially ordered to his final end. This need not lead, and in Bernard seldom led, to pietistic excursions away from the topic at hand. But one is struck in Bernard by the living unity of everything he did and wrote, its subordination to his drive for spiritual perfection. We see this in all his activities, whether he is counseling popes, chiding kings, criticizing other religious, refuting Abelard, preaching, or building monasteries. It is all one; everything must be subjected to a single criterion if it is to be justified and considered important. Man is made to know and love God. It is that simple. The loving knowledge of God in contemplation, the experiential knowledge of God, is the central thing—not merely

abstract arguments, not dialectical finesse, but loving union with the source of truth who is Truth, the source of knowledge who is Wisdom. Bernard, who had been granted that mystical union with God, could not take seriously the suggestion that a bloodless and neutral logic must preside over our talk of that infinite reality.

Now this indicates that there is a vantage point from which all human activity can be assessed. Bernard has much to say about the route that takes us to that vantage point. Let us consider what he has to say about the triad opinion, faith, and intelligence. Human knowledge bears first of all on created things, the things of this world. The visible world is a book in which divine truth can be read, but the script is smudged, the knowledge thus gained imperfect. Beyond such knowledge or opinion is faith. Faith marks an advance because of its certitude—Bernard is therefore extremely critical of what he takes to be the import of Abelard's description of faith as *existimatio*—but faith is a dark knowledge: the truth is hidden for it behind a veil. Beyond opinion and faith there is intelligence or understanding. Here not only is truth had, but knowledge that it is the truth. Here there is a similarity between knower and known. Understanding is had, if it is had, because of the presence of the Word in the soul. Understanding is beyond images, a gift; it is the purity and perfection of love where one is concerned only with the good of the other. How far this love is beyond love as we first know it! There is, first in time, a carnal love, selfish love. The direction in which we must go is from self-love to love of God. The perfection of love is the perfection of knowledge because love unites us with Wisdom itself. The progression here is a progression in freedom as well. Bernard will distinguish between various kinds of freedom. There is a natural freedom, one that belongs to us essentially because we are men. But there are two kinds of freedom which are added to us, which are not ours because of our nature. These are the freedoms of grace and glory.

### *Bibliographical Note*

Thomas Merton's *The Last of the Fathers* (New York, 1954) is a brief and interesting introduction to St. Bernard; Watkin Williams' *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (Manchester, 1935) is useful if one can survive the style and format. Étienne Gilson's *The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard* (New York, 1940) is the eminent medieval scholar at his best.

#### D. *Other Figures*

1. *Peter the Venerable* (1092–1147). We have encountered Peter

the Venerable in our discussion of Abelard. The Abbot of Cluny gave Abelard asylum in the last year of the latter's life and was instrumental in effecting a reconciliation between Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux. Peter the Venerable was a defender of the Cluniac interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict and an advocate of an adaptation of the monastic ideal to the changing times in opposition to St. Bernard's call for the strict and literal Cistercian interpretation.

Peter visited Toledo, where he became acquainted with the translations being made there and was instrumental in getting the Koran translated into Latin. Lest this be seen as indicating sympathy on his part, we must add that he then wrote a refutation of the Islamic religion and tried to interest St. Bernard in doing the same. Peter also wrote against the Jews and various heretics. An important figure in the history of monasticism as well as in the history of spirituality, Peter the Venerable is of interest for us insofar as his conception of the monastic life did not preclude the kind of scholarly work which had long been associated with the monastery schools. His works can be found in Migne, *PL*, 189.

2. *William of St. Thierry*. William was born in Liège around 1080, studied at Reims or perhaps Laon, where he might have come into contact with Abelard. He became a monk at St. Thierry in 1113 and was elected abbot in 1119. In 1135 he resigned and became a Cistercian. He died in 1148.

William had little more than disdain for secular learning, both in itself and in its application to the faith. A man is called to love God, and this is not aided by study of Ovid or dialectics. The school of divine love is the cloister. In his various writings William attempts to set down the itinerary of man's will. His works, which are found in Migne, *PL*, 180 and 184, include *Epistola ad fratres de monte dei*, *speculum fidei*, *Aenigma fidei*, *De contemplando deo*, *De natura et dignitate amoris*, *De natura corporis et animae*.

In William the stress is on love rather than knowledge, but ultimately there is a knowledge which issues from love. Speaking of man's nature, of body and soul, William distinguishes the life of the body, the life of the soul, and the life of spirit. This distinction between kinds of life provides him with the structure of the spiritual life. That life consists of three stages or moments. First, man finds himself bound by the senses and passions; he is as it were outside himself, and if he responds to the promptings of spirit, he does so with a sense of being constrained or forced. Second, there is the life of virtue. Virtue is a voluntary consent to the good. The contrast here is between the voluntary and the constrained; the spiritual life is a movement toward greater and greater freedom. The good may be known by natural knowledge and it may be desired, but there is not yet the fullness of love. Monastic asceticism is the school of charity which turns desire to love. Third is the spiritual life properly so called, which is marked

by spontaneity and freedom. The perfect are prompted and led by the Holy Ghost. Such perfect inwardness cannot be learned from the masters of the schools; it comes only from complete docility to the movement of the Holy Ghost. The spiritual life is a condition of union with God: *cum fit homo unus cum Deo*. This is a unity of grace, not of nature; it means to will what God wills, so that there is no longer any difference between our will and God's. William will speak of the progression of the spiritual life in various ways, but always with the emphasis on will and love. Sometimes the progression is expressed as *voluntas, amor, caritas, sapientia* (will, love, charity, wisdom); sometimes as *amor, dilectio, caritas, unitas, spiritus* (love, affection, charity, unity, spirit). But more often than not, William stresses that love is the vehicle of knowledge or, better, of wisdom. *Amor crescit in caritatem, caritas in sapientiam* (love grows into charity and charity into wisdom). The knowledge given man by the Holy Ghost, not the knowledge of the schools, is what life is all about. We do not know God by disputation, by dialectics, by endless wrangling. Charity is the eye with which we see God (*ipsa caritas est oculus quo videtur Deus*).

One can see here the difference between a mystic like William of St. Thierry and one like Hugh of St. Victor. For the latter there is no need to choose between secular learning and the interior life. All things work together for good; secular learning responds to something real in man, something which remains in him as Christian, and he can turn it into an instrument for arriving at his supernatural goal. William, on the other hand, convinced of the vanity of this world, is more struck by the way in which secular learning can be an impediment to the one thing needful, and he warns against it. What we are called to, what will perfect us, is not something we can achieve by our own efforts; it is not something within the grasp of the naturally talented but withheld from the unlearned and simple. William, we may be sure, would not understand the charge that his position is an obscurantist one. He would no doubt reply that to devote oneself to spiritual perfection, to be responsive to the promptings of grace and the Holy Ghost, to live the life of charity—that is to come into possession of the fullness of wisdom. What could be lacking in one who has the fullness of wisdom? If the cautiously inclusive attitude of Hugh of St. Victor seems preferable, we must nonetheless keep in mind that what William was confronted by was not dialectics in the abstract but singular dialecticians, men like Abelard. Abelard may not in the long run and in his writings have been so distant from the emphasis William made, but on the hoof, so to speak, Abelard must have appeared a dangerous and disruptive force, an almost demonic presence. The remedy, at least as far as William of St. Thierry was concerned, was to eschew what Abelard engaged in, retire from the world, and let God work his marvels in the soul.

3. *Isaac of Stella*. An Englishman by birth, Isaac became a Cis-

tercian and, in 1167, was elected abbot of the abbey of Stella near Poitiers. He was an unusual Cistercian in that he employed dialectics in his writings effectively and unapologetically. But the dialectics is at the service of a constant theme of St. Bernard of Clairvaux: the vanity of the world, the nothingness of creatures. Isaac makes this point by engaging in the discussion over the status of universals. He begins by distinguishing substance and accident. The being of accidents is to inhere in substance; accidents enjoy no autonomous existence. But how is it with substance? Well, we must distinguish between first or primary substance, for example, this man, and second substance, for example, Man. The individual man would not exist if there were not Man, or human nature, and human nature exists only if there are individual men. Thus, not only accidents are imperfect beings but also substance, whether considered as universal or singular. From this Isaac draws the surprising conclusion that creatures are nothing, certainly nothing in themselves, since creatures are either substances or accidents and these have been shown to have at best a precarious hold on existence. God alone exists of himself: God is both autonomous in existence and immutable. Thus, God is distinguished from accidents and from both first and second substance. God's existence is discoverable by reflecting on the "nothingness" of creatures; their being, because it is so precarious that it deserves to be called nothing, demands the being God is. Can we speak of God? Isaac distinguishes levels of theology: divine theology consists of negations, claiming that we can affirm nothing literally of God; symbolic theology is metaphorical and speaks of God as a lion and so forth. Between these two is another kind of theology which speaks of God neither literally, for that can produce only negations, nor metaphorically. God is said to be wise and just, not metaphorically, as he may be called a lion, and not literally either, since to say God is just is not to say the same thing as to say that a man is just.

In speaking of the soul and its faculties, Isaac, like Alcher of Clairvaux, is interested in relating the powers of the soul to the stages of the spiritual life. Through sensation the soul is in touch with the corporeal world; through its highest faculty, intelligence, the soul attains to the Holy Ghost and then, thanks to the influence of the Holy Ghost within it, the soul comes to knowledge of the Word and then of the Father. Isaac defines soul as *similitudo omnium*, the likeness of all things; the plurality of faculties of the soul is taken to be an image of the Trinity.

The works of Isaac of Stella are to be found in Migne, *PL*, 194.

4. *Alcher of Clairvaux*. Alcher is noteworthy for a work on the soul, the *De spiritu et anima* (*PL*, 40, 779-832). Aquinas had a low opinion of it and dismissed the suggestion that it was a work of Augustine. "This book, *Concerning Spirit and Soul*," he wrote, "is not by

Augustine; it is said to have been written by some Cistercian. As for its contents, they are not worth bothering about." (*Q.D. de anima*, a. 12, ad 1) The work is a compilation of texts taken from Augustine, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Alcuin, Hugh of St. Victor, and Bernard of Clairvaux. The definition of soul (*animus*) Alcer gives became famous: the soul is a substance which participates in reason and is so fashioned as to rule the body (*animus est substantia quaedam rationis particeps, regendo corpori accomodata*). But the *De spiritu et anima* is not simply concerned with the nature of soul and its faculties. It goes on to discuss the spiritual life. The route of perfection is Augustinian. The soul must turn upon itself if it would go to God, for the soul is the image of God.

5. *Alan of Lille*. Poet, theologian, apologist, philosopher, Alan of Lille (Alanus de Insulis) was born about 1128. He is noteworthy for his contributions to theological method, which indicate a profound influence of Boethius. In his *De hebdomadibus* Boethius proposed to proceed by first setting down a set of propositions or maxims and then subjecting them to analysis in such a way that he seems to be elaborating an axiomatic system. As there are echoes of the Proclus of the *Elements of Theology* in this work of Boethius, so there are echoes of Boethius in Alan's *Rules of Sacred Theology*. What Alan thought he was doing is clear; his method is an application to theology of something common to the other sciences. Each science proceeds from maxims or axioms: in rhetoric these are commonplaces (*loci communes*); and in dialectic, ethics, geometry, and music there are analogous common principles. Theology must also begin from rules or axioms, although these are very obscure and subtle and may be called paradoxes or enigmas. Given the character of the starting points of theology, they should not be given over to discussion by the uninstructed or those whose thoughts are completely bound to sensed objects. Many of the rules Alan set down, pithy axiomatic statements, became the common currency of theological discussion, though, of course, not all of them were original with him. Thus, he takes from Boethius the identity of essence and existence in God: *omne simplex esse suum et id quod est unum habet*. A Neoplatonic influence is apparent in the very first maxim Alan sets down: *Monas est qua quaelibet res est una* (the Monad is that whereby anything is one). The influence of Pseudo-Dionysius is apparent in another. Only negations can be truly and properly predicated of God since by them we remove from God what cannot inhere in him (*negationes vero de Deo dictae et verae et propriae sunt, secundum quas removetur a Deo quod ei per inhaerentiam non convenit*). Alan's work is also influenced by the so-called Hermetic writings.

Taking his cue from Boethius as well as from Chalcidius, Alan develops a remarkable doctrine on the nature of matter. This aspect

of his teaching links him with the school of Chartres. In discussing the various meanings of the word "nature," Alan singles out a meaning according to which nature is an intermediary between God and the world, something reminiscent of Erigena's *natura quae creatur et creat*.

Alan's apologetic work not only is directed against the Albigensians but also takes into account the Jewish and Islamic religions. His apologetic effort is guided by a very intense feeling for the unity of Christianity, and his trump card against heretics is that they threaten that unity; as for non-Christians, their failure to take sufficiently into account the unity of mankind's religious experience is taken as a mark against them.

The poetic work of Alan includes the *Anticlaudianus*, in which he argues for the unity of nature and virtue, and *The Plaint of Nature*. The latter, a mixture of prose and poetry, also has as its theme the relation between nature and virtue. His poetry has earned Alan the title of Christian humanist. He resigned his chair of theology and retired to the monastery at Citeaux, where he died in 1202.

### *Bibliographical Note*

The works of Alan can be found in Migne, *PL*, 120. These include *Ars predicatoria*, *De fide catholica contra haereticos sui temporis praesertim Albigenses*, *Regula de sacra theologia*, *Anticlaudianus*, *De planctu naturae*. There are English translations of the *Anticlaudianus*, by W. H. Cornog (Philadelphia, 1935), and of the *De planctu naturae*, by D. M. Moffat (New York, 1908).

## CHAPTER VI

# *Dominicus Gundissalinus*

Dominicus Gundissalinus was a member of the Toledo school of translators of Islamic and Judaic writings which was established by the archbishop of that city, Raymond (1126–1151). Others of the school were John of Spain, Gerard of Cremona, and, later, Michael Scot and Herman the German. The writings of Gundissalinus are now placed in the second half of the twelfth century, probably under Archbishop John (1151–1166). Prior to the establishment of the Toledo school there had been translations made (for example, by Adelhard of Bath), but such efforts were sporadic and unorganized. Spain was the logical place for such work, for there intimate contact between Latin Christian culture and Judaism and Islam was a fact of life. Converts from these faiths were a major source of the works which came to be translated into Latin. Gundissalinus is thought to have been a convert from Judaism.

The ancient texts which were thus introduced into the West had been filtered through a number of languages before finding their way into Latin. The Nestorian school at Edessa (431–489) translated many works from Greek into Syriac. It is interesting that Cassiodorus mentions both Alexandrian and Syrian scholarly efforts. (*PL*, 70, 1105) The object of these efforts was not Aristotle alone but also the works of the Alexandrian commentators. Such work is thought to have continued from the fifth to the eighth century. In the eighth century Syrian scholars were summoned to the courts of the Caliphs of Bagdad. One of these scholars, Henin Ben Isaac, translated works from Syriac into Arabic. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries this heritage became available to Jews and Christians. The last step, into Latin, was in itself a somewhat complicated one. At Toledo, for example, an Arabic or Jewish text was first translated into the vernacular, Spanish, and it was that version that someone might put into Latin. What was thus translated was not simply a text of Aristotle, say, but such a text together with an Arabian commentary on it. Thus at the same time that Aris-

totle and his Alexandrian commentators were introduced to the Latin West, Alkindi, Alfarabi, Algazel, Avicenna, and Averroes came to be known. This fact was to have not a little influence on Aristotle's fate in European universities.

Unlike most other translators, Gundissalinus wrote independent philosophical works. Besides his work on the divisions of philosophy (*De divisione philosophiae*), at which we will take a sustained look, he wrote on the creation of the world, the immortality of the soul, and unity.

*De divisione philosophiae.* Although this work exhibits a great deal of community with the tradition on the relationship between the arts and philosophy, a tradition to which we have been alluding in what has gone before, Gundissalinus strikes a note that is definitely new, a note which anticipates the sort of approach to the nature of philosophy which in the thirteenth century will be taken by Thomas Aquinas. In devoting a modest amount of space to Gundissalinus' map of philosophy, we leave it to the reader to compare what the Spaniard has to say with what has been said earlier about other twelfth-century views on the division of philosophy.

The *De divisione philosophiae* begins with a fairly familiar lament: *Felix prior aetas*: Alas, for the good old days. The phrase, as it happens, is lifted from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. Although once avidly pursued, philosophy is nowadays fallen into oblivion, for men are too concerned with worldly matters. To help rectify this situation, Gundissalinus proposes to write a kind of summary of wisdom in which he will do three things: show (1) what wisdom is, (2) what its parts are, and (3) the usefulness of each part.<sup>1</sup>

Since everyone prefers some things to other things, and things are preferred either with reference to flesh or to spirit, we must examine what is sought by flesh and what is sought by spirit. The goods sought by the flesh are of three kinds. Some are necessary, for they sustain us, and they are either provided by nature (for example, food and drink) or by art (for example, medicine). Others are such that they are pleasant (for example, fine clothes, well-prepared food, sex). Finally, some things are sought by flesh out of curiosity (*curiositas*), for example, superfluous possessions and riches. Those who seek such things are corrupt and abominable.

The concerns of spirit are also threefold. Some are harmful, such

<sup>1</sup> A general admission of indebtedness to the remarkable work of Ludwig Baur must be made here. Baur not only edited the text and wrote a brilliant analysis of it from the point of view of its sources but also traced the history of *Einleitungslitteratur* from antiquity to the Middle Ages. Written in 1903, these historical studies of Baur remain today indispensable for research into questions concerning introductions to philosophy, divisions of philosophy, the Platonic and Aristotelian currents in Scholasticism, and so on. Exact reference to Baur is in the Bibliographical Note at the end of this chapter.

as moral vice; others are vain, such as worldly honor and magic; finally, some are useful, such as virtues and worthwhile sciences. It is in the latter that human perfection consists, since human perfection cannot be had in virtue without knowledge or in knowledge without virtue.

Sciences are of two kinds, human and divine. Divine science is that which is revealed to man by God, for example, the Old and New Testaments. The sign of such a science is that it is introduced by "The Lord God spoke . . ." and "Jesus said to his disciples. . . ."

Human science is that which is attained by human discourse, for example, all the arts which are called liberal. Some human sciences pertain to eloquence, others to wisdom. Grammar, poetry, rhetoric, and law belong to eloquence, for they enable one to speak correctly and ornately. Those belong to wisdom which enlighten the soul with respect to the knowledge of truth or elevate it to the level of the good. Now all of these sciences belong to philosophy; there is no science which is not part of philosophy. Here Gundissalinus sets himself a fourfold task: he will determine what philosophy is, what its intention or end is, what its parts are, and what each part is concerned with.

#### A. *What Is Philosophy?*

This discussion is divided into two parts, in the first of which Gundissalinus gives us definitions of philosophy. The second part establishes the intention of philosophy and assigns its parts. With respect to the definition of philosophy, Gundissalinus suggests some definitions drawn from what is proper to it and others taken from the effect of philosophy. As a matter of fact, six definitions of philosophy are given, four arising from what is proper to philosophy and two from its effect.

The first four definitions are (1) philosophy is the assimilation of man to the works of the creator insofar as humanly possible, (2) philosophy is the study of death, (3) philosophy is the knowledge of things human and divine conjoined with the effort to live well, (4) philosophy is the art of arts and the discipline of disciplines. Baur gives Isaac's book of definitions as the immediate source of the first two definitions and Isadore as the source of the next two. He also indicates (p. 169 ff.), however, the ancient sources for these definitions, citing *Theaetetus* 176AB as the source of the first two.

As found in Plato, these seem to reflect a Pythagorean influence, a mystical direction of thought in which philosophy is ordered to religion, speculation to intuition and ecstasy. For Gundissalinus, however, the first definition has a straightforward, scientific meaning. Philosophy is the assimilation of man to the works of God in the sense that it is the perception of the truth of things, the truth of knowledge, and the truth of operation. But to know the truth of things is to know them in their causes. Gundissalinus then enumerates the four species of cause

taught by Aristotle, dividing each species into spiritual and corporeal. The second definition, that which sees philosophy as solicitude for death, is interpreted as meaning the mortification of base desires, a prerequisite for the pursuit and acquisition of truth.

Baur's research into the sources of the third and fourth definitions is particularly interesting for us since, as has already been said, they are taken from Isadore. Where did Isadore get them? Baur sees these definitions as Stoic in origin, citing a fragment of the Pseudo-Plutarch in the *Placita philosophorum*. The fourth definition is thought to be derived from Aristotle. (*Meta.*, I,2)

The definition of philosophy from its effect is "Man's complete knowledge of himself." The relation of this definition to the dictum of the Delphic Oracle is noted by Baur, a dictum whose ethical import is clear. It can be seen to suggest that introspection is a source of knowledge of the macrocosm. We can see in this the option of Neoplatonism and Augustinianism: "Noli foras ire, in te redi: in interiore homine habitat veritas, et si tuam naturam mutabilem inveneris, transcede et te ipsum" [Go not about, retire within: truth dwells in the inner man, and should you find your own truth mutable, go on beyond yourself]. (*De vera religione*, chap. 39, n. 72) Gundissalinus' interpretation of this definition could hardly be less mystical. In man substance and accident are found, and not only that but both spiritual and corporeal substance and accident. Now since whatever is is either substance or accident, spiritual or corporeal, man is a sort of compendium of being; for him to know himself will be in a way to know whatever is.

The sixth definition given of philosophy is etymological: philosophy is the love of wisdom; the philosopher is one who seeks wisdom. Wisdom itself is definable in two ways: first from its proper nature, second from its effect. "Wisdom is the true knowledge of first and sempiternal things." These first things are described in terms of emanation, somewhat redolent of the *Fons vitae* of Avicbron. The first genus is created immediately by God, and from it come other genera. Individuals and species receive their names and definitions from the genera, and, thus, owing to the genera each *this* is what it is and has what truth it has. Truth is that which is. Thus, we can say that wisdom is true knowledge of the first and sempiternal things. Finally, wisdom is the intellectual comprehension of what is true and false in every area.

## B. *The Division of Philosophy*

Philosophy is an attempt to understand all things insofar as this is humanly possible. A first division of things is that into those which result from our willing (for example, laws, constitutions, wars, rites, and so on) and those which do not. Only God in no way comes to be; every creature comes to be, whether before time (angels and matter), with time (celestial bodies and earthly elements), or in time

(everything else). Those which come to be in time either will never have an end (for example, soul) or will have an end. Of those things which will have an end, some are due to nature, others to art.

1. *Theoretical and Practical Philosophy.* Since whatever is is due either to our willing or to God or nature, philosophy is first divided into two parts. The first, having to do with human affairs, is *practical* philosophy, which seeks to know what we ought to do; the second, *theoretical* philosophy, having to do with everything other than human works, seeks to learn what ought to be known. Gundissalinus goes on to make several distinctions calculated to clarify this initial division of philosophy. Theoretical philosophy is in the intellect, consisting only in the mind's knowledge; practical philosophy is in doing (*in effectu*) and consists in the execution of a work. Philosophy is sought for the perfection of the soul, and this is achieved by science and operation. Operation pertains to the sensible part of the soul, speculation to the rational part. The rational part of the soul is divided by the concern with divine things not elements of our work and with human things. The end of the speculative is in knowledge, the end of the practical in knowledge of what ought to be done. The principles of this division are, in the first place, objects (divine and human things), mode (knowing and knowing for doing), and the parts of soul involved (rational and sensible). But, lest one think that practical philosophy is action, Gundissalinus makes clear that, as philosophy, it is rational knowledge of what ought to be done.

2. *Divisions of Theoretical Philosophy.* In assigning the parts of theoretical philosophy our author gives two accounts of how the division is made and then compares them with the doctrine of Boethius, *De trinitate*, chapter two. We will set down in schematic form the divisions given in the text.

### *First Division*

Theoretical knowledge has as its object whatever does not result from our willing. But such things are

1. either such that motion cannot belong (*accidit*) to them (God, angels),
2. or such that motion can belong (*accidit*) to them,
  - (a) some of which can exist without motion (e.g., one, cause)
  - (b) while others cannot,
    - (i) though some can be understood without proper motion (e.g., square)
    - (ii) while others cannot be so understood (e.g., humanity).

With respect to the things which would fall under 2a, our author notes that they can be considered in two ways, either according to proper matter and motion or without them. Examples of the first mode would be the consideration that fire is *one*, the elements are *four*, hot and cold are *causes*, the soul is a *principle*. These things—namely one, four,

cause, and principle—can exist apart from matter. The second mode pertains to 2b(i), and refers to the consideration of mathematical things apart from proper matter and motion. What this seems to be saying is this: mathematical things exist in material and mobile things but can be considered without including proper matter and motion. So too such things as cause, principle, and unity are found in material and mobile things, but, unlike mathematical things, they are also sometimes found existing apart from matter and motion. Thus, although matter and motion are not accidental to material and mobile causes, matter and motion *accidunt* to cause as such.

### Second Division

Whatever is understood

1. either exists altogether apart from matter and motion,
  - (a) some such that it is impossible for them to exist in matter and motion, such as God and the angels,
  - (b) others such that it is not necessary that they be in matter and motion, such as unity and cause,
2. or exists in matter and motion,
  - (a) although some can be understood without matter and motion, such as figure, square, circularity, curve, etc.,
  - (b) while others cannot be understood without matter and motion, such as man, vegetable, animal, etc.

That each of these divisions is in agreement with the doctrine of Boethius is next shown. The two divisions come down to saying that speculation is concerned either (1) with what is not separate from its matter either in existing or in the intellect, or (2) with what is separated from matter in the intellect but not as it exists, or (3) with what is separate from matter in existing and in the intellect. The science concerned with the first kind of things is called physics or natural science; the science concerned with the second, mathematics; that concerned with the third, first science or first philosophy or metaphysics. It is precisely these sciences and such objects which Boethius describes when he says that physics is *in abstracta* and with motion; mathematics, abstract and with motion; theology, abstract and without motion. What is more, this division of speculative philosophy is the one given by Aristotle.

3. *Division of Practical Philosophy.* Our author introduces this division by noting that future happiness requires not only science of what should be understood but also knowledge of what is good. Thus, practical philosophy too is necessary. And, as it happens, practical philosophy too is divided into three parts.

One part of it is the science that has to do with intercourse with all men, something which requires knowledge of grammar, poetry, rhetoric, and secular law. These provide for that science of ruling states and of knowing the rights of citizens which is called political science.

Second, there is a science concerned with the household and one's own family. By means of it knowledge is had of the relations of man with wife, children, and servants and of all domestic matters. This science, usually called economics (from the Greek *oikia*, home), Gundissalinus calls family government.

A third science is that by which a man knows how to regulate himself. This is ethics or moral science. Since a man lives either alone or with others and, if with others, either with his family or with his co-citizens, the division of practical philosophy is seen to be adequate.

4. *Logic and the Schema of Philosophy.* The six sciences already enumerated contain whatever can and should be known. Because this is so and because they are precisely the parts of philosophy, the intention of philosophy is said to be the understanding of all things insofar as this is humanly possible. And since philosophy has as its effect the perfection of the soul, it has been pointed out that the end of practical philosophy is the love of the good, that of speculative philosophy the knowledge of the truth.

Truth, however, is either known or unknown. Examples of known truths are that two is more than one and that the whole is greater than its part. Unknown truths, such as that the world began and that angels are composed of matter and form(!) require demonstration. What is unknown comes to be known through something else previously known. Logic is the science which teaches how to bring about this transformation. For this reason logic is naturally prior to every theoretical science and is necessary to each. However, since truth is expressed in propositions and these are composed of terms, grammar, whose concern is the composition of terms, must precede logic.

Gundissalinus holds that every science is either a part or an instrument of philosophy. Examples of parts would be mathematics and physics; of an instrument, grammar. Grammar is only an instrument, for although it is necessary in order to *teach* philosophy, it is not necessary in order to *know* it. But since philosophy inquires into the dispositions of its subject, logic is not only an instrument but also a part of philosophy.

Baur (p. 193) draws up the following schema to represent the doctrine of Gundissalinus' *De divisione philosophiae*.

- I. *Propaedeutic Sciences* (Sciences of Eloquence)
  1. *Scientia litteralis*: grammar
  2. *Scientiae civiles*: poetics and rhetoric

II. *Logic*

Logic is situated midway between the sciences of eloquence and the sciences of wisdom. However, two of the sciences of eloquence enter into the parts of logic Gundissalinus sets down: Categories, Perihemeneias, Analytica Priora, Analytica Posteriora, Topica, Sophistica, Rhetorica, Poetica. These "parts" are simply names of Aristotelian works.

III. *Properly Philosophical Sciences* (Sciences of Wisdom)1. *Theoretical*

- (a) physics
- (b) mathematics
- (c) metaphysics

2. *Practical*

- (a) politics
- (b) economics
- (c) ethics

It is clear that the liberal arts do not as such constitute the main concern of Gundissalinus in his division of philosophy. He mentions them but once, and then seemingly suggests that any human science can be called a liberal art. The mechanical arts come up for discussion, briefly, when economics is considered. His understanding of them would seem to be that these arts transform natural matter in order to make objects useful for man. Gundissalinus suggests a division of them according to the natural matter transformed, according to whether their matter is inanimate or (formerly) animate body. When medicine is distinguished from the liberal arts, we are not faced with anything new, for Isadore (IV, 13, 1-5) makes the same distinction. We need not look in the *De divisione philosophiae* for any precisions on the meaning of the phrase "liberal art" or for any distinction of art from science. Gundissalinus is content to accept Cassiodorus on the definitions of art and science, indicating that these are simply different names for the same thing. Indeed, for Gundissalinus metaphysics is an art and the metaphysician an *artifex*. What the schema just set down indicates (if it be supplemented by the division of mathematics into its parts<sup>2</sup>) is that the trivium and quadrivium have been wholly subsumed under the more important division of philosophy as a whole. It is this division and the use he makes of it that sets the work of Gundissalinus off from all other views discussed earlier, even those of Hugh of St. Victor. The exact nature of Gundissalinus' difference from the others we shall now endeavor to make plain.

The reader will have noted the similarity of the division of Gundissalinus and that of Aristotle discussed in volume one (McInerny, *A History of Western Philosophy: From the Beginnings of Philosophy to Plotinus* [Notre Dame, 1963], pp. 222 ff.). Should this be a surprise? As Gundissalinus himself indicates, the division of speculative philosophy that he sets down is that of Aristotle, but it is as well the division Boethius gives in his *De trinitate*, chapter two. Moreover, this division, doubtless thanks to Boethius, is present in many of the books which influenced the tradition of the liberal arts up to and into the twelfth century. In Isadore, for example, we find this division of speculative philosophy. Nevertheless, there is a difference. The division of philoso-

<sup>2</sup> On page 32 of the text Gundissalinus gives the division of mathematics to be found in Cassiodorus: mathematics is concerned either with magnitude or multitude. Magnitudes are either immobile and the concern of *geometry*, or mobile and the concern of *astrology*; multitude is either considered in itself, as by *arithmetic*, or with reference to something else, as in *music*.

phy which is most operative in the tradition we have been examining is that which divided philosophy into logic, physics, and ethics. This is the division set down by St. Augustine, (Cf. *De civ. dei*, VIII, 4; II, 7; XI, 25.) Moreover, it is the division favored by Cicero. This division is clearly the one most influential on Cassiodorus, Isadore, Alcuin, Rhabanus Maurus, Scotus Erigena, Gilbert of la Porrée, and John of Salisbury. Baur sees the work of Cassiodorus as primarily an introduction to the study of Sacred Scripture, having this in common with Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* before him and, after him, with Rhabanus Maurus' *De clericorum institutione*. For this reason, secular sciences were shrunk to the seven liberal arts, and physical and metaphysical speculation was set aside. "Theology, in the sense of the theology of Christian revelation, takes the place of metaphysics as the queen of the sciences." (p. 353) The justice of Baur's remark will be clear if one considers the manner in which Rhabanus Maurus, for example, discusses the notion of wisdom as it enters into the definition of philosophy. The wisdom involved is precisely that revealed by Christ in the Scriptures. If the liberal arts are useful for the Christian, if they are the pillars on which wisdom is raised, this is simply, according to Augustine, Cassiodorus, Alcuin, Rhabanus Maurus, and so forth, because they are useful in reading the Scriptures.

The new note struck by Gundissalinus, a note possible only because of the influx of the Arabian Aristotelianism, is that there is a wisdom distinct from what has been revealed, a metaphysics to which philosophical sciences are ordered. It was impossible for earlier thinkers to so interpret the third member of Boethius' division in the *De trinitate*, chapter two. Theology was the knowledge of God handed down in the Scriptures; philosophy was a mélange of propaedeutic arts and revealed wisdom. The materials with which Gundissalinus is dealing are precisely those which in the thirteenth century will pose the problem of a relationship between philosophy and theology. This problem is not formally posed prior to the introduction of the *corpus aristotelicum* into the Latin West. There is, of course, the problem of faith and reason, but that is not the same problem as that of the relation between philosophy and theology.

It may not be immediately evident that a difference exists between Gundissalinus and Hugh of St. Victor. That such a difference does exist is clear from the fact that the Victorine school is usually considered to be a mystical one. What does this mean? As we have seen, the purpose of philosophy, the goal of philosophy, is a wisdom which will rectify the nature of man which has been disintegrated by sin. "Omnium autem humanarum actionum seu studiorum, quae sapientia moderatur, finis et intentio ad hoc spectare debet, ut vel naturae nostrae reparetur integritas, vel defectuum quibus praesens subiacet vita temperetur necessitas" [The end or intention sought in any human

action or pursuit, guided by wisdom, is either that the integrity of nature might be restored or that the harshness stemming from the flaws to which our present life is subjected be tempered]. (*Didasc.*, I, 5, p. 12, 3-6) The wisdom with which Hugh is concerned is not the speculative science which is metaphysics, anymore than it would appear to be that theological science whose beginnings had long been had. The goal of philosophy is one of union with God, a condition of man which is no more attained in the sciences than it is attained in the mechanical arts or in philosophical knowledge of them, but via them. We have tried to indicate how Gundissalinus, on the other hand, can so interpret definitions of philosophy whose origins are mystical or ethical that they have a straightforward scientific meaning. In this Gundissalinus is the precursor in a special way of the directions taken by philosophical thought in the thirteenth century.

In his study of unity, in his work on the soul, Gundissalinus, while paying deference to such writers as Boethius, draws much of his inspiration from Arab thinkers. Thus, as translator and independent thinker, Gundissalinus provides for us, writ small as it were, the problem which faces the West with the influx of the Aristotelian *corpus* together with Arab commentaries. Like the last generation of Greek commentators on Aristotle, men contemporary with Boethius, there is a good deal of Neoplatonism among the Arab commentators on Aristotle. This creates difficulties not only for a true understanding of the text of Aristotle but also with Christian orthodoxy.

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PART FOUR  
THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY



## CHAPTER I

# *The Background*

What Freud said of the life of an individual can be applied to history at large: in retrospect it takes on an inevitability and natural progression that it does not possess when one is at the beginning or in midstream. When we consider the thirteenth century as the point of arrival of what had gone before, it is possible so to arrange the data that the rise of universities, the full development of Scholastic theology as against philosophy, and all the rest seem to flow almost effortlessly from their antecedents as if any other outcome would be unthinkable. The contrary view leans rather heavily on the much overworked term "renaissance." We are confronted first with the Carolingian Renaissance, next with the twelfth-century renaissance, then with the renaissance of the thirteenth century, and finally with *the* Renaissance with the resultant picture of discontinuous bootstrap efforts which bear little positive relation to one another, though each points back in various ways to classical times. It would be difficult to decide definitively for either view, particularly if we advert to the original analogue, the life of the individual. Our lives may seem at once a continuum of deeds culminating in what we now are and a discontinuous succession of turning points at each of which we refashioned ourselves. Neither view alone would be sufficient; each has an interpretative value.

In the present chapter we want to look at the thirteenth century both as the telos toward which earlier efforts in the philosophy of the Christian West tended and as something surprising, unforeseeable, and quite *sui generis*. The first viewpoint is valuable in discussing the rise of the universities, which can be regarded as evolving out of previous modes of instruction; the second seems called for when we consider the impact on the West of Islamic philosophy, which was the vehicle whereby the integral Aristotle first came into view. Islamic philosophy and its influence on the West force us to see the need for both of the viewpoints we have mentioned. On the one hand, the Arabian Aristotelians represent a threat to the Augustinian tradition which was dominant in theology and, on the other hand, their Aristotelianism must be viewed with relation to the Aristotle already known and influential in the West. Furthermore, the Neoplatonism of the Islamic phi-

losophers provides a common note with that operative in Augustine and Boethius, and yet because Islamic philosophy brings with it closer contact with Neoplatonic sources, there is an element of strangeness and difference. In short, Islamic philosophy and its influence on the West demand that we see the ambiguity of the thirteenth century with respect to what had gone before. There is both continuity and disruption, a modification of an ongoing effort and quite fundamental changes in the conception of the nature of that effort. Finally, we will make some general remarks about the sources of the philosophizing of the thirteenth century.

#### *A. The Universities*

The preceding chapters have acquainted us with the palace school begun by Alcuin as well as with the fact that Alcuin was already associated with a cathedral school when the invitation from Charlemagne came to him. During the Carolingian Renaissance, as we have seen, great emphasis was put on the establishment of cathedral and monastic schools, and during the twelfth century the men we have considered were associated with one or the other of the latter types of school. At Paris there were schools on Mont Ste. Genevieve, at the monastery of St. Victor, and at the cathedral; it was from the last, the cathedral school, that the University of Paris evolved. The thirteenth century saw the rise of a great many universities, those of Salerno, Bologna, Paris, Montpellier, and Oxford. We shall study this phenomenon in terms of the University of Paris if only because so many of the men to be considered in the following chapters were associated with that university.

The cathedral school of Paris first came into real prominence with William of Champeaux, and the city's importance on the educational map was further enhanced by Abelard's tenures there. It is generally recognized that the University of Paris did not exist at the time of Abelard. The first statute of the university dates from 1215, though this seems to be a confirmation of something already established however inchoately. But what is it we are talking about when we talk of a university?

The model of the university was the medieval guild; the university is a society of masters and scholars. Sometimes the guild was made up of the students, as in the south; sometimes, as was the case at Paris, the guild comprised the masters. In the latter case students can be regarded as apprentices who are candidates for full membership in the guild, that is, to the society of masters. It is thought that the masters formed a corporation because of a struggle with the chancellor of the cathedral school at Paris. With the recognition of the autonomy of the university, or society of masters, control of the granting of licenses to teach passed from the chancellor to the rector of the university, who

was elected by his peers; at Paris the rector of the faculty of arts was also the rector of the university.

There were four faculties at Paris—arts, law, medicine, and theology—with the faculty of arts serving as preparation for the others and thus as the undergraduate college, so to speak. The principal purpose of the university was to train future masters who, after prescribed courses of studies and the successful passing of examinations, were granted degrees. The degree arose quite naturally out of the license to teach. However, not all those who received a degree became teaching masters at the university, thus the distinction between the *magistri regentes* and *magistri non regentes*. The striking thing about the medieval university as it came to be constituted was its autonomy, its freedom from pressure of both an ecclesiastical and a political sort. The University of Paris was from the outset an international university; indeed, besides the division into faculties there was a division of the masters into nations. Of course, since the masters were members of the clergy, both secular and regular, freedom from religious pressure often amounted to little more than freedom from the local bishop. Moreover, since the masters were believers, the constraints of faith on their work, if “constraint” is the right term, could scarcely be considered as emanating from an external source. It is safe to assume that no master wanted or intended to teach anything contrary to the received doctrines of the Church; often it was judged that he nonetheless was so teaching, and condemnation was certainly not unknown. Academic freedom in its most responsible sense was surely present in the medieval university; a master was answerable to his peers, and free and open debate, public occasions when he would defend his views against all comers, both students and fellow masters, were frequent. For sheer hurly-burly of debate and disputation there has probably been nothing to equal the medieval university.

As has been pointed out, the chief purpose of the society of masters was to train others to become masters in their subject. The student entering the faculty of arts was thirteen or fourteen years old, and he embarked on a course of studies which continued for something over four years (even more at universities other than Paris). The curriculum of the arts faculty can conveniently be thought of in terms of the trivium and quadrivium, and the basic mode of instruction was the *lectio*, which was a lecture, not in the modern sense, but in the older sense of a reading. Stated books were read and commented on: in grammar, Priscian; in logic, Porphyry and subsequently the entire *Organon* of Aristotle. Some of the *Nicomachean Ethics* was also read; in the quadrivium no particular books were prescribed in the statutes of 1215, but the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle as well as his natural writings, newly introduced in the West, are excluded from consideration and may not be read. This prohibition was later lifted—certainly it

came not to be heeded—and with the passage of time other books were prescribed for the arts course.

To finish the arts course was to obtain a license to teach in that faculty and to pursue studies in one of the others. The hours of instruction in theology, for example, were such that a master from the faculty of arts could do his teaching and then attend lectures in theology. As a student of theology one followed lectures on Scripture for four years, after which two years were spent attending lectures on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. When one had finished this course and had attained the age of twenty-six, he received the baccalaureate and himself lectured on Scripture for two years and subsequently on the *Sentences*. The doctorate of theology could then be awarded if one had achieved the age of thirty-four and fulfilled other requirements such as holding public disputations.

Besides the *lectiones* there were two kinds of disputation or inquiry, the *Quaestio Disputata* and the *Quaestio Quodlibetalis*. The former could be a fairly regular classroom feature. The procedure was as follows. A thesis was proposed, objections to it were entertained, and finally a resolution was given and the objections resolved. In the classroom the *baccalarius* might make the first attempt at replying to the difficulties proposed, to be followed by the more magisterial resolution of the master. Disputed questions swinging around a common theme could be entertained in the course of a year and be productive of the sort of thing we have in Aquinas' *Disputed Question on Truth*, which is a series of *quaestiones*. The written form of such classroom disputations was sometimes the report of a student, sometimes the composition of the master himself. The quodlibetal questions were just that, on anything at all, and they were entertained at specific times during Advent and Lent when the participants or interlocutors could be other masters. These seem to have been very arduous affairs for the master who undertook them; they were certainly occasions when he would have to prove his mettle or suffer a diminution of prestige. It was not incumbent on a master to subject himself to this ordeal, however; the master was also free in setting the number of disputed questions he would handle.

The style of the *quaestiones* gradually made inroads on the *lectiones*, so that commentaries on the *Sentences*, for example, quickly became a suite of questions. The style of the *Summa theologiae* of Aquinas (but not of his *Summa contra gentes*) reflects that of public disputations, though this was from the outset a written work. The style of the schools, the Scholastic method, exhibits, even on the printed page, the flavor of inquiry, disputation, and dialectic that animated the medieval university. A *quaestio* of the *Summa theologiae*, for example, is first articulated into a number of subsidiary questions or articles. An "article" of the *Summa* begins with a question and is

followed by an answer which is the thesis for what follows. Immediately after the statement of the thesis a number of reasons for not accepting it are given; these are terminated by the *sed contra*. There follows the *respondeo*, or sustained answer, to the question, after which each objection to the initial thesis is taken up in turn. Debate is easily controlled in writing, of course, but when we consider that this literary style reflects the debate of the classroom or open disputation, we get some inkling of what the medieval university was like.

Commenting on set texts in the lectures was an effort to expound what an admitted authority had to say on a given subject; indeed, the very term "authority" suggests, in Latin as well as English, reference to an author. The principal concern of the reader or lecturer would be to expound what the author had to say. But we need not think of this as slavish adherence to the text. What animated the effort was the search for truth, and the exposition must be seen in terms of this larger quest. We are of course speaking of the ideal, and we can surmise that in the medieval, as in modern universities, the very good teacher was a rare entity and that a mode of instruction which, in the hands of a talented teacher, might soar would, in lesser hands, bore. The clue to this mode of instruction was inquiry, questioning, disputation which took their rise from received authors (whether directly or indirectly) as well as from the difficulties the subject matter suggested to master and student. The dangers inherent in the system are clear: authorities might block the way to inquiry; debate can become overly stylized; the mere repetition and manipulation of available material can replace serious and independent research; and so forth. When the system became rigid and an impediment, "Scholasticism" became a pejorative term. This should not lead us to forget that in its heyday it simply covered the method of the medieval schools, a method which was open and lively, disputatious and dialectical, striving for an ideal blend of respect for tradition and openness to novelty. Scholasticism, intimately linked with the medieval university, is, when all is said and done, that out of which modern university instruction arose.

## B. *Translations*

In the previous part, in discussing Dominic Gundisallinus, mention was made of the translation into Latin of the works of Greek and Islamic authors. Toledo in Spain was one of the centers of this effort. In that city Muslim, Jew, and Christian were in contact with one another, and under the patronage of Archbishop Raymond (1126–1151) the task of the translators was given impetus. Among those engaged in this work in the twelfth century, besides Gundisallinus, were John of Spain, Gerard of Cremona, Michael the Scot, and Herman the German. Already in the twelfth century efforts at commentary

and assimilation are apparent, and, once more, Gundisallinus is a major example.

Naples was another scene of translation work; the Emperor Frederick II (1197–1250) invited Islamic and Jewish philosophers to his court. The Emperor also founded the University of Naples, where Aquinas was to attend the faculty of arts and where Peter the Irishman commented on Aristotle and Porphyry. Michael the Scot came to Naples and with a team of translators rendered Averroes into Latin about 1230. The papal court was also the locus of translating, notably by William of Moerbeke; during his sojourn in the papal court Aquinas urged William on. Thus, translations into Latin were being made from the original Greek as well as through the medium of Arabic.

