

These disks contain my version of Paul Spade's expository text and his translated texts. They were converted from WordStar disk format to WordPerfect 5.1 disk format, and then I used a bunch of macros and some hands-on work to change most of the FancyFont formatting codes into WordPerfect codes. Many transferred nicely. Some of them are still in the text (anything beginning with a backslash is a FancyFont code). Some I just erased without knowing what they were for.

All of the files were cleaned up with one macro, and some of them have been further doctored with additional macros I wrote later and additional hand editing. This explains why some are quite neat, and others somewhat cluttered.

In some cases I changed Spade's formatting to make the printout look better (to me); often this is because I lost some of his original formatting. I have occasionally corrected obvious typos, and in at least one case I changed an 'although' to a 'but' so that the line would fit on the same page. With these exceptions, I haven't intentionally changed any of the text.

All of the charts made by graphics are missing entirely (though in a few cases I perserved fragments so you can sort of tell what it was like). Some of the translations had numbers down the side of the page to indicate location in the original text; these are all lost. Translation 1.5 (Aristotle) was not on the disk I got, so it is listed in the table of contents, but you won't find it.

This text is a wonderful source, and I have benefitted a lot from it. Paul was gracious enough to make it publically available, but he retains all rights. Please respect them.

Terry Parsons





# A Survey of Mediaeval Philosophy

by

Paul Vincent Spade

Volume 1 : Survey

Version 2.0

August 29, 1985

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You can get too fancy about these things.  
You can also not get fancy enough.

Raymond                      Chandler,                      The                      Little                      Sister



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## Chapter 1:

### Introduction and Select General Bibliography

This survey began as a set of notes and handouts for a graduate-level course I taught in 1975 and again in 1977. During the summer of 1980, I typed up all the handouts and class-notes for that course, and made the entire package available to students on an "independent readings course" basis. I kept a copy in my office, in a cardboard box of the size that holds a ream of paper. Hence, the package became known as "the course in the box".

The present survey is essentially a reworking of that original "course in the box". In the fall of 1984, I taught the course again, and took the opportunity to put the entire thing on computer disk, so that it would be relatively easy to tinker with it, revise it and update it from time to time. What you have in your hands is a version of that "course on a disk".

The survey retains many of the virtues and, I am afraid, many of the defects that betray its origin. The virtues are, I hope, a certain informality and liveliness of style, reflecting the sort of thing that goes on in the classroom. The most obvious defect is that there are many claims that are far too strong and oversimplified. I devote whole chapters to matters on which I am by no means an authority and about which I have only minimal competence - if that much. In a classroom survey, of course, one is obliged to do this sort of thing in order to guarantee that students get at least some exposure to all the main topics, even if one has no personal expertise in them. I have resolved to adopt the same attitude in putting these classroom materials in writing. So, warts and all, here they are. If you don't like them, go read someone else's survey.

The course on which this survey is based required certain readings in the primary sources (in English translation). I urge the reader to supplement the reading of this survey by working through those primary texts. Some of the materials below are directly related to them. Wherever possible, I have cited the primary sources according to their internal divisions, independent of any particular translation. Here are the readings we used in our course:

1. Arthur Hyman and James J. Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic and Jewish Traditions*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1973; 2nd ed. 1983). Dollar for dollar, this is the best single collection of readings you can get. *Note*: The second edition is revised and enlarged, and of course the page numbers are different. Throughout this survey, I will cite this work according to the page numbers in the *second* edition. For anyone who has the first edition, I have compiled a table of the differences between the two. See Appendix A at the end of Volume 1 of this survey.
2. John F. Wippel and Allan Wolter, eds., *Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, (New York: The Free Press, 1969). We used only a small selection from this volume. I have included my own translation of the relevant passage in Volume 2 of this survey. In other words, you don't need to go dig up a copy of this book. (I do recommend it, however, as a good sourcebook.)
3. Richard McKeon, ed. & tr., *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, vol. I: Augustine to Albert the Great, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929). There is also a volume II, but we used only volume I. Once again, you don't need to get this one; I've translated the relevant material anew, and included it in Volume 2 of this survey.
4. Augustine, *Confessions*, R. S. Pine-Coffin, tr., (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961). Other translations are fine.

5. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff, trs., ("The Library of Liberal Arts"; Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1964). There are other translations too, but this one is probably still the most readily available.
  6. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, V. E. Watts, tr., (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969). Or Richard Green, tr., ("The Library of Liberal Arts"; Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1962). Other translations will do as well.
  7. Anselm, *Basic Writings*, S. N. Deane, tr., (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1962).
  8. Peter Abelard, *The Story of Abelard's Adversities*, J. T. Muckle, tr., (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1964).
  9. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, Armand Maurer, tr., 2nd ed., (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968). Other translations will do, but I recommend this one.
  10. John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, Allan Wolter, ed. & tr., ("The Library of Liberal Arts"; Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1962). Now, alas, out of print. I have provided my own translation of the relevant material in Volume 2 of this survey.
  11. William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*, Philotheus Boehner, ed. & tr., ("The Library of Liberal Arts"; Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1964). This too is now out of print. So much for Bobbs-Merrill's commitment to academic publishing. Again, I have provided my own translations of the relevant material in Volume 2 of this survey.
  12. William of Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, Marilyn McCord Adams and Norman Kretzmann, trs., (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1969; 2nd ed., 1983). This volume originally appeared in the series "Century Philosophy Sourcebooks", published by Appleton-Century-Crofts in New York.
- Honorable mention should go to:
13. Thomas Aquinas, *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*, Anton C. Pegis, tr., (New York: The Modern Library, 1948).

We did not actually have any assigned readings from item #13, but if you want a good general source for Aquinas, that is probably the single best (and cheapest) place to go.

In addition to the above items, I urge you to read volumes II and III of Frederick C. Copleston's *A History of Philosophy*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Image" Books, 1962). Each paperback volume is published in two parts.

I have divided this survey into two parts, in separate volumes. Volume 1 (this one) contains the survey itself. Volume 2 contains translations of things I refer to in Volume 1, and of whatever else I happened to have translated and wanted to stick into Volume 2. All the translations in this survey are my own (except for the King James Bible) and, like everything else in the survey, are in the public domain. (See the copyright notice on the cover of this volume.)

Pages in Volume 1 are numbered consecutively within each chapter and prefixed by the chapter number. Thus the present page, which is page 15 of chapter \s0, is numbered "Ch. \s0 p. 15". (Look down at the bottom of the page to make sure.) The page numbers revert to 1 at the beginning of each chapter. In Volume 2, the main sections are not called "chapters" but "texts". Again, page numbers revert to 1 at the beginning of each "text". This method will allow me to revise individual sections of this survey without having to repaginate the entire thing. When I so revise a section I will change the date given on the title page of this survey, and update the "version" number by changing the portion of the number following the decimal point. When I add an entirely new chapter or text, or delete an old one, I will increase that portion of the

version number preceding the decimal point. I have every intention of revising this survey repeatedly, as time and circumstance permit. Hence in the event that anyone should ever want to refer to it, he should cite the version number and the date in order to guarantee an unambiguous reference.

I welcome any suggestions or corrections from readers.

## SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

As a more or less arbitrary starting point for our survey, we shall begin with the so called "Church Fathers" shortly after the turn of the Christian Era. (As background, I include also some pages containing everything you need to know, for our purposes, about ancient Greek philosophy.) Our survey will stop with Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century. Geographically, we shall be concerned primarily with the area known as the "Latin West", especially France, Italy, and England, and to a lesser extent Germany and Spain. We shall discuss early Greek Christian philosophy briefly, as well as mediaeval Jewish and Arabic philosophy, but only to the extent that they affected "Latin philosophy". One cannot do everything.

Topically, we shall be concerned primarily with metaphysical and epistemological questions. Ethics will be treated only insofar as it touches on these matters (as it does quite regularly in the Platonic/Augustinian tradition). We shall not discuss mediaeval social or political philosophy, and shall treat logic only very sketchily.

If you want to begin your readings in the primary sources while you also work through the preliminary pages that follow, I suggest that you start with Augustine's *Confessions*. Read the whole thing, but read it quickly. You will probably find most of it very foreign, and perhaps hard to read. You may even wonder what is supposed to be philosophical about it. It betrays a characteristic tendency to write in a rhetorical, visionary way, with little hard argumentation. This is a symptom of the fact that, for a long time, philosophy was not clearly distinguished from theology, Scripture studies, or just plain "wisdom". During the course of this survey, you should watch how these things gradually sort themselves out.

One final word: Let us just agree that the preferred spelling is 'mediaeval', not 'medieval'. 'Medieval' is perfectly correct, but uncouth. The people who use it probably also write 'esthetics', and can therefore be dismissed without further consideration. The justification for 'medieval' comes from the fact that in late Latin, 'ae' was regularly contracted in writing to 'e' (the pronunciation was the same). Still, as purists we should insist on the 'ae'. If you ask who cares, the answer is: I do. And so do the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, the journal *Mediaeval Studies*, the Mediaeval Academy of America (at least until they too yielded to the charms of fashion), the annual Mediaeval Colloquium at the University of the South, and - in short - those who are in a position to know. And don't remind me that some of my own publications have 'medieval'. That is an ad hominem argument, and, besides, I only spelled it that way because someone else insisted. (Note: I do draw the line, however, and write 'ecumenical' rather than 'oecumenical'.)

## SELECT GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following items represent only a small portion of the available material. I list them only because you should *know* about them, not because you should *read* them for this survey. This is a *general* bibliography; I will also provide additional bibliographical information on particular topics and figures as we go along. See also the consolidated bibliography at the end of this survey.

### General Histories and Discussions

A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek & Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974.

Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, volume 2: *Mediaeval Philosophy*, part i: *Augustine to Bonaventure*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Image" Books, 1962.

Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, volume 2: *Mediaeval Philosophy*, part ii: *Albert the Great to Duns Scotus*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Image" Books, 1962.

Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, volume 3: *Late Mediaeval and Renaissance Philosophy*, part i: *Ockham to the Speculative Mystics*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Image" Books, 1963.

Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, volume 3: *Late Mediaeval and Renaissance Philosophy*, part ii: *The Revival of Platonism to Suarez*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Image" Books, 1963.

Frederick C. Copleston, *Medieval Philosophy*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York: Random House, 1955.

Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938.

Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, A. H. C. Downes, tr., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

Martin Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, 3 vols., Munich: Max Hueber, 1926-1956.

Martin Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode nach den gedruckten und ungedruckten Quellen*, 2 vols., Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1909-1911.

Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the 12th Century*, Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1957.

David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, New York: Vintage Books, 1964.

Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought: St. Augustine to Ockham*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958.

Julius R. Weinberg, *A Short History of Medieval Philosophy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964.

### Collections of Texts in Translation

Arthur Hyman, and James J. Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic and Jewish Traditions*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1973. 2nd edition, 1983.

Richard McKeon, ed. & tr., *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, vol. 1: *Augustine to Albert the Great*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.

Richard McKeon, ed. & tr., *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, vol. 2: *Roger Bacon to William of Ockham*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930.



John F. Wippel, and Allan Wolter, eds., *Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, New York: The Free Press, 1969.  
Journals and Series

*Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*. (A venerable old journal. Contains many classic articles.)

*Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*. (An invaluable series of texts and studies. Always refer to this series by volume and fascicle number, not just the date, since the volumes are not numbered in the order in which they appear, and the series is not indexed. Some volumes leave out 'und Theologie' in the series-title.)

*Etudes de philosophie médiévale*. (A series of very important monographs, published by the distinguished J. Vrin in Paris.)

*Franciscan Studies*. (The early volumes are perhaps not so good for our purposes. But more recent volumes have some excellent articles.)

*Mediaeval Studies*. (The early volumes contain some classic and seminal papers. Later volumes have perhaps less emphasis on philosophy, but it's still an extremely important journal for the history of mediaeval philosophy.)

*Vivarium*. (A relatively recent journal, published by E. J. Brill in Leiden. Generally of high quality. Several articles on mediaeval logic, and some important papers on Boethius in the early volumes.)

## VERSIONS OF THIS SURVEY

Here is a brief history of the various versions of this Survey, and of the revisions, additions and deletions that went into each one. As I keep working on the Survey, this part of Chapter 1 will be kept up to date. I am writing now as part of Version 2.0, so the account of what went on before Version 2.0 is going to be pretty sketchy. From that point on, things will be more detailed.

As described at the beginning of this Chapter, the original "course in the box" on which this Survey is based was a typescript put together in 1980. It contained seventy-three "sections" (I did not call them "chapters" then), with translated texts and my discussion thoroughly intermixed. This original version was intended to serve as the basis for an "independent readings course", and so contained some organizational preliminaries concerning examinations and such. I did not give it a "version number", but let us call it Version 0.0. I made and distributed perhaps a half-dozen copies of this Version 0.0, and in some cases further copies were made from those.

Version 1.0 was prepared in connection with a graduate-level course I taught in the Fall of 1984. It carried a date of September 30, 1984. In fact, however, it was not completed until late in the Fall of that year. This version was done on a word-processor and kept on computer disks. It was printed on a dot-matrix printer (and looked it), with some fancy graphics for figures and tables. It contained seventy-two sections. The organizational material in Version 0.0 was omitted in Version 1.0. While I was typing Version 1.0 into my word-processor, I took the opportunity to revise everything. Version 1.0, therefore, was in effect a complete rewriting of Version 0.0.

Version 2.0 carries the date August 29, 1985. It too involves a complete revision of everything. This version is printed on a dot-matrix printer using the "Fancy Font" system sold by SoftCraft, Inc., of Madison, Wisconsin. It is divided into two volumes. Volume 1 contains the survey itself (that is, *my material*), and Volume 2 contains a series of translations to accompany and supplement the survey.

As I add chapters or texts to future versions of this Survey, I will sometimes, in order to get things in the proper sequence, assign a chapter or text a non-whole number using a decimal expression. I have already done this once in Version 2.0, where Volume 2 contains a Text 1.5 (Aristotle's Epistemology). In Version 1.0 I had placed this material immediately before the discussion of Arabic epistemology, since that is where the texts are referred to. But in Version 2.0 I wanted to put it in proper chronological order in the sequence of texts. By the time I got to it, I already had a fairly long series of texts, and I didn't want to have to renumber them all and reprint everything. So, Text 1.5 it is. An elementary proof in mathematics guarantees that I will be able to add new chapters and texts in this way as long as I want. And my experience in working on this stuff makes me confident that there will always be new chapters and texts to add.

Likewise, when in the future I delete a chapter or text from this Survey (to incorporate it into some other chapter or into a more inclusive text), the resulting sequence of chapters and texts may skip some whole numbers. Do not be alarmed. The Table of Contents will tell you whether you are missing anything. And this section, "Versions of This Survey", of Chapter \s0 will tell you how things got that way. Anyone who wants is welcome to go through the entire Survey and renumber everything (including all the cross-references) with a nice, neat sequence of integers. But I have no intention of spending my life that way.

## Chapter 2:

### Methodological Considerations

This chapter might well be subtitled "Why study the history of philosophy anyway? What do you hope to get out of it?" I want to distinguish two main approaches to the history of philosophy. (The second one has two subdivisions.) And then I will give you my own approach.

(1) The who thought of it first approach. A wonderfully explicit example of this is to be found in Kneale and Kneale's *The Development of Logic* (p. v): But our primary purpose has been to record the first appearances of those ideas which seem to us most important in the logic of our own day.

On this approach, the primary reason for doing the history of philosophy is to trace the first implicit glimmerings of the philosophical views we all now know are the correct ones. Hence one hears a lot about "anticipations" of this and that. Just what *difference* any of this makes is not entirely clear. On this approach, there appears to be no serious *motive* for studying the history of philosophy. If that is all there is to it, it is of interest only to the antiquarian, the fact collector, the mental litterbug.

I once heard a philosophical address that described this approach as "How Plato invented the atom bomb".

There may be more involved, however. The "who thought of it first" approach can in many cases be correctly regarded as an application to the history of philosophy, in particular, of that more general approach to history sometimes called "Whig interpretation", aptly defined by Herbert Butterfield as the tendency in many authors to write on the side of Protestants and Whigs, to praise revolutions provided they have been successful, to emphasise certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present.

After all, if there is one thing the history of philosophy ought to teach us, it is that nowadays we have all the right answers!

The second main approach I call the Despoiling Egypt approach. The phrase refers to the passage in Exodus, where the Israelites are being led out of Egypt-land and the Lord gives them permission to take with them (to "borrow", as the King James version rather delicately puts it) whatever they can carry: And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. *And they spoiled the Egyptians.* (Exodus 12:35-36, King James version. My emphasis, of course.)

There are two forms of this view - or at least two that I want to distinguish:

The ask someone who knows approach. The idea here is that you set yourself certain problems you are interested in, and then go look at the historical figures to see what they had to say about those problems. On this approach, you hear things like: "Those old folks were no fools. What they had to say on these questions is likely to be worth taking seriously."

This approach will only work *provided* those old philosophers had anything at all to say about just exactly the questions you are interested in. In practice, however, it turns out more often than not that their interests were not exactly yours, their questions were slightly different, and their whole approach to things strikes you as foreign enough that they are not much real help with the problems you approached them with. This should not surprise you. You were not really interested in *their* problems; you were interested only in *your* problems. Usually, you will end up

either being just frustrated or else distorting the old philosophers' doctrine to make them say something you can use.

The Oh *that reminds me* technique. The idea this time is that you *use* the historical texts to *suggest* views or answers to questions you are interested in. You approach the historical figures not for what they had to *say* about those questions, but for what you can find *suggested* by what they did say. The most offhand remark can serve the role of suggesting to you fantastically wonderful model-theoretic structures or what not. A good example of this approach may be found in Hans G. Herzberger's "Truth and Modality in Semantically Closed Languages". This is a provocative and exciting paper on issues surrounding the Liar paradox, and the ideas in it were suggested to Herzberger in part by reading John Buridan's own discussion of the Liar paradox. (Buridan is a fourteenth-century Parisian author who's hot stuff.) On the basis of this, Herzberger derives suggestions for a theory of three-valued semantics using Bochvar's internal matrices and other such things.

All this of course is wonderful, and there is no doubt that some very exciting things can come along this way. (I *like* Herzberger's paper.) But it is not *really* the history of philosophy at all, now is it? Historical accuracy doesn't really matter here; the only thing that's important to you is the catalytic effect history has on your own thinking.

I reject both (1) and (2) - the latter in both its forms - as legitimate ways to approach the history of philosophy. In my view, the trouble with all of these methodologies is that they presuppose that the *important* philosophical problems and concepts are the ones in *current* circulation. That in the end is why you are interested in who thought of it first, in what the old-timey philosophers had to say about this and that, and so on.

In short, the assumption - to put it as neutrally as possible - is that if there is anything of value in the history of philosophy, it is of value only insofar as it is *relevant* to current philosophical issues, techniques and concepts.

I hold that that assumption is false. What is of *most* value in the history of philosophy is of value precisely because it is *not* connected with current philosophical issues, techniques, concepts.

The two approaches sketched above, (1) and (2), start off with a fixed set of questions and concepts, and *never get beyond them*. These approaches are *rigged* from the outset to guarantee that one never really learns very much from the history of philosophy.

In my view, what *should* happen when you study the history of philosophy is that you come into contact with *new* techniques and concepts, points of view that are radically new to you, philosophical questions or issues you had never thought of or had never taken seriously before. The more foreign the philosophy is (provided you can get a handle on it at all), the better. Certainly, unless you have had a pretty remarkable philosophical background already, what you are about to see in this survey will serve this purpose very well.

Hence, my approach to the history of philosophy I will call the *Mind-Expanding Approach*, or the *Consciousness-Raising Approach*. (I also call it the *Correct Approach*.)

On this approach, the basic reason for studying the history of philosophy is the same as the reason one should read the journal articles in one's profession - and not just the articles on the very narrow topics one happens to be interested in at the moment. The reason is: to keep in touch, to stay familiar with *all* the things going on in the discipline, even those things that may be quite alien to what you are primarily interested in personally, to make sure you do not get too narrow and parochial in your opinions. This analogy is also revealing in another respect: in both cases, in the history of philosophy and in the journals, the yield per unit effort is very low. There

is a great deal of wasted time, of reading things that aren't worthwhile. But still, the overall enterprise *is* worthwhile. Or at least I think it is.

This notion of the role of the history of philosophy has some important consequences:

It is not our task to *reconstruct*, to *translate* an old philosophical position into a more contemporary idiom. When Aquinas talks about the difference between essential and accidental predication, for instance, his point probably has very little to do with "predicate modifiers" (or "pred-mods", as someone once tried to explain it to me). Such a translation is perhaps useful at a very rudimentary level, but one should do it only very sparingly. In short, the approach I recommend would reject the sort of thing done, for instance, by

E. M. Curley in his book *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, which translates the whole Spinozistic business into a logical atomist framework. J. M. Findlay in *The Philosophy of Hegel*, which interprets Hegel as making "linguistic recommendations" in the manner of Wittgenstein. (That sort of thing was the "contemporary idiom" when the book was written.)

My point here is that studying the history of philosophy is a little like learning a foreign language. (In fact, it is a *lot* like learning a foreign language.) In both cases, if you have to *translate* before you understand, then you don't really understand very well, you've not really mastered the material.

We have to yield to the texts. We have to fight our biases and prejudices in reading the old philosophers. Hence the importance of reading widely in the historical literature, and above all of *rereading often*. This is not just a pep talk; it is absolutely crucial. The tendency is for one to read a passage and then go away to think about it. Before long, one comes up with a view about what the author had in mind, and begins to extrapolate on the basis of that view. We hear things like "Abelard *would say* thus and so about this or that". I personally have done this many times, and then gone back to find that Abelard (or whoever it was) in fact had said the direct opposite, and that I had completely missed the point. What had happened of course is that, by going away and thinking about the text on my own, I had brought *my own* conceptual machinery into play instead of *Abelard's* categories and ways of thinking.

Of course I do not mean to suggest that you should *not* think about what you read. On the contrary, you have to think about it long and hard. But in such thinking there lies the danger of distorting the historical doctrine. You can minimize this kind of danger by making sure that you read more, and read again, and in general make sure that you *read* as much as you *think*! The idea is to check and doublecheck your understanding of the material every step of the way.

(iii) There is a third consequence of the approach I recommend to the history of philosophy. It implies that one must be willing to do *history*, and not only *philosophy*. That is, one must be prepared to go to the library and get one's hands dirty with real books; one must *care* about getting the facts straight. For, unlike many other branches of philosophy, in the *history* of philosophy it is frequently possible to *tell* whether you've got things right or not, and to tell by quite objective and universally recognized techniques; they are collectively called "scholarship". Not everyone is good at it, of course, and even the best will make dumb mistakes sometimes. Furthermore, not all scholarly questions of interpretation can be settled once and for all. Still, one must be prepared for this kind of meticulous, detailed work, one must recognize it as an important - indeed, absolutely *essential* - part of the enterprise, or else one should just stop pretending to have any interest in the history of philosophy at all. In short, you should stop reading right now!

There is a prejudice among some academic philosophers and graduate students of philosophy these days, a prejudice that I suspect can be traced back to the heyday of logical

positivism, with its disdain for (and general ignorance of) the history of philosophy. This prejudice, whatever its origin, holds that philosophers for some reason must be concerned with "the issues" in the abstract, and that therefore it doesn't make any difference *what* they say about the historical background of those issues. Worse, this prejudice holds that, since philosophers must be concerned with "the issues" in the abstract, they therefore must positively *scorn* historical work of the scholarly, detailed kind - as though somehow one could not possibly be interested in both at once.

To be sure, some academic philosophers, and for that matter many people in other fields, are simply not interested in the history of their discipline. That is no reflection on the historical enterprise, but rather on the breadth of their interests. Now, it is a free country, of course, and it is certainly not my job to tell other people what they ought to be interested in. It *is* my job, however, if no one else will do it, to point out that people do not have some kind of divine right to play fast and loose with facts simply because they are not interested in them. "It's OK! Don't worry about a thing! Everything's just fine. It doesn't make any difference what I say. Why? Because *I just don't care!*" It may be true that you don't care, but that's no defense for spreading falsehoods around.

The odd thing is, some of my colleagues in this "queen of the sciences" are not really sure just what to think about the historical facts. They are perfectly willing to make *claims* about those facts, to describe certain views as "Platonic", for instance, or to call certain doctrines "Aristotelian essentialism". But, having made the historical claim, they then think it is somehow unfair, or beneath their professional dignity, for anyone to demand of them that those claims be *true*. After all, the real point is the *philosophical* one; the scholarly details we can leave to the pedants. Quine's attitude, for example, may be seen in the following justly famous passage (*Word and Object*, pp. 199-200 - I quote it at length to give you the full flavor):

Perhaps I can evoke the appropriate sense of bewilderment as follows. Mathematicians may conceivably be said to be necessarily rational and not necessarily two-legged; and cyclists necessarily two-legged and not necessarily rational. But what of an individual who counts among his eccentricities both mathematics and cycling? Is this concrete individual necessarily rational and contingently two-legged or vice versa? Just insofar as we are talking referentially of the object, with no special bias toward a background grouping of mathematicians as against cyclists or vice versa, there is no semblance of sense in rating some of his attributes as necessary and others as contingent. Some of his attributes count as important and others as unimportant, yes; some as enduring and others as fleeting; but none as necessary or contingent.

Curiously, a philosophical tradition does exist for just such a distinction between necessary and contingent attributes. It lives on in the terms 'essence' and 'accident', 'internal relation' and 'external relation'. It is a distinction that one attributes to Aristotle (subject to contradiction by scholars, such being the penalty for attributions to Aristotle). But, however venerable the distinction, it is surely indefensible.

Whether the view is in fact indefensible, or whether it is in fact even Aristotle's, is something I don't want to argue here. But notice the snide remark in the next to last sentence. The suggestion is that we can say what we like about Aristotle, because "scholars" on the topic will no doubt contradict whatever you say anyway; let's not be bothered with them, and get on with the real philosophical business at hand. In fact, of course, things are just the reverse. Although there are many areas of uncertainty, "scholars" by and large are in remarkable agreement about what Aristotle's views were; it is on the abstract *philosophical* issues that one is "subject to contradiction" almost no matter what one says!

This disdain for history is not something inherent in the nature of the philosophical enterprise. It has to be learned! I said above that this attitude is to be found among "academic philosophers and graduate students of philosophy". For the most part I have not found it among undergraduates. They generally have no preconceptions about what philosophers can and cannot be asked to do, and so they are willing to regard historical scholarship as a permissible part of the enterprise. Of course, undergraduates will often not do the work required for serious history of philosophy; but when that happens, it is usually because they are incapable or lazy. Only at the more advanced levels do I find people who refuse to do it *on principle*!

So, gentle reader, even if you have already been tainted by the influence of the ahistorical Philistines, still it is perhaps not too late to save yourselves. Throw off your old prejudices! Broaden your horizons! Read on!

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER \S0

1. Full bibliographical references may be found in the Consolidated Bibliography at the end of this survey.

2. Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, p. v. See also the discussion in David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, p. 139.

### Chapter 3: The Greek Background to Mediaeval Philosophy, or Everything You Need to Know about the Greeks

Before we start on the Middle Ages, it is a good idea to review where we are coming from. Here is a summary of the main points of Greek philosophy, including Plotinus.

#### Plato

Perhaps the most basic and enlightening difference between Plato and Aristotle is this: whereas Plato's overriding interest was in what is important (one is almost tempted to say "whether it is true or not"), Aristotle's interest was in what is *true* (and here one is certainly tempted to say "whether it is important or not" - recall some of his more obscure physical and biological treatises). Hence the Platonic philosophy, and the whole Platonic tradition, will be shot through and through with a dominant concern for *ethics*, for *wisdom* and values generally. There is little patience in this tradition with knowledge for the sake of knowledge. If Aristotle represents the *curious mind*, the collector of truths for their own sake, the inquisitive intellect, then Plato represents the man who has no time for trivial things. There is a kind of *ethical urgency* about Plato that is missing in Aristotle.

Some things follow from this basic orientation in Plato's philosophy. In our judgments about the values of things, for instance, we implicitly measure them against standards or ideals. We cannot get our concepts of these standards or ideals simply by observing them in the physical world around us, because they just aren't there in the physical world around us. The physical world is far from ideal, and conspicuously imperfect. Therefore,

(1) We observed these standards or ideals in another world, separated and distinct from the physical one.

(Note the implicit premiss that concept-formation is ultimately based on knowledge by acquaintance.) These standards or ideals Plato calls Ideas or Forms. The same considerations lead one to postulate Ideas or Forms of mathematical or geometrical ideal entities not encountered in the sensory world - perfect circles, geometric points, etc. (In general, the Platonic tradition of philosophy will always be most persuasive when it comes to values or mathematics - two great areas of knowledge where we employ or encounter standards and ideals. Platonism is always least plausible when it is applied beyond the realm of values and mathematics, for instance to the Form of the Bed in the Republic [596b], or to the dubious Forms of mud and filth and hair in the Parmenides [130c].)

It follows from (1) that

(2) We - i.e., our minds or souls - must be capable of existing in that separated realm - i.e., we must be capable of existing apart from the physical body.

It also follows that

(3) we really have known these Ideas or Forms all our (physical) lives. Hence, what we call learning (at least about these matters) is really only the recollection of what was already known but forgotten because of the distracting influence of the senses.

Hence,

(4) it is bad for the soul to be in the body.

The body is a prison. Death is a liberation. It allows us to reach the realm where things are the way they *ought* to be.



There is a cluster of other assumptions that Plato, like most Greeks, accepted. Among them:

(5) Whatever really is can be understood or known, and vice versa.

The realm of Being and the realm of Intelligibility are the same. (This goes back at least to Parmenides [Fragment 3].)

(6) Real *knowledge* or understanding, as opposed to fickle opinion, requires that *what is known* be fixed, permanent and necessary.

(Note: This is really a very exalted notion of knowledge. The paradigm of knowledge seems to have been the *mathematical* knowledge provided, for instance, by Euclid, and nothing was said to be really knowable unless it could be known with all the necessity and changelessness of mathematical truths.)

(7) On the other hand, the physical world is constantly *changing*.

(This, of course, comes from Heraclitus - or at least from Heraclitus as he was interpreted by others.)

Plato draws the following conclusions:

(8) The physical world cannot really be *known or understood*, but is only an object for *opinion* (from 6 and 7).

(9) The physical world does not then truly *exist* (from 8 and 5). It is a realm of *Becoming*, not of Being.

(10) From 3 and 5, it follows that the Forms or Ideas are what really exist. They are the realm of Being. They are the objects of real knowledge.

(11) From (3) and (6), it follows that the Forms or Ideas are changeless, fixed, eternal and necessary.

In virtue of (10), there is some pressure on Plato to extend his notion of the Forms from *values* - Beauty, Justice, etc. - and *mathematics*, to forms of *anything* that can be said to be known. Plato's exalted view of knowledge pushes him to extend the doctrine of Forms beyond the realm of values and mathematics, where it originated and where it is most plausible. See the doubts raised in the *Parmenides* [130b-135d].

Plato has some things to say about the interconnection of the realm of Being (the Forms) with the realm of Becoming (the physical world):

(12) The things in the physical world *participate in or imitate* the Forms.

A physical object is more or less an X to the extent that it participates in or imitates more or less the form of X. For the most part, this relation is left at the metaphorical level in Plato. The notion of participation or imitation makes most sense, like the Platonic doctrine as a whole, in the context of values and mathematics. We can perhaps understand what it means to say that a person is more or less a human being to the extent that he "participates in" or "imitates" the ideal human being; but it is much harder to understand what it could mean to say that a thing is more or less a rock to the extent that it "participated in" in or "imitated" the ideal rock.

(13) There is a *mediator*, something called the "Demiurge" (= "handicraftsman"), who is responsible for the interconnection of the Forms and the physical world.

If you don't know about this important feature of Plato's thought, read the *Timaeus* [27d sqq.]. The Demiurge looks up to the Forms, and then *imposes order on recalcitrant matter* as best he can, according to the patterns of the Forms. (Compare the role of the Demiurge in the cosmos, according to the *Timaeus*, with the role of the philosopher-king in the state, according to the *Republic*, and the role of the soul in the human being, according to many places.) He does this

*eternally and necessarily* (without choice), because he is good and "without jealousy" (*Timaeus*, 29e). (He wants to share the wealth.) He is "provident" - i.e., he "cares" about what goes on in the physical world.

Finally, on the general principle that wherever you have a plurality of more or less similar things, you try to explain them in terms of some one principle or explanatory device (the motive behind the search for a Unified Field Theory, for instance), Plato says

(14) Above even the many Forms, there is a unifying principle that grounds them. Plato calls this the *Form of the Good*, and frequently uses the metaphor of the Sun.

*Question for Plato:* Is the Form of the Good in some sense *above* the rest of the Forms, so that it is *not* really a Form at all like the rest? It seems it must be, if it is to do its job of unifying and grounding the Forms. And, in fact, in at least one passage in the *Republic* [vi.509b9]i+5d, Plato explicitly says that the Good is "above being" (\i+5d\fh8h\~epe\~\i+5d\keina \fh8t^\~yv ou\m0\~\i+9dh chapter s^\~iav). On the other hand, if it is above being, then since the realm of the Forms is the realm of Being and of Intelligibility, then the Forms of the Good cannot really be understood (and, for that matter, does not really *exist* - it *more than exists*). Or, on the contrary, are we supposed to interpret the realm of Being as extending to include the Form of the Good too? The metaphor of the Sun is a "light"-metaphor, and light was frequently taken as a metaphor for knowledge by the Greeks, so that the Sun-metaphor suggests that the Form of the Good is indeed intelligible, and therefore a being. On the other hand, how can it *ground* the Forms if it is one of them itself? Plato is perhaps not clear on all of this, but watch what happens to the question in later people.

## ARISTOTLE

Aristotle does not have the Platonic overriding concern with values. Matters of value are just one branch of human endeavor - the practical disciplines, as opposed to the theoretical sciences. Hence, there is no pressure on Aristotle to accept (1) - (4) above. On the other hand, he does accept (5) - (7), but denies that (8) follows from them. On the contrary, despite (7),

(15) there is in the physical, changing world a fixed and changeless *core* that *sets limits to the change*.

This core is constituted by the *natures* of physical objects. These natures are for Aristotle the proper objects of knowledge. They satisfy (6) above. Hence Aristotle rejects (8) - (9). For Aristotle, all our knowledge is ultimately based on our knowledge of the natures of physical objects, and comes through the senses. Far from distracting us from real knowledge, as in (3), the senses provide us with it. There is, here in the physical world of Becoming, a fixed core of Being. In the realm of Opinion, we can find a stable basis for real Knowledge.

(16) Aristotle analyzes *change* into two components: the *matter*, which remains throughout the change, and the *form*, which is altered.

By a complicated doctrine the details of which need not concern us now, *forms* - or at least some of them - are the *natures* of physical objects. See above on natures.

(17) Aristotle also thinks that, in addition to the material, physical world, there is a realm of "separated substances".

He thinks this is required in order to account for and cause change in the physical world.

(18) Since these separated substances are separated from matter, they are changeless and fixed. (See 16.)

(19) They also *think*.

Aristotle's reasons for this are complicated (and obscure). They think only about *themselves*. "Their thinking is a thinking on thinking." (*Metaphysics* xii, 9, 1074b34-35.) They neither know nor care about the physical world. (Contrast 12, above.) Also, it is not clear how many of these separated substances there are. In some places, it appears that there is only one; but in other places, Aristotle says there is one such separated substance for each distinct celestial sphere, so that the question is ultimately a question for the astronomer, not the philosopher.

The separated substances are like Platonic Forms in being changeless and immaterial. They are unlike them in many other respects: Platonic Forms do not think, and do not cause change in the physical world. On the other hand, the separated substances are not the proper objects of human knowledge, and do not account for the characteristics of physical things. (Physical things do not "participate" in the separated substances, for Aristotle.) Aristotelian "natures" take over these roles of the Platonic Forms. To this extent (and to this extent only) is it true to say (as it frequently *is* said) that Aristotle took the Forms out of their "Platonic heaven" and implanted them in the material individual.

There is an important Aristotelian principle governing his *theory of knowledge*:

(20) In knowledge, the knower takes on the form (although not the matter) of what is known.

The *point* of this is to guarantee the objectivity of knowledge. (Mental contents are not *representations* of the objects known; they are, formally at least, *identical* with the objects known. No *inference* from the one to the other is needed. Hence all the Cartesian problems with a representational theory of knowledge are avoided.) The *problem* with the doctrine is to explain the possibility of error. The doctrine can be summed up in the slogan: *The knower is (formally) identical with the known*. (This is of course a very foreign doctrine for us. It is difficult for us to see how all the problems with it can be met. But Aristotle takes it quite seriously, and it is not, in the end, stupid at all.) Aristotle thought it followed from (20) that

(21) what knows - i.e., the mind - is separated from matter.

(Compare the separated substances.) We need not worry about his reasons now. On the other hand, he also thought

(22) that the human *soul* was the *form of the material body*, and hence is intimately tied up with matter - to the extent that it cannot exist separately.

From (22), it follows that it is *good* for the soul to be in the body - on pain of extinction. (Contrast 4, above.) (21) and (22) together make the connection between human souls and minds rather troublesome. Aristotle never fully worked it out. He was often *interpreted* in the Middle Ages as denying anything like a personal afterlife. Finally, Aristotle thought this whole framework was *eternal and necessary*. It has always been this way, and always will be.

## PLOTINUS

The main way to view Plotinus is as follows: *He combines Plato with Aristotle*. Take the entire Platonic framework, as outlined above, and add the Aristotelian principle (20). The Platonic Forms, since they are the *objects* of knowledge, become by (20) also *knowers*, *minds*, *intelligences*. Plotinus argues that, in a curious way, they can be spoken of in the singular and also in the plural - as being one Intelligence or Intelligible or Being, and yet many intelligences or intelligibles or beings. We shall see more of this kind of talk later on.

The role of Plato's Demiurge is taken over by the *World Soul*. It imposes what order there is on the world at large, after the pattern of the Forms (the Intelligences). Hence it comes in contact with matter. Just as Plotinus speaks of there being one Intelligence and yet many intelligences, so too he speaks of one World Soul and yet many (human) souls. Human souls are

The role of Plato's Form of the Good is taken over by Plotinus' *One*, which he explicitly identifies with Plato's Good. The One is above the realm of Being and Intelligibility (it is not an intelligence). (This resolves the question left at the end of the section on Plato above.) Hence we cannot really understand the One at all - and worse, *it does not really exist*. (This is not to say, of course, that it is not there at all; it is *above* being.) The One produces the intelligences and, through them, the souls, by a process called *emanation*. The One, like Plato's Demiurge, is not *jealous*. It spontaneously but *necessarily* produces all these things. Finally, there is a strong mystical overtone in Plotinus. Although we cannot *understand* the One, we can nevertheless come in contact with it - "return" to it by a kind of reversal of the process of emanation - in a *non-intellectual* way.

Below you will find three "maps", describing the philosophical universe according to Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. I call them "cosmograms", and hope you appreciate how much time it took to code them into my word-processor.

\f1COSMOGRAMS  
 \v+.75iyc\*\*\*\*\*  
 THE GOOD  
 \m0IDEAS (FORMS)\rREALM OF BEING  
 \n0|  
 ncludes the Good?)  
 \\_ \i1i\i1i\i1i\i1i\i1i\i.5i\\_   
 VISIBLE WORLD\rREALM OF BECOMING  
 (Relation of "parti\m5cipation"\n4  
 or "imitation")\n2  
 \h3.5iSouls \m6  
 \h1iDemiurge\n3\m4  
 g. \s0-1: Plato's World\n7  
 \l0d\hm4 deas"  
 sible World"  
 cipation"  
 \n6\hm6x\h-2d\m7 \! loop at "Souls" \! ####  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \n0\l.045iSeparate\m0d Substances  
 chapter |  
 \h+.4cVisible World\m1  
 \hm1 { \i+.25i\m1  
 \hm1Forms, including the \m3soul\i+.25i\m2(Juqy\-\h+.1c'\i+.1c)\m4  
 \i+.75i\m1GI\m5  
 \hm5o\_ o\_ "moving")\hm3mind\hm2(No^\-uv)\m6\n2  
 \hm6<sup>B</sup>

on of no<sup>^</sup>\-uv

\hm6 to juqy\-\h+.1c' uncertain)

\\_i1i\i1i\i1i\\_

FIG. \s0-2: ARISTOTLE'S WORLD

\n2THE ONE \m0= THE GOOD

chapter D

\h+4.7cIntelligence(s\\_ \_ Intelligible(s\\_ \_ Being(s)\i+.25i\m1(Nou\-\^v) è chapter D

\h+2.55iSoul(s)\m2\hm1(Juqy\-\h+.1c'\h+.1c)\m3\n1

chapter \h+10dK

\n0 \\_i+1i\i+1i\i+1i\\_

Visible World

chapter D

\h+2.48iMatter\n3

x \! "Souls" loop.

\hm2\h+.12i\h+7du

on/Return arrows.

Emanation

\l9dK

K

K

K

K

g. \s0-3: Plotinus' World

## VERY SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Here are a few places to go if you want to brush up on Greek philosophy. The list is very idiosyncratic, and does not necessarily represent the best literature available. You'll have to consult a real expert in the field (that is to say, not me) to get a list like that. But this one will do just to get us started.

### *General Histories:*

A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). From later Platonism on, including Plotinus and Philo of Alexandria.

Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, volume 1: *Greece and Rome*, published in 2 paperback parts, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Image" Books, 1962). *Note*: Lots of people think it's chic to badmouth Copleston's *History*. In my opinion, the earlier volumes are better than the later ones, but the volumes up to Kant, at least, are quite acceptable - even good - for those who do not yet know what exact points of detail they ought to be objecting to. So don't be finicky. Read it; you'll learn a lot if you're just getting into this stuff.

Joseph Owens, *A History of Ancient Western Philosophy*, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959). Contains a very nice discussion of Plotinus.

### *Primary Texts*

Plato, *The Collected Dialogues including the Letters*, Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., ("Bollingen Series", vol. 71), New York: Pantheon Books, 1963. Probably the best single volume collection, containing essentially the complete works in English translation.

Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon, ed., (New York: Random House, 1941). A selection of the main texts, based on the old Oxford translation.

Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, revised Oxford translation, Jonathan Barnes, ed., 2 vols., ("Bollingen Series", vol. 71.2), Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. Now the standard English translation. Includes doubtful and spurious works.

Plotinus, *Enneades*, Emile Bréhier, ed. and tr., 6 vols. bound in 7, (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1924-1938). For those of you who read French, this contains an edition of the original Greek text, plus a French translation and introductory commentaries. A nice set.

Plotinus, *The Enneads*, Stephen MacKenna, tr., 3rd ed., (London: Faber and Faber, 1962). This is still the only complete English translation. Although it leaves much to be desired, it wins by default.

Plotinus, *The Enneads* (Enneads I-III), A. H. Armstrong, ed. & tr., 3 vols., ("The Loeb Classical Library"; London: William Heinemann, 1966-1967). Contains the Greek original, with a quite good English translation. The title page indicates that six volumes were originally planned (presumably one for each Ennead) but unfortunately only the first three have appeared.

Plotinus, *The Essential Plotinus*, Elmer O'Brien, tr., (New York: Mentor Books, 1964). This is a much superior translation to the MacKenna translation, but unfortunately is only of selected passages.

Finally, I realize that in the above discussion I have entirely omitted any mention of Stoicism. This certainly cannot be neglected. In fact, an argument might be made that Stoicism is the most important and all-pervasive philosophical inheritance from the pagan Greeks. On the other hand, that influence was fragmentary, diffuse and indirect, and it was perhaps not in philosophical circles that it was most strongly felt. It would probably be a big mistake to treat Stoicism as a "body of philosophical doctrine" in the way one can treat the Aristotelian and Platonic "schools" in the Middle Ages. In any case, we won't say a lot about Stoicism here. If you want to know a bit about the Stoic influence on mediaeval thought, I recommend the following:

Gerard Verbeke, *The Presence of Stoicism in Medieval Thought*, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983).

A thoughtful review of this book, by Marcia L. Colish, may be found in *Speculum* 59 (1984), pp. 449-450.

## Chapter 4:

### The Two Main Ingredients of Mediaeval Philosophy

Mediaeval philosophy was a mixture of two main ingredients: (a) the Greek philosophical heritage, and (b) Christianity. Many of the factors included under (b) of course came originally from Judaism. But I am not competent to trace out their Judaic origin in detail.

### The Greek Tradition

On ingredient (a), the Greek philosophical heritage, see Chapter 2 of this Survey. There were three main philosophical streams from the Greeks: Plato, Aristotle, and neo-Platonism - the last combining features of both Plato and Aristotle, but having a flavor of its own.

### Points to Note

Neo-Platonism was a doctrine contemporary with the early part of the period we will be studying. It was not some ancient doctrine that influenced the early Middle Ages across a span of several centuries. Plotinus, for instance, lived in the third century a.d; he died almost six hundred years after Aristotle. The end of the Middle Ages is closer in time to us than Plato and Aristotle were to Plotinus. In short, ancient classical philosophy and early mediaeval philosophy overlap.

This is very important: All the Greek philosophers, including the contemporary neo-Platonists, exerted their influence on Latin philosophy in the first instance only indirectly. The original texts were lost - in the sense that no one could read them, even if there were a few manuscripts around. In general, people had forgotten how to read Greek.

In the case of Plato, the Middle Ages possessed only the first half or so of the *Timaeus* (hardly your average Platonic dialogue) in a translation by a certain Chalcidius (end of 3rd - beginning of 4th century - pronounce the 'Ch' in his name like the German 'ch' in 'ach', or roughly like the English 'k' if you aren't familiar with German), with a commentary. The *Timaeus* contained Plato's cosmology - his account of the origin of the cosmos. Hence sometimes the Middle Ages called Plato "physicus" - the physicist or philosopher of nature.

It seems that there were also translations of the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* around, but no one appears to have read them. They certainly had little circulation outside very narrow circles, and absolutely no influence.

This state of affairs lasted until the Renaissance. Remember, except for the first half of the *Timaeus*, the Middle Ages did not possess the texts of Plato.

As for Plotinus, matters were even worse. His *Enneads* (the collection of his writings) were almost completely lost. Marius Victorinus is said to have translated some of the *Enneads* into Latin in the fourth century, but his translation seems to have been lost right away.<sup>42</sup>

For Aristotle, the Middle Ages were in somewhat better shape. The logical works were translated by Boethius in the fifth and sixth centuries, but only his translations of the *Categories* and *De interpretatione* ever got into general circulation. (As a result, Aristotle was sometimes referred to as "logicus", just as Plato was called "physicus".) The rest of Aristotle eventually got translated into Latin, but only much later - from about the middle of the twelfth century. First there came the rest of the logical works, and then the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics*, and so on. Essentially all the works had been translated by the middle of the thirteenth century.

This "recovery" of Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was a momentous event in the history of mediaeval philosophy. We shall have much more to say about it later on.



(3) While I want to emphasize the absence of the primary texts of the Greek philosophers, I also want to emphasize that the mediaevals nevertheless knew a good deal about Greek philosophy secondhand. They got their information from:

(a) Some of the Latin "Church Fathers". Many of these men wrote before the knowledge of Greek died out in the West, and they discussed classical Greek doctrines in some detail.

(b) Some of the Latin pagan authors, such as Cicero and Seneca. These writers give us (and gave the mediaevals) a great deal of information about Greek philosophy - much of it pretty accurate too.

During the first part of the Middle Ages, Platonic and neo-Platonic influences dominated philosophical thinking, as they dominated late classical philosophy generally. "Platonism was everywhere, although Plato was not to be found," as Gilson has said somewhere. This situation prevailed until the recovery of Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Hence, it is quite wrong to think of mediaeval philosophy as mainly warmed-over Aristotle. For most of the Middle Ages by far, Aristotle was of decidedly secondary importance.

## CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

The second main ingredient of mediaeval philosophy was *Christianity*. This element is *characteristic* of mediaeval philosophy. It is what separates, for instance, early mediaeval philosophy from late classical pagan philosophy, even though chronologically they were simultaneous.

The philosophy of the whole era we shall be dealing with was carried out with one eye on what people regarded as the truths of the Christian religion. To the extent that a philosophical doctrine conflicted with one or more of those theological givens, to that extent it was in error. We may take this fact indeed as the *defining* feature of mediaeval philosophy: mediaeval philosophy began when philosophers began to measure their speculations against theological doctrine, and it ended when philosophers stopped doing that.

In fact, most of the men we shall be considering, if not all of them, were not philosophers at all by profession. They were *theologians*. This is especially true in the later period, when philosophy began to be clearly distinguished from theology. Aquinas, for instance, thought of himself as a theologian, not especially as a philosopher, even though he wrote some purely philosophical works and even though we can extract philosophical themes from his theological writings. The same is true of most of the authors we shall be studying. They treated philosophical questions, to be sure, and we can discuss their properly philosophical doctrines. But we must remember that, in doing so, we are *abstracting*, and therefore doing a certain measure of violence to what they themselves thought they were doing.

There is no getting around this. Frequently students of mediaeval philosophy are embarrassed by this close link between philosophy and Church dogma in the Middle Ages, and try to apologize for it. And, while it is true that the churchiness of mediaeval philosophy was never as stifling as free-spirited rationalists like to say it was, it is also true that it was there and cannot be denied.

The problem is that nowadays we tend to think of philosophy as an *autonomous* discipline, in which the philosopher must be free to follow out the logic of his thoughts, without regard for previous "givens" that have to be made to come out true. It is easy, therefore, to dismiss mediaeval philosophy as nothing more than a thinly disguised attempt to justify Church doctrine.

I think this view is too simplistic. In fact, philosophy rarely if ever proceeds in such an ideally autonomous way.

It is instructive to compare mediaeval philosophy in this respect with early modern philosophy, which measured its conclusions not so much against Church doctrine as against the new *scientific* doctrine that was beginning to take hold in that day. In fact, I think we can take the dividing line between mediaeval and early modern philosophy to come when philosophers substituted *science* for *revelation* as the touchstone of their theories.

There is an interesting passage in Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* that illustrates this. Descartes, as is well known, held that the essence of body is extension. Leibniz argues against this strictly philosophical claim, on the *scientific* grounds that the laws of momentum and force, as formulated in a Cartesian framework in which the essence of body is extension, would violate the law governing the acceleration of falling bodies, as formulated by Galileo. Here is a case in which a *philosophical* claim is measured against scientific theory.

The same situation prevails today. Anyone now who came up with a philosophy of space and time, or of physical objects, that clearly *violated* relativity theory or quantum mechanics, would be ruled out as not only scientifically, but also *philosophically* incompetent.

There is a reason for bringing all this up. It illustrates my claim that philosophy rarely proceeds with complete autonomy. Of course, there are many areas of modern philosophy where one can reason pretty much as one pleases without fear of trespassing on scientific ground. But so too, there were many areas of mediaeval philosophy in which one could speculate at will without fear of heresy. The situations are strictly parallel.

And if you think that scientific principles are somehow a better basis against which to measure your philosophy than theological principles are, I suggest that this simply betrays a rather parochial bias in favor of the period in which you live. It means that you are more concerned with the scientific, and therefore ultimately *pragmatic* success of predictions (good heavens, no one dares any more to say that science aims at real *truth*, much less that it has actually *achieved* it!) than you are with the salvation of your soul. Do you have any non-question-begging reasons for preferring the one to the other?

However we stand on the question of the final truth or falsity of Christian doctrine, we must, if only for pedagogical reasons, keep an open mind while doing the history of philosophy - and the history of mediaeval philosophy in particular - and be as sympathetic as we can.

## Two Problems for an Early Christian

Mediaeval philosophy, then, may be regarded as combining two ingredients, Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine. But this recipe produces a very volatile brew. The two ingredients don't mix very well, and the tensions and pressures that emerge when one tries to mix them were responsible for much of the subsequent history of philosophy.

I want to pose two problems to you, to illustrate my claim that the mixture of Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine is a "volatile" one. These two problems will also serve to point out some of the "pressures" I said were operating.

Suppose you are an educated Christian in the early centuries. You know your Greek heritage, as educated people did in those days, and in particular you know your Greek philosophy. As an educated person, you of course want to find a place for your new religious beliefs within the philosophical frameworks you have already acquired from your predecessors.

### *FIRST PROBLEM: THE SOUL*

The first problem I want to pose to you is: Which of the classical philosophies are you going to follow when it comes to the human soul?

At first sight, the Platonic/neo-Platonic framework is going to seem most attractive (and in fact it did seem most attractive to most early Christian thinkers). It will attract you as a Christian because:

- (a) The Platonists and neo-Platonists were concerned with the moral development of the soul.
- (b) They saw the highest goal of mankind as some kind of mystical or intellectual vision of the One, or the Form of the Good. It would be easy to interpret this as the "face to face" vision of God in the next life that St. Paul describes (1 Cor. 13:12).
- (c) The neo-Platonic hierarchy of the One, the Intelligence, and the World Soul was reminiscent of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which was just getting worked out in those early centuries. It was not fully formulated in any official way until the first ecumenical council of Nicaea (a.d. 325) and the first council of Constantinople (381), after Christianity had become the state religion of the Roman Empire.
- (d) Most important of all, both Platonists and neo-Platonists held that the soul could exist in separation from the body. This was of course congenial to the Christian notion of an afterlife.

On the other hand, there was another aspect of Christian doctrine that did not fit the Platonic/neo-Platonic framework at all, namely, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead at the end of the world, when the soul, which had been existing apart from the body ever since the death of the individual, would *reenter* a reconstituted body. This view was first recorded as official Church doctrine in the first council of Constantinople in 381, although there is certainly precedent for it in the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles.

The important thing about this doctrine was that the resurrection of the dead was something we are supposed to *look forward to*. It is supposed to be a *good* thing.

This does not fit at all well with the Platonic/neo-Platonic view that the body is the *prison* of the soul, that the soul originally entered the body as the result of kind of metaphysico-moral *fall* (this is especially present in neo-Platonism), that the job of the philosopher and of the wise man generally is to "learn how to die", so that the soul might be released from this vale of tears, that it is *best* for the soul to be *free* from the body.

A Platonist or neo-Platonist, therefore, would have a hard time looking forward eagerly to the resurrection of the dead. Hence, a Christian could not consistently be a straightforward Platonist or neo-Platonist on this point.

But neither could he be an Aristotelian. For Aristotle, recall, the soul was the form of the body, and - at least as he was frequently interpreted - the soul could not *exist* apart from the body.

This theory would make it clear why it is *good* for the soul to be in the body (under pain of total destruction) in the first place. But it makes death an annihilation. There is no disembodied soul after death. Hence the resurrection of the dead, the *reentry* of the soul into the body, is all the more difficult to understand.

Thus Christian doctrine requires a view of the human soul that is neither strictly Platonic or neo-Platonic nor strictly Aristotelian. This is one point of *tension* in the "mixture" of Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine.

It is not at once clear how to resolve this tension. It remains a sore spot for centuries.

## SECOND PROBLEM: GOD

The second problem I want to pose to you in your role as early Christian is: What in your Greek philosophical heritage are you going to identify with the God of your new religion?

At first glance, there are several plausible candidates:

- (a) the Platonic Demiurge, who *produces* the world.
- (b) the Platonic Form of the Good, or alternatively
- (c) the neo-Platonic One, both of which, in their respective doctrines, are the most exalted things in the hierarchy of values.
- (d) an Aristotelian separated substance, which is the only thing in the Aristotelian framework that even remotely looks like God.

But there are problems with all these candidates. The problems can be brought out by listing various features of the Judaeo-Christian God:

- (1) He is the most exalted thing in the hierarchy of values.
- (2) He is a *being* - indeed, a being *par excellence*. Recall Exodus 3:14, where God says to Moses "I am who am" (or however you translate it), and then went on to tell Moses "Go tell the Israelites that *He who is* sent you to them." The mediaevals came to take this text *very* seriously.
- (3) God is *provident*. That is, he *cares* about the world, so much so that he entered into a *covenant* with it.
- (4) God is a *creator*. We shall see some of the implications of this crucial doctrine in a moment.

Point (3) of course automatically rules out Aristotle's separated substances, which are aloof from the world. They do not even *know*, much less care about, what goes on in the world.

Also, there is supposed to be only *one* God, but (in at least some texts) it appears that there are *several* separated substances for Aristotle.

Point (2) rules out the neo-Platonic One - which is *above* Being and so does not, strictly speaking, *exist*. For Plotinus and the neo-Platonists, that which is at the top of the hierarchy is beyond the realm of Being. For Christians, that which is at the top of the hierarchy - namely, God - is a being *par excellence*. Nevertheless, it must be added, some early Christians (those who did not read Exodus 3:14 in this very strong way) tried to make the neo-Platonic One fit the God of their religion.

Point (1) rules out the Platonic Demiurge. The Demiurge is *not* the highest thing on the ontological totem pole. It is lower than the Forms, and looks up to them to get the patterns it imposes on the world.

What about the Platonic Form of the Good? Its status was perhaps ambiguous in Plato:

- (i) Is it the highest *Form*, and therefore the highest *being*?
- (ii) Or is it, despite the locution "Form of the Good", not really a Form at all, but *beyond* the Forms and so, strictly speaking, *above* being?

Plotinus opts for (ii) in identifying his One with the Good. But must we follow him here? Why not opt for (i)? Then the Good will be the *most exalted being*, thus satisfying both (1) and (2). You might also, without stretching it, make the Good "provident". Plotinus, for instance, speaks of his One as spontaneously overflowing because of a "lack of jealousy", just like Plato's Demiurge. That is, the One "cares". Perhaps then an early Christian might touch up his Greek heritage in this way to make it fit the requirements of his religion.

This is basically what *Augustine* did, although as we are about to see, there is much more involved here.

For what about (4), the *doctrine of creation*? This is an absolutely crucial doctrine. When you add this to your Greek heritage, the mixture is not only volatile, it is positively *explosive*.

## THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

What then is the doctrine of creation? There are two fundamental claims in this doctrine:

(a) God caused absolutely everything other than himself. (Depending on your notion of causality, you might also want to say that God is the "cause of himself" - *causa sui* - although most mediaevals did not talk that way. In any case, God is certainly supposed to be the cause of everything else.

(b) This causal act is an absolutely free act on God's part. And it is free not just in the sense that God was not constrained or forced to produce everything else, but also in the stronger sense that God had real alternatives. He did not have to create at all, and, given that he did create, he did not have to create things the way they in fact are.

Note: Sometimes people add a third ingredient to the doctrine of creation, namely that the created world (including time itself) had a *beginning*. I prefer not to think of this as part of the very *notion* of creation, but rather as a substantive claim *about* creation. Aquinas, for instance, says that one can prove philosophically that the world was created (that is, that the whole of reality - not counting God himself, of course - was causally produced by a God who didn't have to do anything of the kind), but one *cannot* prove philosophically that it had a beginning (although he believes that too, but on the basis of revelation, not on the basis of philosophy). Hence, Aquinas takes the claim that the world had a beginning to be *not* a part of the very notion of creation. To some extent, of course, all this is simply a matter of terminology, but I prefer to set it up this way.

In any case, the ingredients (a) and (b) above are enough to tell my story. For there is *absolutely nothing like this doctrine in Greek philosophy*.

With respect to (a), what I will call the "exhaustiveness" of creation, consider Plato. Plato's Demiurge produces the cosmos out of a pre-existing *matter* (or something like matter - the point is that it is pre-existent and so not itself produced by the Demiurge). Moreover in doing so, he looks above himself to the pre-existing Forms to guide him. Hence the Demiurge does not produce *everything* besides himself; he only shapes something that is already there. His job is not to create, but only to *bring order out of chaos*.

As for Aristotle, the separated substances don't do anything that even looks like creation. They don't *produce* anything at all.

With respect to point (b), nowhere in Greek philosophy is there anything like the radical *contingency* of the doctrine of creation. Greek philosophy held that the world was pretty much *necessarily* the way it is. The Demiurge, for instance, had no choice about what to do, and neither did the neo-Platonic One. Although they are free to do what they do in the sense that they are not forced or constrained to do it by some outside agency, nevertheless they are *not* free in the sense that they do not really have any alternatives; they inevitably do what they do, because they are "without jealousy". And as for Aristotle, it is well known that he thought the structure of the world was a necessary one. The species of things, for instance, were fixed and eternal according to Aristotle.

The Greeks do sometimes talk about contingency and chance, but it is clear that they do not take it very seriously. It is not for them a matter of radical alternatives. In this respect it is instructive to look at Aristotle's account of "chance" in *Physics* II, 4-6. For him, "chance" is no more than a matter of unforeseen outcomes. And when the Greeks do talk about alternatives and choice, as for instance when they sometimes speak of humans' free will and responsibility for their actions, it is clear that it is *human beings* they are talking about, not anything like a Christian God.

Once again, this doctrine was a very explosive one when mixed with Greek philosophy. Let me point out some of its consequences.

(1) We need a new account of *causality*, in addition to Aristotle's analysis. Creation is not a *change* in the Aristotelian sense. Aristotle's theory of change requires a *matter* that stays the same throughout the change. Forms come and go, but the continuity of the matter is what makes the change a *change*, not just a mere succession. If I die and the Emperor of China is born, we do not say that I have *become* or *changed into* the Emperor of China, unless there is some element of continuity - as we might have, for instance, on a theory of transmigration of souls. Otherwise, all we have is mere succession: first me, and then the Emperor. Change, therefore, requires a permanent matter. (The separated substances, which have no matter, therefore do not change for Aristotle.) But, according to the doctrine of creation, matter too is created (creation pertains to *everything* besides God). Hence creation is not change. On the other hand, creation is a *transition* of some kind or other - perhaps not a transition *in time*, but a transition nonetheless. That is, God's creative act is supposed to make a difference, and in fact a *very big* difference. The upshot of all this is that the received Aristotelian account of change (and therefore causality) needs to be supplemented. There is something else that needs to be explained that Aristotle has not accounted for.

(2) The radical contingency of creation poses problems if a Christian is going to formulate anything like a *Principle of Sufficient Reason*. The Principle of Sufficient Reason is often in effect a claim that there must ultimately be a *reason* why things are - and have to be - the way they are and not otherwise. But the created world does *not* have to be the way it is and not otherwise. In fact, it does not have to be *at all*. Leibniz of course got into trouble over this later on.

You sometimes see it said that the mediaevals - for example, Aquinas - tried to prove the existence of God by an appeal to the Principle of Sufficient Reason. But they had better not (and in fact *did not*) appeal to a Principle of Sufficient Reason in *that* form; otherwise they would end up proving the existence of something incompatible with what they believed in.

The contingency of creation is not meant to be just a matter of our ignorance. It is not just that we mere humans do not *know* what sufficient reasons God in his infinite wisdom might have had for creating a world, and for creating the one he did. No, the doctrine is that there *was* no such sufficient reason, if by "sufficient" we mean strong enough to rule out all other alternatives. (If it *doesn't* rule out the alternatives, then how can we call it a "sufficient" reason? We *still* don't have enough to tip the balances in favor of things' turning out this way rather than some other.) In effect, then, Christian doctrine added a whole new logical modality to the philosophical vocabulary.

Now for some more concrete consequences:

(3) If God created *everything* other than himself, then he did not have to look outside himself, as the Demiurge did, to some Forms or paradigms that set limits on what can be created. There are, in other words, no *external* constraints on God's creative power. There is simply no external *anything* before creation that could serve to impose the constraints. On the other hand, since God's creative act is *free*, there are no *internal* constraints either. In short, there are no constraints *at all* on God's creative power. That is, *God is omnipotent*.

The doctrine of divine omnipotence, then, is a corollary of the doctrine of creation. That's where it comes from. There is nothing like omnipotence anywhere in Greek philosophy.

If God is so omnipotent, then what about the laws of logic? Is God bound to obey the laws of logic when he creates? If so, then who's boss here, God or logic? If God is only allowed

to create after he checks his logical rule-book to see just what he can get away with, then isn't God in pretty much the same position as the Platonic Demiurge, who had to consult the Forms before imposing order on matter? And if those logical laws are distinct from God himself, then what happened to the claim that *absolutely everything* besides God himself is created? On the other hand, if God is not bound by the laws of logic, then are those laws created along with everything else, so that God could have made them other than in fact they are?

An exactly similar problem arises over values. Are certain actions right and certain other actions wrong simply because God arbitrarily said so, or did he say so because, in some objective and absolute sense, that's just the way they are? If it's only a matter of God's capricious whim, then could he have made it a virtue to eat fried babies in butter - indeed, could he have *commanded* us to do so? But if it's the other way around, and values are *not* created by God along with everything else, then aren't we in effect back in the position of the Demiurge? Does God first have to check the absolute values written in the sky before he knows what commandments he can inscribe on Moses' tablets? This problem emerges in the later Middle Ages in controversies over various "voluntarist" theories of ethics.

These are serious questions, but there is perhaps a way out. Is it possible to build the laws of logic and morality *right into God's nature*, so that he does not have to behave like a Demiurge and look outside himself for *external* limits on what he can do? If so, then perhaps we can preserve an objective and absolute basis for logic and morality without losing the *exhaustiveness* built into the doctrine of creation. God's creative activity must conform to the laws of logic and morality, but those laws are no longer thought of as anything other than God himself, so that we can still claim that everything *besides* God is subject to creation. The price of this solution, of course, is to tamper with the *second* main ingredient in the doctrine of creation, God's complete and utter freedom to create or not to create anything he pleases. One might of course argue that these new limitations do not amount to any real compromise of the divine power, since the inability to produce logical contradictions can hardly be called a real limitation on God or anyone else. But that is a matter of some delicacy. In effect, what it comes down to is a question of formulating an adequate definition of divine omnipotence. "Can God make a stone so big he can't lift it?"

This strategy of identifying God with the laws of logic (and morality, and whatever other "laws" we want to save from the divine capriciousness) is a strategy that will be adopted by Augustine. See Chapter §3 below on Augustine's proof for the existence of God. This strategy has its own problems, of course, and some of them are discussed there.

(4) As a result of the doctrine of creation, *evil* becomes a serious problem. The Greeks did not have this problem in quite the same form. First, by and large things were necessary in the Greek world, so that if there is evil there, no one is really to blame for it, since no one could prevent it. (At least, the One, or the Demiurge, etc., could not prevent it. There *is* some talk about men's responsibility for the evil they do.) But second, the Greeks frequently accounted for evil by means of *matter*. It is "recalcitrant matter" that is responsible for evil in the world. The poor old Demiurge does the best he can, but he only has inferior materials to work with, and so the world he shapes is only an imperfect imitation of the ideal patterns he is trying to embody.

Recall the Socratic principle: *No one knowingly does evil*. Since evil harms the doer, the reasoning goes, no one would do evil if he saw it clearly for what it was. It is simply a matter of self-interest. In fact, of course, we do evil, but that is because we do *not* see clearly. Our vision is clouded because the soul is in the body, and therefore subject to the corrupting and distracting

influences of *matter*. This is a common Platonic/neo-Platonic theme. (Aristotle doesn't have much to say about the ultimate cause of evil in this sense.)

But this Platonic/neo-Platonic theme will not work in a Christian framework. Since God created matter along with everything else, therefore, if matter is responsible for evil, then God is *ultimately* responsible for evil. And that, of course, won't do.

Christianity is committed to saying that *matter is good*, both by the fact that matter is created by a good God, and also by the fact that it is supposed to be good for the soul to be in the body (so that we can look forward to the resurrection of the dead). The stories you frequently hear about how Christianity *despises* the body and everything else in this material world are simply not true of any reflective Christianity.

In short, the usual principle that no one *knowingly* does evil loses its explanation. On a Christian framework, there is no metaphysical accounting for such a thesis. Hence, we conclude, on a Christian framework people sometimes do knowingly do evil - or at least they *can*.

The reasoning here is this: Since God cannot be made responsible for evil, we cannot say that matter is evil or the cause of evil, because God created matter. But the claim that matter is evil (or the cause of evil) is part and parcel of the Socratic thesis that no one knowingly does evil. Hence, we must reject that claim too.

This little consequence goes a long way toward explaining a very curious passage in Augustine's *Confessions*, which you will be reading soon if you have not already started it. The passage is in Book II, Chs. 4-10. One night in his sixteenth year, it seems - that is, when he was fifteen years old - Augustine and some comrades stole some pears from a neighbor's tree. Augustine describes this episode, and then goes on for several chapters wailing over the evil of this deed. It is a striking passage!

Now it is easy to read these chapters and miss the entire point. One is usually struck by the contrast between the relative triviality of the crime and the degree of Augustine's apparent feelings of guilt. And it is all the more odd because Augustine is writing the *Confessions* as an old man, many years after the deed he reports. Has he been cultivating those guilt feelings for all those years? Is this the result?

This passage is therefore sometimes cited as evidence for the *morbidity* of the Christian religion. It turns insignificant escapades into mortal sins, condemns people to infinite punishments for finite crimes, and in general fills you with needless guilt and worry.

But that is *fundamentally* to miss the point of the passage. If you read the passage carefully, it is clear that what Augustine is dwelling on is *not* the supposed enormity of the crime. Rather it is the fact that *he did it in full consciousness of what he was doing*. He insists that he was *not* overwhelmed by the delicious attractiveness of the pears; they weren't even very good pears, and they threw them to some pigs. It was not that they were hungry, so that their judgment was clouded by the needs of the flesh. No, they weren't hungry. And besides, they didn't even *eat* the things. The point of the passage is precisely that there was *nothing* that clouded Augustine's mind in this case; he saw exactly what he was doing, and knew it was wrong. Not that it was *horribly* wrong; that is not the point. But it *was* wrong, and he was fully conscious of that fact.

In short, the real point of the passage, what strikes him about the deed, what makes him go on for seven whole chapters, is the fact that *Socrates was wrong*! It is simply an empirical fact that people sometimes do knowingly do evil. Augustine himself did it! This possibility was theoretically ruled out by the Greek view of things, and was theoretically *required* by the



Christian view of things. Augustine's observation here is in effect that it is not only theoretically required by Christianity, it is also *empirically true*.

(5) The problem of evil, which became a far more serious problem for Christians than it ever was for the Greeks, led to an emphasis on human free will as at least a possible explanation explanation for evil. If God is not to be responsible for evil, then presumably we are, and that requires some kind of notion of free and responsible action. Hence, there is a much stronger emphasis on free will in mediaeval philosophy than there was previously. There is some talk among some Greeks about human free will, but it was never a crucial point as it is for the mediaevals.

The philosophical discussion of free will, of course, lasted far beyond the Middle Ages, and is still with us. It is a legacy of the doctrine of creation.

Of course, once you decide you want to have human free will, you have the problem of reconciling divine omniscience with human free will. If God knows in advance what we are going to do, and if that is *knowledge*, and not just extrapolation or informed projections based on our past behavior, then isn't it somehow already settled what we are going to do? But then in what sense are we free to do otherwise? This classical old philosophical problem of reconciling "divine foreknowledge and human free will" is another legacy of the doctrine of creation.

(7) I also want to claim that Descartes' worries over the Evil Demon and Berkeley's idealism are consequences of the doctrine of creation, via the doctrine of omnipotence. These claims will turn out to be not so odd as they sound. More on that later.

I think I have said enough to justify my remark earlier that the doctrine of creation was a crucial ingredient to throw into the philosophical stew. It set up a whole new array of problems, and introduced a whole new group of notions - like free will and real contingency - into the philosophical vocabulary. These problems and notions, once introduced, tended to stay. They are still with us, even among philosophers who no longer believe in God or in the doctrine of creation that got the whole thing started.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. I here continue to ignore the Stoic tradition. See the end of Chapter 2, above.
2. On Victorinus, see A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek & Early Medieval Philosophy*, Ch. 20 (pp. 331-340). You perhaps have already met Victorinus in your reading of Augustine's *Confessions*.
3. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, ¶¶ 17-18, in Leibniz, *Basic Writings*, pp. 29-33.
4. See the "Nicene Creed", the Greek text of which is in Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, ¶ 125. (A Latin translation is also supplied.) This version of the Creed contains a good deal of doctrine about the nature of God the Son, and his relation to the Father. But nothing much is said about the Holy Spirit, except that you believe in him: "And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit," period.
5. *Ibid.*, ¶ 150 (Greek and Latin texts). The Latin translation given here is the same Creed that used to be recited in the Catholic Mass, and is the basis for the vernacular versions still used today. This "Constantinopolitan" Creed has much more detail about the role of the Holy Spirit: he is "Lord" and "Giver of Life"; he "proceeds" from the Father, and in the Latin version but not in the Greek, from the Son too; together with the Father and the Son he is adored and glorified; he was spoken of by the Prophets. The Latin claim that the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from both the Father and the Son, not just from the Father, was the basis for the famous

"Filioque" controversy in the history of theology. Many heads were broken over it. 6.

*Ibid.*: "We ["I" in the Latin] expect the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

7. The King James Version has "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you." This of course just makes the point all the more strongly.

8. Yes, I know that's too strong. I realize that Aristotle himself discussed the notions of possibility and contingency - although none too clearly - in the *De interpretatione*. And after all, he did *invent* the modal syllogistic. The point is rather one of emphasis; the radical contingency of all things but one is an absolutely central claim of the Christian religion, whereas the wishy-washy kind of contingency Aristotle talked about was pretty obviously a peripheral concern.

9. It is perhaps worth observing here that some recent philosophers of religion have adopted the radical "voluntarist" approach to these questions, and have argued that not only can God *make* a stone so big he can't lift it, he can also then go ahead and *lift* a stone so big he can't lift it! See, for instance, Harry G. Frankfurt, "The Logic of Omnipotence".

## Chapter 5:

### The Early Patristic Period to Augustine

With this chapter, see also Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, Chapter 2.

### Some Preliminary Notes on Patrology

"Patrology", or "patristics", is the study of the so called "Fathers (patres) of the Church". Don't be confused. 'Fathers' in this sense does not mean "priests", although of course many of these people were priests. And it doesn't exactly mean "fathers" in the sense of "founding fathers" either. It means "teachers". This was a standard usage in ancient and early Christian times. See, for example, St. Paul (1 Cor. 4:15): "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." (King James version.)

In early Christian usage, the term 'father' was applied primarily to the bishop, who had the primary teaching role within the Church. But gradually the word was extended until, much later, it came to include all early Christian writers who were taken as representing the authentic tradition of the Church. (See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, I, p. 9.)

Here is a selection of sources you should at least know about.

### Standard Studies and Reference Works

Berthold Altaner, *Patrology*, Hilda C. Graef, tr., Freiburg: Herder, and Edinburgh-London: Nelson, 1960.

Otto Bardenhewer, *Patrology: The Lives and Works of the Fathers of the Church*, Thomas J. Shahan, tr., Freiburg im Breisgau & St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1908.

E. Dekkers, ed., *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, 2nd ed., (= *Sacris erudiri*, 3), Bruges: C. Beyaert and The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961. (Treats Latin Fathers only.)

Maurice Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974 - . Four volumes to date. (Treats Greek Fathers only.)

Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 3 vols., Utrecht: Speculum, and Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1950-1960.

Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, vol. I: Faith, Trinity, Incarnation, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956.

### Collections of Primary Texts

There are several collections of the texts of the Fathers, both in the original Greek and Latin and in translation. See the bibliography to vol. 2, Ch. 2, of Copleston's *History of Philosophy*. You should especially know about the following monumental collection:

Migne, J.-P., *Patrologiae cursus completus*, in two series: Series graeca, 162 vols., Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857-1866 (also contains Latin translations in facing columns); and Series latina, 221 vols., Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844-1864. f41

This is an invaluable source, even though many of the texts published in it are falsely attributed or in unreliable editions. Migne used what was available in his day. Never use Migne without consulting P. Glorieux, *Pour revaloriser Migne: Tables rectificatives*. Glorieux reports on the authenticity of Migne's texts, and cites better editions where they are available. (Note: Glorieux's volume applies only to the *Latin* series.) See also, along the same lines, the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (for the period from Tertullian to Bede, ca. 197-735, in the Latin tradition)

and the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* for the Greeks. Again, for the *Series latina* there is a *Supplementum* to Migne, edited in a series of volumes by Adalbert Hammann (Paris: Garnier, 1958 - ). This *Supplementum* goes through each volume of the *Series latina* and summarizes recent scholarship on authors, dates, and so on, and sometimes adds *new texts*. It is still in course of publication.

Standard abbreviations used for citing Migne: PL = *Patrologia latina* (i.e., the *Series latina*), and PG = *Patrologia graeca*, followed by the *column* number (not a *page* number - there are two columns per page). Some volumes also divide the columns into rough sections, marked between the columns with the letters A, B, etc. These just help you to give a more precise reference. Hammann's *Supplementum* to the PL is often referred to as the PLS.

The PG covers the period from Pope Clement I (d. 101) to Constantinus Palaeologus (Emperor at Constantinople 1129-1132). The PL covers the period from Tertullian (d. ca. 226) to Pope Innocent IV in the thirteenth century.

While Migne's collection is the most extensive, and certainly the most impressive, I do not want to give you the impression that it is the only or the best such collection. The sources cited above will lead you to other collections of texts.

#### TIME SPAN

Despite Migne's rather generous use of the term, the Patristic period is generally taken to extend only to Gregory the Great (d. 604) or to Isidore of Seville (d. 636) in the Latin or Western tradition, and to John Damascene (d. 729) in the Greek or Eastern tradition. (See Quasten, *Patrology*, I, p. 1.)

#### TERMINOLOGY

On the following terms, see Quasten, *Patrology*, I, p. 10.

To be regarded as a "Father of the Church", a Christian author must show:

\f1(a) orthodoxy of teaching. There can be "mistakes" in doctrine, from the vantage point of hindsight. That is, the later development of doctrine may regard some of an author's views as heterodox. But there can be no outright opposition to a dogmatic teaching of the Church that was quite clear at the time the author wrote.

\f1(b) holiness of life. (Nevertheless, not all the "Fathers" have the title "Saint".)

\f1(c) approval by the Church. As witnessed by other authors' quoting him in support of traditional doctrines, by their recommending him to be read, etc.

\f1(d) antiquity. See the discussion of "Time Span", above.

Now look, folks. It's easy to make fun of this, particularly characteristics (a) and (c). Scoffers will be quick to point out that the "mistakes" in doctrine so generously allowed under point (a) don't really amount to all that much, given the rest of the requirement. After all, the question who is and who is not part of the main-line Church, and so what counts as a "clear dogmatic teaching of the Church", is just as much a matter of hindsight as the "mistakes" themselves. In the end, whether a particular author does or does not get to be counted as a "Father of the Church" is entirely a matter of which "party" ultimately wins out in the long-range history of the Church. So too for characteristic (c). Whose "quoting" and "recommending" counts here? Surely not heretics', but only "quoting" and "recommending" by those who turned out to be on the winning side. In short, it is easy to dismiss all this is just another case of the "Whig interpretation of history", which I dismissed in Chapter \s3 above.

All that is no doubt true, but is probably irrelevant. The whole idea of "Patrology" involves the question how a certain organizational body ("the Church") has come to view itself. We have to expect that body to interpret its own history in terms of the outcome. In short, Patrology, by its very nature, is not and cannot be a "neutral" historical investigation. (Which of course is not to say that patrologists have to be propagandists.)

In any case, there is some more terminology you should know:

A doctor of the Church must display characteristics (a) through (c) above to a conspicuous and high degree, but he need not satisfy (d). Thus Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225-1274) and the great mystic John of the Cross (16th century) are "Doctors of the Church" but not "Fathers".

Among the Fathers, the Latin tradition recognizes eight "great Fathers", four Greeks and four Latins. They are:

*Greek:* Gregory Nazianzus, Basil, John Chrysostom, Athanasius. The last is certainly venerated in the Greek East, but is not regarded there as a "Doctor". Thus, the Eastern Church counts only *three* "great Fathers" in the East.

*Latin:* Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great.

## GROUPINGS OF THE FATHERS

*Note:* This is far from an exhaustive list.

*The Apostolic Fathers* (first and early second century).

These are putatively the disciples of the Apostles or of their immediate disciples. Their writings pretty much continue the preaching tradition of the Apostles. There is little theoretical speculation. All the authors in this group are Greeks.

Pope St. Clement I (d. 101)\b

St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 115)\b

St. Polycarp of Smyrna (d. 156),\b

etc.

*Greek Apologists* (early second century to early third century).

## ANTI-PAGAN AUTHORS:

Aristides. Wrote two "apologies" for Christianity. The first (despite Copleston - see Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 554, n. 5) is dated 117-118 and addressed to the emperor Hadrian. Aristides argues for the superiority of Christianity over pagan religion on two grounds: (a) it brought men to a higher idea of God, \f1(b) it brought men to more perfect rules of conduct. He offers a rudimentary form of the argument from design. God is "incomprehensible, unnameable". (Note the neo-Platonic overtones. God, like the neo-Platonic One, is above intelligibility.)