Almost the entire Aristotelian corpus was available in the West when the thirteenth century began, but the versions of the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* were partial ones. Of Plato, part of the *Timaeus* was translated; the *Phaedo* and *Meno* were translated into Latin about the middle of the twelfth century. The Neoplatonism which was part of the patrimony of the West was augmented by translations of Neoplatonist commentaries on Aristotle, the *Liber de causis*, and the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, derivative from Proclus and Plotinus, respectively. In the thirteenth century the spate of translations increased, and largely through the efforts of William of Moerbeke the complete Aristotle together with the Greek commentaries on him were turned into Latin. William also translated a number of works of Proclus as well as his commentaries on the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*. The result of his labor was an Aristotle who had been freed from the interpretation of the Islamic commentators.

### C. Islamic Philosophy

Now that we have some notion of the academic setting in which the men we are soon to consider lived their lives, we must say something about the impact of the Islamic philosophers on the thought of the thirteenth century. It is only under this aspect that we propose to say a few things about a number of thinkers, for the most part Arabs, who lived prior to the thirteenth century but who exercised a considerable influence on the masters of the universities. Our knowledge of these men is in a considerable state of flux, and it increases almost daily. For this and other reasons the following sketch is attempted with more than the usual trepidation.

We are already aware of the fragmentary way in which Greek thought came into the Latin West. Of Plato little was known directly, apart from the *Timaeus*; for a long time Aristotle was represented only by portions of his *Organon*, then by all of it as well as by the first three books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Meanwhile, Greek thought was traveling a circuitous route that would eventually bring it into contact

with the Christian West in Spain, a route through Syria and Persia and Arabia. As it traveled this route, Greek thought underwent translation from one language into the next with all the dangers that are involved with respect to fidelity to the original Greek. Furthermore, there was not simply transmission but interpretation, and the thinkers of Islam, like their Christian counterparts, were bent on establishing a harmony between pagan philosophy and their religious beliefs. When Aristotle finally came into the West, he came together with the writings of his Arabian interpreters. This had consequences of an interesting kind.

*Al-Kindi* (c.801–873). The first Muslim philosopher was al-Kindi. He is said to have written 270 works, but most of them are lost, and it is probable that sections of works have been counted as whole works. His writings, as they are described, are encyclopedic in scope, ranging from logic through medicine and science to theology. Some of al-Kindi's works were translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona, and, until recently, he was known only through these Latin translations. He revised the Arabic version of Plotinus' *Enneads*, a work he thought to be one of Aristotle's.

It was owing to al-Kindi that philosophy became part of Islamic culture; he became known as the "philosopher of the Arabs," and his task as he saw it was to reconcile the wisdom of the Koran with Greek philosophy. This will be the continuing task of al-Farabi, ibn-Sina (Avicenna), and ibn-Rushd (Averroes). Philosophy, al-Kindi observed, depends upon reason, religion upon revelation; logic is the method of the former, faith of the latter. Al-Kindi's view of philosophy is quite comprehensive; it embraces the whole of human science. The divisions of it that he offers are Aristotelian, distinguishing speculative and practical philosophy and subdividing the former into physics, mathematics, and divine science, the latter into ethics, economics, and politics. The fact that divine science, or theology, is a part of speculative philosophy provided al-Kindi with one of his reasons for the compatibility of philosophy and religion, though this reason led to an ambiguity. He also suggests a common source, ultimately, of the prophet's revelation and philosophical truth and goes on to speak of religion as the ultimate ordination of philosophizing.

Al-Kindi's use of the term "theologian" varies. Sometimes he uses it to describe those who opposed the study of philosophy and argues against them in a manner reminiscent of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*. Either the study of philosophy is necessary or it is not. If it is necessary, it should be pursued; if it is said to be unnecessary, one must show why this is the case, and to do this he must engage in philosophy. Thus, willy-nilly, philosophy is necessary. Further, although he sometimes seems to identify Aristotle's metaphysics and divine science without qualification, al-Kindi makes the following contrast between the divine

science of the Koran and that of the philosophers. That of the Koran is strictly a divine science, while that of the philosophers is finally a human science. The knowledge of the prophet is immediate and inspired, whereas that of the philosophers is reached by way of logic and demonstration. Confronted with Aristotle's view that the world is eternal, al-Kindi will deny this because of his faith. Only God is eternal; everything else is created and finite. The denial of infinitude of anything other than God is found in the *De quinque essentiis*, a work which holds that matter, form, space, movement, and time attach to every physical body. Holding that any body must be finite, al-Kindi argues that the sum of finite magnitudes must be itself finite. In his *De intellectu* al-Kindi argues that man has four intellects: the agent intellect, the passive intellect, the latter as actuated, and the use of knowledge already had. We can take it that he is distinguishing four senses of "intellect."

*Al-Farabi* (c.870-c.950). Al-Farabi was a Turk by birth and of the Islamic faith. He came to the study of philosophy late in life, perhaps at fifty years of age, and half of his writings deal with logic and consist of commentaries on the works of Aristotle's *Organon*. One of the striking things about al-Farabi's conception of philosophy is that he holds that the various philosophical schools teach, not many philosophies, but different aspects of the one philosophy. He shares the Neoplatonic hope, expressed by Porphyry, that the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle can be reconciled and shown to be complementary. The fact that Porphyry, Plotinus, and Proclus, together with Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle by Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ammonius, and Themistius, had been translated into Arabic doubtless gave fuel to this hope of synthesizing the great philosophers of antiquity.

In al-Farabi we find a picture of the universe which is quite clearly Neoplatonic, one relying on a doctrine of emanation and insisting on a hierarchy such that God acts on lesser orders only through the medium of intervening orders. The picture of the universe is contained in al-Farabi's theory of the ten intelligences. First, there is God, the One, who in thinking of himself produces a first intelligence which emanates from him. God is necessary, but the first intelligence is possible in itself, though necessary with respect to another, that is, to God. When the first intelligence thinks about God, this is productive of another intelligence, and the chain of emanations continues, reaching the tenth intelligence, called the "agent intellect," which directs the sublunary world. As with Neoplatonism, *esse est percipi*, in the sense that to be thought is to be created; the first nine intelligences hierarchically ordered are productive of the souls of the nine celestial spheres of the astronomy of Ptolemy. Prime matter issues in some way from the tenth intelligence, and prime matter underlies the four elements out of which all physical things are ultimately made; the forms

of bodies also emanate from the tenth intelligence, and it is here that room is found for Aristotle's teaching on the hylomorphic composition of physical bodies. Al-Farabi's writings on the intellect were translated into Latin and are influential in the West; his interpretation of Aristotle's agent intellect, an interpretation reflecting the influence of the school of Alexandria, will have an impact on the University of Paris in the thirteenth century. The various senses of *intellect* we have seen distinguished by al-Kindi have their counterpart in al-Farabi, but there is the further note of illumination from superior intelligences, a kind of infused knowledge, which enabled al-Farabi to make a rather smooth transition from philosophy to religion. The counterpart of the Neoplatonic emanation is the theory of return to the One, and al-Farabi, like Plotinus, speaks of this return as it is effected by the human intellect in religious and even mystical terms.

*Avicenna* (980–1037). Perhaps the greatest of the Islamic philosophers, ibn-Sina, or Avicenna, was known by the men of the thirteenth century chiefly through his *Sufficientiae*, whose parts are devoted to the principal divisions of philosophy—logic, physics, mathematics, psychology, and metaphysics. Avicenna's vision of the world is essentially that we find in al-Farabi, and his procedure in treating of God is reminiscent of the ontological argument, as Fazlur Rahman has pointed out. God is a necessary being and cannot not exist; from him, considered as premise, creation emanates as if it were a conclusion. In knowing himself, God effects the first intelligence, which is not a necessary being considered in itself but only possible. Any being other than God is not necessary of itself, in its nature, but receives its necessity from God. It is here that Avicenna develops a thought of al-Farabi, who, taking up a distinction Aristotle had made in the *Posterior Analytics* between knowing what a thing is and knowing that it is, had maintained in creatures a difference between essence and existence. Essence here stands for nature, which is possibility, which does not include existence. If a nature exists, this must be explained by something other than itself. In short, existence is accidental to essence or nature. By accident Avicenna did not mean what would be meant if red were said to be an accident of a thing, for the thing might continue to be while ceasing to be red. His point is simply that if existence is not part of what a thing is, part of its essence, when it exists existence befalls it; it happens to exist. Existence seems to identify the created nature's dependence on God and would be, if Rahman is right, a relational notion. God is existence, is necessary existence. Avicenna intends to say, not that in God essence and existence are the same, but that God has no essence or nature. This denial can doubtless be explained in terms of the Neoplatonic notion that nature or essence is a limitation or restriction on existence.

The difference between essence and existence in creatures provides

Avicenna with the great ontological difference between creatures and God. Like al-Farabi, Avicenna interpreted a remark of Aristotle's in the *Metaphysics* to mean that God is wholly aloof from the world, neither knowing things other than himself nor caring about them, and perhaps not the cause of other things either. No doubt inspired by his religious beliefs here, Avicenna wants both to insist on the ontological difference between God and creature and to put God into contact with the world. This contact or relation introduces the problem of the one and the many, and the doctrine of emanation commends itself to those who feel that by placing God at the top of a hierarchy, the first of whose constitutive members he accounts for directly, God's immediate influence can be kept to a minimum, while his mediated influence has total scope. Just as with al-Farabi's theory of the ten intelligences, Avicenna's theory of emanations is productive of angels and of celestial spheres, to the tenth intelligence, the agent intellect, whose name is the angel Gabriel.

The agent intellect is the giver of forms (*dator formarum*), responsible for forms not only in the sense of the substantial forms of physical bodies but also in the sense of man's mental concepts. Our glance at al-Farabi has already acquainted us with this projection of a faculty of the human soul into the status of a separate entity, an angel. As for man himself, Avicenna denies that the human soul is the form of the body. Rather the union of soul and body is the union of two substances. This doctrine is based on Avicenna's reflections on the difference between mental and corporeal activities, which he sees to be heterogeneous and which he then concludes cannot pertain to one and the same substance. However, if soul and body are two substances, their link is something so intimate that the soul retains after its separation from the body in death a relation to the matter which entered into its body. For this and other reasons Avicenna will deny that souls coalesce into one in their separated state; a fortiori he rejects the Neoplatonic conception that the ultimate goal of the return to God which complements emanation will be the fusion of the soul with God. Unlike al-Farabi, who had made immortality an achievement of good men, Avicenna maintains that every human soul is immortal.

A matter that elicited criticism within Islam was Avicenna's inability to account for creation in time. The emanation from God of creatures cannot be understood as something willed by God in the sense that this is a process which takes place but might not have taken place. When Avicenna speaks of God willing the emanation of creatures, he means little more than that God consents to its necessity. Rahman's image of premise and consequence is helpful here: creatures are thought of as emanating from God with a kind of logical necessity such that their not emanating would be unthinkable and contradictory.

In speaking of God's "nature" and attributes Avicenna will use

terms like "will" and "knowledge" and "power," but it is his opinion that all such terms are either negative or relational and finally coincide with existence, which is what God is. He will speak of all things pre-existing in God as Ideas or forms, but this is not taken to be a denial of his basic claim that God knows only himself; it is in knowing himself that God knows whatever emanates from him. Avicenna wants to say that God knows individuals as individuals, not merely types or universals, but his way of maintaining this left him open to the criticism of al-Ghazzali. It must be said that Avicenna's teaching on universal nature is a difficult one in itself and has been the topic of much comment. Avicenna can speak of a threefold existence of a nature: in God's knowledge, in the created mind, and as it exists. The first two differ for reasons already hinted at, but further because human knowledge, indeed created knowledge, is discussed in terms of an illumination from above. In the case of man the proximate illumination comes from the agent intellect, that is, the angel Gabriel. As for the difference between the nature as known (by man) and as it exists in nature, Avicenna will say it is universal in the former, singular in the latter, and he goes on to say that neither mode of existence pertains to the nature in itself. This is the *natura absolute considerata* that we encounter in Aquinas' *De ente et essentia*. Some present-day critics of this doctrine have seen in it a claim that a nature exists absolutely apart from the various kinds of existence it can enjoy, which would of course be an absurd claim. But it is not what Avicenna is trying to say. We must no doubt return to his position that in creatures essence and existence are distinct; when we do this, the present point is little more than a corollary. When we consider a nature, a whatness, we need make no reference to its status as being thought by us nor to the accidents which attend it in an individual, and even when such references are made, we are adverting to what is accidental to, not a part of, the nature in question. A consideration of manness, for example, need not advert to accidents which accrue to that nature insofar as we think of it (for example, universality) nor of accidents which accrue to it because of Socrates who is a man (for example, being bald). Aquinas quite rightly sees this Avicennian doctrine as part and parcel of his distinction between essence and existence; it is highly surprising, therefore, to find Thomists criticizing Avicenna on this point with no apparent awareness that their criticism, if valid, would undermine their confidence in what Aquinas has had to say about *esse* and *essentia*.

*Averroes* (1126–1198). Averroes was born in Cordova and, unlike Avicenna whose works had a more independent cast, expressed himself most influentially through commentaries on Aristotle. For the medievals of the West he became simply *the* Commentator, and his direct association with the writings of Aristotle make his influence more palpable than that of Avicenna and a good deal more controver-

sial. There are three sorts of commentary Averroes wrote on a given work of Aristotle, for example, the *Metaphysics*, but they seem to differ largely in terms of quantity and detail.

The closeness to the text of Aristotle that his role as commentator demanded of Averroes led him to separate himself from the more Neoplatonic views of al-Farabi and Avicenna. Thus, he will deny the theory of emanation, though he retains the notion of a hierarchy of intelligences. Furthermore, he will accept as true Aristotle's doctrine that the world is eternal. His treatment of the human soul is also markedly different from that of Avicenna. For Averroes the human soul is the substantial form of the body, and as the form of a body it has whatever existence it has as a bodily form. This was taken to mean that the soul of Socrates does not survive the death of Socrates in any meaningful way.

An attitude characteristic of Averroes' procedure, fidelity to the text of Aristotle despite the apparent conflict between his understanding of it and his religious faith, got Averroes into trouble in Islam. Al-Ghazzali was highly critical of him (as well as of philosophers generally), and Averroes attempted to reply to this criticism in *Destructio destructionis*. What emerges from his attempts to explain the relation between philosophy and faith becomes definitive of Latin Averroism as well, the so-called two-truth theory. By this Averroes seems to mean that the statement of truths in the Koran is not as exact and accurate as might be, and this is only fitting since the Koran addresses itself to all, not merely to the learned. For a clear and distinct statement of a truth we must turn to philosophy. Philosophy thus becomes the measure of faith, and revealed statements are considered not to be in straight conflict with philosophical ones (they are, again, couched in a different, more symbolic language), but to be inadequate as they stand. As adequately expressed, revealed truths come to say something apparently different from what they are taken to mean in their original habitat, and it is not surprising to learn that Averroes was sent into exile and his books proscribed and even burnt.

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There were other Islamic philosophers whose works became known to the medievals and were influential on their thinking. What is generally important about all these men, for our purposes, is that they modified the appearance that Greek thought had for the men of the medieval universities. Among the Arabs there was an unfortunate confusion of Plotinus and Aristotle; a portion of the *Enneads* came to be known as *The Theology of Aristotle*, and the *Liber de causis*, which consists of borrowings from Proclus, was not associated with its true author. Al-Farabi and Avicenna gave a version of Greek philosophy which appeared to be a restatement of what Aristotle had taught, and Averroes as the commentator on Aristotle was taken to be unpacking

the text and revealing what Aristotle had really taught. Sometimes this is what he was doing; on other occasions his and other Islamic versions of Aristotle's doctrine were wide of the mark. In many cases the Aristotle they presented to the Christian West was a teacher whose tenets were in sharp contrast to revealed truths. Thus, the first reaction is one of caution. Aristotle's writings were proscribed at Paris in 1210, but later a commission was set up to study and evaluate the Aristotelian corpus. This was in 1231, and from that time the earlier prohibition seems largely to have been ignored. Along with the translations which had been made in Spain newer translations, made directly from the Greek, were becoming available. Resistance continued to this influx of a strange and different Aristotle, a thinker whose range, like that of the Islamic philosophers, was significantly greater than that of anyone in the West. Aristotle was thought to be a threat to the great tradition of Western theology, to be inimical to the faith, to be wrong on significant points. The assessment of Aristotle was surely in large part an assessment of the Aristotle interpreted by the Arabs, particularly by Averroes, but even the unadorned text of Aristotle presented massive difficulties for the Christian thinker. Fortunately there were some, most notably Aquinas, who held themselves to the task of getting at what Aristotle really meant and assessing the result of that inquiry in terms of both natural and supernatural criteria of judgment.

Besides Islamic philosophy, brief mention must be made of the influence of Jewish thought on the thirteenth century. Avicenna, mistakenly thought to be an Arab, lived from 1021 to about 1070; his work *The Origin of Life (Fons vitae)* is often cited. Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) was born in Spain and died in Egypt. His *Guide for the Perplexed* is an attempt to make use of the philosophy of Aristotle to interpret Scripture. Rabbi Moses, as Aquinas refers to him, was well acquainted with Islamic philosophy, and we may surmise that his effort to effect a concordance of philosophy and faith was influenced by their similar effort. Whatever the principles that guided his interpretation, Maimonides comes up with rational defenses of items of religious faith which his Islamic counterparts tended to call into question on the basis of philosophy. For example, since it is clearly revealed that the world has not always existed and the philosophical arguments for its eternity are inconclusive, Maimonides concluded that we must accept the position of Scripture. Maimonides stands ready to abandon an item of belief if it can be disproved by philosophy, but this led to no wholesale housecleaning of religious tenets.

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Intellectual culture reached a crest in Islam long before it did in the Christian West. The medicine, the mathematics, the science of the Arabs surpassed what was known in the West; more importantly for

our immediate purposes, there was in Islam a long tradition of study of the Greek philosophers, a study which led to assimilation, interpretation, appropriation. The finest fruits of two intellectual cultures, the Greek and Islamic, entered Europe with what can only be described as suddenness and at roughly the moment when the universities were assuming the shape that would define them for centuries. The diet was extremely rich against the background of the Western tradition, and it is not surprising that caution was exercised by some, while adulation of an uncritical kind was displayed by others, and that only gradually the medievals became equipped to assimilate and appropriate in their turn.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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## CHAPTER II

# *The Beginnings*

Before turning to progressively more important responses to the influences just mentioned, we want in the present chapter to give some sense of the initial efforts to cope with and profit from the new influx of philosophical literature. The men we shall presently mention—William of Auvergne, Alexander of Hales, and Robert Grosseteste—though subsidiary figures in the broad sketch we are trying to give, are, when considered for themselves alone, a good deal more interesting than the following may suggest.

### A. *William of Auvergne* (c.1180–1249)

William was a master of theology at the University of Paris, who in 1228 became bishop of Paris. Since William was a member of the commission appointed by Pope Gregory IX to study and correct the writings of Aristotle, his works take on a special interest. William writes at a time when the attitude toward Aristotle is at least wary, and what William has to say gives us a fair indication of an early thirteenth-century response to the inundation of new philosophical literature.

The first thing that must be said about William's treatment of Aristotle is that he seems imperfectly aware of the line of demarcation between Aristotle's doctrine and the doctrines of the Islamic thinkers. Often criticisms are made of Aristotle and his followers when the point at issue is one that Aristotle emphatically did not hold. For example, William attributes to Aristotle the view that from the one God only one effect can immediately proceed and that that first creature, the first intelligence, goes on to create its own effect, and so on to the constitution of the ten intelligences, with the tenth the creator of matter, corporeal forms, and human souls. We are familiar with this Neoplatonic emanation theory in Islamic thinkers, but it is possible that William attributes it to Aristotle as well because Gerard of Cremona, the translator of the *Liber de causis*, had called that work a work of Aristotle's. Furthermore, William often cites specific works of Aristotle and accurately identifies Aristotelian doctrines. Consequently, if some of William's criticisms of Aristotle are misconceived, others are not.

The mode of William's critique is interesting. Whenever he encounters a philosophical doctrine contrary to Christian belief, he will label it an error. But he does not leave the matter there. He will go on and try to show by argument that the position is false or ill-founded. An error that particularly incenses William is the contention that there is but one human soul, that the present diversity of souls is merely a function of matter, and that when death comes, the distinction between souls disappears. He says that this error should be countered not only by proofs and arguments but also with steel and torments! This problem raises the question of the principle of individuation. William's discussion of the matter is critical of the doctrine of Boethius, found in the *De trinitate*, according to which it is the "variety of accidents" which individuates members of the same species. William transfers the question to the angels and goes on to criticize the identification of the nine intelligences and the choirs of the angels, since in each choir there is a plurality of angels. It is difficult to know whether William is suggesting a plurality of angels of the same species or not.

Let us consider William's treatment of the eternity of the world, a question he takes up in his *De universo*, the second part of the first principal part, chapters one to eleven, especially chapter eight.

Some have tried to suggest extenuating reasons for Aristotle's claim, William observes, but it is quite clear that Aristotle held the world to be eternal, that it did not begin to be, and that he held the same to be true of motion; Avicenna followed him in this and added reasons and arguments to sustain the claim. The first reason the philosophers give is as follows: either the creator precedes the world or he does not; if he does not, there would be neither creator nor world, since the creator is the creator of the world and the world is the effect of the creator. We might want to say that they come to be simultaneously (*incoepit esse cum mundo*), but this will not do since the first cause cannot come to be.

William's resolution of the difficulty is to free the relation of eternity to time of the temporal sense of *before*. Eternity is not just endless time; its priority to time is a priority of nature. To say that God is eternal and before the world is not to say that he is older than the world in the usual sense of *older* which is temporal. To ask what is before time sounds as funny as it would to ask what is beyond the world. Time like space is intramundane; therefore, to speak of God as before the world is not to speak of a time before time.

William criticizes the view, associated with Avicenna, to the effect that all creatures are composed of matter and form, even angels. In order to sustain that position, it was necessary to speak of a different kind of matter in angels, a spiritual matter. For William, *matter* means what it meant for Aristotle: it is a principle of generable and corruptible things. Thus, he holds that angels are not composed of matter and

form. Matter of course is the course of the contingency of material things, that because of which they can cease to be. Would not a creature which was not composed of matter and form, a creature who was pure form, be a necessary being?

The Islamic view that creation is necessary was one that William of Auvergne strongly contested. Despite this opposition, William took over from Islam the distinction between essence and existence, finding in this the fundamental ontological difference between creator and creature. In God there is no distinction between essence and existence: what God is is necessary existence. The existence of any creature is other than what it is and thus relates to its essence or nature as an accident. The composition of essence and existence calls for a cause and thus is the basis for the contingency and dependence on God of every creature.

It is in the first eight chapters of his *De trinitate* that William develops his doctrine on essence and existence. First, he distinguishes between essential being and participated being. He draws an analogy between the predication of "good" and of "being": some thing may be essentially good, be goodness, while other things participate in goodness. These different modes, being and having, are explained by Boethius in his *De hebdomadibus*, William observes, and he goes on to construct a general rule. Whatever is predicated is predicated either essentially or accidentally, that is, the predicate expresses what the thing is or something other than what the thing is. Such a predicate as being cannot be an accidental predicate of everything of which it is said; it must be predicated essentially of something. "Ens igitur de unoquoque aut substantia aut participatione dicitur. Dicitur autem de quodam substantialiter, de quodam participatione dicitur: et quoniam non potest dici de unoquoque secundum participationem, necesse est ut de aliquo dicatur secundum essentiam." William underpins this move by saying that we must either accept it or get involved in an infinite regress. Let A be said to be good by participation, that is, by having good; call the good it has B, and then if B is good by having good, call that good C, and so on to infinity. To avoid this we must say that something is good in the sense of being goodness, not having it, and the same must be said of being.

The Latin infinitive "esse" that we have been translating as "existence" has two senses, according to William. It can mean essence or nature: the residue left when all accidents are removed, the substance, what the defining notion rather than the specific name expresses. In another sense "esse" means something other than essence: it is not part of the essence or nature of any creature. It is, however, the essence of what is said to be essentially. Given these two senses of "esse," we can say that in God they are one, in creatures they differ. Only that being whose essence is existence is truly called being, and

being is its proper name. God is the only being of whom it can be said that it is impossible to think of him without thinking of him as existing. Such a being is uncaused; every being which is such that existence is other than its essence must be a caused being.

William goes on to draw the corollaries of this doctrine. The being in whom essence and existence are identical is simple, unique, and so forth. With William of Auvergne's discussion of essence and existence we have a first contribution to what will be a continuing discussion of his century and beyond. The influence of Islamic thinkers is palpable here, but the doctrine is also referred to Boethius. Islamic thinkers, as we have seen, trace the distinction back to Aristotle. We stress its importance for a further reason as well, for it reveals that William of Auvergne was not merely a critic of the new philosophy, but a judicious borrower from it. His obvious acquaintance with the new sources of philosophy was bound, we should think, to leave its mark on him; and so it did.

The Aristotelianism that William never ceased to oppose can be conveniently summed up in the point suggested by Pierre Duhem. (1) It contends that the whole of creation is necessary and exists from all eternity; that it necessarily issues from the first cause. (2) It holds that God creates directly but one creature, which, though created, in turn creates; of these further creatures God is only a mediate cause. (William's major objection to this is that it suggests that God can do more things in conjunction with creatures than he could do on his own.) (3) Human souls are not really distinct from one another save in their bodily existence and thus must coalesce into one after death. In treating these points William does not merely label them heresies; he seeks arguments to refute them.

As for the philosophical teachings he accepts, it is difficult to say what larger whole they become parts of. With William we are not yet at the point where the structure of Aristotelian philosophy is accepted as fundamental, with the errors it may contain refuted in terms of its own principles. Perhaps we must conclude that William remains very much an ad hoc philosopher; his *De universo* is reminiscent of earlier writings bearing that same title which were more or less random collections of everything under the sun. Nevertheless, in many ways William is the herald of an emerging style both in theology and philosophy, a style that developed with astonishing rapidity.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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pp. 249–260; É. Gilson, “La notion d’existence chez Guillaume d’Auvergne,” *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age*, 21 (1946), pp. 55–91.

### B. *Alexander of Hales* (c.1185–1245)

Alexander was an Englishman who came to Paris, where he was a master of arts prior to 1210 and went on to become a master of theology probably around 1220. He went home for several years (1229–1231), where he was named archdeacon of Coventry, but he reclaimed his chair in theology at the University of Paris in 1232. He joined the Franciscan Order in 1236.

Alexander was the first master of theology to employ the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard as the text for his courses. His commentary on it, discovered in 1945 and recently published (1951–1957), was written prior to his entrance into the Franciscans. Several volumes of *Disputed Questions*, published in 1960, contain work done by Alexander before becoming a Franciscan. He continued to teach in the university as well as in the Franciscan house of studies after he had entered religion; indeed, it is held that he taught until the time of his death. His *Summa theologica* is in many ways a Franciscan effort, since it is generally agreed that the *Summa* consists of a compilation from Alexander with contributions by other hands, all of them Alexander’s confrères in religion. The recognition that the *Summa* is not in every sense a personal work does not lessen its interest or importance.

Alexander’s explanation of the *Sentences* clarifies the text principally by appeals to Scripture and St. Augustine, but he cites Aristotle both in his logical writings and in the *Physics*, *On the Soul*, and *Metaphysics*. References to other philosophical writings are infrequent, and Van Steenberghen sees in Alexander’s commentary on the *Sentences* the first tentative effort at speculative theology in the presence of Aristotelianism. So too, the *Disputed Questions* thus far published exhibit a modest interest in the new influx of philosophical writings. The *Summa* is something else again. Its attitude toward the new literature is open but critical, though questions have been raised as to the extent of the acquaintance with the new literature that the *Summa* exhibits. The general attitude of the *Summa* has been compared with that of William of Auvergne, but there are many substantive differences of judgment about particular points of doctrine. Let us mention some salient points of the teaching of the *Summa* attributed to Alexander of Hales.

We find a discussion of the nature of the human soul and human intelligence. Aristotle is said to have distinguished a material, a potential, and an active intelligence. Though it is usually held that the material intelligence is the potential intelligence for Aristotle, the

*Summa* takes them to be distinct and identifies the former with the sensitive soul. The role of the active intelligence is abstraction; it illuminates and actuates the potential intelligence. As for the status of the active intelligence—is it a part of the human soul or separate from it?—the *Summa* suggests that the reason for maintaining that it is separate is that there are intelligible forms nobler than those attained by means of abstraction. In order for the mind to grasp such divine forms, it seems necessary that it be aided by something other than and apart from it. The agent intellect is assigned this role. In discussing this position, the *Summa* distinguishes between the form and matter of the soul. The agent intellect relates to the form of the human soul whereby it is spirit; the possible intellect relates to the matter of the soul, and the use of the term “matter” here is suggested by the fact that the soul is in potency to knowable things. Thus, the *Summa* would deny that the agent intellect is something apart from soul. The reason for suggesting that it is, alluded to above, is contested by saying that the agent intellect is said to be in act, not in the sense that it actually knows all forms, but in the sense that it receives from the first agent an illuminating power which relates to forms. The agent intellect is thus a participated light. However, if the agent intellect is not considered to be a power separate from the human soul, both the possible and agent intellects are held to be separable in the sense that they can continue in existence apart from the body.

A point of difference between the *Summa* and William of Auvergne lies precisely in this talk of the matter and form of the soul. Indeed, the *Summa* holds to a universal hylomorphism: every creature is composed of matter and form; hylomorphic composition is the mark of the created. Boethius’ distinction between *quod est* and *quo* is invoked in this connection, and Albert the Great, who denied hylomorphic composition of the soul, is explicitly contested. The matter which enters into the composition of spiritual creatures is, of course, a spiritual matter and not to be confused with the component of physical things. Thus, there is not one and the same matter present in all creatures; if there were, transmutation between spiritual and physical things would be possible, and it is not. The term “matter,” that is, covers any and every potentiality, and it must be recalled that the motive for universal hylomorphism is to retain a distance between creator and created. Speaking of this initially surprising claim, Aquinas will say that while it is misleading to say that angels, for example, are composed of matter and form, once one understands the intention of those who say this, it is possible to agree with them without admiring their vocabulary; but, in the final analysis, *sapientis non est curare de nominibus*.

Mention should also be made here of John of la Rochelle, a disciple and contemporary of Alexander of Hales, who is probably

the one most responsible for the *Summa* attributed to Alexander, although he wrote other things as well and indeed was a master of theology at the same time as Alexander. The Augustinian doctrine of illumination, employed in the *Summa*, was a favored doctrine of John's and was to receive even greater development at the hands of Bonaventurc.

### C. Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253)

William of Auvergne, Alexander of Hales, and John of la Rochelle give us a rather good indication of the initial reaction to the influx of new philosophical writings at the University of Paris. Meanwhile, at Oxford the example of Robert Grosseteste is an indication of a quite different response to the new literature. Robert, who was later to become bishop of Lincoln, was well acquainted with the works of Aristotle. Roger Bacon, whose admiration for Grosseteste knew no bounds and whose contempt for such Parisian masters as Alexander of Hales was equally unrestrained, liked to portray Grosseteste as the easy equal of the likes of Aristotle and indeed as one who opposed the Greek philosopher on all important points.

The thing that strikes the reader of the philosophical writings of Grosseteste, edited in 1912 by Ludwig Baur, is the preponderance of mathematical and scientific topics. It is easy to feel that here is independence and originality of a sort unknown in William of Auvergne and Alexander of Hales. Further consideration leads, however, to the judgment that, despite the mathematics, Grosseteste is actually representative of a conservative mentality, that in him Augustinianism lives on in a less adulterated form than in his continental contemporaries. It is customary, convenient, and fitting that the flavor of Grosseteste's work be exhibited by his contribution to Augustine's theory of illumination.

Among the philosophical writings of Grosseteste is one entitled *De luce seu de incoatione formarum* (*On Light and the Beginning of Forms*). The following amounts to a rough translation of the beginning of that essay. I think, Grosseteste writes, that the first bodily form, what some call corporeity, is light, for light of its very nature (*per se*) diffuses itself in all directions such that, given a point of light, a sphere of light of whatever size is immediately generated unless something opaque (*umbrosum*) impedes. Matter's extension in three dimensions follows necessarily on corporeity, but matter itself is a simple substance lacking dimensions. So too, form is a simple substance also lacking dimensions, and it cannot account for the dimensions matter comes to have. To account for the extension of matter, Grosseteste says, I nominate light. Extension in all directions is a *per se* property of light; it diffuses and multiplies itself everywhere. Whatever performs the task of introducing dimensions into the compound of form

and matter must therefore be either light or something that does this just insofar as it participates in light. Corporeity, bodily extension, is either light or a participation in light: something which acts through the power of light. Grosseteste's own opinion is simply put. Light is the most noble form of bodies and is that in bodies which makes them most akin to separate substances.

If light is employed to explain the extension of bodies, it is also used to explain the constitution of the universe. We mentioned earlier that the diffusion of light can be checked by the interposition of an obstacle; Grosseteste also holds that any given point of light has an intrinsic limitation on the extent of its diffusion. As for the constitution of the cosmos, then, he can begin with a single body which may be thought of as light and matter, a compound of form and matter: its diffusion to the extent of its intrinsic power will produce a sphere which is finite and whose limit is the heaven. Then, by thinking of that outer limit of light reflecting on the center from which it radiated, Grosseteste speaks of the generation of the celestial bodies. The picture that results is quite geocentric. The degree or intensity of light provides Grosseteste with a scale on which he can compute the ontological status of entities, so that the universe for him is a hierarchy of lights or a hierarchy based on degrees of participation in light.

Thus far Grosseteste's use of light to explain the cosmos may seem only the inspiration of one who had been impressed by the application of mathematics to natural phenomena, like the distribution of light from a source and like the rainbow. Bacon was to laud Grosseteste for having views about the natural world which derived not simply from what he read but from his own careful observations. Historians of science dispute the importance of the contribution Grosseteste made to the emergence of scientific method as we know it. At any rate, beyond his attempt to interpret the physical world by means of light as his basic concept, Grosseteste's theory must be seen as a continuation of the Augustinian doctrine of illumination. St. James spoke of God as the Father of lights and St. John of Christ as the light of the world, and it may not be too much to say that what Augustine had developed from such scriptural remarks as these is as important for the development of Grosseteste's universe of light as anything of an observational nature.

In speaking of the relation of creatures to God two of Grosseteste's philosophical essays are of particular importance. One asks if God is the single form of all things (*De unica forma omnium*), and the other deals with the emanation of creatures from God (*De ordine emanandi causatorum a deo*). In discussing the first point Grosseteste employs Augustine's reinterpretation of the Platonic Ideas and is careful to deny that God is the form of all things in the sense of their constitutive or inherent form. The second point deals with the need to distinguish

the difference between the procession of the Son from the Father and the emanation of creatures from God. In the course of the essay he distinguishes between the measure of God's duration (eternity) and that of creatures (time) and removes some of the confusion that surrounds the claim that a creature might be eternal. The text Grosseteste seems to be commenting on here is taken from proposition two of the *Liber de causis*. Only the Son is coeternal with the Father; angels and soul are measured by something other than time, which is the measure of the duration of corporeal things. When God is said to exist before every creature, the adverb must not be understood as temporal, since God is not measured by time. (Cum dico creator est quando non fuit creatura, illud quando significat aeternitatem . . . et est sensus: creatorem esse in aeternitate, in qua non est vel fuit creatura. . . .) The truth of things, Grosseteste maintains in *De veritate propositionis*, consists in a conformity with the creative Idea of God. To know the truth, consequently, involves ultimately knowing that conformity. This is the twist Grosseteste, in the familiar Augustinian manner, will give the dictum that truth resides in a conformity of thing and mind. Grosseteste wants no more than Augustine to hold that when we know the truth, we are attending both to things and to the divine pattern, the Word of God, and seeing the conformity between the two. Rather, he suggests that our mind is a participation in the light that is the Word and that as a participation in light our mind is capable of knowing the truth.

### *Bibliographical Note*

See S. H. Thomson, *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1940); L. Baur, *Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste* (Münster, 1912) and *Die Philosophie des Robert Grosseteste* (Münster, 1917). A. C. Crombie, *Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science* (Oxford, 1953) and D. A. Callus, ed., *Robert Grosseteste, Scholar and Bishop* (Oxford, 1955).

## CHAPTER III

# *Albert the Great*

### A. *The Man and His Work*

Albert was born in Lauingen, in Bavaria, in 1206 and died in Cologne in 1280. His long life, superimposed on three-quarters of the thirteenth century, makes him a particularly interesting figure since he was very much a part of the intellectual developments of his century, of his order, and of his country. Thomas Aquinas studied under Albert, and although it is no easy matter to compare the doctrine of master and pupil on many points, it is safe to say that Albert's indefatigable energy and the scope of his interests inevitably had their impact on Aquinas. It is a tempting thought that the influence might in some cases have gone in the opposite direction, though there is as yet no scholarly agreement on the extent of such influence. In some ways the interests of Albert were broader than those of Aquinas, a fact that does not seem explicable merely in terms of Albert's longer life. There is little or nothing in Aquinas that echoes Albert's concern with what he called experimental knowledge. Aquinas will insist that our knowledge of nature arises only out of experimental contact with it, but we do not find any of the detailed natural descriptions in Aquinas that we find in Albert; nor do we find in Aquinas, as we do in Albert, such judgments passed on classical texts as "I have tested this," "I have not tested this," "This does not accord with experience."

Albert began his university studies at Bologna and Padua, but he seems to have spent scarcely more than a year in the Italian schools. In 1223 he joined the Dominican Order and was sent to the convent at Cologne to make his novitiate and pursue his studies. One of Roger Bacon's complaints against Albert was that the latter had not pursued the study of philosophy in the university. With the exception of his brief sojourn in Italy as a boy, this charge is accurate. From 1228 to 1240 Albert taught theology in various Dominican convents in Germany; in 1240 he was sent to the University of Paris. After two years of study he occupied one of the two Dominican chairs (1242-1248). He was then sent to Cologne to set up the Dominican *Studium generale*; he was Dominican provincial of Germany from 1254 to 1257; he

returned to teaching at Cologne for three years and became bishop of Ratisbon in 1260, remaining in the post for two years. After resigning his see, Albert devoted the last eighteen years of his life to teaching, preaching, research, and writing.

It is convenient to consider the writings of Albert from the point of view of chronology, and the chronological periods distinguished by Van Steenberghen and the location of writings within these periods serve our purposes ideally. A first period, what Van Steenberghen calls the first theological period, extends from 1228 to 1248 and comprises Albert's first teaching in Germany and the Parisian sojourn (1240–1248). Apart from many of the biblical commentaries, three important works may be assigned to this period. First, there is the *Tractatus de natura boni* (*Treatise on the Good*). Second, there is the *Summa de creaturis* (*Summa on Creatures*), perhaps written in the first half of Albert's stay in Paris and containing five parts: (1) On the Four Coevals, (2) On Man, (3) On Good and the Virtues, (4) On the Sacraments, and (5) On the Resurrection. Finally, there is Albert's commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.

A second period, extending from 1248 to 1254, is called by Van Steenberghen the mystical, or Dionysian, period. In this period, of course, are located Albert's commentaries on the entire corpus of Pseudo-Dionysius. Furthermore, Albert's first commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was written during this time span.

Albert's so-called Aristotelian, or philosophical, period is located between the years 1254 and 1270. To this period are assigned his paraphrases of Boethius as well as of a vast number of works of Aristotle. It may be noted here that Albert is quite insistent on the fact that his own views do not appear in these commentaries or paraphrases; his task, he claims, is simply to set forth the tenets of the Peripatetic philosophy. His description of the philosophy he is relating is significant, for what we find in these writings of Albert is not simply a restatement of the works of Aristotle, or Boethius, which give them their titles. Albert draws on the various commentators on these works and is thought to show a marked preference for the interpretations of al-Ghazzali and Avicenna. To show a preference is, of course, to make a judgment, and to make a judgment is to reveal one's criteria as a judge; thus, a good deal of Albert inevitably gets into these works. In his exposition, or paraphrase, of the *Liber de causis* Albert is particularly drawn by the views of al-Ghazzali.

As Duhem has pointed out, we find Albert addressing himself in these writings to issues which must vex the Christian thinker. For instance, in his exposition of the *Metaphysics* (bk. XI, treat. 3, chap. 7) Albert brings up the matter of the relationship between philosophy and theology. He describes the two disciplines in a manner consonant with his treatment in his *Summa theologiae*, as we shall see below,

but adds here that we cannot discuss theological questions in philosophy. Moreover, Albert suggests that in philosophy we merely follow the argument, not concerning ourselves with what religion teaches. This suggestion of the autonomy and neutrality of philosophy vis-à-vis faith becomes quite explicit when Albert asks what results when philosophy arrives at positions contrary to faith. Albert uses the specific example of Peripatetic philosophy's contention that from one only one proceeds and that not all things are direct effects of God, but only one thing. Well, he will say, theology contradicts the "one-from-one" principle, and, besides, the philosophy he is setting forth is not his own; for his personal opinions we will have to consult his theological writings. Despite this disclaimer, however, Albert attempts to adjudicate such divergences from faith within the context of his philosophical writings. In presenting the doctrine of book eight of Aristotle's *Physics* and its arguments that motion could not have begun absolutely in some past time, Albert interjects that he holds that everything has been simultaneously created by God and that, anyway, one well acquainted with Aristotle will know that Aristotle has nowhere proved the eternity of the world, has nowhere shown that the beginning of time and of motion are one with the beginning of the heavenly movements. Albert will even review natural or philosophical arguments which attempt to show that the world and motion and time had a beginning, but, like Maimonides, he is not much impressed with these, holding that none is completely cogent.

We will, as we have already indicated, return to Albert's views on the relation between faith and reason, theology and philosophy, but it seemed appropriate to say something here about Albert's curious insistence that what he is doing in his philosophical writings does not engage his personal thought and amounts to nothing more than a neutral relation of the contents of an ambiguous aggregate dubbed Peripatetic philosophy.

The fourth and final period of Albert's career is called by Van Steenberghen the second theological period. It extends from 1270 to 1280. The major work of this period is Albert's *Summa theologiae*, which was composed after that of Aquinas and which, like that of Aquinas, was not completed. It shows little, if any, influence on Albert of his most important student.

Albert was a prodigious writer, and the length of his life and active career makes his collected writings an imposing, even intimidating, edifice. It will be appreciated that in the present sketch we have referred to his writings largely by way of class and type rather than by individual title. To do the latter would amount to giving a very long list indeed.

## B. Faith and Reason

The relationship between faith and reason is most profitably dis-

cussed, as far as the bulk of thirteenth-century authors is concerned, in terms of the nature of theology, its relation to philosophy, and so forth. We have already said that Albert indicates something of his views on this matter in writings that are billed as ignoring the relation involved, and that even when some glimmer of his own thought is seen, he directs us for his definitive stand to his overtly theological writings. In following this advice we now turn to Albert's *Summa theologiae*, which, as the foregoing makes clear, is a late work and should provide us with Albert's mature and developed thoughts on the matter in question. Obviously, a full understanding of Albert's doctrine would involve comparing the doctrine of the *Summa theologiae* with earlier explicit as well as oblique treatments, but the narrower procedure we shall follow, while not aiming at such a complete statement, nevertheless sketches what would have to be a significant component of the wider treatment.

At the very outset of the *Summa* Albert asks if theology is a science and, if so, what kind of science it is, what its subject matter is, and so forth. He has little doubt that theology is a science; indeed, beyond being a science it is also a wisdom. He gives the following definition of it: *theologia scientia est, ea quae sunt ad fidem generandum, nutriendam, roborandum considerans* (theology is a science that considers whatever pertains to generating, nourishing, and strengthening faith). Referring to Paul's Epistle to Titus (1:1), he emphasizes that theology is concerned with what is knowable, though not with every knowable thing, but only with the knowable as it inclines to piety. Piety is defined as the cult of God which is perfected by faith, hope, and charity, prayers and sacrifices. (*Summa theologiae*, first part, treat. 1, quest. 2, sol.) Theology, in short, is knowledge of those things which pertain to salvation, and for this reason it is concerned with those things from which faith is generated and by which it is nourished and strengthened in us with respect to our assent to the first truth. What unifies theology, for Albert, is its end, namely, salvation. But what precisely is the subject of theology? Albert remarks that the subject of a science can be understood in several ways: thus, God is the subject of metaphysics in the sense that knowledge of God is what is principally sought in that science; being is the subject of metaphysics in the sense of that whose properties and causes are sought. So too, the subject of theology can be variously designated. God is its subject since knowledge of God is principally sought and intended by the theologian; theology's subject in the sense of that whose properties are sought is Christ and the Church, or the Incarnate Word and all the sacraments with which he perfects the Church. That is to say, the subject of theology is the work of reparation. (*Ibid.*, treat. 1, a. 3) The comparison of theology and metaphysics in this passage leads us to ask in what they differ, and Albert states the difference succinctly. "Ad secundum dicendum quod prima philosophia est de Deo secun-

dum quod substat proprietatibus entis primi secundum quod ens primum est. Ista autem de Deo est secundum quod substat attributis quae per fidem attribuntur." (*Ibid.*, q. 4) In metaphysics God is known in terms of being and its properties because he is the first being; theology considers God in terms of attributes known to be his through faith. The difference in mode of access to a common concern of theology and metaphysics is accompanied by another difference, namely, that theology is more certain than metaphysics. "Certior est scientia quae magis primis innititur, quam quae secundis, et sic deinceps. Theologia autem innititur primae veritati incircumscriptae et increatae et aeternae: aliae vero scientiae veritatibus creatis, et ideo non primis, nec immutabilibus, nec aeternis: quia omne creatum, ut dicit Damascenus, vertibile sive mutabile est. Theologia ergo certior omnibus est." (*Ibid.*, q. 5) If we range the sciences and assess their certitude in terms of the ontological hierarchy of their objects, then theology, which is concerned with and founded on what is first, immutable, and eternal, is the most certain science. We will come back to this comparison and claim later.

The foregoing suggests that theology is knowledge of God which, as knowledge, is in some way comparable to other sciences, the philosophical sciences, but with the difference that God is studied in theology in terms of those attributes of his which are revealed to faith. Moreover, the term of the study is not knowledge as such but salvation. In the *Summa theologiae* Albert spends a great deal of time discussing the knowability of God, and the contrasts and similarities already mentioned are further elaborated. Let us consider the way in which Albert handles the question Can God be known on a purely natural basis? He replies by saying that God can be known in many ways: positively, by knowing that he is, what he is, and so on, or privatively, by knowing what he is not, how he is not, and so forth. "Dicimus igitur quod ex solis naturalibus potest cognosci quia Deus est positivo intellectu: quid autem, non potest cognosci, nisi infinite. Dico autem *infinite*: quia si cognoscatur, quod substantia est incorporea, determinari non potest quid finite genere, vel specie, vel differentia, vel numero illa substantia sit. Et remanet intellectus infinitus, qui constituitur ex negatione finientium ad nos ex constitutione infiniti. Dicimus enim, quod cum dicitur *substantia* Deus, non est substantia quae nobis innotescit finite genere, vel specie, vel differentia, vel numero: sed est substantia infinite eminentis super omnem substantiam." (*Ibid.*, treat. 3, q. 14, memb. 1) On a natural basis, then, we can have positive knowledge that God is, but we can know what God is only "infinitely," that is, in a manner that leaves undetermined what precisely God is. Albert uses the example of our saying that God is an incorporeal substance; to know this about God is not to know him as a finite substance may be known, a finite substance whose genus, species, difference, and so forth are known. Rather, when we know God is substance, our

knowledge is of a substance more perfect than any we can determinately know, and we fashion our notion of the divine substance by negating the characteristics of finite substance.

To know God privatively is to know that he is not a body and is not measured by any corporeal measures, that is, God is not measured by place and time and so forth. The kind of natural knowledge Albert is discussing here is, he suggests, that indicated by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (1:20), where we read that the invisible things of God can be known by knowledge of what God has made. Later (*ibid.*, q. 15, memb. 1) Albert expatiates on the discursive knowledge suggested by the Pauline text. "Dicendum, quod in praesenti vita cognitio Dei sine medio esse non potest: quod medium effectus Dei est in natura, vel gratia, in quo Deus monstratur. Talis enim cognitio per medium ad viam pertinet, et *cognitio viae* vocatur. . . . Notandum tamen est, quod medium est duplex: ex parte visibilis, et ex parte videntis. *Ex parte visibilis* formaliter et effective medium est, quod ut actus visibilium, invisibilia potentia actu facit esse visibilia. *Ex parte videntis* medium duplex: commune scilicet, et speciale. Commune est illud, quod sub uno vel duplici situ formam visibilis ad visum est deferens. Specialis est, quo utitur visus ad excellens, sicut ad solem in rota videntum. . . ." In this life all knowledge of God is through knowledge of something else, through some mean or medium, whether a natural mean or grace as the mean. The natural mean can be considered either from the side of the known or the knower. What are the means whereby God can be naturally known? Albert invokes the Augustinian notions of vestige and image. The vestige is an imperfect similitude of creature to God, the image a less imperfect similitude. Albert's development of the way in which God is diversely known through his vestiges and images in creatures, besides recalling Augustine, is reminiscent of Bonaventure rather than of Aquinas, though the latter too employs this Augustinian distinction. As for knowledge of God through his image, we find that man or the human soul is treated as what gives us the best access to God. Thus, the vestige of God is found in all creatures, his image in some, and both these means of knowing God are distinguished from the way we know God through faith. "Dicendum quod fides medium est in cognitione viae, sive sit fides informis sive formata. . . . Et cum supra multiplex medium est distinctum, fides est medium dicens in scientiam crediti, et coadjuvans credentem ad intelligendum: per quod medium quaeritur et invenitur intellectus crediti." (*Ibid.*, treat. 3, q. 15)

In comparing the knowledge of God gained through natural means and that had through faith, Albert returns to the comparison of philosophical and theological knowledge in terms of certitude, this time distinguishing kinds of certitude. "*Certitudo* multiplex est. Est enim certitudo simpliciter et certitudo quoad nos: et certitudo quoad nos duplex, scilicet certitudo inclinantis ad actum, et certitudo rationis

quasi arguentis. Et quaelibet istarum certitudinum ducit ad alterum minus certum. Certitudine ergo simpliciter nihil est adeo certum sicut Deus et divina. . . . Hoc modo certissima cognitionum est cognitio divinatorum facie ad faciem, et sub illa cognitio per fidem, infima vero cognitio per naturalem rationem. . . . Certitudo autem quae est quoad nos, ex notioribus est quoad nos, secundum quod animales sumus enutriti sensibus. . . . Et hoc modo nihil prohibet cognitionem per naturales rationes esse certissimam, et post hoc cognitionem fidei, et minime certam eam quae est facie ad faciem." (Treat. 3, q. 15, memb. 3, a. 2)

What Albert now compares is the knowledge of vision in the next life when God is known face to face and the knowledge through faith and the knowledge of God through natural reason in this life. Certitude is said to be of two kinds, absolute and relative (to us). Albert does not here say what constitutes certitude in the absolute sense, but we can get a glimmer by recalling the earlier passage where it is a function of our mode of access to an object as well as the perfection of the object. Since in all cases being compared here it is God who is known, it must be the way he is known that produces the variation in certitude. Knowledge of vision would seem to be God's unmediated presence to the blessed; the other two kinds of knowledge are through a medium, and faith is more certain than reasoned knowledge of God in that the former is explicitly based on the authority of the first truth. In terms of the mode of knowledge most in tune with our nature, that intimately related to sense perception, the scale of certitudes is exactly reversed. It must be said that Albert's handling of this issue does not have the clarity of Bonaventure's or Aquinas' treatment.

When Albert turns to the precise manner in which God's existence can be naturally known, he sets down his own *quinque viae*, but these five ways of proving God's existence are quite distinct from the more famous five found in Aquinas. Indeed, it is only after Albert lists five proofs taken from Ambrose, Augustine, and Peter Lombard that he adds two others, one from Aristotle, the other from Boethius. The proof taken from Aristotle is that of the prime mover. "His viis ego addo duas. Una quae sumitur ex octavo Physicorum, in cuius principio probatur, quod motor primus non potest esse motus ab aliquo. Deinde probatur, quod movens motum nec movere, ne moveri habet nisi per influentiam a primo per omnia media moventia et mota usque ad ultimum quod est motum tantum. Propter quod si cessaret motus in primo secundum quod est actus moventis, cessaret in omnibus mediis in quibus est actus moventis et mobilis, et cessaret in ultimo in quo est actus mobilis tantum. Destruatur ergo consequens: quia videmus, quod non cessat in mediis, nec in ultimo. Ad sensum enim patet esse multa mota; et multa esse moventia et mota: ergo necesse est esse unum primum movens, in quo non cessat motus, secundum quod est actus moventis et non mobilis." (*Ibid.*, treat. 3, q. 18) This is a rather bland summary of the proof of the light of the controversies Albert alluded to in his

philosophical commentaries. No mention whatsoever of real or apparent conflicts with truths of faith; no mention, for that matter, of the eternity of the world or of the "one-from-one" principle Albert had attributed to the philosophers. The proof, as he presents it, relies on a distinction between what is only moved and what is moved and moves, and the question becomes, Is there something which only moves and is not moved? A moved mover cannot move save under the influence of the first mover, something true of the whole range of such movers between the unmoved mover and what is moved alone and does not move something else. Thus, if the activity of the first mover ceased, all activity subsequent to it would cease. This of course does nothing toward proving that there *is* a first mover. In fact, it is difficult to say that Albert, even indirectly, has set forth the premises of the Aristotelian proof. One is shocked by the apparent indifference of Albert in this regard, and it is tempting to suggest that we are faced here with the effort of an aging man, that, ironically, the promissory notes issued in those impressive philosophical works are not too persuasively redeemed in the later theological works.

### C. Conclusion

Although we found it necessary to conclude the preceding section with a criticism of the manner in which Albert presents an important and much discussed Aristotelian doctrine, and this in a work where we have reason to expect a nuanced study, we must end by saying that the massive effort Albert undertook in endeavoring to present in a narrative fashion the Peripatetic philosophy in its full scope did as much as any other single thing to make respectable the study of Aristotle. That Albert himself tended to favor the lead taken by al-Ghazzali and Avicenna in interpreting Aristotle has its significance; insofar as the philosophers of Islam were heavily influenced by certain tenets of Neoplatonism, we should expect to find the same influence in Albert. Many students of Albert's writings have insisted that there is much Neoplatonism there.

## *Bibliographical Note*

The collected works (*Opera omnia*) have long been available in the Borgnet edition in thirty-eight volumes (Paris, 1890-1899), but a new and better edition is currently in preparation, several volumes of which have already appeared (Münster, 1951- ). See as well James A. Weisheipl, O.P., "The *Problemata Determinata* XLIII Ascribed to Albertus Magnus (1271)," *Mediaeval Studies*, 22 (1960), pp. 303-354.

## CHAPTER IV

# Roger Bacon

### A. *His Life and Work*

Roger Bacon was born in England about 1219. He may have studied the arts at Oxford and then gone on to Paris to teach, or he may have begun his studies at Paris; at any rate, he began his teaching career at Paris, in the faculty of arts, and prided himself on the frequency with which he commented on the works of Aristotle. This is the first phase of his career, and the writings of Bacon representative of this phase, while of interest, do not prepare us for what he was to become. It is often said, perhaps unjustly, that they are indistinguishable from the philosophical efforts of the typical lecturer at Paris at the time. About the year 1247 Roger returned to England, where at Oxford he came under the influence of Robert Grosseteste. Bacon was a man of violent likes and dislikes, and for Grosseteste he conceived an almost unbounded admiration. His own work took a dramatic turn. For ten years Bacon devoted himself to scientific studies, though his conception of the scope of such studies must temper the judgment that in Bacon we have a forerunner of modern science. Alchemy and astrology fascinated Bacon, and his interest in mathematics, pure and applied, carried him back and forth across the border between magic and science. He was heavily influenced by a pseudo-Aristotelian work, *The Secret of Secrets*, and was charged with necromancy. The picture Bacon sketches of the ten years of study he undertook in the wake of his contact with Grosseteste may seem overdrawn, but his whole career was one of such intensity and indefatigable energy that it must be accepted. In that picture Bacon comports himself in the shifting role of mad scientist, dedicated scholar, and a university master who is progressively less patient with the usual academic fare. The disputes of the schools seemed to him airy and ungrounded; he was shocked by the spectacle of men without training in philosophy occupying chairs of theology. (Bacon himself must for a time have been a student in the faculty of theology.) In approximately 1257 Bacon joined the Franciscan Order.

As a Franciscan, Bacon seems to have stopped teaching; furthermore, because of a rule of his order, he could not write for external

publication without obtaining permission. Another decade went by and reached its culmination when Bacon contacted the future Pope Clement IV, seeking patronage for a work he wanted to compose in which a reform of university education would be set forth. The sequel to this contact has its bizarre moments. Guy de Foulques, the cardinal Bacon contacted, was elected pope. He seems to have had the impression that the work Bacon mentioned was completed and needed only to be copied before being sent to him. He requested that Bacon send it on, enjoining him to do so secretly. The Pope is sometimes described as Bacon's patron and benefactor, even as being enthusiastic about the writings Bacon eventually sent him. This is all conjecture. The most that can be said is that the Pope accepted the offer of Bacon's book and that he received what Bacon sent him. The claim that the Pope was on the verge of introducing Bacon's proposed reforms when death cut him down is pure fable. Were one to permit his imagination a bit of leash here, it would be just as easy to imagine the Pope chuckling over the inflated offer of the friar, concealing his mirth as he writes that he will accept the book, and being alternately overwhelmed by the four huge parcels that contained the *Opus majus* and miffed when Bacon tried to dun him for expenses. The fact is, we simply do not know what the Pope's attitude in this matter was. We know he received the *Opus majus* since it is still in the Vatican library.

Bacon was upset when he learned from the Pope's letter that the impression had been created that he had already written a work he had simply proposed to write. Indeed, there is some basis for thinking that what Bacon had in mind was something like an encyclopedia by several hands rather than a personal work. Nonetheless, he took the papal letter as a mandate enjoining him to secret composition, and he set to work on what became the *Opus majus*. This was followed shortly by the *Opus minus* and the *Opus tertium*. The Pope is thought to have received these works in 1267; in 1268 he died. Bacon turned to other works then, but he was now an object of suspicion in his own order. His teachings were condemned by the minister general, and Bacon was put in prison by the Franciscans. We do not know how long he was in prison, only that he was out before 1292, when he wrote his last work, a *Compendium of Theological Studies*. His death may be placed in that same year.

Roger Bacon is a polyvalent figure—dedicated, irascible, caustic, vain, credulous, and critical. With few exceptions he despised his contemporaries, and he voiced his views in untempered language. His jeremiads become tedious, his promissory notes seem unredeemable, his self-importance is comic. And yet, and yet . . . Bacon himself would not have been content to bring home half a loaf, but what he had to say about university education in his time had its merit. He saw the danger in a theology unanchored in philosophy and science; he knew

the book of the world had not yet been reduced to books. The final irony is that it was likely his abrasive personality more than his ideas that denied him the hearing he craved.

### B. *The Opus majus*

The writing of the *Opus majus* occupied a very small portion of Roger Bacon's scholarly life. Yet it represents a period when he was at the height of his powers, had done a good deal of the research which set him off from other masters of arts, and was quite unrestrained with respect to the scope of his vision and ambition. This work provides us with a convenient source to give something of the spirit and character of Bacon's thought. As we have seen, it was followed by other writings, writings whose importance is undeniable; nonetheless, the *Opus majus* is vast and representative of the mature Roger Bacon.

It should be said at once that Bacon conceived the work to be a program rather than an accomplishment; it points beyond itself and seeks to summarize not so much what has been done as what must be done. The work is divided into seven parts and is written with an urgency, directness, and forcefulness that make it quite personal. One would not go far wrong in describing it as a voluminous letter to the Pope. This is not to say that it lacks some of the common features of the scholarly style of the day, but even when familiar stylistic notes are present, their familiarity is dimmed, and intentionally so, by Bacon's conviction that the times called, not for encyclopedias, but for a vast concatenation of scholarly efforts. It would be both an anachronism and a disservice to Bacon to say that his work reads something like a prolonged and prolix appeal to a foundation for funds to support research—but the parallel does suggest itself.

Part one of the *Opus majus* discusses the four general causes of human ignorance. These causes are subjection to unworthy authority, the influence of habit, popular prejudice, and false conceit of our own wisdom. It is noteworthy that Bacon is concerned here with moral faults rather than with what might be called intrinsic causes of human error. His choice is of course dictated by the fact that he is launching a general critique of his milieu. Thus, though Bacon prided himself on his own sustained attention to the writings of Aristotle during his tenure as master in the faculty of arts at Paris, he points out that while Aristotle was undoubtedly one of the wisest of men, he is not without his defects. Thus, while deference to Aristotle may bring one to the truth, it may lead one into error. Indeed, Bacon holds that it is only rarely that authority, habit, and popular prejudice have positive effects in the search for truth. But the most prominent target of Bacon's criticism, and the one from which he considered himself to have suffered the most, is popular prejudice. He goes on to make a number of very useful remarks having to do with the attitude of the student, who must

question authorities and enter into discussion with them, for a later generation can often detect flaws in a great man which were concealed from his contemporaries. Though his ire mounts most noticeably when discussing the deleterious effects of popular prejudice, Bacon holds that false conceit of one's own wisdom is the most injurious factor in the pursuit of truth. In the first place, knowledge must always be of less scope than religious faith; second, the sum total of what is known and of what has been revealed is as nothing when compared with what can be known. A boy of today may know more than the wisest men of yesteryear, Bacon observes, and thus how stupid to be puffed up if one is abreast of the present status of knowledge. Addressing the Pope directly, Bacon says that his point is not that anything of substance now being taught in the universities should be proscribed; rather, he is directing attention to the vast areas of inquiry which are presently ignored.

The first part of the *Opus majus* is thus quite moralistic in tone; Bacon chides, laments, urges, prescribes, pleads. Nor should we think that Bacon's concern with the morals of the intellectual is a rhetorical device. He was of the opinion that moral philosophy is the aim and goal of speculative philosophy. The moral philosophy he advocates is continuous with pagan ethics but goes far beyond it because of the influence of Christianity. This poses the problem of Bacon's conception of the relationship between philosophy and theology, a problem to which he devotes part two of the *Opus majus*.

Bacon sees the search for truth as divided into three avenues: Scripture, canon law, and philosophy. All truth is contained in Scripture, but to elicit it we need canon law and philosophy. Wisdom, however, is one. Canon law is an articulation of what is contained in Scripture, and so is philosophy. Bacon is not suggesting that all the scholar need do is pore over the Scriptures in order to arrive at the truth. His point is rather this: no truth can be incompatible with Scripture because wherever truth is found it belongs to Christ. It is at this point that Bacon, although he makes reference to Augustine, takes a stand on one of the vexed points of Aristotelian interpretation. The agent intellect, Bacon says, is not a part of our nature, not a faculty of the human soul. Avicenna is right in this interpretation of Aristotle: the agent intellect is outside us, something to whose influence we are susceptible, something divine. And since all human knowledge requires the influence of this separated agent intellect, knowledge is something divine. The effective source of all knowledge in God indicates the ultimate goal of knowledge, which, again, is God, God as final cause. Bacon accepts an Augustinian suggestion, also made by Abelard, that the giants of pagan philosophy were recipients of a revelation from God. What then of the distinction between philosophy and theology?

Philosophy and theology are parts of one whole. The whole purpose and function of philosophy is to lead us to the threshold of divine truth; across that threshold would seem to be Scripture. Bacon guards against the view that philosophy is something to be gotten through hastily in order to arrive at revelation in Scripture. The task of philosophy is one that never ends, for what do we indeed know? The Christian must not simply borrow bits and pieces from the philosophers; he must engage in philosophy, in the ceaseless pursuit of truth, with a constant eye for its relevance to what God has revealed in Scripture. Bacon's conception of philosophy and theology, while obscure, seems clearly distinct from that held by Aquinas, for example. The notion of a theology fashioned on the model of Aristotelian science is absent from Bacon's writings. What we find is the much earlier notion that in some vague and ad hoc way all human knowledge serves to illustrate the truths God has revealed in Scripture. The appeal to illumination, the interpretation of the status of the agent intellect, serves to blur the distinction between faith and knowledge, although Bacon frequently mentions such a distinction. What Bacon seems most concerned with is that human knowledge, philosophy, be open with respect to revealed truth and see it as its complement. The very limitations of philosophical knowledge enable the philosopher to devise an argument to the effect that God must have revealed to man truths which are of the greatest importance.

It was said earlier that Bacon does not refer to the truth contained in Scripture in such a way that he is contemning the need for philosophical research. That is true, but it must be added that Bacon does tend toward the view that the totality of truth was known by the Patriarchs and has been lost because of the moral defects of men. The Scriptures then come to seem repositories of esoteric knowledge which must be elicited by the appropriate means. Since philosophy is a principal means of eliciting this truth, Bacon can at one and the same time hold that in a hidden fashion everything is contained in Scripture and that we must bend our best efforts to discover knowledge.

Although it is difficult to establish an order among Bacon's enthusiasms, since he went all out for anything he favored, his recommendation of the study of languages is impassioned and is the subject of part three of the *Opus majus*. He expatiates on the difficulties of accurate translation and urges the study of Greek and Hebrew. The obvious advantages of knowledge of these languages for grasping the meaning of Scripture are dwelled on, but Bacon points as well to the advantages for ecclesiastical diplomacy and for preaching the Gospel to all nations to be gained from the study of languages.

Parts four, five, and six constitute the bulk of the *Opus majus* and treat, respectively, mathematics, optics, and experimental science. Bacon considers mathematics to be the key to all the other sciences;

consequently, having said something of mathematics itself, he will show its importance not only for other human knowledge but to divine knowledge and to the governance of the Church. Bacon makes a teasing remark on the affinity of logic to mathematics, and speaks of the greater cogency of mathematical demonstrations and the tendency we show, in other domains, of selecting examples from mathematics to illustrate our points. The discussions which ensue are, from the outset, devoted to applied mathematics, its use in astronomy, in understanding the propagation of light, and so forth. It becomes clear that in part four it is precisely the utility of mathematics in other sciences that Bacon is out to show. Its application to sacred subjects is of particular interest.

Bacon reverts to his point that knowledge of nature is needed if we are to unpack the message of Scripture. Distinguishing between the literal and spiritual meanings of Scripture, Bacon says that we need to grasp the former to get at the latter and that to grasp the literal meaning of Scripture mathematical knowledge is necessary. He illustrates this by appealing to astronomy; this enables us to see the relative insignificance of the earth in the universe. Geography enables us to determine the exact location of the places mentioned in Scripture. The chronology of Scripture can be established by appeal to astronomy. Furthermore, what we know about the rainbow is particularly fruitful for understanding the literal and then the spiritual meaning of Scriptural passages. It is in this section of the *Opus majus* that Bacon proceeds with the most gusto. When he begins to discuss the terrestrial effects of celestial bodies, Bacon does not go immediately to astrology. Rather he goes on at great length to relate character traits, and even religious profession, to regional and climatic conditions. Only afterward does he insist that the stars exercise an influence on the affairs of men, an influence that can be understood and thus can become a powerful force in human foresight and governing.

Part five, which deals with optics, is thought to be the section that best illustrates Bacon's own work. He begins with the physiology of eyesight, the eye, and the brain, and goes on to discuss the conditions of seeing: light, distance, position, size. There are other conditions as well, and, after considering them, Bacon relates what he has said to Aristotelian psychology. He goes on to discuss direct vision, reflected vision, and refraction. Typically, after a quite lengthy treatise, whose scope and content may surprise one whose opinion of medieval science is dictated by myth rather than history, Bacon typically discusses the spiritual significance of optics. Here he considers, for example, the meaning of the prayer in which we ask God to guard us as the apple of his eye.

Bacon's discussion of experimental science in part six must be correctly understood. Although he begins with the observation that there

are two ways of acquiring knowledge, reasoning and experience, he goes on to divide experience into sense experience (our own or that of trustworthy witnesses) and internal experience. Internal experience has as its object spiritual things and is aided by grace; a by-product of internal experience is often knowledge of earthly things. Bacon lists seven grades of spiritual experience and, in one of those asides that make the *Opus majus* the singular work it is, tells the Pope that the young man who has carried the book to him is a good example of the intellectual benefits to be derived from a spotless life. Although he distinguishes these various meanings of "experience," the experimental science Bacon wishes to discuss is that which tests tentative judgments about natural things. Bacon discourses on various experimental apparatuses and goes on to picture the inventions that may be expected if studies are turned in the direction he advocates.

The culminating discussion of the *Opus majus* is to be found in part seven, which is devoted to moral philosophy. We have already mentioned that for Bacon knowledge is ordered to virtue, an opinion that dictated the structure of his work. The study of our practical conduct, that due to which we are adjudged good or bad, deals with the final purpose of all human wisdom. The conclusions of the other sciences are the starting points of ethics. That is to say, in moral philosophy we try to set forth the practical implications of all other knowledge.

The task of moral philosophy is threefold, dealing with duties to God, duties to our neighbor, and duties to ourselves. A recognition of the nature of the universe and its dependence on God is the basis for maxims having to do with worship of and reverence for God. Civic morality commences with reflections on the propagation of the species and moves quite naturally into matters of the state, the functions of the citizens, reward, punishment, and law. It is in the third part of moral philosophy that Bacon explicitly joins the discussions of Aristotle and that he treats of virtue and vice in general and then of the special virtues. His discussion of the moral virtues leans heavily on the fact that until our sensual desires are reined, the mind is not free for its pursuit of the truth. Bacon, who seems to have been a most irascible man, dwells on the topic of anger: its sources and remedies and, predictably, the way it impedes the intellectual life. His discussion of the proper attitude toward death and the way to peace of mind exhibits the influence of Stoicism on Bacon. The section on moral philosophy concludes with a discussion of the sacraments, placing special emphasis on the Mass and on the Eucharist.

### C. Conclusion

The life of Roger Bacon almost spans the thirteenth century. Perhaps it can be said that he was typical of that century precisely in not

being typical of it. The man to whom he would seem to be closest in spirit, Albert the Great, was a man Bacon professed to despise; his distance from the spirit of Aquinas, and even from that of Bonaventure, does not require emphasis. It seems necessary to say that Roger Bacon was at one and the same time a very traditional figure and a daring innovator. That kind of phrase, lacking as it does all sharpness and precision, could be applied to almost any figure in whatever time who excites our interest. It does, nonetheless, have a somewhat illuminating application to Roger Bacon.

Bacon's conception of the task of the Christian thinker was in fundamental continuity with St. Augustine. All truth, wherever it might be found, must be seized by the believer as rightfully his. All knowledge illumines and is illumined by what God has revealed in Scripture. Like Augustine, Bacon does not seem to have drawn a sharp distinction between philosophy and theology. This is due to the manner in which he compares knowledge and faith. Theology is taken to be the content of Scripture, but at other times it seems to consist of the application to revealed truth of human knowledge. The influence of Aristotle is seen in men like Aquinas in the conception of theology as a science which derives its principles from Scripture and by reasoning relates what is believed to what is known by natural powers. The model of theology, in short, is demonstrative science in the Aristotelian sense. It is not here that the influence of Aristotle on Roger Bacon is evident; rather it is in his passion to know the natural world.

The student of Aquinas finds that Thomas knew the natural writings of Aristotle and that he wrote commentaries on many of them, but he will search in vain for any contribution Thomas has made to our knowledge of the world around us. This is one of Bacon's complaints. Let us, he urges, carry on the work that Aristotle had begun. Let us study the natural world. Aristotle is not the last word here. Islamic thinkers who came into contact with Greek thought assimilated it and tried to continue it with their own work in mathematics and astronomy. Bacon's fear that the universities of his day would become too bookish, too tied down to authors and authorities, was not unfounded. No doubt he underestimated the value of the speculative work his contemporaries were doing, but he did so because he was so impressed by the promise of other studies, studies more experimental, studies that could correct and prolong what earlier thinkers had discovered. If his own vision of philosophy involves much credulity and fancy, it must nonetheless be said that Roger Bacon, though certainly not alone, was insisting on the quest for a certain kind of knowledge that could never be attained by the developing Scholastic method. There is no need to exaggerate his achievements, no need to deny his unlovableness, to recognize the importance of Roger Bacon for the history of human thought.

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## CHAPTER V

# *Saint Bonaventure*

### A. *The Man and His Work*

The saint we know as Bonaventure was born John Fidenza about 1217 near Viterbo. It is thought that he studied the liberal arts in Paris from 1236 to 1242. In 1243 he entered the Franciscan Order, and it may be that he had begun studying theology before becoming a Franciscan; at any rate, he studied theology until 1248 under Alexander of Hales and others. Bachelor of Scripture in 1248, Bachelor of the Sentences in 1250, he received the *licentia docendi* in 1253 and was master of the Franciscan school in Paris from 1253 to 1257. Because of the opposition of the secular masters, Bonaventure was not admitted as a master of the faculty of theology in the university until 1257, being admitted at the same time as Thomas Aquinas. Some months before, Bonaventure had been elected master general of the Franciscan Order—which effectively ended his university career, although he did lecture at the convent in Paris on several occasions. Bonaventure became a cardinal in 1273 and died in Lyon in 1274 while attending the ecumenical council which was held in that city. He was fifty-seven.

Bonaventure's commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and disputed questions on the knowledge of Christ, the Trinity, and evangelical perfection, together with the *Breviloquium* (which Van Steenberghen has called a kind of summa which résumés substantially Bonaventure's commentary on the *Sentences*), the *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, and the *Itinerarium mentis in deum* are among his most important works. There are also commentaries on Scripture, of course, and the publication of his lectures in the Paris convent after he became the head of his order: *De decem praeceptis* (1267), *De donis spiritus sancti* (1268), and the *In Hexaemeron* (1273).

Despite their proximity in time and place, it is doubtful that Bonaventure and Aquinas were close friends. Although Aquinas was successful in avoiding the active life and Bonaventure was not, the two men seem complementary, each representative of the spiritual

and intellectual life of his order, and both looming above the other giants of the thirteenth century.

### B. *The Nature of Philosophy*

“Philosophical knowledge is a preparation for other sciences and he who wishes to stop there falls into error.”

(*De donis*, col. IV, 12)

It is an extremely difficult matter to determine what for Bonaventure the nature of philosophy is. The point has been debated by Gilson and Van Steenberghen, but we shall address the question without explicit reference to the views of these leading medievalists. Can a philosophy be isolated from the theological writings of Bonaventure and, if so, how much autonomy does it have? Further, what kind of philosophy would such a constructed system be? To say that it would be Augustinian presupposes that St. Augustine's conception of the nature of philosophy is clear and easily grasped. Before we can possibly adjudicate the differences of opinion between the scholars mentioned, we must of course turn to Bonaventure himself. When we do this, we find that while it is difficult to maintain that any one of Bonaventure's works is specifically philosophical, in many of them he does say things about philosophy.

Let us begin with the division of knowledge into four kinds, a division Bonaventure makes in his commentary on the *Sentences*. First of all, knowledge may be purely speculative and founded on principles of reason: this is the science of human philosophy. Second, there is a knowledge which resides in the intellect insofar as it is inclined by appetite: when founded on principles of faith, such knowledge is the science of Sacred Scripture. Third, there is a science or knowledge which resides in intellect inclined by appetite toward operation: such knowledge is founded on the principles of natural law. Finally, there is a kind of knowledge which is in the intellect considered both as inclined and inclining, that is, inclined by faith and inclining to good works. This knowledge is founded on principles of faith and finds its source in the gift of grace. Such knowledge is called a gift of the Holy Ghost. (*III Sent.*, d. 35, q. 2, c.)

We find in this passage a distinction of philosophy (the first and third members) from theology (the second and final members of the division), and in both philosophy and theology there is a distinction between the speculative and the practical. Philosophy is based on principles of reason (*principia rationis*), theology on principles of faith (*principia fidei*). Elsewhere Bonaventure compares philosophy and theology in the following fashion. Sacred doctrine, or theology, is principally concerned with the First Principle, that is, with God as

one and three; nevertheless, theology is concerned with other things as well. "The reason for this truth is that since sacred doctrine, or theology, is a science giving knowledge of the First Principle sufficient for our present state, insofar as it is necessary for salvation, and since God is not only the principle and effective exemplar in creation but also the restoring cause in redemption and the perfective cause in reparation, this science treats not only of God the creator but also of creation and the creature. . . . Thus, it alone is perfect science because it begins at the beginning, with the First Principle, and proceeds to the term, which is the eternal reward; it begins with the highest, the most high God, creator of all, and descends to the least, which is the punishment of hell. That alone is perfect wisdom which begins with the highest cause, that is, with the principle of caused things—which is where philosophical knowledge ends." (*Breviloquium*, p. 1, cap. 1, 2-3) This passage clarifies the grounds for the distinction between philosophy and theology. The former, being based on what is naturally known to us, must begin with creatures and ascend to knowledge of God as to its term. Theology, since it is based on faith, begins with God and considers everything else in the light of revealed truth.

In discussing the subject of theology in his commentary on the *Sentences* Bonaventure distinguishes a variety of meanings for the phrase "subject of a science." In effect, he says, this phrase may mean either (1) that to which all else in the science is referred as to its radical principle, or (2) that to which everything in the science is referred as to an integral whole, or (3) that to which everything is referred as to its universal whole. Thus, the subject of grammar, following these three possibilities, is either the alphabet, or perfect and correct speech, or articulated sound capable of signifying something as itself or in another. In geometry the three subjects are, respectively, point, body, and immobile continuous quantity. As for theology, the subject to which it reduces everything as to its cause is God; the subject to which everything is reduced as to an integral whole is Christ, who unites in himself human and divine, created and uncreated nature. "The subject to which all things are reduced as to a universal whole can be named in two ways, by a disjunction, and then it is reality and sign, where sign means sacrament; or it can be named by one word, the credible, insofar as the credible takes on the note of intelligibility by having reason brought to bear on it [*prout tamen credibile transit in rationem intelligibilis et hoc per adductionem rationis*]; properly speaking, then, the credible is the subject of this book." (*I Sent.*, proemium, q. 1, c.)

Theology and philosophy are different ways of considering things, and things are named differently because of the different light in which they appear to the theologian and to the philosopher. We will

be seeing more of Bonaventure's use of the metaphor of light; for the moment consider the following remark concerning an innate and infused light. "The innate light is the natural light of the judging faculty or reason; superinfused light is the light of faith." (*De donis*, col. IV, 2) The first is impressed by the creator on the rational creature: it is the possible and agent intellects. In this context Bonaventure speaks of philosophical knowledge, theological knowledge, the knowledge which is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the knowledge of the blessed in heaven. "Philosophical knowledge is nothing other than certain knowledge of the truth as what can be investigated [*ut scrutabilis*]. Theological knowledge is loving knowledge of truth as credible. The gift of knowledge is holy knowledge of the truth as lovable [*ut diligibilis*]. The knowledge of glory is sempiternal knowledge of truth as desirable [*ut desiderabilis*]." (*Ibid.*, 5)

To sum up our findings thus far: (1) philosophy is based on principles of reason, theology on principles of faith. (2) The former sees things under an inborn light, something belonging to the nature of the rational creature; the latter is dependent on an infused light, the gift of faith. (3) The subject of theology is the credible; the subject of philosophy is the naturally knowable. (4) Philosophy begins with creatures and arrives at knowledge of God as its term; theology begins with God and considers everything else in the light of what God has revealed to us about himself.

Speaking of the philosophical sciences, Bonaventure says: "All these sciences have certain and infallible rules which are as lights and rays descending from the eternal law into our mind." (*Itinerarium*, cap. 3, n. 7) Given this participation, it is possible for us to be led to contemplation of the eternal light. Things are the object of philosophy insofar as they can be investigated in the light of principles naturally known; they are objects of theology insofar as they are credible in the light of faith. From these considerations there seems to emerge a picture of philosophy as an autonomous science having its own light, principles, and certitude. What is more, philosophy is more certain than theology. "That concerning which no doubt is possible is known more certainly than that about which we can doubt; but what is known by scientific knowledge [*scientiâ cognitione*] is so known that it cannot be doubted, as is obvious." (*III Sent.*, d. 23, a. 1, a. 4, a. 2) When something is seen in the light of those principles naturally inserted in the mind, absolute certainty is attained. (*De reductione*, n.4) "Someone can know something so certainly through science that he can in no way doubt nor disbelieve it nor in any way contradict it in his heart, as is clear in knowledge of axioms [*dignitatum*] and first principles." (*III Sent.*, d. 23, a. 1, q. 4, c.) Thus, not only are philosophy and theology distinct but philosophy is more certain than the faith on which theology is founded. This greater

certitude of natural reason has to be correctly understood, however.

No science is more certain than that which the blessed enjoy in heaven. "In another way, science means knowledge had in this life and is of two kinds: either it concerns things which are objects of faith or it concerns other knowable objects. If it is concerned with objects of faith, then absolutely speaking faith is more certain than knowledge. Hence, if some philosopher knows a given article [of faith] by reason, for example, that God is the creator or that God is the rewarder, he can in no wise know it more certainly through his science than the true believer through his faith. If however we are speaking of knowable objects other than those of faith, then in some ways faith is more certain than science and in other ways science is more certain than faith. For there is the certitude of seeing [*speculationis*] and the certitude of adherence [*adhaesionis*]: The first pertains to intellect, the second to the affections."

"In terms of the certitude of adherence the certitude of faith is greater than that of the habit of science, since the true faith causes the believer to adhere more firmly to what is believed than science causes the knower to adhere to any known thing. If, however, we speak of the certitude of seeing, which pertains to intellect and bare truth [*nudam veritatem*], then it can be granted that the certitude of any science is greater than that of faith insofar as someone can know a thing so certainly in a science that he can in no way doubt or disbelieve or gainsay it in his heart, as is clear in the case of first principles." (*III Sent.*, d. 23, a. 1, q. 4, c.)

We have here a very nuanced position, since a distinction between objects and modes of certitude is implied. When the objects of philosophy and theology are different, then of course the certitude with which they attain truths about them will differ. But Bonaventure seems to begin with an instance of the same object simultaneously known and believed. This is particularly intriguing, and we must pursue it since it will lead us to call into question our earlier tentative conclusion that philosophy, for Bonaventure, is a quite autonomous enterprise.

### C. *Simultaneity of Knowledge and Belief*

Is it possible for the same truth to be known certainly with reference to the principles of reason and to be believed on divine faith? Bonaventure, in speaking of knowledge of God as creator and belief of this same truth, could, of course, be referring to different men, for example, to the pagan pre-Christian philosopher and the simple faithful of the Christian era. Such a "simultaneity" of knowledge and belief would present no problem. In the area of secular knowledge the teacher may know what the student for a time only believes. But it would seem odd to say that the same man simultaneously

knows and believes the same truth, particularly if the following Bonaventurian distinction is accepted. "We must say that what is true is an object of faith differently from the way in which it is an object of knowledge: the object of knowledge, I say, is the seen truth [*verum visum*], whereas the object of faith is truth not as seen but as salutary." (*III Sent.*, d. 23, a. 1, q. 1, ad 2) On this basis, to say that the same thing can be simultaneously known and believed is like saying that the same thing can be simultaneously seen and not seen. In short, such simultaneity seems contradictory. Nevertheless, Bonaventure is quite commonly represented as maintaining such a simultaneity. Thus, we must examine the relevant passages to see if he does indeed do this and, if so, in precisely what manner.

St. Bonaventure asks whether faith bears on the same objects as does scientific knowledge, and he approaches the question with a fine feeling for useful distinctions. (See *III Sent.*, d. 24, a. 2, q. 3, c.) He first points out the difference between knowledge which is of "open comprehension" and that which results from reasoning (*duplex est cognitio, scilicet apertae comprehensionis et manuductione ratiocinationis*). If we speak of that open comprehensive knowledge whereby God is known in heaven, then faith is not compatible with it such that the same thing could be simultaneously known and believed, for such knowledge absolutely excludes any darkness (*aenigma*). With respect to this knowledge it is the view of the saints and the common opinion of masters of theology that here the same thing cannot be simultaneously known and believed.

With respect to the knowledge which results from reasoning there is, Bonaventure notes, a division of opinion. Some hold that it is incompatible with faith, since with such knowledge the intellect assents because of an argument, necessarily, and to a thing inferior to itself. Faith, on the other hand, is an assent to the first truth for its own sake and voluntarily, which elevates reason above itself. Thus, science and faith mutually exclude one another.

Others are of the opinion that with respect to one and the same thing it is possible to have science as the result of reasoning *and* faith. St. Augustine and Richard of St. Victor are invoked as authorities, and the upshot is this: "Hence, someone believing God to be one and the creator of everything, if he begins to know the same thing by necessary arguments, does not thereby cease to have faith; nor, if he first knew, would the advent of faith destroy his knowledge, as is clear from experience." The reason such science can be had simultaneously with faith concerning the same thing, neither destroying the other, is that science, which results from reasoning, although it gives some certitude and evidence about divine things, is not in every way clear as long as we are in this life. For though one be able by necessary reasons to prove that God is and that God is one, to discern the divine being itself, the very unity of God and the way in

which that unity does not exclude a plurality of persons, is impossible until one is cleansed by the justice of faith. The illumination and certitude of such science are not so great that, science being had, the illumination of faith becomes superfluous. On the contrary, given that science, faith is all the more necessary. A sign of this, Bonaventure feels, is in the fact that some philosophers, while they knew many truths concerning God, committed many errors because they lacked faith. In short, Bonaventure holds that knowledge and belief are simultaneously possible concerning the same object.

Now, as will be seen, it is the view of St. Thomas that one cannot at the same time know and believe the same truth. It is often said that this is a point of open conflict between him and Bonaventure. But is this really the case? Is Bonaventure claiming that it is precisely the same thing that is known and believed? Let us consider the example he gives. A contemporary of Christ looks at him and sees a man; his divinity is hidden to every sense and is an object of faith alone. Bonaventure says that this makes it perfectly clear that doubt and certitude concerning the same thing are simultaneously possible. I can be certain that this is a man: I see that he is. But that he is God—that I cannot see. “Therefore, it must be conceded that faith and vision can bear on one and the same thing, although not in the same respect [*quamvis non secundum idem*].” (*III Sent.*, d. 24, a. 2, q. 1, c.) It is that final phrase which is all important. Bonaventure is not saying that the same thing can be simultaneously known and believed where “the same thing” would mean same in every respect. The propositions “Christ is a man” and “Christ is God” are about the same thing, but they do not say the same thing about it. So too, the philosopher who proves that God is one knows that about God; what he does not know and cannot know in this life by natural reason is that the unity of God admits of a plurality of persons. In other words, faith and knowledge do not bear unequivocally on the same thing, since the thing is an object of faith insofar as it is not seen and an object of knowledge insofar as it is seen. Thus, while the same thing may be a *credibile* and a *scibile*, to be a *credibile* and to be a *scibile* are not the same. One cannot simultaneously know and believe the proposition “God is one” unless the predicate is made to bear two meanings. For example, (1) there is not a plurality of gods, and (2) the one divine nature admits of a plurality of persons. In conclusion, the position of Bonaventure, while complex, seems to be the same as that maintained by Thomas Aquinas: the same man cannot at the same time both know and believe the same truth. However, if the philosophical as opposed to the theological understanding of a proposition admits of certitude, it is not thereby wholly autonomous for Bonaventure. For the great Franciscan philosophical truth all by itself is dangerous; indeed, it is its own kind of error.

D. *Is Philosophy Autonomous?*

There are things which to a certain degree and in a certain respect are evident to sense and in another fashion and respect are hidden; owing to this complexity there can be vision or knowledge, in part, and credulity or faith, in part. Knowledge will bear on what is evident, faith on what is hidden. With respect to divine things Bonaventure grants that philosophers can know with certitude, because of necessary arguments, some truths concerning God. For example, that God exists and is one. Bonaventure says that such philosophical proofs cannot be resisted. (*In Ioannem*, proemium, n. 10)

Does this mean that philosophy can enjoy a life of its own quite apart from faith? The following somewhat lengthy passage gives a first approach to Bonaventure's thought on this matter. "To the objection that faith concerns what is above reason and science what is below, it must be said that just as nothing prevents one and the same thing from being both evident and hidden, so nothing prevents the same thing from being above and below reason according to different modes of knowing and thus being both known and believed. For though 'the sempiternal power and divinity' (Romans 1:19) can be known either through acquired or even innate science, yet, as compared with the plurality of persons or with the humbleness of our humanity which God assumed, it is wholly above reason and science. For should someone base himself on the judgment of reason and science, he would never believe it to be possible that the highest unity could admit a plurality of persons or that the highest majesty could be united with our humility or that the highest power should from not acting come to act without any change in itself, or other similar things which seem to go contrary to the most common concepts of the mind according to philosophy. Thus it is that science attains precious little in the way of knowledge of divine things unless it is based on faith, because in one and the same thing what is most obvious to faith is most hidden to science. This is clear in the highest and most noble questions, the truth of which is hidden from philosophers, for example, concerning the creation of the world, concerning the power and wisdom of God—matters that were hidden from philosophers but are now manifest to simple Christians. Because of this Paul writes, 'God has made foolish the wisdom of this world,' since any faithless wisdom concerning God in this life is stupidity rather than true science. For it will drag the inquirer into error if he is not directed and aided by the illumination of faith; it is not destroyed by faith, consequently, but rather perfected." (*III Sent.*, d. 24, a. 2, q. 3, ad 4)

While maintaining that science and faith can coexist, Bonaventure makes it clear that philosophy is not sufficient to itself; it needs the

aid and light of faith lest it be turned into foolishness. It is difficult to express Bonaventure's thought accurately here. He has shown that science and faith, philosophy and theology, are distinct, that from one point of view science is more certain than faith, although from another point of view faith is more certain than science. If these can coexist, can they exist separately? Bonaventure wants to deny that they can. First of all, theology without philosophy does not seem to be possible. We remember from earlier considerations how Bonaventure described the subject of theology. That subject is not the *credibile* as *credibile*—this is the object of simple faith, and faith is presupposed by theology. Theology is concerned with the credible, with the believed, to the degree that it can take on the note of understandability. In order for this to come about, philosophy is presupposed. "Since the teachings of philosophers are often useful for understanding truth and refuting error, there is nothing to be feared from the study of it, particularly since many questions concerning the faith cannot be resolved without it." (*De tribus quaestionibus*, n. 12) "Philosophy is concerned with things as they are in nature, or in the soul, according to knowledge naturally inserted or even acquired, but theology as a science founded on faith and revealed by the Holy Ghost deals with things pertaining to grace and glory and even to Eternal Wisdom." (*Breviloquium*, prologue) But these are not wholly separable pursuits. First of all, the theologian must employ philosophy. The simple faithful accept revealed truths owing to an infused and gratuitous light. So does the theologian, but, having accepted what God has revealed, he reflects on these truths, bringing to bear on them the findings of the philosophers. This results in an organization of articles of faith according to a pattern not followed by Scripture itself. The theologian defends the truths of faith against his own and others' doubt, and philosophy is an apt instrument for this task.

The credible, in short, can be looked upon in three ways. "For the credible insofar as it has in itself the note of First Truth to which faith assents for its own sake and above all else, pertains to the habit of faith; insofar as the note of authority is added to that of truth it pertains to the teaching of Holy Writ, of whose authority Augustine said that it is greater than any insight of human genius; but insofar as to the notes of truth and authority the note of being susceptible of proof [*probabilitas*] is added to the credible, it pertains to the consideration of the present book." (*I Sent.*, proemium, q. 1, ad 5) It is out of love for what is believed that man naturally seeks arguments on behalf of what has been revealed. (*Ibid.*, q. 2, ad 6) Thus, theology cannot exist without philosophy.