Quadratus. He also wrote an "apology", also addressed to Hadrian, 117-138. It is now lost. Such "apologies", incidentally, were basically pleas to the emperor for toleration. That is, they are "apologies" in the original sense of a "defense" (as in Socrates' Apology). Aristides and Quadratus were certainly not saying they were sorry for being Christians!

Justin Martyr. Wrote a First Apology (ca. 150-154), a Second Apology a few years later, and a Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, (ca. 161). More on Justin in Chapter \s3 below.

Tatian (b. 120). A pupil of Justin's. An anti-Greek polemicist. That is, he wrote against Greek philosophy (although he himself was Greek). Christians should avoid pagan philosophy. Tatian advocates the "barbarian" philosophy, by which he means the wisdom of Christianity, which is a

"stumbling block" to the Greeks. Affirms the creation of matter. Evil is the result of free will, not of Stoic Fate. What is true in Greek philosophy was stolen from the Bible. (This is a theme we will see again.) The soul is material and not naturally immortal. It dies with the body if it does not find the truth. Tatian died a "heretic".

Athenagoras. Later second century. He argues for the oneness of God on the grounds that there would be no "place" (apparently literally) for more than one. (See Gilson, *History*, p. 559, n. 34.) Athenagoras explicitly affirms the resurrection of the body. He distinguishes two roles of reason in faith: (a) to prove that faith is not inconsistent or contradictory, and (b) to prove it is true. This distinction will be very important in later scholasticism.

Theophilus of Antioch. Late second century. Makes an effort to define the notion of creation accurately. Affirms creation *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing").

#### *ANTI-HERETICAL APOLOGISTS:*

Don't be misled here. All these people were of course against heresy, just as they were all against paganism. The question is who they *wrote* against. *Note*: A "pagan" or "infidel" is not a "heretic". The former has never been baptized; the latter has been baptized but holds views explicitly in opposition to clear doctrine. And just for the record, an "apostate" is one who has been baptized but subsequently fell away from the faith entirely.

Irenaeus. Died ca. 202. Wrote against the Gnostics. Evil is the result of human free will. The soul is material.

Hippolytus of Rome. Died 235. Affirmed creation *ex nihilo*. Free will is the source of evil. The Platonic Forms are interpreted as "Ideas" in the mind of God. *Note*: This will become a quite standard view. It is already present in Philo of Alexandria (also called Philo the Jew, died ca. 40 a.d.) and in Plotinus, if you're not too picky about identifying things as "God" in Plotinus' philosophy.

*The Alexandrines* (third century, Greeks).

Clement of Alexandria. Died ca. 211. God is above the One. Creation is *ex nihilo*. Only negative knowledge of God is possible. (That is, it is only possible to know what he is *not*, not what he is.)

Origen. Died ca. 254. *Note* the spelling of his name; it is *not* 'Origin'. He studied under Clement of Alexandria and under the

very mysterious Ammonius Saccas, who also may have taught Plotinus. (There is considerable controversy here.) For more on Origen, see Chapter 4 below.

*Latin Apologists* (third and fourth centuries).

Tertullian. Died ca. 226. A *rabid* anti-Greek. He is reputed to have said things like "I believe because it is absurd!", "Christ rose from the dead; it is true because it is impossible", and "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (i.e., philosophy with Christianity).

Also in this group, I should mention Minucius Felix, Arnobius and Lactantius (a pupil of Arnobius), so that you will at least have their names.

*The Cappadocians*. That is, from Caesarea, fourth century Greeks.

Gregory Nazianzus

Basil (a friend of Nazianzus)

Gregory of Nyssa (the brother of Basil). *Note*: When it came to identifying his works, Nyssa was sometimes confused with a certain Nemesis (ca. 400), who is not at all the same man. For more on Nyssa, see Chapter 5 below.

You should also at least know the following names: Hermes Trismegistos (a pseudonymous Greek), Macrobius (Latin), Chalcidius (end of the third to early fourth century,

translator of the first half of Plato's *Timaeus* into Latin), Marius Victorinus (fourth century Latin). There are some things about Victorinus in Augustine's *Confessions*, Book VIII, Chs. 2 & 4. On Hermes, see the delightfully fun book by Frances W. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. Like everything else Yates writes, this book is superb.

## MAIN DATES IN THE POLITICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE TIME

\f1(1) 313: The Edict of Milan, promulgated by Constantine. This was the edict of toleration for Christianity. It did not make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. That came later.

\f1(2) 325: The First Council of Nicaea. This was the first of the so called "ecumenical councils", that is, a general council of all the bishops of the Church. There are also various regional councils held from time to time, and they do not count as "ecumenical" councils. There have been several such ecumenical councils throughout the history of the Church. The most recent one recognized by Roman Catholics was the Second Vatican Council held in the 1960s. The First Council of Nicaea condemned "Arianism", the heresy that taught that the Son is a creature of the Father. (\f1Note: This is not an altogether unmotivated doctrine. Can you tell me *exactly* what the difference might be between the way in which the Son is supposed to be dependent on the Father and the way in which the world is supposed to be dependent on God? Sure, the one is supposed to be necessary and eternal while the other is contingent and in time. But did God *do* anything radically different in the two cases?) Arianism came to be a very widespread doctrine. The First Council of Nicaea also formulated the so called "Nicene Creed", as a kind of summary statement of the Faith and of the doctrinal stands the Council took.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5      1. The story of Migne's labors is a pretty amazing story in its own right, as the 383 volumes in the combined series might lead you to think. See the articles by J. P. Kirsch, "Migne, Jacques-Paul", *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10, pp. 290-291, and by F. X. Murphy, "Migne, Jacques Paul", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, p. 827, for details. In 1868 there was a huge fire that completely wiped out Migne's presses and warehouses - and the plates of his books. Never daunted, Migne rebuilt and tried to start over, but died in 1875, just one day short of his 75th birthday. The business passed into the hands of Garnier Frères in Paris. Garnier reprinted many of Migne's earlier works from new plates. This explains why you may find volumes of Migne's *Patrologia* that have printing dates long after Migne's death.

## Chapter 6

### Patristic Chronology

The following page contains a table summarizing the information in the preceding Chapter.

The main division is between Greeks and Latins, and is marked by a double solid line down the middle of the page. Since there are "Church Fathers" in both camps, that title straddles the solid line. So too for the title "Apologists" a little lower on the page.

Greeks, of course, come in both "Pagan" and "Christian" varieties, and so do Latins. Hence there are lesser divisions down either side of the table, marked by dotted vertical lines.

The group of "Apologists", which includes both Greek and Latin Christian authors, is outlined in a solid line.

\x{k\l-7d\i+.5iPhilo of Alexandria (the Jew),  
\i+.5id. ca. 40 a.d.  
\n0\l0i\l4H  
\l-7dChurch  
\n1Fathers\l4  
\l0d\n2hccL  
\f41\h5.1i1\l4rPagans  
sts\l4\n4\n9  
\l0dH  
H  
H  
1\h5.1i1  
chapter A\h.8i1\h5.1i1  
chapter A\h.8i1\h5.1i1  
\h0dhccL  
\l-7dGREEKS\h+2.5iLATINS  
100

\f3Apostolic Fathers  
Pope St. Clement I, d. 101  
Ignatius of Antioch, d.  
ca. 115  
Polycarp of Smyrna, d. 156  
-Pagan  
Aristides, fl. 117-118  
Quadratus, fl. 117-138  
Justin Martyr, d. 163-167\n5  
Tatian (Justin's pupil),  
b. 120  
Athenagoras (late 2nd c.)  
Theophilus of Antioch, late  
2nd c.\n6  
Writings



\f3Anti-Heretical  
 \n0\f3Alexandrines Irenaeus, d.  
 Clement of \m9202  
 Alexandria, Hippolytus of\n7  
 ca. 150 -\hm9Rome, d. 235  
 ca. 211  
 Origen, *ca.*  
 185 - ca.  
 254\n1  
 Tertullian, d. ca. 226  
 Minucius Felix (used Tertullian or  
 vice versa)

\h0d400 \b  
 \h5.1i Marti-  
 \h5.1i anus  
 \h5.1i Capel-

Pseudo-Denis the Areopagite, 5th c., mid  
perhaps late-5th c.

Boethius, ca.

480-525

John Philoponus, d. ca. 580

Pope St. Gregory I  
the Great, ca. 540 -

post 600

600 Maximus the Confessor,  
commentator on

Pseudo-Denis, ca. 580-662

700 John Damascene, 8th c.

stic *Chronology*

## Chapter 7: Early Christian Attitudes to Greek Philosophy

In Chapter \s2 above, I claimed that the addition of Christian doctrine, and in particular of the doctrine of creation, to the Greek philosophical heritage resulted in a volatile mixture with important implications for the subsequent history of philosophy. Not all of those implications, of course, were seen at once.

In fact, at first it was not at all clear just what a Christian's attitude toward Greek philosophy ought to be. For the various schools and sects of philosophy in the second or third century a.d. were like religious sects themselves in many respects:

- (a) They were likely to go around saying things like "The job of the philosopher is to search after God".
- (b) Those of a common philosophical persuasion often lived together in a community, much like a monastic community or a 1960's "commune".
- (c) Such communities frequently lived according to a "rule", like the rules that govern religious communities.
- (d) Philosophers, and even particular schools of philosophy, could frequently be identified by their dress, somewhat like modern clerical garb.

Hence, for many practical purposes, the philosophical sects of the time just were religions.

There were two extreme attitudes a Christian could take toward these philosophical sects:

### Contra

On the one hand, you could say that the philosophical schools are the rivals of Christianity. This will result in a very negative attitude toward Greek philosophy. The idea here is that since Christianity is true, these other sects must be false and foolish. And since they are false and foolish, a good Christian should have nothing to do with them. Keep the faith pure of all admixture of Greek paganism. This was the attitude adopted by the second-century Greek author Tatian, and by the third-century Latin Tertullian (see Chapters \s3 and \s4, above). Perhaps it is significant that both men died in somewhat dubious communion with the Christian Church.

We should not make too much of the anti-philosophical attitude of these men. Tertullian, for all his striking turns of phrase against philosophy, is probably not advocating out and out irrationalism. He is advocating what, from the point of view of Greek philosophy, must appear like out and out irrationalism. The idea is that the philosophers search after God, while the Christians have found him, so that it would be futile and perverse for a Christian to search - that is, to philosophize - any more.

There is ample Scriptural basis for this negative attitude. Thus:

- (a) Romans 1:22: "Professing themselves to be wise [sapientes in the Latin Vulgate Bible - compare the Greek sophia, as in `philosophia`\h+3d]\h+3d, they became fools."
- (b) I Corinthians 1:17-27, especially v. 20: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Also 1:22-23: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

(c) Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

(d) Acts 17:18. The Greek philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens give St. Paul a critical reception, which just shows how much they know: "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection."

Also, although this is hardly Scriptural, the Latin pagan author Petronius, in his *Satyricon* (section 71), has Trimalchio describe the kind of epitaph he wants (Müller ed., p. 76):

Here rests C. Pompeius Trimalchio Maecenatianus. The rank of sexvir was given him in absentia. While he could have been a member of all the clubs in Rome, nevertheless he didn't want to. Pious, strong, faithful, he rose from little, left behind three hundred sesterces, *and never listened to a philosopher*. Farewell, you too.

This negative attitude toward Greek philosophy always remained a possibility for the Middle Ages. We still find it, for instance, at the very end of the period in Nicholas of Cusa, who writes (*Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, Raymund Klibansky ed., *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, p. 21):

One reads that most blessed Ambrose added to the litanies: A dialecticis libera nos, Domine. (= "From logicians free us, oh Lord"). For chattering logic is more an obstruction to most sacred theology than it is a contribution to it.

#### PRO

That's one view. On the other hand, there was another possible attitude an early Christian might take toward his Greek philosophical heritage. According to this view, Greek philosophy and Christianity are both after the same thing - searching for salvation, for God. They are not so much rivals as wayfarers on the same road. The important difference from this point of view is that Christianity succeeds in reaching its destination, whereas pagan philosophy fails. In effect, then, Christianity, far from being a rival of philosophy, is instead the true philosophy.

Just as the Hebrews were prepared for Christianity by the law and the prophets, so too the Gentiles were prepared by Plato and Aristotle. And just as Christianity is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, so too it is the fulfillment of Greek philosophy.

This attitude yields a much more positive regard for Greek philosophy, and there is ample Scriptural support for this view too:

(a) Romans 1:18-20: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest to them: for God has shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." This is a famous and influential text. The pagans are without excuse; they should have been able to figure out what they needed to know about God from the evidence of creation. Notice the implicit claim that one can prove the existence of God from the evidence of the world.

(b) Acts 17:28: "As certain also of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring'." The quotation preserves a fragment of Epimenides of Knossos, a pagan Greek philosopher. St. Paul quotes pagan philosophers, so it must be all right.

(c) Titus 1:12-13: "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true." Clement of Alexandria tells us that this "one

of themselves" is again Epimenides the Cretan (Epimenides of Cnossus). And once again, the importance of this text (for our purposes) is that St. Paul quotes pagan authorities, so it must be all right to use them.\f45

There are some variations on this generally positive approach to Greek philosophy.

First, as a Christian in the early centuries, you are going to be on the defensive against those who are charging that your doctrine is silly and contradictory. So, if you have a basically positive attitude toward philosophy, you might naturally turn there to find arguments to help defend your beliefs.

You are going to be charged with holding preposterous views. You want to argue that they are *not* preposterous, but rather quite reasonable. So you turn to philosophical arguments to make your case. This is an *apologetical*, defensive use of philosophy in Christianity. It is a response to *external* pressure, external attack.

On the other hand, you might take a less defensive attitude. You might, as an educated person, simply want to *explore* your beliefs, to *understand* them better, to see what they entail and how they fit together. Hence we have "Faith seeking understanding", an important theme in the Middle Ages. The pressure here is not external, but internal. And as Christianity comes to prevail more and more, so that the defensive, apologetical use of philosophy in Christian thinking is less and less appropriate (since there are fewer external attacks), this attitude of "Faith seeking understanding" comes more and more to the fore.

#### SUMMARY

One might take an anti-philosophical attitude, regarding philosophers as rivals. Or one might take a positive attitude toward philosophy, regarding philosophers as your travelling companions toward a common destination. But even in the latter case, where you have a favorable and tolerant disposition toward Greek philosophy, you have no real reason to incorporate it into your own thinking unless there is some pressure on you to do so. This pressure may be either external, in which case we get a kind of apologetical use of philosophy, or else internal, in which case it is prompted by sheer intellectual curiosity about the faith.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. Monasticism, in the sense in which we normally think of it, did not get really organized until the fifth century, under the influence of St. Benedict (ca. 480-ca. 543). Nevertheless, there were various cenobitic (look it up) religious communities around from quite early on.

2. The most well known, of course, was the famous "Rule of St. Benedict".

3. Note this last point. One of the main things that bothered the philosophers on the Areopagus was the Christian doctrine of the *resurrection*. This was not just the doctrine that a dead man (Jesus) came back to life (and that we will *all* do so on the Day of Judgment), but that this is a *good* thing and something to look forward to. See Chapter \s2, above, on the difficulties with fitting this doctrine into a Greek philosophical framework.

4. Those of you familiar with the old Catholic liturgy will recognize the parody on the Litany of the Saints. Despite Nicholas, Saint Ambrose (you've met him by now in Augustine's *Confessions*) said no such thing, as far as I can tell. What he did say was this (De fide, I, 5, PL 16, col. 559): "But it did not please God to save his people by dialectic."

5. Incidentally, as you probably are aware, the well known "Liar Paradox" is sometimes called "The Epimenides", because of just this passage. Nevertheless, although the later Middle

Ages discussed the Liar Paradox a lot, no one seems to have connected this passage with it. Instead, mediaeval authors who discussed this passage at all were worried only about why Scripture should quote pagan philosophers. (See Paul Vincent Spade, "The Origins of the Mediaeval *Insolubilia*-Literature," *Franciscan Studies* 33 (1973), 292-309.) Note also that modern authors are fond of pointing out that what Epimenides is supposed to have said is not really a full-fledged paradox. It would only be a paradox if he (a Cretan himself) were the only Cretan, and if that were the only thing he ever said. Epimenides' statement cannot be true, since if it is true then everything Cretans say is false - including that very statement. On the other hand, if Epimenides' statement is false, it follows only that *some* Cretan or other at least *sometimes* tells the truth. But it doesn't follow - unless Epimenides' statement is itself the only thing ever said by a Cretan - that that statement *itself* is true, as it would *have* to follow if we were going to get a full-fledged paradox. Hence, except under special assumptions, Epimenides' statement is *false* but not a version of the real Liar Paradox. (Those "special assumptions" are in fact false, of course. But they *could* have been true - there seems to be nothing impossible about them - so that there is still an air of trouble surrounding Epimenides' remark.) All this is no doubt correct, but misses an important point. What *Epimenides* said is just false. But what *St. Paul* said is going to be a real problem. He not only quotes Epimenides' troublesome statement, but then goes on in the very next line to pronounce it *true*! But we have just seen that it *cannot* be true. Proponents of the literal interpretation of the Bible had better sharpen their logical wits for this one!

## Chapter 8:

### Justin Martyr

I have already mentioned Tatian and Tertullian as anti-philosophical Fathers. I now want to touch briefly, in this and the next two chapters, on three of the pro-philosophical Fathers:

Justin Martyr, a second-century "Apologist".

The great Origen, a third-century "Alexandrine".

Gregory of Nyssa, a fourth-century "Cappadocian".

All three are Greek, and all three are important. I want to talk first about Justin, whose importance lies not so much in his philosophical originality (which wasn't very great) but in his attitude.

Note: 'Martyr' was not his name. That is, his mother did not call the poor child "Martyr". Nevertheless, he was martyred (sometime between 163 and 167); the term is a title.

Justin wrote two *apologiai*, that is, two pleas to the Roman Emperor (Antoninus Pius, although the second *Apology* is addressed to the Roman Senate - see Quasten, *Patrology*, I, p. 199), for religious toleration. Christians, recall, were not only new and slightly offbeat; they also refused to worship the state gods, and so were suspected of treason and lack of proper Roman patriotism. Besides these two *Apologies*, and a number of other works that are now lost, Justin wrote a famous *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, his best known work. It is available in translation in several collections of the Church Fathers.<sup>f41</sup> We possess most of this dialogue, although the introduction and a big part of Ch. 74 are lost. (Quasten, *Patrology*, I, p. 202.) It is this dialogue that I want to talk about here.

In the dialogue, Justin relates to a certain Trypho, a Jew, how he was converted to Christianity. The story is no doubt basically true, although it has been arranged and embellished for literary purposes. It goes like this (Chs. 2-8):

Justin was searching for wisdom, for God, as philosophers were wont to do in those days. He felt the "need for salvation". And so he went around to the various philosophical schools to see what they had to offer.

(1) First he tried a Stoic. But the Stoic did not himself believe in God, and thought it was foolishness. Justin decided he was not going to satisfy his soul that way. So,

(2) He went next to a Peripatetic, that is, a follower of Aristotle. But, after a while, "he asked me then to settle on his fee, so that our association should not be profitless to us" (Ch. 2, §2). Hence,

(3) He went to a Pythagorean. But the Pythagorean insisted that he must first learn music (that is, the mathematical theory of harmony, not musical performance), astronomy and geometry before he could get anywhere. But Justin had neither the time nor the inclination to learn all that stuff. So he went away. *Note*, incidentally, the implicit demand Justin is making here. The way to salvation, the *true* philosophy, should be open to all, not just to the learned.

(4) Finally, he went to a Platonist. "And I made progress and improved as much as possible every day. I was greatly taken with the thought of incorporeal things, and the contemplation of the Ideas excited my mind. I thought I had become wise in a short time and, in my laziness, I hoped to have a vision of God at once. For that is the goal of Plato's philosophy."<sup>f42</sup> (Ch. 2, §6)

Note that last claim well! Note also how it was the Platonists who first got Justin to realize that immaterial things existed. This is a common theme in the early literature. Apparently

most people were materialists, and it took some persuasion to get them to believe that immaterial things could exist too.

In any case, having now found what he thought was the true philosophy, Justin retired to the seashore to meditate. There, as he relates to Trypho, he encountered an old man, who turned out to be a Christian, and who engaged him in dispute. Here is a fragment of their conversation:

"Does philosophy then produce happiness?", he said, interrupting.

"It certainly does," I replied, "and it alone."

"What then is philosophy," he said, "and what is its happiness? Tell me, if nothing prevents your telling."

"Philosophy," I said, "is the knowledge of what is and the discovery of truth, while happiness is the prize for that knowledge and that wisdom." [Note the Platonic tone of Justin's remark.]

"Then what do you call God?", he said.

"That which always stays the same, and in the same way, and is the cause of all other things' being. That is God." (Ch. 3, \f8VV 4-5.)

*Note:* This is the classic Platonic way to describe a Form - as *changeless* and immutable. Things in this world, on the other hand, are mutable and impermanent.

The old man then argues with Justin, and convinces him that Platonism is wrong. The main point of contention is the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence and transmigration of the soul. This feature of Platonism is generally not emphasized very much nowadays, but it is there in Plato, and was apparently an important part of "popular Platonism" in Justin's day.

The old man argues that this doctrine is incoherent. If you are bad, you are punished by being reincarnated as a lower form of life - for instance, as a toad. But what kind of punishment is that, if the toad does not know he is being punished, and why? So too, if you do good, you are rewarded by a vision of the Forms, but then you are promptly stuck back in a body, where you forget the Forms again. Some reward! (Ch. 4.)

Note that the old man is here arguing against a certain popular form of Platonism on purely *internal* grounds. And he is absolutely right about it! The re-entry of the soul into the prison-body is hardly a good thing - hardly a reward - for Platonism. In this connection, recall what I said earlier (in chapter \s2, above) about the difficulty of incorporating the Christian hope of a resurrection into a Greek philosophical context. Reincarnation is just as hard, for the same reasons.

The importance of the old man's argument cannot be overemphasized. It is not that the argument is iron-clad. Rather, the point is Justin's realization that, in the framework in which he is working, the Christian doctrine of the soul made better *philosophical* sense than the best of the Greek philosophies he could find. For Christian doctrine rejected transmigration of souls into higher and lower forms of life.

Where did the old man get these doctrines, Justin asks. From the wise men of old, from the Hebrew prophets, whose prophecies are fulfilled in Christianity. In connection with this last point, there are two different doctrines in Justin, not necessarily compatible with one another:

(a) Whatever was worthy in Greek philosophy they stole from Moses and the prophets. This is an old and common view, going back at least to Philo of Alexandria. Chronologically, it is dubious - to say the least.

(b) All who live "reasonably" - that is, in accordance with the \f9l\i+5d\-\i-5dogov - are really Christians whether they know it or not, even if they lived before Christ.



In accordance with (b), philosophy is viewed as a kind of *revelation* to the Greeks (through reason), just as the prophets were a revelation to the Jews. Hence there is a *continuity* of philosophy with Christianity. Recall the Prologue to John's Gospel: Jesus, the "Word" (\f9l\i+5d\-\i-5dogov) is the true light that enlightens *every man* who comes into the world (John 1:9). This is a *very* important text.

There is one further point of Justin's doctrine that deserves mention for future reference: his theory of the soul. Recall the difficulties Platonism had over this question. And recall also Acts 17:18 (quoted in chapter \s3, above): the Greeks did not understand St. Paul when he taught them about Christ *and the resurrection* - that is, not just Christ's resurrection but ours too. (St. Paul thinks the former is a proof of the latter.) The doctrine of the resurrection just would not fit into the Greek way of thinking.

In order to avoid the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, which the old man had shown to be incoherent, Justin feels compelled to say that souls are *not* immortal by nature. On the contrary, *by nature* they are corruptible - that is, they can be disintegrated and come apart, they are by nature *mortal*. And, although I do not find Justin saying so in so many words, it appears that this means that souls are *material*. (Certainly other Church Fathers from around this time held such a view. See Chapter \s4 above.) Because souls are by nature mortal (and material?), they survive only as long as God wills it. Now *in fact* God wills them to survive indefinitely; that is, *in fact* they are *immortal*. But this is a privilege they do *not* have automatically, by nature. Souls are immortal by *participation*, not by nature.

The immateriality and natural immortality of the soul, for which Plato argues, was tied up too closely in Justin's mind with the doctrine of transmigration, which he wanted to avoid. Hence he denied that souls were like that.

There is another reason for thinking that souls are material. Matter is tied up with change. (This is true *throughout* the Greek tradition.) The immaterial is therefore immutable. But immutability is the prerogative of God alone. Recall Justin's definition of God in response to the old man's question. Hence, mutability, and so apparently materiality, *is the mark of a creature*.

This is an important doctrine, even if it is not quite explicit yet in Justin. We have here the germ of the theory of *universal hylomorphism* that will become strong later, and against which Aquinas will argue. According to the doctrine of universal hylomorphism, *everything* - except God, who is special - is made up of matter and form, \i+5d\ f9H\-\i-15duly + \ f9morfy\-\i+10d\i+10d, hence "hylomorphism". Watch for this doctrine, coming soon to this theater. (What you have just seen is only a preview.)

For Justin, therefore, to make human souls naturally immortal and immaterial is to tread dangerously close to polytheism; it is to endow souls with the mark of divinity.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER \S0

1. For the Greek text, I have used the edition by Georges Archambault, *Justin: Dialogue avec Tryphon*, which also contains a French translation. The complete text (which is rather on the long side) is translated in *The Works Now Extant of S. Justin the Martyr*, and in the volume *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr* in the series "The Fathers of the Church". The most important passages for our purposes are also contained in R. P. C. Hanson's translation, *Selections from Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*.

2. I leave it as an exercise to the reader to assign the various characters in Justin's story to familiar members of present-day philosophy departments.

## Chapter 9:

### Origen

Note once again: His name is spelled with an '-en', not an '-in' as in 'origin'. Origen was a third-century Alexandrine author, and is very important indeed.

#### Origen's "Reckless Deed"

Now, boys and girls, we get our first lesson in what I call the "lore and gossip" part of this Survey. If you are ever called upon to teach a course in mediaeval philosophy, you will have to have a collection of anecdotes and droll stories to keep your class's attention. Here is one that will wake them up. Origen, it seems, was much impressed by Matthew 19:12: For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Apparently Origen was able to receive it, so he castrated himself. The story is told in Eusebius of Caesarea's (c. 260-339/340) Ecclesiastical History, VI, 8 ("Loeb Classical Library" edition, vol. II, pp. 29-31; The History of the Church, G.A. Williamson, tr., pp. 247-248), where it is described as Origen's "reckless deed". Eusebius tells us that a certain Demetrius, who was Origen's bishop, was quite astonished at his reckless deed. But he accepted the zeal and the genuineness of his faith, encouraged him to take heart, and urged him to take on his catechetical work now all the more.

#### Origen's Philosophical Views

Apart from that story, the single most important philosophical thing to remember about Origen is that his doctrine bears obvious resemblances to straight neo-Platonism of the Plotinian variety. This is perhaps not surprising, since Origen and Plotinus may both have studied in Alexandria under the same teacher - the very mysterious Ammonius Saccas. (There is considerable dispute about this.)

Ammonius Saccas is a very dark figure, one of those people who haunt the footnotes of books about this period. Plotinus' student and biographer, Porphyry the Phoenician, tells us a bit about him. (Porphyry will have an importance in mediaeval philosophy in quite another context, as we shall see later.)

Recall the discussion of Plotinus in Chapter 2 above. Consult the "cosmogram" there, with its triad: One/Intelligence(s)/Soul(s). Origen takes over a lot of this picture.

First of all, the triad obviously suggests the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which was just getting worked out during this period. Origen pushes this. For him:

(1) God (i.e., God the Father) is to be identified with Plotinus' One. Hence, for Origen the Father is above being. Contrast the passage in Exodus 3:14 ("I am that I am"), which Augustine and others would take as entailing that God is a being par excellence. Origen doesn't feel the pressure of that text quite so strongly.

(2) The One then *generates* or gives rise to (Origen doesn't want to say "creates") the *Logos* or *Word*, which is to be identified with Plotinus' Intelligence, and also with God the Son, the second person of the Trinity.

The Word is, or contains, the *exemplars* (i.e., the Platonic Forms) of all creatures, in imitation of which creatures are fashioned in creation. Origen is here following the beginning of

John's Gospel, 1\i+3d:\i+3d1-3\i+3d: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

*Note:* The Platonic Forms or exemplars are now in a *mind* (\f8nou\-\i+4d^v = intelligence) and are to be thought of as divine ideas. Plato's "Ideas" were not originally ideas in our sense, that is, ideas *in a mind*. The move of putting Platonic Ideas into a divine mind goes back at least to Philo of Alexandria (an important Jewish thinker around the turn of the Christian era, and someone I wish I knew more about). The doctrine will become standard in the Middle Ages, through the influence of Augustine.

(3) Immediately below the Word is the Holy Spirit, which is to be identified with Plotinus' Soul. Below that are created and individual souls (that is, yours and mine).

Note two things about this doctrine. First of all, there is a tendency built in here to *subordinate* the Word and the Holy Spirit (the second and third "persons" of the Trinity) to the Father. They are not all of the same rank. This conflicts with the *theological* doctrine that the three persons were all on a par. This kind of thinking led to Arianism - a trinitarian heresy that grew out of a strong neo-Platonic interpretation of Christianity. At least it grew out of this when pushed by certain people. (We will meet Arianism again later, in connection with Boethius.)

Second, if we were being thoroughly neo-Platonic about this, we should say that, just as the Intelligence is identical with the intelligences (that is, the Word is somehow identical with its Ideas), so too the Soul is identical with individual souls (that is, the Holy Spirit is identical with human souls). (Don't worry too much at this point about how *one* thing can be identical with *several distinct* things; that's the least of our problems.)

There is thus some pressure here to view human souls as *divine*, at least as divine as the Holy Spirit. Origen fights this tendency by *subordinating* human souls to the Holy Spirit - that is, by breaking the second of the above identities. To this extent, he departs from the straight Plotinian line. Nevertheless, the pressure is there, and the tendency remains in this kind of neo-Platonizing Christianity to exalt the human soul to the extent that it becomes in effect *divine*. Watch this tendency when we come to Augustine's theory of *illumination*.

Here are some other features of Origen's doctrine:

(1) Creation is *necessary and eternal*. This, to be sure, is just plain heretical (from the vantage point of hindsight, of course). Origen in effect has solved the problem of reconciling Christian doctrine on this point with Greek philosophy by simply *giving up* the Christian doctrine. (On the nature of the problem, see Chapter \s3, above.)

*Note:* If "creation" is necessary and eternal, how does it differ from the "generation" or "production" of the second and third persons of the Trinity? Well, the answer is: it doesn't. (As the theological doctrines eventually worked themselves out, the idea became this: The *necessary* relations that God enters into are the internal relations among the members of the Trinity; the *contingent* relations God enters into are exactly the relations between God and creatures. A tidy way of dividing things up.) But now, if the production of creatures cannot in the end be distinguished from the production of the second and third persons of the Trinity, we have the opportunity for two opposite heresies:

(a) The view that the second and third persons are, for practical purposes, creatures. This is Arianism, strictly speaking, the view that the Son (never mind the Holy Spirit) is a creature of the Father - a very special and exalted creature, to be sure, but a creature nonetheless.

(b) The view that so called "creatures" are really no different, for practical purposes, from the second or third persons of the Trinity. If the former view reduces the other members of the

Trinity to the status of mere creatures, this view in effect raises creatures to the level of the other members of the Trinity. Once again, we find the tendency to treat creatures - and in particular, *human souls* - as divine.

(2) Creation is *ex nihilo* - that is, "out of nothing". *Note*: To say that creation is *ex nihilo* is not to say that it violates the old Parmenidean principle that you don't get something from nothing. We *would* be violating that principle only if the doctrine were that first there was *nothing at all*, and then - presto! - there were creatures. (Ignore the problem about creating time itself.) But we don't have that picture at all. Rather the doctrine is that first there was *God alone*, and then there were *God and creatures*. So, to say that creation is *ex nihilo* simply means that creation is not out of some pre-existing, independent *matter*. In short, the point of the claim that creation is *ex nihilo* is simply that God's creative activity is not like the work of the Platonic Demiurge.

Origen *argues* for this doctrine - or at least he argues that it is no more difficult to conceive than its contrary. Here is the argument:

If you think creation *ex nihilo* is unintelligible, suppose the contrary. That is, suppose that matter always existed independently, as a kind of *brute fact* without any further cause or explanation. Then, of course, there would be no *reason* for its existence. The raw, brute existence of matter would violate the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* (to use an anachronistic phrase). But that is unintelligible - or at least it is *no more* intelligible than creation *ex nihilo*.

Without worrying about the soundness of this argument, note its structure. The idea is that you are going to have to deny the Principle of Sufficient Reason *somewhere*, and so creation *ex nihilo* is just as good a place to deny it as any. (Recall the difficulties I mentioned in Chapter \s3, above, with reconciling the Principle of Sufficient Reason with the contingency that was part of the doctrine of creation. For Origen, of course, creation is *not* contingent. Still, he seems to recognize that the notion of creation *ex nihilo* has the ring of paradox about it. There still seems to be no real accounting for creation - but neither would there be for the existence of matter, if we denied the doctrine of creation and just took that existence as a brute fact.)

(3) Unlike what Justin appears to have held, Origen affirms the *immateriality* of human souls, in good Platonic/neo-Platonic fashion. Justin was afraid to do this, recall, in part because it would tend to give souls the mark of *divinity*. And, appropriately, we have seen just that tendency in Origen.

(4) *All will be saved*. For Origen, there is no doctrine of Hell. This, of course, is an echo of the neo-Platonic doctrine of the *return* of all things to the One, part of the mystical element in neo-Platonism. (See Chapter \s2, above.)

(5) *Evil* is the result of the soul's *free will*, not the result of matter. (On the problem of evil, see Chapter \s3, above.) In fact, for Origen, the soul *pre-exists*, and it is because of an evil choice on its part that it is put into the body in the first place. The embodiment of souls is therefore *a kind of Fall*. What we see in this view is an attempt to interpret the Christian doctrine of Original Sin in a way that preserves *overtones* of the Platonic doctrine that *the body is a prison*. But only overtones.

Finally, there is one last point to observe about Origen:

(6) God's power is *finite*. This perhaps sounds odd, or even paradoxical, to us, but Origen thought it was necessary in order for God to be *perfect*. What is going on here is this: the Greek notion of *perfection* required definiteness, clear limits, sharpness around the edges. Indefiniteness, blurriness, was an imperfection. (In Latin, '*perfectus*' just means "complete", "completely made". So too, *mutatis mutandis* in Greek.) So if God's power were to be infinite,

that would mean that it's rather hazy just *what* all God can do. And that haziness would be an imperfection, not a worthy thing to attribute to God. In general, Christian authors for a long time felt embarrassed over the need to say that God was in some sense infinite. It is only quite late that the notion of divine infinity gets separated from classical overtones. (I'm told the dividing line comes with Henry of Ghent in the late-thirteenth century, but I have not tried to verify that.)

This sketch only hints at Origen's profundity. He was a *very* great thinker. From the point of view of later developments, his orthodoxy was perhaps rather borderline. But many of the tendencies or explicit doctrines we find in Origen we will also see haunting the rest of the Middle Ages.

Origen belonged to a school of Christian thinkers at Alexandria in the second and third centuries. They were called (appropriately) the *Alexandrines*. Besides Origen, the other main figure in this group is *Clement of Alexandria*.

On Origen, you may also want to consult (besides Copleston) A. H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Ch. 11. (Ch. 10 is on Clement of Alexandria.)

## Chapter 10:

### Gregory of Nyssa

The third of the pre-Augustinian Fathers I want to consider is Gregory of Nyssa. He lived in the fourth century, and belonged to the group called the "Cappadocians". (Cappadocia is a region of Asia Minor, southeast of modern Ankara.) The three main Cappadocians of the fourth century were:

Gregory Nazianzus

Basil, a friend of Gregory's

Gregory of Nyssa, the brother of Basil.

Nyssa is often confused by later writers with a certain Nemesis, because of the similarity of their names and of the titles of their works. (If their names don't look very similar to you, remember: you're not looking at a Greek manuscript.)

Nyssa, like Origen, is very neo-Platonic. Here are some of the main themes:

(1) Like Origen, Nyssa accepts the return of everything to God. (This doctrine is known in the trade as "*apokatastasis*" [ = complete restoration, re-establishment].) Hence there is no Hell for Nyssa. Unlike Origen, however, Nyssa rejects the pre-existence of souls.

(2) For Nyssa, creation is a free act (contrary to Origen).

(3) Like Origen, Nyssa held that evil is the result of man's free will. In Nyssa's happy phrase, man is the "demiurge of evil". That is, just as the Platonic Demiurge (and, for that matter, the neo-Platonic Soul of Plotinus' doctrine) is responsible for what good there is in this visible world insofar as he is the one who shapes "recalcitrant matter" after the patterns found in the ideal Forms, so too human beings - or their souls - are "demiurges of evil" and are responsible for what is bad in this visible world insofar as they are the ones who mess things up in this world. They are the ones who stir up the waters so that the reflection of the Forms is all broken up and distorted.

(4) Nyssa held that matter is composed of intelligible qualities. It is not exactly clear (to me at any rate) how all this works, but it is clear that it is a kind of "bundle theory" of "material" things, and the ingredients of the bundle are Platonic intelligibles. Matter for Nyssa is not a dark, mysterious, "unintelligible" principle, as it is for some people (for some Aristotelians, for example). Nyssa appears to have held this view for basically *theological*, not philosophical reasons: it provided a way of handling the notion that at the end of the world, not only will our *souls* return to God, but so will our *bodies*. (This is one version of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead - that is, the resurrection of their *bodies*. See Chapter 2 above.) It is much easier to see how bodies can return to God in the neo-Platonic way if bodies are just clusters of intelligible, immaterial qualities to begin with. This rather odd doctrine does not have much of a future in the Middle Ages, although it will emerge again in John Scottus Eriugena, who read Greek and was very much influenced by Nyssa. (I leave it as homework to figure out whether this doctrine has anything at all to do with Berkeley.)

(5) Perhaps the most important contribution Nyssa made to mediaeval philosophy, however, was in his mystical theory. Recall the old Greek equation of being with intelligibility. (The equation goes back at least to Parmenides.) Given this equation, you can do two things:

(a) If you think of God as a being, even as a being *par excellence*, then mysticism (or, in neo-Platonic terms, the "return" to God) is going to be interpreted in terms of *intellect* or *understanding*. The mystical experience will be thought of primarily as an *intellectual*

experience. And so you will get all the standard intellectual metaphors - "light"-metaphors, primarily. The mystical experience will involve a "blinding light", "the sun" (recall Plato's allegory). Similarly, the face to face experience of God that St. Paul promises to the blessed in the next life will be a matter of *intellect*, a "beatific vision". One important branch of the Platonic tradition, the branch including Augustine, will go in this direction.

(b) On the other hand, if you put God *above* being, with at least some of the neo-Platonists, then the mystical experience of union with God is not going to be an *intellectual* experience at all. (You are also, of course, ignoring Exodus 34:14, if that bothers you.)

Nyssa adopts a somewhat different approach, which nevertheless has pretty much the same consequences for the way one describes the mystical experience. According to Nyssa:

(i) God is indeed *most real*, in conformity with Exodus 34:14. Sensible things are but pale reflections of God.

(ii) But our human cognitive powers are naturally geared to the *sensible*. It is the sensible world that we know best. Hence

(iii) Mysticism, even though it is going to be a search after or return to what is *most real*, in accordance with Exodus 34:14, is *not* going to be an *intellectual* experience.

For Nyssa, our intellects are simply not capable of reaching that far - to God. Hence mysticism will not be a matter of intellect but of *will and love*, which outstrips the intellect.

This is an important doctrine, with a big future - and not just in mediaeval thought. If, for instance, in Augustine mystical experience is going to be interpreted as a *blinding light*, etc., in Nyssa it is going to be put in terms of *darkness, love*, etc. It is from the Nyssa-tradition that you get later mystical talk about:

the "Dark Night of the Soul"

the "Cloud of Unknowing"

the "Living Flame of Love", etc.

*Note:* As far as I know, these actual *terms* do not come from Nyssa, although they are certainly from the Nyssa-tradition.

This mystical tradition is a completely different stream from the intellectualist kind of mysticism in Augustine. We will see it emerge into the Latin tradition with the translation of Pseudo-Denis. (We'll get to him later.)

Here is a quite typical passage that illustrates this "darkness"-mysticism. It comes from *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous mystical treatise written in Middle English around 1370:

. . . And our soul, by virtue of this reforming grace, is made entirely sufficient to comprehend him completely by love, who is incomprehensible to any created knowing power, such as an angel or a human soul. (I mean by their knowing, and not by their loving. And therefore in this case I call them knowing powers.)

But see: all rational creatures, each one by himself, angel and man, has in himself a principal operative power that is called a knowing power, and another principal operative power that is called a loving power. To the first of these two powers, which is a knowing power, God - that is, the maker of [those powers] - is forever incomprehensible. And to the second, which is the loving power, he is altogether completely knowable to each one individually. . . . *Please note:* There is a *highly* developed mystical tradition in the West. And it is a *theoretical* tradition - that is, there is a large literature about what is *going on* in mysticism, not just on how to do it or what it feels like. Eastern philosophy has no monopoly on mysticism.

You also get overtones of Nyssa's doctrine in Descartes' *Meditation* IV. Descartes says that our intellects are limited, but our wills are not. Hence our wills can go beyond our intellects. We can judge - return verdicts on - things we do not, and perhaps *cannot*, clearly and distinctly understand. This is what in the end is responsible for our falling into error. Such a view of the relation of will to intellect is very much in the spirit of Nyssa, although Descartes was no doubt not thinking especially of Nyssa here.

It is important to see exactly what Nyssa has done. He has *tampered* with the old Greek equation of being with intelligibility. There are two ways of viewing it. We may take Nyssa as *denying* that equation, so that while God is the most real thing around, he is nevertheless a dark night to the intellect. The most real is *not* the most intelligible. Or else we can also take it - and this is the way that will be most important and influential - that Nyssa has *kept* the equation but introduced a qualification:

It may very well be that being is *in some sense* equated with intelligibility, but not necessarily with *intelligibility to us*. God may be perfectly intelligible *to himself*. He may be the most intelligible thing there is, in that sense. But *we* don't and can't understand him, so he is not intelligible *to us*.

This is the distinction between intelligibility *absolutely* and intelligibility *quoad nos* (= "with respect to us" or "as far as we are concerned") that Aquinas and the Aristotelians will make so much of later on.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER \S0

1. My own clumsy translation, with apologies to those who *really* know Middle English, from *The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Treatises*, Phyllis Hodgson, ed., p. 10 lines 26-37. See also *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Clifton Wolters, tr., section 4, p. 55.



## Chapter 11: Augustine: Some Preliminaries

If you have not already done so, now is a good time to read Augustine's *Confessions*. In conjunction with the *Confessions*, consult the notes in Chapter 2 below. Also, to get ready for what is coming up in the next few chapters, you should read Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, and the passages from *The Teacher*, *On the Trinity*, and *The City of God* in the Hyman and Walsh volume. See also Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, Chs. 3-8.

### Selected Bibliography on Augustine

As you can imagine, the bibliography on Augustine is immense. See Copleston, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 327-329 for a partial listing. Here are a few further items you should know about:

#### Collections of *Texts*

Vernon J. Bourke, ed. & tr., *The Essential Augustine*, (New York: Mentor "Omega" Books, 1964; 2nd ed., Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1974). A terrific collection of otherwise hard to find texts. Well-arranged, indexed, annotated, and with an appendix listing the works of Augustine together with available translations. A good buy.

John J. O'Meara, ed. & tr., *An Augustine Reader*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Image" Books, 1973). A collection of large extracts from a few works. Big chunks from the *Soliloquies*, letters, etc. A useful collection.

Erich Przywara, ed. & tr., *An Augustine Synthesis*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958). A good collection of texts, but arranged in a very unhelpful way. It's hard to find your way around in this volume.

#### Secondary Literature

Roy W. Battenhouse, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969).

Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967). Probably the best single introduction to Augustine. Excellent!

R. A. Markus, ed., *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Anchor" Books, 1972). This is a volume in the "Modern Studies in Philosophy" series. On the whole, it is an excellent collection of essays.

Robert Meagher, *Augustine: An Introduction*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1978).

F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: Church and Society at the Dawn of the Middle Ages*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965). A heavy but very interesting book, primarily biographical and not philosophical.

### First Things TO KNOW ABOUT AUGUSTINE

*Note on Augustine's Name:* I pronounce it "aw-GUS-tin" or "uh-GUS-tin". Many people say "AW-gus-teen". Either is perfectly correct; the difference is largely regional. But the English "AW-stin" is an affectation that ought to be stamped out.

Augustine is probably *the most influential philosopher who ever lived*. This is not a joke, people; it's really true. Augustine was certainly more influential than Aristotle, and probably

more influential than Plato - much of whose influence, after all, came *through* Augustine. Throughout the entire Middle Ages - that is, for roughly a thousand years after his death - Augustine was an authority who *had* to be taken seriously. He *shaped* mediaeval philosophy as no one else did. And his influence did not end with the Middle Ages. During the Reformation, Augustinian authority was appealed to by both sides - and not just on matters of no philosophical significance either. His theory of illumination lives on in Malebranche, and in Descartes' mysterious "light of nature" in the *Meditations*. His approach to the problem of evil and to the question of human free will is *still* in circulation today. His influence was felt not just in subsequent philosophy, but also in theology, popular religion, and politics - for instance, the theory of the just war. He is one of the all time greats!

Having said this, I should point out that, on the other hand, Augustine was not really a philosopher at all - either by training or by profession. He was a *rhetor* ("rhetorician"), which in classical antiquity meant something of a cross between a poet laureate and a lawyer. A rhetor would be called upon to deliver speeches on important and ceremonial occasions, and would also be expected to be able to plead a case persuasively in a court of law. The *rhetor* was also something of an educator. For rhetoric was the study of "how to do things with words" - that is, of the *practical* uses of language. And one of the things you can do with words is, of course, *to shape people's minds and characters*, in short, to educate them. Rhetoric was an important cornerstone of classical society. But it was not philosophy, exactly, and so we should not think of Augustine as primarily a philosopher.

Augustine's rhetorical training and (at least until he became a bishop) profession explain the highly rhetorical flavor of most of his writings. There is very little hard argumentation in them. And little *systematic presentation of his views*. In some cases, it is not always clear just what his doctrine is; he seems to change his mind from one writing to the next. Augustinianism may perhaps best be viewed as a matter of broad themes and tendencies, not of hard doctrines.

We will continue to see this kind of thing, with some exceptions, right up to the eleventh century and *Saint Anselm*: people trained in classical culture, the liberal arts, and speculating about their religion and about philosophical topics in a rather loose way. Only with Anselm do we begin to get real hard argumentation.<sup>1</sup>

The main thing to remember about Augustine is that he is a *Platonist*, in a very broad sense of that very broad term. This may be seen in the following ways:

(1) He thinks we must *turn inward* to our own experience and to the contents of our own mind to get any knowledge worthy of the name. While he does not, at least not after his early years, follow the skeptics of the late Platonic Academy in rejecting the senses as entirely untrustworthy, he does think they will not give us the knowledge that counts.

(2) Like Justin Martyr (see Chapter \s3 above) Augustine found the reading of the Platonists particularly *revealing*. The Platonists first brought him to believe in immaterial realities. (So too Justin, as you will recall.) The Manichees were *materialists*, and Augustine (as you know from reading the *Confessions*) was strongly influenced by them for a long time. On their view, nothing could exist that wasn't a physical *body*. Basically this view seems to have confused what can *exist* with what can be *imagined*. On the influence of the Platonists, Augustine came gradually to realize that we can think of things that cannot be *pictured* (imagined) accurately. And he eventually came to believe that such things really exist.

(3) Augustine was interested in *mathematics and values*, the two areas where we encounter *ideal* concepts. (See Chapter \s4 above.) This regular pairing of mathematics and values is an infallible indication of Platonic influence. Take a look at *On Free Choice*, Bk. II, Ch.

8 (at the end of the chapter), where Augustine cites Ecclesiastes 7:25: "I have and my heart have gone round to know and to consider and to search out *wisdom and number*." Augustine uses this text as a vehicle to allow him to treat the two together. (*Note:* To say that Augustine was *interested* in mathematics is not to say that he was especially *good* at it. Far from it.)

## PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

In my discussion of Augustine in the next several chapters, I want to treat the following topics:

- (a) Skepticism.
- (b) Soul and body.
- (c) The problem of evil.
- (d) Perception.
- (e) Augustine's theory of the "teacher".
- (f) His proof for the existence of God.
- (g) Illumination and the theory of divine ideas.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 11

1. John Marenbon's very interesting book *Early Medieval Philosophy (480-1150): An Introduction*, in effect makes the same point. There is an important difference between merely "passing on" philosophical views developed and argued for by others, and actually doing real philosophical work oneself. Much of the neo-Platonism of the early Middle Ages was of the former variety, the presentation of a "world-view" with little real argumentation for it. Marenbon observes that what philosophical *argumentation* there was in the the early Middle Ages was almost always tied up in some way with the tradition of Aristotelian logic. I recommend his book.

## Chapter 12: Notes on Augustine's Confessions

Read Augustine's Confessions from beginning to end, if you have not already done so. Use the following notes in conjunction with the chapters on Augustine that follow.

References will be by book, chapter and section number. Some translations do not divide the chapters into sections; if you have such a translation, ignore the section numbers (of course).

I,1,1 - 2,2: (i.e., Book I, Ch. 1, section 1, to Book I, Ch. 2, section 2): Note the statement of a version of Plato's paradox in the *Meno*. There Plato asks how learning is possible, since we cannot learn what we already know, nor can we learn what we do not know, since then we would be unable to recognize it when we found it. So too, Augustine asks how it is possible to "call upon" (*invocare* - literally, to call in) God without his already being in some sense present within us. But, in that case, why "call upon him" at all? The search for God, of which Augustine is going to give us an autobiographical account, already presupposes that God is in some sense already found. Augustine is very puzzled by this. Compare Descartes' "discovery" of the *innate* idea of God in him.

I,3,3: Note the doctrine that God is "present" to everything that exists, supporting and sustaining it. (See also I,2,2.) This is a corollary of the doctrine of the creation of everything besides God (including matter). Here Augustine wonders what this "presence" can be. Compare Augustine's questions here with Plato's questions about the Forms in the first part of the *Parmenides*: Are they divided up, etc.? See also Anselm's discussion of the same problem in his *Monologion*, Chs. 20-24. (Anselm will come up later.)

I,5,6: Note the claim that God is Truth itself. See On Free Choice of the Will, Book II, where Augustine will give a proof of the existence of God on the basis of this identification. Truth lies in the realm of intelligibility. Augustine is here locating God at the level of intelligibility, and therefore, according to the old Greek equation, of being. Contrast Origen, who put God (the Father) *above* being, violating Exodus 3:14, and identified the Son with the neo-Platonic Intelligence (the realm of intelligibility). Augustine will *not* separate these as Origen did. He puts great weight on Exodus 3:14. ("I am who I am...I am has sent ...")

I,6,9: "in you . . . the sempiternal reasons . . . live" (your translation may vary). That is, the divine Ideas, Platonic Forms - now, following Philo and Plotinus, put into the divine mind. Note Augustine's hesitation over the question of the pre-existence of souls.

I,8,13: This passage was made famous not long ago by Wittgenstein's using it at the beginning of the Philosophical Investigations. (That is, it was made famous among those who were likely to read Wittgenstein and not Augustine.)

II,1,1: Note that Augustine here calls God the "One". Earlier, he called God "Truth". Once again, Augustine will refuse the neo-Platonic separation of these. *Note*: The Pine-Coffin translation in the Penguin Classics effectively disguises what is going on here by translating "when I turned away from you, whom alone I should have sought, and lost myself instead on many a different quest" (p. 43). The Latin in fact says something more along the lines of

"while, turned away from you, the one, I disappeared into the many" (*dum ab uno te aversus in multa evanui*). The point is the contrast between the one and the many.

II,4,9 - 9,17: A justly famous passage. Augustine dwells so long on his relatively trivial deed because he recognizes that he did evil in full consciousness that it was evil - thus refuting the Greek axiom that no one knowingly does evil. (See Chapter \s2, above.)

III,6,10 - 7,12: Manicheism, which attracted Augustine, was thoroughly materialistic. Compare the remarks in III,7,12 with the passage in I,3,3. Compare also Justin Martyr's remark that the Platonists first made him aware of immaterial realities.

III,7,12: Note the doctrine that evil does not really exist, but is a *privation* of the good.

III,8,15: Note the claim that "every part that does not fit into its whole is deformed". Compare *On Free Choice of the Will*, the notion of justice as *order*. Augustine wrote a short tract *De ordine* ("On Order"). This is an important theme in Augustine.

IV,10,15 - 11,17: Note the neo-Platonic dissatisfaction with the changing universe, and the longing for permanence. A common Augustinian theme. What changes exists only in part. What most fully exists is immutable.

IV,12,18: God is present wherever truth is known. An intimation of the doctrine of illumination.

IV,13,20: Augustine's lost *De pulchro et apto* was his first work. Recall Plato's discussion of beauty in the *Symposium*, and Plotinus's chronologically first essay in the *Enneads*, also on beauty.

IV,15,24: Augustine is still a Manichee, a dualist who thought that there was a force of evil (the dyad) opposing the force of good (the monad). Note that the force of evil is not the same as the Christian notion of the devil; the devil is a creature, and so causally dependent on God.

IV,15,25: Another intimation of the doctrine of illumination. Note why it is necessary: "It has to be illuminated by another light in order to partake of Truth, because it itself is not the nature of Truth."

IV,16,29: Note the implication that God does not fall under an Aristotelian category. This will be an important doctrine later on.

IV,16,30: Note the allusion to Plato's allegory of the cave.

V,10,19: Augustine begins to break away from Manicheism and to be attracted by the skepticism of the late Platonic Academy. After his conversion, Augustine's first book was *Contra academicos*.

VI,4,6: Note how the truths of mathematics are a paradigm of certitude for Augustine. See his argument in *On Free Choice*, Book II.

VI,5,8: Note the important claim that pure human reason is too weak to find the truth, and therefore revelation is necessary. This notion is characteristic of the Augustinian tradition, and is connected with the doctrine of illumination. It is difficult to keep revelation and illumination separate in the Augustinian tradition. Note also how this attitude toward human reason follows easily from the notion that Christianity (using revelation) is the true philosophy, succeeding where pagan philosophy (based solely on reason) failed, and also from the notion that what was true in Greek philosophy was stolen from the Scriptures (revelation), and what was false was the fault of unaided speculation. Both these attitudes are already present in Augustine's patristic predecessors (for instance, Justin Martyr).

VII,1,1: Note the truths Augustine here holds certain. They are all matters of *value*. See also the note above on VI,4,6. The combination of *value* and *mathematics* as paradigmatically certain is an infallible indication of Platonic influence. See Chapter \s3, above.

VII,2,3: This chapter gives a brief glimpse of Manichean doctrine. The "refutation" is one of the few real arguments in the *Confessions*. Note how the *reductio* of the second alternative appears

to something like the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Recall the difficulties with this principle for any Christian who believes in the radical contingency of creation. (See Chapter \s2, above.)

VII,3,4: Note how Augustine brings up the problem of evil after affirming that God creates "all things" (other than himself, presumably). Recall our discussion of the relation between the problem of evil and the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation (Chapter \s2, above). The Manichean account of the origin of evil is given in VII,2,3, but, as Augustine observes here, that explanation makes God mutable, and moreover (see VII,2,3 again) is based on a *denial* that everything except God is created by God. The origin of evil is no real problem for a Manichee because he does not have the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation.

VII,3,5: A sketch of Augustine's approach in *On Free Choice*, especially Book I. The last part of VII,3,5 shows that Augustine did not think that free will was an easy solution to the problem. (He's right.)

VII,4,6: Note the statement "neither was any soul ever able nor will it be able to think of something that is better than you". Compare Anselm's ontological argument in *Proslogion*, Ch. 2. (We will talk about this later.) Augustine, unlike Anselm, does not use this notion of God to construct a proof of his existence.

VII,6,8-10: This is not a digression. Astrology amounted in Augustine's view to an attempt to avoid human blame for evil by shifting responsibility to the stars. See IV,3,4.

VII,9,13-15: An important chapter. Compare Justin Martyr's reaction on being exposed to Platonism. Note how Augustine find (neo-) Platonism and the Scriptures to be saying much the same thing, although neo-Platonism did not teach the Incarnation and Redemption. Note, toward the end of the chapter, the remark about taking gold out of Egypt. This is an allusion to the "despoiling Egypt" passage in the Book of Exodus. (See Chapter \s4, above.)

VII, 10,6: The doctrine of illumination is being expounded here. Read the chapter carefully. Note that Augustine turns inward (away from the senses, to introspection) to see this light. This is part of the Platonic theme that the senses only *distract* us from the truth. Note also the quotation of Exodus 3:14 and the famous passage from Romans 1:20.

VII,12,18: A being that had no good at all would not exist. Once you adopt this Platonic point of view, equating being and goodness, Manichean dualism is ruled out. Evil turns out to be a privation.

VII,13,19: Augustine here seems to be expressing the often heard view that evil is dissolved in the harmony of the whole: "Discord is but harmony poorly understood." While Augustine certainly does sometimes talk this way, it is not his considered opinion. Evil is no illusion for Augustine.

VII,16,22: A first attempt to say what evil is. Basically, for Augustine, evil is disorder - things out of place in the hierarchy of values.

VII,17,23: Closely parallels the argument in *On Free Choice*, Book II. Toward the end of the chapter Augustine speaks of illumination in almost mystical terms.

VIII,7,17: "Give me chastity and continence, but don't do it now." A justly famous line - and the object of many tired old jokes.

VIII,7,18: Note the implications of the passage. For Augustine, faith is not a matter of intellect. He was intellectually convinced long before his conversion.

VIII,8,20 - 10,24: Recall Aristotle's distinction (*Nichomachean Ethics*) between deliberation and choice. Deliberation is terminated by a choice, which we may think of as the will's giving an order. With this distinction in mind, note how Augustine first observes (8,20 - 9,21) what appears to be conflicting *choices* in him (the will does not obey its own orders). Then he argues

that this inner conflict does not imply an irreducible duality in human nature, any more than strife in the world implies Manichean dualism (the parallel is important). But in making the argument (10,22-24) Augustine seems to have slipped into talking not about choice but about deliberation. Despite his confusion in the discussion, Augustine's point can still be made. The set of choices that a person makes need not be a consistent set.

*IX,4,7:* At Cassiciacum, Augustine wrote *Contra academicos*, *De beata vita*, *De ordine* and the *Soliloquies*.

*Book X.* Book IX is the last of the purely autobiographical books. There follow four books that may seem a bit out of place. Book X is a meditation on memory - a faculty that Augustine has been using continuously for nine whole books. It will help your understanding of this book if you keep in mind that the cluster of Latin words dealing with memory basically mean "calling to mind". Normally, of course, we "call to mind" things we have *previously* encountered, so that "memory" is the same as "recall". But Augustine expands the use of the words, so that it is possible to "remember" (call to mind) the present and even the future. As a result, Augustine can accept something like Plato's thesis that "learning is really remembering" without being committed to the pre-existence of souls, a doctrine historically associated with transmigration, and so unacceptable to a Christian. The whole of Book X is important for the doctrine of illumination. Just as reminiscence for Plato was a kind of link between the soul and the Forms, so too illumination, via "memory", is for Augustine a link between the soul and divine Truth (the divine Ideas). Memory is the same as the mind for Augustine.

*X,6,8-10:* A famous chapter. Note the typical Platonic kind of progression: from sensory objects, Augustine turns to the senses themselves ("bodily messengers") and then begins to turn *inward*, away from the senses (to the "inner man"), to the power of *reason* (which men have and animals lack). This progression amounts to a climb up the Platonic hierarchy. See the similar move in *On Free Choice*, Book II. Note, toward the end, the statement that beauty "speaks however to all, but they understand who compare its voice, received from the outside, with the truth within". Compare *On the Teacher*. The point is the same as in the slave-boy passage in the *Meno*. Finally, note the importance, in this chapter, of what passes judgment on what. See, again, *On Free Choice*, Book II.

*X,9,16 - 10,17:* In Ch. 8, Augustine discussed *sensory* memory, involving "images". Now he discusses non-sensory memory, which does not involve images but the realities themselves. Intellectual "memory" - that is, any kind of intellectual "calling to mind" - is a calling forth of immaterial truths from the depths of the mind. (See *On the Teacher*.) How did such truths get there? Note that, when the problem is put this way, it is *not* subject to a Cartesian solution in terms of innate ideas, since they are representations ("images", not the realities), nor probably to a Platonic solution in terms of pre-existence. Augustine's claim is that any kind of intellectual knowledge requires that Truth (that is, God, the divine Ideas) be somehow present in person in the recesses of the mind. Knowledge presupposes a divine indwelling.

*X,14,21:* Note the explicit statement that mind is identical with memory.

*X,15,23 - 16,25:* It appeared from Chs. 8-9 that the images of sensory objects were in the memory, while immaterial things were present in person. The discussion in Chs. 14-16 shows that this division is too neat, and that the facts are much more complicated. Note, in 16,25, the claim that images require a prior acquaintance. Augustine really has no answer to the problem he raises here.

*X,17,26:* Note the Platonic identification of the self with the mind.

*X,25,36:* A review.

*Books XI-XII* amount to a commentary on the beginning of Genesis.

*XI,4,6*: Mutability is the mark of a creature; hence immutability is proper to God alone. Recall Justin Martyr. This is a common theme.

*XI,5,7*: Note how Augustine distinguishes creation from the work of a Demiurge.

*XI,7,9*: The "word" is the second person of the Trinity. Augustine thinks of thought after the analogy of speech, and thinks of the relation of Father to Son in the Trinity as analogous to the relation between a mind and its thinking. There are strong overtones here of the neo-Platonic Intelligence.

*XI,14,17*: A famous passage. With the discussion in the rest of Book XI, compare Sartre's section on time in *Being and Nothingness*. The discussion is not as shallow as it may seem at first.

*XI,20,26*: Augustine is not ignoring the distinction between subjective and objective time. He is reducing the latter to the former. Again, compare Sartre's discussion.

*XII,9,9*: The heaven Augustine is speaking of here is not the sky (the word is ambiguous in Latin) but presumably the *angelic* realm, created and yet changeless.

*XII,17,25*: Note the term 'spiritual matter'. This will have a long history.



## Chapter 13: Augustine: Skepticism

With this Chapter, see also the translations below, in Volume II of this Survey, Text \s3, passages \s4-\s5.

For a while, Augustine had been attracted by the skepticism of the late Platonic Academy. Gradually, however, he worked his way out of this position. Indeed, one of the first writings he undertook after his conversion to Christianity was the *Contra academicos* - an attack on Academic skepticism.

The Academic arguments for skepticism were basically directed against the *senses*. They seem to have made a basic assumption, one quite Aristotelian and non-Platonic in spirit:

Whatever knowledge we have comes from the senses.

Hence, if our senses can be attacked as unreliable, our whole claim to certain knowledge fails. (Note: I do not mean to suggest that the late Academy was secretly a hotbed of empiricism. But this does seem to be the way many of their skeptical arguments went.)

Basically, the arguments against the senses were of the variety that have become standard: arguments from illusions - the oar that appears bent in the water, square towers that look round from a distance, and so on.

Augustine for the most part simply accepts these arguments, and the conclusion that the senses are unreliable. He does not, however, think that we should therefore suspend our belief in them. That would be impractical. We should use them for whatever they are worth, recognizing that they are *risky* and therefore do not give us *knowledge* in the fullest and strongest sense of the term.

This kind of practical reasonableness is characteristic of Augustine. But, of course, by itself it is no response at all to Academic skepticism. The skeptical question is not the practical question whether we have to rely on our cognitive faculties on a day to day basis. Of course we do! Rather, the skeptical question is the theoretical question how much those cognitive faculties are worth, whether they deserve the trust we cannot help but give them in practice.

Accordingly, Augustine's main attack on the Academics comes from a different and more theoretical quarter: he rejects the implicit *assumption* of their arguments, the assumption that whatever knowledge we have comes from the senses. This of course puts Augustine squarely in the Platonic tradition - which is where he fits on other grounds too.

In *Confessions*, Book X, Augustine distinguishes things that are present to the mind in person, so to speak, from those that are present only by proxy, by representation or image. (Readers of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* will find much of what Augustine says here quite familiar.) Now while there are many difficulties and refinements that he discusses in Book X, the basic application to Academic skepticism is clear:

The problem with sensation is that it presents us with its objects only *by proxy* - that is, in a representation, a sense datum or impression. From this, all the classical problems with representational theories of perception follow: how can we ever be sure that the representation is an accurate one without somehow getting both the image and the object present to the mind "in person" (that is, directly) and comparing them with one another to see if they match up? *Ex hypothesi* we cannot do that; we do not have direct access to external objects, but only to our images and impressions. This of course is just the standard old *Cartesian* problem.

In this situation, Augustine makes some of the standard moves. For instance, as long as we confine ourselves to a kind of phenomenological description of our sensory images, without committing ourselves in any way to anything beyond them, we are on safe ground. If I say there really *is* a bent oar out there in the water, I am probably wrong. But if I say only "It *appears to me* that there is a bent oar in the water", I am absolutely right; it *does* appear that way to me, and there is no doubt about it.

The rationale for this quite standard move is clear. While the objects of sensation (that is, the *external* objects) are presented to us only by proxy, in their images, the images themselves are present to the mind *in person*. We don't see the image as it were through yet another image. Thus, while we can err about the object, we cannot err about the image.

The picture then is this. The mind knows what it's got, what so to speak is present "inside" it. There the mind is on its home territory. And what *does* the mind have as the result of sensation? Certainly not the external object. The senses do not deliver the object itself to the mind. What they deliver is rather a "message" *about* the object, an image or sense impression *claiming* that there is an object of such and such a sort out there. Now, there is no doubt about the fact that *we get the message*. Skeptical doubt arises instead over whether the message is true. And the doubt is quite a reasonable one, especially since on this theory of sensation we never get the object. All we get are more messages. Hence we can *never* get ourselves in a position to verify those messages decisively once and for all.

The mind therefore can have absolute and certain knowledge about the things that are directly or immediately present to it, the things present "in person". Skeptical doubts arise only for things that are *not* directly or immediately present to the mind, but only indirectly and mediately, "by proxy". This is not yet the whole of Augustine's answer to skepticism, but already you may have an objection. It may look at this point as if Augustine is implicitly assuming that the *only* reason for errors of judgment is the presence of an *intermediary* blocking direct access to the object of judgment, that *all* errors of judgment are like the case of sensory illusion. And you may object that this is simply not so. We can err not only because we do not come into direct cognitive contact with what we are judging, but also in cases where we *do* come into direct contact but are simply not paying attention, or in cases where we just *misdescribe* our images, and so on. A lot of criticism in the literature a few years back ran along these lines.

But Augustine in fact need not and is not maintaining that the presence of an intermediary barrier is the *only* reason for error. What he is saying instead is that it is the only *incorrigible* reason for error. If you err because of a lack of attention, then pay more attention! If you misdescribe what you directly see, then look again! Only in the case of *representational* awareness are we presented with an *insuperable* barrier.

Those of us brought up in the modern philosophical tradition recognize of course that there is an additional problem here: the *critical* problem, more or less in the sense of Kant's "critical" philosophy. How do we know when we've paid enough attention? How many times do we have to look before we can be sure we are describing our direct awareness correctly?

Augustine is simply not worried about this problem. It is a *later* problem in the history of philosophy. Augustine is not really concerned with formulating infallible criteria for knowledge. He is more concerned to observe that there are some things - those present to the mind in person - about which, when we take reasonable care and pay reasonable attention, we are *justified* (in some moral sense) in placing *absolute credence* in our judgments. By contrast, the *external* objects of the senses are such that, even if we do take reasonable care, we are *not* justified in

placing such absolute credence in our judgments about them. About the former, it is *in principle* possible to get yourself in a position to judge them without risk of error - and in fact, in the normal case, we *are* in that position. About the latter, however, it is not possible even in principle. And that's about as far as Augustine goes into the "critical" problem.

Now it turns out that it is not only sensory images that are present to the mind directly. And this is the point on which Augustine's main criticism of the Academics rests. I said earlier that Augustine rejects the implicit premise of the Academics' arguments, that all our knowledge comes through the senses. If that premise were true, then the only things we could be sure of would be that we are getting "messages" about things we cannot verify. But, for Augustine, *not* all our knowledge comes through the senses, and the things we can be sure of go far beyond that.

First of all, the mind itself *and all its acts* are present to the mind without intermediary. *What could get between the mind and itself?* Hence, without risk of error, we can *know*

(a) That we have a mind.

(b) Since the mind is alive, we know that we are alive. What could get between the mind and its own act of living? (You may not find this one entirely convincing.)

(c) So too, we know that we exist. We cannot be deceived about this.

This may still seem like not very much, but there's more coming. In the meantime, note the obvious similarities between all this and Descartes' *cogito*. In fact, there is a direct historical connection between Augustine and Descartes. (Descartes did not come out of nowhere, after all, although some older histories of philosophy would try to make you think so.) Look at the passage from Augustine's *De trinitate* quoted in Volume II, below, Text \s3, passage \s6. It is *very* reminiscent of Descartes' first *Meditation*. Like Descartes, Augustine considers the cases of sensory illusion, dreams, and madness, and says many of the same things Descartes says about them.

But although there are parallels with Descartes, there are important differences too:

(1) The Augustinian *cogito*, if I may call it that, is not the cornerstone of his philosophy, as Descartes tried to make it the cornerstone of his. Augustine is content to observe that things of this kind suffice to refute the Academics, and then turns to other matters. He does not try to construct the whole edifice of his philosophy on the basis of it.

(2) Augustine never tries to argue, as Descartes does, that the senses really *are* to some degree reliable (at least about what would later come to be called the "primary qualities" of things) by showing that God would not deceive us. That got Descartes into big trouble in *Meditation IV*. Augustine continues to think that the senses really are unreliable, although as a matter of *pragmatics*, we have to trust them to some degree.

(3) *This is very important*, and is the "more" that I promised just before bringing up Descartes. Augustine, like Descartes, is going to find that the mind can have certain knowledge not only of sensory images, and of the mind itself and its acts, but also of other truths that are in no sense "mental truths" or "facts about the mind" but that *we cannot have got through the senses*: for instance, the truths of mathematics and certain *a priori* truths of ethics, such as "Good is to be preferred to evil". See, for instance, Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book II. (Note the linkage of numbers and value here, and recall what I said above in Chapters \s2 and \s7 above about the pairing of these two notions.)

Now Augustine, like Descartes, has to ask: How do we get the knowledge of these things? But Augustine's answer is going to be different from Descartes'. Descartes thought we had this knowledge by means of *clear and distinct ideas* - that is, by *representations*. And so he

has to try to prove that these clear and distinct ideas are *reliable* representations. In short, for Descartes the skeptical problems are all back again, and all the notorious problems with *Meditation* III result. For Augustine, on the other hand, these truths of mathematics and ethics are not present to the mind *by proxy*; they are present *in person*. They *have* to be if we can know them with certainty; that is the whole point of what we've been saying. (On this point, it seems to me that Augustine's doctrine is more coherent than Descartes'.)

Exactly how all this works is going to be a touchy matter in Augustine. It concerns his so called "theory of illumination", which we shall discuss later. It is *very important*. Despite the differences in their philosophies, the theory of illumination survives in Descartes, in a perhaps degraded form, as the mysterious "light of nature".

The upshot of all this is that skepticism is untenable. Certain knowledge is possible - but one must get it from *introspection*, not from the senses. This keeps Augustine squarely in the Platonic tradition, and fits nicely with the Christian tendency to contemplation and mysticism.

## Chapter 14:

### Augustine: Soul and Body

Recall the problem discussed in Chapter \s2, above, about reconciling Christian doctrine with Greek philosophy on the question of the relation between soul and body. Augustine never satisfactorily solves these problems or completely resolves the tension between Christianity and Greek thought on this point. Nevertheless, the overall flavor of his doctrine here is more Platonic than Aristotelian.

Perhaps the best way to approach his attempt to define the relation between soul and body in human beings is to look at a passage from his little-read work *On the Customs of the Catholic Church* [= *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*], I, 4, 6. It is translated below in Volume II of this Survey, Text \s3, passage \s4. Go read it now. (See also *The City of God*, XIX, 3, in the Hyman and Walsh volume.)

Now what is going on in this passage? What is man?, Augustine asks. He agrees that a man is somehow a composite of soul and body, and to this extent he agrees with Aristotle. We do not properly call a *corpse* a man; and we would not *properly* call a disembodied *ghost* a man. The word 'man', then, is employed only where we have a soul and a body somehow linked together.

But just exactly what is the nature of this composition, this linkage? Augustine considers three alternatives:

(1) Is the word 'man' a pair-word? That is to say, is the word 'man' like the word 'team', as in 'team of horses'? Neither horse by itself is the team, but only the two together. Is it then likewise with 'man', namely, that neither body nor soul by itself *is* the man, but only the two together?

(2) Or is the word 'man' more like the word 'lantern'? (The Latin term I am translating here is 'lucerna', and can also be translated "light". But don't confuse this with "light" in the sense of a ray or beam of light. A "light" in the sense of 'lucerna' is the source of "light" in the sense of a ray or beam.) Two things are required to make a lantern a lantern: the lantern-case and the *flame*. If you have the case without the flame, you don't really have a lantern. You have a piece of metal or porcelain and this is only *potentially* a lantern, as Aristotle might say. Conversely, if you have the flame without the case, you still don't have a lantern - you have a *conflagration*! Both the case and the flame are required in order to have "a lantern". Nevertheless, when you do have "a lantern" in this sense, it is only the *case* that is properly the "lantern", although it is *called* "a lantern" with a kind of oblique reference to the flame it contains.

Augustine's example depends to some extent on the particulars of the Latin 'lucerna'. But there is nothing difficult about his overall point. Consider the English word 'mother'. A woman cannot be a mother without having had a child. But it is not the *pair* woman/child that is the mother. It is only the *woman* who is the mother, although we only *call* her a "mother" if she has had a child.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the analogy, the term 'lantern' is better for Augustine's purposes. Is the word 'man' then like the word 'lantern'? Is it only the case - that is, the "shell" of a man, his body - that is properly the man, even though we *call* the body a "man" only when it contains a *soul*?

(3) Or is the word 'man' more like the word 'rider' (= 'eques', "horseman")? One cannot be a rider unless he rides horses. Yet the rider is not the *pair* man/horse. And he is certainly not

the *horse*, insofar as it supports the man as the lantern-case supports the flame. Rather the rider is properly only the *man*, even though he is *called* a "rider" only insofar as he is *on* the horse, *governing and ruling* it.

Is the word 'man' like this? Is it really only the *soul* that is the man, even though it is *called* a "man" only insofar as it *riding on* the body, *governing and ruling* it?

Incidentally, what we are seeing in this passage is a very rudimentary form of the later mediaeval theory of *connotation*, which was a big thing in fourteenth-century logical theory. In the terminology of that theory, what Augustine is asking is whether the word 'man' (1) signifies *both* body and soul, or the *composition* of body and soul; (2) *signifies* the body and *connotes* the soul; or (3) *signifies* soul and *connotes* the body. This is not the place to discuss that later theory, but something like that is very much what is going on here.

Well, these are three alternatives. Under which of them are we to put the term 'man'? Or, to express it more metaphysically and less in terms of language, what sort of thing is a man? Is he the composite of body and soul, or is he really just the body, or just the soul?

In *The City of God*, XIX, 3 (in the Hyman and Walsh volume), Augustine lists the same three alternatives, and attributes them to Varro, whom he elsewhere calls "a very learned heathen" (*The City of God*, III, 4). (Varro was a Roman Eclectic scholar and philosopher, 116-27 b. c.) Augustine says that Varro himself chose the first alternative (the third as they are arranged in *The City of God*), that 'man' is a pair-word and is properly applied to the pair or composite of body and soul. Accordingly, for Varro, the highest good for a man is to lead a *mixed* life, a life that combines the goods of both the soul and the body, a mixture of both the contemplative and the active lives.

In the passage from *On the Customs of the Catholic Church*, Augustine himself does not explicitly choose among the three alternatives. But notice how the *second* alternative, that a man is really just the body, is tacitly dropped in the last paragraph of the passage. Again, a little later on in *The City of God*, XIX, 4, Augustine says he thinks Varro treated the question quite superficially, because he tried to find the highest good of man *in this life*. One might suspect, therefore, that Augustine will reject the metaphysical view on which Varro based his conclusion, that man is a *composite* of body and soul.

This suspicion is confirmed later on in the *Customs of the Catholic Church*, where Augustine makes it quite clear that he accepts the *third* alternative only, that man is a *soul* governing and ruling a body. See below, Volume II, Text \s3, passage \s5. (I'm not sure what the qualification 'as he appears to man' means in this passage.)

Now what sort of thing is this soul? Well, in a passage in his *De quantitate animae* (= *On the Size of the Soul*, a rather strange title!), 13, 22, Augustine defines not the *soul* (= *anima*) but the *mind* (= *animus*), which is nevertheless a closely related notion. (The *De quantitate animae* is a dialogue between Augustine and Evodius. In the present passage, Augustine is speaking.) Here is what he says (the passage is reproduced also, below, in Volume II, Text \s3, passage \s7):

. . . But if you want to define the mind for yourself, and so ask what the mind is, it is easy for me to reply. For it seems to be to be a certain substance, partaking in reason, and fitted to ruling the body.

Hence it appears that Augustine basically accepts a Platonic view of man: body and soul are *two substances*. They are not linked together as matter and form, as they are for Aristotle, but rather by a relation of *governing and ruling*. And it is the *soul* that is truly the man.

For the Platonic credentials of this view, see *Alcibiades I*, 130a-c, translated below in Volume II, Text \s6.

See also Plotinus, *Ennead VI*, 7, 4-5 - if you can make any sense of it.

One final point in all this should be brought out: the notion of *governing and ruling*. Keep your eye on this. It will serve as a link to some of the themes in Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*.

Chapter 15:  
Augustine: Evil  
What Is Evil and How Does It Arise?

Augustine's world, in the best Platonic fashion, is hierarchically arranged. The principle of ordering in this hierarchy is based on intrinsic value. That is, the higher on the scheme of things, the better or more worthy. Once again, note the Platonic concern with values.

Things higher on the hierarchy are thus better than things lower on the hierarchy. You can guess in advance how in general this is going to look:

God  
(angels)  
Human Souls  
(devils)  
bodies

Fig. \s0-1: Augustine's Hierarchy

Don't worry about the positioning of angels and devils on this scheme. I simply stick them in for the sake of completeness. I think I have them where Augustine would put them.

Now so far this ordering looks pretty innocuous. It's just a way of ranking things according to what you think they are worth. But the arrangement has metaphysical overtones.

Augustine, unlike Origen, refuses to follow the neo-Platonists in putting God, the One or the Good, above the realm of being. On the contrary, in view of Exodus 3:14, which Augustine takes very seriously, God is a being par excellence.

That is, Augustine identifies: God = Good = Being. Hence, since that which is at the top of the hierarchy is that which is best (because the hierarchy is a hierarchy of value) it is therefore also that which most truly is. The things lower on the hierarchy are not so good, and so don't exist as fully. What we have here is a theory of degrees of reality.

Many people have a prejudice against theories like this, and perhaps you do too. Perhaps you want to think of reality or being as an all or nothing affair. A thing is either real or it is not, it either exists or it doesn't, and that is all there is to it. Being or reality is like an on/off switch; it has only two positions.

Not so for Augustine and lots of other people. For them, being or reality is more like a rheostat, a volume-control on a radio. You can turn it up or you can turn it down. And while of course the radio is either on or off, nevertheless there is a whole spectrum of degrees between being on "all the way" and being off altogether.

There is a perfectly respectable philosophical tradition that treats reality as coming in degrees in this way. And it is important to realize that there is nothing incoherent about thinking of things this way. It is in no way a denial of the truism that things either exist or they don't. And there is not even anything especially mysterious about the view (although it may well be historically associated with other views that are pretty mysterious). So if you find yourself wanting to dismiss theories like this out of hand, I suggest you examine your reasons carefully.