This would seem to indicate that philosophy must be able to enjoy a separate existence. And yet, the very fact of theology seems to call philosophy into question. "Beyond philosophical science God gave us

theological science, which is a pious knowledge of credible truth, because the eternal light which is God is a light inaccessible to us as long as we are mortals and have the eyes of owls." (*De donis*, IV, 13) The reference is to Aristotle, who had pointed out the weakness of our minds with respect to divine things. On this very point, however, Bonaventure deals somewhat harshly with Aristotle. Of what good is it to recognize the weakness of the human mind and be unable to understand the cause of it, to recognize the illness and be unable to provide the remedy? "This, then, is the medicine: the grace of the Holy Ghost. This aid and this grace philosophy cannot attain." (*In Hexaemeron*, VII, 11) The weakness of the human mind is an effect of original sin. This weakness is present in the theoretical as well as the practical intellect, and Bonaventure will point out the errors into which philosophers were led, errors they might have avoided if they had had the grace of faith, which is the cure for original sin.

In his lectures on the work of the six days (*Collationes in Hexaemeron*) Bonaventure gives us a veritable catalogue of the errors of philosophers. The philosophical doctrine on virtue is unsatisfactory: no philosophical doctrine can provide the means for healing our wayward affections. (IV, 12) Philosophical moral doctrine fails to recognize man's true end, which is supernatural; consequently, it is mistaken about the sufficiency of the merit for acts done and cannot cure the weakness of our faculties. "Only faith can divide light from this darkness." (IV, 13) Bonaventure's charge here is not that philosophy failed to do what it could and should do, but that philosophy is radically inadequate in matters of morality. "We must then go on to the light of faith, which the philosophers did not have, for they knew only by the natural light. The most perfect virtues, however, are known by faith and lead on to the end." (III, 32)

As for Aristotle, Bonaventure summarizes his defects in the following manner. Asking how philosophers fell into darkness, he answers, "For this reason, that while all recognized a first cause, the principle and end of all things, they disagreed about the in-between. For some denied that the exemplars of all things were in God, the chief being Aristotle, who, at the beginning and the end of his *Metaphysics* and in many other places, rejects the Ideas of Plato. Hence, he says that God knows only himself and has no need of knowledge of other things and moves as what is desired and loved. From which it follows that he knows nothing of particular things. Aristotle execrates the Ideas in his *Ethics* as well, denying that the highest good can be an Idea. But his arguments are worthless and are disproved by the Commentator. Now from this error another follows, namely, that God has neither foreknowledge nor providence since he has not the notions of things in himself whereby to know them. Moreover, they say there

is no truth concerning the future except in necessary events, the contingent having no truth. From which it follows that all things come about either by chance or by fatal necessity; and since it is impossible that everything come about by chance, the Arabs held for the necessity of fate, saying that the substances which move celestial bodies are necessary causes of all events." (*In Hexaemeron*, VI, 2-3) Thus, a rejection of exemplars, of the Platonic Ideas, leads inexorably to a rejection of providence and thus to a fatalistic view of the happenings in the world. (Bonaventure betrays no acquaintance here with the discussion of fate and providence in the fifth book of *The Consolation of Philosophy* or of Boethius' handling of chapter nine of Aristotle's *On Interpretation*.) The opinion that the world is eternal, that there is but one intellect for all men, and that, consequently, there is neither punishment nor reward for deeds done in this life—these too follow from the rejection of the Ideas. The unicity of the intellect was maintained to avoid having to affirm an actual infinity of human souls, which would seem to follow if the world and time had no beginning. And if there is but one intellect, only it survives the demise of particular men, and no personal immortality is possible, nor, of course, personal reward or punishment. (*Ibid.*, 4; see VII, 2)

It is a melancholy picture that Bonaventure paints of the philosophy of Aristotle. Since the whole sorry story has been made to hang on the rejection of the Ideas, we would expect to see Plato treated somewhat more kindly. And so he is. "Other enlightened philosophers posited the Ideas, and they were worshippers of the one God, for they placed all good in God as the best good." (VII, 3) Plato, Plotinus, and Cicero are cited and praised in this regard. Nevertheless, Bonaventure feels constrained to go on to enumerate the deficiencies of these men, which were due to their not having the faith.

Bonaventure does not seem to be saying that the philosophers just happened to commit errors. Rather, his point is that a man who does not have grace and faith will inevitably make philosophical mistakes; he has not the remedy with which to cure the disorder and weakness of his natural powers, and as long as there is not faith the malady lingers on. Thus, while Bonaventure holds that theology needs philosophy, he wants also to maintain that philosophy has need of faith if it is to achieve its own ends. We might wish to object to this position in the following manner. Granted that philosophers made mistakes (though I, for one, cannot accept the Bonaventurian estimate of Aristotle), the history of philosophy is not simply a catalogue of errors; indeed, the errors there are stand out precisely because of the background of truth. Now Bonaventure himself is willing to concede that philosophers, even Aristotle, recognized the existence of God; moreover, Plato and others are commended because they recognized the Ideas. Immediately after listing the three great errors of

Aristotle, Bonaventure adds, "But some, seeing that Aristotle was so good in other matters and had said so much that was true, could not believe that in these instances he was not speaking the truth." (*In Hexaemeron*, VI, 5)

Can we not then accept the truths philosophers offer and reject their errors? This is just what theology must do. "Hence, making use of philosophical knowledge and taking from the nature of things what it needs to construct a mirror in which divine things are reflected, it erects a ladder the foot of which rests on earth and whose head reaches heaven." (*Breviloquium*, prologue) Theologians must take from philosophers in the way the sons of Israel took from the Egyptians, following the counsel of Augustine. (*De tribus quaestionibus*, n. 12) What criteria enable us to recognize the errors of philosophers? Not a more adequate philosophy. Bonaventure says that the simple faithful, knowing that in the beginning God created heaven and earth, see the falsity of the claim that the world is eternal. It is in the light of faith then that philosophical errors are recognized as such—and presumably philosophical truths as well. But if a philosophical truth is the conclusion of an argument, to accept that truth because it is also revealed is not to accept it as philosophically established. An examination of the proofs and a philosophical assessment of them is a different undertaking altogether, and it seems difficult to hold that Bonaventure urges us to refrain from such activity. He has said that philosophical arguments are irresistible, and he will recognize a good number of them as valid. But these arguments demand a fairly wide context. In that sense Bonaventure recognizes the existence of philosophy. But philosophy is completed by faith and the theology based upon it. Moreover, philosophy is best carried on under the extrinsic control of faith, which warns against blind alleys and guides us toward the truth. But since faith provides no proofs, it does not constitute philosophy. Perhaps one could say that for Bonaventure faith has an important role to play in philosophizing, though not in philosophy as such. The openness of philosophy to a truth above reason would save us from thinking that the philosophical conclusion "God is one" is opposed to the truth of faith "the one God is three persons."

Perhaps something can now be said of the controversy mentioned earlier. First of all, no one maintains that Bonaventure ever devoted himself to a specifically philosophical work. The question is, Can we find a philosophical doctrine in what he has written? Our answer must be in the affirmative. Bonaventure's whole view of the nature of theology indicates that it must make use of philosophy. But did he himself contribute to philosophy or only borrow from it? I think we must say that for the most part he only borrowed, though he did make contributions.

It is often said that Bonaventure was primarily a theologian. While true enough, this remark could be misleading. We feel prompted to

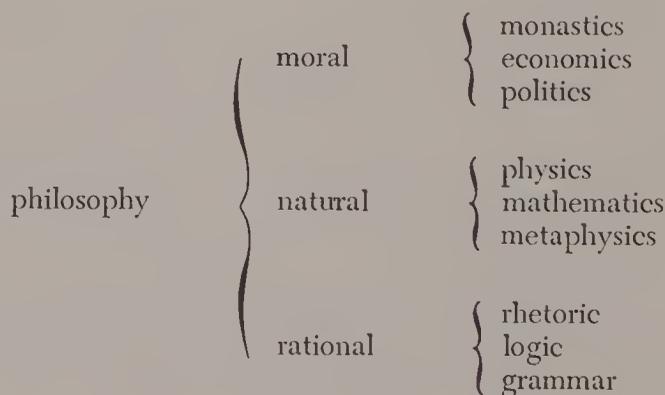
observe that most theologians are primarily theologians, particularly when they are doing theology. The remark is made to establish the point that insofar as Bonaventure dabbled in philosophy, he did so with a view to the ends of theology. But of course theology was no more an end in itself for Bonaventure the man than was philosophy. Theological knowledge was to lead to mystical union and that to the beatific vision. The perspective in which something may be seen, the subjective reason for doing it, need not alter what is seen or done. In making use of philosophy the scholastic theologian may or may not find ready at hand the philosophical doctrine he requires. If none exists and he elaborates one and then goes on to employ it to explicate or defend truths of faith, the historian of philosophy will be able to examine the doctrine elaborated in legitimate isolation from the theological context and from the theological purpose it is made to serve. Some medieval masters of theology, and Bonaventure is in this class, do whatever philosophy they do in the context of works which are formally theological; others not only do this but also engage in philosophy within the limits and dictates of natural reason itself. Thomas Aquinas falls into this second class. The great difference between these two classes, as represented by Bonaventure and Aquinas, is the following. When we find philosophical doctrines elaborated in theological works of Aquinas, we know what for him is the wider philosophical whole to which they are contributions. The same is not true of Bonaventure. Consequently, it must always be a work of some daring and imagination to try to make a coherent whole of Bonaventure's philosophical doctrines, which are scattered piecemeal through his theological works. To maintain that any whole constructed from such pieces depends upon the acceptance of truths of faith would be to vitiate the whole enterprise. It would be better not to call such a systematic whole a philosophy at all if it presupposes religious faith for its acceptance.

What is for the moment clear is that philosophy represents for Bonaventure a given level of knowledge which is best interpreted with an eye to the hierarchy in which it fits. Most of his remarks about philosophical doctrines amount to more or less symbolic interpretations: they are seen as prefiguring what lies beyond philosophy. Bonaventure, in this characteristic stance, is clearly looking on philosophy from the vantage point of faith, and this is a perspective which presupposes philosophy as given and betrays no interest in contributing to it. From this sapiential point of view philosophy is a sign of what lies beyond it and at the same time is seen as a useful, if not necessary, rung on the ladder to heaven.

### E. *The Division of Philosophy*

Scattered throughout the works of Bonaventure are the divisions of philosophy into various disciplines that indicate their sources in

Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, and, of course, Aristotle. Bonaventure sets down the threefold division of philosophy into rational, natural, and moral in *The Reduction of the Arts to Theology* and argues that it is an adequate one since there are but three kinds of truth—that of speech, that of things, and that of morals. Another argument is more typically Bonaventurian. “Again, just as in God we can consider the note of efficient cause, of formal or exemplar cause, and of final cause, since he is the cause of subsisting, the means of understanding, and the order of living, so in philosophical illumination, since it illumines either for knowing the causes of being, and then it is physics, or for knowing the means of understanding, and then it is logic, or for knowing the order of living, and then it is moral or practical philosophy.” (n. 4) Bonaventure goes on to subdivide each of these, assigning grammar, logic, and rhetoric as the parts of rational philosophy. “Further, since our intellect has to be directed in judging according to formal notions [*rationes formales*] and these can be considered in three ways—with reference to matter, and then they are called formal notions; with reference to soul, and then they are called concepts; or in relation to divine wisdom, and then they are called Ideas—so natural philosophy is divided into three parts. Physics, accordingly, considers the generation and corruption of things according to natural forces and seminal reasons; mathematics considers the intelligible notions of abstractable forms; metaphysics is knowledge of all beings, which it reduces to one first principle from which they come according to the Ideas, or it reduces them to God as principle, goal, and exemplar. There is, however, a great divergence among metaphysicians on the subject of Ideas.” Finally, Bonaventure subdivides moral philosophy into monastics, economics, and politics. The following schema summarizes his views:



While Bonaventure gives these divisions, with which we are well acquainted from previous chapters, what characterizes much of his

work, and indeed the *Reduction* itself from which we have just been quoting, is the way in which philosophy occupies only a few of the rungs on that ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. We shall try now to give a sketch of *The Reduction of the Arts to Theology*; having done that, we shall discuss a famous text in which Bonaventure argues that all science and wisdom are summed up in Christ, who is the mean (*medium*) of every science. We will then go on to the allied question of the way in which whatever is known is known in the eternal notions or divine Ideas.

*The Reduction of the Arts to Theology* is an elaborate interpretation of a remark by St. James in the first chapter of his Epistle: "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." From this basic image of God as a sun from which flow rays of light Bonaventure distinguishes a variety of participated lights. He speaks of four: an *external* light, or the light of mechanical art; a *lower* light, or the light of sense knowledge; an *inner* light which is the light of philosophical knowledge; a *higher* light which is the light of grace and of Sacred Scripture. Bonaventure's discussion of the mechanical arts simply recalls the relevant part of Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon*. Given the threefold division of philosophy already mentioned, he arrives at six ways of looking at the light emanating from God: mechanical arts, sense knowledge, rational philosophy, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, and Sacred Scripture. These make way for a seventh, the light of glory. (n.6)

Since these six lights have their origin in one source, they are all ordered to knowledge of Sacred Scripture: they are contained in it, perfected by it, and through it ordered to eternal illumination. (n.7) Bonaventure's task now becomes one of showing how the other illuminations of knowledge are to be led back to Sacred Scripture. He then goes on to show how sense knowledge can be distinguished in terms of a *medium*, the exercise of knowledge, and the delight concomitant with it. The means (*medium*) suggests to Bonaventure the Divine Word; the exercise of sensation gives a pattern for human life, since each sense is directed to its proper object and shrinks from what could harm it. The delight which accompanies sensation is a sign of the soul's union with God. "Behold the way in which divine wisdom is contained hidden in sense knowledge." (n.10) This may suffice to indicate how each of the levels of light leads Bonaventure inexorably back to Sacred Scripture and theology. "And thus it is obvious how the manifold wisdom of God, lucidly revealed in Sacred Scripture, is hidden in all knowledge and in nature itself. It is also clear how all kinds of knowledge serve theology, which takes examples and terms belonging to every branch of science. So too, it is clear how wide is that illumined path and how within each thing sensed or known God himself lies hidden." (n.26)

The procedure of the *Reduction* is not wholly unlike that of *The Mind's Journey to God*, the purpose of which is "rather the stirring of the affections than intellectual erudition." (Prologue, n.5) Doubtless such an approach lends itself to parody; moreover, the literal intent of philosophical doctrine becomes swiftly a matter of indifference as one seeks signs of what is believed. Perhaps the most difficult example of Bonaventure's attempts to take a scriptural text as programmatic for a summary assessment of human knowledge is to be found in his lectures on the six days of creation.

The first conference opens with the following passage from Ecclesiasticus (15:5): "In the middle of the Church he will open his mouth and the Lord will fill him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding and will clothe him with the mantle of glory." The *medium ecclesiae* of the text is identified with Christ, who is *mediator Dei et hominum*, the mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5). Bonaventure then sets forth his intention. "Our plan then is to show that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God and that he is the means (*medium*) of every science. There are seven kinds of mean: of essence, of nature, of distance, of doctrine, of modesty, of justice, and of harmony. The consideration of the first falls to the metaphysician, of the second to the physicist, of the third to the mathematician, of the fourth to the logician, of the fifth to the moralist, of the sixth to the politician or lawyer, of the seventh to the theologian. The first mean is primary because of its eternal origin; the second weighty because of its efficacious diffusion; the third profound because of its central position; the fourth clear because of its rational manifestation; the fifth important for moral choice; the sixth important in judicial compensation; the seventh pacifying by its universal conciliation. Christ is the first mean in his eternal generation, the second in his Incarnation, the third in his Passion, the fourth in his Resurrection, the fifth in his Ascension, the sixth in the future judgment, the seventh in eternal reward and punishment." (*In Hexaemeron*, I, 11) From this we construct the following table:

<i>Medium</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Christ</i>
1. essence	metaphysics	eternal generation
2. nature	physics	Incarnation
3. distance	mathematics	Passion
4. doctrine	logic	Resurrection
5. modesty	morals	Ascension
6. justice	politics	judgment
7. harmony	theology	heaven/hell

Most of these juxtapositions are, to say the least, initially surprising. At any rate, this is Bonaventure's plan. To get some glimmering of how he makes good on it, let us see what he has to say about

metaphysics. Metaphysics, he observes, although it rises from a consideration of the principles of created and particular substance to the universal and uncreated and to that being (*ad illud esse*) as it has the note of beginning, means, and ultimate end, does not grasp it as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is because philosophy ultimately arrives at God, who is the efficient, exemplar, and final cause of all else, that Bonaventure sees new significance in the tripartite division of philosophy. The metaphysician, insofar as he sees God as the first efficient cause of all things, is like the natural philosopher who considers the origin of things; and when the metaphysician considers God as final cause, he is like the moral philosopher who refers all to the highest good. "But when he considers that being as exemplifying all things, then he is a true metaphysician." (n.13) The defining role of metaphysics is concern with the eternal exemplars, or Ideas. Christ as the Word of God is the locus of the divine Ideas, and with him all things have their origin; hence, knowledge will achieve its perfection in Christ and metaphysics in its reduction of things to the Ideas. "For the beginning of knowledge is the same as the beginning of being. For if, as Aristotle says, the knowable (*scibile*) as such is eternal, it must be that nothing is known save through immutable, unchangeable, unlimited truth."

Just as Christ lies at the center of metaphysics since the peculiar concern of metaphysics is the divine Ideas, so Bonaventure would have us see that Christ is implied by or prefigured in the principal concern of each of the sciences. Physics is concerned with two worlds, the macrocosm and the microcosm, man; and the centers of these worlds are, respectively, the sun and the heart, both of which are signs of Christ in his Incarnation. Mathematics is said to be chiefly concerned with the measurement of the world and with the movements of the heavenly bodies. In his crucifixion on earth Christ stands at the center of the world; moreover, his passion is the measure of the Christian life. In logic we are concerned with the exterior manifestation of the truth, and this is a sign of the Resurrection, which is a proof of Christ's divinity. Ethics of course is concerned with virtue, and virtue lies in the mean between extremes. The Ascension corresponds with ethics insofar as the Christian is supposed to rise from virtue to virtue; moreover, rectified reason determines the mean of virtue, and faith is such a rectification of reason. The jurist or politician who must pass judgment is a sign of Christ in the last judgment. The theologian is chiefly concerned with the return of all things to God and thus with Christ as the means of eternal beatification.

One can only marvel at Bonaventure's ingenuity, though at the same time he may be baffled by its results. We have dwelt on this passage in order to give an indication of the way in which Bonaventure, while he sets down traditional divisions of philosophy, goes on

in what we may well take to be his characteristic manner or style to reduce all intellectual pursuits to theology. Once more, in such efforts a minimum of time is spent in sketching aspects of philosophical doctrine, and the tendency is to hurry on to an interpretation of the whole endeavor as a sign of some role of the Incarnate Word in the supernatural order. Generally speaking, Bonaventure's attitude toward philosophy would seem to be one which assumes philosophy as given, as already there awaiting the kind of symbolic interpretation at which he is so adept. The goal again is spiritual edification rather than intellectual enlightenment. As we shall see, it is a matter of knowing things not simply in themselves but as vestiges and images of the divine.

#### F. *The Divine Ideas*

St. Bonaventure has summed up the "whole of our metaphysics: it deals with emanation, exemplarity, consummation; that is, to be illumined by the spiritual rays and be led back to the highest is to be a true metaphysician." (*In Hexaemeron*, I, 17) We have seen that these various aspects come down to a consideration of the beginning, exemplar, and end of all things and that since in some fashion the metaphysician shares his interest in the origin and goal with the physicist and moralist, the defining metaphysical concern will be with God as exemplar cause. The proper way to approach the doctrine of Ideas is to ask after Bonaventure's theory of knowledge.

For Bonaventure knowledge is of three kinds: sense knowledge, scientific knowledge, and sapiential knowledge. It is the difference between the last two which interests us now; the fact that he admits both is testimony to Bonaventure's desire to keep what he considered best both in Augustine and in Aristotle. For Bonaventure the human intellect at the moment of creation is a blank slate, a pure possibility as far as knowledge goes. (*II Sent.*, d. 3, p. 2, a. 2, q.1) Experience is the beginning of science. "It is true beyond doubt that, as the Philosopher says, knowledge is generated in us by way of the senses, memory, and experience, from which we derive the universal which is the principle of art and science." (*Sermo, Christus magister*, 18) However, Bonaventure, while accepting the Aristotelian doctrine on the abstractive character of our intellectual knowledge, makes some notable additions to that doctrine. Is it the case that all of our intellectual knowledge comes from sense experience? "The reply must be in the negative. For we must hold that the soul knows God and itself and the things in itself without any help from the external senses. Hence, if the Philosopher sometimes says that 'nothing is in the intellect which was not first in the senses' and that 'all knowledge takes its rise from sense,' this should be understood as referring to those things which are in the soul owing to an abstracted likeness." (*II*

*Sent.*, d. 39, a. 1, q. 2, c.) God and soul—these fundamental, and Augustinian, concerns are excepted from the scope of Aristotle's doctrine of abstraction. Let us first see what Bonaventure has to say about abstractive knowledge, *cognitio scientialis*.

St. Bonaventure will here make use of the Aristotelian analysis which led to the distinction between an agent and passive intellect; this distinction permits us to speak of understanding both as an activity and as a kind of receiving of an impression. The agent intellect itself is a kind of light, Aristotle had said, which plays upon the images garnered from sense experience. The agent intellect then is the innate light because of which we can attain knowledge of what things are. We do not want to emphasize just now the divergence between Bonaventure and other Scholastics on the interpretation and use of Aristotelian doctrine. What we do want to stress is that Bonaventure allows for a theory of knowledge which it is easy to think is diametrically opposed to that which comes from Plato and Augustine. Bonaventure sees the merit in the teaching that intellectual knowledge of sensible things is abstractive. Intellectual knowledge is not simply a passive reception of objects: it is an activity and there is an agent intellect which may be compared to a light and which is an indispensable element in the doctrine of abstraction. However, while he accepts the necessity of abstraction, Bonaventure will also argue against its sufficiency. He will argue that intellection requires as well a kind of illumination which is independent of abstraction. It is to that difficult Bonaventurian tenet that we must now turn.

The *locus classicus* of Bonaventure's doctrine on the necessity of illumination as the complement to and foundation of abstractive knowledge is the *Disputed Question on the Knowledge of Christ*, question 4. The thesis Bonaventure would defend is this: "For certain knowledge it is necessary that the intellect, even here below, in some way grasps the eternal notion as normative and efficient cause, not by itself and in its own clarity, to be sure, but along with the created proper notion and as known in a glass darkly." We must follow in some detail Bonaventure's defense of this thesis.

The claim that whatever is certainly known is known in the light of the eternal Ideas (*rationes aeternae*) is susceptible of three interpretations. First, one might take it to mean that in certain knowledge the evidence of eternal light is the sole and whole cause of knowing. This does not commend itself, however, since it comes down to saying that all knowledge is knowledge of things in the Word, and then there is no difference between terrestrial knowledge and the beatific vision. Moreover, there would be no difference between knowing something in the Word and knowing it in itself (*in proprio genere*), and no difference between scientific and sapiential knowledge, between natural knowledge and that of grace, between rational knowl-

edge and that of revelation. Since all these consequences amount to false identifications, the interpretation must be rejected. Augustine has observed that skepticism is the final result of this opinion. The Academicians, maintaining that nothing could be known with certainty save in the intelligible, archetypal world, and recognizing that that world is hidden from us, had to conclude that we have no certain knowledge, that all is opinion and open to doubt.

A second way of interpreting the claim is this. In certain knowledge an influence of the eternal Idea is necessarily involved, but not in such a way that the knower attains the eternal notion itself except in its influence or effect. This view is inadequate, however, and this according to Augustine, who expressly asserts and clearly argues that the mind has to be regulated in certain knowledge by eternal and changeless rules, not as by a possession of its own, but by things above it in the eternal truth. Thus, to say that our mind in knowing with certitude does not go beyond the effect or influence of uncreated light is to say that Augustine was deceived, since his remarks cannot be interpreted in this way. Bonaventure takes this to be an absurd accusation to make against so great a Father and Doctor, who is the most reliable expositor of Sacred Scripture.

We may add that either this "influence" of light is the general causality of God with respect to all creatures or it is special, like God's causality in grace. If the former, then God need be named the giver of wisdom with no more propriety than he is called the fructifier of the earth, nor should we ascribe wisdom to him anymore than honey; if the latter, in the fashion of the special effect of grace, then all knowledge is infused and none acquired or innate. But all this is absurd.

But there is a third way of understanding the claim, one which is a mean between the two unsatisfactory interpretations. Certain knowledge necessarily requires the eternal Idea as normative and efficient cause, not alone and in its proper brilliance, but together with the created notion, that is, it is "known in part" to the degree that this is presently possible. This is what Augustine tells us. "Let the impious one reflect in order that he may be converted to the Lord as to that light whereby even as he turns from it he is touched. So it is that even the impious recognize eternity and rightly grasp and rightly praise many things concerning the morals of man." (*De trinitate*, XIV, 15) And he adds that they accomplish this through rules "written in the book of that light called truth." In order that our mind in its certain knowledge might in some wise attain those rules and changeless Ideas, there must necessarily be both nobility of knowledge and worthiness of the knower.

By nobility of knowledge Bonaventure means that certain knowledge requires immutability on the part of the knowable and infallibility on the part of the knower (*ex parte scibilis immutabilitas et*

*infallibilitas ex parte scientis*). Created truth is not absolutely, but potentially, immutable; similarly the light of the creature is not wholly infallible in virtue of itself—both are created and come forth from non-being to being. Both truth and the light which enables us to see it are daughters of time. If then the fullness of knowledge necessitates recourse to a truth in every way immutable and stable and to a light wholly infallible, there must needs be in such knowledge recourse to the supreme art as to light and truth: to the light as to that which gives infallibility to the knower, to the truth as to that which gives immutability to the known. Since then things enjoy a threefold existence—in the mind, in themselves, and in the eternal art—the truth of things which follows on the second mode of being is not sufficient for the soul's certain knowledge, nor is the existence of these things in the mind sufficient. In some way things must be attained as they are in the eternal art.

Certain knowledge also requires worthiness (*dignitas*) on the part of the knower. The rational spirit has a superior and inferior part, and just as the inferior part has need of the superior for a full deliberative judgment as to what should be done, so too with respect to a complete judgment in speculative matters. The superior part of the soul is that owing to which it is an image of God; it adheres to the eternal rules, and it is through them that it defines and judges with certitude: this belongs to it insofar as it is an image of God.

The creature can be compared to God as a vestige, image, or likeness. The creature is a vestige insofar as it is referred to God as to its principle, an image insofar as it is referred to God as to an object, a likeness insofar as it is referred to God as to an infused gift. Every creature since it is from God is a vestige; every creature which knows God is an image; only that creature is a likeness in whom God dwells. Following on this threefold reference to God, there is a threefold gradation of divine cooperation.

God cooperates in the effect of the creature as vestige by way of the creative principle and in the work of the creature as likeness, a work meritorious and pleasing to God, by way of an infused gift. God cooperates in the effect of the creature as image in the manner of an effecting notion (*per modum rationis moventis*), and such is the work of certain knowledge which is not from inferior reason alone but involves the superior reason. Since then certain knowledge belongs to the rational spirit insofar as it is an image of God, in such knowledge it attains the eternal Ideas. But because in this life it is not fully like God, it does not attain them clearly, fully, and distinctly; rather, to the degree that it is more or less like God, to that degree it attains them, but always only in a certain fashion, since it cannot rid itself of the status of image. Hence, in the state of innocence, when the soul is an image without the deformity of guilt, it neverthe-

less did not have the full likeness with God which is glory; thus, it attained the Ideas in part but not in darkness. In the state of fallen nature the soul both lacks "deiformity," likeness to God, and has deformity, and so attains them in part and darkly (*in aenigmate*). In the state of glory the soul will lack deformity and have full likeness to God and will then attain the Ideas fully and perspicuously.

Again, because the soul is not an image in its entirety (but only owing to the *ratio superior*), it attains the eternal notions along with the similitude of things abstracted from phantasms, and these similitudes are proper and distinct means (*rationes*) of knowing. Without these concepts the light of eternal reason is insufficient for knowledge, at least in this life, unless perhaps through some special revelation this state is transcended. This happens in states of rapture and in revelations to the Prophets.

### G. *The Nature of Illumination*

The key text we have just examined provides us with a hook on which to hang all subsequent discussion of St. Bonaventure. We have seen that for Bonaventure true metaphysics is occupied with three things: creation or emanation, exemplarity, and consummation or return. Of these three the exemplars, or divine Ideas, are finally the most important since, as we shall see, it is via these that things emanate from God and because of these that in their different ways creatures return once more to God. This metaphysical program will strike us as Neoplatonic, and as a philosophical program that is essentially what it is. The theologian, of course, could have no alternative plan: creator, creatures, return. That is, as we shall see, the plan of Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*. Yet Bonaventure is no Neoplatonist, or if he is, he is something else besides. In the first place, while in some sense the Ideas are the beginning of knowledge as well as of being, they are also a culmination and conclusion from a philosophical point of view. The text we have just considered exhibits a typical deference to Augustine, and the Augustinian influence gives a Platonic and Neoplatonic tone to what Bonaventure has to say. True and certain knowledge entails infallibility on the part of the knower and immutability on the part of what is known. If I am certain that "X is Y," there can be no possibility that "X is not Y" will be true. The truth, in short, is immutable.

Whence comes this immutability, particularly when I consider that the value of X is something sensible and changeable? Here is the familiar source of idealism, whether it leads to the positing of another realm of entities, Xness and Yness, or whether it posits innate rules of thought according to which "X is Y" can never be overturned. Notice that Bonaventure, following Augustine, has dismissed the latter possibility: the eternal rules are not the innate grooves of the

created mind. Why? Precisely because it is created. As created, the human soul is *vertibilis in non-esse*. Being contingent, it cannot of itself account for the necessary. Changeable things are in themselves changeable and not necessary; moreover, their existence in the mind cannot as such confer unchangeability and necessity on them. If we take a proposition which expresses an eternal truth, "the truth signified by it can be signified either as it is in matter or as it is in the soul or as it is in the divine art or taken to be certain in all these ways at once." (*Ibid.*, ad 23-6) Now, if we say that things are true as spoken, such statements are signs of mental states. What we must do is see the soul as occupying the middle ground between things and the divine Ideas. Owing to inferior reason (*ratio inferior*), the soul is referred to things in themselves by way of abstractive forms or concepts which are accordingly *rationes creatae*; because of superior reason (*ratio superior*), which makes it an image of God, the soul refers to the divine Ideas which are *rationes increatae*. True and certain knowledge is had by bringing the *rationes aeternae* to bear on the *rationes creatae*. We have then a blend of abstractive and illuminative knowledge: the former without the latter is mere contingency; the latter without the former is empty. Illumination, then, an intellectual participation in the divine Ideas, is the perfection and *sine qua non* of abstractive knowledge; scientific knowledge must be anchored in and guaranteed by sapiential knowledge.

As to the nature of illumination, we are first told what it is not. Neither is it another name for the general cooperation of God in the operations of creatures nor is it something as special as grace. Illumination is not something supernatural. It lies somewhere in between these two possibilities. More positively, it is said to be God's cooperation with the activity of the creature as image; a creature is an image insofar as it can know God, and thus illumination is the divine cooperation with the activity of the intellectual creature. God as exemplar cause is the guarantee of the certitude and immutability of knowledge in the strict sense. No matter how fluid and evanescent the created thing which is known, it is a vestige of the creator, an exemplification of a divine Idea. As such it can be a factor in abstractive knowledge, in scientific knowledge. But scientific knowledge is not yet sufficiently grounded. Bonaventure accepts Aristotle's definition and discussion of *scientia*, or *episteme*, and asks what is the guarantee of its immutability. It cannot be the things known, the things out-there in the visible world, for they are mutable and changeable; it cannot be a constituent conferred by our mind because we too are creatures, our minds are *vertibiles in non-esse*. Beyond abstraction and science, then, it is necessary for recourse to be had to the art behind the things and our souls, the art which operates through eternal notions and Ideas. By reference to these science is anchored and justified.

Without this reference to Ideas there is no metaphysics. Aristotle, consequently, is a philosopher of nature, a scientist, but he is not a metaphysician or *sapiens*.

This is not to say that scientific knowledge requires explicit reference to the Ideas. Augustine has said that the eternal light reaches men even when they are turned from it. The scientist—think of Aristotle—achieves certain knowledge and thus implicitly at least is aware of the Ideas—that is why his knowledge is certain: the Ideas are operative in it. But he is not, for all that, wise. “The wise man [*sapiens*] attains these Ideas in one way, the scientist [*sciens*] in another. The latter attains them as causes [*ut moventes*], the former as that in which he rests [*ut quietantes*], and to this wisdom no one attains ‘unless he first be cleansed by the justice of faith’ (John 1:9).” (*Ibid.*, ad 2) Alas, this passage complicates matters once more. In his defense of his thesis Bonaventure had made no mention of Ideas *ut quietantes*, but only *ut moventes*. Presumably the latter was sufficient to show the way in which abstraction is perfected by illumination, science by wisdom, and there was no question of a supernatural gift. Now, wisdom is associated with a knowledge which terminates in the Ideas as opposed to a knowledge in which the Ideas are operative but perhaps not explicitly alluded to. Is Bonaventure distinguishing now the wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Ghost from theology and a fortiori from philosophical wisdom, or is he distinguishing the supernatural from the natural order? If unequivocally the latter, then philosophical wisdom, or metaphysics, is impossible and Plato is no better off than Aristotle. Perhaps it is not a trivialization of Bonaventure’s position to say that the Ideas are operative in scientific knowledge insofar as God is the cause of the known and cooperates with the activity of the knower. He need not be taken to mean that there are other objects of knowledge to which we must turn in order to have scientific knowledge, but that we can have scientific knowledge of the things we do because these things are what they are and we are what we are. The divine truth is known to us, not in itself, but rather insofar as it is revealed generally in the truths we know: “The eternal Idea not only causes us to know but is known, not specially in itself, but generally together with the truth of principles; thus, it does not follow that it is known to us in itself, but to the degree that it shines forth generally in principles.” (ad 16) Scientific truths, then, are referred to the Ideas, the *rationes creatae* to the *rationes aeternae*, not as objects to further objects. Rather, in reflecting on the demands of truth and knowledge the mind is led to know God and the way in which God creates.

The danger here of course is that eternal truths appear to be, *salva reverentia*, whimsical or capricious choices of God. Bonaventure’s point is more subtle and Augustinian. Self-evident principles

are signs of God, who is eternal truth. In short, and we shall return to this, Bonaventure is here treading the Augustinian way of truth as a proof for the existence of God. The following summary statement of his position by Bonaventure perhaps makes it as clear as it can be made. "To the objection that if we know in these notions or Ideas [*rationibus*], every knower is a wise man, let it be said that it does not follow, because to attain these Ideas does not make one wise unless he rests in them and knows that he attains them, which is proper to wisdom. For such Ideas are attained in the concepts of scientists as instruments [*ab intellectibus scientium ut ductivae*], but in the concepts of the wise as terms and resting points [*ab intellectibus sapientium ut reductivae quietativae*]. And since they are few who so attain them, the wise are few, though the knowing are many. Few indeed are those who know that they attain such Ideas and, what is more, few wish to believe there are such Ideas since it appears so difficult for an intellect which has not been elevated to the contemplation of divine things and thus to have God present and near, although Paul says in Acts 17:27 that 'He is not far from each of us.'" (ad 19)

Few indeed maintain that Bonaventure's doctrine on illumination is an easy one to grasp. We can only hope that we have managed to remove some of the initial ambiguity from it. We must go on now to discuss a number of allied doctrines: What is the status of proofs for the existence of God? What has Bonaventure to say about creation? What is Bonaventure's doctrine on universal hylomorphism? What is the nature of the human soul and can its immortality be proved? In attempting to answer these questions we shall have more to say on the distinction of reason into a superior and inferior part and on the division of created perfections into vestiges, images, and likenesses. We shall want to ask what is the relevance of that triad to the question, How can God be named by us?

#### H. *Proofs of God's Existence*

Bonaventure's doctrine of illumination is such that God is involved in all certain knowledge, not as object, but as the regulating and motivating cause. The theory according to which intellectual knowledge is abstractive is good as far as it goes, Bonaventure feels, but it is ultimately insufficient to explain the certitude of knowledge. For that, appeal must be made to the Ideas. Now, if Bonaventure were saying that we know all things in God, it would be fair to call him an "ontologist," but, as it happens, he insists that in this life we always know God in or through something else. God, the divine Ideas, are the ultimate guarantee of knowledge, but we cannot have direct and comprehensive knowledge of God in this life. Thus, he counsels us to interpret carefully any authoritative statements which seem to say

that we can know God in this life; they must be taken to mean, not that we can know God in his essence, but rather that we can know him in some inner effect. (*II Sent.*, d. 23, a. 2, q. 3) The universe is a scale we must ascend in order to arrive at knowledge of God; therefore, the universe is that through which we know God. We must begin with God's vestige in the corporeal and temporal. Although he more often than not will exempt ecstatic and mystical knowledge from the scope of this claim, Bonaventure says that our knowledge of God is always an achievement, the term of rational discourse by which we move from effects to God as their cause. If, however, knowledge must begin with what is sensed, we cannot make the object of intellection coterminous with what has been abstracted from sense experience. Once more, abstraction is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of intellectual knowledge. Bonaventure will insist that our knowledge of God is not abstractive; no more is our knowledge of ourselves. Not unlike Kant, he will say that while all knowledge begins with experience, not all knowledge is derived from experience. Our knowledge of sensible things may be the occasion for our self-awareness, but knowledge of self is not derived from what is sensed. In order to stress this, Bonaventure will speak of an intuition of the self as opposed to abstractive knowledge, which pertains to the corporeal and temporal. In the same connection he will speak of an intuition or cointuition of God.

Knowledge of self and knowledge of God are linked when Bonaventure wants to oppose them to abstractive knowledge. "It is necessary to say that the soul knows God and itself and its own activities without any aid from the external senses." (*II Sent.*, d. 39, a. 1, q. 2) The route that Bonaventure is taking here is certainly Augustinian. In our ascent to knowledge of God the sensible world has its role to play, not so much because one moves from corporeal things directly to their incorporeal cause, but rather because corporeal things, as vestiges of God, lead us within ourselves, to the image of God we are. What is the next step? If there is an intuition of the self and of mental activities which is occasioned by experience of corporeal things, is there also a direct intuition of God? The difficulties here are precisely the difficulties we encountered in trying to understand Bonaventure's remarks on the divine Ideas. On the one hand, he seems to be saying that we know God by direct intuition; on the other, he vehemently denies that God is directly accessible to the human mind in this life. What he seems to be saying is that since the human soul is the image of God, reflection on it permits us to arrive at knowledge of God by moving from the image to the original. This is a discursive knowledge, a movement from effect to cause, but Bonaventure insists that it is knowledge of God. The whole purpose of the universe is to lead men to knowledge of God, and Bonaven-

ture's teaching will not allow that this purpose is systematically frustrated. But since our discursive knowledge of God must betray its origins, our knowledge is always imperfect, and Bonaventure will again remind us of the distinction between attaining God cognitively and comprehending God. The latter is impossible. Bonaventure employs the distinction between affirmative and negative knowledge to indicate how we attempt to surmount the imperfections of what has permitted us to come to knowledge of God.

Bonaventure is often represented as accepting the ontological argument for God's existence, and there are grounds for this contention. However, here as elsewhere the precise position of Bonaventure is a nuanced one, and we must be careful in ascribing to him an unqualified acceptance of the Anselmian proof. The text which is most pertinent to this inquiry is the *Disputed Question on the Mystery of the Trinity*, question one, article one. Bonaventure is asking whether "God exists" is an indubitable truth. He begins by giving twenty-nine reasons why the truth that God exists is indubitable, and among those twenty-nine reasons are several borrowed from Saint Anselm. When we turn to the *Respondeo* of the article, however, we find Bonaventure remarking that a truth can be indubitable in itself and nonetheless dubitable by us. That is the kind of indubitable truth "God exists" is taken to be. Insofar as one does not correctly apprehend the meaning of the term "God," he can doubt that God exists. Nevertheless, Bonaventure concludes as follows: "But that God exists cannot only not be doubted, its contradictory cannot even be thought by a mind which fully comprehends the meaning of the term 'God,' namely, a being than which nothing greater can be thought." Bonaventure thinks it highly unlikely that anyone would not know the meaning of the term "God," however, and if the ontological argument is less an argument proving that God exists than the denial of the need for such proofs, one must ask what Bonaventure takes the status of attempted proofs to be. Having recalled that "God exists" is dubitable only from a defect on the part of our mind, a defect which calls forth proofs, he adds, "Hence, reasonings of that kind are intellectual exercises rather than arguments giving evidence and manifesting a proved truth." (*Ibid.*, ad 12m) So-called proofs do not so much prove as remove impediments to our seeing that "God exists" is indisputably true.

If the whole of creation bespeaks its cause, nevertheless because the universe is graded and hierarchical, things reveal their creator in various ways. Bonaventure, we have seen, distinguishes between vestige and image. Sometimes he speaks of shadow, vestige, and image. Earlier we proceeded as if the difference between vestige and image were simply the difference between the corporeal and spiritual. This is not exactly true, since vestigial traces of God are found in

spiritual creatures as well. "With respect to the difference between vestige and image some assign the following: the vestige is in sensible things, the image in spiritual. But this will not do because the vestige is found in spiritual things as well, for unity, truth, goodness, in which the vestige consists, are quite universal and intelligible conditions. Others say that something is called a vestige because it is a partial representation, while an image gives the whole. But this position will not do either, because since God is simple, he cannot be represented according to a part. And since he is infinite, he cannot be represented totally by any creature or indeed by the whole world. So we should recognize that when creatures lead to knowledge of God as shadows, vestiges, and images, the difference among these three, as their names suggest, is taken from mode of representing. For a shadow is that which represents in a remote and confused manner, a vestige in a remote but distinct manner, and an image more closely and distinctly. . . . Creatures are called shadows with respect to properties which refer them to God in any genus of causality, but according to an indeterminate notion of the cause. The vestige is that whose property refers it to God under the aspect of a threefold cause: efficient, formal, and final, like one, true, and good. A creature is called an image because of conditions which refer to God not only as cause but as object—properties like memory, understanding, and will. From this we can arrive at other differences taken from the cognitive destination of these three. For the creature as shadow leads to knowledge of the common as common; as vestige, to knowledge of the common as appropriated; as image, to knowledge of the proper as proper." (*I Sent.*, d. 3, q. 2, concl.) From creatures which are only shadows we can have only the most remote conception of what God is, whereas vestiges enable us to know attributes common to the three Persons of the Trinity, though these attributes of nature can be appropriated to one Person rather than another, for example, wisdom to the Son. The rational creature alone is an image of God and is an *imago trinitatis*.

### I. Creation and Universal Hylomorphism

The principle that Bonaventure invokes to discuss creation is that the good is diffusive of itself (*bonum est diffusivum sui*), what might be called the principle of the generosity of the good. Since he invokes this same principle in speaking of the procession of Persons in the Trinity, however, some distinctions are clearly called for. The procession of Persons is eternal, whereas Bonaventure is a staunch opponent of the claim that the world is eternal. The distinction brought forward is that between production *within* the Godhead and production *without*. The procession of Persons is within the Godhead and is a necessary one, whereas the production of the world is without and

is not necessary. The reason for the latter claim is that production without bears on that which can be and not be, that is, on the contingent. The created world depends for its existence on God's free will. "The reason why this causality is attributed to the will is the following: the reason for causing both from the point of view of efficient and from that of final causality is goodness, for the good is said to be diffusive of itself and the good is that for the sake of which all things are. The efficient cause becomes actually such because of the end. . . . Therefore, it is will that unites the effective with the end." (*I Sent.*, d. 45, a. 2, q. 1) It is according to the divine reason and power that creation takes place, but not automatically or necessarily—free will is required. God has eternally within himself the patterns of creatures, but he creates them freely and in time. Creatures come to be in time and from nothing owing to the power and free will of God.

That the world was created freely by God, in time and from nothing, is for Bonaventure a truth accessible to human reason. However, though this is true in principle, in fact men have recognized this only under the influence of Scripture. "It must be said that this is the truth: the world was produced in being, not simply as a whole but also with respect to its intrinsic principles, which do not come from anything else but from nothing. This truth, though it is now open and clear to every believer, was hidden from the wisdom of philosophers, who on this matter long wandered on errant ways." (*II Sent.*, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, concl.) Since the most eminent philosophers have erred on this matter, Scripture has come to our aid and made the point clear. Once the truth of creation in time and from nothing is clarified by Scripture, it is easy, Bonaventure feels, to see that the opposed view is untenable. Bonaventure held that to maintain that the world is eternal not only contradicts Scripture but involves within itself a contradiction. He gives a number of reasons for this, among which are the following. If the world had always existed, the sun would have described its revolutions an infinity of times; but the sun is still revolving, and this entails further additions to an already infinite number, which is a contradiction. Furthermore, if the world as we know it is eternal, there would be an infinite number of souls of the departed, and an infinite number is a contradictory notion. By an infinite number Bonaventure understands an actual, not a possible, infinity; an actual infinite number is one to which no further additions could be made.

Bonaventure's assertion that the notion of an eternal world is self-contradictory is directed against Aristotle. Nevertheless, Bonaventure makes use of an Aristotelian conception when he describes finite beings, namely, the notion that the creature is composed of matter and form. Aristotle had argued that an entity which comes to

be as the result of a change is composed of form and matter. There are other beings, separate substances, devoid of matter. For such a thinker as Aquinas there are beings other than God and still quite immaterial. Bonaventure held to a universal hylomorphism, claiming that every finite being has matter as a principle of its limitation. "The principle of any limitation is matter or something material" (*principium omnis limitationis est materia vel aliquid materiale*). (*Q.D. de myst. trin.*, q. 4, a. 1) Only divine being, which is pure act, lacks materiality and thus is without limitation. It is clear that for Bonaventure matter is the name of the principle of limitation whereby finite being is precisely finite and not infinite; it is the source of possibility and potentiality. That is why he can speak of matter in the angels and in rational souls. "Matter considered in itself is neither spiritual nor corporeal; therefore, the capacity following on the essence of matter relates indifferently to spiritual and corporeal forms." (*II Sent.*, d. 3, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2, ad 3) On the basis of this Bonaventure will speak of spiritual matter which is simple and unextended. All this sounds odd, of course, but the strangeness recedes somewhat when we recall that what Bonaventure was seeking to emphasize is the difference between finite and infinite being. Since finite being is limited and some principle or source of its limitation must be recognized, Bonaventure chose the term "matter" to designate the principle of limitation of finite being. Souls and angels, while not corporeal, are finite beings and thus, in Bonaventure's odd locution, must contain a material component. He is not suggesting that everything other than God is material in the sense of corporeal and extended.

The human soul is immortal or incorruptible, something that could hardly be said of it if it were material or a composition in the usual sense, for matter, in its usual sense, is the principle of change or of the corruptibility of the composite. Matter itself is incorruptible, and that provides Bonaventure with one of his arguments for the immortality of the soul. The order of the universe involves both prime matter and an ultimate form. The rational soul is the ultimate form, and if prime matter is incorruptible, then, Bonaventure argues, the ultimate form too must be incorruptible. This is the first of twelve arguments given by Bonaventure for the immortality of the rational soul. (See *II Sent.*, d. 19, a. 1, q. 1.) On other occasions Bonaventure will found the soul's immortality on its ordination to beatitude. "For the soul is the image of God because it has a capacity for God and can participate in his being, and thus it is made for beatitude and is apt for beatitude, which, I say, can only belong to an immortal substance; it is necessary therefore that the soul be immortal." (*II Sent.*, d. 26, q. 4, ad 1) In connection with discussions of the immortality of the soul Bonaventure will stress that his doctrine of universal hylomorphism is a metaphysical and not a physical doctrine. From a physical

point of view the soul is wholly simple, since a composition of parts makes a body, whereas the soul is a spirit since it is simple and without extension. Metaphysical composition, such as of act and potency, is, Bonaventure notes, admitted to obtain in all creatures, even angels, and angels are certainly immortal. That is why he concludes that the soul's metaphysical composition of form and matter is not a root of corruptibility.

### J. Conclusion

In form and intent the work of St. Bonaventure is always the work of a theologian; he writes as one for whom the only angle of vision and the proximate criterion of truth is the Christian faith. This fact influences his importance for the history of philosophy; when coupled with his style, it makes Bonaventure perhaps the least accessible of the major figures of the thirteenth century. This is true, not because he is a theologian, but because philosophy interests him largely as a *praeparatio evangelica*, as something to be interpreted as a foreshadow of or deviation from what God has revealed. We find in his writings something like a charter for philosophy, but not for anything like a fully autonomous philosophy. Despite this, however, Bonaventure himself seems little interested in engaging in philosophical work. In a way that is not true of Aquinas or Albert or Scotus, Bonaventure does not survive well the transition from his time to ours. It is difficult to imagine a contemporary philosopher, Christian or not, citing a passage from Bonaventure to make a specifically philosophical point. One must know philosophers in order to read Bonaventure, but the study of Bonaventure is seldom helpful for understanding philosophers and their characteristic problems. Bonaventure as a theologian is something else again, of course, as is Bonaventure the edifying author. It is in those areas, rather than in philosophy proper, that his continuing importance must be sought.

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## CHAPTER VI

# *Saint Thomas Aquinas*

### A. *The Man and His Work*

Almost twenty years ago a professor of philosophy remarked that there are more Thomists in the world than any other kind of philosopher, a remark that lost its surprise when one reflected that it was prompted by identifying every Catholic philosopher—if not every Catholic—as a Thomist. Things have changed in the meantime, for better or worse, but the remark retains some interest if only because it reveals how Thomas Aquinas has sometimes been swallowed by Thomism, that in his case we seem to be dealing less with an individual thinker than with an institution. In a broken rhythm but with general constancy since his death, men have come forward as intermediaries between Thomas and his reader. Commentaries on Aquinas, monographs devoted to particular points of his teaching, a bewildering barrage of journal articles, popularizations of his doctrine, even popularizations of the popularizations—all this has sometimes had the effect of putting Thomas himself further and further away from the possibility of direct contact. Dominicans, members of Thomas' own order, have always been in the vanguard of these efforts to explicate, expand, and apply the teachings of Aquinas, but they have always been joined by other religious, by secular priests, and, more recently, by laymen, Catholic and non-Catholic.

The remarkable attention that has been paid the thought of Aquinas, while it relates to the essential quality of his work, cannot be understood on that basis alone. The favor shown Thomas by the Catholic Church over the centuries, the unique deference paid him in the Leonine revival at the end of the nineteenth century, added the weight of the ordinary magisterium of the Church to the attraction of the intrinsic qualities of Thomas' teaching and to his previous historical impact to insure for Aquinas an attention to his writings on the part of Catholics which goes far beyond that owed and paid to other important thinkers. This antecedent deference to the thought of Thomas has had disadvantages as well as advantages, and we are currently in a time when the mood of deference to Aquinas seems

almost wholly absent from some Catholic philosophers. Just as earlier there were a few who equated repetition of what Thomas had written (a repetition that seemed most comfortable when it was of the original Latin) with understanding and philosophical argument, so now a few seem to take hostility to Aquinas as a sure sign of philosophical seriousness.

One childish attitude is scarcely preferable to another; the importance of Aquinas cannot be decided by hoisting a moist finger to catch the winds of current fashion. Our task here must be to get through the Thomistic tradition—so much of which, taken in moderation, is undoubtedly an aid—to the teachings of Thomas himself. When we do this, when we catch something of the flavor and style of his procedure and make soundings in the vast expanse of his teachings, we begin to see why he has been singled out for the attention he has received, why that vast tradition of scholarship and commentary arose, why he is one of a handful of truly major and perennial thinkers. Only then can we hope to speak intelligently of the role Thomas may play today—and that he has a contemporary role to play is the continuing and insistent conviction of the teaching Church. But, of course, it will not be our task here to enter into any lengthy discussion of the timeliness of Thomas.

Thomas was born in 1225 in Roccasecca near Naples, and Aquinas is the family name taken from Aquino, where the feudal family into which Thomas was born ruled. Thomas' early education was at the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino. From 1239 to 1243 he studied the arts at the University of Naples, which had been founded by Emperor Frederick II in 1224. When Thomas entered the Order of Preachers in 1244, his decision met with resistance from his family; taken into custody by his brothers, he was held prisoner for several months, but they set him free in 1245. His first years as a Dominican are obscured for us, but we know that Thomas studied under Albert the Great at Cologne from 1248 to 1252. In the latter year he was sent to Paris, where he was a student of theology until 1257. He was a bachelor of Scripture from 1252 to 1253 and a bachelor of the *Sentences* from 1253 to 1256 in the Dominican convent in Paris. At the end of this period he was admitted as a master of theology and granted a license to teach on the faculty of theology of the University of Paris. His inaugural lecture was delivered in the summer of 1256.

It must be pointed out that these years of study at Paris were far from serene, for it was just at this time that the efforts of the secular clergy to keep the religious, particularly the mendicant friars, from faculty positions reached a peak of what can only be called frenzy. Thomas and Bonaventure were granted their degrees at the same time, but their admission to chairs on the faculty of theology was delayed. In October of 1256 Pope Alexander intervened to demand

that they be received into the academic community. This demand was not complied with until August, 1257, by which time Bonaventure had been elected master general of the Franciscans. But for Thomas this marked the start of a professorial career which, one way or the other, defined his life until he died.

From 1256 to 1259 Thomas held one of the Dominican chairs of theology at the University of Paris. During this period he wrote his *Commentary on the Sentences*, or rather completed his comments on the work of Peter Lombard begun in 1253. To this period also belong his commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew, the *Disputed Questions on Truth*, the expositions of the *De trinitate* and *De hebdomadibus* of Boethius, the opuscula *On Being and Essence* and *On the Principles of Nature*, and several quodlibetal questions. These few years represent the first stage of Thomas' career as a teacher and are called the first Parisian period.

The first Italian period begins perhaps in 1260 and extends to 1268. During this period Thomas taught first at Orvieto, where Pope Urban IV was in residence; from 1265 to 1267 he taught in Rome, at the convent of St. Sabine, and then perhaps at Viterbo, where the papal court had gone. During the first Italian period Thomas wrote the *Summa contra gentiles* as well as the first part of the *Summa theologiae*, the masterpiece which was still to be incomplete at the time of his death. He also wrote at this time the *Disputed Questions On the Power of God* and *On Spiritual Creatures* and commented on Pseudo-Dionysius' *On the Divine Names*. The commentaries on Isaiah and Jeremiah seem also to belong to this period. Of great importance for our purposes are commentaries on works of Aristotle, some of which, notably those on the *Metaphysics* and *On the Soul*, were begun during this period.

The second Parisian period took place between 1269 and 1272, when, on the orders of his superiors, Thomas reclaimed his chair on the faculty of theology at the University of Paris. In many ways this could be called the Aristotelian period of Thomas' career since during it he completed his commentaries on the *Metaphysics* and *On the Soul* and commented as well on the *Physics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Meteorology*, *On Interpretation*, and the *Posterior Analytics*. At the same time he commented on the *Liber de causis* (pointing out that it amounted to a selection from Proclus' *Elements of Theology*). He also commented on Job, St. John's Gospel, and the Epistles of St. Paul. He continued working on the *Summa theologiae* during this period and engaged in many *Disputed Questions*, those *On the Soul*, *On Evil*, *On the Virtues*, and *On the Union of the Word*, as well as in many quodlibetal questions. It is to this period that the opusculum *On the Unity of the Intellect against the Parisian Averroists* belongs.

The second Italian period begins in 1272 and ends with the death

of Aquinas in 1274. Thomas taught at the University of Naples, where he was sent in 1272 to found a Dominican House of Studies. Besides organizing the curriculum and teaching, Thomas wrote more commentaries on Aristotle, those *On the Heavens*, *On Generation and Corruption*, and on the *Politics*. Moreover, he worked on part three of the *Summa theologiae*. In 1274, on orders of the pope, Thomas set out for the ecumenical council to be held at Lyons. He never made it. Falling ill on the way, he was taken into the Cistercian abbey at Fossanova, located between Naples and Rome. It was there, when he was not yet fifty, that he died on March 7, 1274.

To summarize a life in this way gives us everything but the man who lived it, and of the man Thomas it must be remembered that he was priest and Dominican, teacher and mystic, scholar and saint. In Thomas we find a blend of the natural and supernatural virtues, the moral and intellectual virtues, and truly, insofar as man can say of man, Thomas exhibited in his own life the ideal of Christian perfection of which he wrote with authority and in a style that is almost never unctuous. There is a story that as a child he asked, "What is God?" He followed the trail of that question throughout his life, not as the statement of a curious intellectual puzzle, but in quest of the ultimate meaning of life and of the universe. With respect to that controlling question of his life he was intent to run out the string of reason as far as it could go, and by doing so he came to hold that in the end the most we can do is know what God is not; we cannot know what or who he is with clarity in this life. This final position is not a sign of resignation or lethargy; it represents a learned ignorance which refers not simply to the limits of pure reason but also to the darkness and obscurity of the spiritual life. Intellectual and saint, Thomas speaks audibly both to the sophisticated academic and to the lyric mystic. St. John of the Cross professed to see in the treatise on the contemplative life in the *Summa theologiae* the map, insofar as it can be mapped, of the profundities of the spiritual life. Only the traveler who has returned can make us maps, and Thomas' credentials, unsettling for a certain view of the intellectual life, are incorrigibly dual: his holiness and his austere arguments.

It is not Thomas the saint who is our interest here, but Thomas the thinker, and however inseparable these were in his person, they can be considered apart. The writings of Aquinas which have come down to us are intimidating in their bulk and number; editions of his complete works fill shelves. Our sketch has indicated that they fall into classes. The first great division of his writings could be between those which comment on, explicate, or expose the writings of others on the one hand and independent works on the other. Among the latter we might include those which grew out of academic debates, the *Disputed Questions* and the *Quodlibetal Questions*, but more par-

ticularly various opuscula and, of course, the two great summaries of Christian theology, the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae*.

Another way of grouping his writings, one more important for our purposes, would be into philosophical writings and theological writings. The former, of course, are what seem to interest us most, but what would they be? Such opuscula as *On Being and Essence*, *On the Principles of Nature*, and *On the Unity of the Intellect* certainly—these are, on Thomas' own criteria, philosophical works, and, while dependent on his predecessors, they are original in their conception and development. Further, there is the great mass of his commentaries on Aristotle. There has been a dispute among students of Thomas during the present century concerning the status of those commentaries, a dispute which often swings around varying ideas of what Thomas was doing when he commented on Aristotle. Some have simply used the commentaries (despite the deplorable condition of the text of crucial ones like that on the *Metaphysics*) as unqualified repositories of the teaching of Thomas; others have suggested that in his Aristotelian commentaries Thomas is trying to make as clear as he can (and some would say he succeeds to a fault) what Aristotle is saying, without giving his own personal views on the matters in question.

One cannot, of course, in a few lines hope to settle a dispute in which men of acumen and sincerity have disagreed deeply, but some working conceptions for our present purposes seem both possible of formulation and necessary to our task. It seems unreasonable to ask that we ascertain the motives of Thomas the commentator, which could in no way be verified in the evidence we have. We must look at the commentaries, consequently, and see what we find there. We find, as some have insisted, a Thomas who takes great pains to discover precisely what Aristotle is teaching, what his questions are, what the order and development of the text are, and what is the structure of his arguments. Say then that we find Thomas the commentator showing us in great detail that such and such is the problem, so-and-so is the solution, and these are the reasons for accepting the solution. Are we then to ask whether he agrees or disagrees? This suggestion seems to me to be an invitation to distraction. Our attention must be on the question, solution, and arguments; the point is, Do *we* agree or disagree? If the discourse as Thomas presents it is cogent, to ask if he finds it so is irrelevant. Why should we doubt that he does? What I am suggesting, with respect to those who would downgrade the commentaries, is simply that a cogent argument, a reasoned position, in a commentary of Aquinas must quite naturally be assumed to be the one with which Thomas agrees.

Now this seems a terribly simple dissolution of a long-standing

problem when we had said earlier that it would be difficult and indeed inappropriate to try to settle the matter in a few lines. I want now to develop the solution suggested in such a way that both sides in the dispute are given their due. In commenting on Aristotle, Thomas often takes into account other efforts to explicate the text; when he rejects those efforts, as he often does, it is because they make nonsense of Aristotle or negate the order and development of his thought. Now this sort of thing, which is so far from being rare that it is almost the mark of Thomas' Aristotelian commentaries, suggests that Thomas was deeply sympathetic with the philosophy of Aristotle, that he held Aristotle in an esteem that is quite unique in his relations to previous thinkers, and that this explains both the volume of his commentaries on Aristotle and the fact that he urged his Dominican friend, William of Moerbeke, to provide him with more accurate Latin translations of Aristotle. In short, we can employ Thomas' commentaries on Aristotle with the assurance that in them Thomas is striving for an accurate reading of Aristotle and he is doing so because, by and large, he agrees with the results of such a reading.

Having stated the matter in this way, we must hasten to add that no one doubts for a minute the impact of Aristotle on Aquinas. Indeed, save for infrequent exaggerated statements, no one would doubt for a minute what has been said about our proper response to cogent arguments in commentaries which are clearly regarded to be cogent by Thomas when he formulates them. That is not the point, we would be told; of course Aquinas agrees with Aristotle as far as he goes, but Aquinas often goes far beyond a text of Aristotle in commenting on it. One sees how the dispute now alters in character. At first it seemed to be a disagreement between those who insisted that there was only Aristotelianism in Thomas' commentaries and those who would find Thomism in those commentaries. Now it is those in the first group who insist that the commentaries are Thomistic and beyond mere Aristotelianism. This apparent switch points, however, to a most important truth.

No one could possibly doubt that Thomas is an Aristotelian; what those who object to an almost exclusive reliance on the Aristotelian commentaries have in mind is the fact that we cannot equate Aristotelianism and Thomism. This means at least the following: that there were other sources of the philosophizing of Thomas than the texts of Aristotle. Some insist on the influence of Christian faith, an influence which led him to philosophical positions, philosophically arrived at, which, if not incompatible with Aristotelianism, nevertheless represent a deepened version, perhaps even a transformation, of it. Surely this is not a priori an implausible suggestion. Others will call our attention to philosophical influences other than Aristotle which leave their mark on Thomas' teaching. Consider for example

Aristotle's opposition to Plato. Does Aquinas too reject Plato? It would seem so, on the basis of the commentaries, but a number of recent works—notably those of Fabro, Geiger, and Henle—have pointed out the influence of Platonism on Thomas. A crucial consideration here is that of participation, which Aristotle rejects as a useless metaphor but which permeates the doctrine of Aquinas.

Our simple solution of the dispute thus gives much to both sides. We seem to find here as we often find elsewhere that when intelligent men disagree, they may on a more profound level be in agreement. However, to agree that not every philosophical teaching of Aquinas is already in Aristotle or derived from Aristotle is not of course to agree about the nature of the more commodious entity, Thomistic philosophy. One can accept, one must accept, the reminder that there is much Platonism in Aquinas, but that is not *eo ipso* to accept certain descriptions of the resultant Thomistic synthesis. It is the assumption of the present presentation that Aquinas was so fundamentally an Aristotelian that he accepted Platonic and Neoplatonic suggestions on an Aristotelian basis. That assumption is borne out by Thomas' procedure in commenting on the *Liber de causis* and on Pseudo-Dionysius.

When we distinguish between the philosophical and the theological writings of Aquinas, we are not suggesting that a history such as this one must restrict itself to the former. For reasons that will be made clear in the following section, formally theological works of Thomas contain much that is crucial for understanding his philosophy. A presentation of the philosophy of Aquinas must rely heavily on the *Summa theologiae*. Thomas' exposition of Boethius' *De trinitate* gives us one of the most lucid presentations of the nature of metaphysics and its relations to other philosophical sciences. For the reader who has come to this chapter from the preceding ones that fact will not be terribly surprising, of course, but let us now turn to what Aquinas has to say on one of our recurrent themes, the relation of faith and reason as well as on one of the allied themes, the relation of theology and philosophy.

## B. *Philosophy and Theology*

The very first question Aquinas asks in his *Summa theologiae* is, Why do we need any doctrine or inquiry beyond philosophy? To pose such a question suggests, of course, that philosophy is or was a going concern and that later and by way of addition a new study was introduced, call it "theology." Thus, it is theology and not philosophy which must be justified. Thomas provides a number of reasons why theology seems superfluous. In the first place, if a man ought not try to know what is beyond his intellectual capacities and whatever is within those capacities falls to the concern of philosophy, philosophy

is certainly sufficient for man. Further, teaching is concerned with something, with being, but no type of being seems excluded from philosophical consideration, certainly not divine being since Aristotle's name for metaphysics is theology.

Having made things look difficult indeed for the work he is undertaking, Thomas begins to move toward the contrary position by first quoting from St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy (3:16), where Scripture is said to be useful for teaching, arguing, correction, and so forth. It becomes clear that what Aquinas is thus opposing to philosophy, which includes a theology or teaching about God, is Scripture, in which God tells man of himself. "Divinely inspired Scripture does not belong with the philosophical disciplines, which are discovered by human reason." We see that the difference lies in the source of a doctrine: it is discovered by human reason or it is revealed by God. It is this opposition which Thomas stresses in the body of the article. "I reply that we must say that it was necessary for human salvation that there be a doctrine according to divine revelation in addition to the philosophical disciplines which are investigated by human reason. For, in the first place, man as man is meant for God, who is a goal surpassing reason's comprehension. . . . But the goal must be fore-known by men, who are to direct their intentions and actions to it. That is why it was necessary for man's salvation that things which exceed human reason be made known to him by divine revelation." (*ST*, I, 1, 1, c.) The assumption here is that God as man's goal is beyond the ken of man. And yet, had not Thomas conceded earlier that philosophy arrives at valid knowledge of God? He had, and this will of course lead to ambiguity in the use of the term "theology." There is the theology of the philosophers, and there is the theology contained in and based on Scripture.

Aquinas now says something quite important about the theology of the philosophers. "It was necessary that man be instructed by divine revelation even concerning those things which human reason can know about God. The truth concerning God as discovered by reason comes to only a few men after a protracted period of study and with the admixture of much error—and yet on knowledge of such truth man's whole salvation depends, for that lies in God. Thus, it was necessary, if salvation was to come to men more fittingly and certainly, that men be instructed about divine things by divine revelation." (*Ibid.*) That last remark may seem confusing, as if Thomas were suggesting that through reason men could, though with difficulty and over a great span of time, arrive at truths concerning God which God has revealed to man. That suggestion is not wholly unintended, as we shall see, but precision is required.

For the moment Thomas is after another point. We remember that one of the arguments for the superfluousness of theology pointed out

that philosophy studies God. Notice what Thomas now says of that. He first gives an example of how different sciences can prove the same truth, as the physicist and astronomer might prove that the earth is round by quite different reasons. If that is true, "nothing prevents that the same things be treated philosophically insofar as they are knowable in the light of natural reason and by another science insofar as they are known in the light of divine revelation. Thus, the theology which pertains to Sacred Scripture is generically different from the theology which is a part of philosophy." Without for the moment going into the fact that there are truths about God revealed in Scripture that would be inaccessible to human inquiry no matter how much time and effort were expended, Thomas concedes that philosophy arrives at certain truths about God which can also be gleaned from Scripture. With respect to such truths the argument for revelation bears on the difficulty of arriving at them philosophically, on the few men who have succeeded in doing so, and on the errors that mar their success. Yet even here Thomas draws our attention to the different ways in which the same truth may be held to be such, either on the basis of natural reason or on the basis of divine revelation.

This seems curious because two types of rational activity are apparently being compared, and then one is described as a rational activity, namely, doing philosophy. What are we to call the other, the acceptance of a truth as a truth because it is revealed by God? Thomas will call it "believing" the truth. For example, to hold, to affirm, to say that God is one, that there is but one God, because God says so, is to believe that truth. There is a mental attitude here vis-à-vis an object which finds form in a linguistic expression, "God is one." In speaking of faith as a condition or state of mind Thomas will want to contrast it with other mental attitudes, with other states of mind. Thus, he will compare "believing that A is B" with "knowing that A is B" and "intuiting that A is B" and "thinking that A is B." The symbols stand for subjects and predicates, of course, and perhaps we would normally say that we know or believe or think, not propositions, but what propositions are about. Nonetheless, we can say that propositions or sentences express what we know or think or believe—that, at any rate, is the way Thomas understands the matter, though in speaking of faith he will insist that we believe someone and something. What is the relation between the subject and predicate when we intuit that A is B? (I am using intuition here for Thomas' *intellectus*.) We intuit that A is B when the connection between the two is immediate, when no link other than that of subject and predicate is required to see that the proposition is true. A frequent example of such a truth in Aquinas is "the whole is greater than any of its parts." In order to see that this is true we need know only what a whole is and what a part is. (Notice that I did not say that we need know only

what "whole" and "part" mean, since this could suggest that Thomas thought it is simply a matter of convention and that he shares the suppositions of many current discussions of "analyticity.") Once we know what a whole is and what a part is, the truth is immediately seen. To know that A is B, on the other hand, is to know a statement is true whose predicate and subject are connected or mediated by some third thing. That third thing is, of course, a middle term, and the connection of knowing with the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism is apparent; so too, intuition bears on the principles of such syllogisms. To *think* that A is B, finally, is to assert a connection between subject and predicate on other than conclusive grounds. That is, intuition and knowledge are certain, whereas thinking, or opinion, is not. Enough has been said, perhaps, to introduce Thomas' notion of "believing that A is B."

Is believing that A is B like thinking that A is B? It is like it in that, as believed, no cogent reasons for the truth are known; believing is unlike opinion or thinking in that believing is unwavering and, in that sense, certain. Thus, faith is like knowledge and intuition in that it is certain and unwavering, but it is unlike both in that it does not involve the same sort of clarity. Further, what is known or intuited is, in principle, within the reach of any normal man if he pays attention and follows the argument. But faith, the acceptance of what God reveals, is not just the natural employment of a natural capacity. There is something surprising about faith, an intrusion into human affairs of something outside the normal course of events. That something more is, for Thomas, grace, the power of God, and it reaches the mind through the will. "To believe belongs to intellect insofar as it moved by the will to assent." (*ST*, IIaIIae, 2, 2, c.) What the mind assents to in faith is not seen, that is, to continue the earlier analysis, we do not *see* the connection between A and B. Faith involves an intellectual assent to what is believed, but intellectual assent is of course involved in intuiting, in knowing, even in opinion. "There is another way in which intellect assents to something, not because it is sufficiently moved by its proper object, but rather by a choice voluntarily inclining it to one side [of a contradiction] rather than to the other. If this is done with doubt or fear that the opposite might be true, there is opinion; if however it is done with certitude and without fear, it is faith." (*ST*, IIaIIae, 1, 4, c.) The proper object of intellect is what is seen; when the mind assents to something it does not see, whether mediately or immediately, it may do so because it is prompted by desire. Thomas suggests that such motivation is common to opinion and faith, but the great difference is that the believer is without doubt. Or is he?

Like Bonaventure, Thomas distinguished the certitude of adherence from the certitude of comprehension. Knowledge or intuition

would possess both kinds of certitude; faith has only certitude of adherence and has it, Thomas argues, to a greater degree than do intuition or knowledge. It is because the assent of faith is prompted by the will, moved by grace, that while there is no wavering with respect to adherence to what God has revealed as true, there is a kind of movement, of mental discomfort, on the part of the believer with respect to believed truths. His assent, while mental, is not prompted by what is proper to intellectual assent as such. Thus, the believer reflects in some unease on the truths he has accepted on the authority of God, and this reflection or meditation may, when it is of a certain sort, give rise to what Thomas means by theology. Thomas makes this point by comparing believing with intuiting and knowing. Intuiting involves assent without prior cogitation, while the assent of the knower to what he knows follows on cogitation. "The knower has both cogitation and assent, but a cogitation causing assent and an assent which terminates cogitation." Belief or faith involves both cogitation and assent but, as it were, on an equal footing (*quasi ex aequo*). "For the assent is caused, not by cogitation, but by the will. In this way the intellect is not determined to one [side of a contradiction] as it is when it is led to its proper term, which is the vision of something intelligible; that is why its movement is not at rest, but cogitation and inquiry remain concerning those things which are believed, though the believer most firmly assents to them." (*Q.D. de ver.*, 14, 1, c.) The mind of the believer is thus portrayed as restless since it has given its assent under the influence of will and not because of the evidence of what is assented to. The mind of the believer has been rendered captive, its assent prompted by something extrinsic to intellection as such. "Thence too it is that in the believer there can arise an impulse toward the contrary of what is most firmly held, something that does not happen in intuiting and knowing." (*Ibid.*) Having noted that certitude involves both firmness of adherence and evidence, Thomas can speak of the certitude of faith in various ways. With respect to firmness of adherence, "faith is more certain than any intuition or knowledge, because the First Truth, which causes the assent of faith, is a stronger cause than the light of reason which causes the assent of intuition or knowledge. It [certitude] also implies evidence concerning that to which assent is given; in this sense, faith has no certitude, though intuition and knowledge do." (*Ibid.*, ad 7)

To know what Thomas meant by believing and knowing is to possess the prerequisites for understanding his distinction between theology and philosophy. Philosophy aims at knowledge which is discourse terminating in an assent prompted by the evidence of what the mind is attending to. The starting points of such discourse are truths knowable by everyone. This is why, when Thomas compares

teaching and discovery, he will insist that teaching must imitate the route we would go if we were finding out for ourselves, at least in the sense that it must start from what may be presumed to be already known. What the teacher proposes must be shown to follow from what is already known by the pupil, and it is from that connection that it derives its force and commands assent—not from the authority of the teacher. “If someone should propose to another something unconnected with self-evident principles or whose connection with such principles is not shown, he does not cause knowledge in him, but perhaps opinion or trust.” (*De ver.*, 11, 1, c.) The point is that each man has in principle the capacity for knowledge; there are certain truths that no one could fail to know. Such truths are the object of what we have been translating by intuition (*intellectus*). What is known is connected with such self-evident truths, which are premises or guidelines for reasoning. If another presents to us a statement that A is B, he must give us some grounds for assenting to the connection between the terms when this is not self-evident. What mediates between A and B in knowledge is not someone’s say-so, but the evidence of what is being talked about. Thus, knowledge and, consequently, philosophy are portrayed as what any man in principle can come to have owing to his natural powers.

To believe through revelation that A is B is precisely to accept the connection on someone’s say-so, namely, God’s, and the motive force is the will drawn by the promise that such assent will lead to man’s saving good. The will is a cause here under the influence of grace, a special intrusion of God’s causality. To believe is not to be a theologian in Thomas’ understanding of theology, although one cannot be a theologian unless he believes.

What does theology add to belief? Theology is the science of Sacred Scripture, that is, it is a discourse bearing on the truths revealed by God in Scripture. Revealed truth, the articles of faith, are the principles of theology, and in discussing the theologian’s attitude toward them Thomas will invoke the practice within certain philosophical disciplines of accepting the principles and attempting to prove things other than the principles of the discipline. Metaphysics, unlike the other sciences, disputes with those who would deny its principles. Theology, like philosophical sciences in general, accepts its principles (the philosophical sciences accept theirs because of their evidence; theology accepts its principles on faith), and, like the metaphysician, the theologian disputes with those who would deny the principles of theology, that is, who would deny revealed truth. (*ST*, Ia, 1, 8, e.) The mark of theology, as Thomas conceives of it, is the use that it makes of what men naturally know, that is, of philosophy, in its discourse about what God has revealed. We remember Thomas saying that while faith involves the firmest assent, cogitation, a kind

of discursive wavering with respect to what is assented to, remains. Theology may be regarded as addressing itself to this cogitation or, perhaps better, as being an instance of it insofar as the theologian tries to bring into relation with one another what is believed and what is known. Predictably, Thomas shows concern with the procedure or methodology of the theologian, asking whether it is licit to employ philosophical reasoning in theology. (*De trin.*, q.2,a.3) Against this practice he arrays a barrage of quotations from Scripture and the Fathers, and fashions arguments against it by appealing to the methodological rules of the philosophers. Having done this, he shows that St. Paul himself used philosophical doctrines in his Epistles, cites the practice of the Fathers, and so on. With that dialectical background he develops his own position.

He begins by remarking that grace does not destroy nature but rather perfects it and that, thus, the light of faith, which is infused in us by grace, should not be thought to destroy the light of natural reason, which is also God-given. Of course, natural reason is inadequate with respect to the object of faith; nonetheless, it is impossible for the truths God has revealed to conflict with those known by the reason God has given us. Rather, naturally known truths are similitudes of a sort to what has been revealed. Thomas makes the point stronger. Natural truths are preambles to revealed truths. This is an extremely important teaching of his. We saw earlier that he holds that some things which in principle can be known by man have been revealed by God. Now, if some of the things God has revealed can be known in the strong sense of known, that is, by natural reason, this is a sign that other revealed truths, which are beyond our understanding, are also intelligible in themselves. There is thus a kind of bridge between natural knowledge and what can only be believed; it is this bridge that is meant by the phrase *praeambula fidei*.

Thomas distinguishes three ways in which philosophy can be used in theology. It can be used for demonstrating those things which are preambles to faith, that is, to prove by natural reason that God exists, that he is one, and other things concerning God and man which can be proved in philosophy and which faith implicitly or explicitly holds. Second, it can be used to make known what is believed by appealing to philosophical doctrines, as Augustine finds many similitudes to the Trinity in philosophical doctrines. Third, philosophy is useful to the theologian to resist what is said against the faith by showing the attacks to be false or at least inconclusive. The assumption here is that anything contrary to faith is false and that since it is false, it can be shown to be such on philosophical grounds; if it is only probable, that too can be manifested by philosophical reasoning.

There are, of course, dangers involved in the theologian's use of philosophy. Thomas mentions two of them. The theologian might

employ philosophical teachings which are contrary to faith, which are corruptions of natural reasoning since they are false. Thomas mentions Origen as guilty of this. Second, he might try to submit revealed truth to natural reason as to an absolute measure. For example, he might want to believe only what can be proved by philosophical reasoning. The order should be the reverse, Thomas says. *Philosophia sit ad metas fidei redigenda* (philosophy should be submitted to the measure of faith). (*De trin.*, q. 2, a. 3, c.)

Thomas sees no problem whatsoever with respect to the use of dialectic in reasoning about revealed truths. Except in the case of the *praeambula fidei*, truths which have been revealed but can be known by natural reason, there is no possibility of proving revealed truths. Insofar as dialectic is construed as simply a method of reasoning, the theologian can use it to prove, for example, that, given two revealed truths, a further truth can be derived from them. It is in this, as it happens, that he sees the possibility of an explication in time of the content of faith. (*ST*, IIaIIae, q. 1, a. 7) But beyond the employment of the method of philosophy in reasoning about the contents of faith, the theologian, according to Thomas' conception of him, will often develop philosophical points in order to cast some poor light on the mysteries of faith. Thus, the notions of person, nature, relation, and so forth are clarified to a remarkable degree in the course of the theologian's deliberation on the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. There is a striking amount of such philosophical clarification in the *Summa theologiae*, as, for further example, in the treatise on man and in the moral parts.

Because of this, interpreters ask if Thomas is then to be thought of as doing philosophy or theology. It is not facetious to reply that he is doing both. His overall purpose in a theological work is of course theological, that is, to achieve such understanding as is possible concerning the objects of faith. But his very conception of how to do this indicates that much philosophy must be brought into play. With respect to philosophical arguments and clarifications in theological works of Aquinas it must be said that insofar as they are philosophical, their worth and acceptance does not depend upon the acceptance of faith. That is why Thomists, in the course of philosophical writing, will often refer to passages which occur in the theological writings of St. Thomas. When they do this, they are not asking their philosophical reader to accept the overriding assumptions of theology, that is, the truths revealed by God. The passages referred to are found in a theological context, but if they are philosophical, acceptance of them demands appeal only to principles knowable by every man on a natural basis. Thus, in presenting a sketch of the philosophy of Thomas, as we are attempting to do here, we can legitimately cite passages from theological works precisely because these theological works are filled with philosophical passages.

A caution must be made nonetheless. Often in a theological work of Aquinas we can read for pages without encountering significant appeals to truths accepted on faith. Nevertheless, any such section, being a section of a theological work, draws its order and plan from the work of which it is a part. The order and procedure of the *Summa theologiae* is not, in its main lines, philosophical but precisely theological. Reasons can be adduced from Thomas to show that the order of the *Summa* is not and could not be the order of philosophical reasoning. Let one reason suffice. The *Summa* takes up at the very outset the existence of God, but this is a question which philosophy can fruitfully ask only in its culminating part. In the case of Thomas, however, we encounter far less trouble than we do in the case of a theologian like Bonaventure in determining what is the *philosophical* whole into which the philosophical passages which occur in theological works fit. Thomas provides us with a highly developed notion of what the term "philosophy" covers and clues as to what part of philosophy a random consideration would belong. Let us turn now to the notion of the nature and parts of philosophy.

### C. *The Division of Philosophy*

Thomas' conception of what philosophy is and of how it is divided is basically Aristotelian, but he strives to incorporate into this conception the other major traditions. Thus, he will on occasion make use of the Stoic division of philosophy, which was used by Augustine, into natural science, ethics, and logic. "Because reason's consideration is perfected by habit, there are diverse sciences following on the diverse orders which reason properly considers. For it pertains to natural philosophy to consider the order of things which human reason considers but does not cause, insofar as metaphysics is included under natural philosophy. The order that reason introduces into its own act of consideration pertains to rational philosophy, which considers the order of the parts of discourse to one another and the order of principles to one another and to conclusions. The order of voluntary actions pertains to the consideration of moral philosophy." (*In I Ethic.*, lect. 1, n. 2) Further, he will incorporate into his conception of philosophy the tradition of the liberal arts. This can be seen if we first consider his notion, developed from hints in Aristotle, of the proper order of learning the philosophical sciences. For the term "philosophy" covers a variety of disciplines.

When he comments on Aristotle's discussion of wisdom at the outset of the *Metaphysics*, he, like Aristotle, is impressed by the etymology of the term "philosophy": the love of or quest for wisdom. Wisdom is the knowledge of all things in their ultimate causes, and philosophy, accordingly, is seen as a drive toward knowledge of the highest and best reality, that is, knowledge of the divine. Any intellectual inquiry is philosophical to the degree that it is necessary for

or useful to acquiring knowledge of God. Hence, the various philosophical disciplines are ranged with respect to the culminating consideration of philosophy, and this is part of what underlies Thomas' notion of the order of learning. "Thus it is that the chief intention of the philosophers was that they might come to knowledge of the first causes by means of everything they considered in reality, and thus they placed the science of first causes last and assigned the consideration of it to the final period of life. Beginning with logic, which treats the mode of sciences, they proceeded to mathematics, something which even the young can grasp; they then went on to natural philosophy, which, because of experience, requires time; fourth came moral philosophy, since youth are not good students of it. Finally they came to divine science, which considers the first causes of beings." (*In librum de causis, proemium*) The tradition of the liberal arts had divided the seven arts into two groups. The arts of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) Thomas reduces in the above list to logic; the arts of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) he reduces to mathematics, and thus he absorbs into his Aristotelian conception the arts preparatory to wisdom. (*De trin.*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3) He actually cites Hugh of St. Victor in this regard, but in doing so he alters the view of Hugh himself, since the wisdom Hugh had in mind as the goal of these arts as ways (*viae*) was not metaphysics in the Aristotelian sense.

In what way are the various disciplines which are ranged in the order of learning distinguished from one another? Thomas accepts from Aristotle a first division of philosophy into speculative and practical. "It must be said that the theoretical or speculative intellect is properly distinguished from the operative or practical in that the speculative has for its end the truth which it considers, the practical orders the truth considered to operation as to its end." (*De trin.*, q. 5, a. 1) Thomas does not mean that we have two intellects; he is drawing attention to the two uses we make of our mind. (*ST*, Ia, q. 79, a. 11) Thomas introduces three criteria which must be taken into account when we speak of knowledge as speculative or practical, one of which, the end of the knowledge, has already been mentioned. The other two are the object and the method of knowing.

In the speculative use of our mind we have in view no end beyond the perfection of the act of knowing itself, and perfection is truth, to be in conformity with the way things are. When our thinking is aimed at the perfection of an activity other than thinking, say the perfection of choice, then it is called practical. We can see that these different uses of our mind can be dictated by the nature of its objects. Thomas will point out that there are some things that we cannot do or make, and thus our only cognitive attitude toward them is speculative. His examples are God and natural objects. Insofar as our purpose in

knowing is the perfection of the act of knowing or some other activity, our method of knowing the object will differ. Thomas' point here can perhaps be captured by saying that the method of practical knowing is expressed in something resembling recipes. That is, if you want to build a house, first do this, then that and that, and, *voilà*, there is your house. Speculative knowledge of an object does not reduce it to the steps whereby we might bring it into existence, but proceeds by a resolution into its defining principles. Much more could be said of all this, of course. We might point out that insofar as there are various criteria of speculative and practical knowledge, knowledge can be to a greater or lesser degree speculative or practical insofar as it saves one, two, or all of the criteria of the one kind of knowledge. This is a point to which we will return when we consider Thomas on moral philosophy.

*Division of Speculative Philosophy.* Thomas calls the objects of practical and speculative philosophy, respectively, the operable and the speculable. It is by considering the notes of the latter that he finds grounds for distinguishing various speculative sciences. There are two proper characteristics of the speculable object, Thomas argues, and these are drawn from the nature of the intellect and the demands of science, which is the quality of intellect as it bears on the speculable. The intellect, Thomas says, and we will look later at his reasons for this assertion, is an immaterial faculty; consequently, if anything is to be an object of intellect, it must be in some way immaterial. Science, knowledge in the strong sense, bears on what is necessary. To know that the sum of the internal angles of a plane triangle is equal to two right angles is to know what cannot be otherwise and is thus necessary. But what cannot be otherwise is immobile or unchangeable. All this is shorthand for matters which are not self-evident and are not taken to be such by Thomas. Nevertheless, on these assumptions he is able to conclude that immateriality and unchangeability are essential characteristics of the speculable, the object of speculative philosophy. "Therefore, it is according to the order of removal from matter and motion that the speculative sciences are distinguished." (*De trin.*, q. 5, a. 1) This removal from matter and motion is first indiscriminately described by Thomas as a separation or abstraction, terms which later acquire meanings owing to which they are opposed.

If separation or abstraction from matter and motion is essential to the objects of speculative thinking, insofar as there are different types or degrees of such abstraction we will have formal differences among speculative sciences, since the difference will be read in terms of what is essential to the speculable as such. We will seek this difference in definitions, for reasons which become clearer when we consider Thomas' doctrine on the paradigm of scientific reasoning. Now,

we do find different modes of defining with respect to removal from matter and motion. "There are some speculables which need matter in order to be, since they cannot exist except in matter, but these are further distinguished, since some depend on matter both to be and to be understood, like those in whose definitions sensible matter is put and which are thus unintelligible without sensible matter; for example, it is necessary to put flesh and bones in the definition of man. Physics, or natural science, is concerned with things of this kind. Others indeed depend on matter in order to be but not to be understood since sensible matter is not put in their definitions, for instance, line and number; mathematics is concerned with these. Further, there are speculables which do not depend on matter in order to be because they can be without matter, either because they never are in matter, like God and angels, or in some cases are in matter and in others not, like substance, quality, being, potency, act, one and many, and the like, with all of which theology is concerned, that is, divine science, the chief object of which is God, a science also called metaphysics, that is, beyond physics, because for us, who must proceed from sensible things to that which is not, it is studied after physics." (*De trin.*, q. 5, a. 1)

This is a very difficult doctrine, but perhaps something can be seen of the precision with which Thomas handles what might seem to be acceptable merely as a de facto division of intellectual labor into natural science, mathematics, and metaphysics. If he is to admit that there are different speculative sciences, he must seek the difference in what is essential to the object of speculative philosophy. By citing the essential characters of the speculable, Thomas is able to give a statement of Aristotle's division of speculative philosophy which is a good deal clearer than that of Aristotle.

*Division of Practical Philosophy.* The principle of the division of moral philosophy is drawn from the fact that practical thinking is concerned with the perfection of an activity other than thinking. Thomas, in commenting on the discussion of prudence in book six of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, makes a distinction, called for by the text, between political and ethical prudence (practical wisdom). (*In VI Ethic.*, lect. 7, n. 1196) These are substantially, that is, generically, the same, he argues, in that both involve right reason with respect to what ought to be done concerning human goods and evils, but they differ specifically. What we are calling ethical prudence is the concern of a man with his own good, whereas political prudence is a concern with the goods and evils of the whole civic community. Besides these two kinds of prudence there is economic prudence, which is concerned with the good of more than one and of less than the whole civic community, that is, the good of the family. These three are intellectual virtues and, as such, presuppose a right disposition of the will,

but the distinction enables Thomas to proceed to distinctions of practical, or moral, philosophy. "It should be noticed that, as has been pointed out, prudence is not of reason alone, but depends on appetite. What we have been speaking of here are species of prudence insofar as they do not consist of knowledge alone, but depend on an appetitive condition. Insofar as they are in reason alone, they are called practical sciences, namely, ethics, economics, and politics." (*Ibid.*, n. 1200)

To make this less obscure, let us recall what was said earlier about the various criteria of speculative and practical thinking. The first and minimal criterion of practical thinking is that the mind be concerned with something we can do or make. Moral philosophy for Thomas is concerned with man's rational choices. The task of moral philosophy, he writes, "is to consider human operations insofar as they are related to one another and to the end." (*In I Ethic.*, lect. 1, n. 2) But a human action may be considered in various ways; it may be approached in much the same way as we think of objects whose existence is not dependent on any choice of ours. Thomas' distinction of types of prudence or practical wisdom is an example; he is dividing a genus into species. A more practical *method* would be to know how to perform, what must be done, in order to achieve a given practical goal. That is why "normative discourse" rather than distinctions, definitions, and so forth, would be thought of as particularly ethical. Thomas would say that to know an operable thing as to *how* it can be done is a knowledge more practical than that whereby we know an operable in the same way we know speculable objects. What happens to knowledge when the third criterion of practical knowing is saved, namely, intention? Completely practical knowing, for Thomas, is exemplified in acting, and since actions are singular, we must say that completely practical knowledge is singular. Therefore, what Thomas in commenting on the *Ethics* gave as the distinction between types of prudence and types of practical philosophy, namely, presence or absence of a certain appetitive condition, can now be clarified by saying that practical science is at a level of generality in a way in which prudence is not. Practical sciences (the division of moral philosophy) are general judgments of man's good and of the way it can be attained, and insofar as the good is the good of the individual, of the family, or of the whole civic community, the judgments differ accordingly and so too do the sciences.