Having said that, it is also important to realize how foreign this way of thinking is to us - or at least to some of us. On the Platonic/Augustinian view, for instance, there is simply no



problem whatever deriving an "ought" from an "is". What most truly is is what is best, and so is what ought to be. The more a thing exists, the more it ought to exist. Nothing could be simpler.

Let us look at Augustine's hierarchy in more detail. Physical objects, bodies at the bottom of the hierarchy, and indeed all of creation by comparison with God, is in Augustine's phrase "prope nihil" - "next to nothing". Creatures are not nothing, of course, but by comparison with the exalted reality of God, they are next to nothing. Creatures are, but they by no means exist in the fullest sense. That is reserved for God.

Creatures, then, are not fully real. They exist, but not fully or completely. Another way some people put this is to say that they are in part, and are not in part. Some things follow from this:

(1) *Change or becoming* is another striking case where we have things that exist but not completely or fully, things that *are in part* and *are not in part*. What is changing or coming to be is real in some sense; it is not *completely* nothing. But it is not yet *fully real*; it is only "on the way", it is *coming to be*. (Compare Aristotle's analysis of change in the *Physics*.) In fact, this kind of in-between status seems to be *characteristic* of change or becoming, and is what makes change so hard to grasp philosophically, as people have known ever since Parmenides. *Therefore*, creatures, which exist but not fully or completely, which are in part and are not in part, are linked with change and becoming. Hence we get with Augustine, just as we have already seen with Justin Martyr, *the identification of creaturehood with mutability*. Change is the mark of a creature. Immutability or fixity is the mark of God alone. It is a divine characteristic. (Recall Justin's definition of God.)

(2) Since Augustine identifies Being and One (unlike Plotinus), therefore reality and unity go hand in hand. Hence that which is most real is also that which is most one. In short, God is absolutely one, and therefore *has no parts*. Things that have parts are, in some sense least, a *plurality*. God, therefore, who is to the highest degree one, can have no parts. Lesser things, on the other hand, things lower on the hierarchy, are composites and do have parts. Hence, not only is mutability the mark of a creature, *composition is also the mark of a creature*. (This also fits in with point (1) just above, since the traditional analysis of change requires composition.)

(3) God becomes identified with the good old *Form of the Good*. God, in virtue of being the most real and the most unified, is also *the good par excellence*. Now notice that there is nothing at the opposite end of the hierarchy which is *purely evil*. Indeed, there cannot be. If there were anything in Augustine's universe that were *purely evil* - so that it were not even in the slightest degree good - then, by the equation of good with being, that thing would not *exist* in even the slightest degree. In short, there is no such thing. There is no place on the hierarchy of reality for a *principle of evil*, a kind of "Form of the Evil" to match the Form of the Good.

Contrast this situation with the Manichean picture that attracted Augustine until he learned better. (Of course you are familiar with the Manichees from reading the *Confessions*.)

GOD

HUMAN SOULS

BODIES

FORCE OF EVIL

FIG. \S0-2: THE MANICHEAN HIERARCHY

The Manicheans were moral dualists, and with it metaphysical dualists. For them, the world is split between two poles, a force of good and a force of evil, and everything in between is a mixture, containing some good and some evil. In virtue of their allowing a separate force of

evil, a second pole, the Manichees were committed (whether they realized it or not) to rejecting the equation of good with being.

This is another case where Augustine's reading of the Platonists opened his eyes. They showed him how to avoid the Manichean solution to the problem of evil, the postulation of a separate and independent force of evil. They suggested to him the equation of good with being.

Note: Many neo-Platonists would no doubt not have accepted this equation; they would have put the Good *above* being. Still, it is not at all far fetched to say that they *suggested* it to Augustine. Until one gets so far up on the neo-Platonic hierarchy that one is beyond the intelligences/intelligibles (the latter-day Platonic Forms), being and goodness go hand in hand. Degrees of being exactly match (indeed, exactly *are*) degrees of goodness all the way up the neo-Platonic ladder, except for the very last step. Hence it is not at all hard to see how Augustine might have found his equation suggested by their doctrines. And in any case, Augustine certainly *says* it was the Platonists who showed him how to avoid Manicheanism on this point.

Notice how the Christian doctrine of creation rules out the Manichean schema. If God created everything below him on the hierarchy, then he would have created the force of evil too, and so could hardly be said to be good *par excellence*.

Manicheanism in effect entails a denial of the doctrine of creation insofar as it postulates an *independent* force of evil, not subject to and not created by God.

(4) Augustine not only will not allow that there is an independent force of evil. He also will not allow that things below God on the hierarchy are *mixtures* of good and evil. *Everything* on the hierarchy is good - in varying degrees. *Nothing* on the hierarchy is bad. Evil of course is a fact that has to be accounted for. Augustine knows too much about evil to deny that. But his account of evil does not proceed by finding a place for it on the hierarchy of being.

Augustine *cannot* say that human souls, for instance, since they are midway down the hierarchy, are to some degree *ontologically bad*. He cannot admit that because souls are created by God, and so if they were bad in *any* degree, God would be directly responsible for evil, and so not be good *par excellence*. In short, Augustine must reject the theory that is sometimes called the theory of "metaphysical evil", the theory that anything falling short of the highest good (God) is to that extent "imperfect" and so bad or evil *by its very nature*. For Augustine, there can be nothing that is evil by nature.

Augustine has to say that everything on the hierarchy is good, although in varying degrees. But to say that something is *less good* is *not* automatically to say it is *more evil*. In short, the notions of good and evil are not *polar opposites* for Augustine, as they are for the Manichees. Good and evil are not like hot and cold. As something becomes less hot it becomes colder, and as it becomes less cold it becomes hotter. But good and evil are not like that.

Here we see the ontological rationale behind the famous Augustinian thesis (in the *Confessions* and in *On Free Choice of the Will*) that *evil does not exist*. Evil is not a positive entity for Augustine.

This means not only that there is no primal force of *pure evil*, as the Manichees held. It means also that, strictly speaking, there *are* not even lesser evils. There is simply *no place at all* on the hierarchy for things that are ontologically evil.

It is very hard to make sense of this doctrine at first. Augustine is *not* of course denying that people *sin*, that they do things something that they *ought not to do*. What then *is* he saying?

People sometimes do things they *ought not* to do, and things sometimes happen that *ought not* to happen. This notion of "ought" is the key here. It adds a whole subtheme to the picture I have been presenting.

Good and evil, I said, are not *polar opposites*. That is, it is not the case that the less good is automatically the more evil. Nevertheless, good and evil *are* contraries, in the sense that a thing cannot be both good and evil in the same respect at the same time. (Consult Aristotle's *De interpretatione* on the difference between contradictories - which correspond very roughly to what I have been calling here "polar opposites" - and contraries.) The way this works is as follows. Augustine thinks of evil as a *privation* or *lack* of good, not just an *absence* of good - not just the *non-presence* of good. There are two sides to this notion:

(1) First, the *linguistic* side. (*Note to head off a misunderstanding*: This is *not* the whole story. There is also point (2) listed below. If this first point *were* the whole story, then evil *would* be merely the absence, the non-presence, of good.) Our language deceives us if we are not careful. We say 'The wall is in the light' and we say 'The wall is in the darkness'. Syntactically, these two sentences are quite similar. But there is a great difference ontologically in what is said by them.

The first sentence is in a sense an *accurate representation* of the situation it describes (assuming the sentence is true, of course). There is an entity we are calling "the wall", and there is something called "light" (an odd and mysterious kind of entity, to be sure, but never mind that), and the two are related in a way expressed by the words 'is in'. As long as we don't push the point too far, we can say that something like the early Wittgenstein's "picture-theory" of language applies to this sentence.

But the second sentence is different. It is *not* an accurate representation of the situation it describes, even if the sentence is true. The "picture theory" does not apply to this sentence. There is *no* entity called "darkness" that is related to the wall, when the wall is "in darkness", in the way light is related to the wall when the wall is "in the light". And when we say 'The wall is in darkness', we do not mean to suggest that there is such an entity - or if we do, we're wrong. All we mean to say is that the wall is *not* in the light. We do not have to appeal to some third entity, *darkness*, in addition to the wall and the light.

Now similarly - although, I emphasize again, this is only *part* of the picture - when we say that a thing is *good* in a certain respect, we mean that there are certain *real* features about it that *make it good*. But when we say that something is *evil* in a certain respect, we do *not* mean - at least not if we are Augustinians - that there are some *different* real features about it that make it evil. Instead we mean that the features that, were they present, would make the thing *good* in that respect *are not there*.

(2) But there is more to it of course. To say that a thing is evil in a certain respect is not *just* to say that it is not good in that respect. That is, evil is not just the absence, the non-presence, of good. If it were, then the less good would automatically be the more evil, and we would be back to the polar view that Augustine rejects, the view that creatures are somehow metaphysically evil just in virtue of being inferior goods.

Augustine rejects that, I said. For him, evil is the *lack* or *privation* of a good. A *lack* or *privation* is not just an *absence*, at least not as we are using the terms here. A *lack* or *privation* is an absence of something that *ought* to be there. Here we have that "ought" again.

In short, to say that something is *evil* for Augustine is to say that it does *not* have certain good-making features that it *ought* to have.

Now the lower things on the Augustinian hierarchy are *not* as good as the higher ones. There is an *absence* of high-degree good in their case. But they are not on that account *evil*, because this absence is not an absence of a good they *ought* to have. If it were, this would amount to saying that *lower* goods ought to be *higher* goods. And that is ridiculous. One might

just as well blame the moon because it is not the sun. Augustine argues forcefully against this kind of thinking in *On Free Choice of the Will*, III, 5.

How then are we to account for the fact that people do what they *ought not* to do? Why do things happen that *ought not* to happen?

This is basically the problem of Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*. I will not here give you a play by play account of what goes on there; read it for yourself. Rather, I will try to systematize (very tentatively) what he does there and elsewhere.

The main link between the notion of *good* (the hierarchy) and the notion of *ought* that seems to be operative in Augustine is this:

The higher things on the hierarchy *ought to govern and rule* the lower. (Recall the notion of *governing and ruling* in Chapter 2, above.) That is, they *ought* to have power over them. The lower things *ought not* to govern and rule the higher. They *ought not* to have power over the higher.

When things *are* as they ought to be - the higher ruling the lower - then that is *just*. Otherwise, it is *unjust*. When things are as they ought to be, then they are *ordinatus*, ordered or *well-ordered* (not of course in the mathematical sense). Otherwise, they are *disordered*.

Evil then is *injustice* or *disorder*, when lower things have power over the higher, reversing the proper arrangement of things.

This notion of *order* is absolutely *central* in Augustine. At Cassiciacum, shortly after his conversion, he wrote a tract *De ordine*. (On this see the *Confessions*.)

To summarize, the analysis of the notion of evil led us to the notion of "ought". That in turn led us to the notions of justice and order and their correlatives injustice and disorder. To ask how evil arises then is to ask how we account for *disorder* or *injustice*. That is, how does it come about that *lower* things on the hierarchy come to have power over the *higher* ones? What *gives* them that power?

Does God give lower things power over the higher? Certainly not. Why not? Because God is *just*, in the sense we have just learned. That is, God has arranged things so that the higher have power over the lower, just as they *ought*, not the other way around. (Notice, incidentally, the metaphysical implications of this claim. Causality runs *down* Augustine's hierarchy, but not *up*. The lower does not have power over the higher.)

Once again, how do we account for injustice or disorder? Who upsets the just hierarchical order that God has established? The answer: *Men* do, and they do it through *free will*. Now I will look later at Augustine's notion of free will - exactly what he thinks it is and why he thinks men have it. For the present suffice it to say that it is by *free will* that men give lower things power over the higher.

So here is the situation. *God* gives higher things power over the lower; the lower is *subject* to the higher. God is *just* and *not evil*. On the other hand, *men* sometimes give lower things power over the higher - and in particular, over *them*. They are *unjust* and *evil*.

Now you may very well object at this point: Which is it? You can't have it both ways! Either higher things have power over the lower or they don't. If God gives them that power, then how can *men* take it away, upset the order and give lower things power over the higher?

The answer, paradoxically, is that for Augustine you *can* in a sense have it both ways. Lower things can be *given* a power over higher things, a power that nevertheless they don't really have even after they are given it!

What we have here is a situation that might well be compared to what Sartre calls "The Spirit of Seriousness", where we allow ourselves to be governed and restrained by rules and conventions that of course really have no power over us at all.

Consider, for example, Sartre's famous illustration of the "waiter" from Part II, Ch. 2, of *Being and Nothingness*. The duties of the waiter's job don't *really* have any power over him. When the alarm-clock rings in the morning, he is quite *free* to turn it off and go back to sleep. He may thereby lose his job, of course, but that's all right. He is *free* to lose his job. If he loses his job, his family will no doubt suffer, and he may, to push it to the extreme, ultimately starve to death. But he is free to abuse his family and to starve to death. He is not likely to do any of these things, to be sure, but he is free to do so; it all depends on how he *orders his priorities*.

But what happens? He doesn't do any of these things. Instead, when the alarm-clock rings, he rolls over and gets up to start the day. That is, he *responds* to the alarm-clock, he *obeys* it. He treats its noise as a *summons*, a *demand*. In short, he *gives* the alarm-clock power over him.

The alarm-clock *has* no power over him, and yet it *does*. And that, of course, is paradoxical. There may well be a way of describing this situation non-paradoxically, but that doesn't matter. It is precisely this kind of paradox, whether it can be explained away or not, that is involved in Augustine's theory of evil and free will.

Let me take another example. When you *love* someone, that person is in a sense has a *power* over you that nevertheless he or she doesn't really have. You *give* certain considerations force in your life that otherwise would not *have* that force. Certain situations *command* certain responses on your part, even though you still have the *power* to do otherwise. You have the power, but you choose not to exercise it. You *abdicate* that power, turn it over to another, even though you retain the power all along.

This case of love is especially instructive, because it brings the role of *will* to the fore.

Recall the old Biblical (and for that matter Greek) notion that you are a *slave* to the things in which you place your ultimate values. You are *subject* to them. The *just* man places his ultimate values in the *highest* things, so that he is subject to the things to which he *ought* to be subject. He *orders* his priorities correctly. The *unjust* man gets it all mixed up.

So here you have it: *God* gives higher things power over the lower. *Man* sometimes gives lower things power over the higher. *Neither* of these facts gets in the way of the other. Paradoxical as it may sound, the higher is both subject to and ruler over the lower. God does *not* give the lower power over the higher, and so he is not to blame. That is man's contribution. Man is Nyssa's *Demiurge of evil*.

Now notice: There is a *paradox* about evil in the world, at least there is a paradox if you believe in any kind of a traditional God. If God (a) *knows* about evil by his omniscience, (b) has the *power* to prevent it by his omnipotence, and (c) is *benevolent* and just and so will arrange things to *avoid* evil wherever he can (which, in virtue of (a) and (b), means that he will avoid it *everywhere*), then it looks as though there can be *no evil in the world*. It has been successfully prevented by a power strong enough to do so. And yet God is supposed to have all these properties, even though there is evil in the world.

*That* is the paradox, the traditional "problem of evil". It is *not* a silly problem, and it *cannot* be easily disarmed. All the usual stuff about how God is "testing us" by inflicting evils on us is ridiculous; if God had just consulted his omniscience, there would have been no point to a test. All the usual stuff about how God is "teaching us" by allowing evils, that he is "building our characters", is equally ridiculous. If he had just resorted to his omnipotence, he could have created us at the outset with the knowledge and the characters he wanted us to have. And if you

think there is something impossible about that, then I suggest you are compromising God's omnipotence, and are treading very close to heresy. And all the talk about how "God's ways are not our ways" and how "God's goodness is not what *we* mean by goodness" is just an evasion. If God's goodness is the kind of thing that inflicts plagues on innocent people and contrives to bring sweet little babies into the world with horrible birth-defects, then his goodness certainly *isn't* what we call goodness. It looks *exactly* like what we call *fiendish evil*!

My point here is not to argue that the problem of evil refutes the existence of anything like the traditional God. My point is rather that the existence of evil presents a *real paradox* to anyone who wants to be a believer. In my opinion, it is probably the most serious problem a believer has to face; compared to it, the metaphysical difficulties involved in the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity are but mere bagatelles.

Augustine, to his credit, does not resort in his most careful moments to any of the sophistries I've just rehearsed (although you can find traces of them here and there in his writings). For a believer, the existence of evil *is* paradox. Augustine does not try to eliminate its paradoxicalness. That remains. What he does instead is to *reject* the view the *because* it is paradoxical, we should give up one of the paradoxical ingredients and, since we cannot deny that there is evil in the world, we must abandon the faith and deny either that God exists or that he has the traditional properties he is supposed to have (which, I suppose, amounts to the same thing).

Augustine wants to show that intellectual honesty does *not* require this apostasy and blasphemy. And he does this *not* by removing the element of paradox but by showing how it can be *reduced* to a familiar paradox that we *cannot* deny: the paradox by which we give power over us to things that we have power over - and that moreover we *still* have power over even when we give them power over *us*.

This is a fact that Augustine thinks just cannot be denied. We have free will, and that means we can use it in this disordered way. If this fact yields results that sound paradoxical, that's just too bad. The air of paradox can perhaps be explained away, but that is not the point, and Augustine doesn't especially try. He is content to observe that you have *no less* reason for accepting the paradox involved in the problem of evil than you have for accepting the paradox that seems to be involved in the case of free will. In fact, they are ultimately *the same* paradox.

As I interpret him, therefore, Augustine's strategy is this. The existence of God *appears* to be incompatible with evil in the world. So too, the fact that I can freely subject myself to things lower than I am on the hierarchy *appears* to be incompatible with the fact that nevertheless I am not really subject to them at all, and would not be even if I so chose. Whether either of these apparent incompatibilities is a *real* one is something we fortunately don't have to decide. For, incompatible or not, we *cannot* deny either of the apparently incompatible ingredients of the second paradox, for reasons we shall see. And, since for Augustine the problem of evil is *reducible* to that second paradox, it follows that we have no good reason to deny either of the apparently incompatible ingredients there either. In short, whether we can "solve" the problem of evil or not, it gives us no reason to deny the existence of God.

I should warn you that this account of Augustine's strategy is pretty unusual. I don't know of anyone else who defends it. Still, I know of no other plausible way to account for the fact that Augustine plainly has *not* eliminated the sense of paradox about the joint existence of God and evil, that nevertheless he thinks he has accomplished something in his various discussions of it, and that yet on the whole he does not try to accomplish it by taking refuge in any of the various sophisticated "solutions" to the problem that I dismissed above.

Now whatever objections you may have to this theory as an exegesis of Augustine, there are at least two major objections to it, among perhaps many others, as a theory in its own right:

(1) First, it is always open to you to say that, just as the problem of evil shows that God doesn't exist, so too the paradoxes about free will just go to show that free will doesn't exist either, and is just an illusion. But, as we shall see below, Augustine thinks he has an answer to this one.

(2) Second, even if you accept Augustine's notion of free will, you might think this whole approach is insufficient. After all, even if God does not *give* lower things power over the higher, he nevertheless *allows* it insofar as he gives men free will and then lets *them* give lower things power over the higher. Hence you still have a case where God *allows* evil he could have prevented. (In the final analysis, remember, God doesn't have to create *at all*.) Isn't God therefore at least guilty of *negligence*?

Augustine tries to answer this second line of objection in Books II and III of *On Free Choice of the Will*. He asks there, why did God give men free will if he knew they were going to abuse it? I'm afraid I don't think his answer there is very successful. So problem (2), in my opinion, still stands.

But what about problem (1)? Augustine thinks he has an answer here, and in order to see what it is, we need to look at his notion of *free will* more carefully.

## ALL ABOUT FREE WILL

In what sense does Augustine think we have free will, and how can he be so sure we have it in that sense? With this discussion, see *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book I, Chs. 10-14. These chapters are a *central* discussion.

Augustine argues there that nothing can *force* a mind or soul that is *just* to submit to what he calls "lust". The Latin is *'libido'*, and it doesn't just mean sexual lust. It means *any* kind of disordered desire by which one's highest values are placed in things that *we can lose against our will*. (Note that the *highest* things on the hierarchy appear to be the things that we *cannot* lose against our will, so that there is a connection in Augustine between *justice* and things that cannot be lost against our will.)

The reason nothing can force a mind or soul to do this is that God has made the world *justly*. This is not just an *assumption* Augustine has pulled out of the air. If you don't think God does things *wisely and justly and well*, then you don't have the problem of evil to begin with, and Augustine would have never written his book.

Since the order of things is just, things *lower* than a *just soul* cannot *force* it to submit to lust. They *don't have the power; they are simply not strong enough*.

Neither can things on a par with a just soul do it. That is to say, *other* just souls cannot force one of their own to submit to lust. First of all, they are just, by hypothesis, and so *would* not do such a thing. But second, if they tried, they would *ipso facto* become *unjust*, and so *fall* in the hierarchy of things and end up *not strong enough* to overpower the just soul after all.

Nor can things *above* a just soul on the hierarchy force a just soul to submit to lust. In a sense they have the *power* to do so, since they are higher than the just souls, and so have power over them. But they *would* not do such a thing, and would fail if they tried. The reasoning is basically the same as in the previous case.

Hence, Augustine concludes, if a just soul *falls* from its lofty place, it does so *under its own initiative, since nothing else can make it do so*. Hence, *it has only itself to blame*. That is, it falls *voluntarily and out of free will*.

Now at this point, Evodius (Augustine's interlocutor in the dialogue) objects: That's fine, Augustine, *provided* we start off just. But what about those of us who start off *foolish and unjust*? Your argument says nothing that applies to that case. And since in fact we all fall into that category, your argument seems irrelevant.

Augustine answers that it doesn't make any difference. But, instead of going on as one might expect to duplicate the *earlier* reasoning, this time for *unjust* souls (in fact, it is not clear that he *could* do this), he tries to offer a *general* argument applicable to *all* souls, just or not.

He distinguishes a *good* will from an *evil* will. The *good* will is "the will by which we succeed in living *rightly and virtuously* and in arriving at the highest *wisdom*" (I, 12, 83). That is, it seeks *wisdom and virtue*. By a little manipulation, it can also be shown that this will is *just* - that is, *well-ordered*. See the text for this.

Now Augustine argues that, peculiarly, this kind of will is one that is *self-satisfying*. That is, if we order our priorities so that we want wisdom and virtue, that is itself a *wise and virtuous choice*, so that we *already* have wisdom and virtue. (Here we see why it is that the good - that is, just - will is a will for that which cannot be lost against our will.)

In Book I, Ch. 13, Augustine goes through the four classical cardinal virtues and shows that the good will *ipso facto* has all four of them. The will that has ordered its priorities in this way has made a *prudent, fortitudinous, temperate and just* choice.

So this good will is, curiously, *self-satisfying*. By contrast, the evil will, the disordered will, is for what *can* be lost against our will, and so it is *not* automatically self-satisfying. [Note: The good will is as near as no matter to the *just soul* that Augustine had argued earlier *could not be overthrown*.]

Now Augustine makes the important move: Not only is the good will self-satisfying. It is the easiest thing in the world to get: all you have to do is *want it*. His reason is curious: "For what is situated more under [the control of our] will than the will itself?" (I, 12, 86.)

Curiously, this argument may *work* in the case of *the good will*:

(1) to have a good will = to will to have wisdom and virtue

chapter = to have wisdom and virtue.

(The first identity is by definition; the second is because the good will is automatically self-satisfying.) Hence, on the basis of (1):

to will to have a good will = to will to will to have wisdom and virtue

chapter = to will to have wisdom and virtue

chapter = to have a good will.

The proof is *by simple substitution*. (Note: Is there a problem here about opaque contexts?)

This is why, for Augustine, you cannot *against your will* have a good will. If you have a good will, it is because you *want* to have it. And conversely, if you want to have it, you do. For Augustine, this much is just a point of logic.

Now Augustine wants to *generalize* this, it seems, so that for *any x*, to will *x* it just to will to will *x*. Thus, if you have a will of *any kind* (good or bad) for anything, it is because you *want* to have that will. Do you want a drink of water? Yes. Is it *against your will* that you want a drink of water? Well, hardly. You want a drink of water because, I suppose, you *want* to want one.



Now it is perhaps not *legitimate* for Augustine to generalize in this way. Perhaps he is concentrating too much on the case of *wanting the good will*, where - if anywhere - it works. In any case, it is easy to see why Augustine *needs* to generalize here:

(1) In the first place, this is going to be Augustine's notion of *free* will. The will is *free* because all these *iterations* (to will to will to will . . . to will *x*) *collapse*. You never will something *involuntarily*.

(2) In the second place, if you could *not* generalize - if the point worked only for the *good* will - then one might object as follows: Yes, if I have a *good* will, it is only because I want to. But I don't have one. Unfortunately, I have an *evil* will. Now the evil will wills things we can lose against our will, so that it is *not* automatically self-satisfying. In the case where *x* is something we can lose against our will, to will *x* = to have *x*, so that it does not follow as a mere point of logic that to will to will *x* = to will *x*. Hence, it does not follow that if I have an evil will for *x*, it is only because I *want* to. As far as logic goes, I might have an evil will for *x* even though I don't *want* to have such a will. This wouldn't happen, of course, if I had wanted to have a *good* will rather than an evil one. For then I would automatically have *had* the good will. But suppose I put my ultimate values in *wealth*, which I can lose against my will. It follows that I don't want a *good* will, but it does *not* follow that I *do* want to place my values in *wealth*. I might *want* to have a different evil will - for example, for fame and reputation, which I can also lose against my will. But nevertheless, *against my will*, I want wealth instead. The substitution argument doesn't prevent this, and neither does anything else we have said so far.

Hence we have not shown that *evil* wills are in their own power, and are therefore *free*. The example shows two things: why it is illegitimate for Augustine to generalize from the case of the good will, and also why he *needs* to do so.

There are various ways Augustine might try to get out of this impasse. He *might*, for instance, have tried something like this: Suppose:

(1) You *have* to will some kind of will or other. That is, given that you have a will, you either *will the good will* (you place your values in things that cannot be lost against your will) or else, for some *x* such that *x* can be lost against your will, you *will to will x* (will to place your ultimate values in *x*).

(2) Now you *have* the good will if and only if you *will* it, from the above discussion.

(3) Hence if you have an *evil* will for *x*, that must be because you *will* to have an evil will of some kind or other. It may be an evil will for something besides *x*. But it is *some* kind of evil will you want.

Hence for Augustine *the will is free* in this sense: You have a *good* will if and only if you want it. Likewise, you have an *evil* will if and only if you want *an* evil will. You may not want the one you get, but you are going to want *some* evil will. Hence the will is free to that extent - and you are justly punished.

However all this works out, let us just grant Augustine his claim for the sake of argument. Let's grant him *across the board* that the will is in its own power, that it *is* legitimate to generalize as he does. I *think* Augustine supposes that his general claim is just as much a point of logic as the particular case of the *good* will. It isn't, but let's just grant him his point.

Then it follows that *all wills are necessarily free*. You can't have a will that isn't free. Now no one doubts that we have *wills*. That is an undeniable fact of experience. Some people do doubt that their will is *free*, but that just shows that they don't understand the "logic" of the situation. Hence, Augustine thinks he can be sure he has free will, and so he has what he needs to make his solution to the problem of evil work. The apparent paradox that arises from trying to

reconcile the existence of God with the existence of evil is reduced to the apparent paradox that emerges from our having free wills (see above). But that apparent paradox is no reason to deny that we *have* free wills, since Augustine thinks he can *prove* that. The paradox must be resolved, if it can be resolved, in some way that Augustine doesn't worry about. And so, by the same token, the apparent paradox of the problem of evil is no reason to deny the existence of God (much less the existence of evil).

Augustine's general strategy, then, is to reduce the paradox of the problem of evil to another paradox that he thinks he can prove we *must* accept, even if it does appear paradoxical. I think this is a very slick strategy, whatever we may think about the details of it.

Now what does Augustine's notion of free will mean with respect to the hierarchy of values we talked about earlier?

Basically, Augustine's notion of free will is the notion of a will that nothing can *overpower*. It is not subject to external *constraint*. What the will does it does *not* because it is *caused* to do so from some external agency; it does so under its own steam. Now how does this fit with Augustine's hierarchy? I thought God was just, and so arranged things that, while the lower did not have power over the higher, the higher *did* have power over the lower. (Recall the notion of *justice*.) Doesn't it follow then that everything *higher* than the will has power over the will, so that it is *not* free from external constraint after all - is not entirely in its own power? Of course, higher things could not force the will to choose *evil*, as we have seen, since in the very attempt to do so they would sink lower in the hierarchy and so lose the power to do so. But couldn't they force the will to choose *good*?

To my knowledge, Augustine never explicitly considers this point. What he *might* have said, but didn't, is this: Strictly speaking, what has a place in the hierarchy is not a *will* but a *soul*. Now it is true that higher things have power over human *souls*. They have this power - they are *strong* enough - to make the soul choose good. God could make human souls choose good, and so presumably could the good angels. Of course, then the souls wouldn't be *free*, but it could be done nevertheless. *But it isn't*. God could make souls choose the good, but he doesn't. He chooses not to *exercise* that power, and leaves it up to the souls themselves. So too, presumably, the higher angels do not exercise the power they have - perhaps because they place their ultimate values in God (as is only "just") and so agree to leave souls alone because he wants them left alone. On this view, then, free will (and Augustine has argued that *every* will is a free will) is not some separate *faculty* of the soul - some ontologically distinct *part* of the soul. If it were, it would have a place on the hierarchy, and so *could* be overpowered even if it isn't. But that would be contradictory, since wills are *necessarily* free. On the contrary, *the will* is just the same entity as the soul itself - only we *call* it a "will" because it is left to its own power. Recall Augustine's definition of man: man *is* a soul, but a soul insofar as it rules a body. We *call* the soul a man only when it governs and rules a body. We also call it a *will* only when it is left to its own devices. In each case, we are talking about the same entity, the soul.

All this, of course, is extrapolation. But it does foreshadow the later mediaeval problem of the relation between the soul and its powers. Some people, in the broadly "Augustinian" tradition, wanted to say that there was no *real* distinction between the soul and its powers. That is exactly the line I have suggested here.

Finally, there is an additional problem you may want to consider: Is the notion of *free will* as simply freedom from external constraint enough for the assigning of moral praise and blame? If it isn't, then Augustine's whole approach to the problem of evil will not work. On this, see *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book III.



## Chapter 16: Augustine: Perception

Augustine's hierarchical picture of the world, together with the principle that God has arranged things so that the lower has no power over the higher (see Chapter \s2 above) leads to a curious doctrine of perception. I call it the "vital attention theory". It is a special case of the general problem of the relation of soul to body for Augustine. Those of you who know Richard Taylor's book, *Metaphysics*, know that Roderick Chisholm has a cute plate there diagramming various theories about soul and body and their interrelation. Well, Augustine's "vital attention" theory isn't on the plate. So you are about to learn something *new*. Here is the problem that motivates the theory:

- (1) The lower does not, as we have seen, have power over the higher.
- (2) Now one way in which a thing A can exert power over a thing B is causally - that is, by causing some effect in B.
- (3) Therefore, from (1) and (2), lower things do not act causally on higher things. Causality can run down the hierarchy, but not up. (We've seen this much before.)
- (4) Now the body is lower on the hierarchy than the soul is.
- (5) Therefore, from (3) and (4), the body cannot act on the soul, cannot affect it causally.

This of course makes perception very odd. The usual view of perception, a basically Aristotelian view, by the way, is that perception (sensation) *is* caused, at least in part, by the external objects' - by *bodies*' - acting causally on the sensitive part of the soul.

They impress themselves, so to speak, on the sensitive faculty and leave there a sense-impression. The metaphor that is frequently used is the metaphor of the seal-ring (signet ring) that leaves its impression on the wax.

These sense-impressions are the sensory images or representations of objects. Aristotle has a nifty theory about how to avoid the problems with representationalism that we discussed when we talked about Augustine on skepticism. (See Chapter \s3, above, for the problems, and Chapter \s4, above, for Aristotle's nifty theory. We'll see more of the latter later on.)

Now it is easy to see that this usual view of perception will simply not do for Augustine. He never really *argues* against it, to be sure. In fact, what he has to say about perception is very little. The most extended treatment occurs in *De musica*, VI, a passage from which I have translated in Volume II below, as Text \s5, passage \s6. (See also passages \s7 and \s8 there.)

Plotinus, on the other hand, gives a frontal attack on this usual theory of perception. It is perhaps not unfair to use Plotinus' text to fill in the gaps in Augustine. As you will see, the theories are *quite* compatible here. Plotinus argues that the impression-theory violates certain *empirical facts*. (I have translated the text from Plotinus as Text \s9 in Volume II below.)

Recall that Augustine, like Aristotle, thinks we have sense *images* of objects. Unlike Aristotle, however, those sense images cannot be *caused* by the external objects they represent, since then bodies would causally affect the soul. So where do they come from? Here is where the theory of "vital attention" comes to the rescue.

The soul is in the body like a captain in his ship, or again like a ruler in his city, to use the venerable old metaphors. And like a good ruler or a good captain, the soul is *aware* of what is going on in the body - the events caused in the body by other physical bodies (the hierarchical picture of things does not present *this* kind of causal goings on) - just as the ruler is aware of

what is going on in his city, even though he is not causally affected by what he sees going on there. (Barring revolutions, of course, and things like that. But let's ignore such complications.)

The soul then *pays attention* to what is going on in the body, to the events caused there by external objects - as indeed it should if it is going to be good ruler. In the *De musica* all this is tied up with pleasure and pain, although exactly how this works is unclear to me.

In any case, when the soul observes what is going on in the body, it *makes up* the images *out of itself*. The images are not imported, so to speak, from the body; they are home-grown in the soul.

Such sense-images do not then come from the body. Neither are they *innate* in the sense of always being in the soul. Rather the soul makes them up *on the spot*, in response to what it sees going on in the body.

That is really all Augustine has to say on the matter. There are some obvious problems and some obvious ways we can extrapolate this doctrine.

#### *Problems"*

(1) The theory isn't a very good one. It explains vision, for instance, in circular fashion, in terms of a *visual* metaphor. The soul "look out" and "surveys" its body. Not much is gained here.

(2) In what sense do bodies not affect the soul on this view? External objects act on the human body. The soul observes this and then makes up an image out of its own resources. Doesn't the external object then *cause* the soul to make up that image?

#### *Reply ad (1):*

Good objection. What it means is that Augustine doesn't yet possess the technical vocabulary to make his point in a non-metaphorical way. But the *point* is clear and relatively unobjectionable (at least on these grounds): sensation is an act of the soul within itself, *not* an act of an external body *on* the soul. The metaphysical machinery required to explain this clearly will not be developed until much later. Aquinas, for instance, presents the theory in fairly precise form, although he rejects it.

#### *Reply ad (2):*

No. that view of causality is tied up too much with the Humean notion of *constant conjunction*. At most, the external object is the *occasion* for the soul's activity, not its *cause*. The external object has no *power* over the soul.

In fact, if you think about it, there is no reason to suppose the *conjunction* is after all so *constant*. The only images the mind forms are of events it is paying attention to. There may be and are lots of things going on in the body that the soul isn't paying attention to at all - for example, your heartbeat, various disgusting glandular things, peripheral noises, etc.

Now this is interesting. The events in the body have no power over the soul. The soul doesn't have to pay attention to them if it doesn't want to. This explains, for instance, what happens in "contemplation" (the old-fashioned term for mysticism), or when you are absorbed in a good book. You "lose contact" with your surroundings.

It also provides a possible explanation for *hallucinations*. You are drunk and see pink elephants. That is because your soul is not paying attention, and is *making up images at random*. It is not doing its job properly; it is not *ruling*.

Finally, there is one aspect of the theory that perhaps deserves pursuing. The theory implicitly assumes that the mind has a *direct* awareness of what goes on in its body, since it is by observing that that it is occasioned to make up images or representations for itself. Presumably it doesn't see what is going on in the body by some *prior* intermediary or representation. It sees *directly*.

There may be some epistemological consequences of this. While there may still be insuperable difficulties with knowing when our images are accurate representations of their external objects (see Chapter \s3 above), this theory *may* give us a way of ascertaining certain cases in which they are *not* accurate - namely, cases of *physiological malfunction*. That is, if a sense organ is not functioning properly, the soul presumably knows that fact *directly*. If it nevertheless goes ahead and manufactures sense *images* on cue according to what is going on in the body, it will at least know not to pay too much attention to the results.

That is, cases of unreliable sense images fashioned according to malfunctioning organs can perhaps be spotted on this theory. There may still of course be other cases to give credence to skeptical arguments about the senses: the oar in the water, and so on. In any event, these last remarks are pure extrapolation.

Chapter 17:  
Augustine: Theory of the "Teacher"

With this Chapter, read the passage from Augustine's *On the Teacher*, in the Hyman and Walsh volume.

We've seen how Augustine's overall view requires him to have a theory of sensation according to which sensations are not passively received by the soul from without. There is nothing transferred from outside the mind into the mind in the case of sensation. But what about the case of ideas or concepts, what about our *intellectual* knowledge? Where do we get that?

At first glance, it appears that we can get ideas or concepts from outside. Indeed, that appears to be just what is going on in the case of teaching. By using words, diagrams, signs in general, I convey to you what is in my mind. So it appears that there *is* something transferred in this case, and that your minds *do* receive something from without. Furthermore, it appears at first that we are *not* here violating the Augustinian hierarchy, since we do not have a case of the lower acting on the higher, but rather the equal acting on the equal, one soul on another.

Actually, of course, there is still a problem. If what we normally call teaching is the transferring of ideas from one mind to another by a causal process, then I should not be able to teach you anything unless I am at least as morally good as you are, so that I would be at least as high as you are on the hierarchy. So too, insofar as teaching involves the use of words, diagrams, and other *physical* aids, it would appear that the process of teaching does violate the Augustinian hierarchy after all.

These objections are good ones, and they show that what we normally call teaching is not after all the transfer of ideas from one mind to another. It is true that our minds do receive concepts and intellectual knowledge from outside, and in particular we can receive it from another mind. But that is not what is going on in what we normally call "teaching". (Incidentally, we should not think of the word 'teaching' as connoting any kind of formal situation. Any *informative* talking, for instance, would count as what we normally call "teaching" for Augustine.)

Augustine argues this point in his *De magistro* (= *On the Teacher*), most of which is translated in the Hyman and Walsh volume. (There is a complete translation in Herman Shapiro's collection, *Medieval Philosophy*). The argument there is rather long-winded and rambly. It is hard to see any overall direction or unity to what he is saying there. His *final* doctrine is set out only at the very end.

(Incidentally, the *De magistro* is a dialogue between Augustine and Adeodatus. Who is Adeodatus? You should recognize his name from reading the *Confessions*.)

Augustine is concerned throughout the dialogue with the relation between *signs* - words, gestures, and so on - and what they *signify*, that is, what they *call to mind*. (We will see more about this notion of signification when we come to Abelard.) What we *call* teaching is an activity that makes use of signs. How does it work?

It will help if you are warned in advance that there is a distinction between what we *call* teaching and what Augustine thinks of as *real* teaching. The distinction comes out only gradually in the dialogue, and at first Augustine is talking only about what we *normally* think of as teaching. Let's do so too.

Augustine is worried here in part about whether there is anything that can be taught *without* the use of signs. At first he decides *no*, you cannot teach anything without the use of signs. But then he goes on in the second half of the dialogue to say that you cannot teach anything *with* the use of signs either - at least not if teaching is the *exporting* of ideas from one human mind to another.

I think I can draw out the main points of his discussion as follows. (I'm extrapolating a bit from the text here.)

If "teaching" is what we frequently think it is, a case in which the teacher *produces* in the mind of the hearer either his own ideas or reproductions of them, and if the teacher does this by means of *linguistic signs* or other signs, then there must be a close connection between language, or signs in general, and thought (the ideas that language conveys from one mind and produces in another).

Without worrying about the details of Augustine's argument, we can say that the thrust of what he is arguing here is that such a close connection is simply not there. Again, without following the details of the text, it is easy to see that this is so. There are first of all *misunderstandings*, caused by using words in different contexts, and so on. And second, there are simple *mishearings*, where we just hear the word wrongly and think that another one was uttered instead.

If you think about these cases, you will see that, while the *words* - the *sounds*, the *signs* - are really transferred from my mouth to your ear (the causal action of body on body - there's nothing *here* that violates the Augustinian hierarchy), the ideas involved are not as it were passengers on those words, passengers that as it were walk downstairs from my mind, get on the bus of words at my mouth, go down the line, then get off the bus at your ear and walk upstairs to your mind. That is not it at all.

In short, words are not the *vehicles* of ideas. Augustine argues against this common view.

When we use language for communication, there is nothing really transferred from mind to mind. We are not literally *exchanging* ideas. Rather, the words I use to express my ideas simply *awaken* or *call to mind* your own ideas. The cases of misunderstandings and mishearings show that this is not done in any mechanical fashion; there is no "constant conjunction" here.

The words - or rather the physiological events of hearing them - serve only as a cue, much as physiological events are only cues in the Augustinian theory of sensation.

The thoughts that are occasioned in your minds by my words are thoughts that *you drag up out of the recesses of your minds* in response to my words.

The point is: they are thoughts *you already have*. I simply occasion them in you; I do not give them to you or produce them in you. What we *call* teaching is not a case of *my* acting causally on your mind, any more than sensation is. Rather in both cases it is something *you* do.

Conversation then is reduced to *parallel monologues*.

Augustine's point can be made perhaps more forcefully if we consider not how we get our ideas and concepts, but rather how we form judgments. Consider the following simple mathematical arguments. And I want you to watch what goes on in your minds as you follow me through these arguments.

*First argument:*



*Prove:* There is no greatest prime number.

*Proof:* Suppose for *reductio* that there is a greatest prime number. Call it  $n$ .

Then take all prime numbers up to and including  $n$ , multiply them together, and then add one. Call the result  $m$ .

Now  $m$  is clearly greater than  $n$ , and is either prime or not prime. If it *is* prime, then we have a prime number greater than  $n$ , contrary to the hypothesis that  $n$  is the greatest prime. But if  $m$  is *not* prime, then it is evenly divisible by some integer  $k$  less than  $m$ , and so is also evenly divisible by the *prime factors* of  $k$ , if  $k$  is not itself already prime. Let  $t$  be  $k$  if  $k$  is prime, and let  $t$  be one of the prime factors of  $k$  if  $k$  is not prime. In either case, then,  $t$  is prime and evenly divides  $m$ . Now  $t$  cannot be less than or equal to  $n$ , since every prime less than or equal to  $n$  leaves a remainder of one when it divides  $m$ , whereas  $t$  divides  $m$  evenly. Hence  $t$  is a prime greater than  $n$ , contrary to the hypothesis that  $n$  was the greatest prime.

By *reductio*, therefore, there *is* no greatest prime number  $n$ .

*Second argument:*

*Prove:* The square root of 2 is irrational. That is, it cannot be expressed as the ratio of two integers.

*Proof:* Again, by *reductio*. Suppose the square root of 2 *is* rational, that it *can* be expressed as the ratio of two integers. Then, since any ratio can be reduced to lowest terms, let the square root of 2 when expressed in lowest terms be  $m/n$ . Then

$$(1) \quad m/n = \sqrt{2}$$

Since  $m$  and  $n$  are integers,  $m$  is even or odd.

(2) (since it is evenly divisible by 2).

(3)  $m$  is even.

(4) (If  $m$  were odd, it would be of the general form  $2x+1$ , where  $x$  is not less than 0. Hence  $m^2$  would be  $(2x+1)^2 = 4x^2 + 4x + 1$ , or  $4x^2 + 4x + 1$ , which is odd. But by step (3),  $m^2$  is even, not odd.)

(5) For some integer  $z$ ,  $m = 2z$ .

(6) (since even numbers are evenly divisible by 2)

$$(7) \quad m^2 = 4z^2 = 4n^2$$

(from (6) and (3))

$$(8) \quad 2z^2 = n^2$$

(from (7), dividing by 2)

(9)  $n^2$  is even

(since it is evenly divisible by 2)

(10)  $n$  is even

(the argument is the same as for step (5))

Therefore,  $m$  and  $n$  are both even and hence divisible by two, so that  $m/n$  is not in lowest terms after all, contrary to the hypothesis. Hence, by *reductio*, the square root of 2 cannot be expressed as a ratio of two integers; it is irrational.

Now suppose I am mathematically inept, and I present these proofs to you. I've memorized them and can repeat them. But I don't understand them at all, and in fact I don't even really believe they're true. You, on the other hand, when you read these proofs, understand them perfectly. You *see* after a moment's thought that they are true. There is a kind of "insight" here, a kind of mental *flash*. (That is why I want you to be sure you *see* the force of the arguments.)

In such a case, I cannot be said, strictly speaking, to have *taught* you anything. I've not transferred any knowledge from my mind to yours. My words are simply the *occasion* for you to

draw up the appropriate concepts in your own mind, and then to see in a flash that the theorems are true. I don't *know* or even *believe* the truth, as it happens, so how can I be said to *teach* it to you, if teaching is a kind of transference?

Now change the situation a bit, so that I do know and understand the proofs. I fully grasp them, and present them to you, so that you come to grasp and understand them too. Does that change anything as far as you are concerned? Not at all. If you are dull and don't see the force of the proofs, then I haven't of course *taught* you anything. If you just believe me on the basis of my professorial authority and dignity, then you have no real *knowledge* but a kind of *faith*.

In order to have *real knowledge*, you have to have the same kind of insight, the same kind of intellectual vision, you did before. And in that case, my knowledge is irrelevant to yours. You don't need it. In no case then do I teach you anything if teaching is causing or producing knowledge in you by transferring it somehow from me.

Augustine describes what is going on here in terms of *light*-metaphors: insight, intellectual vision, "I see it now", *illumination*, light of the mind, light of reason, and so on.

We will look at this notion of "illumination" later on. It is a *very important* Augustinian theory. In the end, Augustine thinks this illumination comes from God. While *I* don't cause this knowledge in you, God does. Hence *God is the true teacher*. This is the point of the business at the end of the dialogue.

Hence, for Augustine, teaching really *is* the transfer of ideas and knowledge from one mind to another. But then what we *normally* think of as teaching is not really teaching at all. Teaching is not something I or any other mere human being can do. Ultimately, only God can do it.

In case you haven't noticed it, all this should of course remind you greatly of Plato's *Meno*.

## Chapter 18:

### Augustine: Proof for the Existence of God

With this Chapter, see also the passage on "divine ideas" translated in Volume II, below, as Text \s3, passage \s4. Augustine uses considerations of the kind discussed in Chapter \s2, above, to develop his only sustained attempt to prove the existence of God, in *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book II, which you should read now if you have not already read it.

#### Two Kinds of Proofs for the EXISTENCE OF GOD

It is important to see in what sense this is supposed to be a proof for the existence of God. Basically, there are two way to try to prove the existence of God. (There are various ways of classifying the proofs, of course; this is only one of them, one that I find particularly useful.) These two ways reflect two distinct stages in what is called "natural theology", a later term for the study of what can be known about God by the use of unaided reason, without relying on revelation. The two stages are (a) the attempt to prove the *existence* of God, and (b) attempts to prove that God has the attributes he is supposed to have according to the religious tradition. The two kinds of proofs for the existence of God are distinguished on the basis of whether the passage from (a) to (b) is easy or hard.

The easy way is to start off with a loaded concept of God. For example, God is a being than which no greater can be conceived (Anselm's famous definition), or a being combining in its essence all perfections (in effect, Descartes' definition in Meditation V). If you can prove the existence of such a being, then the passage to stage (b) of natural theology follows as a quick corollary: you just list all the attributes you can think of that it is better to have than not to have (all the "perfections", to use the Cartesian formulation), and *God has them all*. Quick and easy.

The hard way is to pick one property, or just a few properties, that God is supposed to possess uniquely, and then prove that there exists something that has that property. Then, on this approach, step (b) is usually much harder. You have to prove that this thing also has all the other properties God is supposed to have, and that is usually a much harder task than the quick corollaries we had on the first approach.

Aquinas' famous "five ways" to prove the existence of God are of this second kind. He proves, for instance, that there exists an *uncaused cause*, and he thinks he has thereby proved the existence of God. But then he's left with the task, which he cheerfully accepts, to be sure, of arguing at great length that this uncaused cause turns out to have also the other properties normally associated with God. The two stages of natural theology are much less closely connected on this kind of approach.

Since the second style of proof makes things so much harder, you might well wonder why anyone would pick it. Why not pick the quick and easy way, as Anselm and Descartes did? The answer, of course, is that other features of your philosophical views may lead you to the conclusion that the "quick and easy way" is fallacious, and the *only* way to prove the existence of God, if indeed you can do it at all, is to take the more laborious route. That is what Aquinas thought, for instance.

#### Augustine's PROOF

Now Augustine's proof is of this second kind. In effect (despite his words - see below), Augustine chooses the attributes *necessity* and *immutability* as the crucial characteristics, and

proves that there is something that has those characteristics. Of course, this leaves the large task of showing that this thing also has the other divine attributes, a task Augustine doesn't even attempt in *On Free Choice* (or elsewhere, so far as I know).

*Note:* the characteristics Augustine picks are necessity and immutability, the very attributes in terms of which Justin Martyr described God while he was still a Platonist. This "Platonic" theme is in Augustine too. Mutability is the mark of a creature.

Even if Augustine succeeds in doing everything he tried to do in *On Free Choice*, II, you may be reluctant to say he has "proved the existence of God". After all, you might object, if all he has proved is the existence of something necessary and immutable, that might just as well be *mathematics* as God! (In fact, as the proof develops, you might suspect that in fact this is all Augustine *has* proved.) A proof for the existence of God, you might say, ought to involve more than this.

But this is a delicate point. Just how much does one have to prove before we say he has proved the existence of God? Is it enough to prove the existence of an uncaused cause of everything else, let's say, an uncaused cause that is necessary and immutable, conscious and benevolent and so on? Or do we also have to prove that this thing parted the Red Sea, spoke through the prophets, and all the rest? Just how much can we fairly demand of a proof for the existence of God? I have my own views on this, but it is not necessary to rehearse them here. If you are interested, see my paper "What Is A Proof for the Existence of God?".

Augustine's proof in *On Free Choice*, II, goes something alike this (rearranging a bit): In II, 7, Augustine talks about the various *senses* - that is, the normal five exterior senses. Some of them have objects that are *private*, and some have objects that are *common to all*. In the case of those that have *private* objects, no two people can sense *exactly* the same thing. He argues that this is so for taste and smell. While we can both taste the same food, we cannot taste the same *particles* of food. In order to taste it, I have to *consume* and *absorb* it; it becomes part of me. So too with smell. The other senses, however, have *common* objects - objects we can both perceive. These are not absorbed and consumed by the perceiver. These senses fall into two kinds: (a) *touch* - while we can both touch exactly the same object (surface), we cannot do so *at the same time*; (b) *sight and hearing* - we can see and hear the same object, and we can both do so *at the same time*. (You may argue that this requires different perspectives, and so, in a sense, different objects. Augustine never considers this, and it may be irrelevant anyway.)

Now Augustine's argument here may be dubious, but the purpose of it is clear - even if only implicit: Augustine is going to argue that *reason* or *mind* also has an object, and that its object is common and public and open to all at the same time. Hence visual and auditory metaphors will be more appropriate metaphors for this than will metaphors taken from the other senses. In fact, Augustine usually chooses visual metaphors. What we have here is thus a kind of justification for the metaphorical talk of "illumination", the "eye of the mind", and so on.

Of course it is easy for Augustine to find such a common and simultaneous object of the mind or reason; it is *Truth*. We can all see the same truth at the same time, even if some of us in fact do not do so.

Turn now to II, 3. There we get the notion of *hierarchy* again. Some things merely *are*; they just sit there. Others not only are, they *live*. They are *higher* on the hierarchy. Yet other things not only are and live, they *understand*, and they are higher yet, "better" yet.<sup>1</sup>

Then Augustine goes back to fill in the gap between mere life and full rational understanding: he starts with the *senses*. They perceive their *objects*, but they don't perceive *themselves*. The idea here is that when the eye is not seeing anything (that is, when it is plunged in darkness), it doesn't see *that* it is not seeing - since then it *would* be seeing after all, and by hypothesis it isn't. Hence, what tells us whether the eye is seeing or not is something other than the eye, something Augustine calls *the inner sense*, which is below reason since even brute animals have it. For example, a beast will look for food; it will cast its eye about in search of good. How could it do this unless it had some inner sense that told the beast what the eye itself cannot tell - that it isn't *already* seeing food? (See II, 4.) Now the inner sense, Augustine argues, is *higher* than the external senses. The principle of ordering will come out later, but for the present just accept that it is "higher".

Finally, there is *reason*. Just as the external senses do not perceive themselves, so too the inner sense does not perceive itself, or at least it is not clear that it does. Reason, however, perceives all of this. It is in virtue of reason that we humans are able to make all these nice distinctions. Furthermore, reason, unlike the lower powers, *perceives itself*. It is in virtue of reason that we can reason about reason. Reason is the highest thing yet.

In Augustine's II, 5, we finally get an explanation of the principle of ordering that is used here. Everything said so far would lead one to suppose that the principle is: if a power *P* perceives or knows *x*, then *P* is higher than *x* - that is, the ranking of powers is in terms of their *objects*. (Or, since reason perceives *itself*, you may want to revise this to: if *P* perceives *x*, *P* is at least *not lower* than *x*.)

But this won't work. *Reason* perceives *wisdom*, and yet it is not *superior* to wisdom. So some other criterion must be used. Here it is (*this is crucial*):

A cognitive power or faculty *P* is higher than *x* if and only if *P* *judges* *x*. Here we have almost a juridical notion: *standing in judgment on*. The sensory power *stands in judgment on* external objects. If a painting is ugly, for instance, it is the *sensory power* that says "Ugh! You ought to be beautiful". The inner sense *stands in judgment on* the external senses. It says: "Hey, eye! You aren't finding what you're looking for. Look some other direction". Similarly, reason stands in judgment on all the others. Reason decides whether they are working properly or not. They don't stand in judgment on reason. It is obvious that this notion of *judging* is closely linked with the earlier theme of what has *power* over what. In the end, the two criteria of ordering give you the *same* hierarchy.

Now the crucial thing here is that Augustine discovers that there is something even higher than reason itself - namely, truth, which, as we have already seen, is open and public to all at the same time, like the light of the sun. But why is it higher than reason? Because truth stands in judgment on reason; reason is judged against the measure of truth. Reason doesn't stand in judgment on the truth; truth isn't measured against the reason.

Here's where the juridical overtones to the notion of judging are important. *In a sense*, of course, we do say that reason judges the truth - that is, it forms judgments about the truth. But that is not what Augustine has in mind here. What he has in mind is this: When we work a problem in arithmetic, for instance, and get the wrong answer, it's *our* fault, not *arithmetic's*. We don't say, "Mathematics, you are wrong! You *should* have given the answer I got! Mathematics, heal thyself!" Rather, the truth stands in judgment on our reason and says, as it were: "Reason, *you* are wrong. You *should* have got such and such an answer. Now straighten up, and do it until you get it right!" When reason and the truth are mismatched, it is reason that is wrong, not the truth. Reason is *subject* to the truth, not its *ruler* (recall "governing and ruling").

Finally, Augustine realizes that the Truth that stands in judgment on reason is *necessary and immutable*. The examples he gives are instructive: the Platonic pairing of (a) truths of mathematics, and (b) truths of values - the better is to be preferred to the worse, the immutable to the mutable, and so on. These truths are necessary and themselves immutable. Hence, Augustine has found something with the characteristics that are supposed to be unique to divinity, and that something is Truth. Thus, in the second of the senses distinguished above, Augustine has a "proof" for the existence of God. Recall the Scriptural text: "I am the Way, the *truth*, and the life." (John 14:6.)

Augustine's success is obscured somewhat by his own confusion over just what the divine characteristics are that he is here trying to prove. Evodius says early in Book II that he isn't going to call something God just because it is higher than reason, but rather he is going to reserve the title 'God' for that which is *highest*. And Augustine, in a notorious remark, says that it will suffice to prove that there is *something* higher than reason - since either that will be the highest, and so God, or if there is something higher, then either that will be the highest, and so God, or if there is something higher yet . . . And so in any case, God exists.

There is an obvious problem. Why does Augustine think there is any top to the hierarchy at all? His reply to Evodius is far too quick. I suggest that, despite what he says here, is not really looking for that which is *highest*. That's not the divine characteristic he is really looking for in his proof. What he is really looking for is something that is necessary and immutable (and judges reason). Once he has found that, he stops. He still owes us, of course, an argument that there is nothing higher. But that belongs to the second stage of the problem (the second stage of "natural theology"), and Augustine doesn't touch it.

In short, it looks as if there are really two attributes at play here. Evodius wants to prove the existence of something *highest* above reason. Augustine seems to be satisfied with proving something *eternal and necessary* above reason. He puts Evodius off with a patently insufficient remark that suggests that Augustine is not really concerned here with the attribute Evodius chooses. (This is what is called in the trade a "benign interpretation.")

There is another obvious problem too. Whether Augustine ever succeeds in his proof or not, how is it possible that God be the same as the Truth, since there are many truths but only one God? The answer is neo-Platonic in spirit. The necessary and immutable truths are put in the divine mind (together with the divine Ideas, which are more like simple *concepts* than they are like *judgments*, which is what is involved here), where they are *identical* with the divine mind without losing their distinction among themselves. Recall Chapter \s6 above, and the business about how the neo-Platonists took over Aristotle's principle that the knower is identical with the known, the knower *becomes* the known. Augustine wants to hold both that (a) there are *many* divine ideas - in fact there is a distinct divine idea for everything that exists (and also for things

that do not exist) - and also that (b) all these ideas are *identical* with God, since God is simple and cannot be broken up into a composite of aspects or properties.

Now while ideas are not judgments, the problem is pretty much the same, so let's look at divine ideas for a moment. How can Augustine consistently maintain both (a) and (b)? I want to suggest that what is going on here is a play on two criteria for individuating, and therefore for counting up, divine ideas. Clearly, when you say that idea *A* is identical with idea *B*, and that both are identical with God, and then turn around and say that they are all distinct, you must be using two different criteria. These two criteria, I suggest, correspond to the two different sides of an *idea* or *concept*: the ontological and the intentional. (This is not in Augustine, as far as I know, but later people will approach the problem this way.) When I *think of x*, there is a kind of spurt of mental energy. On the other hand, there is *the thing thought of*. It need not exist, of course; it is *represented*. This is the *intentional object*. You can, if you wish, explain this in fancy terms from the phenomenological tradition, but there is no need to do that at this point. Now you can *count* ideas or concepts in two ways: (a) you can count up the mental acts, the distinct spurts of mental energy. This is an ontological criterion. Or (b) you can count up the intentional objects, so that the idea of *x* is identical with the idea of *y* only if *x* is identical with *y*; different thought-objects yield different thoughts.

Of course, this amounts to introducing an ambiguity into the notion of an idea or concept. But in most cases, it will be harmless. We get the same number no matter which criterion we use to count.

But suppose that by *one* mental burst, *one* mental act, I could think of two or more quite distinct intentional objects. Then how many ideas or concepts would I have? Clearly, the choice of criterion makes a difference here. This is what is going on with Augustine's divine ideas - and, *mutatis mutandis*, with the talk about *truths* in the divine mind. When he says that they are all identical with God, he is using the ontological criterion. God is simple. There is no complexity in him. You cannot distinguish a plurality of distinct mental acts from the ontological side. In fact, you cannot even distinguish the act from God himself. All the divine ideas are identical, and are identical with God. On the other hand, when you then turn around and distinguish divine ideas according as there is a distinct idea for you and a distinct idea for me, you are using a criterion based on the *objects*. That is an *intentional* criterion. There is no conflict in the doctrine if we keep these two notions straight. Somewhat the same kind of point can be made in the Aristotelian tradition in terms of efficient and final causality. Suppose a man is taking a walk - for two different purposes, to go to the store and to get some exercise. How many things is he doing? From the point of view of *efficient* causality, he is doing only one. There is only one agency here. But from the point of view of *final* causality, he is doing two things: he is getting his exercise and he is going to the store. Ontologically, he is going one thing; intentionally, he is doing two.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 18

1. Notice something about this hierarchy. It is an *ontological* hierarchy, of course, ranking things according to how "real" they are. And it is a hierarchy of *values* as well. (It *has* to be, if Good = Being.) But it is also a hierarchy of *power*. That is, things higher on the hierarchy can *do* everything lower things can do, and more besides. The "perfections" of higher things (if we want to speak that language) *include* the perfections of lower things too, in a kind of nested

arrangement. Those of you who find talk about "degrees" of reality hard to take, or who think a hierarchy of values is inevitably subjective and arbitrary, will perhaps be more comfortable approaching the Augustinian hierarchy from the point of view of the *powers* of things. For Augustine, it is all the same hierarchy. And it is worth point out that, if one takes the powers of things as the *real* basis for the hierarchy, then the crucial Augustinian claim that higher things are "more powerful" than lower ones (see Chapter \s5, above) is automatic.



## Chapter 19: Augustine: Theory of Illumination and Divine Ideas

With this Chapter, see also the materials translated below in Volume II, Text \s5, passages \s6-\s7. We've already seen a little about divine ideas at the end of Chapter \s2 above. Let's push on and now talk about the theory of illumination. Divine ideas will be relevant here.

We are now finally in a position to get a handle on the doctrine of illumination. Illumination is going to look a lot like the Platonic doctrine of *Reminiscence* or *Recollection*. We've already seen, for instance, how Augustine's doctrine of teaching in the *De magistro* looks a lot like the famous slave-boy passage in Plato's *Meno*. There the slave-boy turns out to know some geometry, although he has never been taught it. So where did he learn it? *Answer*: He learned it prior to this life. (See Chapter \s3, above, on the Greeks.)

I want to approach the doctrine of illumination from two points of view: (1) First, as a general claim, that illumination - or something like Platonic reminiscence - is required for all our knowledge. Here we will have to ask whether this "knowledge" is supposed to include the contents of our ideas or concepts, the rules in terms of which we form judgments, or both. (2) Second, I want to investigate the *special* claim that illumination is required for *some* kinds of knowledge - even if not for all. And again, we will have to ask whether we are talking about certain ideas or concepts, or whether we are talking about the way we put ideas or concepts together to form judgments - or both.

I want to make this distinction because in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus argue that illumination, as traditionally conceived, is not necessary. (The do keep the term, but that's all; in fact, they have rejected the doctrine.) Now, what they are really arguing against is claim (1). That is, they are arguing against the claim that we always need some kind of illumination, in *every* instance of knowing. We must then ask: If, in addition to the *general* claim (1), there are other considerations that seem to require illumination *in certain cases* and for *certain instances of knowledge*, then do the arguments by Aquinas and Scotus against the *general* claim (1) speak also to this *weaker* claim - that is, to (2)? In short, is the wholesale rejection of illumination by Aquinas and Scotus really justified and well argued for? Or do there remain reasons why illumination might still be needed in certain cases?

### The General Theory of Illumination

Let us now look at the general theory of illumination, which is what I will call claim (1) above, that illumination is always needed.

Recall: Why did Plato think his doctrine of reminiscence was needed? Well, let me set up a kind of argument:

(1) Knowledge worthy of the name is fixed, immutable. Here we have an ideal notion of knowledge, knowledge as a kind of limit. (See statement (6) in Chapter \s3, above, on the Greeks.) This is a kind of implicit premise of the whole discussion.

(2) Hence, Plato thinks, the *objects* of knowledge must be fixed and immutable too. They must be *ideal things* - that is, the Forms. That is why Plato talks so much about mathematics and values, where we conspicuously encounter idealized notions, standards. (Let us not worry too much here about the *basis* for the inference from (1) to (2). That will come later.)

(3) Now we have a kind of premise, a Principle of Acquaintance: We form knowledge of and only of those things with which we are directly acquainted - the things we come into *direct contact* with. Note the formulation '*We form*'. Knowledge is something *we* produce. It is the product of *our* act. (This, of course, does not mean that the *object* of knowledge is a product of our act.) Now I am not sure I can find this premise explicitly in Plato, but it will be all right for us to use it in setting out the present argument, because it is on exactly this point that there will be a big difference between Plato's theory and Augustine's. Therefore, let's call the principle "Platonic" in that very convenient loose sense of the term. In any case,

(4) From (2) and (3), it follows that we must have at some time come into direct contact with the Forms, since we do have knowledge. But we have not come into contact with them in *this* life. things in this life unfortunately fall conspicuously short of the ideal. We simply don't encounter any ideally perfect circles or perfectly just persons in this life. *Hence* - and this follows quite rigorously - we encountered those ideals *before* this life, and we are only now *remembering* them.

This is roughly the basis for the famous doctrine of reminiscence. Now let's look at Aristotle. He will be important, since Aquinas and Scotus in the thirteenth century will be arguing *against* illumination on basically Aristotelian grounds.

Aristotle accepts (1) and *part* of (2). The objects of knowledge are *immutable* and in some sense eternal. But Aristotle doesn't think it follows that they must be *ideal limits* - idealized things like geometrical points, perfect circles, perfectly just people. Thus, Aristotle *rejects* part of Plato's move from (1) to (2). For Aristotle, an idealized notion of knowledge does not imply that its *objects* must be idealizations. (On the other hand, Aristotle will accept (3), at least for the most basic kinds of knowledge.) Hence, for Aristotle there is no need for *reminiscence* in general. Step (4) does not follow. The thirteenth-century Aristotelians like Aquinas and Scotus are going to conclude likewise that there is no need for *illumination* in general.

But - and this is always an embarrassing problem for Aristotelians - even if the objects of knowledge need not be ideal in all cases, still some of them *are* ideals - perfect circles, perfectly just states, and the like. What about the knowledge of them? In such cases, it seems, the missing part of step (2) is restored, and the argument goes through. If reminiscence is not needed *in general*, it looks as if it is still going to be needed in special cases.

Aristotle and his followers have really very little to say here. I find it astonishing how *bad* the Aristotelians are on this point. Their account of *mathematical* knowledge, for instance, seems to me to be very weak. And in fact, mathematicians historically have always been Platonists in spirit. So in short, there may still be a need for reminiscence (or illumination, or something similar) in some cases, even if not in all.

Before we go on to Augustine, let's look briefly at Descartes' theory of innate ideas, which is in effect an attempt to answer the same problem. Descartes accepts (1). Recall how he wanted to put *all* knowledge on as fixed and certain a basis as mathematics was. He also accepts something like (2), although it's not quite the same, and it certainly isn't put in terms of Platonic Forms. Still, Descartes confines knowledge to "clear and distinct ideas", and the objects of clear and distinct ideas are usually (not always) pretty ideal things.

Where Descartes breaks from Plato is not with respect to (2), but with respect to (3). He rejects the *Principle of Acquaintance*. For him, we can have *ideas* of objects - and not *constructed* or molecular ideas either (what Descartes calls "factitious" ideas), but quite *simple* or basic ones - without having ever come into direct contact with those objects. This is exactly what

happens in the case of *innate ideas*. I have an innate idea of God, for instance, but I certainly have never met him.

Since Descartes rejects the Principle of Acquaintance, he has no need to postulate a pre-existence of the soul, and his answer to the question how we get knowledge is not a doctrine of reminiscence but the theory of innate ideas.

*Note:* Both the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence and the Cartesian theory of innate ideas agree on the *representational* character of our knowledge. For both of them, we can have real knowledge worthy of the name even though the object of that knowledge is not present in person to the mind, but only "by proxy" - that is, by a representation, a memory or an innate idea. In virtue of our discussion of skepticism in Chapter \s4 above, Augustine cannot allow this. For him, all knowledge requires its object to be present to the mind in person, not by proxy. Hence, for this reason if for no other, Augustine cannot accept either the Platonic theory of reminiscence or the later Cartesian theory of innate ideas.

What then does Augustine do in this situation. Well first, he accepts steps (1) and (2) of the Platonic argument above. Any knowledge *worthy of the name* (we must always add this clause when dealing with the Platonic tradition) is of *ideals*, of *standards* - in short, of *divine ideas*. That is, for Augustine, the objects of knowledge are *divine*.

On the other hand, the human intellect is a *creature*. Therefore, on the general principle that *the lower cannot act on the higher*, which we've seen before, it follows that creatures cannot *act* on the divine ideas. Creaturely minds cannot reach *up* and *grasp* the divine ideas - *grab* them, as it were, and pull them down into the minds themselves - since that would be *doing something to them*, and would violate the hierarchical arrangement of Augustine's universe.

Hence, Augustine's principle of order and justice and his view that souls are *creatures* leads him to deny the Principle of Acquaintance as formulated in (3), although he will obviously have *some* form of a Principle of Acquaintance in virtue of his theory that the objects of real knowledge worthy of the name must be present to the mind in person.

The problem with (3) is that *we* don't have the power to produce in ourselves a knowledge of the only proper objects of knowledge. Hence, since we do have knowledge, it must be produced in us by something higher. That is, *we* don't do it; it is *done to us*. And that process is exactly what is called *illumination*.

Note that nothing *less* than the objects of knowledge, which are divine, can produce that knowledge in us, for basically the same reason that we cannot do it ourselves: it would involve a violation of the hierarchical order of things. Hence, *illumination is done by God*. No one else could do it.

How does Plato avoid this conclusion - that is, the denial of the Principle of Acquaintance as formulated in (3)? Or if not Plato himself, let's talk about those very convenient "Platonists". Well, how did Augustine get where he did? He was led to deny (3) by two principles:

(a) the principle of order and justice, the claim that the lower does not act on the higher, and

(b) the claim that souls are creatures.

(And of course the view that truth is something ideal, exalted - even perhaps *divine*. But we don't need to list that here, since all our authors agreed on it. Their difference lay elsewhere.)

To reject (a) would be quite foreign to the Platonic tradition. But to reject (b) *isn't*. There is a strong tendency in the Platonic stream to think of souls as somehow *divine*. Remember our discussion of Origen (Chapter \s8 above), who felt this tendency and fought against it.

What we have been talking about so far is the "General Theory of Illumination", the claim that illumination is *always* necessary. That view is based on a very low opinion of the human intellect. Knowledge is by rights divine. We have no right to it. If we have it nevertheless, it is a pure gift; it is in no way within our power.

## THE SPECIAL THEORY OF ILLUMINATION

Now let's turn to the *special* theory of illumination, the theory that, whether illumination is needed in all cases or not, it is surely needed in *some* cases.

Regardless of the general considerations we've just been looking at, there are also some special considerations that do not depend on Augustine's peculiar hierarchical notion of the world, or on his view that the objects of any knowledge worthy of the name are all ideals. Regardless how we stand on those two Augustinian doctrines, we seem to have certain *kinds* of knowledge that cannot in any case be accounted for by our own powers.

These kinds of knowledge fall into two kinds. Both kinds may be found discussed to some degree in *On Free Choice of the Will*, II. There are (a) certain kinds of *concepts* that it seems we cannot possibly produce under our own power, and (b) certain kinds of *judgmental knowledge* that likewise we could never arrive at under our own power.

### CONCEPTS

With respect to (a), the concepts, Augustine gives an argument in *On Free Choice*, II, 8, that the notion of *unity* cannot come from the senses. (By "unity" he means simplicity, not being composed of parts.) Now we already know that, for Augustine, *no* ideas comes from the senses. The soul produces it within itself in *response* to what it sees going on in the body. And this is what *isn't* done in the case of the idea of *unity*. The attentive soul can observe *most carefully* what is going on in the body, but it will find no occasion *there* to produce an idea of *unity*. Hence, the idea of unity cannot come from the senses in a much stronger way than we say that for Augustine *no* idea comes from the senses. If we want to ask how the soul comes to have the notion of unity, we cannot turn to the senses for even *part* of the answer.

### THEORIES THAT WON'T WORK

Augustine's example of unity is simply an example of an ideal or limiting notion. And, if you think about it, it is hard to see how we could possibly get any such ideal notion from the senses. Augustine's choice of unity is perhaps not the best choice he could have made to illustrate this. But consider the ideas of perfect circle or geometrical point. (I think it is easier to do this with mathematical, and in particular, geometrical concepts than it is with value-concepts.) Where on earth could we have got such ideas? Here are some theories I have heard, and here is why they won't work:

(1) Abstraction: We don't get these concepts by observing instance of them in the world around us and then abstracting out the common element. We don't do this because there simply aren't any instances of them in the observable world - no perfect circles, no geometrical points. (And even if there were geometrical points, I couldn't observe them, as this theory requires; they're too small to observe.) Strangely enough, Aquinas thinks this is the way we get such geometrical concepts. But as far as I can tell, his theory is very implausible.

(2) *Negation*: We don't get these concepts by *negating* other concepts, so to speak - that is, by starting with an idea derived by empirical means, and then mentally negating it. This theory is implausible to begin with for geometrical ideals. We do not first form the idea of an *imperfect* circle, or of a *non-circle*, and then negate it (or negate the imperfection) to get the idea of a *perfect* circle. How on earth could we recognize something as an *imperfect* circle unless we *already* had at least some concept of the *standard* it falls short of? (To have such a concept does not necessarily mean that we can *articulate* it very well.)

Curiously, many people seem to think this view is plausible when it comes to ideal notions like *omnipotence*, *infinity*, and the like. They think we *construct* a notion of omnipotence, for instance, by observing our own weaknesses and then thinking of something *without* those weaknesses. But, as Descartes knew (*Meditation III*), we cannot start from the realization that we are *imperfect* in certain respects and then negate that idea to form the notion of *perfection* in the ideal. That isn't the direction it goes. How did we come to *realize* we were imperfect to begin with unless we *already* had the notion of perfection in the ideal? How could I know about *weakness*, how could I know that there are things I can't do - or more appropriately for the concept of omnipotence, how could I ever come to imagine that there are things that *can* be done that I do not see actually *being* done around me - unless I somehow *already* had the notion of such exalted tasks? Even the word 'imperfection' betrays its conceptual etymology. It is derived from the notion of perfection, not the other way around.

(3) *Approximation*: On this view, we don't see perfect circles or geometrical points in nature, but we *do* see certain approximations to them, and that is enough to give us the idea. But on the contrary, while we certainly do see approximations, that is *not* enough to "give us the idea" if we don't already have it. This is so even where we are not talking about ideals. If I point to a cloud in the sky and say "That looks like a camel", I must already *have* an idea of a camel. The cloud *reminds* me of a camel, but it doesn't teach me *ex nihilo* about camels.

(4) *Convergence*: This is related to (3), and is in effect an attempt to reinforce (3) with some additional considerations. On this theory, while we don't see perfect circles, we do see approximations of them, even if we don't yet have any idea what they are approximating. That is, we certainly do see *lumpy* circle, *rough* circles. Now suppose we mentally arrange these approximations in order. For instance, let us mentally arrange the approximate circles in a sequence beginning with the more lopsided and running to the less lopsided. I surely can do that! Likewise, let us arrange everything we see in order from large to small. Now, on the "convergence"-theory, the mind gets the concept of a perfect circle, and the concept of a geometric point, by thinking about these two respective sequences and *taking the limit* - that is, by seeing where they are headed.

But, on the contrary, *taking the limit* like this is not a mental operation we can take for granted. It sounds like something familiar and precise because it is a metaphor taken over from mathematics. What we are doing in the case of concept-formation is *at best* only "taking the limit" in a metaphorical sense. And that fact is important, because in mathematics you can frequently find a limit by certain *calculations*, even though you have no idea *in advance* how that limit is going to turn out. But it doesn't seem we can do that in the case of the kinds of limits we are talking about here. There is no "calculation" that will give us what we want. So in what other way could we ever come to see *where* those two sequences were heading, if we did not *already* have some idea of the limiting case? And for that matter (although this consideration perhaps doesn't apply to the second sequence), how do we know how to *arrange* our sequences to begin

with? What counts *in advance* as a "lopsided circle", and what counts as "more" or "less" lopsided? No, the mathematical metaphor of taking limits is no help here. And don't just say, "I don't know *how* we do it, but we *do* it." That's just to say that you don't *have* any explanation but stubbornly refuse to admit there is a problem.

(5) *Indistinguishability*: On this view, although we don't see perfect circles in nature, we do see things that are *perceptually indistinguishable* from perfect circles. *Reply*: They are also perceptually indistinguishable from *slightly lopsided* circles. Why do we get the one concept from then and not the other? Furthermore, even if you can get this theory to work in the case of a perfect circle, it plainly will not work for geometrical points. If I can perceive something at all, it's already too big to be a geometrical point, and can be perceptually distinguished from one. Likewise, when it comes to *value*-concepts, the theory collapses. I don't see anything around me that is perceptually indistinguishable from a perfectly just state.

(6) *Definition*: On this theory, we get these ideal concepts by *explicit definition*, in contrast to the more or less automatic mental operations presupposed by the earlier theories. For instance, how do we define a circle - that is, a "perfect" circle, the kind of circle geometry talks about? Well, we all know the answer to that: A circle is a locus of points on a plane, equidistant from a point called the center. But look! A circle is a locus of *what*, on *what*, *how* distant from a *what* called the center? Look at all the other ideal notions that are presupposed in this definition. *Of course* we can define some ideal notions in terms of other ideal notions. What we want to know, however, is how this process can get *started*? How do we get our *first* ideal notion? (*Note*: Although the failure of this theory is especially obvious for such geometrical examples, it is not hard to see that it also fails for *value*-concepts. Define ideal justice for me.)

Now I do not mean to suggest by all this that there is no solution to the problem. (Well, actually I do mean to suggest it, but I don't mean to be dogmatic about it.) But what I do want to insist on is that there *is*, initially at any rate, a real *problem* here. It is not at all obvious that *any* account of the origin of our ideal concepts is going to be satisfactory if we insist on getting *all* our concepts in one way or another from the senses. I do want to insist on the *existence* of the problem, even if there does turn out to be a solution to it, because those in the Aristotelian (and later the British Empiricist) tradition are very good at *overlooking* this problem, or "black-boxing" it - that is, we put the sense data in the black box of the mind, and (presto!) out comes an ideal concept at the other end. There may be a *name* for what goes on in inside, but no real explanation.

Consider, for example, the following astonishingly naive passage from section 2 of Hume's *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*:

The idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom.

Oh, "augmenting without limit". That's how we do it, is it? What we have here is a nice term, but we want more than a term; we want a *theory*. What makes Hume so sure that our goodness isn't *already* unlimited?

Now, whatever else we may think of Plato's theory of reminiscence and of Descartes' doctrine of innate ideas, they at least have the virtue of recognizing the problem. And Augustine's theory of illumination does too. With Plato, Augustine concludes: We cannot get *ideal concepts* from the senses. That is what the discussion of *unity* was supposed to illustrate.

This then is the reasoning behind the *special* theory of illumination as far as *concepts* are concerned. There appear to be certain kinds of concepts that we cannot get through the senses.

But, you may say, does it follow that we get them by *illumination*? That is, why is this supposed to be an argument for the theory of *illumination* - even as restricted to certain kinds of knowledge? Why not say we get such concepts by reminiscence or that they are just innate in us? Well, that is a good point. And perhaps while we do not need the peculiarly Augustinian themes of the soul's creaturehood and of the hierarchical structure of the world to set up the *problem* of ideal concepts, we might very well need them if we are going to turn these considerations into an argument for *illumination* in particular.

#### *PROPOSITIONS OR JUDGMENTS*

In any case, let us now turn to the second kind of knowledge for which there may be a special need for illumination - that is, certain kinds of propositional or judgmental knowledge. Augustine discusses this too in *On Free Choice of the Will*, II, and elsewhere. He talks about the rules that govern the mind. And it turns out that he means things like: "Equals added to equals are equal", "The better is to be preferred to the worse", and so on.

It is clear from his remarks that he thinks we know these rules too by illumination. Why? Simple: These rules, these truths, have two characteristics:

(1) We can *know* them with certainty.

(2) They are necessary, eternal, immutable.

From (1), it follows from Augustine's views on skepticism (Chapter \s4 above) that such rules are present *in person* to the mind, not *by proxy*. That is, we do not know such truths through an *innate representation* of them, or by *remembering* them, or in any other such representative way. It is not that the *ideas* or *thoughts* of such truths are present to our mind. The *truths themselves* are present - or else we do not know them with certainty.

Now, since our minds are contingent, temporal, changeable things (we change our minds, for instance, forget, and so on), and since so too is the whole world revealed by sensation, it follows further from point (2) above that neither the sensory world nor the created mind can make these *necessary* truths present to the mind. Hence, something else is needed, and Augustine calls it *illumination*.

*Note:* This last step does *not* rest on any *general* Augustinian considerations about ranking things according to value, or about the lower's not acting on the higher. You could argue for it that way, but you can also argue for it on the general ground: You can't build necessary structures on contingent foundations. Changeable realities are not firm enough to ground changeless truths.

*Note also:* Earlier, I said that while there may be a problem about the origin of our ideal concepts, it is not clear that *illumination* is the only solution to that problem. There are also the Platonic theory of reminiscence and the doctrine of innate ideas. But now perhaps there *is* a way to rule those other theories out after all, although Augustine doesn't argue this way so far as I know.

If we accept Augustine's view that the objects of real *knowledge* must be present to the mind in person, and not by representation, then *if* the *ideal objects* we know conceptually are somehow *constituents* of the eternal and necessary truths we know by propositional knowledge, then since the latter are present in person and not by representation, so too are the former. For instance, if *equality* itself enters into the truth "Equals added to equals are equal", then since I

know that truth directly and not by representation, it would seem to follow that I know *equality* directly and not by representation, which would rule out both innate ideas (which are representations) and reminiscence.

## PROBLEMS WITH THE THEORY OF ILLUMINATION

However all that works out, let us now turn to look at some of the problems with the theory of illumination. There are a number of them.

(1) How far does Augustine mean for his doctrine to extend? One can cite conflicting texts on this point. For instance, for a relatively *moderate* view, there is the passage from Augustine's *Retractationes* translated in Volume II, below, as Text \s4, passage \s5. (The title *Retractationes* does not mean "retractions", as though Augustine is now taking it all back, but rather "retreatments".) This work was written late in Augustine's life, and is a kind of literary survey of all he had previously written. In it, Augustine takes the opportunity to correct or explain further certain things he had said in his earlier writings. The *Retractationes* should always be consulted whenever you do serious work on Augustine. Please go read the passage now, in Volume II.

The view in the passage seems to be that illumination - here put in terms *obviously* meant to suggest the *Meno*, although Augustine makes it clear that he rejects the pre-existence of souls - is required for the more abstract *sciences*, but not for the so called *arts*, which do not deal with such exalted objects as the *sciences* do. For the *arts*, illumination is not needed. Sensation is enough.

On the other hand, for a quite *strong* view we can cite *Epistle* 120, 2, 10, translated below in Volume II, Text \s4, passage \s6. According to this passage, illumination is required for *every* cognitive act - arts as well as sciences, even for perception.

The relative chronology of these two passages doesn't really matter. You can find texts like these throughout Augustine's writings. What this probably means is that in the end he just had no settled view about the *extent* of illumination. For what it is worth, my own opinion is that Augustine's more *moderate* view is his "better doctrine".

(2) The second problem with the theory of illumination is this: In what sense is knowledge by illumination *ours*? Here is how it works. In this tradition, knowledge is described in such exalted terms that it is properly an attribute of the divine. But if that is so, how then can creatures have it? And of course the obvious answer is: *We can't*. The truths we know by illumination (at least the *ideal* ones) are necessary and immutable. How then can they ever be assimilated by a contingent and changeable creature, and *made its own* - with or without divine illumination? In short, while something like illumination will be necessary for creaturely knowledge, how can it *or anything else* ever be *sufficient*?

The same point can be put another way: *Who does the knowing*? Knowledge is presumably an *act* of a knowing intellect. But, according to the theory of illumination, *our* intellect is passive and receptive in knowledge; it is the *divine* intellect that *acts* and illuminates us. So in what sense can *we* be said to know? *God* is the only one who is active here in the relevant sense.

Again, if the intellect is passive in knowledge, then how do we explain the fact that we have to *work* so hard at getting knowledge - of mathematics, for instance, where if anywhere illumination is needed? In other words, the theory of illumination as it stands *at best* needs supplementing by an account that gives *some* active role to the human intellect.



(3) A third problem is this: How does illumination differ from the direct vision of God, which is supposed to be reserved for the blessed in the next life - the so called "Beatific Vision"? There is a common Old Testament theme that he who looks directly on God dies. We simply can't take it! And St. Paul says that we see *now* as in a glass darkly, but *then* (that is, in heaven) face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). How then does illumination differ from that face to face encounter with God, which is not supposed to happen in this life?

Illumination after all puts divine truths into *direct* contact with the human mind. We do *not* see them "in a glass, darkly". That would be representationalism, and spoil the whole point of the doctrine. On the other hand, the divine truths are *identical* with God, as we know from *On Free Choice of the Will*, II, and elsewhere. Hence, it looks as if illumination turns out to be a direct intellectual vision of God - the very kind of thing Augustine describes elsewhere as the ultimate goal of mankind! Ironically, therefore, despite his criticism of Varro in *On the City of God*, XIX, for thinking that the goal and purpose of man could be reached in this life (see Chapter \s2, above), Augustine himself seems to be committed to saying that the goal of mankind can be attained in this life by anyone who cares to do a little mathematics or geometry. And that, I submit, is a problem. Salvation should not consist of adding a column of figures.

(4) This brings up another problem: Who gets illumined? Illumination begins to look a lot like the Beatific Vision, which is supposed to be reserved until the next life. But apart from *when* we are supposed to get it, such a direct vision of God is also supposed to be reserved for the *blessed*, the saints. Yet even the most degenerate reprobate can add two and two - an ability which requires illumination if anything does.

Later on, the problem here will be put in terms of *nature* vs. *grace*. 'Grace' in this sense is a theological term that means a kind of *gratuity*, a divine "tip". God gives creatures some things by nature; they are built into the creatures' very structure. For instance, he gives human souls *will*s. But he gives *some* creatures more than that. He gives them *supernatural* things, in the etymological sense: things over and above what they get by nature. And these supernatural endowments are gratuitous: they are *graces*.

Given this kind of terminology, the theory of illumination makes knowledge turn out to be a *super-natural* grace. But *super-natural* knowledge - knowledge we have but nevertheless could not get under our own natural powers - is also called *revelation*. What else could it be? If we cannot find out for ourselves, we *have to be told*, and that is what revelation is. So what we see here is that the theory of illumination tends to assimilate all knowledge to revelation. But now there is an obvious problem: The heathens do not possess revelation, and yet even they can do mathematics. (Recall Justin Martyr's suggestion that the pagans borrowed all their knowledge from the Hebrews. See Chapter \s3, above.)

The moral of the story is obviously that some new distinctions and refinements need to be made. We do not yet have a fully worked out theory of illumination. What we have in Augustine is a statement of a program. Many later authors will devote a lot of effort to straightening this all out.

Finally, there is one last thing I should mention. There is one interpretation of the theory of illumination that tries to get around some of these problems. This is the interpretation that Copleston and Gilson hold. It takes the analogy of the *sun* quite seriously. Augustine frequently puts his illumination talk in terms of sun metaphors, just as Plato did in the *Republic*. What are the implications of choosing this metaphor? Well, just as we see *many things in the light of the sun* even though the direct vision of the source of the light - that is, the sun itself - is reserved for the few (for the rest it just burns holes in their retinas), so too in illumination. We do *not* directly

see the *source* of the light - God - but rather we see other things *in the light* of God. This view requires that illumination *not* put us in direct contact with divine truths, but rather simply *regulates* our minds so that it judges *in accordance* with the divine truths.

The details are tricky, but this will suffice for a brief sketch of the interpretation. Obviously, it nicely avoids problem (3) above, about the Beatific Vision. But it seems to me to be based on a selective choice of the evidence. Augustine does seem to say in some places that the *divine truths* themselves are put in direct contact with our minds, and *they* are the mind's objects, that it is not just that the mind sees *other* objects in the light of those truths.

It is true that Augustine does often speak of the *regulative* role of illumination. But it is not clear that this means anything else than that illumination in some cases involves *propositions* or *judgments*, and concerns *rules*.

In short, the theory of illumination as left to posterity by Augustine needs much more work. We will meet it again.

*Note:* I would like to call your attention to a really very good book on Augustine's theory of illumination: Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge*. See the Consolidated Bibliography for further details. This slim volume helped me a lot.

## Chapter 20

### Boethius: Life and Works

Bibliographical information on the works cited below is given in the "Bibliographical Notes" toward the end of this Chapter (and, of course, in the Consolidated Bibliography at the end of this Survey).

#### Life

Boethius was born sometime around 480, and died between 524 and 526. That is, he is roughly one hundred years after Augustine. Nothing of philosophical note happened in between.

Boethius' name is sometimes spelled 'Boetius', without the 'h'. This spelling has some manuscript authority, but the manuscripts are not unanimous. The Latins were unaccustomed to pronouncing the Greek *theta*, and often just used a *t*-sound. (See Chadwick, p. 1). (ʃ8Boyce-\\i+5d'o' in Greek means to assist, come to the rescue. Greek had by no means died out yet in the Latin West, and aristocratic Roman families were thoroughly familiar with it.)

Boethius came from an extremely well-placed old Roman family, the Anicii. His father died while Boethius was still young, and the child was more or less adopted by the even better-placed household of a certain Symmachus. (Posterity perhaps remembers another Symmachus better, a pagan who campaigned for a kind of revival of paganism in the 370s, during the time of St. Ambrose. Boethius' Symmachus was a descendant of that earlier one. See Chadwick, p. 5.)

Boethius had a distinguished career in public office, eventually rising to the rank of *Magister officiorum*, "Master of the Offices". There is no good modern equivalent of this position, but it was definitely a powerful post. To give you some idea what it meant, recall that under the late Roman Emperors, there were three main grades of officials in the administration. If you were of senatorial rank, you were called a *clarissimus* (= "distinguished one"). Included among the *clarissimi* was a subgroup called the *spectabiles* (= "remarkable ones", even "spectacular ones" - the Romans were not shy about this sort of thing), and yet a further subgroup of the *spectabiles* called the *illustres* (= "illustrious ones").<sup>1</sup> (Boak, p. 20.)

The membership of the class of *illustres* varied over time, but in general it included the *consistorium* (= Imperial Consistory, Council of State, the "Cabinet"), along with various Prefects and military brass. The *consistorium* was made up of the Ministers of the various administrative departments, including the wonderfully titled *comes sacrarum largitionum* or "Count of the Sacred Largesses" (= Finance Minister, Secretary of the Treasury), the "Count of the Privy Purse" (= Minister of Crown Lands, Secretary of the Interior), the *Quaestor* (= legal and judicial advisor, Attorney General), and the *Magister officiorum* (the office Boethius held). (Boak, pp. 21-22.)

In Boethius' day, the office of *Magister officiorum* combined both military and civil functions. (It had not always done so.) On the military side, Boethius had charge of Emperor's household guards (= the Secret Service) and the arsenals, and in effect had charge of all intelligence-gathering activities too. On the civil side, he was in control of the Post Office, looked after the various petitions that were made to the Emperor, and then saw that the Emperor's decisions were executed. He decided who did and who did not have access to the Emperor and the *consistorium*, and looked after the appointments of various provincial governors. (Chadwick, pp. 46-47.) In short, Boethius was a *very* powerful man!

I have referred to the "Emperor" in this sketch. But strictly speaking, there was no real Emperor in the West in Boethius' time, although the above administrative structure remained

intact anyway. In 476, the Western Emperor (remember, there was also an Emperor in Constantinople at this time - the Empire has split) was kicked into "retirement" by a certain Odovacar ('Odoacer' is an alternative spelling), in effect a barbarian warlord. ('Barbarian' here is a semi-technical term. It refers to his racial stock, and doesn't necessarily mean that he was uncouth and vulgar - although he probably was.) Odovacar tried to take over the imperial title, but his legitimacy was never recognized by the Eastern Emperor. Odovacar's *coup* is generally regarded as the official end of the Roman Empire in the West.

Now let's turn the clock back a bit. Up in southern Scandinavia, there was a Germanic tribe called the Goths. (There is an island even today called "Gotland" in the Baltic Sea off the coast of Sweden.) Moved perhaps by overpopulation, the Goths left their homeland and expanded into southern Russia. There they split into two groups, the Ostrogoths (= East Goths), who established themselves north of the Black Sea, and the Visigoths (= West Goths), who settled in "Dacia" just north of the lower Danube, roughly in the area that is now Rumania.

In the late fourth century, the Ostrogoths were attacked and completely smashed by Attila and his terrifying Huns. As a result, the defeated Ostrogoths began to migrate westward, pushing the Visigoths ahead of them. The panic-stricken Visigoths didn't mind. They were only too happy to get out of there as fast as they could; they saw who was coming behind their eastern brothers.

Although they were justifiably afraid of the Huns, the Goths were no pushovers. In their westward migrations, the Visigoths went down into Italy and there, under their leader Alaric, actually captured and "sacked" Rome in 410. Apparently there wasn't much physical damage, but the psychological blow was devastating. The eternal city, inviolate for a thousand years, had fallen! Many people thought it was the end of the world. They weren't far wrong; the old order had decidedly passed away.<sup>2</sup>

The Visigoths had *Wanderlust*, however, and didn't stay. Off they went, and ended up in southern Gaul. The Romans more or less recovered their poise, but things weren't really the same, and in 476, as we saw, Odovacar finally put the Western Empire out of its misery.

Meanwhile, of course, the Ostrogoths were still out there and coming this way. In 489, under their leader Theodoric (the accent is usually put on the first 'o': TheOdoric), entered Italy, and in 493 Theodoric took over. He invited Odovacar to a banquet and there murdered him.

Despite this grisly beginning, Theodoric was a very enlightened man. He was a big patron of culture, and in fact was officially a Roman citizen. He had even held the office of consul in the East. Ostrogothic Italy under Theodoric was probably the most successful and certainly the most brilliant of the "barbarian" governments that were emerging here and there in the West. It was under Theodoric that Boethius served as *Magister officiorum*.

Theodoric's official title was 'king', not 'Emperor'. And he ruled from Ravenna, not from Rome. Although he was pretty much free to do anything he pleased, he was technically subject to Constantinople, and therefore somewhat sensitive about his status.

Theodoric and his Ostrogoths, like the Goths in general, were Arian Christians (on Arianism, see Chapter \s2 above). Boethius and the Roman stock were not; they were of the "orthodox" persuasion. (That doesn't mean "orthodox" in the later sense in which we speak, for instance, of a Greek or Russian "Orthodox" Church.) This difference of religion could well have led to some problems, but apparently Boethius had a good political sense and was able to play his cards right and win the favor of Theodoric.

At least for a while. Eventually, a certain Cyprian, who was in effect a kind of official private secretary, denounced the senator Albinus before Theodoric. He charged Albinus, who was something of a rich fat-cat, with treasonable correspondence with persons associated with the Eastern Emperor Justin. This may very well have had something to do with plans to free the West of barbarian (and Arian) rule. At any event, Albinus denied the charge, of course, and Boethius came to his defense. Boethius wrote to Theodoric, "Cyprian's charge is false. Nevertheless, if Albinus did it then I, and the entire Senate too, have joined [with him] in the one conspiracy. It is false, lord king." (See Chadwick, p. 48.) In other words, If Albinus is guilty, then so am I and the entire Senate. Well, that wasn't quite what he should have said. Cyprian just extended his charge to include Boethius, and claimed that Boethius knew about Albinus' treasonable correspondence and covered it up.

Eventually, Boethius was arrested and thrown in jail where he languished under sentence of death. While he was there, meditating on this dramatic change of fortune, he wrote his famous *Consolation of Philosophy*. In it, he claims he was framed. Well, maybe, maybe not. In any event, he was eventually executed.

Now, folks, as the second lesson in the "lore and gossip" part of this course, I must tell you how Boethius died. They put a tight cord around his head and twisted it together until his eyes popped out and his skull was crushed. Then, just to be sure, they cut off his head.

## WORKS

1. The Consolation of Philosophy.

### **The "Theological Tractates" (or Opuscula sacra):**

12. On the Trinity.
13. Whether Father, Son, and Holy Ghost May be Substantially Predicated of the Divinity.
14. How Are Substances Good insofar as They Exist since They Are not Substantial Goods? (= De hebdomadibus, On the Hebdomads, whatever they are).
15. On the Catholic Faith.
16. On Person and the Two Natures (Against Eutyches and Nestorius, "Contra Eutychen" for short)

### **Logical works:**

17. Translation of Aristotle's Categories.
18. Translation of Aristotle's De interpretatione.
19. Translation of Porphyry's Isagoge (we will talk about Porphyry later).
110. Translation of Aristotle's Posterior Analytics.
111. Translation of Aristotle's Prior Analytics.
112. Translation of Aristotle's Sophistic Refutations.
113. Translation of Aristotle's Topics.
114. Commentary on Aristotle's Topics (not extant).
115. Commentary on Aristotle's Categories.
116. Commentary on Cicero's Topics.
117. First Commentary on Aristotle's De interpretatione.
118. Second Commentary on Aristotle's De interpretatione.
119. Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge in Marius Victorinus' translation. (On Victorinus, see Augustine's Confessions, 8, 2 & 4.)
120. Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge in Boethius' own translation.
121. Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics.
122. Commentary on the Prior Analytics.
123. Introduction to Categorical Syllogisms.
124. On Categorical Syllogisms.
125. On Division.
126. On Hypothetical Syllogisms.
127. On Topical Differences.

### **Mathematical Works:**

128. On the Institution of Arithmetic.
129. On the Institution of Music.

Other works have been attributed to Boethius from time to time, and there is perhaps some dispute about some of them. Worse, not all of the works published under genuine Boethian titles are in fact his. With appropriate warnings, Boethius' works are published in PL 63-64. The textual questions are especially difficult here. If you are going to do any serious work on Boethius, you must be sure you are dealing with his genuine texts. For help, consult Glorieux, Pour revaloriser Migne. For more detailed help, see the items listed below.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

These of course are just a few of the many items available.

There is an edition and translation of the "Theological Tractates", together with the Consolation, in the Boethius, Tractates, De consolatione philosophiae, H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, eds. & trs., ("The Loeb Classical Library"; London: William Heinemann, 1918, with many subsequent reprintings). The translation of the Consolation found there is an old translation from 1609. The Translation of the Tractates varies from good to terrible. (The De hebdomadibus is terrible. Unfortunately, this is the translation reproduced in Hyman and Walsh.) On the other hand, the Latin text of the Tractates in this edition is pretty reliable. There are, of course, many other translations of the Consolation. Another, and much superior, translation of the De hebdomadibus may be found in Wippel and Wolter, Medieval Philosophy, pp. 97-102. I have also provided you with my own translation in Volume II, below, Text \s3. The Stewart and Rand translation of On the Trinity is pretty good. It is reprinted in Herman Shapiro, Medieval Philosophy, pp. 72-83.

There is a translation of an important part of the second commentary on Porphyry in McKeon, Selections from Medieval Philosophers, vol. 1, pp. 70-89. We shall have occasion to refer to this passage later. I have retranslated it as Text \s4, in Volume II, below.

Henry Chadwick, Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). Life, works, doctrine. Recommended.

Margaret Gibson, ed., Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981). A collection of papers, many of which deal at least in part with Boethius' writings, questions of authenticity and such. Generally very high quality scholarship.

Luca Obertello, Severino Boezio, 2 vols., Genoa: Accademia ligurica di scienze e lettere, 1974. Life, works, doctrine - the whole business.

The surviving Boethian translations of Aristotle's logical writings are critically edited by Lorenzo Minio-Paluello in the series Aristoteles Latinus, published by the the Union Académique Internationale and distributed variously by E. J. Brill in Leiden or by Desclée de Brouwer in Brussels. Bernard Dod published Boethius' translation of the *Sophistical Refutations* in the same series in 1975. See also Minio-Paluello's studies, reprinted in a convenient collection in Lorenzo Minio-Paluello, *Opuscula: The Latin Aristotle*, (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1972). Dod also has a chapter entitled "Aristoteles Latinus", discussing of course Boethius along with other translators, in *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, Ch. 2, pp. 45-79.

Most of the above works will supply you with more detailed bibliographical information. See also the references in Gilson's *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 603-604.

Finally, you should also know about Arthur E. R. Boak, *The Master of the Offices in the Later Roman and Byzantine Empire*, part 1 of Arthur E. R. Boak and James E. Dunlap, *Two Studies in Later Roman and Byzantine Administration*, ("University of Michigan Studies",

Humanistic Series, vol. 14; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924). This volume will tell you just about everything you could ever want to know about the history and the development of the office Boethius came to hold. But not quite everything. Curiously, for all its erudition, Boethius himself does not appear to be mentioned in this study. His name certainly does not appear in the index.

#### PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

The program for the rest of the material on Boethius is as follows:

- (a) An overview of the *Consolation of Philosophy*.
- (b) A close look at Book 5 of the *Consolation*, on the problem of divine foreknowledge vs. human free will. Here we will look back to Augustine on the same problem.
- (c) Boethius on universals. Here we will get our first real treatment of this great problem in the Middle Ages.
- (d) Some remarks on Boethius' *De hebdomadibus*, a complete translation of which is in Volume II.
- (e) What I call Boethius' "Philosophical Lexicon" - that is, the philosophical vocabulary he defined and bequeathed to the Middle Ages.

Also, see the texts from Boethius translated in Volume II below.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 20

1. Later on, the Emperor Justinian added an even more exclusive and exalted rank: the *gloriosi*, which means just what it looks like. See Boak, p. 20.

2. As a result of this blow, many Romans began to grumble that it was all the Christians' fault. They had deposed the good old pagan gods and set up their new-fangled religion instead, and now look at the result. It was this charge that prompted St. Augustine in North Africa to take up his pen in 413 and begin to write *The City of God* in reply. As he worked on it sporadically over the years, Augustine's conception of his topic changed, and the finished work really has very little to do the accusation that originally motivated it.



## Chapter 21:

### Boethius: Overview of The Consolation of Philosophy

Read the Consolation, all of it. See also Copleston, Hist. of Philosophy, v. 2, Ch. 10.

#### General Remarks

For the circumstances under which this book was written, see Chapter \s2. Boethius wrote it while he was in jail, awaiting execution. The Consolation is one of those great books of philosophy that turned out to be influential in all sorts of unexpected ways. It was the kind of book military commanders would take with them on campaigns - that kind of thing.

The Consolation is in some respects a puzzling book. First of all, there is a lot of Augustine in it. Basically, Boethius accepts Augustine's free will account of evil. In fact, he takes it more or less implicitly for granted. He doesn't argue the point in the *Consolation*, or anywhere else, at any length. Rather what Boethius wants to know is, *given* all that, why is it that the evil people in this world *prosper* and the good *suffer*. That is, granted that we can explain how evil comes about in the first place, perhaps by an explanation like Augustine's, still why isn't something done about it? Why do the evil people seem to have all the advantages, while the good ones seem to get abused all the time? In short, to get right down to what is *really* bothering Boethius: *Why am I in jail?*

On the other hand, despite - or in addition to - the Augustinian/Christian influence, the Consolation is very Greek in spirit and tone. See, for example, Book III, prose 2. (This way of citing the Consolation will be described below.) There Boethius seems to be saying that people do evil out of ignorance - that is, that no one knowingly does evil. We saw how Greek that was (Chapter \s3 above), and how difficult it was to explain a view like this on a Christian framework, with the doctrine of *creation* in the background. Remember Augustine's episode with the pear tree.

Again, look at Book III, meter 9. There we get an account of "creation" right out of the Timaeus. This is straight Greek stuff. Boethius after all knew Greek. He translated Greek works into Latin. In fact, he had a kind of project under way: to translate all of Plato and all of Aristotle from Greek into Latin, and then to write a separate work showing that they really said the same thing. (This was a common neo-Platonic theme.) Obviously, Boethius didn't get very far with this project. (See Chapter \s2 above for what he did accomplish.) Boethius was one of the few people of philosophical importance in the Middle Ages who knew Greek well enough to translate it.

Again, in the *Consolation* there is almost no explicit appeal to Scripture.

All this has led some people to doubt the depth of Boethius' Christianity. They find it suspicious that his last work, written under confinement and the sentence of death, should appeal to *philosophy* and not to *religion* for solace. You can form your own opinion about that. I think it should not be taken very seriously.

#### Particular Notes

Here are some more detailed remarks on particular passages. The *Consolation* is written in alternate prose and metrical passages. The usual way of referring to them, without resorting to the pagination of some particular edition or translation, is by *book*, then the number of the prose or metrical passage. In the notes below, 'pr.' is for '*prosa*', 'm.' for '*metrica*'. The number of the book is given in Roman numerals.

*I, pr. 1:* The vision of Lady Philosophy. The details of the vision are significant. She ('*philosophia*' is a feminine noun) is a woman, vigorous and yet ancient - so old in fact that "in no way would she be believed to belong to our own age" - a swipe at the state of philosophy in Boethius' own day. Her rather spooky ability to change her stature without warning reflects the fact that philosophy touches on both the ordinary and the sublime. The Greek letters on her robe stand for "Practical" and the "Theoretical" parts of philosophy, respectively. The torn robe suggests the violent division of philosophy into warring sects. (See also *I, pr. 3*.) The fact that she herself wove her gown is indicative of philosophy's self-sufficiency. (Another feature that might make you wonder about Boethius' faith.) The books suggest learning, the scepter suggests philosophy's governing and ruling the other disciplines ("queen of the sciences"). The remark later on about Boethius' having been "nourished in the schools (*studiis*) of the Eleatics and the Academics" (the Watts translation has "of Zeno and Plato") has been used by some people to support the notion that Boethius was actually educated in Athens. But the text is hardly conclusive. '*Studiis*' might mean only "studies". (Note that the old Greek philosophical "schools" were still actually in existence in Boethius' day. Plato's "Academy", for instance, was still there, although its members had long since developed their thought well beyond the strict Plato. The pagan philosophical schools at Athens were finally closed down in 529 by the Emperor Justinian (527-565).) The only other evidence cited for the claim that Boethius studied in Athens is equally inconclusive: a letter from Theodoric to Boethius (actually written *for* Theodoric, who was illiterate, by Cassiodorus, who later was Boethius' immediate successor as *Magister officiorum* and a figure of some intellectual importance in his own right). The letter says that Boethius "put the toga among the Greek academic gowns". (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, XII, pp. 39-40.)

*I, m. 2:* Note the implication that Boethius knew astronomy and was interested in broadly scientific questions. There is further evidence for this in Theodoric's letter cited above.

*I, pr. 3:* Boethius is deliberately trying to compare his lot with Socrates'.

*I, m. 5:* Note the statement of human free will in line 26. (This is the line number in the Latin. Translations may differ slightly.)

*I, pr. 5:* "You yourself have driven yourself out. For no one else was ever able to do it to you." Compare Augustine, *On Free Choice*, I, 10.

*I, pr. 6:* This introduces one of the main themes of the *Consolation*. It is related to Augustine's discussion of evil. Here the question is not "How can there be evil if God is good?" Boethius accepts Augustine's free-will answer to that. What Boethius wants to know is why those freely evil persons prosper at the expense of the innocent.

*II, m. 3:* The law "that nothing born will last". Recall the Augustinian theme (see also Justin Martyr) that the mark of a creature is mutability.

*II, pr. 4:* Compare Augustine's *On Free Choice*. The virtuous man wills only that which cannot be lost against his will.

Book III is the central book on the entire *Consolation*. (And I don't just mean that it comes in the middle.)

*III, pr. 2:* An important passage. Read it carefully. Note that the desire for the good is *naturally* implanted (that is, *innate*) in man. Note also how Boethius sounds much like a Greek here: people go wrong out of ignorance and confusion; they do not know what the good is. This is closely related to the Socratic thesis: No one knowingly does evil.

*III, pr. 9:* Another important passage. The argument is in effect an argument for the uniqueness of God (that is, the good, which produces happiness). See also III, pr. 10.

*III, m. 9:* An important and influential metrical passage. Note that the doctrine of "creation" here is strictly Greek. In fact, the poem is really a kind of summary of the first half of the *Timaeus*. It was the subject of several commentaries in the Middle Ages. Pre-existent matter is at least suggested in lines 4-5: "External causes did not drive you to shape your work of unsteady matter." So too, although God is not subject to *external* constraint to create, it sounds as though he is nevertheless compelled by his nature to do so. External causes do not drive him, "but rather the innate form of the highest good, lacking jealousy". (The Watts translation has merely "benign" for "lacking jealousy".) The "lacking jealousy" is of course a key term in the *Timaeus*, and is the reason why the Demiurge *has* to do what he does. (It is also Plotinus' reason why the One *must* overflow and emanate.)

*III, pr. 10:* One more important text. Compare Aquinas' fourth "proof" for the existence of God in the *Summa theologiae* I, quest. 2, art. 3 (translated in Hyman and Walsh). Note that the argument is firmly in the Platonic tradition. (See Chater §4 above, the discussion of "standards" and "ideals".) Note also the remark that "nothing better than God can be thought". This of course is almost exactly the formulation that Anselm will later use in his famous "ontological" argument for the existence of God. The argument that there cannot be two distinct highest goods is in effect an argument for the *uniqueness* of God (that is, for monotheism), and implicitly appeals to *III, pr. 9*. The notion of becoming gods by participation, though not by nature, may sound odd to Western ears, but it is a common theme in Eastern Christianity (that is, the non-Latin tradition). There is a Scriptural basis for it - for example, 2 Peter 1:4: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers* of the divine nature . . ."

*III, pr. 11:* There is a tendency here to identify being and unity. "'Do you know, therefore,' she said, 'that everything that is endures and subsists as long as it is one?'" The point is not very explicit, however. The claim is in accord with Augustine, and constitutes a break with at least one kind of neo-Platonism for which unity (the One) is *above* Being. The identification of being with unity will play a big role in the problem of universals.

*III, m. 11 & pr. 12:* Note the Platonic theme of reminiscence or recollection, and the theme that the body is a distraction. Note the rudimentary argument from design in *pr. 12*. Also, the Augustinian claim that evil is not a thing: "'Evil therefore,' she said, 'is nothing, since He cannot do it who is unable to do nothing.'"

*IV, pr. 2:* The passage beginning, "Indeed it may perhaps seem strange to someone that we say the same evil [people] who are the majority of men do not exist \i+0i. . ." is squarely in the Platonic tradition. Since the ideal is the fully real, an evil person, who is less than the ideal, is to that extent less than fully real. Note how easy it is to derive an "ought" from an "is" on this doctrine. The argument here is not so merely verbal as it may appear. The idea is that a person who chooses to do evil is not choosing to exercise a power-to-do-evil, but rather choosing to *abdicate* his power to do good. Compare Augustine, *On Free Choice*, I, 10. This is tied up with the theological doctrine of redemption: Once you abdicate your position, it's gone. You cannot claim it back again. The only way you can regain your former status is to have it *bestowed* on you again by some outside agency capable of doing so. Hence the need for redemption. Note that all this is a kind of corollary of the Augustinian rejection of Manichean dualism, which rejection is in turn a corollary of the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation.

*IV, pr. 6:* Note the distinction between Providence and Fate. This is a famous passage. The remark about how Providence is to Fate as intellect is to reasoning is based on the notion that *reasoning* is a kind of step by step process, a kind of *motion*, whereas *intellect* or

*understanding* is done all in a flash. This will be important in Book V. The doctrine is there in Boethius, although the terminology is not yet firmly fixed.

V, *pr. 3 to the end*: This is probably the most famous, and certainly the most philosophically dense passage in the entire *Consolation*. Compare Augustine, *On Free Choice*, III, 1-4. We shall discuss this passage in detail in the next Chapter, so I will not say anything more about it now.

## Chapter 22:

### Boethius: Foreknowledge and Free Will

#### The Problem

Augustine's account of evil, which Boethius presupposes, is in terms of human free will. So it is important to be able to maintain the doctrine of human free will. But there is a difficulty in doing so. If God knows what we're going to do before we do it, then in what sense can we still be free? (For that matter, if God knows what he is going to do before *he* does it, then in what sense is *he* free? But Boethius doesn't discuss that form of the problem. If his "solution" preserves human free will, it will no doubt work for divine free will too.)

#### The Augustinian Response

Augustine had already discussed this problem, in *On Free Choice*, III, Chs. 1-4. His account is, in my view, confused. Recall, the notion of free will developed by Augustine in Book I of *On Free Choice* is basically the notion of *lack of external constraint*. That is, *x* is free if and only if it cannot be overpowered. The opposite of freedom in this sense is external constraint, exercised presumably by some kind of causal action.

Now there is another notion of freedom too that we must take note of: *x* is free if and only if *x* has the ability to do otherwise. That is, if and only if there are real alternatives, as I like to put it. The opposite of freedom in this second sense is *necessity*.

Are these two notions of freedom the same? Can something be free in the one sense but not in the other? This is an important question, because as Evodius observes in *On Free Choice*, III, Ch. 1:

For if [will] has been given so that it has this motion [from the general and unchangeable good to all the private or alien or lowest and changeable goods] as a natural motion, then it is turned to them by *necessity*. And no guilt can be found where nature and necessity rule.

That is, the notion of moral responsibility, and therefore the notions of praise and blame, and therefore again the whole free will account of evil (since the problem of evil is basically a problem of laying blame), require that the will be free in the *second* sense - that it really have the ability to do otherwise than it does.

Many ethical writers have not found this to be true, and have argued that moral responsibility and the notions of praise and blame require only the first notion of freedom, lack of external constraint. That's a question I don't want to get into here. Evodius, at any rate, disagrees with such writers, and I must confess my sympathies are with Evodius.

Augustine does not *deny* Evodius' point. Rather he answers him by simply reiterating the claim that the will is free in the sense that it cannot be *overpowered* by some external force. He thus seems to think that these two senses of freedom are the *same* in practice. Otherwise, his answer to Evodius would hardly be to the point.

Look at *On Free Choice*, III, Ch. 4: "For just as by your memory you do not compel things that have gone before to have happened, so God by his foreknowledge does not compel things that are future to be going to happen." Notice the two occurrences of 'compel' here. Augustine seems to think the will is *free*, in the "Evodian" sense opposite to *necessity*, because it is free in the sense the opposite of which is *compulsion* or external constraint.

This will work only if Augustine is taken to have a *causal* notion of necessity: *x* is necessary if and only if some *y*, distinct from *x*, *causes x*.

In that case, we can say that *x* is "necessary" in the sense of being *necessitated* by *Y*.

If this is really what Augustine means, then he is perfectly coherent in his response to Evodius here. The only problem is that it conflicts with what he says elsewhere, and is in any case *heterodox*.

First, the heterodoxy. The view conflicts with the doctrine of creation. The neo-Platonic One and the Platonic Demiurge are *free* in Augustine's sense (if this *is* Augustine's sense). They are not *constrained*

or *compelled* by external force to do what they do. Yet Jews and Christians from very early times recognized that their God was free in a sense that the One and the Demiurge were not. While the latter were not subject to external *constraint*, they were subject to an *inner necessity* of their own nature. And the Judaeo-Christian notion of God was not like that at all.

In other words, the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation has built right into it an implicit distinction between necessity and external constraint. It is not enough to say that God's actions are free from constraint; they must also be unnecessary - contingent.

Once these two *notions* of freedom, and their correlative opposites, are severed, then we can *apply* the same distinction to humans. Their wills may be free from external constraint, but can they really choose otherwise than they do? Having once distinguished the two notions of freedom, we find that these two questions turn out to be quite distinct.

The doctrine of creation introduces a new notion of necessity, one that is not the notion of external causal compulsion. Human wills may be free from constraint, but perhaps they automatically, by *nature*, choose evil. It is not *against* their will; but their will is fixed in advance. If so, then they are not morally responsible agents, since responsibility, Evodius says, requires lack of necessity, not just lack of constraint; it requires a real ability to do otherwise.

So Augustine's answer to Evodius seems too quick. It conflicts with the consequences of the doctrine of creation, and so is heterodox. But the situation is even worse than that. What we have is that Augustine's answer to Evodius does not *suffice* - that is, Augustine has *not* shown that the will is free in the morally relevant sense Evodius requires (and Augustine does not question that requirement). But worse: I think it is Augustine's doctrine that, after the fall of Adam, the human will is *not* free in the sense of being able to do otherwise. That is, Augustine's reply to Evodius not only conflicts with orthodoxy, it also conflicts with what he himself says on other occasions. And those other occasions are not so very remote from the occasion of his reply to Evodius. One of them, for instance, is in *On Free Choice*, III, Ch. 18:

Now, however, because he [= *man*] is such [as we find him after the fall of Adam], he is not good. Neither does he have it in his power to be good, either because he does not see how he should be [*notice the Greek alternative: evil from ignorance*] or else he sees and is unable to be as he sees he should be.

The point of the passage is to explain the necessity for redemption and grace - to give man back the freedom (in the second sense) he lost through the sin of Adam.

In fact, in the *Retractationes* (see the selection translated on p. 157 of the Benjamin/Hackstaff translation of *On Free Choice*), Augustine cites the above passage against the Pelagians, who were trying to use Augustine's doctrine in support of their view that grace is *not* necessary for salvation. (That view in fact *defines* Pelagianism - it is an important heresy historically and, if you translate it into a less theological idiom and apply it to other things too, it is in my view the dominant mode of wrong-thinking in our times. Figure it out for yourself.)

Despite the passage above, which says that we do not have the power to do what we ought to do, Augustine thinks that nevertheless men are *justly* punished for their sins, even after

the Fall. That is, he seems to think that freedom in the sense of *lack of constraint* is enough for moral responsibility. Thus, it appears that on Augustine's more considered doctrine, he rejects Evodius' claim that responsibility requires the ability to do otherwise, and so freedom in the second sense.

Let us summarize all of this: At the beginning of Book III of *On Free Choice*, Augustine seems to accept Evodius' claim that responsibility requires freedom in the second sense I distinguished earlier. He does this because there he is perhaps confusing the two senses.

But the doctrine of creation, and Augustine's own doctrine of grace, require that these two notions of freedom be separated, and that he *reject* Evodius' claim and pin responsibility to the *first* sense of freedom.

*Final note:* In *On Free Choice*, III, Ch. 19, there is a qualification. There Augustine is discussing the sin of Adam - which, of course, occurred *before* the Fall and was the occasion for the Fall. (You might want to quibble that his sin *was* the Fall. But the point is, it wasn't *after* the Fall, and so the remarks we saw Augustine make above don't apply.) In this passage Augustine seems to say that actions done out of free will in the *first* sense (lack of constraint) are *now* morally responsible actions, even though they *aren't* free in the *second* sense (ability to do otherwise), because the reason they aren't free in the second sense is *Adam's sin*, which was a sin committed by a man *in a state of grace* and so free in the *second* sense. In other words, our lack of freedom in the second sense is a consequence of Adam's sin, which *was* free in the second sense. And *that* is why we share his guilt. There is, of course, a notion of communal guilt here that people have always had trouble with. But the important point for us is that Augustine here seems to recognize that moral responsibility must *somehow* be traced back to freedom in the second sense (ability to do otherwise).

## BOETHIUS' OWN ACCOUNT

I have gone through all this because I think it is instructive to view Boethius' discussion of the same problem in the context of Augustine's. Boethius, in Book V of the *Consolation*, is quite clear on the two senses of freedom, and recognizes that moral responsibility requires a real ability to do otherwise. That is, he agrees with Evodius. He sharply severs the notion of necessity from the notion of causality. Boethius is clear where Augustine seems confused.

In Augustine, the whole discussion was conducted in the context of the problem of evil. In Boethius, things are much more abstract. For him, it is a point of pure logic. Here it is:

It appears that these four claims are incompatible with one another:

- (1) What must be the case is not subject to human free will.\b
- (2) What God knows must be the case.\b
- (3) God knows our future actions (since he is omniscient).\b
- (4) Our future actions are subject to our free will.\b

(Note: Don't get confused. This is *not* an argument that concludes (4) from (1)-(3). It is an inconsistent - or putatively inconsistent - tetrad. In other words, if we *were* talking about an argument, the conclusion would not be (4), but rather the *denial of (4)*.)

*The incompatibility is obvious. From (2) and (3), it follows that our future actions must occur. Hence, by (1), they are not free, which is inconsistent with (4).*

Now in Book V, pr. 3\i+3d.\i+3d16 ff. (Green, p. 105; Watts, p. 151), of the *Consolation*,\f41 Boethius says he rejects one attempted way out of this problem, namely the attempt that says that it is not *because* events are foreseen that they will occur. Rather it is *because* they will occur that they are foreseen. This is perhaps an implicit reference to Augustine's *On Free Choice*, III, Ch. 4 ("Therefore, it is not because God's foreknowledge exists that it is necessary that what he foreknew should come about"), which is at any rate the first half of the view Boethius is rejecting.

Boethius thinks all this is irrelevant. The question is not one of causality at all. It is not a question of which *causes* which. It is a purely logical point. Boethius is here separating the notions of necessity and causality - a separation I have argued is required by the doctrine of creation.

Boethius gives an analogy. If a person is sitting, he says, then the opinion that he is sitting *must be true*. And conversely, if the opinion that he is sitting is true, then he *must be sitting*. And this is so - that is, we have this necessity *both ways* - regardless of your theory about which causes which, if indeed you think causality is involved here at all. (Book V, pr. 3\i+3d.\i+3d31-40, Green, p. 105; Watts, p. 151.)

Now obviously it doesn't make any difference if you plug in the future tense instead of the present in Boethius' analogy. If a person *will* sit, then the opinion that he will sit *must be true*, and conversely, if the opinion that he will sit is true, then he *must* sit.

Furthermore, if you are going to appeal to causality at all, the attempted way out Boethius is now considering seems to have it all backwards. For it is surely preposterous - which is to say, impious - to say that God's foreknowledge is *causally dependent* on the outcome of events. (Book V, pr. 3\i+3d.\i+3d46-48, Green, p. 106; Watts, p. 152.) That would be to make God himself (who is simple and so not distinct from his knowledge) causally dependent and not causally independent. (This point will bother a lot of people later on.)

Boethius in fact thinks that although there *is* necessity involved here, there is no *causality* involved. Causality is simply irrelevant to the problem.

But if that is so, then Lady Philosophy wants to know what is wrong after all with the view Boethius rejects. She says (Book V, pr. 4\i+3d.\i+3d11-27, Green, p. 109; Watts, p. 155): Look, Boethius. You've as much as answered your own problem. First, suppose there is no such thing as foreknowledge, that God does *not* know our actions in advance, and neither does anyone else. Then would we have any difficulty with the notion of free will? No, presumably not - at least, we would not have the difficulty we are concerned with now. Well then, second, suppose foreknowledge does exist, but does not *cause* the future events to happen, as you, Boethius, have just admitted. (Note: Lady Philosophy really says "adds no necessity", *nullam . . . adicit*



*necessitatem*, but Boethius has definitely *not* admitted that foreknowledge doesn't do *that*. All he has admitted is that it doesn't *cause*.) Now *what changes*?

Lady Philosophy anticipates Boethius' reply: A lot changes! If future events are foreknown, then even though the foreknowledge doesn't *cause* them to happen, still they *must* happen, just because if something is *known* it *must be so*.

In effect, then, Boethius is saying (or Lady Philosophy is anticipating that Boethius will say) that while foreknowledge is not a *cause* of the necessity of what is known, it is a *sign* or *symptom* of that necessity. That is, we can *tell* that something is necessary from the fact that it is foreknown, just because if something is *known* it *must be so*. The fact that it is foreknown means that the necessity is there, and that's all that counts. (Book V, pr. 4, Green, p. 109; Watts, pp. 155-156.)

Anticipating this reply on Boethius' part, Lady Philosophy responds to it: Wait! Given what you're saying now, *everything* turns out to be necessary, since everything is - or at least can be - known. In fact, she has a point. Go back and look at the inconsistent tetrad (1)-(4) above. There is nothing special there about the future tense. If the conjunction of the first three entails that our *future* actions are necessary, and so not free, an exactly similar set-up will show that our *present* actions are not free either. But Boethius will not admit that. The charioteer, he says, drives his chariot not by necessity but by *art* or *skill*. This is apparently supposed to mean that he does it freely. (Book V, pr. 4, Green, pp. 109-110; Watts, p. 156. Actually, Boethius seems to be slipping here. Notice how he slips into talking about whether the charioteer is *forced* - that is, compelled, caused - to do what he does. And yet he had clearly explained that the question was a question about *necessity*, whether there is causality involved or not!)

So, Lady Philosophy says, you've answered your own question again. You can't have it both ways, Boethius. The charioteer's *present* driving of his chariot was once *future*, and so foreknown by God, and so *necessary*. (Notice how we're back to *necessity* again, and no longer talking about *force*, which is as it should be.) If you don't find any problem with the freedom of *present* acts, you should find no problem with the freedom of *future* acts either, since the present was once future.

Now what Lady Philosophy is pointing out in all this tortuous dialectic is just that Boethius' statement of the problem, at least insofar as he has set it out up to this point, does not rely on the *futureness* of things. It will apply to things at *any* time. The crucial one of the four claims in the tetrad (1)-(4) above is (2), the claim that what God knows *must* be the case. The argument for (2) is that if, in general, something is known, then it must be so. If it is known that *p*, then it must be the case that *p*. This has nothing particularly to do with *God*; the same thing holds no matter who the knower is. And it has just as little to do with the *tense* of *p*. It is simply a matter of the nature of *knowledge itself*: knowledge implies truth.

Since the argument is independent of the *tense* of *p*, and since Boethius doesn't seem to have any trouble accepting the notion that some *present*-tensed *p*'s are not necessary, why should he worry about the *future*-tensed ones? They are all on a par as far as the logic of the situation goes. (Of course, one person's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*, and you might reverse the argument and suggest that Boethius *ought* to be just as worried about free acts in the present as he is about free acts in the future. But in any case, there's a lot more yet to the story.)

At this point, let's skip ahead a bit to Book V, pr. 6. Here we find out *what* is wrong with the argument, why it fails, why it doesn't prove anything about our future acts any more than it does about our present ones. This is a famous passage.

There are *two* kinds of necessity, Boethius observes: simple and conditional. As an example of simple necessity, we might take the sentence 'Necessarily, all men are mortal'. As an example of conditional necessity, we might take 'If someone is walking, then necessarily he is walking'.

(Since *we* today frequently analyze universal affirmatives into quantified conditionals, it would perhaps be better not to use 'Necessarily, all men are mortal' as an example of simple necessity. If this bothers you, try 'Necessarily, two plus two is four'.)

The difference is in what the word 'necessarily' governs. In a case of *simple* necessity we have as sentence of the general form:  $\Box p$ . (In case you're not familiar with it, ' $\Box$ ' is the symbol generally used by logicians nowadays for 'necessarily'. Some people think that using funny symbols makes things clearer and more precise. Let's humor them, although anyone with any sense can tell that it is not the ' $\Box$ ' that makes for clarity here. Rather, it's the parentheses used below to mark scope.) In the case of *conditional* necessity, we have a sentence of the general form:  $\Box(p \supset q)$  - *not* of the form:  $p \supset \Box q$ . *Conditional necessity then is the simple necessity of a whole conditional, not of just a part of it.*

Now in general, if  $p$  is known, it *must be so*. The sense in which this is *true* is:  $\Box(p \supset p)$ . (' $\Box$ ' for 'it is known that'.) We have no antecedent reason to think it is true in the stronger sense:  $\Box(p \supset \Box p)$ . If you will go back and look at the inconsistent tetrad (1)-(4) above, it will be clear that (2) derives its air of obvious truth from reading it in the conditional sense of necessity: Necessarily, what God knows is the case,  $\Box(\Box p \supset p)$ . But in order to get the inconsistency, we need to take it in the stronger, simple sense: What is known is (necessarily the case),  $\Box p \supset \Box p$ . The problem then arises from trading on the ambiguity. The sense in which (2) is true is not the sense that gives rise to any problem, and the sense in which it gives rise to a problem is a sense we have not yet seen any reason to think is true. It was the failure to see this ambiguity that gave this whole problem its air of plausibility.

The necessity of a *conditional* is quite compatible with the contingency of each part of it. Hence we can see how Boethius is able to maintain the contingency of present events, even though they are known. Similarly, the same thing works for future events. The whole problem evaporates.

Or has it? People frequently take it that this is all Boethius has to say about the problem, that he makes a really pretty elementary logical distinction and that's the end of it. Even worse, some people even take it that this is *enough*, that the problem really has been resolved as a simple logical fallacy. But that's just wrong. It's not so facile as that.

We should properly regard Boethius' distinction between simple and conditional necessity *not* as his solution to the problem, but rather as a necessary *preliminary* to his solution, something we had better get straight on or else we won't be in a position to see what he is *really* doing, since we'll be all tangled up in silly modal fallacies. I think this is the way to look at it, even though Boethius' *presentation* of the distinction between the two kinds of necessity comes *after* his presentation of his real solution. That is, we should regard the distinction as a needed *preliminary*, even though in the text it doesn't come until later. In order to see what Boethius' real solution is, we have to turn back to the important, and rather lengthy, discussion beginning at Book V, pr. 4<sup>i+3d</sup>.<sup>i+3d</sup>62 ff. (Green, p. 110; Watts, p. 156).

Again, Lady Philosophy anticipates Boethius' remarks. The problem is that Boethius' argument so far has not brought out what is special about the future. It is true, as we now see, that *present* things can be known and yet be contingent, and *past* things can be known too, for that matter, even though they *were* contingent when they occurred. But how can *future* things be

known unless they are *necessary*? It is the gut feeling that the case is somehow different for the future that we now have to try to explicate.

Well, look at the kinds of things we *can* know about the future. I can know that either it will snow on New Years Day in the year 2500 or it will not. But that disjunctive bit of knowledge is, of course, *necessary*. I can also know that two plus two will continue to be four in the future. But again, that is *necessary*.

On the other hand, I *cannot* know now - and we are talking about *knowledge*, not just educated guessing, statistical projection, or any such ersatz for knowledge - that it actually *will* snow on New Years Day in the year 2500. Neither can I actually know now that it will *not*. That is still a *contingent* matter - not yet settled. On the contrary, if I *could* actually *know* it now, then it *would* already be settled, and so no longer contingent but necessary.

(Note: 'Necessary' here does not mean some kind of abstract "logical" necessity, whatever you take that to be. It means simply that it is now settled, and it's too late to do anything about it. In that sense, the *past* is now necessary, even though certain events in the past may not have been necessary *before* they occurred. This linkage of time and modality is a perfectly legitimate one, and was the usual one in the Middle Ages, at least until fairly late - around the time of John Duns Scotus at the end of the thirteenth century.)

So it appears that there is a peculiar *asymmetry* here. There is something funny about the future. Only future *necessities* can be foreknown, not future *contingencies*. Hence, in the case of *future* events, unlike the present and the past, we not only have  $\Box(Kp \supset T p)$ , but also the stronger  $Kp \supset \Box T p$ . And that is exactly the reading of sentence (2) in our "inconsistent" tetrad above that *will* really give us our inconsistency. So the distinction between simple and conditional necessities is needed in order to clear the air, but it does not solve the problem. Foreknown events appear to be necessary not just in the innocuous *conditional* sense, but also in the vicious *simple* sense.

Let me head off a quibble here. You might point out - and rightly so - that if the past is already settled and so *necessary* in the sense that we are using, and if the *present* is also necessary in that same sense - after all, if something is now happening it is now settled in the sense that it is too late to do anything about it - then we have the strong  $Kp \supset \Box T p$  for any tense of *p*. That is so, and you might conclude from it that the *asymmetry* about the future vanishes. After all, it turns out that *whatever* is known - past, present or future - is equally necessary. Well, *that* much is true, but there is still a problem. I can know things about the past that, while they are settled and therefore necessary *now*, nevertheless were contingent and not settled right up until the time they happened. (At least I can in principle know such things if there *are* any. The *logic* of the situation does not rule them out.) Similarly, I can know things about the present that, while they are happening now and so are too late to prevent, and so are now necessary, nevertheless were *not* necessary but rather contingent right up to the time they occur. But for the future it appears that I cannot do that. If I know something about the future - that is, if I know it *now* - then it is *now* necessary and so is *not* contingent right up to the time it occurs. *That* is the asymmetry. Now, how are we going to get out of this problem and save the freedom of our future actions?

Well, here is Lady Philosophy's answer. It is an absolutely *crucial* passage (Book V, pr. 4*i*+3d.*i*+3d 72-77, Green, p. 110; Watts, p. 157):

The cause of this mistake is that it thinks that all the things anyone knows are known only from the power and nature of the things that are known. All of which is just backwards. For

everything that is known is comprehended not according to its own power, but rather according to the ability of its knowers.

That is to say, the way we know things - and, for that matter, the question *which* things we can know - is determined not so much by the things themselves (although presumably that is involved too) as by our cognitive faculties. And, Lady Philosophy suggests, we should not suppose that the faculty of *divine* cognition is as weak as ours is. Aha! So this is going to be the trick! Let's see how it goes.

We now get a strongly Augustinian passage (beginning at Book V, pr. 4\i+3d.\i+3d82, Green p. 110, Watts, p. 157, and extending on over into pr. 5). Lady Philosophy distinguishes various cognitive faculties, as follows:

(a) The senses. They grasp sensible *particulars* that are *present* to the sense organs. Note incidentally, in m. 4\i+3d.\i+3d30-40 (Green, p. 112; Watts, pp. 160-161), the Augustinian theory of perception:

Nevertheless, the passive experience (*passio*) in the living body precedes, arousing and moving [*careful! That sounds like causality*] the powers of the spirit. When light stirs the eyes or a voice rattles in the ears, the aroused energy of the mind, summoning the shapes (*species*) it contains within to similar movements, applies [them] to external marks and mixes [external] images with the forms hidden within.

(b) Imagination. It still grasps particulars, but they don't have to be *present*. They can be absent or even altogether fictitious and non-existent. (Imagination here is taken to include sensory memory as well as sheer fancy.)

(c) Reason. It grasps *universals*.

(d) Intelligence. It grasps "the simple form itself". (Book V, pr. 4\i+3d.\i+3d90-91, Green, p. 111; Watts, p. p. 158.)

Now let's try to sort this all out. Note first (Book V, pr. 5\i+3d.\i+3d17-18, Green, p. 113; Watts, p. 161) that "intelligence" is said to be proper to God alone. Reason is the highest faculty in humans. Second, note that these four faculties are arranged hierarchically. The later ones can do everything the earlier ones can do and *more besides*. Reason grasps *not only* universals, but also present and absent particulars; we can reason about them too. Similarly, the divine intelligence does everything reason can do, but in addition it can grasp "the simple form itself", which reason cannot do.

What is the difference between this "simple form itself" and the "universal", which reason *can* grasp? Well, the "simple form" is the divine idea, in the mind of God. The "universal" is the reflection of that idea in things. We will see more of this in our discussion of universals, coming up in the next Chapter.

Lady Philosophy goes on. God's knowledge, which proceeds by *intelligence*, is, like God himself (with whom it is in fact identical), *eternal*. And what is eternity? Eternity is (Book V, pr. 6\i+3d.\i+3d10-11, Green, p. 115; Watts, p. 163):

the whole, simultaneous, and complete possession of interminable life.

This is a famous definition. You may wonder what 'life' is doing there, and that's a good question. But for our purposes the important thing to note is that the key word here is not 'interminable' (that is, 'endless') but 'simultaneous'. That is, God is not spread out all over time, so that at the present we would not have the *whole* God but only a *time-slice of God*. No, God exists as a whole all at once. And that is what it is to be eternal. Eternity, then, is not just omnitemporality.

Since then God is eternal, his knowledge - that is, his intelligence - is likewise eternal. Hence it does not proceed, as our reason does, in terms of past, present, and future. For the divine intelligence, there is as it were an *eternal present*. Hence, just as our *reason* has no problem with knowing *present* contingencies (that is, those things occurring in the present that were not yet settled until they occurred, such as the charioteer's actions), so too God's intelligence has no problem knowing *future* contingencies. They are future, and therefore hidden, only from the point of view of *reason*. For God, they are all *present*.

No doubt, you have heard this line before: the way to solve the problem of divine foreknowledge is to move God outside time entirely. Well, here is where it all began - with Boethius' Book V. There are at least two points to be made here:

(1) Boethius' claim can be expressed in more familiar terminology. You may be familiar with the way Quine translated *tensed* sentences into what he called "eternal" sentences, by substituting a "tenseless" verb and adding an explicit time-specification. For example, 'It is now raining' said at time *t* is translated into 'At time *t*, it rains', where the verb is taken in some tenseless sense.

Boethius' view amounts to claiming that the truths that God knows are all of this tenseless, "eternal" variety. (Non-eternal truths change their truth-values over time, so that if *they* were what God knows, his knowledge - and so he himself - would change over time. But that violates the divine immutability. Changeableness, recall, is the peculiar mark of *creatures*.) Now the claim that all the truths God knows are tenseless, together with the thesis of divine *omniscience* (that is, that God knows *all* truths - he knows everything there is to know), entails that *all* truths can be translated in this way into tenseless truths, without loss of content. And that, of course, is purely a theoretical question in tense-logic.

So here is the situation, summarizing from way back: The existence of God as traditionally conceived - that is, as perfectly good and omniscient, among other properties - depends on there being some way to resolve the "problem of evil". That problem can only be solved by an appeal to human free will. (Whether that is *sufficient* to solve it is another question; but in any case, all *other* ways to solve it appear to be blocked.) But human beings can only *have* free will if there is some way to resolve the problem of divine foreknowledge and human free will. If Boethius is right, the only way to solve *that* problem is to move God outside time, so that his knowledge - his "intelligence" - is eternal. And that, we see, in turn implies (assuming God's omniscience all along) that all tensed true sentences can be translated without loss of content into "eternal" sentences, a point that appears to be a purely theoretical question of tense-logic. So a *great deal* rests on this little point of logic. Let's look at it.

There seem to be obvious counterexamples. For instance, consider the sentence 'It is now twelve noon'. And suppose that this sentence is said *at* twelve noon, so that it is true. Then, on the kind of translation schema given above, we have to translate this into an "eternal" sentence. And the only "eternal" sentence that looks like even a plausible candidate is: 'At twelve noon it is twelve noon'.

But *that* sentence, of course, is hardly the same thing. There appears to be a decided and drastic "loss of content" here. After all, I can certainly know that at twelve noon it is twelve noon, and that at one o'clock it is one o'clock, and so on - *and still not know what time it is*. And since I can know all those things and still not know what time it is, it follows that knowing what time it is is knowing something *in addition to* all those things. Hence, if what *God* knows is only those tenseless temporal identities, then *he does not know what time it is*. Yet there is nothing especially hard about knowing what time it is; even *I* can do that! And if I do, then I know

something God doesn't. Hence, it appears he cannot be omniscient, and the whole stack of cards comes tumbling down.

Well, you can play with this. It is not absolutely certain that things are as bad as I have described them. But the point remains: This whole way of looking at things depends on a very *dubious* tense-logical claim, and a lot of work would have to be done before this view could be accepted. Some later mediaeval authors in fact *rejected* Boethius' putting God outside time in this way.

(2) The second point to be raised here is a little different. If intelligence is supposed to be proper to God alone, then *how does Boethius know so much about it?* On Boethius' own principles, our knowledge depends on the nature of our own faculties. How then can our reason tell us anything reliable about divine intelligence, which would seem to exceed the power of our faculties? Does Boethius know about this by *revelation*? Or does he know about it by something like *illumination*? He simply doesn't say.

*Note:* From one point of view, he doesn't *have* to say. He is trying after all to show that omniscience is not incompatible with human free will. That is, he needs a consistency proof. And he can do that by setting up a consistent *model* in which everything turns out right. He doesn't have to *believe* the model; it only has to be *consistent*. And that would be enough to show that there is no incompatibility between divine omniscience (and hence divine foreknowledge) and human free will.

Alvin Plantinga makes a move like this (in connection with the problem of evil, not omniscience vs. free will) in his *God and Other Minds*, and his *God, Freedom, and Evil*, - and in many other places. But, while that may all be true as a matter of logic, it is clearly *not* what Boethius is doing. When he talks about the divine intelligence, he thinks that's the way it *is*. He is not just constructing a model.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER \S0

1. Numbers after a point, as in the above reference, will refer to the line numbers in the Stewart and Rand edition in the Loeb Classical Library. I will also give page references to the Green translation in the Library of Liberal Arts and the Watts translation in the Penguin Classics series.

## Chapter 23:

### Boethius: On Universals

We come now to the famous problem of universals in Boethius. The problem of universals has sometimes been taken to be the only really philosophical issue discussed in the Middle Ages. That's nonsense. But it is true that mediaeval authors had a lot to say about it. It comes up for the first time with Boethius.

#### What Is the Problem of Universals?

But what exactly is the problem of universals anyway? That's a long story, of course, but the basic problem can be motivated like this. Consider two pieces of white chalk. (I originally did this in the classroom, where I could actually display the two pieces.) Ignore everything else about them for the moment, and concentrate only on their color. They are of the same color, of course; they are both white. Now the problem of universals is this: As you look at these pieces of chalk, *how many colors do you see?* One or two?

You might want to say that of course you only see one color here. Didn't I just say that the two pieces were of the same color? There is only one color involved here, whiteness, and it is found in both pieces of chalk. Here it is once in this piece of chalk, and there it is again in that piece. But it is *the same* color. All you have to do is *look* at it to see that we're dealing only *one* color here. If this is your answer, then you regard whiteness as a "universal" entity, shared by several things at once in a special metaphysical way that no doubt will require further explication. (*Note:* Despite the term 'universal', no one supposes that these special metaphysical entities have to be shared by *all* things; not *everything* is white, after all. It suffices if the entity can be shared in the metaphysically relevant way by a *plurality* of entities.) If you believe in universals like this, you are said to be a "realist" on this issue.

On the other hand, there is another answer you might want to give instead. You might argue: No, there are two colors here, two whitenesses. One whiteness, this whiteness, is here in this piece of chalk, and another one, that whiteness, is there in that piece of chalk. The two whitenesses look exactly alike, to be sure, but they are two and not one. All you have to do is *look* at them to see that you have two of them. If this is your answer, then you do *not* believe in whiteness as a "universal" entity. There is no universal whiteness; there are only individual *whitenesses*. Each white thing has its *own* whiteness, which may *look* exactly like the whiteness of some other thing, but is nevertheless just as *individual* as the thing that possesses it. If you reject universals in this way, then you are said to be a "nominalist". (The point of that label will be clearer when we discuss Abelard later on.)

The problem of universals, then, is simply: Do universals exist or not? And realism and nominalism are the two main answers to it. Of course, as these things always go, there are lots of subdivisions and refinements to these two basic views. But we'll see some of those later. This will suffice for now, just to set up the problem.

There are different theories of universals in Boethius, depending on where you look. In fact, I have a thesis I am sometimes tempted to believe, that *every* theory of universals ever held in the Middle Ages can, in a non-trivial way, be found at least in germ in Boethius. No doubt that thesis is false, but it will take some doing to find out who the exception is.

There is one theory of universals contained in Boethius' *Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge*, the second redaction. (Translated in Volume II, below, Text 5.) This same view is found with some refinements and additions in the *Theological Tractates* - in a passage from the *On*

*Person and the Two Nature* (which I will call by its more usual name, the *Contra Eutychen*) and in a passage from the *De Trinitate*. There is a quite different view, however, contained in another passage from the *De trinitate*. (See the passages translated below in Volume II, Text 6.)

The passage from the Commentary on Porphyry is also translated in McKeon's Selections from Medieval Philosophers, vol. 1, pp. 91-98. But the translation in Volume II, below, is in the public domain. Whichever translation you decide to use, *read the passage carefully*.

### Boethius' Commentary ON PORPHYRY

Let us look now at the *Commentary on Porphyry*. But first, who on earth was Porphyry? And what is this book called the *Isagoge*? Well, Porphyry was a pupil and biographer of Plotinus, and the one who compiled and edited Plotinus' writings, the *Enneads*. His biography of Plotinus is wonderful reading! You should go look at it. It's short and is contained in most editions and translations of the complete Plotinus (for instance, Stephen MacKenna's English translation). It starts with the intriguing line, "Plotinus, the philosopher who arose among us, seemed like one ashamed that he was in the body."

Porphyry wrote lots of other things too, among them the so called *Isagoge*. '*Isagoge*' (= \f9e\i+3dh\-\i-3disagog\i+9d\-\i-9dy\i+3d) is Greek for "Introduction" - actually the title ought properly to be transliterated '*Eisagoge*', but it's generally spelled '*Isagoge*'. The work was meant to be a kind of introduction to Aristotle's *Categories*. There is a complete English translation by Edward W. Warren, *Porphyry the Phoenician: Isagoge*, ("Mediaeval Sources in Translation", vol. 16; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975.)

I should warn you that, in my opinion, although this translation is fine for getting the general flavor of the work, it is altogether too free for serious philosophical purposes. In any event, the relevant passage of the *Isagoge* is translated, along with Boethius' commentary on it, in Volume II below.

### PORPHYRY'S THREE QUESTIONS

In his *Isagoge*, Porphyry raised the problem of universals in the form in which it was to be discussed throughout the Middle Ages. Porphyry was not the only source for this problem among mediaeval authors, of course, but he was certainly one of the most important ones. He raises the problem of universals in terms of three questions (line numbers refer to the translation in Volume II below, Text \s2):

- (1) Do genera and species *subsist*, or are they "posited in bare [acts of] understanding only" (that is, are they pure mental figments)? (Lines 3-4.)
  - (2) If the former, are they corporeal or incorporeal? (Lines 4-5.)
  - (3) Are they *separated* from sensible things or are they *in* sensible things? (Lines 5-6.)
- (Note: This seems to presuppose that they are *incorporeal*, and so to presuppose a particular answer to the preceding question.)

Although Porphyry sets out these three questions, he modestly declines to try to answer them, begging off by remarking that they belong to a "longer investigation" (line 7) than that afforded by the *Categories*, and so have no business in a mere introduction. Now of course that's just a perfect set-up for commentators. If you want to *guarantee* that the commentators on your work - if any - will devote superhuman energies to a particular issue, just be sure to mention it without saying too much about it. It works every time. We will see it happen again when we come to the history of the Aristotelian theory of cognition.



Now let us look closely at the first of Porphyry's questions, as translated by Boethius. First of all, note the term 'subsist' there. The word is a technical term in the Boethian vocabulary. In the *Contra Eutychen*, Boethius tells us what it means. See the passage translated in Volume II, below, as Text 6, passage 1. Go read that now. I'll wait right here.

Now, we'll talk about the metaphysics built into this passage later on. For the present, let's just look at the terminology of it. In this passage, Boethius distinguishes "substance" from "subsistence". Basically, a *subsistent* is what does not need any *accidents* in order to be. It is an *independent* entity in a fairly strong sense. A *substance* is a subsistent, but nevertheless *stands under* accidents - even though of course it doesn't *need* to do so in order to exist. It supports those accidents, gives them being. So substances are included among the subsistences.

Hence, when Porphyry asks whether genera and species *subsist*, Boethius takes him to mean: Are they independent entities in their own right? And that is one form of the problem of universals.

Boethius' discussion of the question takes the following form. First he gives arguments on both sides of the issue - pro and con. Then he *resolves* the issue, giving his own theory. This is a common technique in later mediaeval philosophy. It came to be highly developed, and was called the *quaestio* form. Take a look at Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*, for instance, which is written entirely as a series of such *quaestiones*. You have to be very careful in reading something written in this *quaestio* form. The author may present an argument that does not represent his own view. He may just be setting it up as one of the preliminary pro and con arguments, only to be rejected later. Always look to the *context* before you assume that a mediaeval author is speaking his own mind when he gives an argument.

#### THE ARGUMENT AGAINST UNIVERSALS

The first side of the argument, the negative side, is taken up on p. 3 of the translation below. Genera and species cannot subsist - that is, they cannot be independent entities in their own right. (Actually, Boethius' argument here is even stronger than that. It is an argument that genera and species are not entities at all, either independent subsistences or even accidents.) The proof runs like this:

(1) To be is to be one.

(Note: Boethius just takes this over from his Augustinian heritage without comment. Nevertheless, it is *not* to be taken for granted. Origen, for instance, and lots of other neo-Platonists, would have *denied* this. They would have put unity *above* being, so that to the extent that a thing is a being, to that extent it is *less* than perfectly one.

(2) But genera and species are supposed to be *common to many* and therefore *not one*.

Hence, they cannot subsist - or for that matter, they cannot be at all.

Note the implicit assumption in the second step (at the 'therefore'), that what is common *to* many in the way in which, say, *humanity* is supposed to be common to Socrates and Plato, is *itself* many. That is, the *plurality* of individuals *to* which humanity is common somehow *infects* the species humanity itself and destroys its unity. Why does Boethius think this is so? We will have to look at this more closely in a little while.

Now at this point Boethius gives a very curious infinite regress argument, the point of which is not altogether clear. (The paragraph in lines 83-94, beginning "But even if genus and species do exist".) Let me *tentatively* try to explain this as follows:

Suppose you *agree* with Boethius' argument so far, that the humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato cannot possibly be *one* humanity, but must therefore be two, that the plurality

of *individuals* introduces a plurality into the *species*. Then you might say: While *humanity* as such is not one, the humanity of *Socrates* is one, and the humanity of *Plato* is one. *Each* of these two humanities is peculiar and private to the individual whose humanity it is; neither is *shared or common*, although of course they are quite *similar*. Boethius puts this by saying that the species is "multiple and not one in number". (Lines 83-84.)

This kind of view is going to be a common one in the history of the problem of universals. Indeed, it has its modern adherents. I think it is legitimate to interpret Boethius' cryptic argument in this paragraph as an argument *against* such a view, because this is *exactly* the theory he himself ends up holding at the end of the passage we are now discussing. He is raising objections *in advance* to the theory he is ultimately going to adopt.

Well, what *is* the objection? Since the humanity of Socrates, on this view, is distinct from that of Plato, and yet similar to it, we can account for this similarity only by appealing to something they have in common, something the same for both. (This is the step Boethius will deny.) That is, the humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato are so similar to one another, are both *humanities*, because *they* share something in common - call it X. Humanity *itself* is not one, but rather multiple. Nevertheless, it appears that all these multiple "little" humanities, the humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato and so on, must *share* in something one, in order to count as *instances* of the same kind of thing.

But, for whatever reason we said *humanity* was not one thing but many, the same reason would seem likely to apply to this mysterious X too - to whatever it is that all *humanities* have in common. Hence, on this kind of theory, X itself will not be *one* either, despite the initial appearances; it too turns out to be split up, "multiple", so that the humanity of Socrates has *its* own X, and so does the humanity of Plato, just as Socrates himself has *his* own humanity, and so does Plato. Yet these multiple X's appear to be *similar*. And so we must appeal to yet a further stage, and so *in infinitum*.

If this is what is going on in the passage, then what we have is just a version of a more or less standard objection against nominalist "similarity"-views. But Boethius obscures his point by treating the progression: two humans  $\rightarrow$  two humanities  $\rightarrow$  two X's . . . as a progression to ever higher *genera*, and so concludes that there is no last *genus*. But if I am right, that is not really what is going on in the passage at all. And if I am *not* right, then I don't know *what* is going on in it.

(Note the opening words of the paragraph: "But even if genus and species do exist, but are multiple and not one in number . . . ." In other words, "even if we reject the Augustinian equation Being = Unity in step (1) of the original argument above". This suggests perhaps that the argument in lines 83-94 is intended as a supplement to the one in lines 69-82. The earlier argument is directed to those who accept the Augustinian equation, while the later argument is directed to those who do not. That is an attractive beginning for an interpretation of this passage, but in fact it is not clear what role, if any, the rejection of the Augustinian equation plays in this argument. In the reconstruction of the argument I have just given, the rejection of this equation means only that, when the argument describes something as "not one", we cannot automatically conclude that it doesn't exist. We could conclude that if we granted the Augustinian equation. But if I have understood it correctly, the real point of the argument does not depend on this one way or the other.)

However all this turns out, let us go back and look more carefully at why Boethius thinks that no one thing can be common to many in the way that genus and species are supposed to be common to many. Well, how can a single thing be common to many? (Lines 95-112.)

(a) First of all, one thing can be common to many *part by part*, as happens for instance when we all share a pie. You get one slice and I get another. None of us gets the whole pie. In fact, if I *do* take the whole pie and hog it all myself, then we no longer are said to "share" it. But genus and species are not supposed to be common or shared in the way a pie is. Socrates and Plato don't have only *slices* of human nature. Each of them is supposed to possess human nature *as a whole*. Indeed, the point of saying that we all have a human nature in common is to be able to say that *I have exactly what you have*, not just a different slice of a larger whole. So universals are supposed to be common *as a whole* to several things.

(b) Well then, a single thing can be common to several things as a whole, but *at different times*. For instance, Boethius says, a slave or a horse. The idea is that I buy a slave or a horse, and he belongs to me *totally*, not just *in part*. (I'm sorry. The example is Boethius', not mine.) I don't have to share him with anyone else. But then I sell him to you, and he is *totally* yours, not just *in part*. So the slave or horse belongs *as a whole* to both of us, but at different times. But that's not the way genus and species are supposed to be held in common. Human nature is not something we all *take turns* possessing. No, universals are supposed to be common to or shared by several things as a whole and *at the same time*.

(c) Well then, a single thing can be common to several things as a whole and at the same time, in the way that a show or spectacle is. That is, for instance, we all stand around and watch the same performance. We all see *the whole thing*, not just part of it, and we all see the whole thing *at the same time*. (Ignore the fact that the show itself may be spread out over time. That's irrelevant. The point is rather that we don't have to *take turns* seeing it.) But this is *still* not the way genus and species are supposed to be common or shared. Genus and species are supposed to be common as a whole at the same time to several things *in such a way that they constitute their substance*. Boethius is of course talking about genus and species, and no doubt would have to use a somewhat weaker phrase if he were talking about universal *accidents*, like color. But, at any event, a universal is supposed to enter into the metaphysical make-up of things in a much more intimate way than a show or spectacle does.

If you combine all this, we are now in a position to see that a *universal* is supposed to be something that is common to many things (a) as a whole, (b) simultaneously, and (c) in such a way as to enter into their metaphysical make-up in an intimate way. In effect, we have just seen an attempt to *define* the notion of a universal. And, although there are still some questions (particularly about the kind of relation involved in (c)), it is really a pretty good account. It will be very influential.

Now Boethius thinks that no *one* thing can be common to many things in all the ways required by this account of a universal. And obviously, this will rest on what the peculiar sort of metaphysical "intimacy" is that universals are supposed to have with the things that possess them. Unfortunately, Boethius doesn't say anything more about it in this passage, and we are left with not quite everything we need for a complete assessment of the force of the argument.

In any case, this *is* the argument, and it is supposed to show that genera and species do *not* subsist. (We also saw that curious infinite-regress argument that appears to be an *objection* to this view.) We shall see other arguments for this nominalist answer later on, when we come to Abelard in the twelfth century. For the present, however, note one *very* important thing: *the*

*argument is a purely metaphysical one.* The difficulties with a realist view of universals are metaphysical or ontological difficulties. How can there *be* the kinds of entities that universals are supposed to be? This is not of course to say that such difficulties cannot be resolved; it is just to say that is where they *are*.

### **THE ARGUMENT FOR UNIVERSALS**

Let us now turn to the second side of the question. If genera and species do not subsist in their own right, then it appears that they must be pure fabrications of the mind. That is, generic and specific concepts are concepts taken from things, but "as the thing is not [really] disposed" (lines 116-117). We form generic and specific concepts for the sake of dealing with external realities, but those concepts have nothing answering to them on the side of reality. The objection to nominalism then is that it makes our concepts "false" and empty. They would be at best arbitrary, and possibly worse, outright distortions of reality. Hence we would have no real knowledge of the world, since our knowledge - or at least any that's going to be very important - proceeds in terms of general or common concepts. Hence, this nominalistic second side of the question leads to epistemological difficulties.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is the standard set-up: Realists have worries over metaphysics; anti-realists have worries over epistemology. This is just as true today as it was in the Middle Ages. It is one of the Great Laws of the history of philosophy. We shall see it verified again and again. File it away in your memory, but keep it ready for instant access.

### **BOETHIUS' OWN VIEW**

These then are the preliminary arguments, pro and con (or rather con and pro, respectively). We now turn to Boethius' own resolution of the problem, beginning on p. 5 of the translation.

Boethius says he is taking his solution from a certain "Alexander". This is Alexander of Aphrodisias, the famous ancient commentator on Aristotle, and indeed one of the two or three truly all-time great commentators on Aristotle. How does the solution go?

Well, terminologically at any rate, the view is a bit ambiguous, as we shall see. But on our first approach to it, let us say that it proceeds by adopting the *second* of the alternatives considered above, the one that says that genera and species do *not* subsist, but exist purely in the mind. The solution then *rejects* the counterargument to this view. That is, it *denies* that concepts formed from things "as the things are not [really] disposed" need to be *false and empty*. That depends on *how* they are formed.

First, what do you suppose Boethius means when he talks about a concept's being formed "as the thing is not really disposed" - or for that matter "as the thing *is* really disposed"? Let's try to explain it like this. A concept is a kind of *picture* or *representation*. (We can say this without committing ourselves to the view that confuses thoughts with fantasy images.) Now we can say that a concept is formed "as the thing is really disposed" if and only if the concept is an *exact* picture or representation of something. That is, it includes *all and only* what is included in the object. A concept is formed "as the thing is *not* really disposed" if it fails to be like this. This failure may come about in one (or both) of two ways:

(a) Because of *composition*. For instance, when we put together the concept of a horse and of a man, to get the concept of a centaur. The concept includes *more* than is included in any real object. A concept that departs from reality in *this* way, Boethius says, *is* false and empty. (Note: He is not talking here about false *judgment*. He is talking about what he calls false

*concepts*, by which he means vacuous or empty ones.) So the epistemological problem is really serious if our concepts depart from reality in this way, by *composition*, by adding more than is there in reality.

(b) On the other hand, concepts may also be formed "as the thing is not really disposed" by what Boethius calls "division" or "abstraction". (The second term will be the usual one in later terminology.) Concepts formed in *this* way are *never* false and empty, even though they do in a sense depart from reality, by leaving out certain things included in the real object. For instance, I can form the concept of color *without considering* surface. I can treat them separately. There is nothing false or empty about the concept of *color*. There really are colors, and the concept of color is really *of* them.

Notice what Boethius is *not* doing here. He is not saying that the concept *color-without-surface* is not empty, because it *is*. Boethius is not talking about a concept that includes only certain features of the reality and then *positively excludes* all the rest; he is talking only about a concept that includes certain features of the reality and *completely ignores* the rest, has nothing to say about the rest. This is the distinction that will later be made between "abstraction" and "precision" (from Latin *praecidere* = to cut off).

Boethius' own example (lines 151-158, 176-185) is of a geometrical line, which is present in and inseparable from a physical body, he says. Yet the mind can "separate" it from the body and *consider* it apart from any consideration of the body, even though it cannot *exist* apart from the body.

Note some things about this passage. First, Boethius thinks mathematical notions can be derived from sensation by abstraction. We saw the problems with that when we were discussing the theory of illumination (Chapter 5, above). Boethius takes a basically Aristotelian view of mathematics. If you want to pursue the matter, take a look at his *De trinitate*, where he divides up the theoretical sciences in a basically Aristotelian way, into physics, mathematics, and metaphysics. The way he says mathematics proceeds is very interesting in the light of our earlier discussion of ideal concepts.

Second, note the *activity* of the mind that is involved here. The mind separates things out, abstracts. Contrast this with the passivity of the mind in Augustinian illumination. Boethius is here being influenced by Aristotle.

Boethius thinks our generic and specific concepts are formed in way (b) above, by division or abstraction. But now here is where the terminological ambiguity begins to emerge. For he goes on to say that genera and species subsist, they are incorporeal, and they are *in* individuals. (Note: This answers all three of Porphyry's questions.) But how can he say that? I thought we just said that he accepted the *second* view, that such universals do *not* subsist. Well, the answer is, of course, that there is an equivocation going on. (But see the qualification below.) I want to emphasize that the *theory* is perfectly coherent (at least on this point); it is only the *terminology* that is confusing. Let's look at it more closely.

Boethius has a kind of slogan (lines 196-197): Genera and species *exist* in individuals, but they are *thought* of as universals.

We have to understand just what he is saying *is* or *subsists* here. (In line 203 he says almost the same thing using the word 'subsist'.) It is *not* something common or universal that he says subsists. The antirealist arguments at the beginning of the passage are correct here. On the other hand, Boethius does want to say that the genus *of Socrates*, that is, *his* own private animality, does subsist, and so does his species, his own private humanity. And so do the animality and humanity of Plato. But they are *not* the same things; there is nothing *shared* here.

That this is what he means is indicated by the fact that he goes on immediately to say (lines 197-200):

And species is to be regarded as nothing else than the thought gathered from the substantial likeness of individuals that are unlike in number. Genus, on the other hand, [is] the thought gathered from the likeness of species.