Like Aristotle, who is his mentor here, Thomas grants philosophy a charter so broad that it includes every natural intellectual pursuit insofar as it is necessary for or conducive to the attainment of knowledge of God. The point of moral philosophy is not cognitive perfection as such, but virtuous action. But moral virtue is conceived by Thomas as dispositional with respect to our seeking the perfection of

our mind as such. That is why moral philosophy is philosophical.

Let us go on to give brief sketches of basic areas of Thomas' philosophical doctrine.

#### D. Logic

What did Thomas conceive logic to be, and with what is it concerned? In the preceding section we quoted a passage in which Thomas made use of the division of philosophy into natural science, logic, and ethics. That same passage contains a very brief statement of the object of logic, namely, the order introduced into reason's very act of considering objects. We must now try to understand that remark, and we begin by citing another. "As Aristotle says at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, the human race lives by art and reason, a remark in which the Philosopher seems to hit on something proper to man whereby he differs from the other animals. For the other animals seem to be led by instinct in their actions, whereas man is directed in his by the judgment of reason. Thus it is that the various arts serve to perfect human acts so that they take place easily and in an orderly fashion, for art seems to be nothing else than a determinate ordination of reason whereby human acts arrive at their appropriate ends by determined means. But reason can not only direct the acts of inferior parts; it is even directive of its own act. It is proper to the intellective part that it reflects on itself, for intellect understands itself, and similarly reason can reason about its own activity. Now, if, as a result of reasoning about manual activity, the building art is discovered, an art which enables man to perform acts of a certain kind easily and in an orderly fashion, by the same token an art seems necessary which is directive of the act of reason itself, through which art man might proceed in reasoning in an orderly fashion, easily and without error. This art is logic, or rational science." (*In I Post. Analytic., proemium, n. 1*)

The assumptions of this passage are several. First, reasoning is taken to have a goal, namely, truth; and, second, it is not so determined to that goal that the possibility of error is excluded. Reflection on the reasoning process will permit us to devise an art which will direct reasoning more surely to its goal. Well, we might say, if an art, then artifacts. What are the products of this art? Notice that there is a necessary duality implied by the notion of reason reflecting on its own act, reasoning on reasoning—for in the first, or basic, type of reasoning we are presumably concerned with known objects other than reasoning itself. The things we first understand, what reasoning first intends, leads to talk of *prima intellecta* or *primae intentiones*. On the assumption that unless we are thinking of or reasoning about something there would be no activity to reflect on, what is involved

in reflection comes to be called *secunda intellecta* or *secundae intentiones*.

In the passage from the *Commentary on the Ethics* Thomas spoke of this reflective reasoning as constituting an order. What is the logical order? Thus far we have a few clues. Logic is not reasoning about just anything, but reflective reason, reasoning about reasoning. This makes logic sound like an introspective psychology, and logic is not psychology for Thomas. For one thing, Thomas will make use of a distinction between real being (*ens reale*) and rational being (*ens rationis*), and psychological activities are instances of real being.

Perhaps the best way to achieve clarity here is to compare a list of sentences: (1) man is rational, (2) man is a species, (3) man is white. The subject of each sentence is the same, so clearly it is the predicates that interest us. Consider first the difference between the predicate of (1) and the predicate of (3). In a word, the predicate of (3) is said to be accidental, because it is not predicated of everything of which man is predicated, and even when it can be truly predicated of a man, it does not tell us *what* he is, or something of what he is, as does rational. Let us call rational an essential predicate—it expresses the very nature of that of which it is predicated. To get at the difference between (1) and (2), consider the following discourse. Man is rational, and Socrates is a man. We feel no hesitation in formulating a further sentence: Socrates is rational. But if we should say, “Man is a species and Socrates is a man,” we would hesitate to go on to say, “Socrates is a species.” “Man is a species,” we would want to say, is a lot more like “Man is a noun” than it is like “Man is rational.” Take “Man is a noun.” This tells us something about “man,” not in terms of what it might stand for in the world, but in terms of grammatical relations. What are we saying of man when we say, “Man is a noun” or “Man is a species”? Well, again, we are not attributing something to human nature, mentioning it in terms of an intrinsic component, as when we say that man is rational. Are we then predicating something accidental of it? Surely it is accidental to human nature that the linguistic expression for it is in grammar a noun. But if it is accidental to what “man” signifies that “man” should be a noun, just as it is accidental to human nature that the English word “man” is a three-letter word and its Latin equivalent a four-letter word, such accidental predicates are not like the predicate of (3) above. “Man is white” involves an accidental predicate, but the sentence is true because it happens that in the real, extramental world some things that are men are white. That “man” is a noun depends on the intrusion of man into the world and results from a characteristic activity of his, the formation of grammars. With this as background, let us approach (2) above. If “noun” is a grammatical term, “species” is a logical term. Other examples of logical terms are “predi-

cate," "syllogism," "proposition," "middle term," and so forth. But let us stay with "species." What does "man is a species" tell us; what does "species" mean? For Thomas "species," like other logical words, signifies a relation a nature takes on as known by us. Something is a species if it is predicable of many numerically distinct things, as "man" is predicable of Socrates and Plato and so forth. We are back at the problem of universals, since species is a type of universal, one of Porphyry's predicables. To be predicable pertains to a nature like human nature accidentally; it is not an accident of a nature because of its presence in individuals as is the case with whiteness and man.

The logical order, as Thomas sees it, can now be defined as the relations which obtain among things as they are known and named by us. Furthermore, the logical order is intimately tied to our abstractive way of knowing. Like Aristotle before him, Thomas is struck by the fragmentation reality undergoes in our knowing process, a fragmentation which calls for the kind of ordering and binding together provided by logical relations. For example, we might first know of something simply that it is something-there, a being, then that it is a substance, then that it is living, then that it has senses, and finally that it is rational. If we stop there and collapse these steps, we would have the meaning of the term "man." But we can also label the preceding steps: "substance," "living substance," "animal"; and we might call them genera, as in the sentences "substance is a genus" or "animal is a genus." Now, what is expressed by "substance," what it means, is such that it can be predicated of objects in the world (the same would be true of "animal"), but to be a genus, in the sense of being predicable of many specifically different things, is true of the nature only as it exists in the mind. Furthermore, it is only in the mind that substance exists apart from further determinations like "living" and "nonliving." Thus, in this case certainly it is our abstractive mode of knowing, the fact that we move through progressively less vague "fixes" on things to determinate knowledge, that is productive of the "things" related by logical relations. This is something we must keep in mind when we consider the question of whether the categories (literally, predicates) of being are logical or real, but that is another consideration.

The objects of logic are the relations which accrue to things as they are known by us, relations which are accidental to the nature known. The divisions of logic, for Thomas, are precisely what he takes to be Aristotle's divisions. The bases for the division are the various acts of reason, since these acts are what logic is said to order and direct. Thomas speaks first of an understanding of incomplex things which expresses itself in definitions. Obviously, if something can be defined, it cannot be wholly incomplex or simple. Let us then start with rational discourse, with the syllogism. If C is predicated of every-

thing of which B is predicated and B is predicated of everything of which A is predicated, then C is predicated of everything of which A is predicated. Such discourse can be seen as composed of such symbolically expressed propositions as "Every B is C" and "Every A is C." Apart from and prior to considering the relations among propositions in such discourse, we can consider the relations involved in affirming or denying one thing of another just as such. But the things which enter into affirmations and denials must first be known as to what they are, that is, must be defined. Thus, the parts of logic are, in a sense, the parts of rational discourse. "There are three acts of reason of which the first two belong to reason insofar as it is intellect [*intellectus*]. For one act of intellect is the understanding of indivisible or incomplex things, insofar as it conceives what a thing is. . . . To this operation of reason is ordered the doctrine Aristotle treats in the *Categories*. The second operation of intellect is composition or division, where the true or false first obtains. The doctrine Aristotle treats in *On Interpretation* serves this act of reason. The third act of reason is one proper to reason as such, namely, discourse from one thing to another so that from what is known knowledge is gained of what was unknown. The rest of the books of logic serve this act." (*In I Post. Analytic.*, proemium, n. 4)

The act of reasoning is sometimes necessary, sometimes probable, and sometimes fallacious. The first, necessary reasoning, is scientific and is called by Thomas judicative logic "because judgment is had with the certitude of science." Judgment is said to have its certitude owing to a resolution or analysis into principles, so this part of logic is also called analysis or analytics. "The certitude of judgment, however, which comes from resolution is either from the form of the syllogism alone, and the *Prior Analytics* is ordered to this, or is also from the matter, because it involves propositions which are self-evident and necessary, and with this the *Posterior Analytics* is concerned, which deals with the demonstrative syllogism." (*Ibid.*) The second part of the logic of reasoning is called inventive logic or the logic of discovery. Now what is discovered must be judged, and the term may be science if the judgment is with certitude; if not, if the resultant knowledge is only probable, then it is the concern of what Aristotle calls dialectics and is dealt with in the *Topics*. One can see Thomas the commentator at work here, incidentally; he is surely trying to say something accurate about the contents of and relations between the works of Aristotle's *Organon*, but what comes first, and in his own name, are the statements about the subject matter. He goes on to link the *Rhetoric* and *Sophistical Refutations*, and even the *Poetics*, with the logic of discourse. One is tempted to associate this treatment of the *Poetics* with Thomas' reduction of the arts of the trivium to logic.

The only completed commentary on a logical work of Aristotle is that on the *Posterior Analytics*, but Thomas began one on *On Interpretation* and carried it forward a good distance. Among his collected writings are a number of opuscula whose authenticity has been questioned, one on modal propositions, another on demonstration, one on the square of opposition, and another on fallacies. In the commentaries on Aristotle's logical works Thomas exhibits his usual acuity, and it is easy to wish he had commented on the whole *Organon*. But with logic, as with many subjects, we find illuminating remarks scattered throughout Thomas' works. A notable example is his teaching, which must be pieced together from many sources, on systematic ambiguity, or analogy.

Logic has, of course, come a long way since Thomas, come so far indeed that it is questionable whether the term *logic* must not be taken to be ambiguous as applied to what Thomas meant by it and to what logicians do today. Historians of logic, writing from the standpoint of twentieth-century logic, are seldom detained by Thomas' contributions to the subject, but quite often such historians are indifferent to what *logic* may have meant in earlier times and seek only foreshadows of what logic has come to mean today. This procedure, while it achieves results of value, is finally perhaps as historically suspect as a "Thomistic" critique of the *Principia Mathematica* would be. To see how contemporary thought has "gone wrong" from a thirteenth-century vantage point is as dull as seeing how medieval logic "fell short" from a twentieth-century vantage point. We have yet to see a comparison of "logics" which does justice to historical periods taken on their own terms. When such a history of logic is written, Thomas may well occupy a prominent place in it, not as an innovator, but as a lucid exponent of the view that logic is not concerned with the most abstract language, with symbols or variables whose values are the things of this world (or nothing), but with rational relations accruing to things as the result of our knowing them. That is, that logic is incorrigibly human, all too human, and that its purpose is the quite human one of assuring the correctness of discursive reasoning about objects other than logical entities.

### E. *Natural Philosophy*

One of the most shocking things about the Thomist in the eyes of his colleagues must surely be the attention he pays to what Thomas had to say about our knowledge of the natural world. The source of the shock is not simply that Thomas lived in the thirteenth century, which is prehistoric enough as far as natural science goes, but more basically still that in natural philosophy Thomas is spiritually in the same place as Aristotle in the fourth century B.C. It would be quite easy to list tenets of Thomas in natural science which could seem

quaint at best and weird at worst; even if we should think that such is the stuff of which history is made, at least the history of science, we might question the advisability of devoting time to it in a volume as restricted in length as this one. Much better, it might be thought, to pass over in generous silence this part of the philosophy of Thomas and push on into his metaphysics. But that is precisely the problem. For Thomas there is little point in pushing on into metaphysics unless we have gained some purchase on the physical; in a word, if his physics is totally undermined, his metaphysics is a fortiori undermined. This is why Thomists pay so much attention to such writings of Thomas as his commentaries on Aristotle's natural works and his own *On the Principles of Nature*. It is true that these writings are so different from what we nowadays call natural science that the tendency often is to call the doctrines contained in them metaphysical. Nevertheless, for Thomas they amount to natural science, and that is how we shall consider them. To put what we shall try to say in a proper perspective, consider the following question. Is knowledge of the natural world possible, knowledge which in a significant sense is scientific, which does not employ the methodology of current natural science? If such knowledge is possible, there is no reason why it could not have been had prior to the development of scientific methodology in more recent senses of the phrase; it could have been had in the thirteenth century, even in the fourth century B.C., and need not be thought of as a competitor with or substitute for what we now call natural science.

In this section we shall consider three topics, the first of which is Thomas' statement of the hylomorphic composition of natural, or physical, things. The next two topics bear on what Thomas takes to be the presuppositions of metaphysics, the proof of the separability or immortality of the human soul, and the proof for the existence of an unmoved mover. These proofs are the reasoned ground for the conviction that "physical being" and "real being" are not synonymous and that, consequently, the science of being as being is distinct from natural science.

*Hylomorphism.* In *On the Principles of Nature* Thomas sets down this doctrine in a swift, staccato way. Some things can be, some things already are; the first are said to be in potency, the second in act. There are two kinds of actual being, however, substantial and accidental; it is one thing to be a man and another thing for a man to be white, and something can be in potency to either kind of being; what is in potency can in either case be called matter, though that which is in potency to substantial being might be called the matter out of which (*ex qua*) something comes actually to be, whereas that which is in potency to accidental being might be called the matter in which (*in qua*) something comes to be. "Again, properly speaking, that

which is in potency to substantial being is called prime matter, but that which is in potency to accidental being is called the subject, for the subject gives being or existence to the accident, since the accident has no being save in its subject; hence, it is said that accidents are in a subject, but substantial form is not said to be in a subject. Matter differs from the subject in this: that the subject is not something which exists because something advenes to it; rather it is autonomously (*per se*) and has complete being; for example, a man does not come to be (a man) thanks to whiteness. Matter, on the other hand, has being from that which advencs to it, since of itself it is incomplete, indeed has no being. . . . Hence, absolutely speaking, form gives being to matter, but the accident does not give being to the subject, but the subject to the accident. . . ." (*De princ. nat.*, chap. 1) Having introduced two kinds of composition, that of prime matter and substantial form and that of subject and accident, Thomas goes on to speak of the coming into being of these two kinds of composites as, respectively, substantial and accidental becoming.

Accidental becoming is exemplified by a man's becoming pale. The acquisition of this quality does not make a man be a man, but a pale man. Man is the subject of the change, and prior to the acquisition must have been capable of possessing the quality, in potency to it, though at the time not in possession of it and thus deprived of it. A man moves from not being pale to being pale. Despite the restrictiveness of his earlier definitions, Thomas allows that the subject can be called matter. "Therefore, there are three principles of nature, namely, matter, form, and privation, of which one, form, is that for the sake of which the generation takes place. The other two are that from which the generation takes place. Hence, matter and privation are the same in subject but are different in conception (*ratione*), for bronze and unshaped are the same thing before the advent of form, but from one point of view the thing is called bronze and from another unshaped. Hence privation is said to be a principle not *per se* but *per accidens*, because it resides in the matter. . . ." (*Ibid.*, chap. 2)

Substantial becoming, the coming to be, not of pale man, but of man, is similarly analyzed. If "man" names something one and autonomous, something substantial, the form that makes a man to be is not like the quality which presupposes a substantial subject. Humanity is not something that advencs to an already existing thing to make an accidental compound like white man. The subject of a substantial change is called prime matter precisely to distinguish it from the subject of an accidental change; prime matter is not a substance as is the subject of an accidental change. For much the same reason the form involved in the substantial change is called substantial form: the being it constitutes by advencing to prime matter is a substance.

Whatever comes to be as the result of a change is a compound of

matter and form. This is what the term “hylomorphism” conveys, of course, fashioned as it is from the Greek terms for matter and form. Matter and form are thus two ways of accounting for a physical thing, two causes, or principles, of its being. Besides these intrinsic causes there must be an efficient, or moving, cause which effects the composition of matter and form. Like Aristotle, Thomas also speaks of a final cause, that for the sake of which the change takes place and which in that sense terminates it. The form or the product of the change is the final cause of the change, but the final cause of the change is not of course the final cause or goal, that for the sake of which the product of the change exists. That is, a man may be the final cause of a substantial generation, but man’s goal or final cause is not simply substantial existence.

*The Unmoved Mover.* We will present this proof in the statement Thomas gives it in his *Summa contra gentiles*, book one, chapter thirteen, a statement which is fuller than that found in the *Summa theologiae* and closer to the proof as it is developed by Aristotle in his *Physics*.

“Everything that is moved is moved by another.” The fact of motion is evident to the senses, and the nature of motion demands that what is in motion is moved by another. But the mover is either itself moved or it is not. If the latter, then we have an unmoved mover (which can be taken to be a description of God); if the former, either what moves the mover is moved by another or it is not. Now either we must posit an infinite series of moved movers or we arrive at an unmoved mover. But an infinite series of moved movers is impossible, so there must be an unmoved mover.

As Thomas points out, there are two assumptions here that must be proved, and they are precisely the premises of the proof: “Every moved thing is moved by another” and “An infinite series of movers and things moved is impossible.” He selects from Aristotle several proofs of the first premise.

First, if something moves itself, it must have within itself the principle of its motion, for otherwise it would manifestly be moved by another. Further, *it* must be what is first moved, not some part of it, as an animal being moved by its feet, for then it is moved not by itself but by its part, and, indeed, one part by another. And it is necessary that it be divisible and have parts, since whatever is moved is divisible, as is proved in the *Physics*, book six, chapter four. Given all this, the following argument can be devised. “That which is posited as moved by itself is itself first moved [*primo motum*], and thus the repose of one of its parts entails the repose of the whole. For if when one part comes to rest, another part should remain in motion, then the whole itself is not what is principally moved [*primo motum*], but its part which is moved while other parts are at rest. Nothing which

comes to rest when another thing comes to rest is moved by itself, for whose repose follows on the repose of another must be such that its motion is a consequence of another's motion, and thus it is not moved by itself. Therefore, that which was posited as being moved by itself is not moved by itself. Therefore, it is necessary that whatever is moved is moved by another." The nub of the argument, according to Thomas, is this: "If something moves itself first and as such and not by reason of parts, it is necessary that its being moved is independent of anything else; however, for a divisible thing to be moved, as for it to exist, depends upon its parts and that is why it cannot move itself first and as such [*primo et per se*]."

Another proof of the first premise is this. "Nothing is simultaneously in act and in potency in the same respect. But whatever is in motion is, just as such, in potency, since motion is 'the act of that which is in potency, just as such.' But whatever moves is as such in act, since nothing acts except insofar as it is in act. Therefore, nothing can be, with respect to the same motion, mover and moved. Thus, nothing moves itself."

Thomas offers several proofs in support of the second premise of the argument which concludes to the existence of a mover which is itself unmoved by another. That there cannot be an infinite series of subordinated moved movers is a good deal more difficult to prove, and the arguments are too technical and demand too much subsidiary commentary to go into here. In examining these arguments, as in examining those brought forward in support of the first premise, one is struck by the dependence on the *Physics* of Aristotle, and when one reflects that the proof of the unmoved mover comes at the end of the eight books of that work and depends on nearly everything that has come before, it is not surprising that Thomas, in giving a résumé of the argument, must presume so much. That presupposed doctrine is the source as well as the corollaries of the proof. If whatever is moved is moved by another and if this series cannot proceed to infinity, so that there must be a mover not itself moved, the nature of this unmoved mover can be approached by denying of it characteristics of things which are moved. Suffice it to say for now that matter is a component of what is moved and that thus the unmoved mover must be immaterial. The point is that in the course of doing natural science Aristotle and Thomas following him feel they must admit the existence of something immaterial. Thus, "being" is no longer synonymous with "material being," and the need for a science beyond the natural sciences is seen.

*The Immortality of the Human Soul.* There is another instance within natural science where one comes to see the existence of something immaterial, this time in biology. It should be said that considering natural science generically, we can say that its subject is mobile

being. The predicable scope of such a phrase is, of course, great, and Thomas accepted Aristotle's view that on this level of generality it is possible to formulate proofs which would conclude to properties commensurately universal with the subject. That is, as a first step in natural science we can arrive at some scientific knowledge of what must pertain to any mobile thing whatever differences among kinds of mobile being must later be taken into account. The *Physics* of Aristotle is precisely an attempt at a general science of nature, and its doctrine is thought to transcend the differences between living and nonliving natural things. One would not be content with such general knowledge of the natural world, of course, and in *On the Soul* Aristotle commences the study of living being. What distinguishes the living from the nonliving is precisely the former's possession of soul. What is meant by "soul"? The soul is that owing to which we live, move, sense, and understand. This definition, which Thomas takes from Aristotle, indicates that the soul is denominated from a variety of vital operations of which we have a privileged experience in ourselves. To wish, to fear, to love, to think, to see, and so forth are activities of our own whose existence we are not likely to doubt. If we perform these activities, we must of course be capable of performing them, and the actual performance is not equatable with the capacity since sometimes we perform them and sometimes not. This is the origin of talk about potencies or faculties of the soul: we have various capacities for vital activities like seeing, hearing, wishing, knowing, and so forth. What is the relation of these capacities to the soul? Is the soul identical with them, a class term signifying them all, or distinct from them? Thomas regards the soul as distinct from these capacities or faculties and as related to them as substance to accidents. One reason he gives for this is that if the soul were identical with a capacity to perform a vital act and if there are several such capacities (and there obviously are in man), then since two things identical with a third are identical to one another, the several capacities would actually be one. But surely it would be odd to identify our capacity to see with our capacity to will or to hear or to think. One can see that the soul is something of an inferred entity and that the procedure is from activities to faculties and from faculties to their subject, the soul.

Since this analysis is considered to be part of natural science and the hylomorphic analysis of natural things occurs at the very outset of natural science at its most general level, we are not surprised to find soul spoken of as a form. It is a kind of substantial form, in other words, and the living thing is thought of as a compound of soul and body. Hence, a further definition of soul as the first actuality of an organic body having life in potency. Now, as was clear above, substantial form and prime matter are not so much substances as they

are principles or components of substance. Neither matter nor form is thought of as capable of existence apart from a compound. For Aristotle and for Thomas too the question as to the continuance in existence of the human soul after death comes down to asking if the substantial form which is the human soul survives the dissolution of the human being, this compound of body and soul.

How could this question be answered in the affirmative? First, let us point out that Thomas speaks of kinds of soul insofar as souls are denominated from the characteristic or highest activity of the living thing of which the soul is the principle in the sense of substantial form. So we find Thomas speaking of the vegetative soul, of the animal, or sensitive, soul, and of the rational soul. Man is thought to have the capacities for the vital operations found also in lower things like plants and beasts, but beyond those to have the power of reason, and his soul is denominated from his distinguishing and defining activity. The various vital operations seem to involve the body essentially, since seeing, hearing, smelling, fearing, hoping, imagining, and so forth intrinsically involve corporeal aspects. But is the same true of thinking? Here is the crux of the matter for the question of the immortality of the soul as it is discussed by Aquinas. If a living man performs an activity which does not intrinsically and essentially involve his body, we would seem to have some basis for saying that the soul which is the subject of that activity is not dependent for its continued existence on the body.

On many occasions Thomas attempts to show that the human soul is incorruptible because it is capable of a kind of knowing which reveals that it is wholly immaterial. Question 75 of the first part of the *Summa theologiae* and the *Disputed Question on the Soul* might be particularly cited. An indication of his procedure can be had from the following sketch. Thomas will use the hylomorphic model to speak of cognition. (*De ver.*, q. 2, a. 2) Just as in things it is their forms which make them actual and what they are, so to know things can be described as coming into possession of the forms of things, of what they are. Thus, Thomas will define knowing as having the form of another as other. Now to have the form of a physical thing in knowledge is a different kind of possession of that form than is exemplified in a concrete physical thing. When the form or nature of rose is united with matter in the genesis of a rose, the result is a singular rose, this one and not that one. In short, the form is individuated as received in matter. However, when we know what a rose is, when, in Thomas' terminology, the form of rose is received in the mind, the result is not another rose but an intentional form which enables us to know the material rose. Thus, the mode of existence of the form in the mind is an immaterial one. This is the source of the claim that the human soul is in a sense all things (*anima est quodammodo*

*omnia*) since it can know all things. A physical thing can possess but one substantial form, but the mind can know many forms. "It should be said that the principle of intellectual operation which we call man's soul is an incorporeal and subsistent principle. For it is manifest that man owing to intellect can know the natures of all bodies. That which can know other things cannot be those things in its own nature [*oportet ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura*] because that which is in it naturally would impede knowledge of other things as we see that the tongue of someone ill which is infected by a choleric and bitter humor cannot perceive what is sweet but everything seems bitter to it. If therefore the intellectual principle had in itself the nature of some body, it could not know all bodies, for every body has some determinate nature. Therefore, it is impossible that the intellectual principle be a body." (*ST*, Ia, q. 75, a. 2)

Once more, we face a most difficult matter and a doctrine which can be assessed only when all its presuppositions are examined, but this outline may convey something of the flavor of Thomas' procedure. As we have said several times before, the upshot of these two proofs within natural science is that one sees that "being" must be predicated of things which are not material, that the science of being as being is different from the science of natural, or material, being.

#### F. *Metaphysics*

Let us begin this section by taking a fairly close look at the preface Thomas wrote to his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* of Aristotle. This preface sketches the terrain of metaphysics and suggests a number of points we can develop in order to convey the nature of Thomas' metaphysical doctrine.

Thomas begins the preface by remarking that whenever many things are organized into one whole there must be something which directs and orders the many. He illustrates the principle by noting that man is one thing composed of several "parts," namely, body and soul, and that while it is the role of soul to command, it is that of body to obey. All arts and sciences, he goes on to say, are ordered to one thing, namely, to the perfection and happiness of man, but it is necessary that one of them be directive of all the others and, that science will be called wisdom because it is the role of the wise to order: *sapientis est ordinare*.

We can get some inkling of what this directive science would be and what its subject matter is by pursuing the analogy and asking what makes a man fit to rule others. Well, Thomas says, choosing between brain and brawn, would not we say that men of vigorous intellect are more fit to rule others than are men of great bodily strength but weak minds? Could not we say, then, that the science which is most intellectual is naturally fit to be regulative of others?

But what would we mean by the “most intellectual science?” Thomas suggests that it would be the science concerned with the most intelligible objects and adds that “the most intelligible” can be understood in three ways.

First, that which grounds certitude of understanding is what is meant by intelligible. Since to have certitude is to know the cause of what is known, a science which is concerned with first causes can meaningfully be said to deal with the most intelligible things and to be directive of all other sciences which deal with lesser and thus less intelligible causes.

Second, the “most intelligible” can also be explicated by comparing intellection and sense perception. “For, since perception is cognition of particulars, by that very fact it seems to differ from understanding which grasps universals. Hence, that science is most intellectual which concerns itself with the most universal principles—these are being and what follows on being like one and many, potency and act, which ought not be left wholly uninvestigated since without knowledge of these knowledge of what is proper to a given genus or species cannot be had.” Very abstract notions like being, one, act and potency, do not fall to the consideration of any particular science; indeed, since knowledge of them is needed to undertake the study of any determinate type of being, one would have to say that if the study of them falls to one particular science, it falls to every particular science. Better that in all their scope and generality they be treated in one common science which is thereby most intellectual and directive of the others.

Finally, if we consider the nature of intellectual knowledge, which involves abstraction from matter, we can say that the most intelligible things are those most free of matter. What is most free of or separate from matter will not be what is free of individuating characteristics alone, as man is free from the peculiarities found in Socrates, Plato, and so on, nor what is free from all sensible matter in conception alone, like mathematical objects, but rather most free are existent immaterial things, like God and the angels. The science concerned with immaterial things seems most intellectual and, accordingly, directive of the others.

We recall that Thomas started by saying that he was looking for the one science that would be directive of all the others and that this would be the science concerned with the most intelligible objects. Since he has introduced three criteria for understanding “most intelligible,” he must go on to show that it is one and the same science that is referred to no matter which criterion of “most intelligible” is used. We are talking, he says, of one science, not three. “For the aforementioned separate substances are the universal and first causes of being [*essendi*]. It belongs to the same science to consider the

proper causes of a genus and the genus itself, as the natural scientist considers the principles of natural body; so it belongs to the same science to consider separate substances, universal being [*ens commune*], which is the genus of which the foregoing substances are the common and universal causes." If the science considers the three things mentioned, it does not consider all of them as its subject; the subject of the science is being (*ens commune*). In a science we seek to know the causes and properties of the subject, but the causes of the subject of a science are not the subject of the science. However, though the subject of this science is being in general, it is said to bear on what is separate from matter both in conception and in existence, since this is taken to mean not only what never exists in matter, like God, but also what is sometimes material, sometimes immaterial, like being.

Three names for the science follow from these considerations. It is called "theology" insofar as it is concerned with immaterial existents, the chief of whom is God; it is called "metaphysics" because it comes after physics, which studies a type of being, while metaphysics is concerned with being as being. Finally, it is sometimes called "First Philosophy" because it is concerned with primary realities, first causes.

Thomas has gotten a tremendous amount into this short preface, has in fact taken stands on a number of controverted and difficult questions about the nature of metaphysics and its relation to other sciences. In the sequel we want to unpack this preface a bit and speak of the relation of metaphysics to the other sciences, and of the way in which it is both a general science and a theology. This will lead to a discussion of analogy as an explanation of talk about God.

*Abstraction and Separation.* When we discussed the division of speculative philosophy earlier, we made use of a text to which we must now return, a text from Thomas' exposition of Boethius' work on the Trinity. In distinguishing types of speculative science Thomas appealed to the nature of the speculable, which he characterized as immaterial, and argued that insofar as speculable objects are more or less separated from matter, the sciences which deal with them will differ formally. The various degrees of immateriality are revealed in definitions. This is important since the model of scientific knowledge is a demonstrative syllogism whose middle term is the definition of the subject of the conclusion that links it with its predicate, a property. The order of removal (*ordo remotionis*) from matter is called by Thomas, in article one of Question Five of the *Expositio*, a separation (*separatio*), and here the term covers indiscriminately the kind of freedom from matter exhibited in the objects of natural science, mathematics, and metaphysics. In article three the term "*separatio*" acquires a narrower meaning which restricts its application to meta-

physical abstraction, a fact which has occasioned much discussion.

There are four articles in question five of the *Expositio*. After the distinction of the different kinds of speculative science in article one the remaining articles take up, in order, natural science, mathematics, and metaphysics. Article three, therefore, is concerned with mathematics, but recent discussion has turned on the remarks on the nature of metaphysics to be found there. The guiding question of the article is, Does mathematics consider without matter and motion things which exist in matter? Let us turn immediately to the body of the article. Aquinas begins by saying that there are two kinds of abstraction which follow on two kinds of intellectual activity: simple apprehension, and composition and division. The first is that whereby we grasp what things are and is expressed in definitions. Notice that he says these are two kinds of abstraction.

The first kind of mental activity, he continues, looks to the very nature of a thing according to which the thing understood has what rank in reality it has (*aliquem gradum in entibus obtinet*), whether it is something complete like a whole or incomplete like a part or accident. The second kind of mental activity mentioned looks to the very being of the thing (*respicit ipsum esse rei*) which in compound things results from the conjunction of its components or principles and in simple things is a concomitant of nature.

Truth consists in the mind's conformity with reality; consequently, we cannot truly abstract one thing from another by means of the second type of intellectual activity when they are united in reality. The reason for this is that abstraction would here be expressed in a negative judgment: A is not B. "By this type of activity the mind can truly abstract only those things which are separate in reality, as when we say, 'Man is not an ass.'" Throughout this discussion of composition and division Thomas uses "*abstrahere*" to signify the mental act of negative judgment and "*separatio*" to signify otherness in reality.

The first type of mental activity, the apprehension of the nature of a thing, is relatively freer from reality, so to speak, insofar as something can be understood and defined without reference to things with which it exists. This is not total freedom, of course. The part as part cannot be understood without reference to its whole or the accident without reference to its subject or the parent without reference to children. But of two things which exist together, "if the one does not depend on the other with respect to what constitutes its nature, it can be abstracted by the mind from the other and understood without it." Some parts can thus be understood without their wholes, as letters can be considered apart from syllables, though not vice versa, and accident apart from a determinate subject, like whiteness.

Up to this point, again, Thomas uses "*abstrahere*," "to abstract,"

both for negative judgments, the denial that one thing is another or with another, and for conceiving or considering which would be expressed in a definition. He now introduces a new term, "distinguishing" (*"distinguere"*), and speaks of distinguishing one thing from another in such a way that the phrase comprehends the two kinds of abstraction mentioned. This permits him to give abstracting and separating narrower meanings according to which they are opposed to one another as types of distinguishing. "*Sic ergo intellectus distinguit unum ab altero aliter et aliter secundum diversas operationes.*" The narrow meaning of "separation" confines it to the distinguishing proper to the second type of mental activity, that expressed in a negative judgment. Here one thing is distinguished from another when it is understood not to be with the other (*quia secundum operationem qua componit et dividit, distinguit unum ab alio per hoc, quod intelligit unum alii non inesse*). Conceptualization, the understanding expressed in a definition, may be called abstracting in a narrower sense, namely, when one thing is understood, without another, though the two are together in reality (*sed tunc tantum quando ea quorum unum sine altero intelligitur sunt simul secundum rem*). In this narrow sense an animal is not considered abstractly when it is considered apart from stone, since they are not one in reality; examples of abstraction in the narrow sense would be considering a form apart from matter and considering a whole without its parts.

The thing that has interested scholars here is the fact that Thomas goes on to speak of natural science and mathematics in terms of these two kinds of abstraction in the narrow sense, applying the consideration of form without matter to mathematics and of a whole without its parts to natural science. This would seem to leave separation in the proper, or narrow, sense to metaphysics, and the conclusion to be drawn is that metaphysical thinking involves a negative judgment, an assertion that in reality something is separate from something, is independent in existence from something else. We know from the foregoing what central negative judgment provides the charter for metaphysics. It is precisely insofar as we can judge that some being is separate or independent from matter in existence that we can say that a science of being as being is possible, a science which will be distinct from natural science, which is concerned with a particular kind of being, mobile or physical being. (And of course we know natural science is a particular science, that is, a science concerned with a particular kind of being, just insofar as we know there is another kind of being.) This science will differ from mathematics, which, though it defines its object without sensible matter, does not assert that it so exists out-there.

*Being as Being.* The subject of metaphysics is being as being; metaphysics inquires into what pertains to being, not insofar as it is

mobile and material, but precisely insofar as it is being. It is concerned with separate being, with whatever can be considered apart from all matter and asserted to enjoy existence in separation from all matter. Now, all this sounds extremely enigmatic, particularly when we try to put together various statements of Aquinas. When he says that there is a science of being as being he is talking of wisdom, the culminating philosophical consideration, that which is appropriately placed last in the order of learning the sciences since it would be folly to expect wisdom until one had studied for a long time. Yet Thomas will also say that being is the first thing we know (*ens est quod primum cadit in intellectu*), an observation that suggests what anyone would expect, namely, that to know of something that it is, that it is a being, is to know as little of it as is possible. But does not the description of metaphysics as wisdom suggest that to know being as being is the most profound and desirable knowledge possible?

The difficulty we are trying to elaborate can be put in another way. Is metaphysics a general science of being, an ontology, or is it rather a science of a particular kind of being, immaterial being, and thus a particular science, a theology? Remember that in the preface to his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* Thomas had said that metaphysics is concerned both with things which never exist in matter (like God and the angels) as well as with things which sometimes exist in matter and sometimes do not (like being, substance, act and potency). Does this solve our problem? It would seem not, since if substance is defined without any matter, the definition would be appropriate only to separate substances, and once more metaphysics would seem to be a special science, not a general science of all being.

As it happens, Aristotle raised just this question in book six of his *Metaphysics*. Let us consider Thomas' formulation of the problem and its solution. "Someone might wonder if First Philosophy is universal, concerned with being generally, or if it considers some determinate genus, some one nature (which does not seem to be the case)." Unlike mathematical science, which deals with a determinate kind of things, "First Philosophy is universally common to all things." (*In VI Metaph.*, lect. 1, n. 1169) Metaphysics then would seem to be about everything insofar as everything has something in common with everything else, namely, being. But would not such scope entail meager and impoverished knowledge? Here is Thomas' formulation of the solution. "If there were no substance other than those which exist in nature [*secundum naturam*] with which physics is concerned, physics would be the first science. But if there is an immobile substance, this kind will be prior to natural substance, and the philosophy considering it will be First Philosophy. And because it is first, it will be universal and it will fall to it to consider being as being. . . . The science of the first being and of common being is the same." (*Ibid.*, n. 1170)

The solution seems to retain the difficulty. This science is concerned with the first being, presumably God, and therefore must be concerned with common being. Common being is not a synonym for first being here; it seems to stand for being insofar as it is predicable of all that is, both immaterial and sensible things. Earlier Thomas had written, "Notice however that although things which are separate both in definition and in existence from matter and motion pertain to the consideration of First Philosophy, not only such things do, but sensible things as well, insofar as they are beings [*inquantum sunt entia*]." (*Ibid.*, n. 1165)

Being considered universally (*ens commune*), being as being (*ens inquantum ens*)—these signify the subject of metaphysics, and the subject of the science is that about which we want to discover attributes or properties which belong to it because of what the subject is. What does Thomas mean by "being," what is the "*ratio entis*"? He answers this question in a number of ways: what is, what has existence (*quod est, habens esse, id quod habet esse*). Such a definition does not include sensible matter, but neither does it exclude sensible matter in the sense of prescinding from it. Thus, with this meaning "being" can be predicated of Socrates or a rose, but it surely would not tell us a great deal about them. Far better to know of Socrates that he is a man, of a rose that it is a plant—better in the sense of more informative. If that is true, and surely it is, what kind of an advance is metaphysics supposed to be? To answer that question we must draw back a bit and ask ourselves what for Thomas is the ultimate and crowning concern of philosophy. Philosophy drives toward knowledge of the divine, toward knowledge of God, and this is preeminently the concern of metaphysics. Metaphysics is not undertaken to give us more adequate and appropriate knowledge of physical things (if there were no immaterial substance, physics would be first philosophy); it is undertaken to give us less inadequate knowledge of the divine. The formulation "being as being" therefore should not be regarded as a more profound approach to physical or sensible beings. To know sensible beings insofar as they are beings (*inquantum sunt entia*) is simply less informative than to know them as sensible (*inquantum sunt sensibilia*). The whole point of formulating definitions of "being" and "one" and "act" which do not include sensible matter is to provide us with a less inadequate language with which to talk about God. It would seem that for Aquinas it is not even the principal business of metaphysics to prove the existence of God, since for him that is one of the presuppositions of metaphysics. Rather, for Aquinas metaphysics would seem to be a prolonged reflection on what we know of sensible being, a purification of concepts formed in knowing sensible beings so that they become means of describing less inadequately the immaterial or divine. This inter-

pretation of the metaphysics of Aquinas may be novel, but I feel it accurately reflects both what he says about metaphysics and what he does as a metaphysician. In reply to the earlier question, we can say that for Thomas metaphysics is an ontology in order to be the only kind of theology it can be. God, simple substance, cannot be the subject of a science, Thomas argues, so metaphysics cannot be a theology in the sense that God is its subject matter. Its subject matter is being as being, that is, conceptions which do not involve sensible matter and thus are inadequately informative of sensible things but which, because of this absence of matter, provide a less inadequate bridge to talk about God.

*The Analogy of Being.* It is a commonplace that for Thomas being is analogous, but, before discussing his teaching on this point, it must be clear to us what analogy is for him. What are we saying when we say that being is analogous? Ultimately what we are aiming at is the fact that some beings are substances and some are accidents, that some being is finite and one infinite, but while all this is what analogy is applied to in this instance, that is not what "analogy" means. In order to get at the type of word "analogy" is, we might consider another sentence, "Being is a genus." Thomas agrees with Aristotle that that sentence is false, but we have already seen the type of predicate "genus" is, we know what it means to say that "genus" is a logical term. Well, "Being is analogous" is the affirmation Thomas offers when he decides that "Being is a genus" is false. "Analogy" must be a logical term too, and if we imagine three statements each of whose predicates is a logical term—"being is analogous," "being is univocal," and "being is purely equivocal"—Thomas will say that only the first is true.

As a logical term, "analogy" signifies the relations among several meanings of a given word; analogy is a kind of signification, and it is usually exemplified by "healthy." Consider the following list: (1) Fido is healthy, (2) urine is healthy, (3) food is healthy. Although the same term occurs as predicate in each of these sentences, it does not seem to have the same meaning in all of them as "man" does in "Socrates is a man" and "Plato is a man." Nor does it seem to have entirely unrelated meanings as "top" does in "he spins the top" and "he opens the top." That is, the meanings of "healthy" in our list, while different, seem related. "Healthy," to use Thomas' language, is imposed to signify from health, and we might formulate a common meaning for the various uses in (1), (2), and (3) above by saying that "healthy" means "related in some way to health" or "referring to health in some way." This would be what Thomas means by the common notion (*ratio communis*) of an analogous name, but unlike the common notion of a univocal term (the example of "man" above) it does not apply equally to the things of which it is predicated. By

applying equally Thomas means that when I say Socrates is a man I make no reference to anything else called a man, something else that might be thought to have prior right to the name. The common notion of the term Thomas calls analogous is unequally common to many things in this sense, that it applies to one thing primarily and to others secondarily. That is, beyond the *ratio communis* of "healthy" (referring in some way to health), we can formulate a proper notion (*ratio propria*) which expresses a determinate reference to health, say, "subject of health," which is the principal meaning of the term and is the meaning it has in (1). In (2) it would mean "sign of health," and in (3) "preservative of health." However, if for an analogous term there is a common notion and also a number of determinate notions or meanings, these determinate meanings are fashioned in such a way that one of them is controlling or privileged, the focal meaning of "healthy." In our list the focal meaning (*ratio propria*) or primary analogate is "subject of health." Why does Thomas say this? How does he know one meaning is more basic than the others? He arrives at this by observing that in explicating the meaning of "healthy" in (2) he must make reference to the meaning it has in (1). Thus, its meaning in (2) is "the sign of health in the subject of health," and its meaning in (3) is "preservative of health in the subject of health." Its meaning in (1) makes no reference to its meanings in (2) or (3), and we can safely conclude that the meaning "healthy" has in (1), "subject of health," is the primary and controlling meaning.

"Healthy" is an example of the analogical community of a term, just as animal would be an example of genus. The doctrine of analogical signification is no more tied down to its examples than is any other logical doctrine—and no less so. As a logical relation, analogy is a second intention and thus is a relation obtaining among real things (or other logical entities) as they are known by us. "Healthy" is one instance of an analogous term, "being" is another. To say of such terms that they are analogous is to say something of the way they are predicated of a variety of things, but just as "genus" does not say something about animal as it exists in reality, apart from our knowing animal nature, neither does "analogy" refer just as such to things as they exist, but as they are known and named by us.

Before going on to "being," we might formulate the technical language Thomas uses in discussing analogous signification. What the term is imposed to signify, health in the case of "healthy," is called the thing signified, or *res significata*; the various ways of signifying it, the *modi significandi*, make up the determinate meanings or *rationes*, of the term, one of which is primary (*per prius*), the others secondary (*per posterius*). What is called the common notion (*ratio communis*) is quite indeterminate and might be thought of as

involving the thing signified and a place-marker for determinate modes of signifying it, something like "\_\_\_\_\_ health," where the blank can be filled by "subject of," "sign of," and so forth, though, again, one mode of signifying will be controlling and enter into the secondary modes of signifying the *res significata*. Let us watch Thomas apply all this to being.

The common notion of being is "that which exists," so that existence (*esse*) is the *res significata*, and "that which" (or "having" in "having existence") may be regarded as a place-marker for determinate modes of being. That there are different ways of being may be recognized by constructing a list in the way we did with "healthy": (1) George is a man, (2) George is tall, (3) George is tan. This list does not look like the earlier one since we seem to have three different predicates, "is a man," "is tall," "is tan." Nevertheless, these predicates express different modes of being, different ways of existing—the substantial, quantitative, and qualitative, respectively—and we could say that our list suggests another: (a) substance is, (b) quantity is, (c) quality is, which suggests a further list: (i) substance is being, (ii) quantity is being, (iii) quality is being. "Being" now emerges as the common predicate, and, as in the case of our list of sentences where "healthy" was the common predicate, Thomas holds that "being" cannot mean exactly the same thing in (i), (ii), and (iii). What the term is first predicated of, the primary analogate, is substance: the mode of signifying *esse* involved in the predicate of (i) is the *ratio propria entis*, the controlling signification: "That which exists autonomously, not in another" (*id cui debet esse in se et non in alio*). The other ways of signifying *esse* involve reference to the substantial mode of being and thus are secondary meanings of the term. The analogy of "being," therefore, tells us of the way the term "being" is common to many things according to an ordered variety of meanings. The ways of signifying *esse* express, of course, various ways of being, *modi essendi*; the various meanings of "being" express various modes of existence. Thus, though the relation of the meaning of "quantity" to the meaning of "substance" is logical, the dependence of accident on substance is real and ontological. That is why, mistakenly, the analogy of being is often understood as a direct statement about the way things are. The coincidence here between the primary meaning of "being" and what primarily is, substance, is, from the point of view of analogical signification, just that, a coincidence; the principal meaning of a term is often ontologically secondary since priority and posteriority among the meanings of a term reflect the process of our knowing and not directly the ontological hierarchy.