That is, the common *concept* of the species has no *common* thing corresponding to it in reality; what corresponds to the concept 'humanity' is the *individual* humanities of Socrates and Plato and the rest of us, which are *alike* and yet have nothing really in common. So the concept is *not* empty and false. It is just that the correspondence with reality is not one-to-one; it is one-to-many.

Note the terminological shift in this passage. First he says that genera and species *exist* in singulars or individuals (line 196). Here he is talking about the individual humanities and animalities of Socrates and Plato, and calling *those* species and genera. Then, in the very next words (lines 197-200), he turns around and says that species must be considered to be a kind of *thought*. Here he is talking about the general *concept*. That is the ambiguity I was talking about.

A qualification: Although I have presented this as an ambiguity, it may be closer to the truth to view it instead as a reflection of the basically Aristotelian view that holds that the *knower is the known* (see Chapter \s6 above). On this view, the concept just *is* formally identical with its object, so that there is no ambiguity at all, and Boethius can with impunity use the term 'species' or 'genus' both for the concept and for the correlate in reality. In fact, I think that is probably what Boethius had in mind. Still, the main lines of Boethius' solution can be understood without bringing in this odd Aristotelian view. And that view really is odd. It eliminates the ambiguity I was talking about, but only at the expense of requiring us to make sense of the notion that a concept is somehow identical with several *distinct* things. I'm not sure that we *cannot* make sense of this notion, but I am sure we cannot do it here. Note that it cannot be explained away in the way we explained how many divine ideas were nevertheless all identical (see the end of Chapter \s7 above).

Hence the view Boethius is adopting is the one he tried to refute earlier (of course he was not speaking for himself then, but only presenting an objection) by his odd infinite regress argument. The argument presumably *fails* because it assumes that if the humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato are *alike* in being two *humanities*, then they must have something in common. At least it assumes that if I interpret the argument correctly.

At the end of the entire passage (lines 220-228) Boethius observes that Plato and Aristotle disagree over the answer to Porphyry's third question. Aristotle says that genera and species (though not *universal* genera and species, according to Boethius) are *in* individuals, whereas Plato says they are *separated* - that is, that they are the Ideas or Forms. (Notice that the Platonic Forms are probably *not* universals in the sense in which Boethius had described universals earlier. Platonic Forms are *external* to the particulars that participate in them, and so probably violate the third requirement Boethius lists. I say "probably" because of course it all depends on that crucial but unexplained phrase 'constitute the substance'.)

After noticing this difference between Plato and Aristotle, Boethius makes a truly astonishing remark. He says that he has followed Aristotle here (through his commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias) *not* because he thinks this theory is true, but because he is commenting on a text, the *Isagoge*, that is supposed to introduce the reader to Aristotle's *Categories*, so that it is his job to be Aristotelian about it.

What does this mean? Does it mean that Boethius doesn't believe a word of all the stuff he has just been feeding us? Well, if you look at the *Consolation* and at the *Theological Tractates*, where Boethius is speaking in his own right, and is not operating under the constraints of a faithful commentator, you can piece together another view that is somewhat more Platonic and Augustinian than the view we have just been looking at. In fact, you can piece together *two* views, one of which is more or less like the one we have been looking at, with some disagreements and adjustments that may be responsible for Boethius' disclaimer at the end of the passage from the *Commentary on Porphyry*, and the other of which is quite different and much more realist. Let us then look at the *Theological Tractates* on the question of *structure of an individual*. (I will mention the *Consolation* at the appropriate point.)

## The View in the Theological Tractates

I have already referred you to one text from the *Contra Eutychen* (translated below, Volume II, Text 6, passage 1.) We will have occasion to refer to it again. Let us call it *Passage 1*. Look now also at two other passages from the *Tractates*, translated in Volume II below as Text 6, passages 2 and 3. (We will call these, appropriately, *Passage 2* and *Passage 3*.) Go do it.

In Passage 1, we get the picture of a fully constituted individual substance, to which accidents can be added and from which they can be removed. Substances do not *need* accidents, recall, even if they happen to have them.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION

Given this picture, we can raise the question of *individuation*. That is, how do we get from the genus and species down to the *individual*? What is it that narrows down or "contracts" (as they came to say) the genus and species to yield the individual? What do you have to *add* to the genus and species to get the individual? On this question, there are two views in the *Tractates*, one implicit in the *Contra Eutychen* text and the first passage from *De trinitate*, and consistent with what he says in the *Contra Eutychen* about subsistence and substance, and other explicit in the second passage from *De trinitate* but inconsistent with what he says in the *Contra Eutychen* and moreover unacceptable in itself.

### MATTER

The first, implicit view is that *matter* is the principle of individuation. From Passage 1 (taken from the *Contra Eutychen*), we get the view that particulars can substand accidents, and when they do they are "substances". On the other hand, genera and species, according to that passage, cannot do this. That is the difference between particulars on the one hand and genera or species on the other. From Passage 2, the first passage from *De trinitate*, it follows that accidents do not really inhere in genera and species, but in the *matter* that underlies genera and species. Putting these two texts together, it seems that it is the presence of matter that allows particulars to substand accidents, and that therefore distinguishes particulars from genera and species. To get from genus and species to the individual, you *add matter* - and *that* gives you the ability to substand accidents, which is what characterizes particulars or individuals.

### ACCIDENTS

The second, explicit view is contained in Passage 3: *Accidents* are the principles of individuation. "Now it is the variety of accidents that makes for difference in number."

There are two things wrong with this second view. First, it seems to *freeze* the individual, so that no individual can change in any way by acquiring or losing an accident without changing its very *identity*. All change is *substantial* change. When I wiggle my finger, I acquire some new,

accidental (and really quite trivial) property concerning the spatial configuration of my body and its relations to other bodies around me. But since the accidental features have changed, and since it is just "the variety of accidents that makes for difference in number", it follows when I wiggle my finger, I become a *new* individual, numerically distinct from the individual I was. And that seems too high a price to pay.

Note that Leibniz later on will solve this problem by adding explicit *time*-references to accidents, so that Caesar for instance did not have the property of crossing the Rubicon, just like that. He had - and always, tenselessly, has - the property of crossing the Rubicon on such and such a date, at such and such a time. Now while this is *very* reminiscent of the kind of move Boethius himself makes in his solution to the problem of foreknowledge and human free will (Chapter \s4 above), he does not adopt it here, and seems to be unaware that there is even a problem that might warrant adopting it. Leibniz's view, incidentally, is already present in Augustine, in the doctrine of *seminal reasons*. And for that matter, Augustine took it over from the Stoics. The idea is that the *reasons* (*rationes*) or structures of things are already built into creation from the very beginning, and just unfold over time like seeds. Augustine, at any rate, has such a theory in part to accommodate the view that creation was over at the end of the sixth day; any novelties that have emerged since then are really just the unfoldings of "seed reasons" that were there all along. If you want to look at this a little more, see Bourke, *The Essential Augustine*, pp. 102-103, the passages from Augustine's *De trinitate* and his *De Genesi ad litteram* (= "Literal Commentary on Genesis").

The second thing wrong with the view contained in Passage 3 is that it violates what *Contra Eutychen* says about subsistence and substance. According to Passage 1, particulars do not *need* accidents in order to get their existence and identity. According to Passage 3, they do.

In the *Theological Tractates*, particularly in the *De trinitate*, you get a kind of *laminated* view of individuals. The view comes in two forms. In its first form, for instance is Passage 2, you have matter, and in matter you have several *images* of the separated Forms. Now the Forms are just the divine Ideas. The picture then is that in the matter of an individual human being, you have for instance the image of corporeality, of animality, of rationality, plus accidental images, all piled one on top of another more or less in layers. Images are not forms. Forms are separated from matter; they are the divine Ideas. The *images* are like *impressions* from a seal-ring. Just as a seal-ring can leave its impression in wax, so too the Forms or divine ideas leave their images in matter. (Get familiar with this metaphor. It is an important one.) The Forms are the true *genera and species* - they are common by way of being a common exemplar or paradigm, just as the one seal-ring is common to all the several impressions it makes. But the Forms are *not universals*. They are not metaphysically intimate enough with the individuals to which they are common. Recall, from the end of the discussion in the *Commentary on Porphyry*, how Boethius says Plato and Aristotle disagree over Porphyry's third question, and that while Aristotle holds that genera and species are *in* individuals, Plato holds that they are separated. In the terminology of the *Contra Eutychen*, Plato calls the *Forms* genera and species, while Aristotle calls the *images* genera and species, and completely ignores - or worse, rejects - the Forms.

This is a famous and influential view. It goes back to Plato's *Timaeus* and to the *Seventh Letter* (whether that is genuinely by Plato or not). Chalcidius (remember him?) calls what Boethius calls "images" *impressed forms*. In the twelfth century, Gilbert of Poitiers will call them *native forms* - that is, innate forms. All of these people have the same basic picture in mind, a picture perhaps best expressed by the common metaphor of the seal-ring.



## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE COMMENTARY-VIEW

We are now in a position to speculate about what Boethius found objectionable in the theory of universals he sketched in his *Commentary on Porphyry*, and why he added that odd business at the end about how he has said all of this not because he believes it but because he is a faithful commentator. If you think about it, the view we have just sketched from the *Theological Tractates* looks very much like the one in the *Commentary on Porphyry*. The individual humanities of Socrates and Plato are the impressions or "images"; Socrates and Plato have nothing *really* in common in the way a universal is supposed to be common.

The difference, of course, is that in the *Commentary on Porphyry* there is no mention of divine ideas at all, and no real discussion of matter. Once you bring them into the picture, then you no longer have to say that the mind gets its common concepts by abstracting them under its own power; you can say that the mind gets its common concepts by somehow getting in touch with the divine ideas, which is the *common exemplar* of all the "images". That is, you don't need a theory of abstraction any more; you can do it by illumination.

Boethius doesn't actually say any of this in the *Tractates*, of course. And in fact, at the beginning of Passage 1, he says that the "understanding of universal things is taken from particulars" - not, presumably, from divine Ideas. Furthermore, Boethius definitely does have a theory of abstraction. It makes its appearance in several other passages as well. (See, for instance, Chapter \s8, below.) Nevertheless, the illumination picture does fit in well with the highly Platonic flavor of the *Consolation* - for example, Book IV, m. 1, where we get a doctrine of recollection.

In short, then, we can speculate with some plausibility (although it is no more than educated speculation) that Boethius' doubts about the doctrine of his *Commentary on Porphyry* center on the fact that that doctrine ignores the Forms or divine Ideas. There may or may not be additional doubts involving the theory of abstraction, which is not needed if you have divine Ideas and have a theory of illumination available. But all these are relatively *minor* complaints. If I am right, then we should not take his disclaimer at the end of the passage in the *Commentary on Porphyry* as an indication that he accepted a *radically* different view of universals - for instance, a screaming realist view, or a view that simply accepted all the skeptical consequences of denying genera and species any status in reality at all.

## A STRONGLY REALIST VIEW

The view we have just looked at is, I think, probably Boethius' more considered opinion. Nevertheless, if you look at Passage 3 carefully, you *might* get an altogether different view. There *accidents* are said to individuate; there is simply no mention of matter. If you are going to take *this* text as your starting point, you have no need to bring in *matter*, and so no need to use the seal-ring metaphor or to make the distinction between Form and "image". (Recall Gregory of Nyssa on matter - see Chapter \s9 above.)

This text is open to development in a strongly *realist* way (although it does not *require* such an interpretation). The humanity of Socrates, if you push this realist line, is *the same* as - that is, *identical* with, not merely *like* - the humanity of Plato. In Socrates and Plato, you have a total of *one* humanity, not two. To this humanity, you add certain accidents to get Socrates, and certain other accidents to get Plato. Similarly, Socrates and Brownie the ass (a standard example, although it doesn't arise until the time of Abelard in the twelfth century - the Latin name is '*Brunellus*' or some variation on that) really do share a single *animality*. You add certain other things to get Socrates, and yet others to get Brownie. For instance, Socrates has rationality, but

Browny has irrationality. Here you have a real "laminated" view of the structure of an individual. The individual is built up like a layer cake. All this is illustrated in the Figure on the next page. I didn't include a picture of Goody the Angel, because of course he is incorporeal, and you can't see him.

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 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3\h+.25i\h+10d\ f3K\ f8  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3\h+.25i\h+10d\ f3K\ f8  
 \n1 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3Rationality  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3Animality  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3Life (Animation)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3Corporeality  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3Substantiality\n2  
 \ f8Brownly the Ass\h1.85i\h-5dPlato\h2.55iSocrates  
 \hm5\ f4B\ f8  
 \hm5\h+.2i(Accidents)  
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 \ f1(b)  
 \l1d\ f8  
 \n0 \m0\_\_ \i+5d\m1\_\_ \i-5d\m2\_\_\h4i\m3\h+.25i\ f3B\ f8\i+.1i\m5  
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 \n2 \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3Corporeality  
 \- \_\_\_\_\_ \hm3Substantiality\n2  
 \ f8Goody the Angel\h2iRockey the\h3iRosey the\b  
 \h2.35iStone\h3.1iFlower\b  
 \hm5\ f4B\ f8  
 \hm5\h+.2i(Accidents)  
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 ++++++  
 \l.045i\ f1FIG. \s0-1: BOETHIAN "LAYER-CAKE" ONTOLOGY"

Get the idea?

This strongly realist view, I said, is *suggested* by Passage 3, but it is not explicit there. Although there is no appeal to matter or to Forms and "images", there is no denial of them either. (You would not *expect* matter to appear in this context. Boethius is talking about the Trinity, after all, and there is no matter in God.) And the claim that accidents individuate is not *entirely* out of line with the picture developed in the other texts. After all, we saw how, in that other picture, it was *matter* that got you from the genus and species down to the level of the particular substance. But on that same picture, as Passage 2 says explicitly, the role of that matter is to provide the support for *accidents*. Hence, if accidents individuate, as they do in Passage 3, and if accidents inhere only in matter, as Passage 2 says, then it is not hard to see that in order to have individuals, you are going to have to have accidents, *and so matter too*. (And never mind about individuation in the case of God. We can handle that as a special case, I suppose.) Both matter and accidents, then, would be required for individuation. To this extent, therefore, Passage 3 is not all that incompatible with the view contained in the other passages.

Nevertheless, in another respect it becomes clear that we do *not* have a single, unified theory here after all, and that Passage 3 does not really, in the long run, fit with the others at all. For Passage 1 explicitly tells us that substances do not *need* accidents. And that just won't fit with individuation by accidents, as in Passage 3, where individuals get their very identity from their accidents.

The strongly realist view of Passage 3, I said, is only suggested there, and is certainly not explicit (although individuation by accidents is). Nevertheless, the view is important. For certain later authors, as we shall see, developed views like this, and looked to Boethius - indeed, to this very passage - for authoritative support. In fact, *both* of these views, the strongly realist one suggested by Passage 3 and the more nominalist one in the *Commentary on Porphyry* and most of the rest of the *Tractates*, will be important in the twelfth century and, for that matter, throughout the Middle Ages. Get thoroughly at home with them right now.

## Chapter 24:

### Boethius: On the Hebdomads

Below, in Volume II, Text \s2, I have provided you with a complete translation of one of Boethius' Theological Tractates, the treatise *How Are Substances Good Insofar as They Exist, Since They Are Not Substantial Goods?*, also called *On the Hebdomads*. (Sometimes the work is referred to by a shortened version of its Latin title as the *Quomodo substantiae*.) I want to say a few words here to introduce you to that treatise.

First of all, no one really knows what the "hebdomads" were. The word means "sevens", but that is about as far as anyone can get. Does the word refer to a collection of writings, along the lines of Plotinus' *Enneads* (which means "nines", after all)? Or does it perhaps refer to a kind of "discussion group" that met weekly - that is, once every *seven* days? (Compare the etymology of our word 'seminar'.) I have my own suggestion for the word, given in note 2 to the translation. But I should warn you that it is only a suggestion, and the authority of the manuscripts and the commentary-tradition is against it.

Now, people, I don't really expect you to understand this treatise completely. It's baffled me for years. Boethius himself says in the opening lines that he is deliberately adopting a style that hides his real meaning, in order not to throw his pearls of wisdom before the swine of the general reading public. That strategy has proved very effective.

Nevertheless, this is a good treatise to read. It contains a great deal of Boethian metaphysics, and was often commented on in the twelfth century. It is certainly possible to get an overall view of what is going on in the treatise, even if details are pretty mysterious.

Note a few things about this work. First, note in lines 81-85 a statement of the theory of abstraction we have already seen in Chapter \s3, in the second redaction of Boethius' *Commentary on Porphyry*: it is possible to separate things in the mind that cannot be separated in reality. In particular, geometrical shapes can be mentally abstracted from their underlying matter, even though they cannot exist apart from matter. For another statement of this doctrine, see also Boethius' *De trinitate*, section 2, "Loeb Classical Library" edition, lines 10-14 (but this translation is my own):

The mathematical [part of speculative science considers things that are] not in motion, non-abstracted. For it views the forms of bodies [as] without matter, and therefore without motion. These forms, since they are in matter, cannot be separated from [the bodies].

We discussed the difficulties with such a view above, in Chapter \s4.

Second, note the general structure of the treatise. It is a rudimentary version of the *quaestio*-form we have already seen in the passage from Boethius' *Commentary on Porphyry*. First it sets out both sides of the problem, and then offers a solution. There is no explicit reply to the preliminary arguments, but instead a consideration of yet additional arguments at the end of the treatise. This bare-bones *quaestio*-format will become much more rigid and codified in the later literature.

## Chapter 25:

### Boethius: "Philosophical Lexicon"

Scattered throughout Boethius' works are several definitions that became famous and influential. Boethius (along with Cicero) was one of the main people responsible for shaping the philosophical and theological vocabulary of the Latin West for a long time to come. Here are a few of the important terms you should know. Memorize these definitions. You will see them all over the place in the Middle Ages.

(1) Substance, subsistence. See Passage 1 in Volume II, Text \s2, below.

(2) Person (as opposed to "nature" in the doctrine of the Trinity - three persons, one nature - or the doctrine of the Incarnation - one person, two natures). *Contra Eutychen*, "Loeb Classical Library" ed., p. 84 lines 4-5: "an individual substance of a reasonable [= rational] rational nature".

(3) Providence, Fate. See *Consolation*, Book IV, pr. 6 lines 27-30 (Green, p. 91; Watts, p. 135): "This way [of governing things], when it is regarded in the purity of the divine understanding, is named 'Providence'. But when it is referred to the things it moves and disposes, it was called 'Fate' by the ancients." See also the rest of Book IV, pr. 6, for an elaboration of this theme.

(4) Beatitude, blessedness (= Green's "perfect happiness, Watts' "happiness"). See *Consolation*, Book III, pr. 2 lines 10-12 (Green, p. 43; Watts, p. 79): "Beatitude is the state that is completed by the gathering together of all goods."

(5) Eternity. See *Consolation*, Book V, pr. 6 lines 9-11 (Green, p. 115; Watts, p. 163), and the discussion in Chapter \s3 above: "the whole, simultaneous, and complete possession of interminable life."

(6) Nature. There are four senses of this term for Boethius. See *Contra Eutychen*, "Loeb Classical Library" ed.: (a) p. 78 lines 8-10, "There is a nature of those things that, since they exist, can be grasped in some way by the understanding." (b) p. 78 lines 25-26, "Nature is either what

can act or what [can] be passive [*pati*]." (c) p. 80 lines 41-42 (compare Aristotle, *Physics*, II, 1, 192b, 22-23), "Nature is the principle of motion, through itself and not by accident." (d) p. 80 lines 57-58, "Nature is the specific difference that informs each thing whatever."

## Chapter 26:

### Pseudo-Denis the Areopagite

First, the man's name. It's 'Dionysios' in Greek (he wrote in Greek), but 'Dionysius' in Latin. This becomes 'Denis' in English. It's all the same name. I generally write 'Denis', although most people seem to prefer 'Dionysius'. Decide for yourself.

Pseudo-Denis lived probably in the late-fifth century, which puts him roughly around the same time as Boethius. John Scottus Eriugena, who lived in the ninth century and whom we will be discussing in Chapter 2, translated Pseudo-Denis into Latin. There were also several other translations in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Eriugena's in fact was not the first, although it was certainly the most influential.

It is only in the ninth century, therefore, that Pseudo-Denis' influence begins to be felt in the Latin West. With Eriugena, as with Boethius, we get a big shot of Greek thinking injected into Western speculation.

### The Man AND HIS WRITINGS

The Corpus Areopagiticum translated by Eriugena consists of ten letters, together with the following four treatises:

On the Divine Names

The Mystical Theology. See Volume II, Text 3, below.

On the Celestial Hierarchy. This work is important in the later theory of angels and the angelic hierarchy, the "choirs" of angels - lots of stuff about Thrones and Dominations and Powers.

On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. An important but little read source for the history of liturgy and other matters.

There are also references in some of these works (see, for example, lines 83, 90, 94, and 103 of The Mystical Theology in Volume II, Text 3, below) to two other writings we do not possess:

Theological Outlines

Symbolic Theology.

These works may or may not ever have existed, but in any event we do not have them today.

Now, why do we call this man "Pseudo-Denis"? First of all, who was the real Denis the Areopagite? Well, the Areopagus was a hill in Athens (it still is, for that matter), and St. Paul went there to preach to the Athenian philosophers. Most of them laughed at him (see Acts 17:18, quoted in Chapter 4, above), but one or two did not. Here is what Acts 17:33-34 says (King James version, in case you can't tell):

So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Demaris, and others with them.

Well, Demaris has disappeared without a trace. But the texts that have come down to us as the Corpus Areopagiticum claim to be by this man Dionysius or Denis. For instance, *On the Divine Names* and both of the *Hierarchies* begin with the words: Denis the Presbyter to Timothy, his fellow-Presbyter.

The Timothy here is supposed to be the companion of St. Paul, to whom Paul wrote two epistles. *The Mystical Theology* begins differently, but it too claims to be written to this same Timothy of the Apostolic Age. (See line 12 and n. 4 to the translation in Volume II.)

The ten letters in the *Corpus* are not addressed to Timothy, but to others from about the same time: to John the Evangelist (Letter X); and to certain immediate disciples of the Apostles: to Gaius (Letters I-V, see Acts 20\i+3d:\i+3d4, Romans 16\i+3d:\i+3d23, 3 John 1); to Sosipater (Letter VI, see Acts 20\i+3d:\i+3d4, Romans 16\i+3d:\i+3d21); to Polycarp of Smyrna (Letter VII, see Table \s6-1, above); to Titus, the bishop of Crete to whom Paul directed an epistle (Letter IX); and to a certain Dorothy (Letter V) and a Demophilos (Letter VIII), neither of whom I've tracked down yet.

Also, in *On the Divine Names*, III, 2, the author speaks of a certain Hierotheus as being his teacher, "after blessed Paul". There are several other passages like this too, where Pseudo-Denis claims to have been taught by Paul himself.

The same section of *On the Divine Names* contains a remark in which the author claims to have been present with the Apostles James and Peter after the death of the Virgin Mary, to view the body.

In short, the texts tend to put forth their claim to authenticity by name-dropping of the general form "I was just saying to St. Paul the other day".

Perhaps the most striking attempt to establish his credentials, however, is in Letter VII, where the author claims to have observed strange goings-on in the sky at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. (This of course would have been *before* the conversion of the real Denis the Areopagite.) Here is the passage (PG 3, 1081):

But say to him [= a certain Apollophanes, who had been criticizing "*Denis*"\i+3d]: What do you say about the eclipse that occurred at [the time of] the saving cross? [See Mark 15\i+3d:\i+3d33, Luke 23\i+3d:\i+3d44.] For both [of us] were present together then at Heliopolis and, standing [there], we saw the moon falling upon the sun - paradoxically, for it was not time for [such a] conjunction. And again, from the ninth hour until evening, [we saw] it supernaturally move to the opposite side [of the sky] from the sun. Remind him also of something else. For he knows that we saw the [moon's] approach beginning from the east, and proceeding to the solar edge, then stepping back, and [then] again both the approach and the clearing away, [this time] occurring not from the same [side as before] but from the diametrically opposite [side].

As a result of this supposed authorship, the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, once it was translated, had an *immense* influence. Its author was (or claimed to be) just one step removed from St. Paul himself. People therefore took these texts *very* seriously; their authority was close to that of Scripture itself. There is some irony in this, and some embarrassment, since the doctrine in the works is pretty bizarre and sometimes of dubious orthodoxy. People really had to strain to make it all fit in.

So much for the *real* Denis, and for the corpus attributed to him. Who *really* wrote these works? In short, why do we call their author *Pseudo*-Denis?

The first reference we find to the writings in the corpus is from 533, when the Monophysite (and therefore heretical) Patriarch Severus of Antioch appealed to the texts to support a certain point of doctrine.

There were some doubts raised about the authenticity of these writings from the very beginning. At any rate, it has now been definitely established that the works cannot have been written before the late-fifth century (perhaps slightly later, but not much later - not after 533, for instance), and that they rely very much on straight fifth-century neo-Platonism.

The main fifth-century neo-Platonist was one Proclus, the last head of the neo-Platonic school at Athens. Shortly after his death, the Christian Emperor Justinian closed the school, and



the last adherents fled to Persia. (*Note this well.* The descendants of those refugees will have an important future.)

Pseudo-Denis is strongly influenced by Proclus, and in fact simply copied out huge passage from Proclus *verbatim* and included them at various points in his own writings. Thus, for example, Chapter 4 of *On the Divine Names* contains a famous discussion of the problem of evil. Much of it Pseudo-Denis just took over word for word from Proclus' work *On the Subsistence of Evils*. There were other fifth-century neo-Platonists, of course, who were saying similar things. So we can by no means trace out all the influences on Pseudo-Denis in detail.

Apart from the dating of the works, we really don't know much else about their author. With suitable *caveats*, however, we can say that Pseudo-Denis was *probably* from somewhere in Syria or nearby. One recent (and perhaps promising) suggestion is that Pseudo-Denis is to be identified with a certain *Peter the Iberian*, who was a fifth-century bishop of Maiouma. (See the discussion in Campbell's translation of *the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, pp. 100-101, n. 30. The full reference is given below.)

In any case, the authenticity of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* was not seriously questioned very much again until Lorenzo Valla (1405-1457) in the Renaissance, as a result of some new translations from the Greek that were prompted by the flight of Greek scholars from Constantinople to the West under pressure from the invading Turks. (Incidentally, the Turks had a real role to play in the Renaissance. Lots of Greeks fled from them to Italy, bringing with them their knowledge of the Greek heritage.)

This kind of forgery was not at all uncommon in the Middle Ages. And no one really regarded it as a bad thing to do. If you wanted your writings to be taken seriously, you simply attributed them to someone famous. A good measure of a man's importance in the Middle Ages is how many spurious works were attributed to him. Aquinas and Duns Scotus get a lot of them, for instance. This kind of "reverse plagiarism" was not regarded as dishonest. On the contrary, you were *honoring* the man by recognizing him as an authority to whom you would want to attribute your *own* writings.

## DOCTRINE

Now I want to look briefly at *On the Divine Names* and *the Mystical Theology*. If you are interested in reading *On the Divine Names*, there is a complete translation in the Rolt volume cited in the Bibliography at the end of this Chapter. Chapter 4 of that translation is reprinted in Herman Shapiro, *Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 42-70. A different translation, and for that matter a complete translation of the entire corpus, may be found in the John Parker volume cited below. Yet another translation may be found in the Jones volume cited below.

First, let's look at *On the Divine Names*. The term 'names' here doesn't of course refer to a given name or surname, but rather to "predicates" in general. The topic of the book is in effect the good old problem of religious discourse: "What can we truly say about - predicate of - God?" The following references are by chapter and section numbers. For actual quotations, I have also given the column numbers in PG 3.

I, 1*i*+3*d*: The truths about God are "unspeakable and unknowable" (col. 585), they surpass "our logical and intellective power and activity" (cols. 585-588). Our *logical* power and activity is the power (or activity) that *argues*, and therefore involves a process in time. *Intellective* power (and activity), on the other hand, sees in a flash; it is the faculty of *insight* -

what Augustine is concerned with in his doctrine of illumination. The distinction here is perhaps also similar to Boethius' distinction between "intelligence" and "reason". See Chapter \s7 above.

Hence, if we are going to think of God in *positive* terms - that is, if we are going to *affirm* predicates or concepts of him - we must not *dare* to use any concepts (names) for God except those that have the *authority* of Scripture. (And we will see that those are quite a few.)

God is above the material, tangible world. He is above the world of essence and intelligence too. He is "the cause of all beings, but is not himself a being, since he is above all being" (col. 588). That should ring neo-Platonic bells for you.

I, 5\i+3d: Those who enter into union with it [= God], "according to the ceasing of all intellectual activity, . . . praise it best of all by denying all beings of it" (col. 593). That is exactly what is going to happen in *The Mystical Theology*. But that is mysticism. There are other points of view besides the mystical one. And, he says, since God is the cause of all things, and since all things aim to return to God (note: the neo-Platonic emanation and return), therefore "we must praise the providence of divine dominion, the source of goods, [in terms taken] from all the things that are caused" (ibid.).

Let's just push on a bit, and then we'll talk about what all this means. He goes on, "The theologians, since they know this, praise it both as nameless and [yet in terms taken] from every name" (I, 6, col. 596).

Later on in I, 6, Pseudo-Denis lists some of the names sanctioned by Scriptures. It is all right to describe God (ibid.)\i+3d:

\v+.25iy<.5ias good, as beautiful, as wise, as beloved, as God of Gods, as Lord of Lords, as Holy of Holies, as eternal, as a being, as the cause of the ages, as the supplier of life, as wisdom, as mind, as reason, as knower, as surpassing all the treasures of every knowledge, as power, as master, as King of Kings, as Ancient of Days, as ageless and without alteration, as salvation, as justice, as consecration, as ransom, as surpassing all things in size, and as in the lightest breeze. And they say that it is both in minds and in souls and in bodies, and in heaven and in the earth, and that it is at the same time [and] together in the cosmos, around the cosmos, above the cosmos, above the heavens, above being, [and that it is] the sun, a star, fire, water, wind, dew, a cloud, a veritable stone, and a rock, all beings, and none of the beings.

Now what on earth is going on here? Basically, in all of this Pseudo-Denis is saying that there are three points of view we can adopt when talking about God:

(a) We can talk about God as he is in himself. But in himself he is "unspeakable". Hence from this point of view we can *affirm* nothing of God; *no* predicate truly applies to him. All we can do is to *deny* predicates of God. That we *can* truly and literally say. And that is what goes on in *The Mystical Theology*. This of course is just what you should expect if God is above being, and so above intelligibility in neo-Platonic fashion. Note also that our inability to affirm things of God is not due just to ignorance. It is not that our finite, creaturely minds simply aren't able to know the truths about God. No, if God is above being and intelligibility in this way, then there is *nothing to know* about him. Not even *God* can make true affirmations about God.

(b) We can also talk about God insofar as he is the *cause* of things - that is, insofar as things proceed from him. For instance, when we call God a "Creator", we are not saying anything about his internal nature\ f41; we are only saying how he is *related* to other things: by producing them. We are "naming" God here only in a backhanded way, by making an oblique reference to *other* things, his creatures. Recall Augustine on the definition of man (Chapter \s8 above). The same kind of "oblique reference" or *connotation* that went on there in the definition of man is going on here when we adopt this second way of talking about God.

This second way is what goes on in the later parts of *On the Divine Names*. (The earlier parts are the ones we are talking about now; they set out this threefold division.) It is in this second way that we call God, for instance, a "creator", or "light", or "supplier of life".

(c) We can also talk about God in another "connotative" way, this time not insofar as things proceed from God, but rather insofar as things return to him. This is in part the business of the two books on the Hierarchies, and of course fits right in with the neo-Platonic picture of emanation (sometimes called "ecstasy") and return. In this third way, we can call God "happiness", and perhaps even "good" (although later on he treats 'good' under heading (b)).

This triadic approach is characteristic of fifth-century neo-Platonism, and pervades everything they did - their whole system and each part of it.

All this goes in in Ch. 1 of *On the Divine Names*. In Ch. 2, Pseudo-Denis gets down to the particular business of the book.

*II, 1*<sup>i+3d</sup>: God is not complex. The various names applied by Scripture to God do not pick out *parts* or distinct *properties* of God. Rather, they all suggest dimly, in their different ways, God as a whole. The diversity is solely on our part; it is a diversity in point of view, not in the object. *Note*: Remember that <sup>f4</sup>

God is here in effect the neo-Platonic One, so that there is no plurality in him, no internal divisions.

*II, 2*<sup>i+3d</sup>: But if that is right, don't we risk destroying the *real* distinctions in the Trinity, and making it merely a Trinity from our point of view?

*II, 3-7*<sup>i+3d</sup>: In order to handle this, Pseudo-Denis distinguishes two kinds of names:

(a) Undifferentiated. These refer to the entire Godhead - that is, to all three persons of the Trinity. And there are two kinds of these:

(i) Names like "'super-good', 'super-God', 'super-substantial', 'super-alive', 'super-wise'" (he likes to talk like this a lot), "and whatever negative [term implies] superiority" (*II, 3*, col. 639) - that is, words like 'immaterial', 'unchanging', which mean not just "*not* material" and "*not* changing" but rather "*more* than material", "*more* than changing", where 'more' means "better than", "higher than" on the ontological hierarchy of things. These terms of kind (i) are discussed more fully in *The Mystical Theology*.

(ii) "The cause of all goods is named according to all the aetiological terms, 'good', 'beautiful', 'being', 'life-generating', 'wise', and all [the terms taken] from its gifts that imitate the Good" (*ibid.*). Compare the second of the three ways of talking about God, above.

(b) Differentiated. These are words like 'Father', 'Son', 'Spirit', and the other technical terms of Trinitarian doctrine. These do not refer to the entire Godhead, but only to one or another of the three persons of the Trinity. "In these cases there is no interchange [of one of these terms for another], and they do not introduce [any] community [of properties in the Trinity] at all" (*ibid.*).

The basic idea here is that the terms that apply equally to all three persons of the Trinity are exactly the ones that relate God in any way, positively or negatively, to *creation*. The terms that apply to one or another of the persons of the Trinity to the exclusion of the others are exactly those that have to do with Trinitarian theory. (Compare the discussion of Trinitarian matters in Chapter <sup>s9</sup>, above.) There is one exception to this: terms dealing with the *Incarnation*. According to the doctrine of the Incarnation, only *the Son* was made incarnate, and yet that is a term relating God to creation.

Well, all this is very untidy. Furthermore, how does this distinction of differentiated from undifferentiated names fit with the earlier claim that God is simple? That is, how have we really answered the problem raised in *II, 2*? This perhaps just indicates the general problem of making

sense out of Trinitarian doctrine if you start off with God as the neo-Platonic One. The doctrine is hard enough to make sense of anyway, without compounding the difficulties that way.

In the rest of *On the Divine Names*, Pseudo-Denis goes through the undifferentiated names of kind (ii). In Ch. 4, he starts with the term 'good'. At the beginning of this discussion, he gives a striking paraphrase of the Sun analogy in Plato's *Republic* (IV, 1, col. 693):

For as our sun, without having thought about it or chosen it, but by its own being, lights up all the things that are able to participate in its light, [each] according to its own nature, so too the Good, [which is] above the sun as the exalted archetype above the dim image, in like manner sends out, by its very existence, the rays of all goodness to all beings.

(See n. 1, below. This certainly *sounds*, at least, as if Pseudo-Denis is denying that creation is a free act.) He goes on to speak of this metaphorical "illumination" as a source of *knowledge* - that is, he uses the same metaphors for knowledge that Plato and Augustine did.

In later sections of *On the Divine Names*, he goes on to discuss some of the other names for God.

Now let us turn to *The Mystical Theology*. Here Pseudo-Denis argues that, while in *On the Divine Names*, we attributed names to God from the point of view of his being the *source* or cause, nevertheless if we are to speak of God as he is in *himself*, we must *deny* all these things of him. God is *not* really good, *not* really just, and so on. We apply those terms to him only insofar as he *causes* good things and just things, and so on.

The first way, the way of *On the Divine Names*, by causality, is called *Cataphatic* or *Kataphatic* (= affirmative) theology, and later on, the "Way of Attribution", or "The Positive Way", the *via affirmativa* or *via affirmationis*. (As you can see, the terminology is flexible.) The other way, the way of *The Mystical Theology*, is called *Apophatic* (= negative) theology, or "The Way of

Remotion (= removing)", the *via negativa*. This is the famous *via negativa* you sometimes hear mentioned in connection with mysticism.

Both of these ways are necessary for a balanced discourse about God. Cataphatic theology says that God is King and Lord. It therefore requires Apophatic theology to rescue it from anthropomorphism. Apophatic theology ends up saying that God doesn't even *exist*. That predicate too has to be denied of God, which is not really surprising given the neo-Platonic context in which the One is above even Being. Hence, Apophatic theology requires Cataphatic theology to keep it from out and out atheism.

These two ways of talking about God, the Cataphatic and the Apophatic, seem irreconcilable opposites. But in fact they *are* reconciled, in a higher plane, a higher mode of talking about God. This is the so called "way of *eminence*", the *via eminentiae* or *via abundantiae*, and so on. Here we say that God is 'super-good', for instance - that is, *more than* good. Notice how this manner of speaking combines some positive content - 'good' - with the negative 'super-'. The negative element does not just *remove* the positive content or *deny* it (then we would be back to Apophatic theology); it *goes beyond it*. It removes the positive content by saying *more*, not by saying *less*.

It is an interesting exercise to try to match this three-fold division with the one in *On the Divine Names*. As far as I can tell, none of the main divisions there clearly corresponds to the "way of eminence" in *The Mystical Theology*, although Pseudo-Denis certainly hints at it in II, 3-7 (the undifferentiated names of the first kind). And the second and third divisions in *On the Divine Names* both seem to come under Cataphatic theology.

In any case, this three-fold division in *The Mystical Theology* later became very famous. You still hear it talked about even today. Recall, Pseudo-Denis is the vehicle through which Gregory of Nyssa's *darkness mysticism* entered the Latin West. (See Chapter 5 above.)

*Final Note:* The *via eminentiae* is not meant to be a fully intellectual process. We can only "see" how it works by means of the *will*, not the intellect. That is part and parcel of putting God beyond Being and so beyond intelligibility.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In connection with Pseudo-Denis, you should also read Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, Ch. 9. And you should at least know about a book by Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, New York: Vintage Books, 1964. Ch. 6 of this book is a discussion of "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Theology of a Christian Magus". Also see her index for further references to Pseudo-Denis. Like everything Yates writes, this book is fascinating.

The Greek text of Pseudo-Denis' works is contained in Migne's *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*, vol. 3, Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857. That edition also contains a seventeenth-century Latin translation and annotations by Balthasar Corderius, SJ, together with the Greek text and Corderius' Latin translation of the *Paraphrasis (Georgii) Pachymerae* on the works.

A very useful publication is Phillipe Chevallier, *et al.*, *Dionysiaca: Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traductions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys l'Aréopagite*. . . , 2 vols., Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937-1950. These volumes contain the Greek text of Pseudo-Denis, based on a manuscript in Paris, and then, arranged interlinearly under this text, the Greek text of the PG, together with Latin translations by Hilduin (c. 832 - note: this translation predates Eriugena's), Eriugena (c. 867), Sarracen (c. 1167), Robert Grosseteste (c. 1235), Traversari (1436), Ficino (1492), Perion (1536), Tilmann (1536), Millanius (1554), Lanssell (1615), Hersent (1626), Hallcox (1633), Corderius (1634 - the same Latin translation that was later included in the PG), Cambefis (1622), and finally a French translation by Claude David (1705). There is also an important concordance of Pseudo-Dionysian terms.

Other items you should know about:

(Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite, *Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite: The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Thomas L. Campbell, tr., Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981.

(Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, John D. Jones, tr., ("Mediaeval Philosophical Texts in Translation," No. 21), Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1980.

(Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names and The Mystical Theology*, C. E. Rolt, tr., London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920.

(Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, John Parker, tr., 2 vols., London: James Parker & Co., 1897-1899. Reprinted in one volume, Merrick, NY: Richwood Publishing Company, 1976. The title page of each volume claims that the works are "Now First Translated into English from the Original Greek". *Note:* Parker thinks the works are by the *real* Denis the Areopagite! And I should warn you that this "translation" is really more properly a free paraphrase.

The "Introduction" to Campbell's translation contains a good discussion of the question of authenticity, and refers you to the appropriate further literature. There is also a good bibliography (but beware of typos!) at the end of Jones' volume.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER \S0

1. You might disagree. After all, we are at least saying that God is *free*, since that is part of the doctrine of creation. But Pseudo-Denis is in fact not altogether clear about the freedom of creation. See below. And in any event, to say that creation is a *free* act is probably only to say something *negative*, that God is not limited in certain ways, and so comes under heading (a) above. In no case do we get any positive idea about the divine nature.

## Chapter 27:

### John Scottus Eriugena

With this Chapter, please read the material on Eriugena in the Hyman and Walsh volume, and Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, Chs. 11-13. Also, read the passages from Eriugena translated below, in Volume II, Text \s3.

#### Life and Works

First, the man's name. Everyone agrees on the 'John', but the rest of his name is spelled in various ways. 'Scottus' frequently appears as 'Scotus', and 'Eriugena' is often found as 'Erigena'. 'Eriugena' has the accent on the 'u', while 'Erigena' has the accent on the 'i'.

'Scottus' means "the Scot" or "the Scotsman", and indeed you sometimes see our man referred to as "John the Scot". It was not a family name. According to one of his recent editors, the spelling 'Scottus' has the authority of the early manuscripts until perhaps the eleventh century. (I. P. Sheldon-Williams, ed., *Iohannis Scotti Eriugenaes Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae) Liber Primus*, p. 1 n. 4. See *ibid.*, pp. 1-5 in general for a brief account of Eriugena's life. My remarks on the man's name are taken from that account.) Occasionally one finds him called 'Scottigena' (= roughly, "Scots born") in the manuscripts.

Our author is not to be confused with another John Scotus, who lived much later. This other one is John Duns Scotus, in the late-thirteenth and very early-fourteenth centuries. His name is always spelled 'Scotus'.

The term 'Eriugena' was apparently made up by John himself while he was translating Pseudo-Denis. Sheldon-Williams suggests that he fashioned the term after the word 'Graiugena', which occurs in Vergil, rather than directly from Gaelic 'Eriu' (= Ireland). In any case, the earliest and best manuscripts spell it 'Eriugena', not 'Erigena'. It was not commonly used for our man until the seventeenth century (and then it was the form 'Erigena' that was favored). However you spell it, the word means "born in Ireland, or Erin", or "the Irishman". So when you put it all together, what we have is "John the Scot, the Irishman". This will sound perhaps less odd if we recall that in the ninth century, Ireland was considered part of "Scotland". In fact, it was called "Scotia Major".

Second, the man's dates. He lived ca. 810 - ca. 877. And that's all we need to say about that.

Eriugena knew Greek. For some reason, Greek never quite died out among the Irish monks. Eriugena knew it well enough to be thoroughly influenced by Greek thought, and to translate the works of Pseudo-Denis and some others. Eriugena worked at the court of Charles the Bald in France. We are now dealing with the late Carolingian period.

Now, as our next lesson in the "lore and gossip" part of this course, I must tell you the story of how Eriugena died. I do not guarantee the truth of this story. In fact, you can find exactly the same story told about other people. But, like all good gossip, it deserves to be repeated, and *ought* to be true, whether it is or not. Here it is: It seems that Eriugena's doctrine was so completely outrageous (you may come to agree with this soon) that one day his students simply couldn't take it any more. So they arose in a mass and stabbed him to death with their quill pens.

Here is a list of Eriugena's writings. The list is not complete (he wrote a lot), and some items on the list are of dubious authenticity. Eriugena's works are contained in PL 122, although some of the editions there are very untrustworthy.

Translations of Pseudo-Denis.

Translation of part of Maximus the Confessor's commentaries on Pseudo-Denis. (These are extant in part.)

Translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*.

Commentary on Pseudo-Denis' *Celestial Hierarchy*.

Commentary on St. John's Gospel. (Incomplete.)

Sermon on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel.

Fragments of another commentary on St. John's Gospel.

*On the Going Forth and the Return of the Soul to God*. (Fragment.)

*Annotationes in Martianum* - that is, notes on Martianus Cappella's "Marriage of Mercury and Philology" (a work that, alas, we don't read much any more). On Martianus, see Chapter \s2, above.

Commentaries on Boethius' *Theological Tractates*. (These are of very doubtful authenticity. There is also a commentary on the *Consolation* sometimes attributed to him, but it is now thought not to be his.)

Letters and verses.

*On the Division of Nature* (= *Periphyseon*). His main work.

*On Predestination*.

The fact that Eriugena wrote a *sermon* on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel suggests that he was at least a *deacon* in the Church hierarchy. There is some evidence that he was never ordained a priest.

It was John's *On Predestination* that first earned him the reputation of being a heretic. The work was written in 851 against the position of the theologian Gottschalk of Orbais. John's view was condemned by the (regional, not ecumenical) Councils of Valence (855) and Langres (859). His *On the Division of Nature* was condemned in the early thirteenth century. (See the letter to Bartholomew, bishop of Paris, in *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis*, I, pp. 106-107, dated 23 January, 1225.) The canon lawyer Hostiensis gave the following reasons for the condemnation (*ibid.*, n. 1):

In this book, which was condemned by the masters at Paris, many heresies are contained. Let it suffice to touch on three by way of example. The first and greatest is that all things are God . . . . The second is that the "primordial causes", which are called "ideas", that is, a form or exemplar, create and are created . . . . The third is that, after the consummation of the age [*that is, the end of the world*], there will be a uniting of the sexes, that is, there will be no distinction of sex.

We shall have to see whether there are any grounds for these charges.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

For a bibliography on Eriugena, see Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2. In the paperback version, it may be found in Part 1, p. 300. Eriugena's *On the Division of Nature* has been translated in part (with summaries of the rest) in *John the Scot: Periphyseon, On the Division of Nature*, Myra L. Uhlfelder, ed. and tr., summaries by Jean A. Potter, ("The Library of Liberal Arts"; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976). A critical edition of the *De divisione naturae* is being prepared by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

#### DOCTRINE

Eriugena is sometimes cited as the great mediaeval rationalist, the one mediaeval thinker who was able to resist the stifling domination of dogma and superstition and exalt the freedom of pure reason over blind faith. Let's see if there is any truth in that.



Eriugena does sometimes say that philosophy is the only way to salvation. See, for example, passage (1) of Text §3, in Volume II, below. (I will be referring to the passages in Volume II, Text §3 a lot in this Chapter, so I will just omit the clause 'in Volume II, Text §3'.) And he cites Augustine as his authority on this point. (Doesn't that already strike you as odd: citing authority to justify reason?) But it is clear that he is simply identifying true philosophy with true religion in this passage, so that he is not glorifying the one at the expense of the other.

In passage (2), he says that no authority (that is, Scripture or the writings of the Fathers) should frighten you away from the use of reason. But then he goes on to say that this is because true reason can never conflict with legitimate authority.

In passage (3), Eriugena seems to be saying that reason is *autonomous* and doesn't need the support of external authority. This does seem to give a much higher evaluation to the power of unaided reason than was common in the early Middle Ages, when it was frequently thought that the reason the pagans went astray was that they did not have access to the authority of revelation to guide their naturally weak and errant reason.

Putting all these passages together, it seems that Eriugena is not exalting reason at the *expense* of authority. He maintains a kind of *concordism* between the two. Recall the old view, found in Justin Martyr (see Chapter §4 above), that philosophy was a kind of revelation to the Greeks, just as the prophets were a revelation to the Jews, and that both prepared the way for Christianity. Recall also Romans 1:20, where the "invisible things of God" can be seen from "the things that are made" - that is, from creation. (See Chapter §5 above.) Eriugena is operating in this kind of context. Reason and revelation parallel one another closely, so that there is no question of playing the one off against the other.

Passage (4), for instance, says that *everything* in material creation is a kind of *sign* of something spiritual - a sign that can presumably be read by reason alone.

Passage (5) says that there are in fact *two* "theophanies" - two appearances of the divine, two ways of finding out about God: Scripture and the world of nature. (Here is where talk of the "Book of Nature" is appropriate. Indeed, I suspect it began in views like this.) The Word, he says, "has two feet".

Now let us turn to some other points of doctrine. Eriugena sometimes says things about creation that can only properly be said of God. Hence, he often *sounds* like a pantheist, and there is some justification for the first of the three charges of heresy listed by Hostiensis in the passage quoted above. See, for instance, Hyman and Walsh, p. 139, "there is nothing outside himself". Again, Hyman and Walsh, p. 140, "Divine nature . . . is made in all things."

Eriugena is *strongly* influenced by Pseudo-Denis and by Gregory of Nyssa. See, for example, Hyman and Walsh, pp. 141-145, on the divine names and the three-fold way of talking about God (the positive, the negative, and the way of eminence). This is straight out of Pseudo-Denis.

Among the traditional liberal arts, Eriugena had a special interest in "dialectic". Its role is to *divide* (note the word), to discriminate the nature of things, and so to *organize*. Hence, when we turn to the *De divisione naturae* (On the Division of Nature, again note the word), what we have is a *dialectical* work, a work concerned with Nature as the first principle, and then all its divisions and subdivisions, and then how they all fit together again. In the structure of this work, there is a kind of analysis and then a synthesis, patterned quite consciously after the neo-Platonic ecstasy and return, a kind of story of the One and the Many.

Ready? Here we go! I warn you, this is wild stuff!

The first division of Nature is into what is and what is not. Now we will later see that Eriugena goes on to give *five* kinds of Nothing - that is, of "what is not". But first he gives us *another* division, one that cuts across this first one. See Hyman and Walsh, p. 135. This second division is fourfold:

CREATES? \RIS CREATED? \B  
 God as source YES \RNO \B  
 Primordial causes YES \RYES \B  
 "Creatures" NO \RYES \B  
 God as goal NO \RNO \B

*TABLE \S0-I\I+3D: ERIUGENA'S FOURFOLD DIVISION OF NATURE*

Now some remarks about this division. First of all, clearly there are no other possibilities; all the combinations have been exhausted.

Second, in the second row, the phrase 'primordial causes' refers to the divine ideas. They are the ideas in the mind of God. They are just as eternal as God is, and yet Eriugena thinks they are dependent on, and so in a sense inferior to, God himself. Hence, while they are "eternal", they are not, he says, "coeternal" with God. They are not quite on a par with him. The divine ideas are creative. That much is just standard doctrine. You can find that in Augustine. The divine ideas are the patterns after which the world is fashioned, the original exemplars and paradigms of all things, Platonic Forms moved into the mind of God. But because Eriugena thinks they are dependent and therefore at least minimally distinct from God, he says they are "created". Not created in time; the "primordial causes" have always been there. But created nonetheless insofar as they are dependent. (See Chapter \S6 above on whether the notion of having a beginning in time is part of the notion of creation.) This is the basis for the second charge of heresy leveled against Eriugena in the thirteenth century. (See the quotation from Hostiensis above.) I suppose it is not too much to suggest that such a doctrine has a built-in tendency toward Arianism.

The first and the fourth rows of the above table do not represent distinct things. God as source is of course the same thing as God as goal. The distinction is only in the way of looking at it, whether you're "coming or going". Once again, there is a kind of reference here to the neo-Platonic ecstasy and return.

Now God, of course, is a kind of Nothing. Recall Pseudo-Denis and the neo-Platonists, for whom God was above Being, and so not a being. God, therefore, is one of the things that are not, in the very first division of nature - the one before the above table.

Since God is not a being, he is therefore not intelligible. (Recall the equation of being and intelligibility.) This means not only that we cannot understand him, but also that he cannot understand himself. Creation is a kind of divine effort by God to understand himself, to see himself in a mirror. This is also a doctrine found in some neo-Platonists, for instance in Marius Victorinus. (Remember him? I won't tell you this time where you've seen him before. Go look it up.)

God does not understand himself. But he is not ignorant of himself, if by that we mean that there is something he doesn't know about himself. He simply doesn't know what he is, since he isn't a "what" at all. See \f1 passage (6).

From creatures we can learn (and so can God) that he is, but we can never learn what he is, since there isn't anything to learn about that. In the thirteenth century, Aquinas will pick up on this and make a similar claim, that we can know that God is but not what he is, although it won't

be on the basis of the same kind of neo-Platonic metaphysics. (And Aquinas probably didn't get it from Eriugena.)

Eriugena pursues the point further in ¶1 passage (9). God is not a genus or a species, or in a genus or species. He is not related to creatures as either their whole or their part, and so on. Notice what Eriugena is doing here. He is systematically denying every reasonable way of interpreting pantheism. The charge of heresy on this point must be very carefully considered. What are we to make of his pantheistic-sounding claims in the light of this passage? Well, it just isn't clear. But, if you think about it, it is clear that it is hard to be a real pantheist and a neo-Platonist at the same time, at least a neo-Platonist of the variety that puts God above being.

Since God is a nothing, we can speak of creation, as a coming forth from God, as being in a sense *ex nihilo*, "out of nothing", interpreted now as "out of God". See ¶1 passage (10). This is an interesting passage, providing a curious interpretation of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. The end of the passage sounds pantheistic.

Note: Eriugena does *not* take the phrase '*ex nihilo*' to refer to the absence of any pre-existing *matter*, as most people do. He doesn't believe in matter even *after* the creation, so creation *ex nihilo* could hardly mean *that* for him. See *passage (16)*. For Eriugena, all reality, including physical reality, is made up entirely of *spiritual* beings. Recall Gregory of Nyssa on this point (Chapter §7 above).

Hence Eriugena is led to reinterpret the classical notion of creation *ex nihilo*. He does sometimes *talk* of "matter", but it is not clear *what* he is talking about then. It is not matter in the usual sense. (In my own opinion, it is not clear what people are talking when they talk about matter in the "usual" sense either. But that's another story.)

Now take a look at the Hyman and Walsh passage on pp. 136-138. Here we get the famous five kinds of nothing. This is a very curious passage, and shows the difficulty people had for a long time coming to terms with the notion of negation. You will find evidence of this also in Anselm's *Monologion*. The five types of nothing for Eriugena are as follows:

(1) Where Being is identified with that which is knowable by sensation or intellect, *non-being* or "nothing" amounts to whatever is unknowable and cannot be sensed. God is a non-being or a "nothing" in this sense. This is basically a Parmenidean notion of "nothing", going back to the Parmenidean identification of Being and intelligibility. (Parmenides, of course, would not have included knowledge by the *senses*.)

(2) Where Being is identified with *sameness* or *identity*, non-being or "nothing" amounts to *difference*. If we are affirming *being* of *X* when we say that *X* "is" *Y*, then we affirm a kind of *non-being* of *X* when we say that *X* "is not" *Y*. Not being *Y* counts as a kind of not-being - that is, as a kind of "nothing". This too is Parmenidean in spirit. You will also find talk like this in Plato's *Sophist*.

Note: To say that *X* and *Y* are "the same" or "identical" is to say that they are *one*. Hence, the identification of Being with sameness or identity, which underlies this second sense of 'nothing', is in effect an identification of Being with the One, and is incompatible with certain kinds of neo-Platonism. It is odd (but not altogether uncharacteristic) to find *both* these senses of 'nothing' in Eriugena.

(3) There is a sense in which *future* things are not beings - that is, not *yet* beings. In this sense, being is that which is already settled and fixed, to wit, the present or the past. The idea here seems to be based on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, Ch. 9, the famous discussion of future contingents (the "sea battle tomorrow"). The line Eriugena takes here has important implications for the problem of foreknowledge and free will that we have already discussed in Chapter §8

above. For Eriugena, there is simply no problem. God *doesn't* know what we are going to do in advance, so that there is no problem with free will on this account. At the same time, this is no compromise on God's omniscience. There is nothing God does not know - that is, no *being* or truth. Our future actions don't exist; they are not beings - not yet. On this view, while omniscience is compatible with free will, omniscience does *not* entail foreknowledge of future events.

(4) In yet another sense, Being is identified with the intelligible, the *unchangeable*. Hence, non-being or "nothing" is identified with *change*. Once again, the connection with Parmenides is obvious. (The difference between this and the first kind of "nothing" above seems to be the addition of sensation in the account of that first kind of "nothing".) Compare Boethius' first sense of 'nature' in Chapter \s9 above.

(5) In the last sense, *sin* is thought of as a kind of non-being. Perhaps this comes from identifying being with goodness, so that sin, which falls short of goodness, to that extent falls short of being too. Note that if being is identified with goodness, considerations like those raised under sense (2) above apply here as well.

For Eriugena, man is a *microcosm*, a kind of miniature of the entire cosmos. See *passage (15)*, and recall Gregory of Nyssa (Chapter \s7 above). Hence the sin of Adam (original sin) is not just his own personal fall, and not even just the Fall of the entire human race. On the contrary, it is an event of *cosmic* proportions. With the sin of Adam, *the entire creation fell*. Hence Redemption is not just redemption of the human race, but of all of creation. See *passage (14)*.

The Fall (original sin) is regarded as a kind of dropping away from the ideal man - and of course the Ideal man is the divine idea of "man". See *passage (11)*, according to which the *real* man is a certain intellectual notion in the divine mind. (Notice, he says it is *made* there. The divine ideas are created.) And included in that divine idea of man is the idea of all *other* things too, since man is a microcosm. It follows therefore that the *true* man contains only what the *ideal* man contains (since the *true* man just *is* the ideal man) - that is, only what is contained in the divine idea or notion of man. In short, only what belongs to the *essence or definition* of man. Now the definition of man is just 'rational animal', as we all know. But notice: there is no mention of the sexes there. Hence - *passage (17)* - the *true man* has no sex. The division into sexes is a consequence of the Fall, of original sin. Hence, at the end of the world, when all things are reabsorbed into their primordial causes - we'll look at this below - the division of the sexes will vanish again. This is the basis for the *third* charge of heresy described by Hostiensis in the *passage* quoted above.

You see here how we get a kind of identification of several notions at once. Creation is identified with neo-Platonic ecstasy, which is in turn identified with the Fall. Conversely, the neo-Platonic return is identified with Redemption. Pretty neat.

*Passage (13)* spins out this ecstasy and return in some detail. Man started off in the divine image, equal to the heavenly powers (the angels?). But he chose to withdraw (*note*: the identification of creation with the Fall seems to make creation a matter of *our* choosing), to "fall" away into the likeness of brute, irrational animals. Man's ruin carries him farther and farther away from true rationality, true life, true humanity, to that which lacks sensation, life and reason - that is, into the *corruptible* body. (Remember, this does not mean *matter*; there is no matter here.)

But then we come to the *turning point*. The Fall can continue no further; there is nothing lower than this. We are not allowed to "fall" into pure nothingness, to be completely annihilated.

(Note: Is this yet a *sixth* sense of 'nothing'?) At the very point at which it would seem that this is about to happen, the very *extremity* of our Fall, the very nadir of our existence, we in fact begin the Return. *Death* - that is, the dissolution of the body - is not the last stage of our degeneration; it is the first stage of our return. *Passage (13)* goes on to detail five stages of this return:

(1) First, the body is resolved into the four elements. This is death, the corruption of the body.

(2) Second, there is the general resurrection at the end of the world, where we will each get our body back again. You may think this sounds like a bad thing, a regression, but it isn't. For:

(3) Third, this "glorified", resurrected body is then transformed into spirit.

(4) Spirit then becomes absorbed into the primordial causes. That is, we return to the divine ideas whence we came.

(5) Finally, all of nature and the primordial causes are reabsorbed into God.

Does all of this involve a loss of personal identity or not? It is hard to say, but I suggest not. In particular, the last stage probably should not be read as saying that the primordial causes or divine ideas cease to exist and somehow get lost in the sea of divinity. For remember, the divine ideas are just as eternal as God is, although they are dependent on him and so not *co-eternal*. Similarly, the business about the air and the light at the end of text (13) suggests something less than metaphysical loss of identity. Light *transforms* the air, but it is nonetheless air for all that. The metaphor of light and air is a fairly common one in mystical literature, and it is usually meant to suggest that the kind of transformation or absorption we are talking about is not a literal, ontological loss of identity.

Finally, look once again at Hyman and Walsh, pp. 141-145, for a relatively clear summary and explanation of Pseudo-Denis' three-fold theology.

## Chapter 28:

### Anselm of Canterbury: Preliminaries

#### Select Bibliography on Anselm

Anselm's collected works have been critically edited in six volumes by F. S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi Opera omnia*. Translations

There are lots of them. I should mention the following:

S. N. Deane, tr., *St. Anselm: Basic Writings*, (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1962). This is the volume I recommended in Chapter 2, above, for use with this survey. In this and the following Chapters on Anselm, I will be giving page references to this volume. *Note*: There are at least two different printings of this volume, with different paginations and different arrangements of the material. I will give page references according to "later" version. For a table of the differences between the two versions, see Appendix B in Volume II below.

Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, trs., *Anselm of Canterbury: Truth, Freedom, and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967). Contains the *De veritate*, *De libertate arbitrii* and the *De casu diaboli*. All very important works.

Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, trs., *Anselm of Canterbury: Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption: Theological Treatises*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970). Contains two letters on Roscelin, the *Epistola de incarnatione verbi*, the *De conceptu virginali et de originali peccato*, *De processione spiritus sancti*, *Epistolae de sacramentis*, and *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinatione et gratiae dei cum libero arbitrio* (on the problem of divine foreknowledge and human free will).

Desmond Paul Henry, ed. & tr., *The De grammatico of St. Anselm: The Theory of Paronymy*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964). Text, translation, study.

#### Studies

See also Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 331 of the paperback edition, for further bibliography.

Desmond Paul Henry, *The Logic of St. Anselm*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

Desmond Paul Henry, *Commentary on De grammatico: The Historical- Logical Dimensions of a Dialogue of St. Anselm's*, (Dordrecht, D. Reidel, 1974).

Jasper Hopkins, *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972).

Hopkins book contains a very full bibliography, pp. 260-275.

On Anselm's famous "ontological argument", there are innumerable secondary sources. Among the most useful are:

Alvin Plantinga, *The Ontological Argument from St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday "Anchor" Books, 1965). A collection of readings.

Alvin Plantinga, "Kant's Objection to the Ontological Argument," *The Journal of Philosophy* 63 (1966), pp. 537-546. This paper has been reprinted in the Bobbs-Merrill Reprints series, PHIL-165.

David Lewis, "Anselm and Actuality,"

*Notre Dame Philosophical Review* 4 (1970), pp. 175-188. This is probably the best paper to date on the ontological argument. Nevertheless, there is a problem with it, as we'll be discussing below. On the problem, see:

Paul Vincent Spade, "Anselm and Ambiguity," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7 (1976), pp. 433-445. (Note: Please don't consider this one as included under the description "among the most useful" above.)

There is also a *very* full bibliography on the ontological argument in Hopkins' *Companion*, pp. 261-265.

## Historical BACKGROUND

Anselm of Canterbury lived from 1033 to 1109. We are roughly 250 years after Eriugena.

A lot has happened in the meantime, although not a whole lot as happened in philosophy. During the early centuries of the Christian Era, the barbarians were running around Europe and Rome was falling. Augustine's *The City of God*, for instance, was written at least in part in response to charges by those diehard Roman pagans who were spreading it about that the reason Rome - the Eternal City - had fallen to the Visigoths in 410 was that the gods were angry because Christianity had been established as the official state religion. Well, things got steadily worse. Boethius was one of the few bright lights in a period of real disintegration. These really were the "Dark Ages". For a while things improved in the ninth century under Charlemagne and his Carolingian successors. For instance, we had Eriugena during this period. But that revival was only temporary. Everything soon fell apart again with the onslaught of the Vikings. There wasn't much time for philosophical speculation when most people couldn't read, and the monks who could had to be constantly running into hiding because the Norse raiders kept trying to steal their altar vessels, burn their monasteries and kill them.

But around the year 1000, everything magically changed! It all settled down. There was a revival of *everything* at that time: of political states, of architecture, of music, of schools, of everything. It was as though the world had been waiting for the turn of the millennium to begin anew. One mediaeval author of the time was himself aware of this change, and wrote how, around the year 1000, the white stone spires of new churches began sprouting up all over Europe.

Well, philosophy took part in this revival. Up until the year 1000, we could count the philosophers of any significance on one hand. But after that date, they become *very* numerous - so many in fact that you can't keep track of all of them. Furthermore, philosophy about this time, although continuing in the basically Platonic stream we have seen all the way along, gets much less *visionary* and much more *argumentative*. We begin to get some serious attempts at *proving* things. We will see this quite clearly in Anselm. Later on, we will speculate about *why* this happened.

## ANSELM'S LIFE, AND REMARKS ON OTHER THINGS

Anselm was an important man. Although he is called Anselm "of Canterbury", he was an Italian by birth, from Aosta. He was born there in 1033. Later, he went to the Benedictine abbey of Bec in Normandy and became a monk. At that time, the famous *Lanfranc* was abbot at Bec. Now, you will recall what the Normans were doing about this time - that is, about 1066 and all that. They were conquering England, right? Well, Lanfranc went to England and became Archbishop of Canterbury, and Anselm replaced him as abbot of Bec. Later on, Anselm himself went to England and likewise became Archbishop of Canterbury. He got involved in the investiture controversy with King Henry I. Anselm died in 1109.

Incidentally, notice the extent of Anselm's wanderings: from Italy to Normandy, and finally to England. This is a symptom of the extent to which things had settled down in his day. It was once again relatively safe to travel.

*Note:* Anselm of Canterbury is also sometimes called Anselm of Bec. I don't recall ever having seen 'Anselm of Aosta', but that would certainly be all right too. In any event, he is *not* to be confused with some other Anselms who were running around during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, for instance Anselm of Lucca or Anselm of Laon.

Most of Anselm's writings were done while he was at Bec. The *Cur deus homo* ("Why a God-Man?" or "Why Did God Become Man?") was written while he was Archbishop of Canterbury, but the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* were both written at Bec.

Anselm is a *very* exciting author. I have more and more regard for him the more I read him. In Anselm, you get some hard argumentation and really meaty philosophy, without all the scholastic jargon and fine distinctions that came later. Anselm did *much* more than just come up with the so called "ontological" argument. His clarity and argumentativeness make him an ideal author to emphasize in undergraduate courses in mediaeval philosophy. If you are ever called upon to teach such a course, keep this in mind.

Anselm was very much in the Augustinian tradition, as was everyone else at this time. Augustine was supreme. But Anselm was also influenced by Boethius. Boethius' influence in philosophy was something that *grew* gradually, and was especially strong in the twelfth century. We can already see evidence of it, however, in Anselm. See, for instance, *Monologion*, Ch. 24, p. 129 of the Deane translation, where Anselm makes use of Boethius' notion of *eternity* (see Chapter §3 above, on Boethius' "Philosophical Lexicon").

Also, in *Cur deus homo*, II, Ch. 18a (the numbering of the chapters varies in the manuscripts), there is a reference to Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, 9, the discussion of the "sea battle tomorrow" and of the problem of future contingent statements. This is a famous passage, and we will see it again later on when we come to Ockham's discussion of foreknowledge and free will. But Anselm knew no Greek at all, so that he could *only* have known this passage through Boethius' translation and perhaps his commentary.

I want to call your further attention to *Cur deus homo*, II, Ch. 18a. There are at least two other noteworthy things about it:

(1) First, there is a brief discussion, on pp. 287-288, of whether God can change the past. Later on we will see a discussion of this very issue by one Peter Damian. I just call your attention to it now.

(2) Second, on pp. 290-291, there is a discussion of foreknowledge and free will. Anselm makes Boethius' distinction between simple and conditional necessity (none too clearly, I might add - and there is some question about just what this distinction comes to in Anselm, and whether it is the same as Boethius' distinction or not). On the other hand, despite Anselm's apparent familiarity with Boethius on this topic, he seems to *regress* on the problem. Boethius seems more clear-headed than Augustine on this question, and Anselm seems to have reverted to Augustine's confusion. (I warn you again, however, that this is all subject to scholarly dispute over the proper interpretation of Anselm on these points.)

Anselm wrote a tract *On the Harmony of the Foreknowledge, the Predestination, and the Grace of God with Free Choice* (¶4De concordia . . . ), in which he discusses the problem at much greater length than he does in the brief allusion in *Cur deus homo*, II, 24. This tract bears out my claim of regression. But you can see it also in *Cur deus homo*. See, for instance, II, Ch. 18(a), p. 290 of the Deane translation, where Anselm is talking about the claim that the virgin Mary knew *in advance*, in virtue of a prophecy, that Jesus was going to die *freely*. Anselm says (my translations here and below, not Deane's - although I will continue to give you references to Deane's volume)¶i+3d:



For that reason, since her faith was true, it was necessary for it to be going to be so. But, if it once again bothers you that I say 'it was necessary', recall that the truth of the virgin's faith was not the cause of his dying voluntarily. Rather, because this was going to be, [her] faith was true.

This seems to be just the view that Boethius rejected at the beginning of his own discussion in *Consolation*, Book V, the view that confused necessity with causality, and thought that the problem was one of which *caused* which.

Recall how Augustine had such a causal notion of necessity: *x* is *necessitated* by some *y*, which causes it from outside. (See Chapter \s4 above.) Anselm seems to have this same notion. This is confirmed in *Cur deus homo*, II, Ch. 5, (Deane, p. 258)i+3d:

Finally, *God does nothing out of necessity, since he is in no way forced into or prevented from doing anything*. And when we say that God does something, as it were out of the necessity of avoiding dishonor, of which he certainly has no fear, we must understand rather that he does this out of the necessity of preserving his honor. This necessity is nothing other than the immutability of his honor, which he has from himself *and not from [anything] else and is therefore [only] improperly called necessity*. Please read the entire *Proslogion*, *Monologion*, and *Cur deus homo*. Also read Gaunilo's reply to Anselm's *Proslogion*, called *In Behalf of the Fool*, and Anselm's

response to him. In short, read all the texts in the Deane volume - but concentrate, if time is a problem, on the ones *other* than the *Cur deus homo*. Read it too, but read it quickly. Also, please read Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, Ch. 15. (We'll do Ch. 14 later.)

## NOTES TO CHAPTER \S0

1. Lewis' "Anselm and Actuality" has been reprinted in David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 10-20, with an added "Postscript" on pp. 21-25. In the "Postscript", Lewis revises some of the things he said in the original paper, but not, so far as I can see, in any way that ultimately affects his reading of the ontological argument - or therefore the problem I think I see in that reading of it.

## Chapter 29: Faith and Reason in Anselm

Anselm was interested in trying to demonstrate certain truths of the faith. That is, he wanted to prove rigorously things he already believed in. As a Christian, for instance, he already believed in the existence of God. Nevertheless, he thought that human understanding was enough to prove the existence of God by itself, without appealing to faith. He was interested in trying to find necessary reasons (rationes necessariae) for the truths of the faith. These "necessary reasons" are a common theme in Anselm. In the *Proslogion* (also called the *Proslogium*), for instance, he tries to prove the *existence* and *nature* of God. In the earlier *Monologion* (also sometimes called the *Monologium* - it depends on whether you want to be Greek or Latin about these endings), he gives some additional proofs for these things, and tries to find *necessary reasons* for the Trinity! In *Cur deus homo*, he tries to find necessary reasons for the Incarnation ("Cur deus homo" = "Why a God-man?").

All these necessary reasons are based on pure reason (or at least they're supposed to be). There is no appeal to Scripture, no appeal to theology, and so on. Contrast this with the technique in Augustine and Boethius, who thoroughly mixed theology and philosophy. In Anselm, the two begin to become separated more clearly. Recall, for instance, how Boethius, in the important passage of *Consolation*, Book V, where he is explaining the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human free will, appeals at the crucial point to the doctrine that God's knowledge proceeds by *intelligence*, not by *reason*, and what the difference between the two is. He pulls this claim out of thin air! There is no argument for it, although there might well be solid *authoritative* reasons for it. Anselm would have tried to *prove* it.

It is instructive to contrast Augustine's *De trinitate* with Anselm's treatment of the same matter in the *Monologion*. Augustine was looking for various analogies to the Trinity in human experience. The most fertile analogy he could find is the human mind itself, where we find memory, intelligence, and will, each of which is identical with the mind, and yet somehow distinct from the other two, and each of which is equal to the others: we *remember* that we remember, know and will; we *know* that we remember, know and will; and we *will* to remember, know and will. Augustine thinks this provides a kind of glimpse of how the Trinity works, by analogy. But he certainly does *not* think he has *proven* the doctrine of the Trinity. He takes that for granted all along. All he is trying to do is to explain how we are to understand it, insofar as we can. Anselm, by contrast, thinks he is *proving* the Trinity. Study his procedure carefully.

It is interesting to look at Anselm's various statements of his methodology. Look at the preface to the *Monologion*, Deane, tr., p. 81 ("It is in accordance . . . light of truth.") Also, *Cur deus homo*, I, 10, p. 215 ("Let us suppose . . . eternal salvation.") The latter passage says, in effect, let us take for granted all the things we have proved in earlier works by necessary reasons. But let us not take for granted the Incarnation. Can we then *prove* the doctrine of the Incarnation on the basis of necessary reasons? And furthermore (p. 214), can we show that the *death of Christ* is "reasonable and necessary"? Needless to say, Anselm was criticized for this extreme use of *reason* in religion. He was accused of over-rationalism. But note two things:

(1) Anselm did *not* think there was no room for *mystery* in religion. While he thought it possible, for instance, to prove that God is a Trinity of persons, he did *not* think it was possible to explain clearly just *how* the Trinity worked. The talk about intellect and will in God provides a proof *that* the Trinity exists, but does not explain completely how it all fits together. See

*Monologion*, Ch. 64. Likewise, he thought it possible to prove the necessity of the Incarnation - the need for God to become man. But just *how* it worked - how the human nature and the divine nature were brought together in a single person - he thought *that* was beyond our comprehension.

Please note also the limits of Anselm's use of "necessary reasons". He was not importing Greek necessitarianism into Christian thought, at the expense of divine freedom. For instance, he would not have thought that there was any necessary reason why God had to create. But, *given* that the world exists, Anselm thought it *was* necessary (it necessarily *followed*) that it was created *ex nihilo*. See *Monologion*, Chs. 7-8. Similarly, the *Cur deus homo* does *not* try to show that God *had* to become man willy-nilly. But *given* that man

exists, and *given* that he was created for eternal happiness, and *given* that he freely fell, *then* the Incarnation was necessary. Recall Boethius' distinction between absolute and conditional necessity. It is something like the latter that Anselm has in mind here.

(2) Anselm was *not* trying to prove all these things as though they were subject to some doubt. It's not as though he believes in God, but just to make sure here's a proof. He doesn't think the role of his arguments is to *support* a faith that might otherwise falter. Rather, the purpose of these proofs is to *prove* what he already believes by faith, to *explore* the doctrines of the faith. He is concerned to *examine* Christian doctrine, rather than to *establish or defend* it. Nevertheless, while this is his *motivation*, his *method* (of appealing only to pure reason) guarantees, if it is applied correctly, that the arguments he comes up with will have whatever probative force they have for *believer and unbeliever alike*. That is why he can address his so called "ontological" argument to the Biblical Fool.

Recall our discussion of the Church Fathers (Chapter \s2 above). There were *two* kinds of pressures that might bring you to use philosophy in thinking about your religion: *external* pressures, resulting in an *apologetical defense* of your religion, or *internal pressures*, arising from a desire to understand what you believe.

This peculiar attitude becomes clear at the beginning of the *Proslogion*, at the end of Ch. 1, pp. 52-53 ("I do not endeavor . . . unless I believed, I should not understand.") *I believe in order that I might understand* (*Credo ut intelligam*) - a very famous slogan. Note the difficulties in understanding it; if he *really* couldn't understand unless he believed, then in what sense do his proofs not *presuppose* the faith? Perhaps he means to say that, while his proofs are iron-clad and do not *assume* the faith, so that in a sense they should convince even the unbeliever, nevertheless the unbeliever is somehow *not in a position* to see how strong these proofs really are. That is, lack of faith not only means you are an unbeliever, *it also somehow affects your ability to use your pure reason*. Is there an implicit doctrine of illumination here - confused with revelation? Anselm is very hard to interpret on these matters. Perhaps he didn't have any clear idea *what* he meant on these issues.

## Chapter 30:

Anselm:

### The Monologion Arguments for the Existence of God

First, let me give you a kind of road-map of the whole of the Monologion.

(a) Chs. 1-8 give some proofs for the existence and nature of God.

(b) Chs. 9-12 begin to talk about the mind of God. You begin to get the notion of the divine Word, which is going to lead into a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity - a discussion that very closely follows Augustine's *De trinitate*, except that Anselm thinks his discussion is much more of a "necessary reason" than Augustine did, who thought this whole business was nothing more than a kind of metaphor. (See Chapter \s2 above.)

(c) After leading right up to the notion of the divine Word, he breaks off and introduces a kind of digression that runs from Ch. 13 to Ch. 28, more on the nature of God apart from considerations of the Trinity. In the middle of this digression, in Ch. 18-24, we have a very interesting discussion of how God is and is not in space and time. See Chapter \s3, below.

(d) The digression ends in Ch. 28, and Anselm begins again in Ch. 29 where he left off in Ch. 12 - with a discussion of the Trinity. This runs to Ch. 64.

(e) Finally, there is some miscellaneous additional material at the end, on life after death, immortality of the soul, and so on.

### The Arguments in Ch. 1

Let us begin at the beginning. In Ch. 1, Anselm gives his first argument for the existence of God, Deane tr., pp. 84-86. This is not a particularly forceful argument unless you are an out and out Platonist and a realist of a pretty strong variety with respect to universals. Actually, there are *two* arguments contained in this Ch. 1, and both of them are in effect arguments for Plato's Form of the Good.

(1) The first argument runs like this (p. 84): Men desire things insofar as they think they are good (whether they are really good or not). (Note: Does this amount to saying that no one knowingly chooses evil? Perhaps not. Desires are not at all the same things as choices. I can choose, after all, to act contrary to my desires. See Chapter \s4, above, on the thesis that no one knowingly does evil.) Now as a matter of fact, *many* things are good. *Hence*, there is some *one* thing, goodness, in virtue of which all those good things are good. (Note, incidentally, that the first step of this argument, the one about desires, seems completely idle. It is not appealed to later on. So, as far as the actual argument is concerned, whether that first step commits one to the Socratic principle, that no one knowingly chooses evil, is an altogether idle point.)

This argument rests on a pretty strong realism: whenever two or more things are *alike* in being F ('F' is to be replaced by some adjective), there is a *single* entity, F-ness, in virtue of which they are all F. Boethius had argued against this kind of strong realism in his *Commentary on Porphyry*, although at least one passage in his *De trinitate* allows a realism as strong as this. (See Chapter \s5 above.)

That's the first argument, in effect an argument for a Form of the Good.

(2) The second argument in the passage is on p. 85, and goes like this: Whenever you have things that are *more-F* and *less-F*, they are measured against a standard or ideal, which is F to the *highest degree: the most-F*.

First of all, note the self-predication assumption here. The standard by which we judge things to be more or less F is itself F, and is indeed F most of all. See p. 86 (but this is my translation): "But who will doubt that the thing through which all things are good is itself a great good?"

This is Platonism, in the sense that it is a Platonic principle that is perhaps plausible in the case of *values and mathematics*. Approximations of *circularity* are judged with respect to the *perfect circle*, which is a *circle par excellence*. The principle is perhaps not so plausible in realms other than values and mathematics. We have larger and not-so-large, but no *largest*. Largeness, however, is not a matter of values or mathematical ideals. Once again, we see the thesis verified: Platonism always works best in the realm of values and mathematics. Of course in the present instance, that's just fine, since we are talking about a case of *values*, goodness, so that the principle is quite at home here.

There is an implicit third principle operating in this Ch. 1, namely, that the two arguments we have just examined are talking about *the same thing*. That is, that in virtue of which all good things are good is also the standard against which good things are *measured*. Things *get* their goodness from the same thing to which we turn to *measure* their goodness.

If we grant Anselm this implicit assumption (and it is *only* implicit), then the two arguments complement one another nicely. The first argument shows that there is *one* entity, goodness, but does *not* show that it is *itself* good. The second argument shows that there is a *highest good*, which is itself good, but does not show that there is only *one* of them. You need both - and you need them both to be talking about the same entity - if you want to be sure you are talking about God.

Of course, even if you do have the implicit third principle, you still have only shown the existence of something like Plato's Form of the Good. You have to *go on* now to argue that this thing the existence of which you have just proved has the *other* properties associated with God. Anselm gives that a try in later chapters. (On that task, see Chapter \s6 above, and Paul Vincent Spade "What Is A Proof for the Existence of God?")

If you are familiar with Plato, you will remember that there is a problem, one that Plato himself brings up in the first part of his *Parmenides*. This is the famous *Third Man Argument*, and it goes like this. Suppose two things:

- (a) Whenever you have a class of things that are alike in being F, there is some *other* entity, F-ness, in which they all share. (The "One-Over-Many" Principle)
- (b) F-ness is itself F. (The "Self-Predication" Principle.)

If you accept those two things, then you are going to have a problem. If *A* and *B* are both F, then there is something *else* *C*, called F-ness, in virtue of which *A* and *B* are both F. But F-ness is itself F. Now take the class *A*, *B*, *C*. They are all F. Hence there is a *fourth* thing, *D* - a kind of F-ness<sub>2</sub> - in virtue of which *A*, *B*, and *C* are all F. And so on. We have an *infinite regress*. Hence, we never *really* have an explanation how things got to be F. However far you go, you always have to appeal one step further.

How does Anselm avoid Plato's Third Man regress? (Of course Anselm did not have the text of Plato, and probably never heard of the Third Man Argument as such. But the problems involved are very much the same.) Premise (b) above is just the principle behind the second argument in Anselm's Ch. 1, and premise (a) seems to be the principle behind the first argument. Well, Anselm does manage to avoid the infinite regress. He *denies* that the one entity in virtue of

which all those F things are F has to be *other than* - *distinct* from - the things that are F. That is, he would delete the word 'other' in (a).

Virtue and happiness are both good in virtue of goodness, which is *itself* good. But we don't have to go any further to explain why *goodness* is good. It is good *through itself*. See Deane, p. 86.

### THE ARGUMENT IN CH. 3

The notion of things that have certain properties they don't get by *participation* in something else, but just have *through themselves*, leads to another argument for the existence of God, in *Monologion*, Ch. 3. This is a much more interesting argument, much tighter. It does not rely on the Platonic principle of "degrees", as does the argument on p. 85, but it does rely at one point on the *One-Over-Many* principle, the principle operative in the argument on p. 84.

The key notion in this argument in Ch. 3 is the notion of a thing's *existing through* something. The idea is "Where does the thing get its existence?", "What does it *depend on*?" Now Anselm is perfectly willing to grant that some things don't depend on anything else at all for their existence. If they exist, they exist *only through themselves*. They are, so to speak, "self-existent"; they depend on nothing besides themselves. We want to *allow* this, but we don't want to *assume* that there are any such things at the outset of the argument.

There are some implicit assumptions about this relation of "existing through".

(a) It is *reflexive*. Everything exists through itself.

This is not to say, of course that everything exists *only* through itself. That is quite another question. It is only to say that everything depends *at least* on itself in order to exist, in the sense that, if it didn't exist, then it wouldn't exist. And this is, indeed, trivially true.

(b) It is *transitive*. If A exists through B and B exists through C, then A exists through C too.

(c) It is *antisymmetric*. If A exists through something *else* other than itself, then that something else cannot in turn exist through A.

If  $A \_ B$ , then if A exists through B, B does not exist through A. (And if  $A = B$ , then of course B exists through A, in virtue of the reflexivity of "exists through" in clause (a) above.)

The idea behind (c) is simply that *you can't give what you don't have, and you can't get what you've already got*. If B gives existence to A, then B *already* exists. So A cannot in turn pass it on to B; B *already has* it. B may get its existence from something *else* - say C - but not from A. Now of course, if B exists *through itself* (as it does, from (a), above), then *in a sense* I suppose you can say that B gives existence to itself. But that is not a very good way to put it, since it makes it sound as though B existed before it exists, which is absurd. It is better to say that when A *exists through* B, that amounts to B's *giving* existence to A, which does not already have it, only where  $A \_ B$ .

These are implicit premises. The argument starts by observing that nothing exists through nothing. That is, everything exists through something, even if only through *itself*. This follows from (a) above.

Now if everything exists through something, then there must be some *one* thing, or perhaps a group of *several* things, through which *everything* exists. This is trivially true, since if you just allow the "group" to be big enough, so that it includes absolutely *everything*, you've got it.

Now Anselm is going to try to show that the hypothesis that there are *several* things through which, jointly, everything exists leads to a contradiction. Or rather, the hypothesis that

you *need* to have several things here leads to a contradiction. In short, there is some *one* thing that turns out to be all you need to get the existence of everything else. And we know who that is going to be, don't we?

Now what is going on here? Basically, Anselm is looking for the *smallest* class of things that suffices to explain the existence of *everything whatever*. And he is going to try to show that this class consists of *exactly* one thing and no more.

Picture it this way: Start off with the class of *all* things that exist. Surely that class is large enough to explain the existence of everything. You don't have to appeal to anything else, since you've already included *everything*. But this is presumably not the *smallest* class that will suffice to explain the existence of everything. We can throw *some* things out and still have enough left to explain the existence of everything. If  $A \_ B$  and  $A$  exists through  $B$ , then we can throw  $A$  out and leave  $B$ , and still have enough left to explain everything we could before.

Now let's throw out everything we *can* in this way, and we will end up with the *smallest* class that will suffice to explain the existence of absolutely everything. How many things are in that class? One or more than one? (Surely there will be *at least* one - since if we throw *everything* out, there will be nothing left, and nothing exists through nothing, we said.) Well, if there are more than one, then Anselm distinguishes three cases (p. 87):

But if there are several [of them], either they are [all] related to some one thing through which they exist, or the same several [things] exist individually, through themselves, or they exist through one another, reciprocally.

In effect, the three cases amount to the following:

*Case (a):* Suppose the class consists of  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n$ , and they *all* exist through some  $X_{n+1}$  that we've already thrown out. Then clearly we don't have the smallest class; we've thrown things out in the wrong order. We could have thrown out  $X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n$ , and *kept*  $X_{n+1}$ , and still have had enough.  $X_{n+1}$  would suffice all by itself.

*Case (b):* Suppose  $X_1, \dots, X_n$  are all self-existent. Then, by the One-Over-Many principle (here it is - the one place in the argument where you need this Platonic assumption), they all exist through Self-existence. Hence Self-existence by itself would have been enough. Whatever you think of that, let's go to:

*Case (c):* Suppose  $X_1$  exists through  $X_2$ ,  $X_2$  in turn exists through  $X_3$ , and in general  $X_{i-1}$  exists through  $X_i$ , until we come to some  $X_n$  that exists through  $X_1$ . Plainly, what we have here is a kind of loop. But, in virtue of the transitivity of "exists through" (principle (b) above), this means that  $X_1$  exists through  $X_n$ , and  $X_n$  we know exists through  $X_1$ . But this violates the antisymmetry of "exists through" (principle (c) above).

Therefore, Anselm concludes, all three ways in which our smallest class could turn out to have more than one member are ruled out. Hence there is only one item in that smallest class, and it exists through itself while everything else exists through it.

This slick little argument is an attempt to prove two things at once: (i) the *existence* of God as a self-existent being, and (ii) the *uniqueness* of God. For the sense in which all this amounts to a proof for the existence of *God*, see the discussion at the beginning of Chapter \s6, above, on the various style of proofs for the existence of God.

There is, I am afraid, a serious objection to this argument (even apart from the One-Over-Many principle, which you may or may not find objectionable). Why does Anselm think there is any smallest class? There are classes *bigger* than necessary, and classes *smaller* than necessary (for instance, the empty class - where we throw *everything* out), but is there any *smallest* class of things that suffices to explain the existence of absolutely everything?

Suppose we can number things that exist:  $X_1, X_2, \dots$ , and so on without end. (For the mathematical fancy-pants among you, I am not supposing that we can number *all* the things that exist in this way, that is, that there are only denumerably many existents. I don't need to assume that to make the present point.) And suppose we have numbered them in such a way that  $X_1$  exists through  $X_2$ ,  $X_2$  exists through  $X_3$ , and in general  $X_n$  exists through  $X_{n+1}$ . So we have a kind of infinite regress. In this case, there would be simply no smallest class of the kind Anselm is looking for. We can keep throwing things out one by one, but there will always be more to be thrown out. We can go *too* far, by throwing *everything* out at once, in one fell swoop. But we cannot get exactly what we want.

Notice that Anselm *could* be sure that there is the smallest class he wants if he could somehow rule out this kind of infinite regress. Hence, when you come right down to it, the argument in Anselm's Ch. 3 is really a disguised *infinite regress* argument for the existence of God, not essentially different in kind from the arguments you will see later in Aquinas. And, like all such arguments, there is one big question: Why *can't* you go on to infinity?

But even if the argument ultimately fails (and I think it does), it is more interesting than most such infinite regress arguments insofar as it has the *uniqueness* claim built in too.

Notice, please: The success or failure of this argument is not the real point for us. The point is that this is the first time we have seen an argument with anything like this much sophistication. There is a sharpness and edge to this argument that is unlike anything we saw in Augustine or Boethius - and *certainly* in Pseudo-Denis or Eriugena. We are beginning to get the kind of Scholastic precision that will characterize later mediaeval philosophy.



## Chapter 31:

Anselm's Monologion Discussion of How God Can and Cannot Be Said to Be in Space and Time

This discussion is concentrated in Monologion, Chs. 20-22, with some preliminaries as far back as Ch. 17. I want to look at this argument because it illustrates at least three things:

(1) It illustrates again the point I made at the end of Chapter \s4, that you get a much tighter kind of argumentation in Anselm than you get in the rhetorical, visionary approach of Augustine and others.

(2) It also illustrates a typical mediaeval philosophical technique, one that later folks will get very good at: the art of making distinctions. "When in trouble, make a distinction." (Of course, Renaissance anti-scholastics thought this art just showed the decadence of mediaeval scholasticism.)

(3) It more or less illustrates the quaestio-form, which we already saw in Boethius' discussion of universals in his Commentary on Porphyry (Chapter \s2 above), and is also present in germ in the structure of the De hebdomadibus (see Chapter \s3 above). Once again, you get first the arguments for one side, then arguments for the other, and finally the resolution of the problem.

The necessary preliminaries for the argument are set down in Chs. 17-18. Ch. 17 argues that God (that is, the Good in virtue of which all things are good, and which is the standard and measure of all good things, and so on) is *simple* - that is, there is no internal structure to him, he is not composed of parts. *Note two things here:* First, whatever the doctrine of the Trinity means in the end, it is generally interpreted as not violating this kind of divine simplicity. And second, note that if this divine simplicity can be established, then it also follows that God is not a *material* object, since material objects are always of a certain size, and can therefore be divided into a left half and a right half, for instance, and so into parts.

The argument that God is simple is itself a simple argument. Recall where we ended up as a result of the "exists through" argument for the existence of God in Ch. 3 (see Chapter \s4 above): God is that being which exists through itself alone. (Even if you do not grant Anselm his "One-Over-Many" step in the Ch. 3 argument, you still have the conclusion that there is one or more such self-existent things.) The argument then is that what is composite, made up of parts, *depends* on those parts. If *A* is made up of parts *B* and *C*, then *A* depends on parts *B* and *C*. Now *B* and *C* are not each of them the whole of *A*, but are rather other than the whole of *A*. It follows that anything composite *exists through* its parts, which are other than it. And since God does not exist through anything except himself alone, God doesn't have parts. Q.E.D.

In Ch. 18, we get an argument that God has no beginning in time, and no end in time either. The argument is this: Suppose God began to exist in time. (That is, there are times  $t_{f31}$  and  $t_{f32}$  such that  $t_{f31}$  is earlier than  $t_{f32}$ , and such that God does not exist at  $t_{f31}$  but does exist at  $t_{f32}$ . This will work whether you regard  $t_{f31}$  and  $t_{f32}$  as instants or as intervals.) Then, Anselm says, we can ask *where* he came from - not in a spatial sense, of course, but in a causal sense. What made him come to be at a certain time, what made him "begin" to be? There are three alternatives, each one absurd:

(a) God didn't come from anything. That is, God came into being, began to exist, but there is nothing from which or through which (causally speaking, again) he came into being. This is absurd on the general Parmenidean principle: You don't get something from nothing. There is no ontological "free lunch".

(b) God came into being through something other than himself. But then his existence would be derived, and he would not be a self-existent being, which he is. (See the Ch. 3 argument discussed in Chapter \s4 above.)

(c) God came into existence *through himself*. Note that this doesn't just mean that God would *exist* through himself. In virtue of the reflexivity of "exists through", as discussed in Chapter \s4 above, *everything* exists through itself in a pretty trivial sense of the phrase. What we are talking about here is something more: that God *came into existence* through himself, *gave himself existence*. But, another inviolable ontological principle: *You can't give what you don't have, and you can't get what you've already got*. (See Chapter \s4 again.) So God would have to exist *already*, in order to give himself existence. But then of course he wouldn't need it. He would have to exist *before* he began existing, which is absurd.

Since all three alternatives are absurd, we conclude that God doesn't *begin* to exist in time after all. God *always* existed. But what about *coming to an end* in time? Note that you can't use the same kind of argument here. While you can't give what you don't have, you certainly can *lose* what you do have. So Anselm adopts a different approach here, one that should remind us of Augustine's identification of God with the eternal truths. This new approach simultaneously gives a *second* argument that God did not *begin* to exist in time either. That is, this new approach can be applied *both* to beginning and to ending in time, whereas the former argument only works for beginning. The argument is this:

Truth did not begin in time and will not end in time. There neither was nor will be a time in which there is not truth. For consider: It is now true that you are reading this page, on such and such a day at such and such a time. Hence, Anselm argues, it always *was* true in the past that you *would* be reading this page on this date at this time. That is, the truth 'Person X (fill in your name) *will be* reading such and such a page (fill in some definite description of this page) on day *d* at time *t* (fill in appropriately)' *was* true at every time in the past. (*Note*: This is not an instance of those "eternal truths" we talked about in connection with Boethius, in Chapter \s5 above. Those truths were "eternal" in the sense that they were without tense. The truths we are talking about now, however, very much have a tense. It is just their truth value doesn't change over time - at least not up until the present, when you actually *do* read this page, and it is no longer true that you *will*.) So, at every time in the past there was at least *that* truth. Similarly, it *will* always be true forever in the future that person *X was* reading such and such a page on day *d* at time *t*. There *will* never be a time when there will not be at least *that* truth. Hence, at every time in the past, present and future, there is *some* truth, at least. That is, truth in general has no beginning or end in time.

Anselm took this part of his argument straight from Augustine. Now at the end of Ch. 18, Anselm simply identifies God with Truth, reminiscent of Augustine's move in *On Free Choice*, Book II. (See Chapter \s6 above.) But the argument doesn't really need this identification. We might argue like this: *Either* God is Truth, and since Truth has no beginning or end, God has no beginning or end either; *or else* God is not identical with this Truth, and then Truth must derive its existence from God, since everything except God *exists through God*, as shown in Ch. 3 (see Chapter \s4 above). But then whenever there is truth, you also have to have God, in order to give existence to that truth, to support it. (You can't give what you don't have, remember.) And so, once again, God - like Truth - has no beginning or end in time. This is similar to the argument we'll see in a moment.

Now all this is background. God is simple (Ch. 17), and does not begin or end in time (Ch. 18). Anselm now goes on to ask how God is related to space and time. The argument here

takes the form of a *dilemma*. In Ch. 20 he argues what appears to be the case about God in space and time. In Ch. 21, he argues that this cannot be so after all. So we have a conflict. In Ch. 22 he resolves the conflict by making a distinction.

In Ch. 20, he sets out three possibilities regarding God's existence in space and time. Two of these are absurd, and so only the third is left. Either God exists (*a*) everywhere and always, (*b*) somewhere and sometime only, or (*c*) nowhere and never. (Actually, you might think there are some other possibilities. Why not try: somewhere only, but always, or everywhere, but only at some time and not always? You can easily adapt Anselm's argument to handle these cases. I leave that as an exercise.)

Alternatives (*b*) and (*c*) are absurd. Consider (*c*). Recall that nothing else exists unless it derives its existence from God, as proved previously in Ch. 3. Hence wherever and whenever anything at all exists, God is somehow present. He must be *acting* then and there, in order to cause something to exist then and there. Hence, if God existed nowhere and never, nothing at all would exist anywhere or ever, which is empirically false. Similarly, consider alternative (*b*). Suppose God existed or was somehow present only at certain times and places but not at all of them. Then only in those times and places would *anything* exist. At other times and places, there would be strictly nothing. In fact, there would not even exist those very times and places themselves, since they too derive their existence from God. (Exactly what does this step assume about the ontology of space and time?) Hence, only alternative (*a*) remains: God exists always and everywhere. We already have independent argumentation for the "always" part of this, in Ch. 18.

Now in Ch. 21, Anselm goes on to ask *how* it can be that God exists always and everywhere. In what way? Once again, he considers some alternatives. But this time, he argues that *all* the alternatives are absurd. And so we have a dilemma. God *has* to exist always and everywhere (Ch. 20), but there doesn't seem to be any way in which he *can* do this (Ch. 21). This dilemma is resolved in Ch. 22. Now, what are the alternatives considered (and rejected) in Ch. 21?

If a thing exists always and everywhere, then either (*a*) *all* of it does, or (*b*) only *part* of it does, and the rest does not. Whatever sense alternative (*b*) might have, it certainly doesn't apply to God, since we saw in Ch. 17 that God is simple and just doesn't *have* any parts. Hence, only alternative (*a*) is really serious. Now, how can God be thought to exist *as a whole* always and everywhere? (Incidentally, notice how all this sounds very much like Boethius' speculations about how a universal is supposed to be "common to many" - see Chapter \s2 above.) Well, a thing can be thought to exist as a whole always and everywhere, either insofar as:

(i) Part of it is here, part of it there, part of it now, part then, but all the times and places taken together jointly *exhaust* the whole. This is the sense in which we might say, for instance, that *space* is everywhere as a whole, and time as a whole is at all times. That is, part of space is here and part there, and if you take all the places together, you exhaust the *whole* of space. Likewise for time. This clearly won't apply to God, since God *has* no parts.

(ii) The whole of it is here, and the whole of it there, the whole of it exists now, and the whole of it then.

Up to now, Anselm has been treating place and time together. But now he decides to treat them separately, beginning with place. How can a thing exist the whole of it here and also the whole of it there, and so on? There are two possibilities: (*A*) The whole of it exists in all these places at the same time, or (*B*) at different times. But (*A*) is absurd. If the *whole* of a thing exists in a given place, then it does not exist *outside* that place at the same time. Otherwise, the *whole*

of it would not be in that place. Similarly, (B) is absurd in the case of God. If God existed here at this time, and there at that time, then there would be certain times when God did not exist at a given place. But we have already seen that this is absurd. Nothing at all would exist at those places at the times when God did not exist there - the places themselves would not exist then. A slightly different argument will apply in the case of time. Either (A\*) God exists in all times at once, or (B\*) he exists in the various times in succession. But (A\*) is absurd, since times simply don't come all at once. Yet (B\*) is absurd too, in the case of God, because if God existed at the various times in succession, then he would have parts: at time  $t_1$  one part of God would exist, and at time  $t_2$  a later part of God would exist. (Note: Anselm seems to be here thinking of an individual as being somehow identified with its personal *history*. My future and my past are different *parts* or time-slices of me. This notion will have a distinguished future in Leibniz, not to mention more recent physics.)

So we have a real problem. At the end of Ch. 20, Anselm had shown that God *has* to exist always and everywhere. But now, in Ch. 21, he seems to have shown that there is *no way* in which this is possible. All the alternatives are absurd. Some of them are ruled out as being absurd for any kind of thing; others are ruled out because of the special nature of the being we are dealing with - one that is absolutely simple and has no parts, and on which everything else depends. How to resolve this apparent contradiction? That comes in Ch. 22, and illustrates a basic move of mediaeval thinking: *When you get in trouble like this, make a distinction*. And so he does:

When a thing  $x$  is at a place  $p$  at a time  $t$ , this can mean one of two things: (a)  $x$  is *present to* (or *with*)  $p$  and  $t$ , in a sense that does not exclude its also being present to other places and times; (b)  $x$  is *contained in* (Note: contained = con + tained = held together) or *bounded by*  $p$  and  $t$ , so that  $x$  cannot also be present to other places and times. In other words, there is an *exclusive* and an *inclusive* sense of being at a place and time. We can say 'here and now' to the exclusion of 'there and then', or we can say it without committing ourselves to 'there and then' one way or the other. Now when we say that God is in a certain place at a certain time, we are using only the *inclusive* sense (a). So in the end Anselm is adopting alternative (A) above (the whole exists at all places and at all times), and denies that it is really absurd, despite the argument there.

Please note carefully that this is *not* just a fudge. Our initial reaction to this argument, I'm afraid, is that he hasn't really done anything at all. All he's said is that there's a sense, whatever it is, in which what appears to be contradictory isn't really contradictory after all, and so the faith is saved. It's just this kind of thing that gives mediaeval philosophy the reputation of being a thinly disguised attempt to make sure all the right dogmas come out true, no matter what.

But that's not what is going on at all. Anselm is not just looking around for some spurious distinction made up on the spot. Recall the arrangement of the argument. He is *forced* to make *some* distinction, by the arguments in Chs. 20-21. The argument is really a demonstration that some distinction like this is necessary, that there must be *some* sense - even if we can't yet fully fathom how it works, there must be one - in which things can be wholly at a given place and time, and yet wholly at a different place and time. That is, there must be *some* sense of being in a place and a time *different* from the walkaday, garden variety sense in which we say things are in a place at a time.

It is important to remember that the arguments in Chs. 20-21 (and for that matter, the preliminary arguments in Chs. 17-18, and the "exists through" argument way back in Ch. 3) are *purely philosophical* arguments. There is no appeal to the faith, no flinging around of Scripture verses - it's all just pure reason. A hard-nosed rationalist might disagree with Anselm's arguments, but he would have to admit that at least they are the *right kind* of arguments to appeal to a philosopher in the strictest sense, as distinct from the theologian. Given this, and given the dilemma that is the outcome of Chs. 20-21, just what do you think Anselm was supposed to do? From this point of view, the distinction drawn in Ch. 22 is the only philosophically responsible move he could have made!

Let me make some final remarks about this argument. First, just a little fact to file away. Notice the etymology of the word 'contains' that occurs in the argument. Literally and etymologically, 'contains' means "holds together". This is what it means, for instance, for a cup to "contain" a quantity of liquid; it "holds it together" and keeps it from running all over the table and making a mess. It is only a small extension of this to speak, for instance, of an envelope as "containing" a letter. It doesn't "hold the letter together" as though the letter would suddenly fly apart if it were taken out of its envelope. But it does "hold it together" in the sense that the enclosed letter is not also *somewhere else*. It is "in" the envelope in the *exclusive* sense of the word.

Now when we speak about the usual theories of the relationship between soul and body, we tend to say that the soul is "in" the body. Recall the Platonic-Augustinian notion that the soul is "in" the body like a captain in his ship, or like a ruler in his city. Now the soul is certainly *not* in the body in the *inclusive* sense of "in" distinguished above. That is, it cannot also be somewhere else at the same time - at least not on the usual theories. But you will find people in the Middle Ages who want to say that the soul is not "in" the body in the *exclusive* sense either. That is, the body does not *contain* the soul, "hold it together". On the contrary, *it is the soul that contains the body*. A theory in which the soul is the substantial form of the body, giving it its structure and unity, would fit this manner of speaking very well. It is not the body that holds the soul together; rather, it is the soul that holds the body together. Hence, you will sometimes find people saying that the soul contains the body. Aquinas, for instance, says this at one point. And my reason for bringing all this up is simply so that you won't be surprised or puzzled when you see it. There is nothing especially mysterious about it once you see that it all rests on a simple point of etymology.

Second, recall the argument in Ch. 20 for why God must exist always and everywhere. Basically, it was that, if there is a place and a time in which God did not exist, then nothing at all would exist there - including the very place and time themselves. The reason for this is that all other things "exist through" God, and so depend on him. This dependence is presumably causal, or at any rate we can think of it as causal for the purposes of the point I am about to make. For notice, the implicit premise in the argument is that the *effects* of God cannot exist in a place or time where their *cause*, God himself, does not exist. In short, the hidden premise behind Ch. 20 is that there is no *action at a distance*, either local or temporal distance. Cause and effect must be spatially and temporally contiguous. (And if you want to think of the "exists through" relation as perhaps not quite the same as causality, no matter. The fact remains, the two terms of that relation must be contiguous.)

Given this, one *obvious* way out of Anselm's dilemma is simply to deny that there can be no action at a distance. *Question for thought:* Is Anselm's own way out, the distinction between an inclusive and an exclusive sense of "being in" a place and a time, simply a disguised way of doing this, of allowing action at a distance?

One final note that I'll put here because I don't know where else to talk about it. There is a discussion in *Monologion*, Ch. 15, of how we can talk about God at all. That is, what kinds of predications can we make of God? The discussion is very much indebted to Boethius' *De trinitate*. Read the chapter carefully, and be thinking of Pseudo-Denis and Eriugena in this context all the while. We will see this question again in Maimonides and Aquinas.

## Chapter 32: Anselm: The Ontological Argument

I'm not going to say a lot about the ontological argument. The literature on the argument is huge, as you probably know. What I am going to do is simply to give some general remarks about the argument, and to sketch where I think it goes wrong. If you want to pursue the topic in more detail, I recommend David Lewis' paper, "Anselm and Actuality", and my own paper "Anselm and Ambiguity" (full references in Chapter 2 above). The latter paper, of course, peddles my own line, so there is no need for me to go through it in detail here. Lewis' paper cannot be recommended strongly enough. Lewis, of course, is not mainly concerned with the historical accuracy of his account of Anselm. His discussion of Anselm is really just a vehicle to allow him to talk about his own theory of actuality, which comes up in the second part of his paper. Nevertheless, his account *is* historically sensitive to the text. In my view, it is far and away the best paper on the topic in the modern literature.

Nevertheless, I think there is a problem with what he says in the paper. I try to touch it up in my own paper, and in the process make a few additional distinctions. I think the point my paper makes is basically correct, but it has that plodding "reply to so and so" quality about it. Lewis' paper, on the other hand, is genuinely exciting.

Let me say right now that what the ontological argument tries to do is not stupid or silly. The argument has too often been dismissed out of hand because it tries to argue from the mere concept of something to the actual existence of that thing. And that, so it is said, is impossible in principle. But why should we think it is impossible in principle? Because if we could do that, then we could prove the existence of anything we can think of? Well, hardly - although sometimes people try to say that. From the fact that we cannot in *every* case deduce a thing's existence from its concept it by no means follows that we cannot quite correctly do it in some *special* cases. Surely anyone who seriously upholds the ontological argument thinks it works only because there is something quite special about the concept of God. I'm afraid what usually happens here is that the "refutation" boils down to: You can't conclude the existence of even a *single* thing from its concept alone, because if you could do that then the ontological argument would probably work. This is a refutation that will appeal perhaps to positivists, but not to us. We cannot say that the ontological argument fails because if it didn't it would work. That's hardly a refutation.

Another line you sometimes hear is that logical truths, conceptual truths, are analytic or a priori, while truths about what does and what does not exist are synthetic or a posteriori. This is the Humean distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact. Somehow people have got it into their collective head that this is a sharp and exclusive division, that merely thinking about something can never tell us anything at all about what does or does not exist in the world. But if we step back just a moment and consider the matter, it is patent that this is just false. We quite frequently - and uncontroversially - run the argument in *one* direction. We quite frequently conclude from an examination of a concept that turns out to be *contradictory* that there exists no corresponding object. That is, we frequently pass from the conceptual level to the real level when it is the *non-existence* of something we are inferring. Why should we not be able to do it at least in some cases when it is the *existence* of something we are inferring? Why the asymmetry?

If we just set aside our philosophical dogmas, it is clear that we must actually look at the *details* of the argument. We cannot dismiss it in advance for trying to do something we know *already* is going to be impossible.

Now, I have given you this little pep-talk not to defend Anselm's ontological argument (I think it fails), but to defend studying the argument - and studying it without prejudice about how it *must* - it just *must* - fail. The argument is one of the greatest mind-benders of all time.

There are in fact at least two versions of the ontological argument - and I mean two *quite* different versions: Anselm's version and the kind found in Descartes' fifth *Meditation* and touched up in his *Replies to the Objections*. These two arguments are completely different. *Do not mix them up*. People frequently treat the arguments as though they were somehow all the same thing, and they are not at all. Anselm, for instance, nowhere says anything at all about existence's being a "perfection". That's Cartesian talk, not Anselmian. The difference between the two kinds of argument is important. For Anselm's version, I argue, fails, whereas Descartes' can be defended - at least in the sense that its success, after you touch it up a bit, depends ultimately on certain modal and perhaps epistemological questions that are hardly settled - and in particular on the question whether the notion of God is a *consistent* notion or not.

But Descartes' ontological argument is not our topic here, so that I will say nothing more about it. Anselm's argument *is* our topic, and we now turn to that.

Anselm's version of the argument is contained in his *Proslogion*, Chs. 2-4. The main argument is in Ch. 2, a subordinate argument is found in Ch. 3, and an attempt to head off a problem is found in Ch. 4. Some modern authors claim to find two *separate* arguments in Chs. 2 and 3, the first of which fails, but the second of which may well work - or at any rate is not affected by the traditional criticisms of the first argument. But whatever modern authors claim to find there (see Chapter \s3, above, on the "Oh that reminds me" approach to the history of philosophy), it is plain that Anselm himself intended there to be just *one* argument in the *Proslogion*. Indeed, as he himself tells us in his Preface, that was the whole point of writing the *Proslogion* in the first place.

He had already written the *Monologion*, he tells us in the Preface to the *Proslogion*, with all the intricate arguments the *Monologion* contains about the existence and nature of God. He did this, he says, at the urging of certain "brothers", probably some of the monks under his care at Bec. (Remember, both these books were written at Bec.) No doubt, the poor monks found it all very confusing, with all that stuff about "exists through" and about inclusive and exclusive senses of being "in" a place or a time. Wouldn't it be good if Anselm could come up with something nice and short, an *easy* argument that isn't too technical, a *single* argument (*note*: he explicitly says "single argument") that does all at once what Anselm took so many pages to do in the *Monologion*? Well, Anselm thought it *would* be good to do that, if it were possible, and resolved to give it a try. So he thought and thought about it, and was just on the verge of giving up, when lo! One day the ontological argument came to him in a flash, and the rest is history.

But there's more. There was another monk, not one of Anselm's at Bec but a monk at Marmoutier, a certain Gaunilo or Gaunilon by name. (*Note on his name*: These are the *only* two correct ways to spell it. In Latin it's 'Gaunilo' in the nominative and 'Gaunilonis' in the genitive, so that you have the 'n' in the oblique cases. That's where we get the 'n' in the alternative form of his name. The accent is generally put on the 'i': Gow-NEE-low or Gow-NEE-lawn. But *please*, people. His name is *not* 'Guano' or 'Galliano', or any other of the other approximations I've seen.)



Gaunilo read Anselm's *Proslogion* argument, and while he admired Anselm very much and was just as steadfast in the faith as the next person, he thought he recognized a bad argument when he saw one. So he wrote a reply, in which he tried to expose the fallacy in Anselm's argumentation. Now Anselm had put his argument in the context of the Biblical Fool of the Psalms, who "says in his heart 'There is no God'" (Ps. 14:1). And the question then for Anselm was "How are we going to refute the Fool?" Gaunilo entitled his own little reply "In Behalf of the Fool". It is contained in the Deane volume *St. Anselm: Basic Writings*, beginning on p. 303. (Note: This is an *extremely* cryptic work. It is not just the translator's fault. The Latin is very obscure, and it is frequently hard to tell just what Gaunilo is saying.) Not that Gaunilo really believed, like the Biblical Fool, that there is no God; it's just that he thought the Fool would have had more to say on his own behalf than Anselm gave him credit for.

Anselm in turn wrote a reply to Gaunilo, in which he sought to defend his original argument and supplement it with some further remarks. Again, people sometimes think they see importantly new and different arguments in Anselm's reply to Gaunilo, but I do not. In the Deane volume, Anselm's reply to Gaunilo begins on p. 311.

Anselm gave instructions to his literary executors that his own *Proslogion* should not be copied out (remember, there was no printing press or photocopy machine, so that it all had to be by hand) without Gaunilo's reply and Anselm's own counter-reply tacked on at the end. That is how we have copies of Gaunilo's work today. He is otherwise, at least as far as I know, a complete mystery to us.

It is perhaps worth pointing out - and marveling over - how respectfully all this is carried out. These are not petty academics sniping at one another. It's really a very admirable interchange.

Now, let's get down to business. The nuts and bolts of my view of the argument may be found in my "Anselm and Ambiguity". Here I only want to give you a sketch.

The argument begins in Ch. 2 of the *Proslogion*, where it is presented, I said, in the context of the Fool, who says in his heart "There is no God". So the argument is a reply to the Fool. What are we going to say to the Fool?

Well, first of all, just what exactly are we trying to prove here? The existence of God, of course. And what is God? God is "a being than which no greater can be conceived". (The Latin does not have 'being'. It simply has 'that than which no greater can be conceived'. In fact, sometimes it doesn't even have the 'that', and we get only 'God is than which no greater can be conceived'. This sounds better in Latin than it does in English.)

Hence, what we are trying to prove the existence of is a being than which no greater can be conceived. Henceforth, the word 'God' nowhere appears in the argument. Everything is done in terms of the phrase '[being] than which no greater can be conceived'. (On the significance of this, see another paper of mine, "What Is A Proof for the Existence of God?", especially the Appendix.) The term 'God' does reappear after a while, but only after Anselm is *done* with the argument and is thanking God for having made him think of it.

Note the formulation of the phrase: '[being] than which no greater *can be conceived*'. It is not just '[being] than which there is *in fact* no greater', as Evodius has it, for instance, in *On Free Choice* (see Chapter \s4 above). There is an important difference between these two formulations. Suppose that as a matter of fact, *you* happen to be the greatest thing there is, in whatever sense of "greatness" is germane to the argument. That is, there is nothing greater than you are. Would we then want to say that God really does exist after all, and he turns out to be *you*? I don't know what your answer would be, but I would be inclined to say not. Rather, I

would say that, under those circumstances, God would *not* exist. Why? Because although you happen to be the greatest thing around, I can certainly *conceive* of something greater than you are. In short, our normal notion of God cannot be captured by the phrase '[being] than which there *is* no greater'. Rather we need '[being] than which no greater *can be conceived*'. This is the point of that part of Anselm's reply to Gaunilo, where he says in effect, "Don't say 'greatest of all'. That's not the way to formulate it." (Deane, tr., pp. 319-320.)

Now, first of all, what is all this "greatness" talk? What does Anselm mean when he says that God is a being than which no "greater" can be conceived? Well, perhaps *Monologion*, Ch. 2 (Deane, p. 86) will help (but this is my translation):

Now I do not say 'great' in space, as some body is [great - that is, big], but rather that which is greater the better or more worthy it is, as wisdom is.

That's the *Monologion*, of course, and not the *Proslogion*. But plainly some similar notion is involved in the *Proslogion* too. Greatness is therefore a matter of (moral?) worth. *Question for reflection*: To what extent does the argument depend on a *particular* moral ranking, a particular set of moral standards? In my view, it does not depend on that at all; the argument has whatever plausibility it has quite apart from all that. That is, one could be a complete moral relativist - a complete relativist about values - and not change one's opinion of the argument at all. It is instructive to go through the argument, and wherever the word 'great' occurs, substitute 'great according to my own subjective canons of greatness'. As far as I can see, nothing that matters changes one bit.

Well, how does the proof go? Here it is. Even the Fool *understands* the phrase 'being than which no greater can be conceived', and so such a being exists *at least* in his understanding. Even the Fool will admit this much, although of course he will not admit that such a being exists also in reality, outside his mind. Hence

*Premise 1*: There exists in the understanding a being than which no greater can be conceived. For convenience, let's agree to call it *g*.

Before we go on, what is this "exists in the understanding" business? I think for Anselm it means only that I can *think* of such a thing - whether it exists or not, whether it is even *possible* or not. (I can think of impossible things; if I couldn't think of such things, I couldn't say they are impossible. A square circle is impossible but thinkable. By contrast, to use a later mediaeval example that I've always liked, *bu ba blitrix* cannot even be thought, although of course the *words* or *sounds* can be conceived. There isn't anything *to* conceive in this case. The phrase is just as much gibberish in Latin as it is in English.)

So construed, there is a sense in which Premise 1 is obviously true. For instance, if I suppose that there are certain properties - let us call them "perfections" (that's my term, not Anselm's) - such that to *have* them makes a thing greater than not to have them, then I can speculate about whether there is a being that has *all* of them. And that being is of course one than which no greater can possibly be conceived. (*Note*: There is nothing here about *existence's* being a perfection.) In fact, even if there aren't any such perfection-properties, still I could ask "What if there were?" And then I could speculate about the same thing that combines all of them. These are only examples. Clearly, by the very fact that we are carrying out this discussion at all, we are *thinking* about such a being (possible or not, coherent or not), and so such a being "exists in the understanding" in the sense we have given to that phrase. As far as I can see, that is *all* the phrase means. There is nothing spurious or funny about it. There is no mysterious epistemology or theory of the mind presupposed by it. This of course is not to say that Anselm *had* no such

presuppositions, or even that he did not have them in mind when he used this 'exists in the mind' talk. It is only to say that his argument does not *depend* on them.

Hence, in one sense at least, Premise 1 is guaranteed to be true. Now Anselm goes on (p. 53). Suppose for *reductio* that this being - we have agreed to call it *g* - does not exist in reality (but only in the understanding). Then, Anselm says:

*It can be conceived to exist also in fact, which is greater.*

Notice that he does *not* say that existence is a perfection. He does *not* say that anything that exists is automatically by that fact greater than anything that doesn't. (People often criticize the ontological argument for allegedly presupposing these things. Descartes' version of the argument may presuppose them, but Anselm's does not.) All he says is that if *this* thing *g* exists, then *it* is greater than if it doesn't.

So we have supposed that *g* does not exist. Still, the argument goes, *g* can be conceived to exist, and that is greater. But then of course I would have conceived of something greater than that than which no greater can be conceived. And since that is a contradiction, it follows by *reductio* that *g* does exist in reality after all (and not just in the understanding).

For the details of what I think is going on here, I refer you to my "Anselm and Ambiguity". But let us look for a moment at the line "it can be conceived to exist also in fact, which is greater". There are at least two problems with interpreting this passage:

(a) It *sounds* like: Suppose *g* doesn't exist in reality. Then suppose it does. But *of course* you're going to get a contradiction that way. You can't suppose both at once. Presumably, that is not what the argument is doing. But just what it *is* doing is not so clear.

(b) Furthermore, there is something funny here. Back in what I called "Premise 1", the verb 'conceive' is construed with a *noun*. You conceive *things*, *objects*. But now in this new passage (the line from p. 53 of the Deane translation, quoted above in my own translation), 'conceive' is construed *with a noun* (actually, a pronoun, but the syntax is the same) *plus an infinitive phrase*: it is conceived *to exist* in fact. Here we are no longer conceiving *things* but rather *states of affairs* or whatever you want to call them in your metaphysical terminology. Hence when you compare these passages, it is not clear what kind of mental operation "conceiving" is supposed to be. Is it the forming of concepts, the making of a judgment, the entertaining of a hypothesis, or what? So the line is obscure. I *suggest*, for our present short-term purposes, that we construe the line this way:

*Premise 2*: Suppose *g* doesn't exist. Nevertheless, the following counterfactual conditional is true: If it *did* exist, it would be greater than it is in fact (the "fact" being, by our assumption, that it doesn't exist).

This is very rough, of course. In "Anselm and Ambiguity" I give a more precise way of construing this, one that doesn't resort to the notoriously difficult notion of counterfactuality. And I argue there that, just as there is a sense in which Premise 1 is guaranteed true, so too there is a sense in which Premise 2 is guaranteed true. But, unfortunately, *they are not the same sense*. Hence, I maintain, the argument trades on an ambiguity. (Thus the title of the paper.)

In fact, I argue, there are at least *four* different senses in which we may take each of these premises, according to four senses of the term 'greater' that appears in them:

Something *x* is greater than something *y* if and only if:

(a) *x* really has all the great-making features that *y* really has, and more besides.

(b) *x* really has all the great-making features *y* is *thought of* as having, and more besides.

(c) *x* is *thought of* as having all the perfections that *y* really has, and more besides. (The '*y* really has' is outside the scope of the 'thought of'.)

(d) *x* is *thought of* as having all the perfections that *y* is thought of as having, and more besides. (The second 'thought of' is outside the scope of the first.)

Now in my paper, I claim that the argument is formally *valid* (as reconstructed there) if we read the same sense of 'greater' in both its premises. We really do get the conclusion that *g* ("that than which no greater can be conceived") does exist in reality. Unfortunately, the plausibility of taking the two premises as true *together* rests on trading on the ambiguity in 'greater'. In short, in any sense in which the argument is formally *valid*, there is no good reason to accept both the premises. And if you find senses (plural) of 'greater' in which it is plausible to accept the premises of the argument, the argument will turn out to be invalid when the premises are read in those senses. I refer you to the paper for the details.

Let us now turn to Anselm's Ch. 3, where he goes on to give a much *stronger* claim. Not only, he says, does this *g* exist. It cannot even be *conceived* not to exist. The argument goes roughly like this:

(1) As in Ch. 2, there exists *in the understanding* at least (and we know now what that phrase means, so we don't have to be afraid of it) a being than which no greater can be conceived. Call it *g*, as before.

So far, so good. I've argued above that there is a sense in which this is *guaranteed* true. But now:

(2) What *cannot* be conceived not to exist is greater than what *can* be conceived not to exist.

This premise I do not want to quarrel with. It seems to me you can choose your criteria of greatness in such a way that (2) is *guaranteed* true, in some appropriate sense of 'great'. I am even willing to grant, for the sake of argument, that this sense is the *same* sense that guarantees (1) to be true too. In short, I do not think the argument in Ch. 3 is going to end up failing because it trades on an ambiguity. But now here is the crucial step:

(3) I can conceive of a being that cannot be conceived not to exist.

If we grant this, then Anselm has us. Let us call this being  $g^*$ . Now if *g*, defined as above, can be conceived not to exist, then by (2),  $g^*$  is greater than *g*, which violates (1). Hence, by *reductio*, *g* not only *exists* (we learned that in Ch. 2), but cannot even be *conceived* not to exist.

But should we grant (3)? I don't see any reason why we should. Indeed, it seems to me that, given *any* real or possible or even merely conceivable being, we can *always* conceive that it doesn't exist. Of course I can think of a being *as* having the property of not being able to be thought not to exist. But that is not what we need. To get (3) in a sense that will make the argument go, we need to be able to think of something that *really* cannot be thought not to exist, not just that is *thought of* as not being able to be thought not to exist. That is, we want:

'I can conceive of  $g^*$ , and  $g^*$  cannot be conceived not to exist',  
not just

'I can conceive of:  $g^*$ -such-that- $g^*$ -cannot-be-conceived-not-to-exist'.

(For that matter, the same thing holds for Premise 1 back in Ch. 2: 'There is a conceivable *x* such that no conceivable *y* is greater than *x*' - in one of the four senses of 'greater' distinguished a while back. It is not enough just to have: 'I can conceive of an *x*-such-that-for-no-conceivable-*y*-is-*y*-greater-than-*x*'. The latter will not even make the argument *valid*.)

In short, I think Anselm's argument in Ch. 3 fails because step (3) is simply implausible. But perhaps you don't agree with me. Perhaps you think (3) is plausible, and that Anselm has a good argument here. In that case, you have a *really* big problem:

What about the Fool? I thought the Fool had said in his heart, "There is no God". But if Ch. 3 is correct, he cannot do that. What are we going to do now?

This is the problem addressed in Ch. 4. Anselm's reply is in effect that the Fool says in his heart 'God does not exist'. He does *not* say 'A being than which no greater can be conceived does not exist'. He *cannot* say that, as Ch. 3 shows. The reason he can get by with saying 'God doesn't exist' is that he simply doesn't really know what the word 'God' means. That's no doubt at least part of why he is such a Fool. Either he attaches *no* meaning at all to the word, so that he is just mouthing words without attaching any meanings to them (or "mouthing" them silently, in his heart), or else he gives some *wrong* meaning to the word 'God', a meaning that entirely misses the point of what we are really arguing about. He thinks that when he denies the existence of God, he is denying the existence of an old man with a white beard who lives on clouds, or something like that.

Now it should be obvious that Anselm's reply in Ch. 4 just won't work. The *Fool* may not know what 'God' means, but *we* do. Anselm has told us! So if Anselm is right, no one should be able to say in his heart 'That than which no greater can be conceived does not exist'. In short, everyone who reads Anselm *must* agree with his ontological argument.

Well, *do* you agree? Or do you harbor even the slightest doubt about whether all this works? For that matter, does *anyone* harbor such a doubt? If so, then you have *empirically refuted Anselm*. On his own grounds, no one should be able to harbor that doubt, so the fact that people can and do shows that something is wrong with his argument. I think this is an altogether ironic outcome for an argument that is supposed to proceed purely at the conceptual level.

Finally, let us look quickly at one of Gaunilo's objections. A lot of what Gaunilo says has to do with 'saying in one's heart' and 'understanding' and 'comprehending', and I simply don't understand all of it. I'm not sure there is a coherent terminology running through Gaunilo's text. Some people think there is one, and some even think they know what it is. But they haven't told me in a form I can fathom.

Nevertheless, one passage in Gaunilo's *In Behalf of the Fool* is famous. It is in section 6, pp. 308-309 of the Deane translation. This is the famous *Lost Island* argument. If Gaunilo is right, Anselm's argument *must* fail. It proves *too much*. For, Gaunilo says, exactly the same form of argument could be used to prove the existence of a Perfect Island. Try it; it works! (Some people think it doesn't. I discuss the matter in section II of "Anselm and Ambiguity", pp. 435-436. Some of the considerations are reproduced below.)

It is curious to look at Anselm's reply to the Lost Island argument. It occurs in Ch. 3 of his response to Gaunilo, p. 316 of the Deane translation (but, as always, this one is mine):

Now I say boldly that if anyone should find for me [anything] existing either in actual fact or in thought alone, except for "[that] than which a greater cannot be thought", to which he is able to fit the logic of this argument of mine, I will find and give him that Lost Island, not to be lost any more.

That is, Anselm's reply consists of remarking that the two arguments are not parallel. And that's all he says about it!

Some people have tried to make it out that there really is a difference here, that 'that than which no greater can be conceived' *may* be a consistent notion, whereas 'that *island* than which no greater *island* can be conceived' is not. But whether that is so or not, it is irrelevant. Anselm's argument does *not* rest on the assumption that the notion of God is *consistent* (although if the argument works and really does prove the *existence* of God, then of course it follows as a *consequent* of the argument that the notion of God is consistent.) And it wouldn't help the argument if you *added* the premise that the notion of God *is* consistent. (Incidentally, this is an important difference between Anselm's form of the ontological argument and Descartes' version,

which depends crucially on the premise that the notion of God is consistent. In fact, if you grant this, then Descartes' argument, suitably revised, is a complete success, and really does prove the existence of God! But I said I wasn't going to talk any more about Descartes.)

Gaunilo's Lost Island argument *is* an *exact* parallel to Anselm's, despite Anselm's denial. And it shows that there is *something* wrong with Anselm's argument. It doesn't, however, show *what* is wrong. I try to do that in my paper.

Chapter 33:  
Remarks on Anselm's Reply to Gaunilo

We have already seen (Chapter \s2 above) Anselm's reply to Gaunilo's Lost Island argument. Here I want to record my views on some of Anselm's other arguments in his reply to Gaunilo. (Note: The following remarks won't make much sense unless you read them in conjunction with Anselm's text.)

Let 'x' and 'y' range over understandable beings, and let 'w' range over conceivable worlds. The notions of understandable beings and conceivable worlds are discussed in Lewis' "Anselm and Actuality" and my own "Anselm and Ambiguity", but you don't really need to worry too much about the machinery. All you need to know is that understandable beings don't have to be real or even possible, and conceivable worlds don't have to be possible worlds; they can be impossible. (The idea is "anything I can think about" - and I can certainly think about lots of impossible things. I just did.) The possible worlds, of course, are included among the conceivable worlds. Let *W* be the actual world, which is of course one of the possible worlds.

Then in Ch. 1 of Anselm's reply to Gaunilo, p. 312 of the Deane translation, the paragraph beginning "In answer to this . . .", let *g* be as in Chapter \s2 above, and let 'F' abbreviate 'exists through a beginning'. Then the paragraph tries to show that if *g* can even be conceived to exist, it really does exist.

Proof:

1. For all *w*, *g* does not F in *w*. (Premise.)
2. For all *x*, if there is a *w* such that *x* exists in *w* but *x* does not exist in *W*, then there is a *w* such that *x* Fs in *w*. (Premise).
3. Hence, if there is a *w* such that *g* exists in *w*, then *g* exists in *W*.

The argument is plainly valid, and step 2 seems to me to be true on the general grounds that I can conceive of anything as doing anything. The whole idea behind this "conceiving"-talk is that conceiving is not confined to just possibilities. (The idea behind the machinery is that if it can be conceived that *x* does F, then in some conceivable world, *x* really does F.) But, unfortunately, the same general principle that verifies step 2 refutes step 1. I know of no other plausible grounds to grant step 2.

On pp. 312-313, in the paragraph beginning "Furthermore . . .", we have an attempt to prove that if some understandable being is such that no greater can be conceived, then it must exist. The argument is fallacious. In skeletal form, it goes like this: Suppose *g*, defined as before, does not exist. Then nevertheless, if it did exist, its non-existence would be both possible and impossible. (See the reasoning in the text.) Hence it exists. But the conclusion does not follow. The *proper* conclusion is that, on the supposition that *g* does not exist, it is *impossible* for *g* to exist. The same kind of fallacy is committed in the argument in the following paragraph, beginning "But let us suppose . . .". The three paragraphs on pp. 313-314, beginning "Moreover . . .", do not prove the existence of *g*, but only that *if g exists*, it exists always and everywhere.

In Ch. 5, p. 320, the two paragraphs beginning "If it should be said . . .", we have an argument roughly as follows:

- (1) Suppose for reductio that *g* does not exist in *W*.
- (2) Then it is possible for *g* not to exist in *W*. (Since what is so is possible.)
- (3) Hence, for some *w*, *g* does not exist in *w*. (From (2), since possible worlds are included among the conceivable worlds.)

(4) For every  $x$ , if there is a world  $w$  such that  $x$  does not exist in  $w$ , then if  $x$  exists in  $W$ , there is a  $y$  greater than  $x$ , and if  $x$  does *not* exist in  $W$ , then even if it did exist in  $W$ , there would be a  $y$  greater than  $x$ . (Premise.) *Note:* This is needlessly complicated. It can be simplified to: For every  $x$ , if there is a world  $w$  such that  $x$  does not exist in  $w$ , then either there is a  $y$  greater than  $x$  or else there would be if  $x$  existed in  $W$ .

(5) By instantiating (4) to  $g$  and using (3), we get: Either there is a  $y$  greater than  $g$  or else there would be if  $g$  existed in  $W$ .

(6) But this is contradictory, given the definition of  $g$ , so that step (1) must be rejected by *reductio*. Hence:  $g$  does exist in  $W$ .

But step (5) is *not* contradictory, and the *reductio* fails. All that follows from (5) is that it is *impossible* for  $g$  to exist in  $W$ .

In this argument, and in the two on pp. 312-313, Anselm thinks that if we are given a sentence of the form 'If it is not the case that  $p$ , then if it *were* the case that  $p$  a contradiction would follow', we can infer that it *is* the case that  $p$  after all. But in fact all we can infer is that *either* it is the case that  $p$  or else it is impossible that  $p$ . If a round square does not exist (which of course it doesn't), then nevertheless if it *did* exist, there would be a contradiction. But it doesn't follow that a round square exists.



Chapter 34:  
The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century  
(And Slightly Before)

In connection with this Chapter, the following are relevant readings. They come to you very highly recommended.

Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927). There is a paperback version (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1957).  
David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), Chs. 5-7.

Haskins' book is a classic, quite literally a "celebrated" book. In 1977 there was a symposium celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its publication.

Recall how, in Chapter 2, above, we talked about the revival of almost everything around the year 1000. By the late-eleventh and early-twelfth century, this revival was in full swing. One of the main features of this period of renaissance was the renewal of learning and the emergence of educational institutions. In the Middle Ages, at least after the time of Boethius or thereabouts, there were four main kinds of educational institutions. All but the last are encountered in Peter Abelard's *Story of My Adversities*. Please read that volume in connection with the present section. We won't be talking about Abelard directly for a while yet, but we are already talking about his time. The four main kinds of educational institutions were:

(1) Monastic Schools. From the earliest days of monasticism, there were schools associated with the monasteries. This was largely due to the influence of Cassiodorus (the successor of Boethius as *Magister officiorum*), who wrote on the monastic ideal. Basically, these monastic schools were for the training of young monks, and also for the education of children entrusted to their care - for example, by noblemen - whether destined for the religious life or not. Under Charlemagne in the ninth century, there was an attempt made to encourage educational institutions in general, including monastic schools. While these monastic schools have never entirely disappeared even to this day, their period of greatest importance ended around 1150. Anselm's school at Bec in Normandy was one of these monastic schools. The *Monologion* and *Proslogion* were written in the context of that school.

Recall from Abelard's *Adversities* how William of Champeaux was driven out of Paris by Abelard's dialectical skills, and retired to the abbey of St. Victor, where he "founded" (actually, he just reorganized) the School of St. Victor. This was another one of the monastic schools. The masters of this school became quite well known in the later-twelfth century. They are collectively known as the "Victorines". The most important of them are:

(a) Hugh of St. Victor, the author of a *Didascalicon* on the various liberal arts. (This has been translated into English by Jerome Taylor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*.) Hugh (or Hugo in Latin) was a theologian and an antidialectician. He was also a "speculative mystic" - that is, a mystic who wrote serious theoretical treatises about what was going on in mysticism. (*Note*: The tradition we call "speculative mysticism" goes back to include Bernard of Clairvaux, the Cistercian monk who attacked Abelard so strongly.)

(b) Richard of St. Victor, who succeeded Hugh as master of the school. Richard wrote an important treatise on the Trinity, the first serious alternative to Augustine's approach in the latter's own *De trinitate*. Like Hugh, Richard too was also an important speculative mystic. But, unlike Hugh, Richard was much more of a dialectician. He apparently even wrote a treatise of his

own on logic but, at last report, it has not survived. (I put it that way because these things are constantly being recovered by scholars.)

(2) Cathedral Schools, or Episcopal Schools. The terms mean the same thing. These were schools associated with a cathedral. A "cathedral" is not just any big church; a "cathedral" is the official home-church of a *bishop*. Cathedrals were not monasteries, and bishops were not abbots. Monasticism belonged (and still does belong) to an entirely different hierarchical structure. Monks were part of the "regular" clergy - that is, the clergy who lived under a *regula* or "rule", such as the Rule of St. Benedict. Bishops and ordinary parish priests belong to what is called the "secular clergy" (a term that often baffles people) - that is, those who do not live under a common "rule", generally in a kind of retirement from the world, but rather live out there among the flock, *in* the world, who *belong* to the "age" (*saeculum* = "age, generation"). In theory the monasteries were independent of the bishops. But then in theory they were independent of the local feudal lord too.

Part of Charlemagne's educational legislation stipulated that *every bishop was to have his school*. In fact, however, this seldom really happened until much later. These schools were run by a school "master". They were intended for the education of the (secular) clerics destined for the priesthood. There was a group of priests associated with the cathedral, who functioned in various administrative capacities. They were called "canons", and the group as a whole was called a "chapter". Often the chapter followed a kind of rule, very much like monks. (The distinctions tend to get a bit technical at this point.) The canons usually had charge of the school.

Such cathedral or episcopal schools flourished from roughly 1000 to roughly 1200. William of Champeaux ran the cathedral school at Paris when Abelard went to study under him. See Abelard's *Adversities*, p. 12. Also the school of Anselm of Laon (not the same as Anselm of Canterbury), where Anselm went to study theology, was a cathedral school. See *Adversities*, p. 21. The very important *School of Chartres*, of which we will be hearing more later, may have been another important cathedral school. (I say "may have been". It was *definitely* important. The question is whether it was strictly a cathedral school, or even whether there was a real school there at all. There is some scholarly dispute over this.)

(3) *Individual masters*. In some cases, individual scholars would go off somewhere and found a school. They would hire a hall and advertise for students. Such "individual masters" relied entirely on their own skills and popularity. Often the masters moved around from place to place, sometimes taking their students with them. Abelard's own school at Melun (about 1107) was an "individual masters's" school of this kind. Apparently, Roscelin had run a similar school earlier. This peculiar kind of institution flourished from around 1050 to around 1150.

(4) *Universities*. Frequently, universities grew out of cathedral schools, as happened for instance at Paris. Basically, what makes a university distinct from a cathedral school is an official charter, from either a royal or an ecclesiastical authority. Universities began to grow up from c. 1150 on in Italy - the first one was at Bologna - and from around 1200 on in France. The great English universities were somewhat later, first Oxford and then Cambridge.

The university is one of the two great mediaeval institutions to survive more or less intact to the present day. The other one, of course, is Parliament.

The great classic work on the history of the universities is by Hastings Rashdall (yes, he is the same as the philosopher who wrote on ethics), *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*. The original edition was in 1895, but it was reprinted in 1936. This work is now quite dated, of course, and flawed in many ways. But never mind, it is still a *great* work. All subsequent work on this topic owes a big debt to Rashdall.

By the mid-twelfth century, a number of works of Greek learning were being translated into Latin, not all of them by any means philosophical works. There were basically four points of contact between the Latin West and the Greek East during this period:

(1) Syria, after the first crusade (1076). Things that came from this source were most exotica and occult works.

(2) Sicily, which was a melting-pot of Latins, Greeks, Hebrews and Arabs. Euclid was translated here, and other mathematical works. Also some medical texts.

(3) Constantinople. A few Western scholars went there, notably one James of Venice in the twelfth century, a major translator of the rest of Aristotle's logical works. (Recall that the first bits of Aristotle came via Boethius.) There were other translations of these works too, but James of Venice's became pretty much the standard versions. By and large, despite James of Venice, the political climate prevailing between the West and Constantinople did not favor this kind of contact at this time. Furthermore, as far as philosophy was concerned, things were pretty bleak in Constantinople in the twelfth century.

(4) Spain. Ah yes, there's a big story to be told here. I will tell it later, together with more on Sicily and Constantinople.

## Chapter 35:

### Dialectic and Anti-Dialectic in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

In Chapters \s2 and \s3 above, we talked about the revival of things beginning around the year 1000. In Chapter \s3, we talked about the revival of learning in particular. One facet of that revival was dialectic or logic.

In Augustine, as we have seen, we have much more of what I called a visionary approach to philosophy. Augustine, recall, was a trained rhetor. And, in the best rhetorical tradition, his arguments proceed by analogy, comparison - that is, *persuasion* - rather than by rigorous logic. He was concerned to *explore* a doctrine he already believed. He was not concerned so much to *prove* that it is true.

There are some exceptions, of course. Late in his life, Augustine entered into controversy with various heretical movements - for instance, the Pelagians, who thought that grace was not necessary for salvation. In those cases Augustine tried to prove that the orthodox view was to be chosen over Pelagianism. But even there his arguments are more rhetorical than rigorous. All this of course is a matter of emphasis.

We saw the same thing in Boethius - for example, in his discussion of foreknowledge and free will. Recall how at the crucial point Boethius just pulls the notion of a timeless divine intelligence out of the air, with no argument for it whatsoever. Again, we saw the same approach to things in Pseudo-Denis and Eriugena. Eriugena paints a glorious picture of the universe; but we are really not given any *argumentative* reason to believe it.

Now we've seen how things are different in Anselm. He tries to prove things rigorously - with varying degrees of success, of course, but that is not the point here - much more than Augustine, Boethius or Eriugena ever did. I want to dwell on this for a while.

Around the turn of the millennium we get, among all the other revivals, a revival of dialectic. In the classical division of the liberal arts, as handed down for instance by Martianus Cappella (see Chapter \s4 above), *dialectica* was one of the disciplines in the *trivium* (and so was "trivial" in the original sense of the word), along with grammar and rhetoric. Traditionally, the trivium was the basis for a young men's education, before he went on to the quadrivium: geometry, arithmetic, astrology (that is, astronomy), and music (that is, the mathematics of harmony - it had nothing to do with composition or performance).

There were several things going on at this time that help to explain this rise of dialectic:

(1) There was, of course, the general revival of education (see Chapter \s3 above). Since dialectic was one of the standard tools of education, you might reasonably expect it to flourish with the reemergence of education and learning.

(2) At the same time, there was a revival of law and legal studies, both civil and ecclesiastical (canon) law. The law began to flourish in a big way in the period of the Gregorian Reform (1040-1140), named after Pope Gregory VII. The great civil Code of Justinian was recovered during this period. All of this was occurring during the time of the growth of mediaeval national states and the papacy, with all the accompanying arguments about who had authority where, and so on. The need for a fairly settled legal system was great.

Of course, one of the things you do if you are a legal expert is to argue cases. And so you might well expect a sharpening of argumentative skills during this period of legal revival. So once again, it is not surprising that dialectic flourished too. Similarly, people even today frequently say that logic is a good preparation for law school.

So far, however, all this might just as well lead you to expect a revival of rhetoric as of dialectic. Rhetoric too was an important educational tool, for instance. Late ancient education was centered on it. And the ability to win a case in court depends at least as much on your persuasive abilities as it does on your logical rigor. So why is it that rhetoric seems to have declined during this period while dialectic grew? Well, I suspect the reason is this:

(3) Boethius' translations of and commentaries on some of the ancient logical works were beginning to enjoy a wide circulation. The Boethian version of Augustinianism was beginning to come into its own in the eleventh and especially the twelfth centuries. I suspect that the increased interest in Boethius generally led to an increased interest in his logical works in particular, and that in turn led to an interest in dialectic generally. If you will recall Chapter 5 above, the corpus of logical writings that stem from Boethius was called the *logica vetus*. It was the standard corpus of logic until around 1150, when more of Aristotle began to be translated.

The last great dialectician or logician of this old period - before the new Aristotelian material came into circulation - was Peter Abelard. Abelard was a superb dialectician. We will talk more about him later.

With this revival of dialectic that we've talked about, there went a subtle change of attitude. One might have supposed that all this new interest in dialectic would have led to people's doing basically the same kind of thing Augustine, Boethius and Eriugena did - that is, explore their religious doctrine, which they assumed all along, rather than to try to prove it - only doing it with more rigorous and polished arguments. To some extent this in fact happened. But something else happened too. Some people began to get pretty enthusiastic about their newly acquired skill. Logic was hot stuff! And they began to think that not only could they explore the mysteries of the faith with logic, they could go further. After all, it was hardly a fitting role for such an exalted tool that it should merely play an ancillary role to theology. Some people, or at least so people said, began to think they could prove the mysteries of the faith by dialectic - without presupposing faith. And for this, they had Scriptural authority: Romans 1: 18-20 (see Chapter 7 above), the passage about the invisible things of God, which are clearly seen from the things that were made. The pagans were without excuse, since they could reason too, and therefore should have known these things.

It is doubtful whether anyone ever really went so far as to claim that the pagans should have been able to deduce all of revelation. In that case, what good would revelation be, except as a labor-saving device? Nevertheless, people were frequently accused of holding this extreme view by those who opposed the new use of dialectic in theology. And there were many who opposed this. Theology, the study of Sacred Doctrine, traditionally proceeded by citing Scripture and the Fathers - by marshalling witnesses. The new upstarts presumed to do away with all that and appeared to rely only on their own pure reason. Recall Anselm's works. Scarcely an authoritative citation in the whole corpus.

So you get two camps: the dialecticians and the antidialecticians. This opposition was one form of the old problem of faith and reason, of reason and revelation.

One of the most shocking uses of dialectic was made by Abelard in his immensely important theological work: *Sic et Non* (= "Yes and No"). In this work, Abelard asks a number of theological questions - for instance, about the Trinity. Then he lines up authoritative sources one on one side and authoritative sources on the other side, face to face. This brings the conflict to a sharp focus: the authorities seem to contradict one another - Yes and No. This was of course shocking because people thought Abelard's real intent was to show that the authoritative texts were inconsistent and therefore unreliable. As Alan of Lille (= Alanus ab Insulis) allegedly said

somewhat later: "Authority has a nose of wax; you can twist it any way you want." (A famous line, whether he ever actually said it or not. I haven't located it.) In fact, however, Abelard made it quite clear in his "Prologue" to the *Sic et Non* that this was not his intention at all. He thought the authorities were all correct. What that meant is that the appearance of contradiction had to be resolved. And that could only be done by reason, by dialectic: by making distinctions, looking carefully at implications, and so on. He sets out some common-sense principles for how to do this in his "Prologue", along with such modern-sounding rules of thumb as: Be sure you read the text in its context; don't expect an author's views to remain unchanged throughout his life, and so on. In effect, therefore, the *Sic et Non*, far from impugning the authorities, was an attempt to show before your eyes that you must use dialectic in Sacred Doctrine, since that was the only way of saving the authorities and reconciling them. The *Sic et Non* was not an attempt to debunk authority; it was an attempt to save it!

The *Sic et Non* had an important influence on a type of argument form that later grew into the Scholastic *quaestio*. The basic form is this: (1) State the question - usually in a yes/no form, but in any way in a form for which there are only two sides. (2) Give arguments for one side. (3) Give opposing arguments for the other side. (4) Settle the question. (This part is called the *responsio* or *determinatio*.) (5) Perhaps answer the previous arguments, some or all of them.

(Note: In mediaeval handwritten manuscripts, the standard abbreviation for 'Responsio' was:  $\_$  - the familiar sign nowadays for medical prescriptions. The *quaestio*-form became widespread in all kinds of teaching, including the teaching of mediaeval medicine. You would present the symptoms, and then ask what should be done to cure them. The "Responsio" to this *quaestio* was in the form of a prescription. Hence the origin of the modern symbol.)

Abelard of course did not make up the *quaestio*-form. We can find relatively pure examples of it in Boethius' discussion of universals in his *Commentary on Porphyry* (see Chapter \s7 above), and also in his *De hebdomadibus* (Chapter \s8 above). See also Anselm's discussion of how God is and is not in space and time (Chapter \s9 above). But, while Abelard didn't make it up, he was the first to apply it to theology in such a big way, and he was one of the main influences in popularizing the form. Note: The preliminary arguments in a *quaestio* may be taken from *reason* - the philosophers - or from *authority*. (Boethius uses reason, Abelard uses authority in the *Sic et Non*.) If they come from reason, the *Responsio* can always just reject an argument as a bad argument. But if they come from authority, they cannot just be rejected in this way. The authorities must be saved: they must be properly *interpreted*.

The *quaestio*-form became a *very* popular pedagogical tool. It was tailor-made for classroom use. It was also very reminiscent of what goes on when you *hear a case in court*. First you hear both sides, and then you return a verdict. In fact, the *quaestio*-form was applied in the codifying of canon law, which was just getting seriously under way in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In 1140, one Gratian (important man) compiled his *very* important *Decretum* of canon law, putting order into the vast array of seemingly contradictory laws from the Church councils and other sources. The *Decretum* was also called the *Concordia discordantium canonum* ("The Harmony of Discordant Canon Laws"). It became part of the *Corpus juris canonici*, the official code of Church law that remained in force until 1917, when there was a new one. The importance of the *quaestio*-form in all this cannot be overemphasized.

Nevertheless, despite Abelard's good intentions in the *Sic et Non*, his aims were misinterpreted by some, who saw them as dangerous. Moreover, his dazzling use of dialectic elsewhere - in ethics, in discussions of the Trinity, and so on - worried some people. After the time covered in Abelard's *Adversities*, one William of St. Thierry (see chapter \s2 below) brought

Abelard to the attention of *Bernard of Clairvaux* (get his name down and remember it) - one of the most powerful men of his day. Bernard was a Saint, a high-grade mystic who wrote important works of mystical theology. He was a Cistercian monk (the Cistercians were a reformed group of Benedictines), and a theologian of the old school. But, for all his sanctity, there was also a strong strain of vindictiveness in him. William accused Abelard of heresy, of dangerous beliefs, and of other bad things, and in general got old Bernard after him. Abelard was not exactly what you would call a "meek" man, so that things went from bad to worse. Well, Bernard in effect harassed Abelard ever after in more or less official ways, until Abelard finally died in semi-exile. Bernard succeeded in getting Abelard in trouble with various ecclesiastical authorities. If you're interested in this period of Abelard's life, which is just as interesting as the part Abelard himself covers in his *Adversities*, the classic biography of Abelard is J. G. Sikes, *Peter Abailard*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932). (Notice, incidentally, the alternative spelling of Abelard's name. There are dozens of other variants too, but these two are the main ones in present circulation.)

Now let's look at this whole business more closely. What brought about this business of dialectic vs. antidialectic? Was it just a case of preferring mindless faith to the labor of thought (with "all the advantages of theft over honest toil")? Was it just a case of enlightened moderns against cranky old stuff-shirted conservatives? I think not. But first, let's look in detail at how the antidialectic side was manifested.

*Please read:* The selections from Peter Damian's *Letter on Divine Omnipotence*, translated as Text \s8 in Vol. 2, below.

Good. Now that you've read it, let's talk about it. Damian was not a philosopher of any real consequence. But he was an important figure in the period immediately preceding the Gregorian Reform mentioned above. The question discussed in Damian's letter is whether God can "restore a virgin after she has been corrupted". St. Jerome had said that God could not. (Jerome was a contemporary of Augustine, and was responsible for the standard Latin translation of the Bible, called the *Vulgate* since it was in the "vulgar" or "popular" Latin tongue rather than in the original Hebrew and Greek. If you think Schopenhauer was a screaming anti-feminist, you should look at some Jerome.)

Neither Jerome nor Damian of course is asking a *biological* question, but rather a *logical* one. Can God change the past? That is, can he *now* change it, after the fact? Jerome says no. His reason for saying no, or at least the reason other people had for agreeing with Jerome, is spelled out in Damian's letter - see \f6V VI of the translation - the passage about causing Rome never to have been founded. The reason is that it is *logically impossible* to change the past. There is a sense in which *what is past is necessary*, even if it wasn't necessary when it happened. (We have encountered this already, in Chapter \s3 above.) In short, the supply of necessary truths is *increasing* as time goes on.

This notion may perhaps strike some of you as odd. In philosophy, anyway, we have come to separate strictly the notion of time from the notions of possibility and necessity (the so called "modal" notions). For us, *necessary* truths are truths like those of logic, and perhaps those of mathematics. They don't *change* over time; they don't *become* necessary. (Whether *all* eternal truths like this are also *necessary* truths is another question entirely. Orthodoxy requires not. It is eternally true that God is a creator. But it is not *necessary*, since he doesn't *have* to create.)

But it was not always so. This strict separation of time and modality is a relatively recent development in the history of logic. The traditional theories linked them very closely. And there is nothing wrong with these traditional views. They are perfectly coherent.

The connection between time and modality goes back far earlier than the eleventh and twelfth centuries, far earlier even than Boethius. It goes back to ancient logic, to the Stoics at least. The basic idea is this: The future, insofar as it is still *unsettled*, is still *contingent*. Let the *contingent* therefore be exactly the *not yet settled*. Then the *necessary* will be that which is already settled in the affirmative, and the *impossible* will be that which is already settled in the negative. 'Settled' here means something like "not subject to negotiation", "there's nothing to be done about it now". This was a common theme in mediaeval and ancient logic. Picture it this way:

$T$   
 $I$   
 $M$   
 $E$

FIG. \s0-I\I+3D: MAP OF POSSIBLE HISTORIES OF THE WORLD

This diagram is a kind of partial map of the temporal possibilities in the history of the world - a world in which there is contingency. Each branching represents a "fork in the road" into the future, a real alternative. The tree may extended in both directions, and also laterally. Now the idea is this. Pick any point on the tree. That point will be at a certain time and on a certain branch. Suppose it is at time  $t_{f31}$  on a certain branch. Now there are *many* ways *up* the tree from a given point, but only *one* way down. The sense then in which, from any given vantage point on the tree, what happened in the past is settled and therefore necessary is just this: There is only *one* way to go *down* the tree from any given point - that is, only one way to trace one's history back into the past. There are no alternatives any more when you look back into the past, and so it is in that sense *necessary*. Similarly, if there *is* real contingency in the world, as there is on my map, then the sense in which from any given vantage point on the tree, at least some of what will happen in the future is not yet settled, and therefore still contingent, is just this: There are *several* ways to go *up* the tree into the future from a given point on the tree, several alternatives. And if you go up the tree to a given future time, then on *some* of the paths you might take up to that time, such and such will occur, and on some others it will not.

For example, in the diagram, point *A* is the base of the tree - where we are starting from, for present purposes - and is at time  $t_{f31}$ . At point *A*, it is *necessary* that *p* be true at time  $t_{f32}$ , since on *both* alternatives into the future from point *A* (for simplicity, I am supposing there are only two alternatives there), *p* will be true at time  $t_{f32}$ . That is already settled at point *A*, and there is nothing to be done about it any more. But from the vantage point of *A*, it is still *contingent* whether *q*, *r* and *s* will be true at times  $t_{f33}$ ,  $t_{f34}$ , and  $t_{f35}$ , respectively. At point *B*, however, (over to the right at time  $t_{f34}$ ) it is *still* contingent whether *s* will occur at time  $t_{f35}$  or not, but it is no longer contingent whether *q* is true at  $t_{f33}$ . That is now settled and necessary. It was *once* contingent, for instance at *A*. But no longer once we get to *B*.

*Note:* It seems to follow from this approach that not only is the *past* necessary, but so is the *present*. (Just as in the case of the past "There's only one way to get there from here", so too in the case of the present, "There's only one way to get here from here".) You must ask yourself whether this sense of necessity is one that interferes with free will. I think not. (I touched on this briefly in Chapter \s3 above.) Now I've dwelled on this bit of tense-logic for two reasons: (i) To



motivate Jerome's denial that God can now change the past. The past is now necessary, and if the omnipotence of God is not be interpreted in such a strong and silly sense that it would allow him to violate even logic, that would allow him to produce contradictions, then even God cannot now change the past, although of course he could have prevented it before it happened, he could have caused it to be different before it occurred (when there was "still time", as we say). \f1(ii) We will see more of this kind of tense-logic when we come to Ockham's account of foreknowledge and free will. I'm just setting up the preliminaries now.

Now note: The *explanation* of the point about God's changing the past is an application of *dialectic* to theology. And Damian doesn't like the result. He thinks this is a compromise on divine omnipotence. There are two things to observe about his discussion:

(1) His view of how God's omnipotence allows him to change the past. It's a bit obscure just how Damian thinks this works, but I think perhaps we can arrange his discussion this way:

(a) He approves the view that what is *now* past is *now* necessary.

(b) Nevertheless, no one denies that *at or before* that past time, God could have caused things to come out different. That is, the past wasn't necessary then, even though it is now. No one denies that God could have adjusted it differently then, although some people deny that he can do it now.

(c) But since there is no change in God - no past, present or future for him - what he *could*, he still *can* do.

(d) Therefore, he still *can* change what, from our point of view, is past.

The point of my discussing this is *not* that it is particularly good as an argument. It probably isn't. In fact, the *worse* you think the argument is, the more it illustrates my point: Damian was of the *old school*. He wasn't much good at precise argumentation. Indeed, in section VII of the translation, he gets himself all messed up. He points out that necessity is not confined to the *past*. "Just as for everything that was, it is necessary for it to have been, so too for everything that is, as long as it is, it is necessary for it to be, and for everything that will be, it is necessary for it to be going to be." (Lines 176-180.) But all these are *conditional* necessities in Boethius' sense: For all *p*, if it necessary that if *p* then *p* - no matter what *tense* '*p*' has. And the problem about God's changing the past does not arise from *this* kind of necessity at all, but rather from the fact that the past, unlike the future, is now *simply* necessary in Boethius' sense: For all *p*, if *p* was so, then it is now *necessary* that *p* was so.

Damian seems confused about all this. He is unfamiliar with the dialectical niceties and doesn't handle them well.

(2) Damian then was of the old school. Notice how this fact is accompanied in his letter by a vigorous attack on the use of dialectic in theology. This is an illustration of my point about how the old school turned antidialectical. Look carefully at lines 185 and thereafter. In lines 203-208, notice that Damian admits that perhaps you can use dialectic in theology a little bit, but only in an *ancillary* - that is, handmaidenly - role. Dialectic must not take the lead; it must follow the lead of theology.

*Important bit of lore:* Damian seems to be the originator of the mediaeval commonplace about philosophy and dialectic as the handmaiden of theology - you see the passage in line 205. (There's dispute about whether he was really the first, of course.) The general thrust of Damian's attack on dialectic is that dialecticians should stay in their own yard and mind their own business.

There is a similar passage from William of St. Thierry (remember him? See earlier in this Chapter), translated as Text \s4 in Volume 2, below. William lived c. 1085 - c. 1148. Please go read that passage now.

In short, what the passage says is that the *categories* of human thought (the Aristotelian categories) simply do not apply to God.

Recall that when discussing the doctrine of creation in Chapter \s5 above, I said that the exhaustiveness of creation (the claim that everything but God is created by God), and the freedom or contingency of creation, together implied the omnipotence of God. Nothing external can constrain him, since there *is* nothing external to God until he creates. Further, God is internally free, so that he is not subject to an inner necessity either (perhaps a divine psychological "compulsion"). Hence, there are *no* limits on what God can do by his creative power; he is omnipotent. When I first discussed this, I mentioned a problem. Are the laws of logic created too? If so, then God can make them any way he wants, and can violate them at will, since they are subject to him. If not, they are *not* subject to God's will, and so don't they impose a constraint on his omnipotence? Omnipotence is sometimes interpreted as not extending to impossibles. Not even God can make a square circle - because it is *impossible* given the natures of circles and squares. But aren't natures created by God too? Who's boss here, God or circularity? Damian may be interpreted in one way as taking the former view: God *can* violate the laws of logic. So too, some people interpret Descartes as saying the same thing in the seventeenth century. (I don't think that's right, although Descartes did say that God could violate the laws of geometry. But that's a different story.)

Is this just obscurantism? Is Damian's (and later, Bernard of Clairvaux's) attack on dialectic in theology just a case of preferring a comfortable confusion to a strenuous argument? No. Or at least it *need* not be. There is a perfectly respectable *philosophical* tradition into which all of this fits - one going from Descartes back through Bernard and William of St. Thierry to Damian, and then on back to Pseudo-Denis and through him to Gregory of Nyssa and the neo-Platonists. Recall that, according to them, God is *above* being, and therefore (given the Greek identification of being and intelligibility) above intelligibilities too. Thus logic, which codifies the laws of intelligible truths, doesn't apply to God. We've seen Pseudo-Denis say, as William of St. Thierry will say after him, that human rational categories simply don't apply to God. (See Chapter \s6 above.) In this tradition, to *reason* logically about the divinity is to *lower* God to the level of a mere being. And this is wrong. God cannot be apprehended by the intellect, but only by the *will*. Recall all those old voluntarist themes in this tradition: "Living Flame of Love", and so on. In Descartes too, the will goes beyond the intellect. (See *Meditation IV*.) Descartes is right in the neo-Platonic tradition to this extent.

Thus here in the twelfth century, we see the spreading influence of Dionysian neo-Platonism. There was another tradition too, of course: Augustinianism. Augustine refused to put God (the One) above being. They were all on the same level. And therefore (*important*) God is at least in principle *intelligible*. For Augustine, logic *does* apply to God. The dispute between dialecticians and antidialecticians is thus in a sense a dispute between Augustinians and Dionysiacs. Not that they were clearly separated in people's minds. No one *thought* he was violating the spirit of Augustine. The streams were mixed together.

But how do the Augustinians get out of the problem I mentioned? Who's boss - God or logic, God or natures? *Answer*: God *and* logic, God *and* natures, because they are all the same. The laws of logic, the archetypes of natures, are all built into the Word - the *logos*, the divine mind. They are all found in the divine ideas. So God's omnipotence is not limited by any external

constraints. And God is still free. Nevertheless, there are still limitations in a sense on God's power. His power does not allow him to do the impossible. But that is no constraint. It does not turn God into a Platonic Demiurge (see Chapter \s7 above), who must look *up* to the archetypes or patterns outside him to tell what he can do and what he can't. The "archetypes" are now built right into God himself. And it does not turn God into the Platonic Demiurge (again) or the neo-Platonic One, both of which *inevitably* and *necessarily* do what they do. God has choices. He doesn't have to create at all. And give that he does create, he can create in any *possible* way. What he *can't* do - and no one else can do either - is the *impossible*.