*Being and Essence.* In the foregoing we spoke of the community of being in such a way that we seem unable to account for talk of logical entities or beings, nor do we seem able to account for what

Thomas called "being in the sense of true" (*ens verum*). For example, "There is no one in the room." "There is" means that it is true to say that no one is in the room. This is a secondary sense of "being," as is also the case when logical relations are called beings; the primary sense of being for Thomas is real being (*ens reale*), being out-there. That real being has many senses is what we were trying to show in our talk of the analogous predication of being with respect to substance and accidents. We might also say that being is analogously common to real being, being as true and logical being on the basis of a list like (1) John is a substance, (2) "the President is not here" is true, (3) analogy is a second intention. The meaning of "being" that could be formulated on the basis of (2) and (3) would make reference to that which could be formulated on the basis of (1), and the reverse would not be the case.

Of real being Thomas will say that it posits something in reality (*aliquid in re ponit*), so we might call it positive being. That owing to which it "posits" is its essence: only real being is said to have essence. Thus, as Bobik has shown, the title of Thomas' opusculum *On Being and Essence* suggests just this transition from being as comprehending more than real being to real being which alone possesses essence. And, since real being is analogous and substance is the primary kind of real being, essence will be found par excellence in substance. Essence is that through which and in which a thing has being; we can see the connection between essence and the modes of being (*modi essendi*) expressed in the various meanings of real being. The essence or nature of a substance is that which makes it *what* it is and is the measure of its actuality or *esse*.

This brings us to Thomas' teaching on the relation between the essence and existence (*esse*) of a substance. This is often presented as a novelty of Thomistic metaphysics, but it should be pointed out that Thomas himself exhibits no sense of being an innovator when he holds that essence and *esse* must be really different. He attributes the distinction to Plato, Aristotle, and of course Boethius. It is in the *De hebdomadibus* of Boethius that Thomas finds what he takes to be a capsule statement of the real distinction: *diversum est esse et id quod est* (to be and what is differ). In Aristotle a phrase which conveys the point is found in the second book of *On the Soul*: *vivere est esse viventibus* (for living things to be is to live). Thomas approaches the matter by saying that the essence or nature of a physical substance is composed of matter and form; neither of these alone is the nature of the thing. For a thing of such a nature to exist is for there to be a conjunction of its essential components or principles (*ipsum esse rei . . . resultat ex congregatione principiorum rei in compositis*). (*De trin.*, q. 5, a. 1) In a living thing essence is composed of body and soul, and this conjunction makes the thing live. To live is of

course a determinate kind of existence following on an essence of a given type. When Thomas speaks of a distinction between essence and *esse*, he does not mean simply that there is a difference between a possible man and an actual man; he does not mean simply that there is a difference between the abstract nature (for example, humanity) and a concrete instance of it (for example, this man). What he intends is this: in an actually existing substance we cannot identify its essence or nature and the actuality or existence which is a consequence of the essence and measured by it. The essence of a thing relates to its *esse* as potency to act. Thus, Thomas will say that *esse* is the actuality of all other acts, even of forms. The form is act with respect to matter as potency, but for the act which is form actually to be in matter is an act other than the act the form is. This absolutely fundamental actuality is what Thomas means by *esse*, and it can be equated neither with form nor with essence in material substances.

The nonidentity of essence and *esse* does not obtain only in physical substance however; Thomas holds that there are immaterial essences other than God, and as other than God their existence is dependent on God as cause. In such substances essence is identified with form, and the form is regarded as having *esse*, sharing in it, participating in it in such a way that their essence is other than their existential actuality. In order to pursue this we must first turn to what Thomas has to say about the names of God.

*God and Language.* We have said that the whole thrust of philosophy and a fortiori of metaphysics is, for Thomas, toward knowledge of God. How such knowledge is possible and how it can be expressed in language are two sides of the same coin, and for purposes of this sketch we will concentrate on the linguistic side.

In question thirteen of the first part of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas discusses the divine names, the meaning of terms predicated of God. Some such terms pose relatively little difficulty, for example, what Thomas calls negative names. Thus, when we say of God that he is immaterial or immobile, we may be thought simply to be denying of God certain characteristics of material creatures. Problems of a more pressing sort arise in the case of affirmative names. Let us take "wise" as our example. It should be said in the first place that Thomas approaches the question of talk about God by assuming that the problem arises because a term is predicated both of God and creature, that is, that we are confronted by "Socrates is wise" and "God is wise" and ask ourselves if the predicate has the same meaning in the two uses. Thomas will say that it does not have exactly the same meaning, but neither does it bear utterly unrelated meanings, that is, neither univocity or equivocity seems to handle the case. Well, we know what remains for Thomas: he will say that "wise" is

predicated analogously of God and creature. Let us try to explicate this example in terms of what we have already learned about analogical signification.

What would the common meaning (*ratio communis*) of "wise" be? Surely something like "having wisdom." Thus, wisdom is what the term "wise" chiefly signifies, its *res significata*. How is wisdom signified when Socrates is said to be wise? The *modus significandi* here would be somewhat elaborate: to say that Socrates is wise is to say that he is a substance possessing a quality of cognition such that he assesses everything in the light of what is truly first and important. That cannot be the way wisdom is signified when we say that God is wise, if only because in God, who is simple, there is no distinction between substance and accident. To be wise is an accidental attribute of Socrates, but if God is wise and wisdom is no accident in him, we might want to say that God *is* wisdom. This is quite a different way of "having wisdom" than is the case with Socrates, and the term "wise" must be construed to convey this difference as it is affirmed of God.

Thomas invokes the procedure of Pseudo-Dionysius here and suggests that there are various "moments" in our analysis of the meaning of "wise" in "God is wise." First, there is the affirmation (*via affirmationis*), but we then go on to deny of God (*via negationis*) the way of being wise that is expressed in the meaning of the term as affirmed of Socrates, for example. Thus, as is generally the case with analogous predicates, there is the same *res significata* but different *modi significandi*. As to how the *res significata*, wisdom, is found in God, we do not know. We say that it is different from the way it is found in creatures for the reasons given, and this is all quite negative. Finally, we can say that the perfection exists in God in an eminent way (*via eminentiae*). Nothing in *what* the term "wise" means (its *res significata*) prevents our attributing wisdom to God, but we cannot have anything like determinate knowledge of the way (*modus*) this perfection is found in God. This is why Thomas will say finally that we know what God is not rather than what he is. This is not a charter for calling God anything whatsoever, of course, since it is a consequence of analysis and reflection rather than a refusal to undertake them.

*Participation.* Let us turn now to the question of "being" as predicated of God and creatures so that we may rejoin our earlier discussion of the real difference between essence and *esse* in simple substances other than God. We have already seen how the term "being" is common to substance and accidents; the question now is, How is it common to God and creature, to infinite and finite being? The sentences to compare, accordingly, are "Socrates exists" and "God exists," or "Socrates is a being" and "God is a being." The *res significata* of the term is *esse*, and in the case of physical substance

*esse* is an actuality consequent upon the conjunction of its essential principles, matter and form. This mode of being cannot obtain in God, and his mode of existing is approached by denying of him the creaturely mode of existing. God is thus thought of as existing in an eminent way, to be existence. This kind of talk leads to a distinction between essential being and participated being.

The common notion of being—having *esse*—has to be so strained when we call God being that it becomes “is *esse*.” Creatures, on the other hand, *have esse* and in various ways; they partake of *esse*. To participate or partake means, etymologically, to take a part of, to share in, to possess in a diminished manner. To be something essentially, as opposed to by participation, means to be it wholly, completely, and in an unrestricted fashion. When creatures are called beings by participation, when they are said to participate in *esse*, the following is what is meant. *Esse* means actuality, but no creature is actuality *tout court*: any creature is this kind of thing or that, and its nature is consequently the measure of its actuality. From this point of view, essence as we have discussed it emerges as a limitation on the actuality *esse* is, and *esse* is considered abstractly as actuality without qualification.

Now, of course, the essence of a given thing is not a limitation of *its esse*, since it is precisely the measure of the kind of *esse* appropriate to it. We must proceed with delicacy here since it is precisely at this point, it seems to me, that some champions of the Platonism of Aquinas have gone astray. The creature’s *esse* is either *esse substantiale* or *esse accidentale*, substantial existence or accidental existence. *Esse substantiale* is simply a general and abstract phrase which covers *to be alive* or *to live*, which, in turn, is generic with respect to the *esse* or ultimate actuality of man, beast, and plant. From the point of view of richness of information it is far more exact to say of a living thing that it lives than that it exists (*vivere est esse viventibus*); in short, more and more determinate designations move us in the direction of greater and greater determinate perfection. There is no doubt that this is true of creatures, but when we attempt to talk about God, we seem to reverse the procedure and put a premium on vagueness.

This can be seen when we consider Thomas’ discussion of “being” as the most appropriate, or least inappropriate, name of God. When we say of God that he is a being, as opposed to wise, merciful, and so forth, we seem to be saying the least possible about him. But to say the least possible means here that we are making no reference to determinate creaturely modes of existence, modes which restrict and limit *esse* considered abstractly as actuality or perfection. It is this very freedom from determinate creaturely modes of being which makes “being” the least inappropriate name of God. And since God does not partake of *esse*, does not have actuality in some restricted mode, we

can speak of God as subsistent existence (*ipsum esse subsistens*).

The Platonic, or Neoplatonic, aspect of this approach is evident when we see Thomas speaking of a generic expression of *esse* as if it contained in an eminent manner the specific types of *esse* below it; as if "to live" were not a vaguer expression of the type of *esse* appropriate to men or beasts or plants, but a richer concept, containing eminently the subtypes. On that assumption we can press on and think of "to be" (*ipsum esse*) as containing telescoped within itself all determinate types of *esse substantiale* and indeed of *esse accidentale*. *Esse* then becomes a kind of dialectical limit at which various kinds of actuality are considered to meet in an eminent way—what Cusa will call a *coincidentia oppositorum*. In Fabro's phrase, *esse* has then become *esse ut actus*, the fullness of actuality, as opposed to *esse in actu*, minimal or brute being-there, mere factual givenness. *Esse ut actus*, a dialectical construct, provides us with the least inadequate name of God, for when we say he *is* existence, we are saying that he is total perfection and actuality and no more—that is, without the diminution and restriction which in creatures is read from their determinate natures or essences. Anything other than God has only as much actuality and perfection as its essence permits. In short, everything other than God partakes of *esse*, has from the point of view of total perfection only a partial perfection, its own limited one. That is how Thomas establishes the difference between essence and *esse* in simple substances other than God.

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When the metaphysics of Aquinas is regarded as a lengthy meditation on what man can know of God, which is what essentially it is, something can be seen of what Maritain has called *la grandeur et la misère de la métaphysique*. In metaphysics man is straining against the limits of his knowing powers, so much so that Aristotle spoke of it as something inhuman, in the sense of superhuman. For Thomas the proportioned object of the human mind is the essence of sensible things, and it is what man knows of the material world which must always provide the lens through which he attempts to see beyond the material world. The elaboration of the subject of metaphysics, being as being, is an effort to formulate concepts which will be less obscure lenses, but their obscurity remains dual: when we consider the physical world through such concepts, we see it more vaguely than we do when we look at it through the more appropriate concepts of natural science; when we use them to gain some purchase on the divine, we are brought to the melancholy realization that all our concepts, all our names, are defective with respect to their mode of representation (*quantum ad modum significandi, omne nomen cum defectu est*). (*I Contra Gentiles*, ch. 30). And yet a little knowledge of the divine, no

matter how defective and distorting, is infinitely preferable to much clear and certain knowledge of lesser things.

### G. Moral Philosophy

In speaking of the division of philosophy into speculative and practical, we pointed out that for Thomas there are three criteria to which attention must be paid in assessing whether an instance of knowing is speculative or practical, namely, object, method, and end. The object of practical knowledge is called generically the operable, something we can do or make. The types of operable object call attention to the distinction between man as moral agent and man as artisan. The process of making something, of art, is one whose perfection is to be found in a product beyond the process producing it. Thus, Thomas will say that art aims at the perfection of the artifact and not at the perfection of the artisan as man. Of course, a man who makes good shoes would be called a good shoemaker, but one can be a good shoemaker without being a good man in the moral sense. Doing or the do-able (*agibile*)—it is with this that our choices and decisions have to do, and the perfection of our choices is the perfection of us as choosers. The standard of perfection here will not be the demands of an artifact. Thomas will emphasize the difference between art and prudence, or practical wisdom, by saying that we can choose the end of art, that is, to make artifacts and to make this one as opposed to that, but in an important sense the end of practical wisdom chooses us, imposes itself upon us. Of course, to act as an artisan, to make things, is something so natural to man that we must say that it would be impossible for man not to be an artisan in the sense this term has for Thomas. His point would seem to be that beyond the englobing necessity, the direction of such activity, the end it seeks to produce, is quite arbitrary and up to us. It is not like this with moral decisions, as we shall see.

Earlier we offered a description of practical knowing according to which its perfection involves the perfection of something other than mere knowing. The perfection of moral knowledge lies in its direction of voluntary acts, of choices. What perfects is a good, and moral philosophy begins for Thomas with the asking of the question, What is the good for man, what is his perfection? Since the good or perfection is looked upon as relative to a process, that which is sought in an act of becoming, the question could be stated, What is man's ultimate end? On the philosophical level Thomas is here a faithful student of Aristotle. For purposes of moral philosophy man is something that comes to be, something striving for its good and doing this in a conscious way. Unlike other cosmic entities, man, though fashioned for a given purpose, is not directed toward it in an unconscious and willy-nilly way. Rather, it is the mark of man that in reflecting on himself in his voluntary activity he asks what is the purpose of such

activity, in what will its perfection consist? For a man to act or to do is for him to know what he is doing. The question "Why are you doing that?" might never be addressed to a being less than man, but it is always a good question to put to him. The implication of the question is that man is consciously directing himself to certain ends or goals. This can be taken to be a given of moral philosophy: we do make choices, we do pursue goals. The question of moral philosophy is, How can we do this well?

One could give a first statement of the human good in terms of what has already been said. The human good is to do well man's characteristic activity. Since this characteristic activity is reasoning, performing it well is man's good, and virtue is the term which designates the perfection of an activity. Thus, Thomas, like Aristotle, will say that virtuous rational activity is the human good. That is, as Aristotle observed, little more than a platitude, but it does involve a discrimination among possible answers to the question, What is the human good? Man houses not only reasoning but also a desire for pleasure, an impulse to avoid physical harm and pain. He is also the seat of any number of acts of sensation of various kinds. Yet more basically, he grows, takes nourishment, moves from place to place. Man on this basis comes to be regarded as a kind of epitomization of processes which are found in lesser beings as well, for it is not man alone who moves and grows, who senses, who seeks pleasure and avoids pain. But man, to do these humanly, must do them rationally insofar as such activities are amenable to rational control. To seek pleasure in a human way is to subject the objects which give physical pleasure to a goal beyond themselves and so to assess them; to seek pleasure pell-mell and irrationally is possible for man, but could a man who did this be considered a good man? Not if the mark of man is to use his reason, for then the specifically human good must attach to what is peculiar and characteristic of man.

"Reasoning" must be distinguished, however. There is the process of reasoning itself, with its appropriate objects and perfection; there is also reasoning which bears on activities other than reasoning and seeks to perfect them. The latter is practical reasoning, and it is when man's appetite is responsive to such rational direction that we have the perfection of rational activity which is called moral virtue. A life lived according to reason—that is the human good—and this covers a multitude of virtues: the human pursuit of sensual pleasure, a human avoidance of physical pain. That is, when instinctive processes become permeated with rationality, they are more fully human. A life lived for pleasure is not a human life because the objects of pursuit which cause physical pleasure are not peculiar to human appetition and because human appetition, in a broad sense, encompasses other and higher objects than these.

To talk of the end or goal of human or rational choice may seem

to refer to consequences of choice, to some quietus, some state achieved when choice is done. The human good, as Thomas sees it, is not beyond action, but in action; it is the style or formality or quality of our choices. To be a man is to choose and decide and live, and to do these things well is man's goal or end, and it will be had, if it is had, in acting and choosing and deciding, not after these are done. That is why Thomas will agree with Aristotle that man's happiness is an activity, not a state or capacity.

Man's moral goal is fixed Thomas holds; he has no choice concerning what will, in the nature of things, perfect him and be his good. Since he is a rational agent, his perfection can only be the perfection of rational activity. Rational activity can be either pure reason or practical reason, and it is the latter that is the concern of moral philosophy. The perfection of practical rational activity, again, is what is meant by moral virtue. To say that man's good is fixed by his very nature means that a man cannot be perfected as man by the pell-mell pursuit of pleasure, for example. Such an activity is not commensurate with human nature.

Thomas calls judgments or precepts concerning what we must do which are anchored in our nature, and thus sure and inflexible, natural law precepts. He uses the plural. (*ST*, IaIIae, q. 94, a. 2) Thus far, we have seen one such precept, which may be stated normatively as: Act virtuously. Thomas will sometimes state this overriding precept of human moral activity in the following way: Do good and avoid evil. But of course one must understand that in terms of the human good, and when one does, "act virtuously" is synonymous with "do good" as this is addressed to man. Are there any other natural law precepts? We can get a plurality of precepts which will have the fixity of the generic one just mentioned by appealing to the tradition of the cardinal virtues. Temperance is the name given to the rational control of the appetite for objects which cause physical pleasure. Fortitude, or bravery, is the name given the rational control of the impulse to avoid objects which cause physical pain. Justice and prudence are the other two cardinal virtues, and, without going into the nature of these, we can suggest that "Be temperate," "Be brave," "Be just," and "Be prudent" are precepts which always bind a man. Their plurality is gained by articulating the regions of human activity in which rational direction is required. There will never be a time when temperance, bravery, justice, and prudence will not be the guiding ideals of human choice. That is what is meant by saying these precepts are fixed, unchanging, and so forth.

Of course, the great difficulty in human action is not in settling on the major guidelines of choice. The difficulties begin when we ask, "But how should I be temperate in such and such circumstances?" And so too with bravery, justice, and prudence. If we think of these

cardinal virtues as the articulation of man's good or end, the further questions can be said to deal with means of incorporating these ideals of human conduct in our lives in the particular decisions we must make.

The precepts of natural law are judgments in the practical order analogous to self-evident judgments in the speculative order. A mark of the self-evident judgment is that to contradict it lands one in absurdity, and with respect to the most basic such judgment, the so-called principle of contradiction, the denial of it requires one to employ it. Something like this may be said about the first principle of the practical order, "Act rationally." If one questioned this, he might be thought of as asking a question as to why he should ask questions. For surely one who wants a justification of the principle is already exhibiting in his conduct his acceptance of the rule that he ought to act rationally. The articulation of the human good into the cardinal virtues is such that something of the same kind of imperviousness to contradiction attends such a precept as "Act temperately." If this principle lays on us the obligation to seek pleasure in a manner befitting the kind of agent we are, it would be difficult to gainsay it without calling into question the kind of agent man is and thus the kind of agent the questioner reveals himself to be.

At a level of great universality, then, Thomas feels that there are inflexible guidelines for human choice; the target at least is clear. But how is one to be temperate in such and such circumstances? As soon as we move into the area of enunciating means of realizing our end or goal, our judgments become corrigible, usually as opposed to always true. The elaboration of less general moral judgments not only depends more and more on experience, our own and others, but reflects increasingly the evanescence of circumstances, the particular historical epoch in which such judgments are made. Thomas will insist on the corrigibility and probability of general judgments less than the most common ones of natural law, but at the same time he will argue that this is no reason against the formulation of more particular moral judgments.

There are thus two levels of generality, what we might call the level of principles and the level of rules, with the former certain and inflexible and the latter true, even if true only for the most part or usually. The moral rule may be thought of as a statement of the means whereby we can usually achieve our end. The justification of moral rules, therefore, is to be found in the principles, in the end. But since the rules are true only for the most part, they admit of exceptions. What would justify an exception to a rule if the principle justifies the rule? It seems that we must say that the principle justifies the exception as well as the original rule, since if we should judge that in some cases it would be wrong to abide by a rule having to do with temperance, say, we might so judge because acting in accord

with the rule will thwart the end of temperance or of some other articulation of our overriding good. And, of course, the recognition of exceptions to a rule can give rise to the formulation of another and lesser rule.

Since both principles and rules are in the practical order, they are not sought for their own sake but point beyond cognition to the perfection of our choices. Thomas follows the lead of Aristotle in saying that beyond the common principles, naturally and easily knowable, and beyond moral rules which might be taken to be the domain of moral philosophy and of human law, there is a third level of moral knowledge, completely practical knowledge, where we are cognitively engaged in applying principle or rule to a concrete set of circumstances. By calling this area the realm of prudence, completely practical knowledge, we are suggesting that it saves all three of the criteria of practical knowledge mentioned earlier. With Aristotle, Thomas calls the discourse of prudence a practical syllogism.

The practical syllogism, the discourse of practical reasoning in the concrete direction of choices, is analyzed as follows. The major premise is a generality, a principle or rule; the minor premise is an assessment of our present singular circumstance in the light of the principle or rule relevant to it. The conclusion, ideally, is a choice in accord with this assessment. As soon as we move away from the major premise, we move away from generality and into an area where the state of our appetites becomes influential. The principle or rule expresses an object of appetite, a good, at a level of generality, and we can assent to such judgments in a way that does not engage us fundamentally where we live. Practical discourse, the practical syllogism, when it moves into the area of the concrete and singular, will reveal the actual condition of our appetites, what for us is really considered good. Now what for us is really considered good, what we have a bent toward due to past choices, may be other than and in conflict with the good expressed in the major premise. Imagine that the major premise has to do with temperance. We find ourselves in a situation where at the back of our mind we are aware of the obliging character of temperance with reference to our choices; with that awareness we regard the circumstances in which we find ourselves. In doing so we might repress or dismiss the moral principle because of the attractiveness of an object which promises pleasure and go on to pursue that object. This would reveal that the good expressed in the principle or rule is not effectively our good; that our choices are really governed by a rule we might hesitate to express as a generality, namely, "Pursue pleasure mindlessly."

A man acting on such a basis would be incontinent, in Thomas' use of the term; in moments of repose, as a student of ethics, say, he might assent to a moral principle or rule, but when the chips are

down, the good he seeks is not that expressed in the moral principle. In order to move from the principle to an assessment of our circumstances in the light of it and to a choice in accord with that assessment, we must effectively love the good expressed in the principle. That is why Thomas will say that the truth of the ultimate practical judgment is to be read, not as a conformity with the way things are, but as a conformity with rectified appetite. In short, only the virtuous man will easily and without pain make the transition in practical discourse from principles to choice. One can see why Thomas places such importance on moral training and upbringing; it makes a great deal of difference what objects of aspiration are placed before us in our early years. Mature reflection on human action always takes place against a background of formation and education, of ideals which have become familiar because of habituation. It is not the case that the ideal can be recognized to be such only by those who strive to incorporate it into their lives, but Thomas will insist that when it comes to how the ideal can be realized here and now, our ability to know this is a function of our past moral history.

We might summarize Thomas' view of moral knowledge, then, by seeing three levels of it. First is the level of the most common precepts, those which enunciate the ideal of rational love or loving reason: man's perfection and its articulation into the cardinal virtues. This is the domain of natural law without qualification, for as long as man is what he is, his perfection is the perfection of the kind of agent he is. On a second level would be the formation of precepts or rules which elaborate at a level of generality how the ideal can usually be achieved. All such rules are corrigible, of course, and they increasingly reflect experience and thus the changing situations in which man strives for the ideal. Finally, there is the concrete level, the singular choice in which knowledge must be proportionate to these changing, concrete circumstances and where knowledge is inevitably influenced by the condition of the agent's appetite.

#### H. *Thomas and His Time*

The foregoing presentation of various aspects of Thomas' doctrine has made little effort to relate what he taught to the currents of his day, though of course the reader will have connected elements of Thomas' teaching with controversies mentioned in earlier chapters. Since the fame of Aquinas reposes in large part on the fact that he brought together in a new whole the various strains and traditions which met in the thirteenth century, it is only right that we say some few things about his general attitude as it is exemplified in a number of key controversies.

If the men of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries had been confronted only with accurate Latin translations of the *Metaphysics*,

*Physics*, and *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle, unaccompanied by commentaries, they would certainly have had their work cut out for them; we can surmise that there would have been a good dose of defensiveness in their response to such a powerful statement of the nature of the world, since in many particulars it seems contrary to what the Christian believes to be true. But of course the matter was not at all that simple. The Aristotle who came to be known came together with Islamic interpretations which confused Aristotelian and Neoplatonic doctrines. We have seen that in Islam portions of Plotinus and of Proclus were considered to be the work of Aristotle. Furthermore, the Greek commentaries on Aristotle, with their Neoplatonic bent, came into Latin directly as well as through the medium of the influence they had had on the thinkers of Islam. That meant that the whole Neoplatonic apparatus of emanation and the mediated causality of the first cause were added to the real problems in the text of Aristotle, those associated with the scope of the divine knowledge, the eternity of the world, and the survival of the individual soul after death. Before this onslaught it is not surprising to find that the first reaction was one of caution. Aristotle's works were proscribed at the University of Paris. Balancing this, however, was the commission set up by Gregory IX to study and interpret the teaching of Aristotle. The invitation to seek in Aristotle what truth might be there was clear, and masters responded to it to the detriment of the ban.

One of the members of the papal commission, William of Auvergne, indicates one mode of response to the new literature. He is quite confused as to what is authentically Aristotelian doctrine and what is not, but he has a double measure with which to confront the new teachings. First, there is faith; if the Aristotelians teach something contrary to faith, that is *prima facie* indication that their teaching is false. William does not leave the matter there, however; he goes on to try to show the falsity of such teachings by arguments. What exercises its influence on him as he does this is the Augustinian tradition which had been dominant, but, unsurprisingly, William also takes over from Aristotle and Islamic thinkers whatever he takes to be sound. The whole into which such borrowings are assumed is somewhat difficult to describe, and to call it traditional Augustinianism is to label it rather than analyze it.

Another attitude, far less ironic, is represented by Bonaventure; yet another by Albert and, more brazenly, the Latin Averroists. We have seen the curious neutrality Albert claims when he is exposing the tenets of Peripatetic philosophy; more curious still is the silence he attempts with respect to the theological verdict on the philosophy he is narrating. His model here seems to be Moses Maimonides, and the term of the attitude could be either that theology must be measured by philosophy or, perhaps, that the truth of philosophy and that

of theology may conflict and contradict in a way that is ultimately acceptable.

With Aquinas we have an Aristotelian, a man who accepts the fundamental validity of the philosophy of Aristotle and will employ it as the context into which other contributions must be fitted. This attitude is possible for him because he was able to distinguish between Aristotle and Neoplatonism, between Aristotle and his interpreters, in a way that had not been done to the same extent before. This is not to say that he rejects Neoplatonism, whether that of Proclus or of the Greek and Islamic commentators, out of hand. But there is a new clarity as to what is what. For example, in the *proemium* to his exposition of the *Liber de causis* Thomas matter-of-factly states the origin of the work in Proclus; apparently this is the first time the identification was made, and Thomas was able to make it because William of Moerbeke had provided him with a Latin translation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. When he approaches the text of Aristotle, Thomas seems possessed of the certitude that, accurately understood, it can withstand the criticisms that have been directed at it. Let us examine a few instances of this.

In the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle had said that God knows only himself, and this had been taken to mean that God knows nothing other than himself, which would seem a plausible enough interpretation. From that would follow a denial of providence and so forth, and Aristotle emerges as teaching things inimical to belief. Thomas comes at the passage in question with little indication that it has been the subject of controversy. Aristotle, he explains, identifies the First Cause with his act of understanding and says that the nobility of that act of understanding can be read in terms of its object. The object of the act of understanding (identified with the First Cause) must be itself, since if it were something else, that object would be more noble than the First Cause. But the First Cause is most noble, and so forth, so it is necessary that it understand itself and that in it understanding and what is understood be the same. "It should be considered however that the Philosopher intends to show that God understands, not something else, but rather himself insofar as what is understood is the perfection of the one understanding and of his act of understanding. It is quite clear that nothing else can be understood by God in this sense that it would be the perfection of his intellect. Nor does it follow that other things are unknown by him, since in understanding himself he understands all other things." (*In XII Metaphys.*, lect. 11, n. 2614) The point is put more succinctly in Thomas' discussion of proposition thirteen of the *Liber de causis*: "Since according to the opinion of Aristotle, which in this matter is more in accord with Catholic doctrine [more than the opinion of Proclus, that is], we posit, not many forms above intellect, but one alone

which is the First Cause, we must say that just as it is its existence [*ipsa est ipsum esse*] so it is one with its life and its intellect. Hence, Aristotle in the twelfth book of the *Metaphysics* proves that he [God] understands only himself, not that knowledge of other things is lacking to him, but because his intellect is not informed by any intelligible species other than himself. . . ." What Thomas is doing in such a case is, not bending Aristotle to Catholic doctrine, but insisting that Aristotle correctly understood is in accord with the faith. So too, for Thomas, Aristotle's God is the creative cause of the universe. "From this manifestly appears the falsity of their opinion who hold that Aristotle thought that God is the cause, not of the substance of the heaven, but only of its motion." (*In VI Metaphys.*, lect. 1, n. 1164) It has become fashionable to say that Aristotle's God is only the ultimate final cause of the world; that "only" would have mystified Thomas, for whom the final cause is, as it was for Aristotle, the *causa causarum*, the cause of the other causes. Although he never developed the argument, since he was not confronted with this curious notion of "only the ultimate final cause," it would be a simple matter for Thomas to prove that if God is the ultimate final cause of the world, he is a fortiori its first efficient cause.

There is considerable confusion in recent discussions of Aristotle and creation. Sometimes it seems to be suggested that Aristotle's world cannot be a created one because it is eternal. Thomas is quite sure that it was Aristotle's firm opinion that the world is eternal, but he insists, as others had, that the arguments he brings forward for this claim are at best probable. Would the eternity of the world preclude its being a created world? This was a matter Thomas investigated, notably in an opusculum entitled *On the Eternity of the World Against Murmurers*. For those who take this sort of thing to be a mark of humanness, we might observe that in this opusculum Aquinas treats his unnamed adversaries with sarcasm, saying how marvelous it is that men like Augustine and the best philosophers had not seen the contradiction involved in an eternally created world. Those who see a contradiction in the notion, he adds icily, must alone be men, and wisdom arrived in the world with them.

In the opusculum *On the Unity of the Intellect Against the Averroists* Thomas goes to great lengths to show the inaccuracy of the Averroistic interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine on the faculties of the soul. Perhaps nowhere else is it as clear that what is at stake is what Aristotle taught and that accuracy of interpretation goes hand in hand with acceptance of the result. In this opusculum, as in his work *On Separate Substances*, Thomas exhibits his knowledge of Islamic, Jewish, and Greek interpretations of Aristotle.

We mentioned earlier in this chapter how unwise it is to identify the philosophy of Aquinas and the philosophy of Aristotle when this

leads to a failure to recognize the influence of other philosophers on Thomas. It would be far unwiser to suggest that Thomas' thought is in principle Neoplatonic. In its principles Thomas' philosophy is Aristotelian, and, as we have observed, whatever else enters into his philosophy is subjected to an Aristotelian test, is brought into a fundamentally Aristotelian context. One may cheer or lament this, but he may not deny it or ignore it.

Thomas' contemporaries found it difficult to ignore what he had accomplished, and we shall see in the next chapter something of the history of his immediate influence and reactions to it. Insofar as Thomas the philosopher is a model for the twentieth-century thinker, it may be well to distinguish two aspects of the model. On the one hand are substantive doctrines to be understood and assessed; on the other hand there is what can be called the spirit of Thomas. That spirit applied nowadays to the thought of Thomas himself would doubtless see it as a component of a larger whole, and would see the Thomist as a philosopher for whom Thomas functions as Aristotle functioned for Thomas.

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## CHAPTER VII

# *Conclusion*

In the preceding chapters of this part we have concentrated on a number of thinkers, selected for their generally recognized importance, and discussed what they taught with only glancing references to the milieu in which they carried on their activity. That milieu—the university, and particularly the University of Paris—was one in which many divergent currents flowed, in which the kind of activity we have regarded in isolation comes into confrontation and conflict with opposed teachings, attitudes, aspirations. We have made reference to the dispute that raged concerning the academic status of Franciscans and Dominicans at Paris, a dispute which had its import for the two most eminent men of the century, Bonaventure and Aquinas. Similarly, we have referred to the caution with which the new writings invading the West were met, the proscriptions that were laid down, and so forth. The men we have concentrated on have represented, by and large, the effort to learn from the new and to assimilate it by putting it into relation with what had been had before. Yet efforts at assimilation varied insofar as one or the other middleman between the Western Scholastics and Aristotle was given prominence. We have suggested that one of the signal accomplishments of Aquinas is to be found in his distinguishing between the doctrines of Aristotle and those of his interpreters in Islam, something that required a painstaking and direct reading of Aristotle in less and less defective texts. No doubt it was this effort that enabled Aquinas to state with the clarity he did the distinction between philosophy and theology. We must now say a few words of the context in which he did this.

We have been considering the universities of the thirteenth century, taking Paris as the great model, as places where the faculty of arts functioned as a stepping stone into the faculty of theology (or those of medicine and law). This suggests that the faculty of arts, and philosophy, which was its principal concern, had nothing terminal to it, that philosophy had its destiny in theology. It should be noted, moreover, that most of the men who have been the objects of our attention in the chapters of this part were theologians, wrote as theologians, saw philosophy from the vantage point of the principles of

theology, and assessed its status accordingly. Yet it was at Paris that a conflict arose with regard to the relationship of philosophy and theology which was, in many of its aspects, a conflict between the faculty of arts and the faculty of theology.

It will be remembered that if there was anything that contributed to the determination of the relationship between philosophy and theology on the part of an Aquinas, it was the striking fact of the philosophical writings of Aristotle. Here, for the first time in centuries, the Christian intellectual found himself face to face with an elaborate and nuanced theory of reality in its various aspects, a theory reached in utter independence of the influence of faith. What greater proof could be required of the autonomy and viability of philosophy? Hand in hand with the appreciation of the autonomy of philosophy there went a sensitivity to those things Aristotle had taught which went contrary to Christian revelation. We have seen that, in large part due to the interpretations of Arabian commentators, it came to be a commonplace that Aristotle had taught that the world is eternal, that the survivability of the individual soul is a doubtful matter, and so forth. The typical reaction of Aquinas was to ask, first, whether this was what Aristotle actually taught. Quite often he reached the conclusion either that he had not taught what he was claimed to have taught or that he taught it in such a way that his doctrine was not in conflict with Christian belief. Others, like Bonaventure, lacking interest in the accuracy of the historical ascription of positions to Aristotle, applied the criteria of revealed truth to assess the alleged doctrines as false. Now while there is certainly a difference in approach between Aquinas and Bonaventure in this matter, the difference does not lie in the fact that the one thought revealed truth was a useful criterion and the other did not. Aquinas, as much as Bonaventure, may be taken to be guided by his faith in assuming that the position that holds firmly that the world has always existed must be false, or at least not provable. What is particularly interesting in the case of Aquinas is that he takes this initial judgment to be, not a foreclosing of argumentation, but an invitation to philosophizing. Let us, he suggests, look at the arguments; let us consult the texts. Animating his whole approach is the assumption that wherever there is a contradiction in terms the truth cannot lie on both sides of the contradiction. Now it was something like the latter position, the so-called two-truths theory, that came to be held by some masters of the faculty of arts in the middle of the century.

The two men most important for this controversy are Siger of Brabant and Boetius of Dacia. The movement associated with their names is commonly called "Latin Averroism." They were the objects of various polemical opuscula by figures already treated, for example, in the *De unitate intellectus* of Aquinas. Now, once more it must be

emphasized that what Aquinas set out to do, and what he accomplished, in that little work was to save Aristotle, not to bury him—to show that he had not taught what was being attributed to him concerning the faculties of the human soul. The controversy in question, then, may not be viewed as arising from the efforts of theologians to condemn philosophy, to restrict it, to destroy its autonomy, and so forth. Rather, it appears to be an effort of theologians to save philosophy from the philosophers—just as nowadays it sometimes seems that it will fall to Christian philosophers to save theology from theologians who misread the import of current philosophical trends.

When we look at the writings of Siger of Brabant, we find a repetition of interpretations of Aristotle with which we are familiar from the Arabian commentators. Thus, God's causality is restricted to a first effect, a primary intelligence, to whose activity the next level of reality must be ascribed and so on. So too, Siger teaches the "eternity" of the world. Since these positions call into question, respectively, the universality of God's causal efficacy and revealed truth, it becomes a matter of some interest to inquire how Siger squared his philosophical tenets with his Christian belief. Siger seems to have adopted an ambiguous stand on this matter. On the one hand, he suggests that he is merely examining the teachings of the (pagan) philosophers; on the other hand, he implies that these tenets are unavoidable conclusions of reason. Boetius of Dacia held views that are both more openly abrasive and unequivocal in their implications. As if from an excess of professional pride, Boetius held that the pursuit of philosophy is the highest human pursuit, that only philosophers are wise, and that there is absolutely no restriction on philosophical activity. More substantively, Boetius is said to have held that creation is impossible, even though faith requires us to believe that it is possible. With what one sometimes suspects must have been perverse delight, Boetius went on to list a number of other articles of Christian faith which are philosophical absurdities, though he seems never to have urged that men cease and desist believing them.

Latin Averroism, then, would seem to be grounded on what must seem a psychological impossibility, since it asked believers to accept logical contradictories. Not only did this call into question the reasonableness of faith—something insisted on from the beginning of theological study—it also characterized the philosophizing of the Christian in a way that would require him to be schizophrenic. The remedy called for was one that assigned their proper notes to faith *and* to philosophizing, and it was this remedy that was offered by theologians—as well as by masters of arts not in sympathy with Siger and Boetius, and these nonsympathizers, we might note, were the majority in the faculty of arts at Paris.

We began by saying that this dispute became a dispute between

the faculty of arts and the faculty of theology and went on to say that it must not be viewed as prompted by an animus against philosophy on the part of theologians. This last claim, while true in the terms we made it, must now be qualified. In 1277 the bishop of Paris, at the behest of the pope, condemned a list of 219 propositions. In presenting this list, the bishop, Stephen Tempier, made quite clear who the targets of his condemnation were: masters of the faculty of arts who taught things contrary to faith and who, when accused of heresy, took refuge in the claim that there is a distinction between the truth of philosophy and the truth of faith. One of the great ironies of the Condemnation of 1277 is that several tenets of Thomas Aquinas were among the propositions condemned. Further, if animosity between philosophers and theologians was not at the source of the dispute, it was certainly one of the consequences of the condemnation. Theologians became increasingly suspect of the activities of philosophers, and there was subsequently a tendency for the theologian to pursue his proper effort in growing independence from philosophical speculation. The reverse side of this coin, of course, was the tendency of philosophers who were also believers to ignore the relevance of their faith to their philosophizing.

If doctrines have a history, it is not linear, and if the history of philosophy is interesting, this is not because of movements which carry men along but rather because of individual philosophers. Men may think in a context, but the men who interest us as philosophers are less products of their times than producers of the spirit of their own and later times. To consider the movement into the thirteenth century of the complete Aristotelian corpus and of the Arabian commentators on Aristotle, as well as of Neoplatonic doctrines of an earlier time, is not to consider something that is independent of individual thinkers; on the contrary, such movements are ideal continua whose points are individual minds. All this is preface to our unwillingness now to discuss the fate and destiny of the movements of the thirteenth century. Finally, what is of philosophical interest in the thirteenth century are the writings of men like Bacon and Bonaventure, Albert and Aquinas, writings which are to a surprising degree accessible without paying great attention to the "spirit of the thirteenth century" or other abstractions taken as the putative antecedents of the efforts of such men. One of pitfalls of the historian is to interpret individuals in the light of their times, forgetful that those times are largely defined by us in terms of the great individuals who inhabited them. It would be easier to sustain the thesis that Aquinas thought against the grain of his age than that he is the perfect mirror of it, easier but perhaps no more fruitful. The suggestion that learning is a matter of entering into conversation with the great men of all times via their writings, while it may be marred by simplifying or

overlooking the real difficulties and impediments that may obscure those writings to a later mentality, is, finally, the only defensible attitude toward the great minds of the past, of the thirteenth or any other century. We may compare the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by saying that in the former the schools were where the great teachers were, whereas in the latter the great teachers were where the schools were; however, in either case it is the great teachers who interest us—and their greatness consists in large part in the way they transcend their times.



PART FIVE  
THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY



## CHAPTER I

# *Introduction*

This volume of our history ends by juxtaposing chapters on two thinkers who represent, respectively, what came to be called the old way (*via antiqua*) and the modern way (*via moderna*) of doing philosophy. Duns Scotus, for all his differences from the great thinkers of the thirteenth century, is nonetheless in basic continuity with them. William of Ockham, on the other hand, represents a rupture with the old and the beginning of something new, a modern way whose fundamental characteristic is nominalism. Scotus is, however, something of a bridge between the new and the old, not because Ockham was a Scotist, but rather because Scotus, though often criticized by William, provided the later Franciscan with some of the formulas for his own thought. As will become clear, however, these formulas tend to take on a quite different meaning in the hands of Ockham.

When we view the thirteenth century as a whole, we see it as a time when Christian thinkers, confronted with an amazing array of new sources which threatened the very foundations of traditional thought, won through in a variety of ways to a new and larger synthesis. But great intellectual achievements cannot be simply passed on to others; guidance they may offer, but each must reenact the achievement in his own mind if it is to be his in any significant way. We recall Roger Bacon's criticism of the thirteenth-century attitude toward the writings of Aristotle. The attitude he lamented soon came to characterize those who grouped themselves around the doctrines of the great thinkers of the thirteenth century. Thomism, for example, became a possession of the Dominican Order, and adherence to its contents a matter of orthodoxy. Josef Pieper has pointed to the striking fact that Aquinas seems to have had no immediate notable disciples; subsequently he was to have legions of them, but the question can be raised whether their attitude toward his writings was in all cases a matter of personal philosophizing or theologizing. And yet it is in such a dissident Dominican as Durandus that one senses the seeds of the *via moderna*, the foreshadowing of nominalism.

Since we have concentrated on the major thinkers, such transi-

tional discussions as the present one have been taken as occasion for generalizations to which the reader may respond as he will. What I would like to do now is to indulge myself in a significant generalization about what happens to philosophy as we move from the thirteenth to the fourteenth century, a generalization which points to a paradox.

It is often noted that the great thinkers of the thirteenth century are theologians by profession, and of course the same must be said of those of the fourteenth century. What strikes me as the great achievement of the thirteenth century, and I have Aquinas particularly in mind, is the establishment of a clear distinction between faith and reason in the terms required by the influx of Aristotle. That is, the distinction clearly becomes one between theology and philosophy. It is no doubt the case that Aquinas was a theologian, but this did not prevent him from granting an autonomy and scope to philosophy which followed on philosophical positions with respect to the nature of the world and the capacity of man's intellect. In Aquinas' vision of philosophy there is a complementarity between the mind and being. The world is intelligible and man can understand it, and the great divisions of philosophy that Aristotle had recognized indicate the range and possibilities of philosophical thought. What has impressed most historians about Aquinas is the fact that while his faith provided him with the context of his thinking, that context required him to admit that belief is not a prerequisite for understanding the world. Rather, even for the believer philosophical thought is a prerequisite for that "understanding" of revelation that is theology. The general point I wish to make about the thirteenth century is that, contrary to what might have been expected and contrary to the judgment of some historians, in that era faith, rather than restricting the range of natural reason, came to function as a kind of motivation for asserting man's natural capacity to understand himself and the world in which he finds himself. It is one of the ironies of the history of philosophy that whenever philosophy sets out to separate itself from a religious context, its scope, its vision of its range, becomes drastically limited. More to the present point—and this is the paradox to which I referred earlier—in the *via moderna* of the fourteenth century there is a devaluation of philosophy which is a function of the devaluation of reality that nominalism requires.

Already in Scotus we find the beginnings of skepticism as to the natural capacities of human reason. To be sure, his doubts are expressed when he is discussing the need for revelation and the importance of religious faith. Nevertheless, Scotus seems to see as a danger what Aquinas clearly regarded as a strength of philosophy as it was developed by Aristotle, namely, the assumptions that reality is intelligible, that it delivers itself up to man according to the canons of

science in the Aristotelian sense, that there are necessary truths which express the real order. For Ockham the world is a world of individuals that happen to have been created by God; a completely contingent world is incapable of delivering up objects for necessary judgments. If having science, really knowing, is knowing what cannot be otherwise, then it is difficult to see how we can have knowledge, in the required sense, of a world which could have been otherwise, could indeed not have been at all. The only evidential knowledge for Ockham will be immediate judgments of present fact. To judge that Socrates is seated when we see him sitting there carries its evidence on its face, and of course Socrates cannot both be seated and not seated. But anything like a universal necessary empirical judgment is excluded by Ockham. The consequences of such doubts about philosophy have their ramification for theology, which ceases to be a science for Ockham; he ends in a fideistic stance where nothing counts for or against what the Christian believes.

The *via moderna* does not involve any turning away from Christian faith, but the reasonableness of faith and the intelligibility of what is believed are called into question at the same time that philosophy as it was understood in the thirteenth century is rejected. At the present time, it seems fair to say, English language philosophers feel more affinity with such men as Ockham than with the men of the thirteenth century. To no small degree this interest is due to the judgment that the terminist logic which Ockham espouses foreshadows some recent developments in logic, but it is also true that commentators on Ockham tend to find similarities to Hume and to the logical atomism of the early twentieth century. That philosophers of the twentieth century should feel this compatibility with the *via moderna* of the fourteenth century may tell us something quite important about both. What is at issue here is not simply logic but the philosophy of logic, and under the latter must be grouped various epistemological and ontological views or attitudes. Far more than notation is involved when such judgments as "Every man is animal" become expressed by " $(x) Fx \supset Gx$ ." Ultimately, for many, such a symbolic formulation comes to express a vision of the world and of human knowledge, a vision according to which everything is itself and nothing more, where the similarity of things is reduced to their otherness, and the paradigm of knowledge is sought in such judgments as "Socrates is seated now." Such a vision is an advance only if it adequately represents reality. If we are now turning away from this desert horizon by noticing that such a vision is an inadequate account of how we speak, we have still a long way to go, and the direction, of course, is not backward to the thirteenth century, but ahead to new expressions of the intelligibility of being and of man as *capax Dei* because he is first *capax entis*.