It is perhaps not altogether clear that this strategy works. It leaves itself open to a number of very subtle problems. But I will not rehearse them here.

## Chapter 36:

### Relations of Influence in the Twelfth Century

If you have been keeping up with the reading for this survey, there is a big chunk of it that has to be done all at once here. Look ahead at the next few chapters of this survey, to see what is coming up. Then please read the passages in Texts \s4, \s2 and \s3 in Volume 2, below. Also the material from John of Salisbury and Peter Abelard in the Hyman and Walsh volume. Look at the Abelard material very closely, and consult the list of corrections to the translation given in Chapter \s5, below. The text is very dense - by far the hardest thing we have done so far - and we will spend a lot of time on it.

Also, please read Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, Ch. 14 and Chs. 16-18.

The diagram on the next page shows how the various late-eleventh and twelfth century figures were related to one another. An arrow between two names,

'A \f8T B\i+3d' means that A taught B. Other relations are marked by dotted lines, and are labelled in each case. Incidentally, notice how the philosophers are coming thick and fast now (see the remarks in Chapter \s6, above). Even if some of the people on the diagram are only marginally philosophical, remember that before Anselm we had only four figures of any philosophical stature at all for a thousand years. (I'm counting Pseudo-Denis, but not counting the Greek Fathers. You can quibble if you want, but the point stands: the philosophical density is growing.) I should add that the diagram is a very selective one. A lot of people are left out.

Book worthy of note: D. E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). This treats Abelard's influence on those around and after him. The book is primarily theological rather than philosophical, but it is still good for our purposes, to learn who was who.

\l1d\X\k\4 \b

\h4iGerbert of Aurillac\m0\n0

\h1.3i(controversy with)\h4i\h+.25i(10th cent.)

St. Anselm (1033-1109)\h2.75iA certain John

(?)\h+.2i(Bec)\f6K\4\h1iManegold of Lautenbach\h3iRoscelin\h4i\h5\9SCHOOL OF CHARTRES\F4

\f6K\h1.75iK\4\h3i(c. 1050-1120)\h4i\h+.1ifounded by Fulbert

\h-10d\6D\h1.75i\h-10dD\4\h4i\h+.1i(died 1028)

Anselm of Laon\h1.5iWilliam of\h2.5iBernard of Clairvaux\h4iBernard of <sup>Chartres</sup>

\f6K\4\h1i(Laon)\h1.5i\h+.1iChampeaux\h2.5i\h+.1iand\h+.3i\6b\4\h4i\h+.1i(head of school,

\f6K\h1.75iK\4\h2.5i\h1iWilliam of (attacked)\h4i\h+.1i1114-c. 1124)

\f6K\4\h1.35i(Paris)\h1.75i\6K\4\h2.5iSt. Thierry\h+.6i\6Z\4\h4iGilbert of Poitiers

\f6K\4\h1i\h+.2i(Laon)\h1.75i\6K\4\h2.5i(both attacked\h4i\h+.1i\h3(1076--1154,

\f6K\h1.75iK\4\h2i(Loches)\h2.5i\h+.1iAbelard)\h4isucceeded Bernard

\f6K\h1.75i\h-10d\6D\h+.65iT\4\h4i\h+.1iof Chartres)

\f6K\4\h1iPeter \n2Abelard (1079-1142)\m3\h4iThierry (Theodoric)

\f6K\4\h4i\h+.1iof Chartres (Bernard

\f6K\4\h4i\h+.1iof Chartres' younger

\f6K\4\h4i\h+.1ibrother, succeeded

\h-10d\6D\4\h4i\h+.1iGilbert)

Alberic of Rheims. and

Ralph (his brother)\h4iWilliam of Conches  
\h4i\h+.1i(c. 1080-1154)

\n4f9SCHOOL OF ST. VICTOR\!f4\h4iBernard of Tours  
("founded" by W. of Champeaux)\h4i\h+.1i(Sylvester)

Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141)\h4iClarenbald of Arras  
Richard of St. Victor (c. 1123-1173)\h4i\h+.1i(d. after 1170)  
Godfrey of St. Victor (d. 1194)  
Walter of St. Victor (d. after 1180)\h4iJohn of Salisbury  
Peter Lombard\h4i\h+.1i(associated with  
\h4i\h+.1iChartres, but did  
\h4i\h+.1i not study there.  
\h4i\h+.1iDied after 1170.)  
\h+.1i\!f6OOA\!f4\!right arrow from Anselm of Laon  
\!f6OOA\!f4\!right arrow to Peter Abelard  
\h2.05i\!f6OOOOOOOOOOA\!f4\!right arrow from High of St. Victor  
\!Next: Lines from Gerbert to Fulbert, from Bernard of Chartres to Wm. of Conches  
chapter \h+.12i\!f6O\!m1  
\!Line between Anselm and Roscelin, Roscelin and Wm. of Champeaux/Abelard  
\!Dotted line from Champeaux to Victorines  
\!Line from Abelard to Salisbury  
\!Line from Gilbert to Clarenbald  
\h3.5iK\!f4 \!f6  
\!Box around Victorines  
\!0d\!f3Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa\!m4I  
VaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaJ  
\!Box around School of Chartres  
\!r\!m5Waaaaaaaaaaaaa\!m4I  
\!hm5VaaaaaaaaaaaaaJ  
è\!F1FIG. \!\$0-1\!i+3D: RELATIONS OF INFLUENCE IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

## Chapter 37:

### Background to the Problem of Universals in the Twelfth Century

Recall how the problem of universals went. See the discussion in Chapter \s2 above.

(a) Everything that exists is one - a single thing.

This Augustinian (but not neo-Platonic, note) metaphysical principle makes, or at least appears to make it impossible for there to be anything common in the way universals are supposed to be common. Recall how Boethius said they were supposed to be common, in his Commentary on Porphyry: as a whole, simultaneously, and in such a way that they enter into the metaphysical structure of the things to which they are said to be common.

(b) On the other hand, all knowledge - or at least all knowledge anyone cares about - proceeds in terms of general concepts.

The problem of universals comes down to a choice. You can either choose to opt for the objectivity of knowledge, and say that there are general things corresponding to general concepts. The problem then is that you appear to make the world metaphysically impossible for the sake of preserving our knowledge of it. This is what realists do. Or: You can opt for a coherent metaphysics in which everything is singular, but you do so at the expense of knowledge. This is what nominalists do. So the question is, where do you want your problem? In metaphysics or in epistemology? You pay your money and you take your choice. Or - and this is what usually happens - you try to strike some middle ground and avoid the two extremes. (This may of course just turn out to mean that you have your problems in *both* metaphysics and epistemology.)

These are the historical dynamics of the situation. It goes without saying that I am not committing myself to saying that either the realists' metaphysical problems or the nominalists' epistemological ones are ultimately insoluble. But their solutions, if any, are not obvious - except to their partisans, of course. And in any event, this is, historically, where the problems lie.

Now realism was a view some people actually held. (We will see in a bit that there are some doubts whether anyone was ever a thoroughgoing nominalist in the twelfth century - or in the entire Middle Ages, for that matter.) There were certain *theological* considerations that led some people to think that an orthodox Christian had to be a realist. One such consideration was the doctrine of original sin.

Go back and look at the passage from Odo of Tournai's treatise On Original Sin, in Volume II, Text \s3, below. First a word about the man. Odo of Tournai is also known as Odo of Cambrai. (Recall how Anselm of Canterbury is also Anselm of Bec.) Odo died in 1113. The name 'Odo' is the equivalent of 'Otto'.

Look at what he says in Text \s3. The problem is this: We get our bodies from Adam, by biology. That is, there is a physical continuity between Adam and us - *genetic* continuity, although of course Odo wasn't thinking in terms of chromosomes. But the soul does *not* come from Adam. We do not *inherit* the soul. It is not transmitted in this way. On the contrary, the theological view was that the soul is subject to a kind of *special* on-the-spot creation by God at some time during the development of the fetus (not necessarily at conception). Now since sin inheres in the *soul* and not in the body (although the *consequences* of sin, such as disease, may inhere in the body), how can I be said to have inherited original sin from Adam?

Notice, incidentally, that this is a *very* good question. As a result, some people have toyed with the idea that we do inherit the soul from Adam. The doctrine of original sin is one of the most utterly fundamental doctrines of the faith, but it is a real mind-bender.

How does Odo try to explain the situation? Well, he says that it is possible to have a species that happens to contain only one individual in it. For example, take the sun. There *could* have been many suns. (Don't think of the word 'sun' as a proper name for the one we've got. And don't think of the sun as just another star. Think of it in the mediaeval way, as an especially large and bright body in our sky. There might have been several such bodies.) If there were many suns, they would all have the same substance or species, and would differ only by their *accidents* (line 25). (Where do you suppose he got that? Recall the doctrine of individuation by accidents in Boethius' *De trinitate*. See passage (3) in Text \s4 below.) But in fact of course there is only one sun. (Odo's example is actually put in terms of the legend of the phoenix. But the principle is the same, and the sun example is the one other authors usually give to illustrate the point.)

Notice that Odo argues in lines 25-27 of the passage that you cannot in the same way have a genus with only one species in it. The whole idea of a species is that it *subdivides* a genus into a subsection. But it is not at all clear that Odo has a point here. I think he is probably confused. It is true that *conceptually*, if you *add* "rational" to "animal" to get "man", then you are implicitly allowing that there is a species of irrational animals too. Otherwise, the addition is not really an addition. But that's all on the conceptual level. It still seems possible to have it *in fact* be the case that the only animals that exist are, say, human beings - just as, as Odo himself admits, it *was* the case once (in the Garden of Eden) that the only human being who existed was Adam. In short, genera and species are alike on this point. If we are talking *conceptually*, then just as you can't have a genus that is not divisible into species, so too you cannot have a species that isn't divisible (potentially common) to several individuals. On the other hand, on the *real* level, just as you can have *in fact* a species with only a single individual in it, so too it seems that you could have a genus that turned out to have only a single species in it (although *conceptually*, of course, it could have more.)

Be that as it may. In any case, in lines 43-46 of the passage, Odo says "And when the species is said of a solitary individual, only then is it valid to attribute an accident both to the individual and to the species, although principally and in the first place accidents are in individuals."

That is, (1) first, accidents do not strictly speaking inhere in species. And where do you suppose he got *that* claim. See passage (2) of Text \s4 in Volume II below, from Boethius' *De trinitate*. Remember my claim in Chapter \s2 that *every* theory of universals ever held in the Middle Ages can be found, in some non-trivial sense, at least in germ in Boethius? Well, we are beginning to see why I said that.

(2) Nevertheless, even though strictly speaking accidents do not inhere in species but only in individuals (Boethius would say "in the *matter*"), still, if there is only *one* individual in the species as it happens, and if *it* has an accident A, then we may *in a sense* (but not "strictly", of course) say that the *species* has A - because every individual in the species has it. What Odo is doing here is saying that if it happens that every B is an A, then we can *in a sense* say that the species or universal B itself is an A. If Adam had blue eyes, then as long as he was alone (that is, until Eve came along - and if she had blue eyes too, then the point would *still* continue to hold), it was *in a sense* true to say that *humanity* had blue eyes - since every human did. It is clear that Odo wants to *generalize* this, so that no matter how many individuals you have in the species, if all of them have an accident A, then we can *in a sense* say that the species itself has A.

Now here is how all this gets applied to the case at hand. (See the paragraph beginning in line 49 of the passage.) While Adam and Eve were still the only people in the garden, they both sinned. That is, *every* human sinned, and therefore, by (2) above, humanity itself in a sense sinned. This sin in a sense infects the whole species, since no part of the species - no individual - did not sin. Hence we, who are of the same species as Adam and get souls of the same nature as his (although of course we do not get them biologically *from* him), end up with souls infected with sin. By the time a third human being appears on the scene, it is already too late. The entire nature has been affected.

It is important of course that *both* people sinned. If Eve had eaten the apple and then given it to Adam who threw it away in pious indignation, then there would have been no original sin in the *whole* species. Presumably Eve would have been in big trouble, but she alone would have been guilty. In order to affect the entire human species, Adam's contribution was crucial too.

But of course this is a crazy doctrine. If you poke at it even a little bit, it falls apart. If Adam and Eve were both right-handed, then so is the entire human species. If Adam and Eve both danced a jig in the garden of Eden, then so do I, since what they did affects the *whole* human nature, in which I partake.

But my reason for discussing Odo's theory is not that it is a *good* theory, but rather that it is a strongly *realist* theory. And notice, please, why Odo thinks he needs to be such a realist. It is to account for the doctrine of original sin.

This was a theological reason for realism. There are philosophical reasons too. Perhaps the most basic philosophical reason comes from a view about the correspondence of our thoughts and judgments to reality. That view is as follows:

If our knowledge is to be objectively grounded in the world, then there must it seems be a one-for-one correspondence between the elements of our judgments and things in the world. (This is sometimes called the "picture-theory" of language, or of truth. Our true judgments somehow "mirror" the world.) What grounds the truth of our judgments in the world must have *exactly the same structure* as our judgment itself has.

Those who don't like views like this sum it up by saying that, on such a theory, the world turns out to look very much like an English sentence (or German, or whatever other language the authors of such theories happen to speak). And in a sense this summation of the view is not too far off the track, although it is not so much the structure of the *spoken languages* that is at stake, but the structure of *judgments*. (This by itself suffices to disarm a number of objections.) The most basic motivation behind realism - at least the most basic *philosophical* motivation - is the view that *the form of our true judgments is the logical form of the world*.

Why does realism have to lean on some such principle as this? Well, remember, realists historically have always been mainly concerned with preserving our knowledge of the world. Now if you grant that the relation between our knowledge and the world does *not* have to proceed in this one-for-one fashion, that it can be more indirect, then why do we have to have a common or universal *entity* to correspond to our general concept? In short, why do we need *realism*?

I do not deny of course that a subtle theoretician might reject the *extreme* form the "correspondence" principle I have just given you, and yet still find philosophical reasons for thinking he has to be a realist. Nevertheless, the principle I have stated encapsulates a prominent underlying historical tendency in its most extreme - and therefore its clearest - form.



The extreme form of this principle is not just a historical abstraction; I am not just setting up a straw man. Some people in the Middle Ages did in fact explicitly hold a relatively extreme form of the principle. For instance, a certain Fridugisus, in a very odd *Letter on Nothing and Shadows*, translated as Text \5 in Volume II, below.

Note that there are several ways to spell the man's name. Concettina Genmnaro, *Fridugiso di Tours*, (Padua: Editrice Dott. Antonio Milani, 1963), pp. 67-96, discusses no fewer than seventeen variant spellings, each with some manuscript authority. They are (p. 71): Fredegis, Fredegisis, Fredegissus, Fredegisus, Fredegysus, Fredugisus, Fridarius, Fridegisus, Fridigisus, Fridogisus,, Friducis, Fridugerus, Fridugilsus, Fridugisus (by far the most common spelling in the manuscripts, and the one I adopt), Fridugusus, Frigdugisus, Frudigisus. Such variation in the spelling of proper names is not at all uncommon in the Middle Ages.

Fridugisus is from the *ninth* century, and was associated with the court of Charlemagne, which puts him shortly before Eriugena. Nevertheless, it is all right to treat him out of order, because the point I want to make about him only comes up now. Fridugisus was *not* an important philosopher.

Look at lines 27-28 of the translation in Text \5 below: "Every finite name signifies something." The word 'name' here is a mediaeval grammatical term meaning both nouns and adjectives. A "finite" name is contrasted with an "infinite" name, which is a name like 'non-man', 'non-tree'. (See the discussion in Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, 2, 16a30-32, which is where this terminology comes from.) Fridugisus doesn't say anything about whether *infinite* names signify something; his claim is confined to the finite ones.

Now 'nothing' is a finite name, as the grammarians tell us. It is not an *infinite* name, since it does not have the prefix 'non-' or an equivalent. (In Latin, 'nihil' = 'nothing' is not obviously made up of 'no' plus 'thing', as in English. Etymologically, to be sure, the word comes from 'ne' + 'hilum' = 'not in the least', but let's just pretend we don't know that.) Hence it must be a *finite* name. After all, it functions grammatically as a noun. It can serve in subject position, for example. Hence, according to the claim "Every finite name signifies something", 'nothing' signifies something. But just as to say that 'tree' (note the single quotation marks) signifies a certain kind of plant, or to say that 'dog' (again note the quotation marks) signifies a certain kind of animal amounts to saying that a tree (no quotation marks) *is* a certain kind of plant and a dog (again no quotation marks) *is* a certain kind of animal, so too, it would seem, to say that 'nothing' signifies something entails that nothing *is* something. And that certainly seems peculiar. (Quotation marks did not appear until the invention of printing. Mediaeval authors had other ways of marking what we do by quotation marks.)

But Fridugisus just accepts the consequence, peculiar or not, on the basis of his principle about finite names. In fact, he goes on to say that this nothing is a very *important* something, since it is that out of which God created every- thing. God created *ex nihilo*, remember.

You see what is happening here. The *extreme* form of the "correspondence" principle I set out above gets you involved in hopeless confusions and paradox. Recall Augustine's trouble over 'nothing' in *The Teacher* (Hyman and Walsh, p. 22). Also, Anselm's worries over nothing (if I may put it that way) in *Monologion*, Ch. 8. Eriugena's five types of nothing (see Chapter \6, above) are perhaps based on a similar kind of principle. Recall Eriugena's interpretation of the claim that creation is *ex nihilo*.

You might object that of course this is all silliness. We sophisticates in the twentieth century all know that 'nothing' may *look* like a noun, and grammatically *is* one (actually, it's a pronoun, but the point is the same) - it can be the subject of a sentence, for instance. But of

course really it can be paraphrased away. To say that God created *ex nihilo* is only to say that he created and did *not* create from *something*.

That's true. But now you're tampering with the "correspondence" principle. You are saying that there *need not* be a one-for-one correspondence between true thought and the world - or rather the *parts* of true thoughts and the *parts* of the world. The correspondence can be more indirect, got at by paraphrase, for instance. But by weakening the principle in this way, you may well be weakening the pressure toward realism.

There is of course another problem with this extreme form of the "correspondence" principle, this time a theological problem. If every finite name signifies something in this straightforward way, then *privative* terms like 'blindness' signify *real* entities, not just the absences of other real entities (to wit, of sight). And worse, 'sin' and 'evil' are names and so signify real entities. Hence, we are back to Manicheanism. (See Chapter §7 above.)

In this connection, it is curious to note that Odo, who is a *realist* on other grounds, nevertheless rejects Manicheanism and says that evil is no real thing. (See PL 160, cols. 1072C-1073D, in Book I of his *On Original Sin*. He is not being exactly inconsistent here. You don't have to be a realist on only *philosophical* grounds. Odo is a realist on *theological* grounds (original sin), but tempers his realism on the basis of *other* theological considerations (he wants to avoid Manicheanism).

Now let's look at this again. I repeat, I am dealing here with what might be called the "pressures" of the situation rather than with strict philosophical necessities. Historically, realism has been philosophically motivated by concerns to save our knowledge of the world. You are going to think this is a problem that only realism can solve only if you also think there must be a "correspondence" between our true judgments and the world. And the simplest and most straightforward way to view that correspondence is in terms of the principle I enunciated earlier. If you take that principle seriously, at face value, then you are going to end up with nothings and evils in the world. There are theological pressures, therefore, against taking the principle too strictly. How all this works out in the case of a particular thinker is of course entirely dependent on his own wits.

It is of course perfectly possible to be fairly sophisticated about it, and to say that the surface structure of our judgments *masks* a deeper and more fundamental structure, so that words like 'evil' and 'nothing' can be strictly done without in a suitably pure language. (Recall the "ideal"-languages of some early-twentieth century philosophers.) And then you might say that the correspondence between thought and reality does not occur at the level of *surface* structure, but at the level of *deep* structure. Then you might go on to say that, while at that deeper level of fully expanded paraphrase, you may not need words like 'nothing' and 'evil' - and so do not need real nothings and evils as positive beings in the world - you certainly *will* need some general terms at any rate, and so some *universals* in the world.

It is possible to say all this, but it is fancier than things got in the twelfth century. It will become more explicit later in the Middle Ages. William of Ockham (early-fourteenth century), for instance, will argue by means of such considerations of "deep structure" or paraphrase (these come out in his so called "connotation theory"), that you don't need entities corresponding to the words 'nothing' and 'evil'. He went even further and said that you don't need entities to correspond to terms in all the Aristotelian categories. You can say everything you want to say - although no doubt not so briefly - by using only *substance* terms and *quality* terms (and connecting words). You don't need real *places*, for instance, to answer to terms in the Aristotelian category of place. And so on. *Motion* for Ockham is not something over and above

substances and their qualities. You don't need such motion *terms* in a suitably paraphrastic language, and so you don't need such *entities* in your ontology.

Ockham uses the paraphrase argument in this way to cut down the list of categories in the world. But when he comes to argue that, even in the categories of substance and quality, where you do need general terms to say everything you want to say, you nevertheless *don't* need real universal *things* in the world, he has to turn to a different kind of argument entirely. Here he has to reject the "correspondence" principle even in its sophisticated, "deep structure" form.

So much now for realism. While realism was held in the twelfth century in various more or less strong forms, I am not so sure that nominalism was *ever* held in a pure form in the twelfth century - or at any other time in the Middle Ages. But it has been *attributed* to a certain Roscelin (see Chapter \s8 above, and Text \s9 in Volume II, below), by Anselm and by others.

In Text \s9, you have some letters to and from Anselm concerning Roscelin. The points in all these places are mainly theological, but it is clear that Roscelin is supposed to have held a fairly strong form of the view that there is nothing shared or common in reality - not even in God. Hence if there are three divine persons, then there must be three gods, and there is *nothing* at all that unites them.<sup>2</sup> Roscelin is the only mediaeval figure I know of ever to have been accused of out and out *tritheism*. (See, for instance, the *Letter on the Incarnation of the Word*, Text \s9, lines 64-65.) It is doubtful that he ever really went that far. (It also doubtful that the view attributed to him is coherent. Questions of realism and nominalism in connection with the Trinity are *extremely* obscure and difficult.)

John of Salisbury is a little more helpful. At the end of the twelfth century, John tells us (Hyman and Walsh, p. 167) that Roscelin thought that "universals" were mere "word sounds". The Latin here is *`voces'*, plural of *`vox'*. That is, there are general *terms*, general in the sense that they are predicable of many things, but there are no general or universal *realities* corresponding to them - that is, general in the way a metaphysical universal is supposed to be general. (Recall Boethius' characterization of how this would be. See Chapter \s2 above.)

The term *`vox'* is important here. In the *Letter on the Incarnation of the Word*, Text \s9, line 36, Roscelin is said to have held that "universals" were mere *flatus vocis* (*`flatus'* is a fourth-declension plural), rather delicately translated there as "verbal puffs". I'm sorry, people, but yes, it can also be translated "verbal farts" - I didn't make up the term. And, given the context, and given that folks in the Middle Ages were not overly refined about that sort of thing, I'm not at all sure that this isn't exactly the sense Abelard had in mind.

A *vox* ('utterance' is probably a good translation) is simply any sound uttered by the vocal mechanism of an animal - and therefore excludes the stamping of feet and the breaking of trees, as some people rather colorfully put it - and that can be written down, that is, *spelled*, thus ruling out sneezes and coughs and so on. (This last is what they meant by saying that a *vox* is an "articulate" sound.)

Now a *vox* need not be significant, it need not *mean* anything. An occasional mediaeval example later on was "*Bu ba blitrix*", which doesn't mean any more in Latin than it does in English. John of Salisbury contrasts Roscelin's doctrine with Abelard's, who says that a universal is a *sermo* - rather hard to translate very well, but it means a *significant* or *meaningful vox*. That is, Abelard wants to say that while there are general terms, there are no universal realities corresponding to them, and *nevertheless* they are significant. They are grounded in the world, so that knowledge is saved. We will look at this more carefully later on.

In any case, if John of Salisbury is right in his sketch of Roscelin, then Roscelin didn't care whether a *vox* is significant or not. (Otherwise the contrast with Abelard loses its point.) What Roscelin leaves out of his account is how thought or language is *significant*, how it links up with the world. As far as Roscelin's doctrine goes - or at least as far as John's description of it goes - everything in the world is singular, and if that compromises our knowledge, so much the worse for knowledge.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I list these two items simply because they are good, and you should know about them.

Marcia L. Colish, "Carolingian Debates over *Nihil* and *Tenebrae*: A Study in Theological Method," *Speculum* 59 (1984), pp. 757-795. (Discusses Fridugisus.)

Eike-Henner W. Kluge, "Roscelin and the Medieval Problem of Universals," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14 (1979), pp. 405-414. A pretty good attempt to reconstruct Roscelin's doctrine on the basis of allusions to him in the writings of others. We have nothing by Roscelin himself dealing directly with these problems. It is all reconstruction from remarks by his opponents, and is so *very* tentative.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 37

1. Although it has nothing to do with the topic of the present Chapter, it is perhaps worth noting lines 170-171 of Fridugisus' letter in Text \s5. There he explicitly maintains the claim that Peter Damian argues against in Text \s2 below, that what is done cannot be undone, so that the past is in a sense necessary.

2. To be sure, in the passages translated in Text \s9 below, Roscelin is said to have held that the three persons of the Trinity are "one" in will and power. How this claim is to be reconciled with his overall nominalist views is not clear, and will probably never be clear, given that we have no original texts of Roscelin on these matters. For a particularly strong statement of Roscelin's nominalism, see the extract from Anselm's *Letter on the Incarnation of the Word*, Text \s9, lines 44-53.

## Chapter 38:

### Corrections to the Translation of John of Salisbury and Peter Abelard

All pages references are to the translations in Hyman and Walsh. Numbers after a decimal point are line numbers. The notation `f.b.' means "from bottom" - that is, lines from the bottom of the page. I will often just quote a few words of the translation, follow them a colon, and then give you what I regard as a corrected and improved translation. I will also include comments as I go along.

#### John of Salisbury

For a sketch of who John of Salisbury was, see p. 166. The passage translated in Hyman and Walsh is from his *Metalogicon*, II, 17.

p. 167.14 f.b.: word sounds. The Latin is `voces'.

p. 167.12 f.b.: word concepts. The Latin is `sermones'. The word is not well translated. A *vox* (plural *voces*) is any utterance, any noise produced by the vocal apparatus of an animal and that can be spelled or written down. A *sermo* (plural, *sermones*) is a *significant vox* - that is, a *vox* that expresses a concept. Abelard agrees with Roscelin that universals are actual, audible utterances. But he goes beyond Roscelin in providing an account of their *significative function*, in terms of concepts. Hence Abelard's discussion is in terms of *sermones*, not in terms of mere *voces*.

#### Abelard's \f8Glosses on Porphyry

This text is a very rich and dense one. It is not made any easier by a hasty and, to put it charitably, slapdash translation. The translation originally appeared in McKeon's *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, vol. 1, and is reprinted here without change. There is another translation (a much better one) of part of this passage in Wippel and Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy*, but it does not include some of the passages I want to discuss. As a matter of terminology, you should know that a "generalissimum", as the word is used here, is a "most general genus" - that is, an Aristotelian *category*, such as substance, quality, quantity, etc.

Make the following corrections and changes in the translation. Do this before you try to read it, since otherwise much of what you'll be reading will be sheer gibberish.

(1) p. 172.12: in the universal noun : under the name `universal'.

(2) p. 172.18-19: the designation of a man : the word `man'.

(3) p. 172.25: universal definition : definition of a universal.

(4) p. 172.29: at the same time : together (that is, collectively or jointly).

(5) p. 172.31: less properly than a collection : less properly than is a collection.

(6) p. 173.14-16 f.b.: But since . . . and in an ass at the same time : But that they are in Socrates at the same time is proved, since they are in Socrates and the ass at the same time.

(7) p. 173.13 f.b.: obviously : namely.

(8) p. 173.9 f.b.: before `Whatever is in Socrates' insert `Therefore'.

Digression: The whole of the tortuous argument in these lines is an attempt to show that, on William of Champeaux's first view of universals, rationality and irrationality are both in Socrates. He starts by observing that rationality is in Socrates and irrationality is in some particular ass. What he is going to argue is that Socrates *is* the ass, and so both rationality and irrationality are in him. The argument runs like this: (a) Socrates is identical with whatever is in Socrates other than the forms of Socrates (that is, other than the "advening" forms - see p. 173.7 - which are accidental to the underlying universal essence, and which narrow down the universal,

say, "animal" or "substance", to this particular individual, Socrates). (b) The ass *is* whatever is in the ass other than the forms of the ass. (Similar remarks apply.) (c) Whatever is in Socrates other than the forms of Socrates is that which is in the ass other than the forms of the ass (for example, "animal" or "substance" - which are individuated by one set of accidental or "advening" forms to produce Socrates, and by another set to produce the ass). (d) Hence Socrates is the ass. (From (a)-(c).)

(9) p. 175.10 f.b.: and with respect to discreteness : both with respect to discreteness.

(10) p. 176.15: in substances : among substances.

(11) p. 176.20: The words 'the species' refer to the *coequal* species mentioned in line 19.

(12) p. 176.21: exactly : entirely.

(13) p. 176.25: integer : integral. This refers to an "integral whole" - that is, a whole made out of parts, like a house made out of bricks - as mentioned in line 23. The notion is to be contrasted with that of a "universal whole", for example a genus. The relation of the various species of animals to their common genus *animal* is not the same as the relation between the bricks and the house they make up.

(14) p. 177.13-15: For each occurrence of 'the thing which is man' read 'a thing which is man'. Latin has no articles, but the argument runs better in English with the indefinite article.

(15) p. 178.18 f.b.: meaning : signification.

(16) p. 178.17 f.b.: meaning : understanding (that is, an *act* of understanding, not the *faculty* of understanding).

(17) p. 178.9 f.b.: meaning : signification.

(18) p. 178.7 f.b.-179.15 & 16: Change 'meaning' to 'understanding' in all these places.

(19) p. 179.22: forming a conception : establishing an understanding. (We'll see the importance of that phrase later.)

(20) p. 179.16-15 f.b.: in respect to properties no less in essence than in forms : in their own essences no less than in their forms. (Understand the "advening" forms of p. 173.7.)

(21) p. 179.7-8 f.b.: in fact . . . Socrates : in a thing, [therefore] if there is any agreement *between* things, it must be taken according to that which is not any thing, so that Socrates.

(22) p. 179 last line - p. 180.1: (as . . . in fact : as if we were to unity in nothing things that are [no parentheses] when we say, namely.

(23) p. 180.17: are of the soul : belong to the soul.

(24) p. 180.14 f.b.: Read 'building of the tower' as a genitive of apposition, that is, as "the building that *is* the tower". Compare "the city of Chicago".

(25) p. 181.17: that which is of the universal noun. Understand this as "that understanding which goes with a universal name".

(26) p. 181.27: delete the 'not'.

(27) p. 181.17 f.b.: idea : understanding. That is, again, an *act* of understanding, not the *faculty*.

(28) p. 181.15 f.b.: idea : understanding.

(29) p. 182.6: meaning : signification. (Both times).

(30) p. 182.10 f.b.: meaning : signification.

(31) p. 182.5 f.b.: to the likeness of matter and form. Put this in quotation marks.

(32) p. 182.14 & 15: states : *status* (plural). See p. 180.1.

(33) p. 182.22: sensuality : sensuousness. (McKeon, who translated this, regularly gets these two mixed up. 'Sensuous' has to do with sensation; 'sensual' means "sexy".)

(34) p. 183.14 f.b.: subsist : are (*consistere*). Do not read any modern connotations into the word 'subsist' here. Also, this does *not* amount to Boethius' technical sense of 'subsist' (see Chapter \s2 above).

(35) p. 183.8 f.b.: The words 'to this' refer back to 'substance' in line 9 f.b. Note Abelard's use of the language of 'material essence' and '(advening) form'.

(36) p. 183.5 f.b.: The first occurrence of 'it' refers to 'material essence' in line 7 f.b. Abelard is here paralleling at the psychological level what William's first view thought went on at the real level.

(37) pp. 183-184. Compare Boethius' discussion of how we can, without falsehood, think of things otherwise than as they are. (See Chapter \s2 above.) Abelard's discussion is obviously taken from Boethius. Boethius nowhere uses the *term* 'abstraction'.

(38) p. 184.1: Here read the word 'subsists' in the Boethian technical sense (Chapter \s2 above). Also in lines 3, 12, 17, and so on.

(39) p. 184.5-6: in such a manner . . . have : so that he considers it in terms of a nature or property that it does not have.

(40) p. 184.11: only . . . has : it only insofar as it has such and such.

(41) p. 184.15: state : *status*. (Technical sense.)

(42) p. 184.17-18: For . . . exist separately : For this thing, not separated from that one, is understood separately, and yet does not exist separately.

(43) p. 184.25-23 f.b.: looking . . . not separated : looking on the conjoined "separately", not "separated" - indeed, they are *not* separated.

(44) p. 184 bottom, to bottom of p. 185: This is a discussion of foreseeing the future.

(45) p. 185.18-20: in that . . . future : because what he thinks of *as if* already existing, he does not suppose exists so, but he thinks of it thus, as if present, in order to posit it as present in the future.

(46) p. 185.20: as of the present : *as if* of the present.

(47) p. 185.21: in that : insofar as. (Both occurrences.)

(48) p. 185.23: in : in terms of.

(49) p. 185.11 f.b.: from the meaning of the noun : in virtue of the noun.

(50) p. 185.2 f.b.: sensual : sensuous.

(51) p. 186.3 f.b.: Insert a comma after 'essence'. The idea is: and in another sense incorporeal things.

(52) p. 187.11: 'Demonstrate' here means to point to with a "demonstrative" pronoun ('this', 'that'), or in general to *point out*. The word does not, in contexts like these, mean *to prove*.



## Chapter 39:

### Outline of Abelard's Discussion of Universals in the Glosses on Porphyry

All references are to the translation in Hyman and Walsh, by page and line numbers. As before, 'f.b.' means "from bottom".

Question: Are only words universal, or are there universal things as well (p. 172.1-2)? Aristotle's definition of a universal: that which is formed naturally apt to be predicated of many (p. 172.3-4). Aristotle and Porphyry ascribe universality to things (p. 172.5-12). Aristotle and Boethius ascribe it to *words* (p. 172.13-23).

Question: Whatever the authorities say, can universality in fact be attributed to things (p. 172.24-25)?

Review of opinions for the affirmative.

William of Champeaux's first opinion stated (p. 172.16 f.b. - p. 173.12).

Abelard's reply:

First objection (p. 173.13-29).

First reply to objection 1 (p. 173.30-33).

Refutation of reply (p. 173.33-2 f.b.).

Second reply to objection 1 (p. 173 last line-p. 174.5).

Refutation of reply (p. 174.5-12).

Second objection (p. 174.13-29).

Third objection (p. 174.30-33).

Fourth objection (p. 174.34-43).

Conclusion: The view is untenable (p. 174.44-46).

William of Champeaux's second view stated (p. 174.3 f.b.-p. 175.21). The problem Abelard raises for this view is implicitly a question "How is this view a realist opinion? What on this view is the universal - that is, what is *predicated of many*, according to the Aristotelian definition of a universal?" Abelard mentions two attempted answers to this question, besides William's own view:

Variation 1: perhaps Joscelyn of Soisson's view (see John of Salisbury, p. 169) (p. 175.22-31).

Variation 2: similar to Walter of Mortagne's view (Salisbury, p. 168) (p. 175.32-45).

Refutation of Variation 1 (p. 175.4 f.b.-p. 176.28).

First argument (p. 175.4 f.b.-p. 176.6).

Second argument (p. 176.6-8).

Third argument (p. 176.8-11).

Fourth argument (p. 176.11-15).

Reply to fourth argument (p. 176.15-16).

Refutation of reply (p. 176.16-22).

Fifth argument (p. 176.22-25).

Sixth argument (p. 176.22-28).

Refutation of Variation 2 (p. 176.29-p. 177.6).

First argument (p. 176.29-40).

Second argument (p. 176.9 f.b. to bottom line).

Third argument (p. 176 last line - p. 177.6).

Refutation of William's own view (p. 177.6-15).

Argument (p. 177.8-10).

Reply (p. 177.10-11). Note: "unless perchance" = unless we appeal to a special principle in the case of "man" but not in the case of "stone".

Refutation of reply (p. 177.11-15).

This ends the discussion of the "realist" positions, and so of the view that there are universal things as well as universal words.

Abelard's **own view** (p. 177.16 to the end of the passage): only *words* are properly called universals.

Explanation of how the definition of a universal applies to words (p. 177.16-p. 178.22

f.b.). Note: p. 177.14 f.b.: a substantive verb is just a copula. Note: p. 178.23 f.b.: infinite nouns - that is, negated nouns, like 'non-man', 'non-animal'. Note: p. 178.22 f.b.: Priscian (c. 500) was a famous grammarian. The definition referred to here is "But there is this difference between a proper and an appellative name, that the appellative is common by nature to many things that the same substance or quality or quantity, whether general or special, joins together." The last part is lacking in the case of infinite names.

Question for further analysis (p. 178.21-17 f.b.): "They seem neither to have any subject thing nor to constitute a clear meaning of anything." See the remarks in section 43 above on the translation of this passage.

Partial resolution of the problem (p. 179.21-26), in terms of a *common reason or cause* and a *common concept*.

Three further explanations are required (p. 179.27-33):

(a) common cause (p. 179.17 f.b.-p. 180.12).

(b) common concepts (understandings) (p. 180.13-15).

(i) concepts (understandings) in general (p. 180.16-p. 181.14). Their formation and ontological status. This is in effect Abelard's theory of abstraction.

(ii) concepts of universals vs. concepts of particulars (p. 181.15-p. 183.18 f.b.).

(c) Which of (a) or (b) is behind the community of universal names (p. 183.23-19 f.b.)?

More on abstraction (p. 183.18 f.b. - p. 186.3). Answers to Porphyry's question, etc.

(p. 186.3 to end of the passage).

## Chapter 40:

### Abelard's Theory of Universals

Now let us finally look at Abelard's theory of universals in some detail. The passage I want to examine is in his Glosses on Porphyry, the first part of his big *Logica ingredientibus*. Remember who Porphyry was, and his role in the mediaeval problem of universals. (See Chapter \s2 above.) The *Logica ingredientibus* is so called because its first word is 'ingredientibus'. The title should not be translated "Logic for Beginners", as is sometimes done. It *is* a logic for beginners, but that is not what the title means. It just means "The Logic with the First Word 'Ingredientibus'".

Note, before we get started, that on p. 170 Abelard cites Boethius' remark that logic is both a part or a branch of philosophy and at the same time a tool employed by the whole of philosophy. It is both a *particular* science, in the sense that it has its own subject matter and asks its own questions, and yet a *general* methodological tool for all the sciences. This should not be surprising if we remember that the *hand* is a *part* of the body and at the same time a *tool* of the body. This cute little simile is a mediaeval commonplace. It comes from Boethius.

Now let us do a close analysis of the text. Abelard begins his discussion of universals here (he discusses the problem also in other texts, but we are going to ignore them for the present) by referring to Porphyry's famous three questions (see Chapter \s2), transmitted to Latin posterity by Boethius:

- (1) Do genera and species subsist or are they purely mental?
- (2) If they subsist, are they corporeal or incorporeal?
- (3) If they are incorporeal, do they exist in corporeal things, like geometrical lines, or separated from corporeal things, like God and the angels?

To these three classical questions, Abelard adds a fourth one of his own (p. 171):

- (4) Would genera and species exist even if there were no individuals?

Recall how in Boethius' Commentary on Porphyry, there was what at first appeared to be an ambiguity with respect to the terms 'genus' and 'species' (and recall how we also said that perhaps that ambiguity was *not* really an ambiguity - see Chapter \s2): On the one hand, he says that genera and species subsist *in* individuals - that is, the individual humanity of Socrates is *his* species. Yet he also says that species is the *thought* "gathered from the substantial likeness" of numerically distinct but *similar* individuals.

Abelard's doctrine is going to be very much like this. But Abelard is a little more explicit about his use of the term 'universal'. He is more careful. Abelard is not very much concerned with thoughts or concepts until later on in his discussion. But he *is* concerned with *words*. Now he takes it for granted that there are universal *words*. What he wants to know is whether in addition there are universal *things* corresponding to such words.

Abelard (p. 172) cites Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, 7, 17a37-40, where Aristotle says that a universal is naturally "apt" to be predicated of many. (It is "apt" to be predicated of many, although it does not have to be *actually* predicable of many. Recall Odo of Tournai's remarks - see Chapter \s3 above - on how there might just happen to be only a single individual in a species. This is the same idea here. A universal is still a universal even if it in fact happens to be predicable of only one thing, provided that it is "apt" to be predicated of many.) Aristotle then goes on to say that an *individual* is *not* like this - that is, is *not* predicable of many, not even "apt" to be. Strictly, of course, that leaves open two possible readings. It could mean that the individual is predicable of *one* thing only, or it could mean that individuals are the kinds of things that are

not predicated at all. To break this ambiguity, Abelard cites Porphyry, who says that the individual is predicated of *one* thing only.

Now we have to ask, what kind of relation is this *predication*? What sorts of things do we say are predicated? Do we predicate *things* of things, or do we only predicate *words* of things (or of other words)?

This in effect is Abelard's way of setting up the problem of universals. *Of course* there are *words* that are predicated of many. Are there also *things* that are predicated of many? Do the facts of general predication in language accurately mirror an ontological relation in the world? An affirmative answer is *realism*; a negative answer is *nominalism*.

Notice that this is *not* the way Boethius set up the problem. (See Chapter \s2 above.) We have then at least *two* versions of the problem of universals in the Middle Ages, an *ontological* version going back to Boethius, and a *predicational* version that can be found here in Abelard. The difference will be important, as we shall see.

Abelard cites some authorities for this kind of "predication" terminology. He is not engaging in neologism here. Aristotle and Boethius both allow that *names* are universals - that is, *words* are universals. Aristotle and Porphyry also attribute universality to *things*. Abelard will begin by considering the *realist* view, which has the authority of Aristotle and Porphyry, in several versions current in Abelard's own day.

Although Abelard does not say so explicitly here, his main target in this part of his discussion is his former teacher *William of Champeaux*, at one time Master of the cathedral school at Paris, and later of the monastic school of St. Victor just outside Paris. (See Chapter \s4 above.) William held *two* theories of universals at different times in his career. Abelard tells us in his *Adversities* (pp. 16-17) that he so hectoring William about his first view that William finally just had to give it up. William then adopted a revised, second view, and Abelard attacked that one too. Finally, he says, William had to give up on the question altogether, and his "lectures bogged down in carelessness".

In the present text, we first get an extended treatment of William's first view, and then of the second view in several variations. We have seen *both* of these views before, in Boethius. Once again, Boethius is the granddaddy of all theories of universals in the Middle Ages.

Abelard's attack on William's first view is a *metaphysical* attack. He thinks it is a metaphysically impossible position. And, as we would expect from the remarks in Chapter \s5 above, that first theory was a *realist* one. Abelard's attack on the second theory is different. Basically, he thinks the second view is perfectly all right (although he does have some quarrels with the way it is expressed) - but it isn't a *realism*, as its proponents say it is.

Let us look first at William's *first view* (Hyman and Walsh, p. 172, *Adversities*, p. 16). It is generally conceded by many scholars - for instance, by Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, part 1, p. 168 - that Abelard's attacks on this view were devastating, that he thoroughly refuted William's brand of realism. Well, historically he may have caused William to change his mind, but I am going to maintain, on the contrary, that *not a single one* of the arguments Abelard gives here is conclusive against a realism of William of Champeaux's kind, although they perhaps are telling against a certain confused version of that theory. (Perhaps William himself was confused, but the point stands: There were ways he could have defended himself.)

## WILLIAM OF CHAMPEAUX'S FIRST THEORY

Consider the structure of an individual, say, of the individual man, Socrates. Well, Socrates is a *substance*, and so has *substantiality*. He is a *body* (that is, a physical object -

although of course he is an *animated* physical object, but that comes later), and so he has *corporeality*. He is an *organism*, a living body, and so has *life*. He is a *man*, a rational animal, and so has *rationality* (and therefore *humanity*). He is a Greek, the teacher of Plato, snub-nosed, and so on. And so he has all those features too. Socrates is a kind of metaphysical layer-cake built up part by part in this way. We have a *laminated view* of individuals.

Now consider Plato. He has many of the same features as Socrates has. In particular, he has the same features up to and including Greekness. But he has some different features too; they are what differentiate him from Socrates.

Finally, let us consider "Brunellus" - that is, Brownie the Ass, Abelard's favorite example of an irrational animal. Brownie has many of the same structural features Socrates and Plato have: substantiality, corporeality, life, animality. But he does *not* have rationality and humanity. Instead he has irrationality and asininity.

Now - and *this is the key point*: If you start with Socrates and Plato, and take away all their features after *humanity*, what do you have left, *one humanity or two*? Is the humanity Socrates has *his own*, and the humanity Plato has *his own*, so that if you were to pull everything else off, so to speak, until you got down to the level of humanity, you would have *two* humanities - one for Socrates and one for Plato - or is there something *one* that is shared, some *one* humanity, so that when you pull off all the features that distinguish Socrates from Plato, you end up with *one universal humanity*? William of Champeaux's first view answered: You have only *one* humanity, and it is common to and shared by them both.

Similarly, if you go somewhat deeper and pull off *rationality*, so that you break up the *humanity* that you had, still you find something that is common to and shared by Socrates and Plato, on the one hand, and by Brownie the ass, on the other: namely, *animality*. And similarly if we go yet deeper. You get the picture.

Now in each case where you find something common like this, it acts, so to speak, *like* matter with respect to the later *forms* - the so called "advening" forms of the text. And so, according to Abelard, William calls this the "material essence", as opposed to the "advening forms". See the terminology on p. 172, lines 16-10 from the bottom, in the passage in Hyman and Walsh.

Note several things about this theory and its terminology:

(1) The talk of "matter" here is surely meant as an analogy. William is saying (or Abelard is saying that William is saying) that the genus is *like* matter with respect to the species, insofar as it is indeterminate, and is *narrowed down* to a species by a determining *difference*. Aristotle talks this way sometimes in the *Metaphysics*, but of course that had not been circulated yet and William of Champeaux could not have got this terminology from there. He could well have got it, however, from Porphyry and from Boethius' *Commentary on Porphyry*. They talk this way too, and it is quite clear that it is meant to be an *analogy*. If the term is being used in this analogical way in William of Champeaux's first theory, then it is not clear whether the doctrine of matter - in the non-analogical sense of that which underlies *all* forms - has any role at all in this view.

(2) On this kind of analysis, if you ask what the essence is of Socrates or Plato, or of Brownie the ass, the answer is: It depends on how deeply you want to push the analysis. At one level, *humanity* is the essence of both Socrates and Plato, the common essence that acts as a kind of matter for - underlies - further "advening" forms that differentiate Socrates from Plato. At a deeper level, however, *animality* is the essence of Socrates and Plato, and also of Brownie the ass. It acts *as* matter for the further forms that differentiate all three of them.

As a result, the difference between substance or essence, on the one hand, and accident on the other, is not really at home here. You have a kind of sliding notion of essence. What may be an "advening" form at one level of analysis may be "essential" at another. [Note: Abelard does not use the term 'accident' in *stating* the view, although he does in attacking it. The closest is "advening form". The point is that we shouldn't be too Aristotelian when we read this "essence" talk.]

(3) The common essence is a *universal* in Boethius' sense of the term. See p. 173, where it is said that the common essence is present in several things wholly, at the same time, and in such a way as to constitute their substance. This is an obvious reference to Boethius' characterization of a universal in his *Commentary on Porphyry* (see Chapter \s2 above).

(4) We've seen this view before, of course, in a slightly different terminology. See Boethius' passage (3) in Text 6 below. There, as you will remember from the discussion in Chapter \s2 above, accidents are said to be the principle of individuation. (Note: Boethius does say 'accidents', even if William only says 'advening forms'.) Recall how the status of *matter* - i.e., matter literally, not in the analogical sense - was unclear on that Boethian view.

(5) William wasn't the only one to hold this kind of view in the twelfth century. It was also held at the *School of Chartres* - see Chapters \s2 and \s3 above, and Chapter \s4 and Text \s5, below. The influence of Boethius was very strong in this School of Chartres. Also, for the record, they were terribly interested in Plato's *Timaeus*, with the commentary by Chalcidius. Recall, this was the only text of Plato's generally available to the Middle Ages. (See Chapter \s6 above.) Plato's *Timaeus* is an account of the origin of the universe. There was obviously another account too that the Christians at Chartres had to come to terms with: Genesis. The School of Chartres produced some pretty strange writings attempting to reconcile Genesis with the *Timaeus*. In any case, at this School of Chartres, William of Champeaux's first view of universals was held more or less by one *Clarenbald of Arras*. (One of my favorite names of all time.) See the passages from Clarenbald in Volume 2, Text \s5, below. Clarenbald denies that there is any *singular* humanity - that is, Socrates' own humanity, for instance, as opposed to and as distinct from Plato's humanity. He gives a curious argument for this view.

Well, this is William of Champeaux's first theory of universals. Now let's look at Abelard's objections to it. Consult the outline in Chapter \s7 above.

#### FIRST OBJECTION

Contraries cannot be in the same thing at the same time. Indeed, that is more or less the definition of contrariety. For example, being white (all over) and being black (all over) are contraries. No one thing can be both white and black (all over) at the same time. But, the objection goes, on William's view, contraries *would* inhere in the same thing at the same time. For instance, both rationality and irrationality would inhere in animality at the same time. And rationality and irrationality are contraries. If they did not both inhere in animality at the same time, then you could not have the rational Socrates and the irrational Brownie the ass existing at the same time. In short, this first view of William's, the objection says, violates the Law of Contraries, and so must be rejected.

#### FIRST REPLY TO OBJECTION 1

As it stands, this argument is not very compelling, and Abelard knows it. The obvious answer is that the Law of Contraries ("Two contraries cannot inhere in the same thing at the same time") was never intended to rule out this kind of thing. Rather it means that two contraries cannot inhere in the same *individual* at the same time. And William's first view does *not* violate

the Law of Contraries, so understood. Animality may have both rationality and irrationality at the same time, but no one individual animal does.

#### REFUTATION OF THE FIRST REPLY TO OBJECTION I

Abelard anticipates this reply and tries to counter it. He argues that, given William's view, it is not only the case that contraries inhere in the same *universal* thing at the same time. Abelard implicitly agrees that this would not after all violate the Law of Contraries. But things are worse. It turns out, Abelard thinks, that on this view contraries would inhere in the same *individual* at the same time. And that clearly does violate the law. Here is his argument (see also Chapter \s8, item (8)). Let me just state it first, and then we'll talk about it.

- (1) Socrates is identical with whatever is in Socrates other than the (advening) forms of Socrates. In other words, Socrates is identical with his material essence.
- (2) So too, Brownny the ass is identical with *its* material essence - that is, the ass is whatever is in the ass other than the (advening) forms of the ass.
- (3) But whatever is in Socrates other than the forms of Socrates is the same as whatever is in the ass other than the forms of the ass. That is, the material essence of Brownny is identical with the material essence of Socrates.
- (4) Hence, Socrates is identical with Brownny the ass.
- (5) And since rationality inheres in Socrates and irrationality in the ass, it follows from (4) that they both inhere in Socrates. Q.E.D.

Plainly the argument is valid, but the premises need a little talking through. Let us begin with (3), which is the easiest. Clearly, there is some level at which (3) is true - for example, the level of *animality*. It is both a material essence of Socrates and a material essence of Brownny, and is one and the same in each. So the force of this argument rests on the very strange premises (1) and (2). Why on earth would William ever want to say that Socrates is *identical* with his material essence *animality*, and the Brownny the ass is likewise *identical* with his material essence, the same animality? The straightforward interpretation of William's view is that the individual is in every case to be identified with the sum total of *all* its forms, including, at any given level of analysis, the material essence together with all its advening forms. The individual is the *product* of this complete layering process, not some intermediate stage along the way.

But Abelard thinks he can block this interpretation (p. 173 bottom: "The truth of what we assumed above . . ."). The individual can be identified with either:

- (a) The matter (understand: the material essence, at some stage of analysis).
- (b) The forms (understand: the advening forms, at some stage of analysis). Or
- (c) Both (a) and (b) together, the sum total of all the forms, both those counted in the material essence and those counted as "advening" forms.

Alternative (c), of course, is the one that makes William's view most plausible. But Abelard wants to rule out (c), and also (b), leaving only (a). Here are his arguments:

*Ad (b):* In that case, accidents would be substance. That is, the individual substance, say, Socrates, would be identified with his accidents. This would of course follow only if William's "advening forms" are to be taken to be accidents. Now there is some evidence from another work of Abelard's, his *Dialectica*, that William did in fact talk this way. The passage is translated as Text \s9 in Volume 2 below. The key line here comes at the end (line 17), where Abelard claims that William wanted to say that *differences* inhere *accidentally* in their genera. That is, rationality is just as *accidental* to animality, in this sense, as being snub-nosed or being seated is to humanity. But the latter are paradigm instances of accidents. The evidence is hardly definitive,

but if Abelard's remark here is correct, then William perhaps did regard his "advening forms" as accidents.

Now, in order to refute alternative (b) above, as Abelard wants to do, we must all agree that substances *cannot* be identified with accidents, as they would have to be on this alternative. Of course, if we are being Aristotelians, this follows simply from our standard terminological usage. Substance and accidents are in a sense opposites; they could scarcely be *identified*. It is not so clear that it follows, however, given William's own rather non-Aristotelian use of the term 'accident' - to stand for the "advening forms" of a strongly realist theory. But in any case, whether it follows or not, we don't have to worry about alternative (b). William certainly did not want to identify an individual with its advening forms. He would no doubt have been willing to grant Abelard that alternative (b) should be rejected.

*Ad (c):* This is plainly the alternative William would want to adopt. The individual is to be identified with the sum total of *all* its forms. But Abelard argues that, if this is so, then "body and non-body would be body". This seems to mean that, for instance, the material object Socrates would be identified with the sum of his "material" essence plus his advening forms which, with respect to his essence, would be "immaterial" (non-body). This *sounds* as if a material object would have non-material integral parts (on integral parts and wholes, see Chapter 8 above, correction 13). And that, of course, would be a bad consequence. But the consequence simply doesn't follow; there is an equivocation on the word 'material'. The sense in which Socrates is a "material object" is not the same sense of 'material' in which we speak of his having a 'material essence'. The notion of "matter" involved in material essences is purely an analogy with the notion of "matter" involved in physical objects. The "material" essence is "material" only insofar as, *like* matter in the literal sense, it is indeterminate and underlies (advening) forms that narrow it down and specify it more fully. Hence we must conclude that Abelard's argument against alternative (c) fails.

But, if that is so, then why did Abelard ever come up with it? On the interpretation I have just given, the argument is an *obvious* fallacy. Is Abelard deliberately distorting William's view, or was William really so confused that he used the term 'matter' in the equivocal way on which Abelard's argument depends? Or is perhaps Abelard himself simply confused? Unfortunately, we don't really have enough surviving texts of William to be able to say with any confidence just what his doctrine was, and whether Abelard is distorting it or not. But no matter - William's doctrine can be saved, even if Abelard and William himself were both too confused to see it. Just clear up the equivocation.

In any event, Abelard thinks only alternative (a) above remains: the individual is to be identified with its material essence, to the exclusion of the advening forms. This gives him what he needs to defend premises (1) and (2) of his refutation of the first reply to objection 1 (see above).

There is still a problem, however. Abelard should have recognized that the notion of "material essence" on William's view was a *sliding* notion, relative to the depth of the analysis. There is no *one* form that is the material essence; it depends on how deep you go. Does Abelard's argument then force us to conclude that the individual is identical with *all* those forms that might, at some level of analysis, be called its "material essence"? That certainly seems hopeless. On the other hand, if not, then how are we to pick out *one* such form and identify the individual with *it*? Abelard might well reply: Don't ask me! It's not my theory.

Let me summarize the result of all this. I think the main problem here is that we have a terminology of matter, essence and accident that comes ultimately from Aristotle, and was



known to the Middle Ages through Boethius's translations of and commentaries on Aristotle and Porphyry, and through his own independent logical writings. With this terminology comes a set of terminological conventions: substances cannot be identified with accidents. Material things don't have immaterial integral parts. And so on. However, the doctrine we are now dealing with just doesn't fit that terminology and those conventions very well. Abelard's objections so far apply only to a badly formulated version of Boethian realism. Such a realism can be defended against Abelard's attacks by simply getting straight on the terminology, and getting straight on what is and what is not implied by the doctrine.

*Conclusion:* the first reply to objection 1 is a good reply, and Abelard's refutation of it fails.

#### *SECOND REPLY TO THE FIRST OBJECTION*

Abelard considers a second reply his objection. (The objection, recall, was the one about contraries' inhering in the same thing at the same time.) In effect, this second reply accepts Abelard's conclusion, that on William's first view two contraries are in the same thing at the same time, but says that this poses no problem. *Animal* - that is, the universal, animality - is indeed both rational and irrational, but in virtue of different forms. Animal is not irrational *insofar as* it has the form *rationality*, but insofar as it has the form *irrationality*. Neither is it rational *insofar as* it has the form *irrationality*, but insofar as it has the form *rationality*.

#### *REFUTATION OF THE SECOND REPLY TO OBJECTION 1*

Abelard's response to this is, "So what?" It still remains true that contraries are in the same thing at the same time. And what's so special about these "insofar as" considerations? There is nothing unique about contraries in this respect. Such considerations apply to all forms. It is not in virtue of *redness* that the apple is round, but in virtue of *roundness*. Neither is it in virtue of *roundness* that it is red, but in virtue of *redness*. Nothing is gained by the appeal to "insofar as" considerations, as though they made a difference.

Abelard's reply seems to me a conclusive refutation of a silly attempt to avoid his first objection. But the success of Abelard's reply here does not allow us to conclude that his original objection stands. The *first* reply is still open, despite Abelard's argument against it. Contrary forms are *not* in the same *individual* at the same time on William's first theory, despite Abelard's argument that they would be, and so the Law of Contraries is preserved intact.

#### *ABELARD'S SECOND OBJECTION*

Abelard now begins a whole new line of attack. There would be, he says, only ten essences of all things if William's view were correct - the ten "generalissima" or ten Aristotelian categories. The argument is this: All substances are *at bottom* the same; they all share the common material essence *substantiality*. And that is indeed true on William's view. So too, all qualities are *at bottom* the same: redness, greenness, tallness, and the rest, all share the common material essence *quality*. And so too for all the other Aristotelian categories. Note that the categories are the bottom layer of the ontological layer-cake. They are "generalissima" - *most* general genera. They are the most material of material essences.

Here then is the problem: Take two things, say, Socrates and Plato. They have a selection of characteristics from each of the Aristotelian categories. They have characteristics from the category of substance, others from quality, others from quantity, and so on. Now, on William's theory, Socrates and Plato are supposed to differ from one another with respect to the peculiar

*combination* of characteristics each has. But - and here comes the punch - any characteristic the one has turns out, as we have seen, to be *at bottom* (= *penitus* - "at bottom" is a pretty good translation of it, if we ignore the spatial connotations that are not in the Latin) the same as some characteristic the other has. Thus *at bottom* Socrates and Plato do not differ at all - not in the category of substance, not in the category of quality, and so on. Hence, Abelard concludes, all distinctions between things will vanish.

*A POSSIBLE REPLY WILLIAM MIGHT MAKE*

(ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO EVIDENCE WHATEVER THAT HE ACTUALLY DID)

Why think there is no more to things than their *bottoms*? We might very well accept Abelard's argument, up to and including the step where he says that Socrates and Plato, and indeed *any* individual, will be *at bottom* the same as any other in all the categories. But why conclude from this that Socrates is not distinct from Plato? They differ by their "advening forms", as we saw right from the beginning. There is a "too-fast" move in Abelard's argument here.

*ABELARD'S PROBABLE REPLY TO THIS HYPOTHETICAL RESPONSE*

There's nothing "too fast" about it. I'm only arguing on your own grounds, Bill. *You* are the one who wants to hold not only the standard view that genera are divided by *differences* - for example, that substance is divided by "corporeal" and "incorporeal". You also want to hold the further thesis that difference-words - for example, the words 'corporeal' and 'incorporeal' - don't just refer to the advening form (corporeity, incorporeity), but to the *combination* of the advening form and the underlying genus or material essence. It follows, of course, that difference-words do the job of *species*-words too. That is, 'corporeal' not only refers to what is *added* to the genus "substance" to get the species "corporeal substance", but also refers to the underlying material essence "substance" itself, so that 'corporeal' means "corporeal *substance*" - which is the species. You want to hold this peculiar view, you say, because otherwise substance would be divided into accidents (that is, the genus or subject "substance" would be so divided). This would indeed follow. If "substance" is divided into "corporeal" and "incorporeal", and the latter referred *only* to the advening forms or accidents, then substance is indeed divided into accidents. Just why you think this is so bad, given your peculiar use of this terminology, I'm not prepared to say. But after all, it's your theory, not mine. (Once again, here we see inferences drawn, not from the theory itself, but from an ill-fitting terminology in which the theory is expressed.) All this is set out in the passage from Abelard's *Dialectica*, in Text §9 below. Now if what that passage says about William is not an out and out fabrication, Abelard has him. Here's why:

When you try to define a species, in the standard way, as a genus plus a difference, it turns out on William's view that the difference-word you use is also a species-word. That is, it contains a reference to the genus plus something else. (That's what a species is, after all.) That something else, of course, is the difference. But when you try to say just what this difference is, all you get is *another* reference back to the original genus plus something else.

Perhaps an example will help. Consider the definition of man as a rational animal. Here 'rational' is the difference-word and 'animal' is the genus-word. But on William's theory, as Abelard describes it in Text §9, the word 'rational' not only picks out the difference - that is, what is *added* to the genus to give you the species (in this case, rationality). It also refers to the *product* or *result* you get when you do add the difference to the genus in this way. That is, the difference-word 'rational' here plays *two* semantic roles. (Whether William clearly distinguished

these roles is not certain, since we have so little of his writings. Abelard's attack, if it is not a misrepresentation of William, suggests that he did not.) In addition to singling out rationality in some way, the difference-word 'rational' also bears some kind of semantic relation to *man*. After all, it is *men* who are rational animals. The difference-word 'rational' is *predicated* not of rationality but of people. Rationality isn't rational, men are - that is, *rational animals* are. Hence, the difference-word 'rational' really "means" *rational animal*. But if that is so, then when I define man as a "rational animal", I am really saying that man is a "rational animal animal", since 'rational' alone already has 'animal' built into it. And of course, 'rational animal animal' can be unpacked one step further, into 'rational animal animal animal', and so on.

The species, then, is ultimately the genus plus something else, which something else is itself the genus plus something else, which something else is again . . . , and so on, *in infinitum*. Hence, in the end *all you have is the genus*, over and over again, plus a promissory note that is never really cashed in. And since any genus that is not a *most general genus* (= a category) is also a species of a higher genus, any genus other than a category will run into these definitional problems. In short, the only forms there are that are not hopelessly involved in definitional infinite regresses are the ten Aristotelian categories. Hence, if every individual has characteristics from each of the ten categories, then it really does follow, as my argument claimed (Abelard is speaking again), that there is *only one* individual, and the distinctions among individuals vanish.

Once again, if this is not a distortion of William's view, then Abelard has him. But notice that the objection is not really against William's *realism*, but rather against his theory of the relation of genus and difference. William might easily revise that view to avoid Abelard's objection without giving up his realism. He can say, for instance, that differences do *not* belong to the genus they differentiate. They are *not* the original genus plus something else.

In this connection, you might compare *Metaphysics* B, 3, where Aristotle argues that "being" cannot be a genus, a sort of "supercategory", since then its differentiae, in order to do their job, would have to be beings, and so fall into the genus they are supposed to differentiate. The presumption, of course, is that differences do *not* fall into their genus in this way. All this is very difficult stuff in Aristotle, and in any case the *Metaphysics* was not yet translated into Latin, so that it could have had no direct influence whatever on the controversy between Abelard and William.

It seems to me that a more likely background for the dispute here is Anselm. Anselm wrote a *De grammatico* in which he discussed the semantics of "connotative" terms (although that is not what he called them). In that discussion, Anselm explicitly raised the kind of infinite regress considerations we have just seen, in order to argue that words like 'rational' do *not* contain a reference to their underlying genus. For Anselm, 'rational' does *not* mean "rational animal". Whether or not Anselm had any *direct* influence on the dispute between William and Abelard, it seems to me that this kind of semantic issue is the real basis for Abelard's argument. And, as far as I can see, William could well change his semantics without being thereby committed to giving up his realist metaphysics.

One last remark before I leave this second objection. The kind of definitional infinite regress Abelard has maneuvered William into has a technical name. It is called '*nugatio*', which means "speaking nonsense" or "babbling". In Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* (which was only first appearing in translation in Abelard's own day, and did not yet have any influence), one way to refute your opponent was to reduce him to "babbling" - the Latin translation says '*nugatio*'. This doesn't mean that you are supposed to get your opponent so confused that he starts gurgling and frothing at the mouth (although you could probably "win" that way too). It means you can

push him into one of these definitional infinite regresses. The flavor of the technical use of '*nugatio*' can perhaps be better captured by translating it 'stammering' - for example, "rational animal animal animal . . .".

#### ABELARD'S THIRD OBJECTION

Abelard hurls another argument at his poor old teacher. On your view, Abelard says, we ought to call an underlying material essence "many" - in the sense that a universal is "many" (= "common to many") - because of the several forms inhering in it. But then by the same token it seems we ought also to call *Socrates* "many" - and so a universal - because he too has many forms inhering in him. Your view, therefore, destroys all difference between universals and individuals.

#### A POSSIBLE REPLY WILLIAM MIGHT HAVE MADE

(BUT ONCE AGAIN THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE THAT HE DID)

The two cases are not the same at all. The forms inhering in *Socrates* constitute him - result in *Socrates*. But the forms inhering in animality do not constitute animality, result in animality. They are added onto something already there; they "advene". The individual is the material essence *plus* the advening forms. Thus the relation of the advening forms to the material essence is *quite* different from their relation to the individual they constitute. It is the same as the difference between the relation of one addend to another addend, on the one hand, and the relation of either addend to their sum, on the other. This difference is enough to warrant our calling the material essence a universal without our being thereby forced to call the individual a universal too.

#### THE FOURTH OBJECTION

Here comes another one. This objection is directly against the notion of individuation by accidents. Abelard argues that this would make individuals dependent on their accidents, metaphysically "posterior" to them. But the opposite is true. Accidents are "posterior" to and dependent on their individual substances. Accidents are ontologically *parasitic*.

#### WILLIAM MIGHT REPLY (BUT AGAIN WE DON'T KNOW THAT HE DID)

Accidents may depend on their individuals for you, Abelard, and even for Aristotle and Boethius (in some passages), but not for me (or for Boethius in passage (3) of Text §2 in Volume 2 below). On my view, Abelard, accidents are ontologically *prior* to the individual. They *constitute* it, not the other way around. You have distorted my view. You have taken the notion of accident and interpreted it in an Aristotelian way that is not part of my theory. (William may in fact have talked in the Aristotelian way Abelard's objection presupposes. But if he did, he shouldn't have.)

Nevertheless, this fourth objection suggests a *good* argument against this form of realism - an argument that Abelard unfortunately never made. Aristotle's distinction of essence and accident, and his identification of the individual substance with its essence, so that the accidents depend on the individual substance and do not constitute it, all this was motivated at least in part by a desire to account for accidental change - that is, for cases in which we say that an individual changes color, say, but stays the same individual it was to begin with. The pin-cushion would stay the same, so to speak; the pins would come and go. Now we saw when we were discussing this realist view in Boethius (Chapter §3 above) that our *real* problem with it is that it rules out

*accidental* change, *freezes* the individual. The change of a single accident would result in a whole new individual. This objection can be met as Leibniz did later on, by adding explicit time-specifications to the accidents (for instance, "red at time  $t_1$ "). Nevertheless, that involves a rather major adjustment in the theory, and so the objection stands as a good objection to the theory as originally stated. But Abelard didn't make *this* objection.

Now let me summarize what we've seen so far. Some of Abelard's objections to William's first theory may hold against a confused form of realism that William perhaps actually held. But they do not refute this form of realism in general - that is, the strong realism suggested by passage (3) of Text \s2 below - although there is another argument that does refute it (the argument about accidental change), or at least requires one to change it in major ways. One wonders why William gave in to Abelard's arguments so easily.

Nevertheless, he did. As a result of Abelard's criticisms - at least to hear Abelard tell it - William abandoned his strong realism for a second view. And this is the second position Abelard discusses in the passage we are examining. We turn now to it.

## WILLIAM OF CHAMPEAUX'S SECOND THEORY

On the first theory, if you take Socrates and Plato and strip off all the advening forms until you get down to the universal humanity, you get only *one* humanity, not two. The humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato are one humanity.

On the second theory (p. 174), this changes. You end up with *two* humanities, not one. The humanity of Socrates is *not* identical with the humanity of Plato. Each has his own. And if you ask what makes them distinct, the answer is "*They just come that way.*" There is nothing - no advening form - that narrows down humanity to yield Socrates. There are advening forms, to be sure, but they do not individuate. Everything is individual to begin with.

Even on the first theory, the ten Aristotelian categories were distinct in this way. There is no one super-genus that is divided up by advening forms into the ten categories. The categories just *are* distinct all by themselves. They just come that way.

On this new theory, we can no longer say that Socrates' humanity and Plato's humanity are both "a substance *essentially* the same", as we did on the first theory (p. 172). Rather, the second theory says "they are one and the same not *essentially* but *indifferently*" (p. 175). The point is that here we are replacing a positive term by a negative one. There is no *difference* separating Socrates' humanity from Plato's humanity. The first view said positively, "They *are* the same". The second view says negatively, "They *are not different*". They do not differ in *man* or in *humanity* (note this phrase for future reference). Now, Abelard goes on, this lack of difference is to be spelled out in terms of *similarity*. The humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato are not identical, but they are *alike*. In addition to the discussion in his *Glosses on Porphyry*, Abelard sketches this second view very briefly in his *Adversities*, p. 17.

Here are some things to note about this second theory:

(1) While William's first view goes back to Boethius' remarks in the *De trinitate* about individuation by accidents - passage (3) in Text \s2 above - the second theory goes back to the view found in various forms in Boethius' *Commentary on Porphyry*, the *Contra Eutychen*, and also other passages in the *De trinitate*. One way of cashing out this view was the well-worked "signet ring" analogy, where the ring was the divine idea. Abelard doesn't develop the view in quite this way here, any more than Boethius did in his *Commentary on Porphyry*. Also, "matter" seemed to be the principle of individuation in the *Contra Eutychen*, although nothing is said

about it in the *Commentary on Porphyry*, any more than there is here in Abelard. What William himself actually said about these points is anyone's guess.

(2) The key term 'indifferently' comes from Boethius' *De trinitate*, passage (2) in Text \s2 below, a passage that maintains a view roughly like William's second theory (but with the role of the divine ideas made explicit in Boethius). Boethius there uses the term 'indifference' for the basis of the *unity* of the Trinity. The three persons are *not* identical, but they are *indifferent* - there is no *difference* between them.

(3) We *do* possess a text of William of Champeaux in which he actually does hold this view. Most of William's writings are totally lost. But we do have this text. It is translated by Muckle in *Adversities*, p. 17 n. 12. (As far as I can see, there is no basis in this text for any suggestion of yet a *third* position, as Muckle says some people have thought.)

(4) William was not the only twelfth century author to hold a view like this, any more than he was the only one to hold a view like his first one. We also find this second theory, or a reasonable facsimile of it, maintained by the famous Gilbert of Poitiers (also called Gilbert de la Porée). Gilbert, like Clarenbald of Arras who maintained a view like William's first one, belonged to the School of Chartres. See Chapters \s4, \s5 and \s6, and Text \s7, above and below. Bernard of Chartres seems to have been another one to hold a view like William's second one. See Chapter \s5 for where Bernard fits into the chronology, and Chapter \s6 on the doctrine. The texts in the case of Gilbert are pretty obscure, but you get the gist. Also on Gilbert, see John of Salisbury's remarks in Hyman and Walsh, p. 169.

Basically, Abelard thinks this second theory of William's is perfectly all right. With certain adjustments, he will accept it himself. But he does *not* think it is a realism, as its proponents maintain. "And yet", he says, "they cling to the universality of *things*" (p. 175). That is, "they" think not only that *words* are universals, but also *things*. Thus Abelard's attack on this view is not that it is incoherent - although he does disagree with William's way of expressing it. Rather, his main question for this theory is "What is the *thing* that is supposed to be *universal* on this theory?" Recall the definition of a universal at the beginning of the passage we are now considering, the definition from Aristotle. What *thing* on this second view is *predicated of many*? Surely not Socrates' humanity, since that is predicated only of Socrates. And not Plato's humanity either, since that is predicated only of Plato. And, on this theory, there simply *is* no *common* humanity to be predicated at all.

Abelard considers two variations of this theory, variations that try to answer just this question, and so save the realism of the theory. (Just why people should be so concerned to insist that it is a realist theory is not very clear. Perhaps they thought that somehow they would save knowledge that way.) Once again, see Chapter \s8 for the exact page and line references to the following articulations of the text.

#### *JOSCELIN OF SOISSONS' VIEW*

On this variation, the universal humanity is the collection (*collectio*) of all the individual humanities. All men *taken together* constitute the species "man", which is then predicated of them all. John of Salisbury (p. 169) is the one who tells us that this view was held by Joscelyn, Bishop of Soissons, although there is no real evidence, I suppose, that Joscelyn is the one Abelard had in mind. (There is no real evidence that it was anyone else, however.) Note that by 'collection', Joscelyn surely did not mean a "set". Sets are extensional; they are defined by their members. If a set gains or loses a member, it becomes a different set. But the collection of men is presumably the same even though men are born and die. Or, if it *isn't* the same, then it is a very

bad candidate for the universal "man". I'm not supposed to keep changing the universal human nature I share in just because other people come and go. One could, I suppose, think of Joscelyn's "collection" as the set of all past, present, future (and perhaps merely possible) men, but that is surely an anachronistic way to view it. (In general, it is bad historical methodology to interpret old views in terms of set-theoretical structures. Sets were not invented - I use the word deliberately - until the nineteenth century.) On all this, see the fourth objection, below. On the whole, Abelard has no trouble with this "collection"-theory. Here are his objections:

(1) A collection is predicated only by parts. The collection of all men is not wholly present to each man in such a way that the whole collection enters into the very structure of each individual. But Boethius says that a real universal is not predicated by parts. (Actually, if you will go back and check the discussion in Chapter \s3 above, you will see that Boethius doesn't put it in terms of predication at all. Abelard's adjustment of Boethius here will be significant, as we shall see.)

(2) Further, if you insist that there *is* a sense in which the whole collection is predicated of each of its parts (perhaps by taking predication as in effect just the converse of the relation of being a member of the collection), then whatever that sense is, it seems that Socrates may also be predicated in the same way of each of *his* parts, so that Socrates would be a universal too. This view then radically alters the dividing line between universals and individuals. The only true individuals on this theory would have no parts at all; they would be metaphysical *atoms*. Whether there are such things or not, they are certainly not the things we *normally* call individuals. This view ends up betraying the common-sense starting point with which it began. (The force of this objection seems to rest on taking the collection as an integral whole, a whole made up of parts. It is not clear whether this distorts the view or not. We simply do not know.)

(3) "Man" would not be a lowest species (*infima species*, *species specialissima*), as it is on the standard doctrine, a species containing only individuals under it, no subordinate species. For there are various subcollections of men - by race and nationality, for instance - and these subcollections would be universal (if universals are just collections), so that we *would* have subspecies.

(4) The fourth objection seems to arise from taking collections as extensional, so that the category (that is, the broadest universal) that contains all substances would be distinct every time a substance is destroyed (and for that matter, every time one is generated, although Abelard does not run the argument in this direction). So, over time, there would be several collections that qualify as the category *substance*.

Abelard mentions a cryptic reply Joscelyn might make to this last objection. No collection included in the category, he might say, is itself a category or most general collection. I suspect this amounts in some way to rejecting the extensional view of collections, so that the collection that is the most general genus *substance* remains the same even though substances are destroyed (and generated). But, Abelard goes on, then what *remains* when a substance is destroyed would be just a species of the category *substance*, so that there would have to be another, coequal species, since a genus cannot be divided into a *single* species. (Recall Odo's remarks on this, and the difficulties with it - see Chapter \s9 above.) But there are no other individuals, *ex hypothesi*, to constitute that other species; the others have all been destroyed. Hence that other species would have to be either (a) exactly contained in the first, so that it is really the same species, and then you have one and not two, or else (b) that other species would have to be a subspecies of the first, as rational animal is a subspecies of mortal animal. But in that case they would not be

coequal. (I really cannot say I am confident about what is going on here, and so am not in a position to assess its exact worth. It may be better than I have made it sound.)

(5) On the realist view, individuals are composed of universals. Universals are the constituents of individuals, so that the individual is ontologically posterior. But Joscelyn's view makes universals out to be composed of individuals, so that the universal is ontologically posterior to the individual, as a whole is posterior to (dependent on) its part.

(6) According to Boethius, who is being Aristotelian here, the species is the same - identically the same - as the genus. But on Joscelyn's view they can't be, since the collection of all men is not the same as the collection of all animals. The sense in which the species is the same as the genus is this (for Aristotle, who on this point sounds a lot like Boethius' view in the *Commentary on Porphyry* and *Contra Eutychen*, which view William is adopting as his second position, and which view Joscelyn is here defending): Socrates contains his own individual humanity, which is distinct from but similar to that of Plato. He also contains his own individual animality - and it is *the same thing* as his humanity. That is, by having his own humanity, Socrates has his own *rational animality*. His humanity is just a case of a special kind of animality - no more, no less. Conversely, the animality that Socrates has is not an *irrational* animality; it is a *rational* one, that is, a humanity. It is all the same thing. We will see more of this immediately below.

#### WALTER OF MORTAGNE'S VIEW

The considerations above lead naturally to the second variation on William's second view, which Abelard now considers. Recall, the question is, "What on this view is universal, what is predicated of many?" On this new variant, the individual Socrates is simultaneously an individual, a species and a genus. He is an individual *insofar as* he is Socrates, a species *insofar as* he is a man, and a genus *insofar as* he is an animal.

This view is based on the kind of consideration we have just seen in the sixth objection to Joscelyn's view. What makes Socrates Socrates and a man and an animal is *the same thing*. It is his own animality, which is not irrational but a *rational animality* - that is, a humanity - and is not a Plato-style humanity - with brown eyes, say - but a Socrates-style humanity - with blue eyes. In Socrates, it is all the same thing. The different degrees of generality in our *predication* are just a result of our considering Socrates *insofar as* he is Socrates, *insofar as* he is a man, or *insofar as* he is an animal. That is, it all depends on how broad or narrow our focus is. But it is the same *thing* we are talking about in each case.

John of Salisbury (p. 168) tells us that a view like this one was held by a certain Walter of Mortagne, who later abandoned it for a view that said that the divine ideas were universals (although they couldn't be universals in the Boethian sense, unless one took the clause 'constitute the substance' in the Boethian definition of a universal in a very loose sense indeed). Bernard of Chartres also said the same thing about the divine ideas. See Chapter 6 below.

Note that this need not have involved anything more than a terminological change on Walter of Mortagne's part. That is, Walter, even after he changed his mind, could still have had a theory like William's second view, metaphysically speaking. The only difference would be in what he was willing to call a "universal" in this theory.

In any case, Abelard attacks this view too, this time with three arguments (pp. 176-177). Now, you may ask, if this view is based on the same kinds of considerations as those to which Abelard himself appealed in his sixth objection to Joscelyn of Soissons, why is Abelard arguing



against the view here? But of course he's not. He's only arguing that it is not a *realism*. Here are his arguments:

(1) On this view, humanity, *insofar as* it is narrowed down to Socrates, can no more be predicated of many than can Socrates himself, *insofar as* he is Socrates. Conversely, Socrates, *insofar as* he is a man can be predicated of many just as much as humanity can, *insofar as* it is just humanity. Hence, individuals and universals are predicable of exactly the same things in exactly the same senses. Whatever you may think of this argument, here is another one:

(2) Further (and this may also be argued as a simple corollary of (1)), this view destroys the distinction between individuals and universals. If Socrates is an individual, a species and a genus, then an individual is a universal, and vice versa. In general, one of Abelard's common strategies against other people's theories of universals is to claim that they destroy the distinction between individuals and universals.