## CHAPTER II

# John Duns Scotus

### A. *The Man and His Work*

John Duns, the Scot, was born about 1266 and entered the Franciscan convent at Dumfries in 1277. Extremely little is known of his early life; there is controversy about his birthplace, where he joined the Franciscans, and so forth. It is held that he lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard both at Cambridge and at Oxford, at the latter university about 1300. He taught at Paris from 1302 to 1303, was exiled because of the part he took in a dispute between king and pope, but was back in Paris in 1304. In 1307 he was sent to the Franciscan house of studies in Cologne, where he died the following year, 1308. Meager facts, no doubt, and facts about a brief life, but Duns Scotus, called the Subtle Doctor, is a most important figure despite the brevity of his career.

The writings of Scotus are of difficult access for a number of reasons, although we now have reason to hope that reliable texts of all his works will be forthcoming. The great difficulty concerns Scotus' commentary on the *Sentences*. He commented on this work at Cambridge, Oxford, and Paris. The so-called *Opus Oxoniense* grows out of his Oxford lectures, but was continued and worked over in Paris; also called the *Ordinatio*, it seems to have been an effort to incorporate in one commentary what was best from Scotus' various expositions of the *Sentences*. A critical edition of the *Ordinatio* began to appear in 1950. Besides his commentaries on the *Sentences*, Scotus produced some *Quaestiones quodlibetales* and *Quaestiones subtilissimae in metaphysicam*; the *Collationes*, conferences given at Paris and Oxford; and logical works based on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. A little work on the First Cause, *Tractatus de primo principio*, is of particular importance, not least because it seems to be a late work. The so-called *Theoremata* is of disputed authenticity; those who favor its authenticity feel that Scotus blocked it out, perhaps dictated it. Like the work on the First Principle, it is valuable for determining Scotus' thinking on the reach of reason with respect to knowledge of

God. The writings of Scotus strike us as inchoative rather than complete, as elements of a developed view rather than that development. But such a judgment refers to them as a totality. Particular treatments, individual discussions, exhibit sureness, profundity, and, yes, subtlety.

### B. *Being and God*

To begin our discussion of Scotus with a treatment of what he had to say about the nature of being and of our concept of it, and of the relation of that to our knowledge of God, is admittedly to begin with a much controverted and contradicted portion of his doctrine. However, no one can overlook the centrality of these questions for gaining some purchase on Scotus' characteristic teachings, and so, with half apologies, this is where we shall begin.

The medievals had learned from Aristotle that there is a science whose subject is being as being, a science which, unlike those called special or particular, is concerned, not with this kind of being or that, but rather with the characters of being prior to its particularization into kinds. For Aristotle this meant that while natural science concerns itself with mobile or changeable being and mathematics with quantitative being, a further science, what came to be called metaphysics, is concerned with being as being. Being as the subject of metaphysics, then, is being as prior to particular kinds of being. Now this position can of course mean several things, but what it did not mean for Aristotle is that insofar as "being" is a more general term than "mobile being" there must be some reality that answers to the more general term "being," just insofar as it is a general term. We can study what an animal is without introducing into our explanation what pertains to this animal or that, but this does not suggest that there is an animal which is no kind of animal. In short, the recognition of levels of generality in our conceptions is not tantamount to the claim that there are levels of reality which respond just as such to those levels of generality.

Scotus would introduce a qualification here, his famous formal distinction, and we will return to that, but even in the terms we have used in presenting the context of what he has to say about being, he would not be in complete agreement with the foregoing. The whole point of the science of being as being, he would want to say, is that there is some being which is not confined to the types or kinds or categories of being—a being which is not, accordingly, finite. Scotus' ultimate interest in being is in infinite being, and what he has to say about being as transcendent must always be understood with reference to his basic theological, or God-centered, interest. What is the relation between finite and infinite being, between God and man?

How do our concepts, and the names which express those concepts, include both God and man?

*Transcendentals.* We must first see something of what Scotus had to say about the relation between categories and transcendental attributes of being. The categories of being are what Aristotle thought they were, types or kinds of being of which the clues are to be found in an analysis of predication. Some general predicates of individuals express what they are, others how much, yet others how, and so forth. The enumeration of such types of predicates results in an enumeration of the fundamental or basic kinds of being: substance and the various accidents—quantity, quality, place, time, and so forth. One category of being is different from another; that which falls into the category of substance is different from that which falls into the category of quality. The categories represent diversity and fragmentation in reality, and the question arises as to the meaning of a term that can be predicated of all of these diverse kinds, of a term like “being.” Substance can be said to be, as can quantities, qualities, and so forth, and if we make of the verb a common noun, “being,” our question emerges. Does “being” express something other than what the categorical terms express? Unlike such terms as “substance,” “quantity,” and so forth, the term “being” is said to be a transcendental term, which means at least this: what it expresses is not confined to one of the categories. Scotus accepted a long tradition according to which there are other terms which function as does “being,” other transcendental terms, that is, terms which are said to be convertible properties of being. That difficult phrase may be translated as follows: another term is, like “being,” a transcendental term if it can be predicated of whatever “being” can be predicated. Since “being” can be predicated of each of the categories, any other terms portraying the same characteristic were called transcendental terms. Among such terms the tradition recognized “one,” “true,” and “good.” Anything that can be said to be can also be said to be, in some sense, one, true, and good. As has been mentioned, Scotus accepted this notion of transcendental, but he did not accept its apparent restriction to transcendentals of this type. In a most important passage he gives a list of various kinds of transcendentals (*Opus ox.*, lib. 1, dist. 8, q. 3, nn. 18–19).

The passage occurs in the context of his asking what kind of predicates can be predicated formally of God. What does the question mean? Formal predication here refers to a real correspondent to the content of a concept whose name is predicated. Thus, from the very outset Scotus' concern with transcendental concepts is a concern with concepts whose content indicates or means or signifies something in the real, that is, extramental order. This of course does not distinguish transcendental concepts from other, categorical concepts. The concept expressed by the term “substance” expresses something in the real

order, and so too with the concept expressed by "quantity." What then is distinctive of transcendental concepts? Here is Scotus' description of the nature of a transcendental: "*Ita transcendens quodcumque nullum habet genus sub quo contineatur*" (that is transcendental which is not contained under some one genus). This definition certainly applies to the more traditional notion of transcendental properties of being such as those which are convertible with it, namely, one, true, and good. But it soon becomes quite clear that Scotus has no intention of confining transcendentality to that traditional list. Those who would identify being transcendental with the items on that list would consider that, like being, that which is transcendental is common to everything, that it can be predicated of whatever is. But Scotus wants to speak of transcendental concepts which are not thus common or universal. It is the contextual question that provides a clue to what he has in mind. What Scotus wants to say is that all notions (and the terms expressing them) which are common to God and creature, or which are proper to God alone, are transcendental concepts. Thus, such a term as "wise" (or "wisdom") is not predicable of everything of which "being" is predicated, but it saves the notion of transcendentality because it is not confined to any one genus. Wisdom is found in God and in man, and while the latter is categorizable, God is not. In short, for Scotus, as for Aquinas, the categories of being enumerated by Aristotle are categories or divisions of finite being. God, therefore, cannot be in a category. Any name which is proper to God, or is common to God and creature, cannot express something which is included under some one category, is confined to a single category. Scotus can now amend his description of the transcendental: it is whatever rises above all genera and transcends all categories.

Following Father Wolter, we can here summarize Scotus' views in the following manner. For Scotus being is the first of the transcendentals. There are certain convertible or coextensive attributes of being which are also transcendentals, namely, one, true, and good. Furthermore, there are disjunctive attributes of being which are also transcendental as disjunctive. For example, finite-or-infinite and substance-or-accident. We can say that being is finite or infinite, substance or accident, and when we say this, we are thinking of being and saying something about it prior to its division into categories. Moreover, and here we touch on something of special interest to Scotus, pure perfections are transcendental. What he has in mind here are the divine attributes, concepts which are proper to God or common to God and creature, as the example of wisdom above. What can be predicated of God is a transcendental, that is, above the categories, precisely because God cannot be contained in the categories of finite being. This is true both of such attributes as omniscience (predicable of God alone) and of wisdom (predicable of God and of some creatures).

*The Univocity of Being.* It can be said that little if anything of the

foregoing goes contrary to what may be found, at least implicitly, in such a predecessor of Scotus as Aquinas. We come now to what turned out to be one of the most controversial claims in Scotus, namely, that "being" is predicated univocally of substance and accident and, indeed, of God and creature. The controversy on this doctrine has been long and intense, and it has most frequently been conducted as a conflict between religious orders. Because of the desire to triumph over an opponent, injustice has been done on both sides; when one looks into some of the literature on this controversy, it is very difficult to discover just precisely what the point of difference is supposed to be. Here we will first give a brief summary of the position according to which "being" is analogically, and not univocally, common to substance and accident or to God and creature. Then we will look at precisely what Scotus meant when he maintained the opposite. Most importantly, we shall ask if there is a real or only a verbal opposition.

In our chapter on Aquinas we went to some lengths to portray his conception of what an analogous term is, and we want now only to recall salient aspects of that presentation. A term is univocally common to many if it is predicated of them with exactly the same meaning. A term is equivocally common to many if it is predicated of them in such a way that it has a totally different and unrelated meaning in each occurrence. An analogous term is one which is neither univocal nor equivocal in the sense defined. For Aquinas a term is analogously common to many if it has the same *res significata*, and that reality is signified in different ways or modes in each occurrence. The great example, we recall, was "healthy." Health is the *res significata*, but when an animal, its coat, and its exercise are called healthy, that *res* is being signified in various related ways: the subject of health, the sign of health, the preserver of health. For Aquinas "being" is an analogous term as common to substance and accident. The reality signified is existence, *esse*, but the way in which it is signified varies insofar as substance is called being or quantity, quality, and so forth are called being. Substance is that which exists *per se*; the accidents are various modes of inherent being, of inherence or modification of substance. The parallel with the example of healthy is clear, the verdict expected: "being" is an analogous and not a univocal or equivocal term.

Scotus maintains that "being" is univocal. Now one thing is perfectly clear. If Scotus means by univocal what Aquinas means by it, then there is a contradiction. However, and obviously, if the two men have different understandings of what "univocal" means, the opposition between them is verbal and may cover an agreement when the verbal discrepancies are cleared up.

What now does Scotus mean by a univocal term? "Lest there be

any quibble about the term 'univocation,' by a univocal concept I mean one that is one in such a way that its unity suffices for contradiction when it is affirmed and denied of the same thing. It is sufficient as well for it to be a syllogistic middle term, such that the extremes united in the middle are one in such a way that the conclusion follows without the fallacy of equivocation." (*Oxon.*, 1, d. 3, q. 2, n. 5) While not unrelated to what Aquinas meant by a univocal term, these two stipulations of the univocal term that Scotus gives would not be for Aquinas peculiar to what he, Aquinas, means by a univocal term, but would be characteristics common to univocal and analogous terms. What Aquinas meant by a univocal term, again, is one which is common to several things according to exactly the same meaning. Can one conclude that Scotus has, by making quite clear what he meant by univocal, made it equally clear that there is no dispute between Aquinas and himself on this matter?

One is tempted to think so. It has often been pointed out that the adversaries Scotus had in mind when he insisted on the univocity of "being" as common to substance and accident, or on the univocity of terms common to God and creature, did not include Thomas Aquinas. Furthermore, it must be said that the way in which some opponents of Scotus on this matter define the unity of the analogous term is unintelligible in itself and not the position of Aquinas. Thus, many Thomists have held that the analogous term has many meanings which are similar to one another, but not in the sense that there is a common component of the various meanings, but rather in some obscure sense of similarity of structure. As a matter of fact, many attempted explanations of the unity of the various meanings of an analogous term are a postponement of an explanation rather than an explanation. For example, in discussing what is going on when "being" is predicated of God and creatures, many Thomists have said that what this means is that as existence is related to the created essence so is existence related to the divine essence, where the similarity is imperfect and where *no term in the one proportion bears the same meaning as it has in its occurrence in the second proportion*. But surely this comes down to saying that there is no intelligible community of meaning between "being" said of God and "being" said of a creature. On this understanding the analogous term, as Scotus suggests, neither permits contradiction nor escapes the fallacy of equivocation.

It is necessary to admit the force of Scotus' opposition to the unity of the analogous term thus "explained." At the same time it must be stressed that the explanation Scotus opposes is not to be found in Aquinas. If there is a *ratio communis* of an analogous term, as there most assuredly is for Aquinas, this is so because of what Aquinas called the *res significata*. The common notion of being as predicable

of substance and accidents is, for Aquinas, *habens esse* or *id quod habet esse*. The key thing signified by being, the *res significata*, is *esse*, existence, actuality. For Aquinas, when a thing is said to be, it is not said to be actuality but to be actual; what is is a mode of being, a way of being actual. Substance is actual in one way and accident in another, and when an accident is said to be, we must understand the actuality of substance. The kind of actuality substance has is the proper notion of being, and that proper notion is referred to when anything else is said to be actual. Thus, while it is necessary to insist that substantial existence is one thing and accidental existence another, the second kind of existence cannot be understood without reference to the first.

The great flaw in the explanation of the relationship between the two meanings of being, accidental and substantial, that Scotus rejects is that it imagines these as two unrelated kinds of being which in some mysterious way are related. There is nothing mysterious about the way they are related for Thomas Aquinas. Accidental being is a secondary mode of being which, in order to be explained, must be referred to substantial being. For Aquinas, then, what insures the unity of the meanings of "being" is, not *esse* considered abstractly, but the proper mode of existing which is substance. When "being" occurs as a middle term in a syllogism, consequently, it must be understood either as meaning substantial being directly or by way of reference. Undeniably this complicates discussions of contradiction when "being" occurs as the predicate in two propositions where the subject of one may be a substance and that of the other an accident. The point for Aquinas, however, is that substantial and accidental being are not distinct and autonomous modes; rather one is primary and the other secondary, and the secondary must always make reference to the primary.

Is this sufficient to bring Scotus and Aquinas into agreement? Unfortunately not. What Scotus wants to maintain is that "being" has a meaning which is quite independent of substantial and accidental modes of being. He wants being to have a common notion or meaning such that there is no difference whatsoever in what is meant when one says that Socrates is a being and that red exists. Scotus does not deny, of course, that the substantial mode of existence is one thing and the accidental mode of existence another, but he feels that we can prescind from or ignore this further difference and understand "being" as meaning some utterly one and simple thing as said of substance and accident. One might feel that it was not necessary for him to make this claim in order to insure the possibility of contradiction and the avoidance of the fallacy of equivocation; nevertheless, Scotus clearly thought it was necessary and there is, consequently, a divergence between him and Aquinas on this point. This is true,

despite the undeniable historical fact that Aquinas was not the opponent Scotus had in mind. Scotus' critique of such men as Henry of Ghent is well taken, and the Thomist who has a correct understanding of the behavior of analogous terms can accept that critique; furthermore, he can accept as necessary the stipulations Scotus lays down for "being" as common to substance and accident and for terms common to God and creature, namely, that they must have sufficient unity of meaning to permit significant contradiction, on the one hand, and to avoid the fallacy of equivocation, on the other.

What he must nonetheless recognize as a great difference between Scotus and Aquinas is the former's insistence that being has a common meaning which makes no reference to, say, substantial being and accidental being, and which is accordingly absolutely one and the same. The long prominence in Thomistic circles of discussion of "analogy of proper proportionality" should not be permitted to obscure this fundamental difference. "Analogy of proper proportionality" involves much confusion, but it is historically inaccurate to suggest that Aquinas and Scotus are as one, once this confusion is recognized and "analogy of proper proportionality" is put in proper perspective. Scotus wants "being" to be univocally common to substance and accident in such a way that "univocal" involves, besides the two characteristics he mentions, precisely the meaning it has for Aquinas. That is, Scotus wants "being" to be common to substance and accident in such a way that it has exactly the same meaning as predicated of both. This Aquinas emphatically denies. Scotus and Aquinas are unalterably opposed on the matter of the univocity of "being."

*The Scotist's Reply.* Father Allan Wolter has addressed himself to this question, and it may be well to examine his critique of analogous terms, a critique launched in behalf of Scotus and in an effort to clarify what Scotus had to say. Father Wolter asks us to consider the following syllogism:

Whatever is divine is God.  
But the Mosaic law is divine;  
Therefore, the Mosaic law is God.

This syllogism involves a fallacy of equivocation since the middle term is analogous and does not mean the same thing in its two occurrences. The Mosaic law can be said to be divine, not because it is God, but because it issues from God. Furthermore, and consequently, we can say of the Mosaic law both that it is divine and that it is not divine. If "good" is an analogous term, we can say of God that he is good and that he is not good. And so forth. All this is perfectly true; equally, it is true that it is this sort of thing that bothers Scotus. What is interesting here is that it indicates to us the nature of Scotus' moves.

One might be inclined to say that since "divine" has diverse meanings, we are going to have to be careful in understanding sentences in which it occurs. And so too with "good," "wise," and so forth. It is this inclination that led to the development of the notion of analogous meaning. Scotus, on the other hand, bridles at this ongoing diversity of meaning in the terms of our language. He does not like it. He wants to insist that underneath this diversity there is a unity that is absolute and simple and unalloyed. That, for example, when we say that substance is and that an accident is, although on one level we must recognize that our verb means different things, on a more profound level it means exactly the same thing. Let us not ask how this would work out with the syllogism originally offered for our consideration, since even Scotus himself would be hard pressed to find a meaning for "divine" that enabled him to escape the fallacy of equivocation that syllogism involves. Let us not detain ourselves any further with the way in which "being" is common to substance and accident. I think it is fair to say that anyone who thinks he is making an identical claim when he asserts that men exist and that colors exist is confused about men and colors rather than in possession of a more profound grasp. What really motivates Scotus all along is the question of how our language can function when we talk about God. It is terms common to God and creature that are Scotus' true interest.

*The Divine Names.* The way in which "being" (and other names) is common to God and creature differs from the way it is common to substance and accident. In the latter case we want to say that one limited or finite mode of being is prior to others and must be referred to in understanding the secondary modes. This, of course, is the basis for claiming that the science of being as being is principally concerned with substance, the primary mode of finite being. The categorical modes of being are participated modes. Substance is not existence, but a mode of existing. When we turn to predicates common to God and creature, the tendency is to say that the created mode of perfection is participated and the divine mode is unparticipated. That is, Socrates is wise, but God is wisdom. We do not mean exactly the same thing when we say Socrates is wise and God is wise. Wisdom is an accident in Socrates; it is something he comes to possess and, alas, might come to lose. To say that God is wise is to speak of what he is. Now "wise" is a word of our language, and it acquires the uses it has with reference to the things we know and are likely to speak about. If we assume that it signifies something we first encounter in creatures, when we say that God is wise we are speaking of him, denominating him, from his creatures. But we would also want to say that in this case what we first noticed and spoke of in creatures is an effect in them of God, a sharing or imitation in something that God is, not in the sense that he shares in it, but in the sense that he

is it. Thus, we might want to say that, taking all this into account, the creature is denominated from God.

Scotus will object to this as the final word on the matter, since it clearly invokes the notion of analogy. Such a term as "wise" has different meanings as said of God and creature. What he wants is to insist on some core meaning of the term owing to which, given that meaning, the term means the exact same thing as said of creatures and God. In short, he wants the term to be univocal, and not only in his sense but in the sense univocity has for someone like Aquinas.

Scotus is confronted with something far more difficult here, since what univocity is being called upon to bridge is the difference between finite and infinite being. Let there be no mistake about it. Scotus is not inadequately aware of the radical difference between God and creature. He does not want to say that being in the sense of unparticipated being is univocally common to God and creature, or that being in the sense of participated being is common to God and creature. What he wants is a meaning of "being" which prescind from finitude and infinitude, a meaning owing to which we can understand "being" as univocally common to God and creature. In his search for that meaning he asks a most important question: Whence comes our knowledge of God?

The explanation of analogy that Scotus rejects maintained that "being" has two meanings, one of which was proper to God and the other of which was proper to creatures. Analogy was then invoked to speak of the relationship between these two proper meanings. But, Scotus asks, where do we get the meaning of "being" which is proper to God? Do we just have it? Is it given to us directly by God by way of some kind of illumination? The Aristotelian teaching on the origin of intellectual knowledge had it that all our concepts are formed against the background of our knowledge of sensible things. But sensible things are all of them finite, and thus it would seem that all our concepts have the limitation of finitude. How then can the terms signifying such concepts be predicated of infinite being? Scotus is asking, in effect, how we can abstract knowledge of the infinite from knowledge of the finite. The effect here would then be so incommensurate with its cause that the claim seems at the least shaky.

Scotus maintains that we have no concept, gained as a result of abstraction, that expresses what is proper to infinite being. Any concepts expressive of something proper to God (for example, Pure Act, First Cause, Infinite Being) are the results of reasoning and not products of abstraction. Now if concepts expressive of what is proper to God are arrived at in the conclusion of an argument, there must be in the premises of the argument a concept functioning as middle term which bridges the gap between the finite and infinite. Thus, if we should reason to the view that God is infinite being, we are in the

conclusion restricting or modifying the concept of being which figured in the premises, and in the premises our concept of being must be such that it is open to this modification. Thus, what is proper to God is infinite being, not being; likewise, what is proper to the creature is finite being, not being. Being, prescinding from finite and infinite, is common to them both. In short, the being proper to creatures and the being proper to God involve a common sort of being which is proper to neither.

At this point we must take into consideration a passage in Scotus that has often puzzled students. It is a passage in which Scotus denies that "being" is predicated univocally of all things. "As to the question, I grant that 'being' is not predicated univocally of all things. Neither is it predicated equivocally, for something is said to be predicated equivocally when those things of which it is predicated are not attributed to one another. For when they are attributed, then it is predicated analogically. But because it ('being') does not have one concept corresponding to it, it signifies all things essentially according to their proper perfection and simply equivocally according to the logician. But because those things which are signified are essentially attributed to one another ('being' is predicated) analogously, according to the metaphysicians." (*Metaph.*, 4, q. 1, n. 12) This passage had led to the gleeful claim that everything we have been concerned with earlier, while it is undeniably to be found in Scotus, is not his only, and perhaps not his final, view on the matter. Father Wolter does not find that the passage presents any particular difficulty. For him, all Scotus is admitting is that when "being" occurs in two propositions and in one of them bears the meaning of substantial being and in the other the meaning of accidental being, or when it occurs in two propositions and in one bears the meaning of finite being and in the other the meaning of infinite being, then the term "being" is not univocal but analogous. But, he goes on to say, this is true because what is under consideration are two proper meanings of "being," proper meanings which imply and/or contain a common meaning, and when it is this common meaning we have in mind, then "being" is univocally common.

It seems to me that Father Wolter's interpretation is valuable. Considered all by itself, it may seem excessively subtle, but after all it is the teaching of the *Doctor Subtilis* that is being examined, and and Father Wolter's subtle explanation has the great merit of retaining a unified Scotistic doctrine (and we must remember that the writings of Scotus were not composed over a great span of time). It is of course a further question whether one can accept the claim that being, owing to a common as opposed to proper meaning, is univocally common to substance and accident, or to God and creature.

## C. Faith and Reason

Like the majority of medieval thinkers, Scotus was conscious of the limits of human reason and of the necessity of revelation. As a theologian he considered the teachings of the philosophers from the vantage point of his faith and, not surprisingly, found them inadequate on a number of crucial points. The question has been raised whether Scotus recognized anything like an independent or autonomous philosophy. Our earlier considerations will have prepared us to recognize this as an extremely tricky question. For the man of faith, needless to say, what the philosophers have had to say about man, his nature and destiny, and about God will seem insufficient. Insofar as the insufficiency and inadequacy are assessed from the viewpoint of faith no judgment of *philosophical* inadequacy is being passed. It could hardly be construed a fault on Aristotle's part if he failed to speak of man's supernatural destiny, of the Incarnation and the Trinity, and so forth. Philosophy is never enough for the Christian; for him what men can come to know by their natural powers must be supplemented by what God has chosen to reveal. Many who point this out go on to suggest that for many medievals, and Scotus is said to be one of them, philosophy as philosophy requires the influence of faith in order to achieve its own goals. This claim too is ambiguous, however, since it may mean simply that the Christian mentality should provide an impetus to do philosophy and that the faith of the believer gives *extrinsic* guidelines to philosophy. Sometimes the suggestion seems to be that for such a thinker as Scotus truths of faith are regulative within philosophy. That this suggestion is less than well-founded in the case of Scotus is best seen by consulting his work on the First Principle, *Tractatus de primo principio*. That this is a philosophical work by a believer is manifest from the beginning when Scotus invokes the aid of God in his effort to show by reason alone that God is what he has revealed himself to be in *Exodus*, namely, being. The whole direction of the work is such that it is clear that the arguments formulated are taken to be conclusive for establishing what is attributed to God, conclusive in such a way that none of them makes any appeal to faith or revelation. Scotus' attitude as a believer provides the personal setting for this effort, but the whole point of the work is that one who follows the arguments must, on the basis of the arguments, assent to the conclusions reached. In the same way, many of Scotus' judgments of the inadequacy of philosophical positions are such that he wants to show that inadequacy on philosophical grounds. That his personal motivation, that the starting point of his own suspicion of inadequacy, may have been his Christian faith is neither here nor there in assessing the validity of such attempts to

show philosophical inadequacy. The relations between belief and reasoning are various and nuanced in the most straightforward of medieval thinkers; we should expect that they will be yet more subtle in the case of Scotus, as indeed they are. On the face of it, almost a priori, it is unlikely that Scotus would have held to a simplistic position according to which philosophizing is theologizing. A few soundings in his works suffice to convince that here as elsewhere he is incorrigibly complicated and nuanced, and this in response to the phenomenon in question.

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## CHAPTER III

# *William of Ockham*

### A. *The Man and His Work*

William was born in Ockham, near London, perhaps in the year 1285, but certainly between 1280–1290. No definite information about his early life is had except that he joined the Franciscan Order while quite young and began his studies at Oxford, where he received his master of theology degree before 1320. The story that he studied under Scotus at Oxford seems just that, a story. This is not to say that Ockham was not heavily influenced by the writings of Scotus. Ockham's career at Oxford was cut short; at the completion of his lectures on the *Sentences* he was not awarded a teaching chair at the university. Indeed, the chancellor of the university accused Ockham of teaching dangerous and heretical doctrines. This accusation was made at the papal court in Avignon in 1323, and William was summoned there in 1324 to answer the charges. He spent four years at Avignon while a commission of theologians considered his case. During these years William continued to write, both treatises and commentaries, and he may have entertained quodlibetal questions at Avignon. The assumption is that he spent these years at the Franciscan convent there. It was during this period that William was caught up in the debate within the order concerning poverty. The dispute soon became one between the master general, with whom William sided, and the pope, John XXII. When the dissenting Franciscans fled Avignon to avoid papal censure, they sought the protection of the German emperor, Louis the Bavarian. It should be said that Ockham's opposition to the Pope was based on his judgment that the current Pope was in conflict with earlier papal pronouncements on the matter in question. Unfortunately, the appeal to the Emperor made the matter political as well as theological. In 1328 the Pope convoked a general chapter of the order and demanded that the Franciscans elect a new general. It was at this point that William fled Avignon in company with the general and other leaders of the opposition to the Pope. The upshot was that William and the others were excommunicated both by the Pope and their fellow Franciscans. Ockham settled in Munich and,

after John XXII's death in 1334, continued his opposition to the Avignon popes. In 1347 Louis of Bavaria died, and Ockham sought reconciliation with the pope and his order. A formula of submission has survived, but we do not know the outcome of this effort at reconciliation. Ockham died in 1349 and was buried in the Franciscan church in Munich. He is thought to have been a victim of the Black Plague.

Ockham's difficulty with the papacy led to a series of writings on political themes; our interest is in the philosophical and theological writings, all of which were perhaps written during his Oxford and Avignon periods. His theological works include, of course, a commentary on the *Sentences*, quodlibetal questions, writings on the Eucharist and predestination. He commented on Aristotle's *Physics* and composed a number of allied works. Of particular interest are his writings on logic, which consist of commentaries on Aristotle and also various independent logical treatises.

### B. Knowledge

A fair notion of Ockham's importance can be had by considering his rejection of previous medieval solutions to the problem of universals. What he has to say here has ramifications throughout his doctrine, ramifications which set him definitively aside from his great predecessors and put philosophy and theology on a new track, the *via moderna*.

The problem of universals, as we have seen, requires for its solution the introduction of logical, epistemological, and ontological considerations. As the problem was transmitted to the Middle Ages by Porphyry, the options for solution were the Platonic and Aristotelian. At first blush the choice may seem to be between a theory which admits more than individuals and one that does not; rather, it should be said that the difference resides in Plato's admission of a class of individuals beyond sensible, material individuals, namely, the Ideas, and that Aristotle's criticism of Plato comes down to a rejection of the imposition on *any* extramental individuals of the mental relations established by our act of knowing. If we confine ourselves to the Aristotelian viewpoint, one according to which the world is a world of individuals (to be is to be one), the further question arises as to what it is in individuals that permits us to form universal concepts and that in turn can lead to asking after the grounds of real similarities among existing individuals. There seem to be certain checks and controls exercised by individuals over our tendency to generalize. In one sense, it seems possible to group individuals in any way that pleases us, whatever their "real" similarities or dissimilarities (for example, everything in this room), but, on the other hand, with respect to certain kinds of questions that we address to reality, our

generalizing or grouping seems constrained by the way things are. The range of questions relevant to the Aristotelian conception of demonstrative science and the Porphyrian tree exercised great influence over medieval discussions of the problem of universals, a fact that accounts both for the undeniable precision of many of the solutions proposed as well as for the suspicion that a number of allied and difficult issues are being overlooked.

The problem of universals was most often discussed in terms of common nouns like "man" which occur as predicate in such a list of statements as the following: (1) Socrates is man, (2) Plato is man, (3) Aristotle is man, and so forth. If the predicate in these sentences does not refer to some individual other than those denoted by the proper names which function as subjects, it would follow that what "man" means is found in Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and so forth. That is, we employ "Socrates" and "man" to talk about the same thing, and yet when we use "man" to talk about that thing we are not thinking of it in the same way as when we employ "Socrates." That is, sentence (1) above is not a roundabout way of saying, "Socrates is Socrates." If it were, of course, sentence (2) could be taken to mean that Plato is Socrates. As this was thought about, the tendency was to say that such common nouns express, not what is peculiar to Socrates and Plato, but what is common to them. But, obviously, "man" does not *mean* "what is common to Socrates and Plato," and this aspect of community (another term for universality) came to be located in the mind of the knower. "To be said of many" or "to be said of many numerically different things," which are less and more specific ways of explicating universality, were thought to be what *happens* to a nature, say human nature, as it is known by us. This led Aquinas and Scotus, though with notable differences, to the notion of a common nature, or rather to a nature not yet modified by universality *or by individuality*. Human nature is individuated in Socrates, Plato, and so forth, and it is universalized, that is, taken to be some one thing that is predicable of many individuals. Once more, "to be predicable of many individuals" is no part of the meaning of "man"; it is not a constitutive of human nature, and as an accident of that nature universality was seen as something conferred by the human mind. Individuation, on the other hand, while equally accidental to human nature, for Aquinas is conferred not by mind but by matter with quantitative designations.

If universality as such was considered to be not part of the furniture of the extramental world, this is not to say that the natures to which it is attached in our knowing are not really different. The difference between a man and a horse, for example, was not considered to be the result of our mode of knowing; rather the difference is there awaiting our recognition. Another sort of difficulty arose in terms of

an ascent of the Porphyrian tree, one that led to a difference between Scotus and Thomists, if not precisely between Scotus and Aquinas. Once we notice that the individual referred to by "Socrates" and "man" in our sentence (1) above can also be referred to by a number of other predicates, like "animal," "living thing," and "substance," predicates which are arranged hierarchically on the Porphyrian tree, the question arises as to what in the individual permits this variety of cognitive "fixes" on it, fixes which are explained in terms of greater and lesser universality. Are they grounded on real slices in the thing, so to speak, on formal differences, or do they rather attest to our mode of knowing, which proceeds from confused to less confused knowledge of things?

Perhaps these few words will be sufficient to recall the context of the problem. The solution that has been dubbed "moderate realism," Aquinas' solution to the problem of universals, would hold, from a logical point of view, that "predicability of many" is a logical relation consequent on our mode of knowing, from an epistemological point of view, that the concept of human nature, to which universality attaches, answers, with respect to its content, to a nature really found in various individuals, but that our concept prescind from the marks of individuation and thus is not commensurate with individuals as individuals. Finally, from a metaphysical point of view the source of such a nature really found in many individuals would be sought in God, and reference would be made to the divine Ideas since the various natures in the created world are different expressions of God's awareness of his own imitability. What now of Ockham?

We cannot avoid the fact that Ockham's position on this problem is described as nominalist, but we must emphasize that the use of such tags does not provide us with a clear and distinct notion of nominalism which can then be blithely applied to Ockham. It is far wiser, having noted that Ockham is called a nominalist, to go on to examine what he had to say, with the idea that the results of such an inquiry will provide us with at least one sense of "nominalism." There is little doubt that Ockham wishes to discard the epistemological and ontological dimensions of earlier medieval discussions of the status of universals. In a fashion that is, or at least has become, characteristic of his countrymen in philosophy, Ockham exhibits an empiricist bent that leads him to want to ground whatever he says on individuals and his experience of them. Here we may mention another cliché of treatments of Ockham, namely, that famous razor. The formulation that is so much cited, *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*, does not, as it happens, occur anywhere in Ockham's writings, but that is really of little importance. His spirit is summed up in that dictum: let us never introduce more than is required for an explanation. Parsimony in the apparatus of explanation is a mark of Ockham fully evident in his discussion of universals.

In his criticism of the position just sketched Ockham goes right for the jugular, that of a human nature really present in many individuals. Why should we speak of that nature as in some way awaiting individuation as it awaits the universality conferred by the mind? The world is a world of individuals through and through; the nature is not something distinct, in reality, from its individuating characteristics. If the nature predicated of Socrates does not include those individuating characteristics without which Socrates is not, well then we are saying of Socrates that he is what he is not. The *natura absolute considerata* of which Aquinas speaks, the nature regarded without reference to universality or particularity, such as human nature in itself, is, if not a fiction for Ockham, certainly nothing he considers deserving of serious attention. The crux of the matter for him seems to be that he can proceed very well without making any reference to a *natura absolute considerata* (it is this that commentators have in mind when they speak of the "common nature"). Universality and individuation can be handled as purely logical problems; they attach to language and consequently to thought, and the problem of universals becomes the logical problem of the behavior of common and proper names. The logical explanation should make no reference to unindividuated natures which are somehow in individuals (there are no such natures); consequently, the logical explanation need not bother itself with reference to the mind's ability to abstract such a nature from its individuating conditions. There is, nonetheless, an epistemological problem: How does our mind form universal notions against the background of its experience with a world of individuals?

With Ockham it is not so much the terminology of explanation that changes as the sense of the terms used. Thus Ockham will speak of abstractive knowledge, which he contrasts with intuitive knowledge, and we must achieve an understanding of this distinction. By intuitive cognition Ockham means a judgment whereby it is evident that the object exists or does not exist. He does not mean by intuitive knowledge sense perception, since the knowledge involved is intellectual, but the object of intuition is present existent fact. This description must be modified in two ways. First, it is taken to include what might be called negative facts, for example, that something does not exist or that it does not have such and such a quality. Second, Ockham admits the logical possibility of an intuition to which no existent fact corresponds, a possibility allowed to accommodate the divine omnipotence, since Ockham holds that God could cause us to have an intuition of a nonexistent object. This possibility is taken to have been realized in cases of prophecy, when God causes men to have intuitive knowledge of facts which do not yet exist. A further modification of the meaning of intuition for Ockham must be introduced when we find that he includes mental states among the objects of intuitive cognition.

Abstractive knowledge is described by way of contrasting it with

intuitive cognition. A first description of abstractive cognition, accordingly, would be that it is such that it provides no evident knowledge that its object exists or does not exist. Further, abstractive knowledge is said to follow on intuitive cognition. If I have known the color of a particular rose, I can later think of that rose and its color even without the presence of the fact. Such cognition does not permit me to say that the rose exists, however, since it may have ceased to do so. Abstract knowledge, for Ockham, is the pale reflection of intuitive cognition.

It is the concept's loss of sharpness and particularity in abstract cognition that provides Ockham with his understanding of the nature of universality. The remembered and abstractly thought-of rose, in losing the particular notes of the once-seen rose, involves a concept answering to the term "rose" that is vague enough to apply to several roses. Notice that this explanation requires no distinction in the particular rose between its thisness and its rosehood; that transition is explained solely in terms of types of human thought and in no wise prejudices a world of individuals through and through. Abstract knowledge expressed in judgments involving universal concepts makes no assertion with respect to factual existence; only when linked with a judgment of intuitive cognition is such a claim involved. Ockham's treatment of supposition corresponds to this duality.

Has Ockham really bypassed the solution to the problem of universals dubbed moderate realism? This question is bound to impose itself when we find that when Ockham asks why in abstractive cognition we form a concept of rose that is not tied down to a particular rose as known in intuitive cognition and which can be applied to many and indeed all roses, he replies that the concept fastens on to the similarity between actually existing individual roses. Now this similarity is real, and that was the fundamental motivation for the introduction of the so-called common nature, that is, the *natura absolute considerata*. Ockham will reply that he is not appealing to a common nature, but of course, as Aquinas' presents the solution of moderate realism, the nature is not actually common or universal in individuals; rather, the real similarity among individuals is the foundation in reality of the one nature expressed in the concept to which attaches the relation of predicability to many. Ockham's demur here may seem to us to be anything but persuasive, and yet it would be quite mistaken to conclude that Ockham's nominalism turns out to be identical with Aquinas' moderate realism. "Every man is risibile" has interest and importance for Ockham only because it is a roundabout way of saying that Socrates is risible, Plato is risible, Aristotle is risible, and so on. For a thinker like Aquinas the universal judgment would not be formed if we did not have experience of some men, but the universal judgment is not merely a shorthand expression for an open series of singular and contingent judgments. Ockham may

finally have confessed that universals constitute an occult problem, but rather than construe this confession of difficulty with a wavering toward moderate realism, we must see that it goes hand in hand with an attitude toward knowledge, toward contingency and necessity, which tends in the direction of a radical empiricism of individual fact and away from an empirically grounded thought whose telos is universal and necessary judgments which involve a qualitative move beyond judgments of particular existent fact. It is not without reason that commentators have expressed Ockham's view of the universal judgment as an open sentence, a propositional function, according to which "Every man is risible" becomes "For all  $x$ , if  $x$  is a man,  $x$  is risible," a translation that makes no ontological commitment to the effect that there are values for  $x$ , and which suggests that if there are such values, the meaning of the universal statement is the sum total of relevant judgments of individual fact.

### C. *Logic*

The new or terminist logic of the fourteenth century, of which Ockham is an adherent and not the founder, does not differ from earlier medieval logic in being divorced from metaphysical and epistemological considerations. Indeed, as we shall see, many of the moves that Ockham makes in logical theory are dictated by his metaphysical and epistemological views.

Ockham gives three senses of "term" and concludes that its precise meaning is such that it is a term which can be either the subject or the predicate of a proposition. "Term" requires a broader sense when we wish to distinguish between categorematic and syncategorematic terms. Of the former, Ockham says that they have a definite and fixed meaning, and his examples are "man," "animal," and "whiteness." The latter, syncategorematic terms, are exemplified by "every," "none," "some," "only," and so forth. These are said not to have any definite and fixed meaning, nor do they signify things distinct from those signified by categorematic terms. "Every" attached to "man" makes the term man stand for all men; when attached to "stone" it stands for all stones.

In distinguishing between absolute and connotative terms Ockham wants to draw a difference between those which signify primarily and have no secondary signification and those on the other hand that have a primary and secondary signification. An example of the latter, of a connotative term, is "white." If we ask what "white" means, we may be told that it means "something that has whiteness," and thus it means both the quality and its bearer. Where Ockham's ontological penchants become clear is in his discussion of absolute terms, terms that signify substances. He does not want to say that "man" signifies the nature humanity and its bearer, since this conjures up for him

the whole business of the common nature. This leads him to the view that "man" *signifies* all men and "animal" *signifies* cows, horses, asses, men, and so on. Away with animality and humanity as *id quod nomen significat*, and we are left ultimately only with individuals. Ockham will insist on the importance of supposition, a doctrine that may be seen to foreshadow contemporary distinctions between meaning and reference, but on crucial occasions, and influenced by his nominalism, Ockham comes very close to identifying meaning and reference. It seems difficult to see that he is doing anything else when he says that "animal" means what it can stand for. He actually defines supposition as the use of a term in a proposition for some thing or things, and normally for the things it signifies. And although he employs the standard distinction between material supposition (for example, "Man is a noun"), simple supposition (for example, "Man is a species"), and personal supposition (for example, "Every man is an animal"), when he speaks of personal supposition, which is the chief kind, he defines it as obtaining when a term stands for what it signifies and is used in its significative function. His doctrine of meaning becomes his doctrine of supposition or reference; logically, what absolute terms mean are individual things because, metaphysically, the only things that are are individual substances and individual qualities. We may no longer find such logical atomism quaint, but it must be insisted that Ockham represents a significant break with the philosophy of logic of the thirteenth century and that, in his case, his logic goes hand in hand with his metaphysics. It is not for us to ask now whether the logic Ockham clearly foreshadows is accidentally or essentially linked to an impoverished metaphysics.

#### D. *Metaphysics*

The criticism of Ockham is not that he has no metaphysics but that he has an excessively diminished one. The basis for this criticism can be seen by asking how Ockham deals with the questions of classical metaphysics, but in this sketch we will confine ourselves to what he has to say about the subject of metaphysics.

That subject, of course, is being as being. Ockham's general approach to metaphysics is by way of criticism of the views of his predecessors, views he conceives to be fraught with confusions he is able to avoid. There is no surprise nor indeed novelty in Ockham's reminder that being as being is not some individual entity apart from other beings, but what is distinctive of him is his contention that being is univocal in such a way that it applies in a wholly undifferentiated way to whatever is and, of course, whatever is is an individual. There is nothing whatsoever that mediates the maximum universality of the term "being" and this or that individual to which it can be applied. By the same token, it stands for accidents in a direct and

unmediated way. This is what Ockham means by saying that it is predicated *in quid*. Given our earlier discussions, we can assume that for Ockham the *meaning* of "being" is all actual existents, and no doubt this is at the basis of his rejection of the distinction between essence and existence. Ockham's simplistic interpretation of the views of others goes hand in hand with his contemptuous disdain. It is difficult to take too seriously one who reminds others that existence must not be understood as a qualification of what does not exist, for he thereby seems to suggest that "essence" means nothing and "existence" existence and that his predecessors had held that being (*ens*) is a nothing which exists. His treatment of the distinction between actuality and potentiality is equally profound; a possible being, he seems to think, was taken to be an existent nonexistent. His prescription for avoiding such undocumented paradoxes is that we learn that actuality and possibility are modalities of statements and not of things. This, while possessing the allure of a partial truth, since the characteristics of modal propositions are not precisely the characteristics of things, far from providing an alternative answer to a question asked earlier, fails even to raise the question. The principle of parsimony is here running amok. To say that Socrates can pitch a curve is not the same as to say that it is possible that "Socrates is pitching a curve" is true. Ockham may seem to be saying that the latter is not the former, but what he is really saying is that the former need be taken to mean exactly the same thing as the latter. There remains little doubt as to who is confusing modalities of statements and characteristics of things, Ockham or his unnamed adversaries.

Once the univocity of being is understood in terms of a universe of things wholly undifferentiated in terms of their being, a veritable flatland of reality where the only solid truth is that an individual thing is itself, Ockham hurries on to show that this enables us to settle the question of God's knowability. There is no common feature in reality that the term "being" (or, in a more limited range, any other general term) is thought to pick out. Now, since this does not impede ordinary linguistic usage, being only an inadequate account of it, since we can go right on saying of Socrates and of Plato and so forth that they are men while denying that there is any foundation in reality other than their individuality, that is, their otherness, for so speaking, what is to prevent us from saying that God can be said to be, even though there is absolutely no common feature between God and anything else? In this Ockhamian wonderland everything is just itself and no other, whether we be speaking of creatures or of creatures and God. Lest our tone seem to be too strident here, we should say that it is one thing to discuss the behavior of common nouns without raising the allied epistemological and ontological questions—this could result from mere boredom or lack of intellectual curiosity. It is quite another

thing to go into a discussion of those epistemological and ontological questions and to say little more than that common nouns are common because they are common and then to lament the confusions of one's predecessors. Ockham does the second and quite different thing. And it is important to be very clear about the metaphysical results of his thought and, once we are clear about them, to lament them. A world where each thing is only itself and no other, where its very otherness is said to be its similarity with others—well, this is a confused and paradoxical terrain. If we excuse ourselves from any consideration of Ockham's discussions of proofs of God's existence and proofs that God has certain attributes, we do so because his apparently affirmative results are such only when terms bear the peculiar Pickwickian sense according to which Ockham can predicate the same term of two entities while denying that he is doing anything other than pointing to two utterly different things. It is only when we forget Ockham's nominalism—as he on occasion was prone to do himself—that the results of his inquiries amount to something other than the melancholy one just stated.

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