#### WILLIAM'S OWN VIEW

After refuting these two variants of William of Champeaux's second view, Abelard (p. 177) turns to face William's view itself. William wanted to say that Socrates and Plato *agree in man*, or *agree in humanity* (so did Walter of Mortagne). But he took these expressions negatively; recall his term 'indifferently'. They agree in man *insofar as* they *do not differ* in man, or in humanity. But Abelard objects that neither do they differ in *stone*, and yet we don't say that they "agree in stone", so that the term 'stone' could be predicated truly of them.

#### A POSSIBLE REPLY

Abelard doesn't really fill in the details of any reply. But he does say that perhaps you might want to add some premise (*propositio*, translated as 'proposition' in line 10 - the term frequently means 'premise') that allows the *man* case but not the *stone* case. That is, we want some premise to the effect that if *A* and *B* do not differ *in man*, then they *agree in man*. But we don't want it to work where you substitute certain other terms for 'man'. It doesn't really make any difference how you would argue for this special premise, since Abelard doesn't think it will help anyway. Here is why:

#### REFUTATION OF REPLY

Abelard counters that it is not even *true* that Socrates and Plato do not differ in man. Hence, it could hardly be appealed to to *explain* anything. As I understand it, his analysis goes like this:

Since we are not talking about a universal man in the sense of William's first theory, we must gloss the statement 'Socrates and Plato do not differ in man' as follows: Socrates and Plato do not differ in *a* man, that is, in *any* (individual) man at all. The lack of an indefinite article in Latin allows this step to be made without calling for any special comment. All right, but now what does this new sentence mean? In general, how do we analyze a sentence of the form '*A* and *B* differ in a *C*'?

Suppose we say that two things, *A* and *B*, do differ with respect to ("in") a color - that is, with respect to *some* color. Then we can parse this: Either *A* has some color that *B* doesn't have, or else *B* has some color that *A* doesn't have. (Perhaps one is colorless.) Hence, to say that *A* and *B* do *not* differ in a color is to say the denial of this: *A* has no color that *B* doesn't have too, and likewise *B* has no color that *A* doesn't have too.

Similarly, to say that Socrates and Plato do not differ in a man or in a humanity is to say that Socrates has no humanity that Plato doesn't have too and Plato has no humanity that Socrates doesn't have too. But on William's second view, that is just plain false! Each of Socrates and Plato has his *own* humanity, which the other does not have. Thus, far from saying that Socrates and Plato do *not* differ in a man, William should have said that they *do*. The claim that they do *not* encapsulates William's *first* theory, not his second.

This is a good example of Abelard's using his dialectical skill to dazzle his opponent. Later logicians would develop long treatises on how to treat the word 'differ' in contexts like this and various other contexts. (Their analyses looks pretty much like the one I have just given, which is why I think it is not implausible to interpret Abelard himself in this way.) Abelard here presupposes an already finely-honed analysis.

Unfortunately, I think it is probably unfair to William. William might well reply that Abelard's fine logic doesn't show that the view is wrong, but only that it was badly expressed. The basis point is unaffected: Socrates has his own humanity and Plato has his own humanity, and there is no *difference* between them - that is, no third entity that comes between them and is required to make them *two* humanities. They are two all by themselves; they just come that way. Their humanities don't have to be *individuated* by anything added on. They are already quite individual enough, thank you. There is a clear difference between this case and Abelard's case of the stone. Neither Socrates nor Plato has a stonehood.

Abelard can hardly object to such a theory, when properly stated. For, in the end, it disagrees in no respect with his own, except perhaps on some minor terminological points that don't really matter. But Abelard is quite clear that his theory is *not* a realism, as apparently William thought his own was.

This completes Abelard's attack on William's two views and their variations. It is important to notice just what he has done.

He *thinks* he has refuted William's first, strongly realist, view. Perhaps he has scored some points against William's own formulation. But realism can be touched up in such a way that every single one of Abelard's objections misses the mark. He does *not* raise the one objection that would have been conclusive, and would have required a major change in the theory: that the view makes accidental change impossible.

He *has* scored some points against William's way of expressing his second view. But his main success is elsewhere. He has pretty clearly refuted various attempts to explain how William's second view amounts to a realism. There is apparently *nothing* on that view, no non-linguistic entity, that is predicated of many. So if you are going to adopt a view like this, you might as well stop pretending you are a realist and *admit* that you are a nominalist.

## ABELARD'S OWN THEORY

This is precisely the conclusion Abelard himself draws on p. 177: "it remains to ascribe universality of this sort to words alone". Only *they* are predicated of many. This passage marks a major point of articulation in the discussion. Abelard has now committed himself to nominalism. We have yet to see how the details work out.

On pp. 177-178, Abelard gives some preliminary explanations of the grammatical sense in which *words* may be called particular (individual) or universal. Then, on p. 178, he raises some questions that will serve to lead into the core of Abelard's own view. There are two questions, both having to do with the "signification" of those general or universal words.

(McKeon, whose translation appears in Hyman and Walsh, translates '*significatio*' as "meaning". We'll say some more about that in a moment.)

(1) First, there seems to be nothing for a universal word to *name*, "no subject thing", as Abelard says. For he has just argued that there are no universal entities in the realists' sense to be named by universal words. We'll see Abelard's answer to this in a bit.

(2) But second, there doesn't seem to be anything for universal names to *signify* either. Here we need a little lesson in the mediaeval terminology of signification. Aristotle, in *De interpretatione* 3, 16b19-21, says that verbs "signify" something just as names do, because he who uses a verb "establishes an understanding" - in Boethius' Latin translation the phrase is '*constituere intellectum*', usually construed with the genitive. Hence, in general, terms signify what they establish an understanding of, or in more colloquial terminology, they signify what they make us think of when we hear them. (It follows from this basic notion of signification, which all mediaevals used, that signification is a species of the causal relation, and is just as transitive as causality is. If *A* signifies *B* and *B* signifies *C*, then *A* signifies *C* too. Some authors explicitly drew this conclusion. This, incidentally, is one reason why it is wrong to translate '*significatio*' as "meaning". Meaning, whatever it is, is not transitive; signification is.)

In effect, therefore, the second of Abelard's questions is "What does a universal term make us think of when we hear it?" Certainly, it doesn't make us think of a universal thing, since he has just argued that there are no such things. But it doesn't seem to make us think of any *individual* thing either. When I hear the word '*man*', I am not made to think of Socrates any more than I am made to think of Plato. And I cannot be made to think of *all* men, since I don't *know* all men. There are lots of people on the other side of the world (in fact, there are lots of them on the other side of the *street*) that I have never thought of in particular. Surely, when I hear the word '*man*', I am not made to think of *them* - except in some very general sense that seems impossible to explain, since we have no general entities on this theory.

In short, there are two problems: (1) Universal terms don't seem to have anything to *name*, and (2) they don't seem to have anything to *signify* either.

Hence it *looks* as if universal terms cannot be *sermones* in Abelard's sense - that is, *significant* words or significant *voces* - since there is nothing for them to signify or name. It *looks*, therefore, as if Abelard's nominalism is committed to saying that universal terms are mere words *without significance* - mere *flatus vocis*, in Roscelin's phrase - with all the consequences that entails for our knowledge of the world. How is Abelard going to avoid this? How is he going to distinguish his view from Roscelin's?

Well, he does. He sketches his answer in the middle paragraph on p. 179 (before getting down to details). "But this is not so," he says.

First of all, what about naming? The objection here was that there is nothing for a universal term to name because there is no *universal* thing for it to name. Abelard's response is in effect, "So what?" Why can't the term name *individual* things?

Abelard's reply here is a bit obscure, but seems to run something like this. The objection works only if we think of naming as a kind of signification, and then argue that terms that signify more than one thing are *equivocal* (p. 177). On pain of equivocation, therefore, universal terms cannot name many things, if naming is a kind of signification, and since they cannot name just *one universal* thing (since there is no such thing), it follows that they cannot name at all.

Abelard's reply in effect severs the notion of naming from the notion of signification, in the sense of signification according to which a term is equivocal if it signifies several things. Abelard is willing to allow that there is *a sense* in which naming is a kind of signification.

Universal terms, he says, signify "in a manner" by *nomination* (=naming). But that is not the kind of signification that is involved in equivocation.

It is not entirely clear to me why Abelard is willing to allow nomination or naming to be a kind of signification at all - even "in a manner". Anselm had already done something like this in his *De grammatico*, but the whole idea there is a bit strained. In any case, it is clear that naming is *not* signification in the sense that seems to be presupposed by the objection. I think, therefore, that Abelard has successfully handled the first objection. His answer proceeds by making the notion of naming in effect *the same* as the notion of predicating, and by *distinguishing* it from signification in the sense in which multiple signification would entail equivocation.

The second objection, however, is harder. What are we made to think of when we hear the word 'man'? In short, what is the link-up between our universal terms, our concepts, and the external world? How are we going to save Abelard's nominalism from the epistemological skepticism that it threatens to yield? This is the meat of Abelard's theory.

Well, here is where considerations about equivocation do apply. If a universal term is going to be *universal*, it must establish in us a single understanding, a single concept. ('Understanding' in these contexts does not mean the *faculty* of understanding, but either the *act* of understanding or else the *object* of such an act.)

That concept has to be a *general* concept. But what is it a concept of? Not of a general or universal *thing*, since there aren't any. Neither does the universal term make us think of *individual* things, for the reasons the objection states and Abelard apparently accepts.

And yet that general concept must somehow be grounded in those individual things, on pain of severing our thought from the world and reducing the theory to Roscelin's.

There must therefore, Abelard says (p. 179), be some *common reason or cause* why the universal term is "imposed on" the several individuals it names ("imposition" is the assigning of names to things), and so names the several individuals it does, and which links the name to the general concept we have when we hear the term. This "common reason or cause" is going to be the linkage between our concepts and the world that saves the objectivity of our knowledge.

Well, how does it work? We need to look at both sides of the question: at this mysterious "common reason or cause", and also at the "common concept" that it grounds.

We have seen that Abelard criticized William of Champeaux's second view for saying that, while Socrates and Plato had two distinct essences, nevertheless they agreed - "indifferently", to be sure - *in man* or *in humanity*. Abelard thought that this was just a verbal smoke screen. Abelard says instead that Socrates and Plato agree, or are alike in *being a man*, or in *being man*.

So what? What is the big difference here? Well, there *is* a big difference. A man is a *thing* - a '*res*'. And there is no *thing* in which Socrates and Plato agree, no *thing* they can share, as Abelard has already argued.

Nevertheless, they must somehow agree, there must be some community between them, or else there would be no objective basis for our calling them both men, and we would be left with subjectivity and skepticism - and Roscelin's doctrine. The common predication of the word 'man' of both of them must be tied to reality *somehow*.

Well, Abelard bites the bullet. Since Socrates and Plato cannot "agree in" or share any common *thing*, and since they must nevertheless have *some* community, it follows that they must agree in or share some item that is *not a thing* - not a *res*.

They do not agree in *man*, he says, but they *do* agree in *being a man* (*hominem esse*), otherwise translated as "to be a man". *Being a man*, therefore, is *not a thing*.

This does not mean that *being a man* is nothing, that it isn't really out there. It *is* really out there. It has to be, since there is an important epistemological job for it to do. Only it is not a *thing* - not a *res*.

Instead, it is what Abelard calls a "*status*" (fourth declension, so that the plural is also '*status*'). Socrates and Plato agree in the *status* of man - that is, in *being a man*, or in *to be a man* (pp. 179-180). "We appeal," he says, "to no essence" (p. 180) - that is, to no *thing*.

Oh great, you may say. What on earth is going on? When it comes to the crunch, Abelard tries to fake his way out by appealing to some contrived and utterly mysterious kind of "non-thing" he calls a *status*. That's not a theory; that's a sign of desperation! Isn't Abelard in fact throwing the whole thing away? Isn't this mysterious *status* of man just the old realist *universal man* in disguise? Hasn't Abelard distinguished his own doctrine from realism by nothing more than a verbal subterfuge?

This is a particularly pressing question once we realize that Abelard *needs* the *status* for basically *epistemological* reasons, and epistemology has always provided the main arguments for *realism*.

In order to see what is going on, we must remember the way Abelard, following Aristotle, defined a universal in the first place. A universal for Abelard is that which is *predicated of many*. And while Abelard seems perfectly willing to speak in some passages in his writings of *things* being predicated of things, he is *not* willing to allow things to be predicated of *many* things, since "it remains to ascribe universality of this sort to words alone" (p. 177).

The universal man of William of Champeaux's first theory was a universal because it was supposed to be predicated of many. The *status*, however, which is just as objective, is *not* a universal because it *cannot* be predicated of many. To see this, we must look at the Latin.

What is the *status* of man? It is, he says, *being a man*. Now 'being' is ambiguous in English. It can be either (a) an adjective (a participle, in particular), meaning *that which is*, or else it can be (b) a noun (a gerund, in particular) meaning *what that which is does* - namely, *be*. (Compare the difference between 'The *living* and the dead' and 'Summertime, and the *living* is easy'.) Both of these senses come into play in the phrase 'Every being has being'.

In Latin, these are quite distinct verb-forms. What we have in the present case, where we are talking about *being a man*, is the gerund, the nominal form. And in Latin, the nominative of the gerund is the *infinitive*. So to make this perfectly clear, we can say that the *status* of man is *to be a man* (*hominem esse*).

Now the Latin sentence 'Hoc est hominem esse' (in English, 'This is to-be-a-man') is certainly odd, and perhaps even ill-formed. (In English, there is a reading of 'this is to be a man' that makes sense, namely, as amounting to 'This is going to be a man', or 'This ought to be a man'. But that is quite different in Latin, and involves the *gerundive*, not the *gerund*.)

Now I am not very concerned whether you understand all the grammatical fine-tuning here. But the general point is important. Although Abelard doesn't say so, I suspect that this grammatical business is the reason why the *status* of man - *to be a man* or *hominem esse* - cannot be predicated of many. It cannot be predicated *at all*. It is simply of the wrong form. It results in gibberish.

Syntactically, this is a matter of grammar. Metaphysically, it can be approached somewhat differently.

The theory of the *categories* may be regarded as providing a list of the basic kinds of *predicates* - whether we construe that linguistically or metaphysically. But the *status* of man does not fit into any of the ten recognized Aristotelian categories. Hence, it cannot be predicated, and so *a fortiori* cannot be predicated of *many*.

It follows of course that the *status* not only cannot be predicated of *many*, it cannot be predicated of even *one*. Hence the *status* is not only not a *universal*, it is not an *individual* either. I suspect this is what Abelard means when he says that the *status* is *not a thing*. Abelard quotes Aristotle (p. 172) as saying that some *things* are universal and others are individual.

Abelard disagrees about universals, of course, but the point is that since the *status* cannot be either an individual or a universal, it follows on the authority of Aristotle that it cannot be a *thing* at all.

Again, in another passage, later in the *Logica ingredientibus* (in his *Glosses on the Categories*), Abelard says that the categories signify the ten primary genera of *things*. (See Text \s2, passages 1 and 2, in Volume 2 below.) Presumably then, since the *status* does not fit into a category, it is not a *thing*. But it is still out there.

To some extent, this is speculation. Abelard simply is not very informative about these non-things. But something like this must be going on, or else I do not see how everything Abelard says can be reconciled.

At this point, let us recall the two kinds of realism we have in circulation:

(a) *Predicational realism*, the view that there are real, non-linguistic things that are predicable of many.

(b) *Boethian realism*, the view that there are real *entities* - whether you want to call them "things" or not is up to you - that are common as a whole, simultaneously, and in a metaphysically intimate manner, to several things.

It now looks as if Abelard is a *nominalist* in the Aristotelian sense, but a *realist* in the Boethian sense. His doctrine of the *status* fits Boethius' definition of a universal exactly - or else it will do not do its job of grounding the objectivity of our knowledge. *Please note this carefully.*

It is the logical doctrine of *predication*, therefore, that is at the heart of Abelard's nominalism. He is a nominalist only in the "predicational" sense.

Now what about the *second* side of our problem, the question of the "common concept"? What does a universal term, after all, signify or make us think of? Now you might well ask, "What about the *status*?" Wouldn't that serve? Perhaps it would. But Abelard doesn't take that route, for reasons we shall see in a moment.

To ask the question as precisely as possible: What is *the* thing of which a universal term establishes an understanding or concept? There must be *only* one, under pain of equivocation.

Well, since it cannot be any *real* thing, as Abelard has already argued, it is, he says (p. 180), a "certain imaginary and fictive thing" - a "*res ficta*". That is, it is purely an *intentional object*, a *thought object*. It is in no sense real - not even in the sense in which the *status* is real even though it is not a "thing". The thought object *is* a thing, only it is a *fake* thing - a metaphysically impossible thing, if Abelard's arguments against William of Champeaux's realism are correct.

Later people will distinguish *real being* (*esse reale*), which all of us enjoy, from *intentional being* (*esse intentionale*), which thought objects enjoy. ('Intentional' here in the sense that thought *intends* or aims at, "tends towards", its object, whether the object is real or not.) This is the germ of the doctrine of *intentionality* that will play such a big role in modern phenomenology. People always say that Brentano got this notion from the Scholastics. Well, he

didn't get it from Abelard; he got from later Scholastics. But we can already see the germ of it in Abelard.

There seems to be some obscurity in Abelard concerning the *res ficta*. On the one hand, he seems to think that this *res ficta* is a product of the activity of the mind, like dream images, and that it is this product we are made to think of when we hear a general or universal term (p. 180). On the other hand, later in the *Logica ingredientibus*, in his *Glosses on the De interpretatione* (see Text \s2, passage 3, in Volume 2 below), he seems to say that such images or figments are not *what* we think of when we hear a general term, but rather mental products that are the *means* by which we think of what they are images *of*. We do not think of the *images*, we think of things *through* the images.

The terminology, at least, and perhaps the content of the doctrine as well, is fluid here. Perhaps the best way to view it is this. The universal term *establishes in us* an understanding, a concept, thought of as a kind of mental picture. That concept or picture is *of* a metaphysically impossible object. Since terms signify that *of* which they establish an understanding in us, and not that understanding or concept itself, it is the *impossible intentional object* that is signified by the universal term, not the concept or image of that object.

Just which of these - the impossible object or the understanding or concept *of* that object - is to be called the *res ficta*, I am not clear. But from the way Abelard introduces the term on p. 180, it seems to me that the *res ficta* is the intentional object, not the concept or image, and it is that *res ficta* that is signified by the term. But if I am wrong about this, and the *res ficta* is to be identified with the concept or image, it is easy to make the terminological adjustment. In that case, the term will signify the intentional object *of* the *res ficta* or image.

This theory is part of an account of all terms, not just of universal ones. Proper names as well as universal terms produce or establish in us a concept or image of an intentional object, which the term signifies. In the case of a proper name, of course, the intentional object is an *individual* and so may also be a *really existing* object. For universal terms, however, this cannot happen.

At the top of p. 181, Abelard suggests an exception to this. A proper name - say, 'Socrates' - *need not* produce in us a concept or image of Socrates, he says, provided that Socrates is present in person and I perceive him. For in that case we do not need the image in order to be made to think of Socrates; the *reality* suffices. But where Socrates is absent, I do need his image in order to think of him. (Note: Is Abelard here rejecting the Augustinian theory of representative perception, as in Chapter \s3 above?) Where the term is a universal term, however, there can never be a universal thing really present to my perception, since there are no universal things out there at all. Hence for universal terms we always need an image or concept in order to think of what they signify.

Before we get too far afield, let me point out something. In the penultimate paragraph on p. 180, Abelard considers a view that denies that concepts or images are intentional objects or products of the mind's activity, but instead identifies the concept or image with the very act of thinking itself. Abelard doesn't really argue against this view, but he says he disagrees with it. This is an interesting view, because after toying with a "fictum" theory very much like Abelard's, William of Ockham in the fourteenth century will opt for the act theory Abelard here rejects, the theory that concepts are identical with the mental acts themselves, not with the products of those acts, and certainly not with their objects.

So far, then, we have a fictum theory for Abelard, a theory that applies equally to general concepts and to particular or individual ones. What is the difference between these two kinds of

concepts? The distinction is drawn on p. 181. Particular or individual concepts are mental pictures or images that represent one thing to the exclusion of others - for instance, the image of Socrates. General concepts are mental pictures or images that represent several things at once. They are in that sense "confused" concepts. This does not mean that there is anything wrong with them, or that they are stupid. It means that they "fuse together" a number of things. The concept "man", for instance, is equally a picture of every man. It is not any more a picture of Plato than it is of Socrates, or vice versa. But it is more a picture of those men than it is of anything that is not a man.

Well, this is troublesome, of course. At the bottom of p. 181, Abelard gives us an analogy. He says that we can paint a picture of a particular lion - "limping or mutilated or wounded by the spear of Hercules", as he oddly puts it. But we can also, he goes on, paint a picture of no lion in particular, but of a lion in general. This of course suggests that Abelard is leaving himself wide open to all the objections Berkeley would later raise against the notion of abstract general ideas - objections based precisely on the identification of concepts or ideas with mental images.

But let us not push this point. Let us suppose that Abelard can answer such objections - perhaps by pointing to the image of a "speckled hen". If you know the literature on Berkeley, you will catch the allusion. (Nevertheless, whether Abelard can answer such objections or not, the analogy with painting still seems to be a bad analogy.)

If we do not push the objection, then we can summarize Abelard this way:

(1) In the absence of individuals to the senses, a proper name, for instance 'Socrates', brings to mind the image or picture of Socrates, and signifies the individual Socrates. It does this whether Socrates exists or not.

(2) A universal term, for instance 'man', brings to mind a general picture or concept of no one man in particular, but of a man in general, and signifies the metaphysically impossible man in general that I think of through that concept or image.

Thus, terms as a whole signify a *realist* world, a world with universal things in it - only that realist world is a world of intentional objects, not of realities. *Realism* is the correct theory for the world we picture, the world we think of. It is, unfortunately, *not* the correct theory for the world that *exists*.

The doctrine of metaphysical realism makes the mistake of thinking that the world that is signified is the real world. Abelard thinks it is not. His distinction between naming and signifying properly speaking makes this outcome possible.

Boethius, in his *Commentary on Porphyry* (Chapter \s4 above), said that we can separate in the mind things that cannot be separated in reality. We can form abstract, general concepts although there is no such thing as a general or universal entity. Abelard is in effect just accepting this theory, and spelling it out in more detail. Unfortunately, he complicates matters by identifying concepts with images.

You may well think this outcome is a rather ironic one for a doctrine that is trying to preserve the objectivity of our knowledge. After all, the upshot of the whole thing is that the world we think about, and so the only world we could even have a chance of knowing, is *not* the world that exists, but rather a metaphysically impossible world populated with universals. What kind of objectivity does a doctrine like that preserve?

This brings us back to a question we put off a while ago: Why cannot the *status* serve as the significate of a universal term? Why cannot the term 'man' make us think of the *status* of man? It seems to be just the kind of significate we want. It is common to many, even though it is



not predicable of many. And it would clearly ground the objectivity of our knowledge if it were the significate of the universal term. In that case, the universal term could make us think of something real, even if not strictly a thing, and not of some impossible universal thing predicable of many. The world that is signified, the world we think of or conceive, would then be just the real world after all, and knowledge would be saved.

The reason Abelard does not adopt this attractive approach is that he thinks we *cannot* form an image of a *status*.

Before I give you my reasons for this, I should mention one recent study that disagrees with me. It is Martin M. Tweedale, *Abailard on Universals*, (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976). On p. 208 of that book, Tweedale takes Abelard to hold that universal terms do signify the *status*. I find no text to support this claim, and indeed I think the whole business about painting pictures of general lions goes against it. But there is one passage in particular where I think Abelard clearly rejects this possibility. On p. 182, Abelard asks whether a universal term signifies the form to which the understanding is directed. He is talking here about the intentional object and not the image. And he goes on to say that this view is confirmed both by authority and by reason. (Note the interesting pairing here.) The 'by reason' seems to clinch it. The "authority" he cites is Priscian, the famous Latin grammarian (c. 500). Priscian, in a rather obscure passage given by Abelard, seems to suggest, Abelard says, that the divine ideas - that is, God's concepts - are concepts of the *status* of things.

It is easy to see why they would *have* to be, since the metaphysical structure of creatures is supposed to be patterned after the divine ideas. That suggests that the ideas are ideas *of* the *status*, which do enter into the metaphysical structure of things, rather than *of* metaphysically impossible universals, which do not.

Just how we get from this to the conclusion that universal terms signify the thought object is not clear. But in any case, Abelard seems to accept that conclusion; it is confirmed, he says, "by reason". What he does *not* accept - and here I think Tweedale misinterprets the passage - is the suggestion that the intentional object is the *status*.

That's fine for God, he says, but not for us. *We* cannot form an image or concept of the *status*. We have no way to *picture* accurately what it is *to be a man*. That is because the *status* cannot be *sensed*; it is not a sensible quality. We have no perceptual access to it, and therefore do not know how to picture it, we "men," he says on p. 182, "who learn things only through the senses." Notice how Abelard is here beginning the Aristotelian break with the Platonic/Augustinian tradition. That tradition would never have said anything like that. The remark is all the more surprising here, since Abelard didn't have all that much more of the Aristotelian texts at disposal than did the earlier mediaevals. (He did have a bit more of the Aristotelian *logical* works, which were just beginning to be translated in Abelard's day. In one passage, he confides breathlessly that he has actually *seen* a Latin copy of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*.)

The only things we know about men are their sensible qualities, so that the picture we make to ourselves when we hear the term 'man' must be constructed out of *those* ingredients.

God's knowledge, however, is not confined to what can be sensed, so that God *can* picture the *status* of things. The connection between thought and reality is much closer for God's thought than it can ever be for our own.

Very well, but what does all this mean for the connection between *our* thought and reality in the final analysis?

Well, the *status* provides an objective non-arbitrary basis for the imposition of terms. The term 'man' is "imposed" to name all men because *they are men*, because they *agree* in being men. They share a common *status*.

The term cannot *signify* that *status*, however, because we cannot picture it. But we do the best we can, and form a kind of monstrous image of no one man in particular, but of an impossible man in general. This image is serviceable; it might, for instance, *guide* us in predicating the word 'man' correctly, since it is after all equally a representation of every man and of nothing quite so much as a man. It can serve *that* function. But it is too indefinite and indeterminate to be an *exact* image of any possible reality. And *there* is where the realists make their mistake.

Before we turn to an evaluation of this view, let us look briefly at the end of Abelard's discussion. On pp. 183-186 there is a further discussion of abstraction, taken from Boethius' *Commentary on Porphyry*. Then he turns to answer the four questions he raised at the beginning of the passage.

(1) With respect to Porphyry's first question, whether genera and species subsist, Abelard glosses this as: Do the words - general and specific words - *signify* something real, or are they purely mental, that is, do they *not* signify something real? *Abelard's answer*: Both. They signify *by nomination* - that is, they name or are truly predicable of - real things. But those real things are individual things, not universal ones. On the other hand, in the other sense of 'signify', the strict sense (what the terms make us think of), they signify nothing real, but only a fictive intentional object. That fiction nevertheless is not exactly *empty*, for the reason explained in his discussion of abstraction.

(2) As for Porphyry's second question, are genera and species corporeal or incorporeal, Abelard glosses this as: Do they *signify* corporeal or incorporeal things? And again Abelard's answer is: Both. And once again, he trades on the two senses of signification. By nomination, they signify corporeal things; in the strict sense they do not, but only signify fictions.

(3) With respect to Porphyry's third question, are genera and species *in* sensible things or separated from them, Abelard glosses this as: Do genera and species words *signify* things *in* sensible things or do they signify things *not* in sensibles? And once again, as you no doubt have come to expect by now, his answer is: Both. By nomination, they signify or name things in sensibles. For instance, 'humanity' signifies (names) the humanities in Socrates and Plato. But more strictly, they signify the common intentional objects, those impossible things that are not in a sensible object but are only fictions.

(4) Finally, what about Abelard's own, fourth question: Can universals continue to exist without any singulars? Again, he parses this: Can universal terms continue to signify as they do if there are no singulars that fall under the universal, no individuals for such terms to be predicated of? Again, his answer is: Yes and No. (This is not a man who wrote the *Sic et Non* for nothing!) They obviously cannot signify then by nomination, but just as obviously they can continue to signify in the strict sense; they can signify the common intentional object.

The distinction between nomination and signification in the strict sense is therefore the main vehicle for Abelard's answering the four questions that frame his discussion. But don't be fooled. There's a lot more than that going on in this passage.

Now, let us pause to evaluate this theory. It is subtle and deep, no doubt, but I think it just will not work. What, after all, *leads* us to form exactly the image we do when we hear the word 'man' - an image of an impossible man in general, but an image that is nevertheless equally if not exactly a representation of just exactly those individuals who share in the status of man?

What a coincidence! Isn't it odd that the fit should be so exact? It seems that this must be an *extraordinary* coincidence unless we are *led* to do this by somehow getting in touch with the *status*. The *status* must guide us. But how can that be? On Abelard's own account, we cannot *sense* the *status* and so cannot form any concept or picture of it.

It looks as though we can have no inkling at all of the status of things. And if that is so, then while the *status* may very well be out there, it can be of no epistemological use to us whatever - and the whole project breaks down.

## Chapter 41: Abelard's Ethics

Note: This is not the same as Abelard's morals. For the latter, read his own *Adversities*, and file it away in the lore and gossip section of this survey.

Part of Abelard's *Ethics* or *Know Thyself* is translated in the Hyman and Walsh volume. Please read it now, if you have not already done so. It is a remarkably modern sounding work to come out of the twelfth century.

The words the translator, R. McCallum, translates as 'defects' and 'qualities' are better translated 'vices' and 'virtues'. So throughout the passage. The words 'will', 'wish', 'voluntary', and the like, always refer in this work to *desire*, not to *choice*. The distinction is crucial to Abelard's whole enterprise in the *Ethics*. We may *choose* to resist our *desires* - that is, to resist our *will*.

Note, in Ch. 1 of the passage, that ignorance and knowledge are irrelevant to morals. This is qualified somewhat in Ch. 3, p. 194: "He who has not yet perceived by reason what he ought to do cannot be guilty of contempt of God", and so cannot sin. Hence, ignorance is *at worst* irrelevant to morality, and in some cases at least, depending on what you are ignorant of, it actually *renders sin impossible*. This is a complete turnaround from the classical Greek notion (see Chapter \s2 above) that no one knowingly does evil. For Abelard, on the contrary, you can't do evil at all without knowing it.

In Ch. 3, p. 190, contrast Abelard's treatment of the slave who kills his master with Augustine's treatment of a similar situation in *On Free Choice*, I, Ch. 4. (Question of interpretation: Does 'cupiditas' for Augustine mean the same thing as 'voluntas' for Abelard? At the beginning of Augustine's chapter, 'cupiditas' means just 'desire'; later on it acquires a specialized meaning of 'evil desire'.)

Finally, note in Ch. 3, p. 192, the example of the man who desires the fruit. This is surely a deliberate allusion to the pear-tree incident recounted in Augustine's *Confessions*, II. (See Chapters \s2 and \s3 above.)

I should mention two good books for your information:

D. E. Luscombe, ed. and tr., *Peter Abelard's Ethics*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Complete Latin edition with English translation and notes. A better translation than the one in Hyman and Walsh.

Etienne Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960). An absolutely terrific book. I cannot recommend it highly enough. Heloise (you've met her, of course, in the *Adversities*) was an extraordinary figure in her own right. Her correspondence with Abelard, which is the main basis for Gilson's book, reveals a remarkably intelligent and subtle mind.

## Chapter 42:

### The School of Chartres

With this Chapter, please read also the passages in Volume II, Text \s5, below.

For the type of school this "School of Chartres" may have been, see Chapter \s2 above. I say "may" have been, because there is some scholarly dispute over whether there was really anything like an official "school" at Chartres. In any case, the term will serve as a convenient name for a group of authors who certainly do belong together. For how this group fits in with what was going on in the period generally, see Chapter \s3 above. For the relation between certain of the texts below and William of Champeaux's views on universals, see Chapter \s4 above.

### Bernard of Chartres

Bernard of Chartres (see Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 619-620 n. 21) held a view like this: There are three real (kinds of) things. They are: God, the Ideas, and matter. They are simple. Composite things *seem* to be real, but aren't. Nevertheless, the component elements of composite beings truly are, namely, the Ideas and matter. On going more deeply into the question, however, it turns out that the Ideas are not directly mixed with matter. Rather there are in matter certain *formae natae* (f4=f4"native forms", inborn or innate forms), like unto the Ideas. Compare the standard analogy of the form left in the wax by a seal-ring. The ring is like the Idea, the impression is a *forma nata*. The *formae natae* are diversified by their contact with matter. (You have two different impressions of the seal-ring because you have two different globs of wax.) This sounds very much like Gilbert of Poitiers: the *formae natae* are all numerically distinct, and yet all alike insofar as they imitate the same Idea - come from the same seal-ring. Nevertheless, Bernard calls the Ideas "universals". (Whether they count as "universals" in the Boethian sense depends on how you interpret the Boethian requirement that universals "constitute the substance" of the things to which they are common.)

### Gilbert of Poitiers

See the passages in Volume II, Text \s5, below. Note that in Gilbert's terminology, a "subsistence" is what Bernard of Chartres called a "native form", while a "subsistent" is what *has* a native form or subsistence, namely, the material composite object. The point of paragraph (28) of the translation is that diversity is not the same as difference. Two things that are "different" must share a common genus. (Recall, species = genus + difference.) Diversity, however, does not require this, and so is the more inclusive notion. This terminological convention is found very often in the Middle Ages, although you can't rely on it. Sometimes authors will explain this terminology very nicely, and then go right ahead and say that two Aristotelian *categories*, for instance, are "different".

In order to get the point of paragraph 24 of the translation (from Gilbert's commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate*, I, 5), you have to realize that the etymological basis for the term 'individual' is "undivided" or "indivisible". An individual is that which cannot be further divided. Gilbert says in paragraph 24 that the "subsistences" (Bernard's "native forms"), by which things are, are not individuals but rather "dividuals". (I'm sorry, but that's the only way I could bring out the etymological connections here.) They are "divisible", after a fashion, insofar as they are *similar* to, or "con-formed" to (I have broken up the word to emphasize the sense Gilbert gives it:

"of like form with") other subsistences. Thus, Socrates' humanity "con-forms" to Plato's. Notice that this is a pretty weak sense of being divisible. Gilbert's "subsistences" are definitely *not* divisible in the way a Boethian universal would be, or a universal according to William of Champeaux's first theory. Still, Socrates' humanity is an *exact duplicate* of Plato's humanity, and Gilbert apparently thinks that such "duplicability" is enough divisibility to keep a subsistence from being an "individual".

Note also that Gilbert says not only that "subsistences", *by* which things are, are "dividuals", but also that the things that *have* those subsistences, the "subsistents", are also "dividuals" ("... not only the things that are, but also the things *by* which they are con-formed . . ."). In other words, Socrates and Plato are *not* individuals for Gilbert. They can be divided. In this case, the divisibility is not at all hard to see. Socrates and Plato are *integral* wholes, made up of parts, and can be divided into those parts. We don't have to think in terms of dismemberment here. It is enough to note that Socrates and Plato consist of matter together with "native forms" or "subsistences".

A true individual for Gilbert would have to be absolutely simple, not internally made up of parts, and not duplicable. Recall the remarks above about which things really are, according to Bernard of Chartres.

## Chapter 43:

### Arabic and Jewish Philosophy

In connection with this Chapter, please read the following materials:

(1) General background, Hyman and Walsh's introductory comments, pp. 203-209, 211-214, 234-241; 337-344, 357-359, 369-373.

(2) Texts: Alfarabi, 215-221; Averroes, 324-334 (just skim this; it's more technical than we're going to get); Saadia, 344-350 (in other words, Ch. 1); Ibn Gabirol (Avencibrol), 359-363 (from the first treatise); Maimonides, 373-395, 399-401. With the Maimonides text on pp. 373-390, see also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 13, a. 2, Hyman and Walsh, pp. 527-529 (where he argues against Maimonides' position).

Note: Until p. 233, the pagination in the Hyman and Walsh volume is the same in the first and the second editions. After that point, they diverge, and the divergence grows as you get further into the book. The page references above are to the second edition. For a table relating these to the corresponding pages in the first edition, see Appendix 1 in Volume 2, below.

Although Avicenna and Averroes, especially, are both extremely important, I'm asking you only to skim part of the Averroes material, and to pass over the Avicenna texts entirely. It's very interesting, and I urge you to read it if you have time, but it involves a lot of technical terminology that I don't want to (and am not entirely able to) get into in depth. The main topic in Chapter 2 below will be the Aristotelian/Arabic doctrine of the intellect(s). On this, read the Alfarabi material carefully. Later on, I will also talk about Avicenna's view on universals (common natures). At that time, I will give you some texts from Avicenna.

### General Bibliography

For full references, see the consolidated bibliography in Volume 2, below.

### Arabic Philosophy

F. C. Copleston, *History of Philosophy*,  
vol. 2, part 1, Ch. 19.

F. C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974),  
Ch. 8. (This volume contains a fuller discussion of Arabic and Jewish philosophy than does his general *History of Philosophy*.)

Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, part 5, Ch. 1.

T. J. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, Edward R. Jones, tr., (New York: Dover Books, 1967). (Originally published 1903.)

`Abdurraḥmān al-ʿIrāqī, *ʿAbd Al-Raḥmān al-ʿIrāqī* (ʿAbd Al-Raḥmān al-ʿIrāqī) Badawi, *Histoire de la philosophie en Islam*, 2 vols. in 1, vol. 1: *Les philosophes thābit al-ʿIrāqī*; vol. 2, *Les philosophes purs*, ("Etudes de philosophie musulmane," vol. 60; Paris: J. Vrin, 1972).

### Jewish Philosophy

F. C. Copleston, *History of Philosophy*,  
vol. 2, part 1, Ch. 20.

F. C. Copleston, A History of Medieval Philosophy, Ch. 9.

Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, part 5, Ch. 2.

Isaac Husik, A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy, (New York: Atheneum, 1969). (Originally published 1916.)

Three Jewish Philosophers: Philo, Saadya Gaon, Jehuda Halevi, (New York: Atheneum, 1969). (Originally New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966. The translation of Saadya (= Saadia) by Alexander Altmann was originally published London: East and West Library, 1946, and is the translation from which the extract in the Hyman and Walsh volume is taken.)

## MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS FROM ARABIC AND JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

### (1) *THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE.*

This will be a major feature of Thomas Aquinas' doctrine in the thirteenth century. It is already present to some degree in Avicenna. The basic idea is that you can understand *what* a thing is without knowing *whether* or not it is (that is, whether there is any such thing). You can define things the existence of which remains in doubt. For Avicenna, this fact implies that the *essence* of a thing (its "quiddity", from Latin *`quidditas'* = "whatness" - the answer to the question *`What is it?'*) is distinct from its existence (if, indeed, it has any existence). Just as, since you can understand what a man is, define him (as a rational animal), without knowing anything about the color of his eyes, it follows that eye-color is an *accidental* feature added onto the essence from outside and really distinct from the essence to which it is added on, so too, since you can understand what a man is without knowing whether there is any such thing, it follows that essence and existence are really distinct too, and that *existence is a kind of accident* superadded to essence. Aquinas will accept most of this, although he won't want to call existence an *accident* exactly. (Sometimes he does anyway, but it is clear that he thinks some distinctions must be made. Existence is certainly *not* for Aquinas an accident like other accidents.) Hyman and Walsh suggest that the distinction between existence and essence is present in Alfarabi, but there is some scholarly dispute over just how much of it is there.

This distinction between essence and existence does not hold in all cases. Avicenna argues that there must exist a being for whom essence and existence are identical. This will, as you might have guessed, be God, who is absolutely simple and has no distinction into parts, is like the neo-Platonic One.

For Avicenna, God is the only being who is necessary through himself. Avicenna distinguishes necessary beings from possible beings, and superimposes on this distinction the distinction between being necessary (or possible) through *oneself* and through *one's cause*. Beings that are merely possible in themselves are those for which essence and existence are distinct. In a word, an ontological argument won't work for them. The only being that is necessary through itself is God, for whom an ontological argument *will* work; the existence of God is built right into the very concept of God, since there is no distinction between the existence of God and *what* he is. (Avicenna, of course, doesn't mention the ontological argument, and he certainly didn't know anything about Anselm; that is just my way of putting it.) Note that the distinction between beings necessary or possible in themselves is a purely logical distinction; it is based purely on what you can and what you cannot get out of a thing's definition.

By contrast, Avicenna wants to say that those beings that are merely possible in themselves must be accounted for in some way. Essence and existence are *distinct* in them, but nevertheless they are not *separated*. They are found *together*, they are *composed* (com + posed =



put together). Now Avicenna thinks that whenever distinct things are found together, some *cause* must have *put* them together. They didn't just get that way by themselves, or by chance. So beings that exist but are merely possible beings require an external cause to bridge the gap between mere possibility and actuality. Such a cause, if it is going to account *fully* for the composition (getting together) of essence and existence in the merely possible being, must *necessitate* or be *causally sufficient* to ensure that the merely possible being actually exists. That is, the being that is only *possible in itself* is made *necessary through its cause*.

There are some things to note and some questions to ask about all of this:

(i) What status does this doctrine give to essences all by themselves? Avicenna talks as if you have two things, an essence and an existence, which you put together somehow to actualize a merely possible being. But how can you put an essence together with an existence if, by hypothesis, the essence doesn't exist to begin with? The answer to this is the peculiar Avicennian view of universals or common natures, to be discussed later on.

(ii) Note how the appeal to *causality* to put things together is a thinly disguised version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. It just won't do to have it be nothing but a brute fact that the essence and the existence are found together; something must have *put them* together. Recall the difficulties with the Principle of Sufficient Reason for anyone who accepts the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation (see Chapter \s3 above). *This* version of it is quite acceptable, and indeed Aquinas *will* accept it. In other words, here is a version of a Principle of Sufficient Reason that is compatible with the doctrine of creation: *Real composition always requires an explanation, a cause*. Of course, since God is simple and there is no real composition in him, there is still room for brute fact and contingency with this version of the Principle. (Avicenna, as you should know by now from your reading, is a necessitarian. For him, "creation" has all the inevitability of neo-Platonic emanation. Nevertheless, contingency is *compatible* with the principle he is employing here.) It works the other way around too. If God is an "uncaused cause", as he is for Aquinas, then he *must* be simple, there must be no composition of any kind in him, since composition always requires a further cause.

(iii) Note finally the close connection between logic and causality on this doctrine. Are we seeing here the seeds of the seventeenth-century Rationalist tendency to link the logical conditional with the causal relation?

Averroes rejected the distinction between essence and existence. He of course agreed that you could know *what* a thing is without knowing *whether* there are any such things, and so he agrees that there is a kind of *mental* distinction that can be drawn. But there is no corresponding *real* distinction on the part of the thing. Recall also how in Eriugena we found the doctrine that we could know *that* God exists, but we cannot know *what* he is. This implies a distinction between essence and existence. In Eriugena, however, it works somewhat differently than it does in Avicenna. For Eriugena, who is squarely neo-Platonic here, to say that God "exists" is just to say that he has a place on the ontological hierarchy. To try to say *what* he is, however, would be to place him at the level of true "being" and intelligibility, where definitions apply. (See Chapter \s4 above.)

Unlike Avicenna, therefore, Eriugena holds that essence and existence must be *distinguished* in the case of God; indeed, they must be distinguished *especially* there. But, for Eriugena this does not mean that there is something called God's existence and something called God's essence and that they are not identical. Rather, for Eriugena God *has* no essence at all, and so it is for *that* reason that we must distinguish. For Eriugena, the reason we cannot know *what*

God is just that he is not a *what* at all; not even God himself can know *what* he is. All this just follows from Eriugena's neo-Platonic putting of God above the realm of Being.

For Avicenna, however, God *is* identical with his essence. Moreover, God does know *what* he is. Yet, despite all this, God retains the utter simplicity of the neo-Platonic One. Hence Avicenna, despite the neo-Platonic elements in his thought, ultimately makes a move much like Augustine's. He identifies God and the neo-Platonic One with that which most truly is a *being*, and therefore puts God at the level of *intelligibility*.

Maimonides (p. 382) may on first hearing sound like Eriugena. We can know *that* God exists, but not *what* he is. Accordingly, the only attributes we can use to describe God's internal metaphysical structure are *negative* attributes. Recall Pseudo-Denis' negative theology (Chapter \s5 above). But in fact Maimonides, like Avicenna, puts God at the level of Being and intelligibility. He indicates (p. 385) that *God* can know *what* he is - implying that God does have an essence. The reason *we* cannot know what God is is not that he is not a *what* at all, as it was for Eriugena, but rather that our intellects are limited and not sufficient to grasp it. Recall Gregory of Nyssa's tampering with the equation "Being equals intelligibility", and how we said that *one* way to interpret it was like what Maimonides is doing here (see Chapter \s6 above). Aquinas will follow Maimonides on this point: God has an essence, only it is not distinct from his existence; *we* cannot know his essence, although he can. Aquinas nevertheless is not satisfied with Maimonides' purely negative attributes when it comes to our knowledge of God.

## (2) DISTINCTION BETWEEN AGENT (MOVING) CAUSE AND EFFICIENT CAUSE

Aristotle distinguished four kinds of cause: the *material* cause, the "stuff" out of which something was produced; the *formal* cause, which gave that "stuff" its form or structure; the *final* cause, which is the purpose or goal to which the thing is ordained; and the *moving or agent* cause, which puts matter and form together for the sake of the purpose or goal. (Note once again the notion that if matter and form are found together, then something must have *put* them together.)

Aristotle's moving or agent cause is one that acts on *already existing* matter - for instance, the sculptor is the agent that acts on the block of stone to produce a statue. He puts the new form into it. Avicenna, however, recognized yet another kind of causality in his system, a kind of causality that was rather like Aristotle's agent causality, except that it does not work on pre-existing stuff - it produces its own materials as it goes along. This is the kind of causality at work in the creation. Avicenna has something *like* the Judaeo-Christian notion of creation, insofar as he admits that the *whole* world except for God was produced by the causal activity of God. (Nevertheless, this is *not* strictly creation, since this production is not a *contingent* one for Avicenna.) Avicenna recognizes that this kind of productive activity requires something other than Aristotle's agent or moving cause, which can account for change of one already existing thing into another thing that comes to exist, but cannot account for the aboriginal production of the whole business. This fifth kind of cause Avicenna calls the "efficient" cause (the "making" cause).

Strictly speaking, then, the agent or moving cause is what Aristotle was talking about, while efficient causality is something different, and is reserved for God's production of the universe. This nice distinction, with its correlative recognition of the limits of Aristotle's agent causality, was soon all mixed up in the Latin West. Aquinas, for instance, while he realizes that Aristotle had nothing quite like creation, does not seem to think that we need to reserve a special term for the peculiar kind of causality involved there. He speaks indiscriminately of the "agent",

the "moving" or the "efficient" cause. In recent times, the term 'efficient' cause has come to be identified with Aristotle's "agent" or "moving" cause.

### (3) UNIVERSAL HYLOMORPHISM AND THE PLURALITY OF FORMS

This doctrine is explicitly argued for in the selections from Ibn Gabirol (Avencibrol) in Hyman and Walsh, but Avicenna also seems to have held it. The basic thesis is that everything besides God is composite; only God is simple. Moreover, every composition is a composition of matter and form, something determinable and something that determines it. Hence, everything besides God is composed of matter and form. (Hence the term 'hylomorphism', literally "matter-form-ism".) Physical objects have a kind of physical or corporeal matter, while spiritual objects, such as angels or the soul, have a "spiritual matter". Recall that we saw the term 'spiritual matter' in Augustine (see Chapter 7 and *Confessions*, XII, 17, 25). We also saw in Augustine the view that only God is immutable, whereas all creatures are changeable. And change of course requires matter. Hence, all creatures have matter. As a result, Avencibrol's hylomorphism, which he got from the Arabs (Avencibrol was a Jew, although the mediaeval Latin's weren't too sure just *who* or *what* he was), fits very nicely with Augustinianism. They both come from a common neo-Platonic heritage. In general, we will see this mixture of Arabic and Augustinian philosophy - what Gilson calls "Avicennizing Augustinism" - throughout the period that follows.

The grounds for this doctrine of universal hylomorphism appear to be the view that the structure of what we say about things mirrors exactly the structure of the things themselves. Thus, if I say 'The cat is black', there is a cat that corresponds to the subject term, and that cat is qualified by the quality "blackness" - at least this is so if what I say is true. Without the blackness, the cat is to some extent indeterminate. It is the addition of blackness that determines the cat to the particular color it has. (Of course, we could have added some other color instead.) In general, then, the relation of subject to predicate in an (affirmative) judgment is the relation of what is relatively indeterminate to what (at least partially) determines it. Now what is indeterminate is called "matter", and what determines it is called "form". (Recall the Greek notion that form is what makes a thing sharp and definite.) Hence everything we can truly say about a thing just reflects the fact that the thing is composed of an indeterminate side and a determining element - that is, of matter plus form. (Incidentally, this view makes it clear why the simplicity of God prevents us from saying anything about him affirmatively. See the Maimonides material, although it is not clear that he would buy hylomorphism whole hog.)

We can of course say lots of things about a given object. We can, for instance, say that "The cat is black", "The cat is fat", "The cat is mean", and so on. The predicates of all these statements (let us assume the statements are true) correspond to properties inhering in the relatively indeterminate nature "cat". Hence we can speak of a "plurality of forms" in the cat.

But the term 'plurality of forms' usually refers to another kind of plurality, one that does not correspond on the linguistic side to the simple attributing of several predicates to the same subject, but rather to a *nesting* of subject and predicate in a *certain order*. We can, for instance, while talking about *the very same cat*, let us call it "Tabby", say "This is a being", "This being is a substance", "This substance is corporeal", "This corporeal substance - that is, this body - is alive", "This living body - that is, this organism - is sensate (has sensation)", "This sensate organism - that is, this animal - is a cat", "This cat is black", and so on. It is clear that each such predication attributes a form to the underlying material, indeterminate subject, and that that subject is in turn a composite of a form and a *deeper*, underlying material subject. The picture we

get then is the picture of some primordial *matter*, corresponding to the bare 'this' in the first predication above ("This is a being"), to which is added a series of forms *one on top of the other* in a certain order, each one limiting and narrowing down the preceding. The structure that results is a *laminated* creature, a metaphysical onion.

Notice why universal hylomorphism and the plurality of forms, in this sense, are so closely linked. They both arise out of the view that reality is accurately mirrored in predication. These two doctrines were so often found together, in the later Middle Ages especially, that they came to be called the "*binarium famosissimum*" (= "the most famous pair"). We now see why.

The doctrine of the plurality of forms should remind you of what we have already seen in Boethius' *Theological Tractates* (Chapter 2 above and Volume 2, Text 3, passage (3) below) and in the School of Chartres, who got it from Boethius (see Chapters 4 and 5 above). Once again, when Arabic and Jewish neo-Platonism made its way into the Latin West, it found there many doctrine that looked familiar, and so mixed with them easily.

#### (4) ETERNITY OF THE WORLD

Most of the Arabic philosophers, following Aristotle or the neo-Platonic tradition, held that the world was eternal. It may have been "created" in the sense that it may have been "efficiently" caused, to use Avicenna's term (see above on the sense in which there is a real doctrine of creation here), but it did not have a beginning. Jewish philosophers, of course, who had the doctrine of creation, argued against this. Look carefully, for instance, at Saadia's four attempts to *prove* the doctrine of creation.

Saadia's Chapter 1 makes it sound as if he is not only going to argue that the entire world, including matter, is dependent on God, and so caused, but also that it was created *with a beginning* - that this causal dependence is not something that is eternal. Ask yourself to what extent Saadia's *first* proof depends on the assumption that the earth is the center of the universe.

Note that his *second* proof is not really an argument for creation with a beginning, despite what he promised us in Ch. 1. The argument shows a kind of causal dependence, but not that this dependence is not eternal. Note also that, despite his use of the term 'artisan', this argument is *not* an argument from design, as its opening lines may suggest. The argument is not that the intricacies of the universe require an intelligent "watchmaker", but simply that when distinct things are found together, something must have put them together. (See above - this theme should be getting pretty familiar by now.)

On the *third* proof, note the peculiar claim that accidents enter into the thing's definition. This is not the usual kind of Aristotelian talk, according to which the accidental features of a thing are just exactly those that are present but do *not* enter into the definition (and are not *implied* by the definition) of the thing.

Compare Saadia's *fourth* argument with Aquinas' third one (Hyman and Walsh, p. 526). Note especially Saadia's reply to the objection, on p. 348. He has a good point.

Here then is the situation. The Aristotelians thought they could *prove* that the world is eternal. Saadia (and, later on, Bonaventure) thought they could prove that the world was produced with a beginning to it - that is, that it was *not* eternal. (Both sides agreed that the world was *produced* and dependent on God.) In the middle falls Maimonides, who argues that you can't prove it either way, and since you can't prove it either way, it is open to the believer to accept the creation story as is - that is, *with* the world's having a beginning. Aquinas will accept this verdict directly from Maimonides.

(5) MAIMONIDES ON TALKING ABOUT GOD

Although the Maimonides text in Hyman and Walsh is on the whole quite lucid, there are some trouble spots. The "primary intelligibles" on p. 373 appear to include two things: (a) what Avicenna calls the "first notions of the intellect", those notions such as "being", which are formed, at least implicitly (whatever that means), by the intellect as soon as it begins to think at all; and (b) what Aristotle calls "first principles", that is, truths that are known as soon as the terms that make them up are understood. For instance, anyone who knows the meaning of 'whole' and 'part' will see *at once* that the whole is greater than the part. The point of this is that it is known *without proof*. There is no *need* to prove first principles, and there is no *possibility* of proving them. Rather, they are the *starting points* for proving *other* things.

The discussion of attributes on pp. 374-375 is just plain confusing. I don't understand it. It gets much clearer when you come to Ch. 52. Note, incidentally, how Maimonides includes the Aristotelian category of "quantity" under his treatment of "quality". Later nominalists, such as Ockham, will try to do the same thing. (Not that they got the idea from Maimonides especially.) On the fourth kind of attribute that Maimonides distinguishes, pp. 377-378, it will perhaps help if you read "proportion" instead of "relation". I think this is basically closer to what Maimonides had in mind. You may find it confusing that Maimonides seems to be saying that both (a) terms can be predicated of God in the fifth class of attributes, that is, by way of causality, and (b) nothing can be truly predicated of God except *negative* attributes. How can these two claims be reconciled? It's actually quite easy. If you are interested in describing God in terms of what he *does*, then you can use attributes from the fifth class and attribute them to God affirmatively. For instance, you can call him "Creator" since he produces creatures. In this kind of talk, you take his "name" from his products. But if you aren't interested so much in this kind of "functional description" of God, that is, if you are not so much interested in what God *does*, but rather want to know what he is *in himself* apart from how he might act in connection with creatures, then the only thing for you to do is to *deny* attributes of him. Incidentally, this is *exactly* the same distinction as Pseudo-Denis' *via affirmativa* and *via negativa*.

## Chapter 44: Translations and the Rise of Universities

Note: It's going to be hard to keep all these names straight. But do it anyway.

### Select Bibliography

F. C. Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, part 1, Chs. 21-22.

F. C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, Ch. 10. (Much of what I say below about the universities comes from here.)

Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, part 6, Chs. 1-2.

Fernand van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, Leonard Johnston, tr., (Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1955).

Bernard G. Dod, "Aristoteles latinus", in *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, Ch. 3, pp. 80-98.

### Translators

See also Chapter \s2 above.

### At Constantinople

James of Venice (Johannes Venetus), translated c. 1128 Aristotle's *Prior and Posterior Analytics* and *Sophistical Refutations*. Abelard at one point notes that he has actually seen a copy of the new translation of the *Sophistical Refutations*. These texts completed the translation of Aristotle's logical works - collectively known as the *Organon* (Greek for "tool"). The newly translated works were called the *logica nova* (\f4=\f4"new logic"), in contrast to the works available before the middle of the twelfth century, including Aristotle's *Categories* and *De interpretatione*, Porphyry's *Isagoge*, and Boethius' commentaries and original works, all of which were collectively known as the *logica vetus* (\f4=\f4"old logic"). (See Chapter \s3 above.) James of Venice's translations were made directly from the Greek. Boethius himself appears to have translated the Aristotelian works that came to be included in the *logica nova*, but his translations were never in wide circulation.

### Sicily

Henricus Aristippus (d. 1162), Archdeacon of Catania, translated Book IV of Aristotle's *On Meteors* directly from Greek into Latin. He also seems to have translated Plato's (NOTE THIS!) *Meno* and *Phaedo* - although I don't know of anyone who ever cited them.

Also at Sicily in the twelfth century, there were translations done of Ptolemy, Euclid, and of Proclus' *Elementaria physica*. All of these were done directly from the Greek.

### Spain

There was a very important school of translators at Toledo, under the direction of Archbishop Raymond (1126-1151, although the school survived him). These very important and famous translators included:

John of Spain (Avendeth, or Avendahuth - accent on the second syllable), who translated Avicenna's *Logic* from Arabic into Latin via Spanish. The Spanish was a vocal link. There were

two people involved here. One would read the Arabic text, translating it aloud at sight into Old Spanish. The other would listen to the Old Spanish and translate it on hearing into Latin. You can imagine what kind of translation this yielded.

Dominic Gundissalinus (Gundisalvi, the old form of "Gonzales"). He translated Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, part of his *Physics*, *De sufficientia*, *De caelo et mundo*, and his *De mundo*. Also Algazel's *Metaphysics* and Alfarabi's *De scientiis*. Together with John of Spain, Gundissalinus translated Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*. All of this was done from Arabic into Latin. Gundissalinus was also the author of some original philosophical works of his own.

Gerard of Cremona, who began work at Toledo in 1134, and died in 1187. He translated Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* together with Themistius' commentary on it. This had already been translated by James of Venice directly from Greek. Gerard also did Aristotle's *Physics* (this too was preceded by a translation directly from Greek), the *De caelo et mundo*, *De generatione et corruptione* (also preceded by a translation from Greek), and his *On Meteors*, Books I-III (see above on Henricus Aristippus at Sicily for Book IV). He also translated Alkindi's *De intellectu*, *De somno et visione*, and *De quinque essentiis*. Also the very important *Liber de causis*, falsely attributed to Aristotle. In fact, this work was a commentary on certain theses extracted from Proclus' *Institutio theologica*. The fact that for a long time people thought this text was genuine Aristotle goes to show how little historical sense they had for Aristotle's thought - *but only at first*. (See below on William of Moerbeke.) All these texts were translated from Arabic into Latin.

Note that, in the case of the Aristotelian texts, these translations from Latin involved quite a long and circuitous route from the original Greek. Recall how, after the closing of the pagan schools at Athens by the Christian Emperor Justinian after the death of Proclus, the Greek pagan scholars fled eastward, to Persia and Syria and that vicinity. (See Chapter 4 above.) Many of the texts of Greek philosophy were then translated into Syriac. Later, during the great period of Arabic culture, they were further translated from Syriac into Arabic. (Some were translated directly from Greek into Arabic, skipping the Syriac link.) Now we see that they are translated once again, from Arabic into Latin, with perhaps in some cases a *vocal* link through Old Spanish. (See above on John of Spain.) It is not hard to guess how the texts fared after all this.

Michael Scot (Scotus), died 1235. A later member of the Toledo school. He did Aristotle's *De caelo et mundo*, *De anima* (there was an earlier translation directly from Greek), *Parva naturalia* (the "Little Naturals" - that is, Aristotle's zoological works), and probably his *Physics*. (That is, probably it was Michael Scot who did *this* version. There was a distinct translation done by Gerard of Cremona.) He also translated Averroes' commentary on the *De caelo et mundo* and on the *De anima* (an *immensely important* commentary). Also Avicenna's compendium of *De animalibus*. All these were done from Arabic into Latin. (See the remarks above on translations of Aristotle's works from the Arabic.)

Either Michael Scot or Gerard of Cremona translated Aristotle's *Metaphysics* from Arabic. There had been an earlier version from the Greek, which then became known as the *Metaphysica vetus* (the "Old Metaphysics"), as opposed to the new translation from the Arabic, which was known as the *Metaphysica nova* (the "New Metaphysics"). This new translation lacked Books K, M and N.

Herman the German (his name also rhymes in Latin: Hermanus Alemannus - died 1272 as bishop of Astorga). He translated Averroes' "middle commentary" on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. (Averroes wrote short commentaries or "epitomes", middle-length commentaries, and full-blown, no-holds-barred commentaries, frequently one of each kind on a given work.) Herman

also translated Averroes' compendium of the *Nichomachean Ethics* and his commentary on the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* of Aristotle. All these were done from Arabic.

#### OTHER IMPORTANT TRANSLATORS

Robert Grosseteste. His name means "fathead". Some people prefer to say it means "Greathead", but they probably also prefer to say that 'Mardi Gras' means "Great Tuesday". Grosseteste was Bishop of Lincoln, and so is often cited in the manuscripts simply as "Lincolnensis". He died in 1253. Grosseteste translated (or saw to it that a translation was done of) Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* in its entirety directly from Greek. This was done c. 1240. Books II and III of the *Ethics* were extant in Latin as early as the twelfth century in another translation from the Greek. (These may actually be translations by Boethius.) Book I was translated already in the early-thirteenth century. Books II-III were called the *Old Ethics* and Book I was called the *New Ethics*. Grosseteste also translated the commentary on the *Ethics* by the Greek author Eustratius of Nicaea. Get his name down! Whenever you see someone described simply as "the Commentator" on Aristotle in a mediaeval text, it is Averroes who is being referred to. Averroes' commentaries were so impressive that he was known simply as "the Commentator", just as Aristotle himself came to be known simply as "the Philosopher". But there was one exception: the *Nichomachean Ethics*, where the "Commentator" was Eustratius of Nicaea, and *not* Averroes. If you ever run across a reference that goes "as the Commentator says on the *Ethics*", that's not Averroes but Eustratius. (Just a little trick of the trade.)

Bartholomew of Messina, mid-thirteenth century, translated Aristotle's *Magna moralia*.

William of Moerbeke (c. 1215-1286). An *extremely* important translator late in the game. Moerbeke reworked existing translations, translated several works all over again, and translated several works for the first time. In all cases, he worked from the Greek, not from the Arabic. His translations are fairly reliable and pretty good. William was an associate of Thomas Aquinas. There is some doubt about whether the two ever actually met, but in any event many of Aquinas' own commentaries on Aristotle were based on William's translations. He translated Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, c. 1260. When this new translation appeared, it usurped the title "*Metaphysica nova*" from the earlier translation by Gerard of Cremona (or Michael Scot, whichever it was). William also translated the *De anima* (see Michael Scot), and the *Politics* (which had not previously been translated). Finally, he translated Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. It was this latter translation that enabled Aquinas to come to the realization that the *Liber de causis* (see Gerard of Cremona) was in fact not by Aristotle. Aquinas was apparently the first person to realize this. For some reason, however, it wasn't until the Renaissance that Lorenzo Valla realized, on the basis of this same work of Proclus, that Pseudo-Denis was not who he purported to be.

Note that Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle did not begin to make themselves felt in the intellectual community (which, for practical purposes, meant the University of Paris) until the 1230s. Avicenna, on the other hand, was influential on the Latins somewhat earlier.

#### UNIVERSITIES

See also Chapter 2 above.

Universities grew out of cathedral schools. An important cathedral school drew students from all over Europe. Such a school became known as a *studium generale*. Some of these *studia generalia* survived and became known as "universities". At first, the term 'universitas' referred to the "entirety" or "universality" of the faculty and students. As the term gradually came to be



used, a "university" was one of these major, international schools that was distinguished from others by its possessing an official charter (granted by the king or by the Church), a set of statutes, and an established form of governing itself.

The University of Paris was the premier university in Europe in the thirteenth century. Its statutes were officially approved by Robert de Courçon, the papal legate, in 1215. The official founding of the University is usually put at this date, although it is clear that the statutes existed earlier. Oxford and Cambridge also date from the early-thirteenth century, although their period of greatest vigor came in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth century. Toulouse was founded in 1229 by papal charter. Salamanca was founded by royal charter in 1200. There were also universities in Italy - indeed, Bologna was the first university in Europe. (Bologna had the peculiarity of being a *student-run* university.)

Universities were divided into "faculties". The four most common ones were the faculties of arts, law, medicine and theology. Most universities had arts faculties, in addition to one or more of the others. The arts faculty was for the basic training of students, before they proceeded to one of the "higher" faculties. Bologna was primarily a law-university. Others were primarily for medicine. Paris had all four faculties. At Paris, theology was considered the highest of the four. You were quite a somebody if you succeeded in getting a doctorate in theology at Paris.

Students started in the University much earlier than is the custom today - around fourteen or fifteen years of age. They studied in the arts faculty for six years. Although this turn in the arts faculty was in theory supposed to ground the student in all the "liberal arts", it in fact was mostly concerned with the arts of grammar and logic - particularly Aristotle, of course. The study of literature had practically disappeared. During this six year stint, a student could become a "bachelor" (the origin of our "bachelor's degree"), which entitled him to perform certain teaching tasks of a menial nature. After his training, he could become a "master", but not before he was twenty. The masters were the teachers in the arts faculty. One who was awarded a master's chair was obliged to teach actively for a period of time (some two years) before he left it to enter one of the "higher" faculties - which he almost always did. There were very few *career*-masters in the faculty of arts. One of the conspicuous exceptions in the fourteenth century was John Buridan, who taught in the arts faculty at Paris for some forty years or so. There was, on the whole, a constant turnover in the teaching staff of the faculty of arts.

After fulfilling his obligations as a Master of Arts, a student could proceed to one of the other faculties. If he went into theology, his training lasted for another eight years, a period which was later made even longer. Four years were spent on the Bible, and another two commenting on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, a standard textbook compiled in the twelfth century, and consisting of a compilation of texts from the Church Fathers (especially Augustine) on various matters. (For Peter, see Chapter 5 above.) After these six years, the student became a "bachelor" of theology (as distinct from a bachelor of arts, of course), lectured for two years on the Bible and another year on the *Sentences*. After another four or five years he could become a master or doctor of theology - if he still had the energy and was not yet in his dotage. All these regulations were of course constantly being changed, but this is enough to give you the general idea.

When the newly translated works of Aristotle first appeared at the University of Paris, it was in the faculty of arts. The works were clearly not law or medicine (some of them might be stretched a bit to count as medicine, but they were not the ones that were influential first), and they were not theology in the traditional sense of "Sacred Doctrine", although of course some of

Aristotle's writings had theological consequences. Some of these consequences were thought to be dangerous and heretical (and they were). So in 1210, a provincial synod at Paris ruled that Aristotle's "natural theology" could not be "read" in the faculty of arts at Paris. To "read" here means to "lecture on", either in public or in private tutorials. It doesn't mean that students and masters couldn't study these works in the privacy of their own chambers. In 1215, when Robert de Courçon approved the statutes of the University of Paris, there was a statute forbidding the arts professors from lecturing on Aristotelian metaphysics and natural science, or "summaries" of them (this probably refers to Avicenna's "compendia" of Aristotle, since it was far too early for Averroes to have been meant). In 1231, Pope Gregory IX ordered that the works prohibited in 1210 not be used until they could be examined by a theological commission to remove any errors. In 1245, Innocent IV extended the prohibitions of 1210 and 1215 to the University of Toulouse. Oxford was never affected by this ban. For that matter, neither was Paris, really. By the 1250s, people were openly lecturing on everything they had of Aristotle's.

Why were these prohibitions issued? In part it was out of a genuine concern for the purity of the faith. Aristotelianism was thought, and rightly so, to be theologically suspect. And remember, people were just getting acquainted with Aristotle. They weren't altogether sure yet just *what* he meant and just *what* the implications were. The Church authorities, and the people in the faculty of theology, didn't want the teenagers in the faculty of arts to get all carried away with this new philosophical pagan - at least not until the theologians had had a chance to think about it a bit for themselves, and to assimilate it.

That's the good part, the genuine concern for the "care of souls". But there was also a great deal of just plain jealousy involved too. A popular arts master who gave exciting lectures on this new philosophical daredevil, Aristotle, was likely to find his wings clipped by the higher-ups in the University hierarchy. Keep the basic ideas of this University structure in mind when we get to the extremely important *Condemnation of 1277* - coming soon to this theater.

## Chapter 45: Aristotelian Epistemology and Its Arabic Developments

Around the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries, the works of Aristotle and the Arabs began to appear in the West in Latin translations, as described in Chapter \s2 above. And with them came a whole new outlook. For the first time, the Latin West was exposed to a technical philosophy. (There were some beginnings of this sort of thing around the time of Abelard, independent of the new translations, but what we are talking about now was something of an altogether different order of magnitude.) For the first time, we get a serious theoretical challenge to what had become the standard Augustinian way of looking at things (tempered here and there with a dose of Pseudo-Denis). At the same time, the universities began to emerge from the old educational institutions. (See Chapter \s2 again.) Henceforth in the Middle Ages, philosophy would be an increasingly *academic* affair, in a way it was not for Augustine or even for Anselm and Abelard.

It cannot be emphasized too much how great a shock the recovery of Aristotle was to the Middle Ages. Recall how the Augustinian tradition basically had a very low opinion of the powers of the unaided human intellect (Chapter \s3 above). It was incapable, by itself, of attaining any knowledge at all worthy of the name. It needed some assistance from outside - by *illumination*. This notion was common doctrine by the twelfth century. And as we have seen when discussing the theory of illumination in Augustine (Chapter \s3 above), it was hard in practice to explain just how illumination differed from revelation. We saw this even as long ago as Justin Martyr (Chapter \s4), with his view that everything true in Plato was stolen from Moses. Put in not quite so crude a form, the standard view was that no knowledge worthy of the name could be had without *faith*. Even Anselm, who thought he could find *necessary reasons* for the truths of the faith, said "Unless I believe, I will not understand".

Into this context came Aristotle, a pagan, who did not have faith. He presented a doctrine in which the human mind was thought of as having much more power in its own right. He had a very high opinion of the unaided intellect. So here for the first time we have a theoretical challenge to the accepted view. And the details of that challenge had been fairly well worked out in Aristotle himself.

But more. Not only did Aristotle present a theory that challenged the accepted one, he also seemed himself to be living proof (well, actually he was dead, but you get the idea) of that theory. In other words, he seemed to have been able, without the aid of faith, and solely on the basis of his unaided intellect, to arrive at some pretty important truths well worthy of the name.

Note: You don't get this problem with Plato in the Middle Ages. You might have thought that people would be worried about the fact that, while Plato's view is more congenial to them, nevertheless Plato thought it up without the aid of faith - he was a pagan too, after all - and how is that possible? The reason you don't get this problem is that the Middle Ages had almost *nothing* of Plato's own writings. Platonism was everywhere, as Gilson says, but Plato was not to be found (with the small exception of the first half or so of the *Timaeus*). The Platonism that was in circulation was already thoroughly mixed with the Church Fathers, with Augustine - in short, with Christian doctrine. It had, so to speak, been "baptized". There was nothing scandalous about it. With Aristotle, on the other hand, you get a whole new batch of *texts from his own hand*, as it were, and this puts the issue into much sharper focus.

Thus we have in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries a crisis of sorts in mediaeval thought. Here is this upstart Aristotle, whose doctrine calls into question the old and venerable views that were commonly held (and remember, there were *good reasons* for holding them - recall the problems the doctrine of illumination was designed to solve). Furthermore, he seemed to be able to support his doctrine, both with his own example and by *rigorous* arguments. What are you going to do about it?

This problem was especially aggravated, because some of Aristotle's positions were outright heresy. Among the most blatant were: (a) the eternity of the world; (b) the claim that the separated substances (which could only be interpreted as God and the angels - what else could they be?) have no concern for the world and in fact don't even *know* about it; (c) the dubious state of the soul in Aristotle (is it immortal or not?). (See Chapters \s5 and \s6 above.) Some people - for example, Bonaventure in the thirteenth century - said that all this just went to *show* that unaided reason wasn't enough to reach the truth. Look what happens!

### Aristotle's Theory

It is this last point that I want to address, by looking at how the Aristotelian theory developed at the hands of Aristotle's successors in the late classical and in the Arab world, up to the time it reappeared in the Latin West along with the Arabic commentaries.

Let's go back and look at Aristotle himself on how the soul knows. The basic passages are from *De anima*, Books II and III, especially Book III, Chs. 4-5. They are translated in Volume 2, Text \s2, below. An excellent and very clear account of the development of the tradition may be found in David Knowles, *The Evolution of Mediaeval Thought*, Ch. 17, part 1. (If you read those pages, you will find out where I learned a lot of what I will be saying below.)

The basic theme of Aristotle's epistemology is this: Understanding is to be thought of after an analogy with sensation. Intellection is like sensation. This is crucial to understanding Aristotle on these matters.

Well, what then happens in sensation? Look at passage (1) in Text \s2. An external, physical individual acts on the sense organ, for instance, on the eye. The organ is an organ of a sense faculty or power of the soul. The object acts on the organ and leaves in the faculty (which uses the organ as a tool -  $\text{ἡ ἐν τῷ ὄργανῳ ἐστὶν ὡς ἐν ὄργανῳ} = \text{'tool' in Greek}$ ) an *impression*.

*Note:* The object acts on the organ, which is part of the *body*, and as a result leaves an impression on the sense *faculty*, which is part of the *soul*. This is already totally non-Augustinian. For Augustine, recall, bodies cannot act on the soul at all. (See Chapter \s3 above.)

Aristotle explicitly uses the *signet-ring* analogy here. We have used it before in connection with the theory of universals (see Chapters \s4 and \s5). This is an analogy that gets used a lot to illustrate all kinds of doctrines.

Now what is this *impression*? In the Latin Middle Ages it was called a *species*, or a *sensible species*. This is *not* to be confused with 'species' as opposed to genus. From the sense of the word 'species' we are talking about now, we get the English word 'specious', meaning "apparent", and referring to the appearance of the thing. (Actually, the word 'species' as opposed to genus is also derived from this more basic sense. But don't let that confuse you.)

Basically, this species or impression on the sense faculty *is* everything involved in the individual - essentially or accidentally - *except for the matter*. The *matter* is "left behind". Consider the seal-ring analogy again. The ring implants an *exact duplicate* of the *formal* structure of itself on the wax, but it does not leave its *matter* there, the gold or the bronze, for

example. If the ring is round, the impression is round. If the ring has serrated edges, the impression has serrated edges. But even though the ring is gold or bronze, the impression is still just wax.

The sensible species is just as *individual* as the original object was. Although matter - so called *prime* matter (that is, *completely* indeterminate stuff - it is a topic of some dispute whether Aristotle himself had anything like prime matter in his doctrine. In my own view, he certainly *should* have had it if he didn't, and in any event his doctrine was frequently interpreted in terms of prime matter, which is enough for us.) - is left behind, the image that remains, the sensible species or impression, keeps all the *detail* of the original. It is an exact duplicate of the individual object that caused it, and of *no other*.

(*Technical note:* There is a sense in which accidents individuate on this view. But this is not the same sense as in Boethius' strongly realist view, or in William of Champeaux's first view - see Chapters \s4 and \s5 above. In those theories there was no real role for matter - that is, *real* matter, not "matter" in the analogical sense of a "material essence".)

Recall how, when we were talking about Abelard (Chapter \s5), I said that the object of thought, whether individual or universal, had a different kind of *existence* than the real objects did. I said that later on that kind of existence or reality would come to be called *esse intentionale* as opposed to *esse reale*. Well, the same thing seems to be going on here, as early as Aristotle.

Every essential or accidental form that exists *really* in the object, exists *mentally*, intentionally, in the sensible species or impression in the sense faculty. Just as, in the real world, all these essential and accidental forms are grounded in, inhere in, prime matter, so too in the intentional world of sense impressions, they all inhere in the sense faculty, which therefore *acts like* prime matter. It is *not* prime matter, of course, but it plays a similar role. The sense faculty then is a kind of *mental analogue* of prime matter.

In this way, then, the sense faculty *becomes* formally its object. That is, it takes on the formal features of its object. Not just *similar* features, but identically the *same* features. What exists in the mental mode in the sense faculty is not just something more or less *similar* to the object that caused it. It is *exactly* that object, just as *individual* and detailed as the external object. If it were not, then it would not be a representation of *that* object, but of another one more or less similar to it.

This is not to say, of course, that when I look out and see a tree, there is a *tree* growing in my visual faculty. Of course not. The difference is one of the *manner of being*. In the external object, all these detailed formal features exist *really* in prime matter. In sensation, identically the same forms exist mentally or *intentionally* in the *sense faculty*.

This approach grounds the *objectivity* of sensation. This is *not* a "representational" theory in the sense that any *inference* is required to get you from your impression to the external object. The species in the sense faculty just *is* the external object - "formally" speaking, of course.

Recall how in Augustine (Chapter \s6) we learned that, in the case of any real and certain knowledge, the object must be present *in person* and not *by proxy*. Aristotle is in effect saying the same thing here about sensation, although he confines it to the formal features of the object. You don't have to *infer* from the fact that your sense *power* is *actualized* in a certain way to the fact that some external object is *acting* on it. See passage (3) in Text \s2.

This is just an application of the general Aristotelian claim that *the cause's causing* is identical with *the effect's being caused*. It is the same process. The fire's heating the water is the very same process as the water's being heated by the fire. So too, the sense *power's* being actualized by some external object is identically the same process as that external object's

actualizing the sense power. No *inference* is involved, and therefore all the traditional "representational" problems of, say, Cartesianism, are neatly sidestepped.

Now let us extract some features from the theory as it has been developed so far.

(1) The sense faculty is totally *passive* to begin with. It is *potentially* its objects - always "formally speaking", of course.

(2) Then it takes on the *sensible species*, and is "reduced, as they say, from potentiality to *act*. Before, it was potentially the object; now it is actually so, just as the sealing-wax to begin with is *potentially* the fully formed seal, and when it takes on the impression it becomes *actually* so.

(3) Here is a general Aristotelian principle: Whenever you have something reduced from *potentiality to actuality* (that is, whenever you have some actualizing process going on), you need a *cause*. In the case of sensation, it is the external object that acts on the sense organ. That is the cause.

Remember the guiding thread that I introduced above: *Intellection is like sensation*. Therefore, analogously, a similar thing must happen in intellectual cognition, in the formation of concepts.

Of course, intellection is *not* sensation; it is only *like* sensation. What is the difference? Here we get an important slogan that people threw around in the Middle Ages: *Sensation is of particulars, but understanding of universals* ("Sensus est particularium, intellectus autem universalium.") Commit that to memory. It will be *very* important.

Just as the *sense* faculty takes on the formal features of the external object - both the essential and the accidental ones - stripped of prime matter, so too the *intellect* takes on, receives, the *universal* form of the same object, and becomes *formally identical* with its object. Identical with its object, note, but not identical with *all* its object. It takes on the universal form, but not all the accidental forms that serve to distinguish this individual object from that one. I leave it as homework to the reader to figure out just what kind of identity relation this is. It is certainly *not* the kind of "identity" that is talked about in first-order logic nowadays. But it is *not* nonsense.

Just as this notion grounded the objectivity of sensation, so too it grounds the objectivity of intellection. There is no basis for skepticism here.

Just as the product of this taking on of forms was called, at the level of sensation, a *sensible species*, so too at the level of concept-formation it is called the *intelligible species*. How then does the intelligible species differ from the sensible species?

Just as the *sensible* species left behind prime matter, but *not* the peculiar and identifying accidents, here the *intelligible* species leaves behind the peculiar and identifying accidents and ends up with only the *universal or essence*.

On all this, see passage (3) in Text \s2 below.

Given this framework, there is an argument that comes in here for the *separability* of mind from body. ("Mind" here is Greek \f9no\i+3d^\-i-3duv. See Chapter \s7 above on the puzzling difference between \f9no\i+3d^\-i-3duv and \f9juq\i+7d^\-i-7dy, mind and soul, in Aristotle.)

Consider sensation - for example, vision. As a *faculty*, it is supposed to be like prime matter, capable of taking on all (visible) forms. Like prime matter, therefore, it cannot then *itself, by nature*, have any of those (visible) forms. If it did, it would no longer be potential and indeterminate like prime matter, but rather determinate and already reduced to act - and so incapable of doing its job. Hence, the visual faculty does not by itself have any visible form. In short, it is invisible. And similarly for the other senses.

Now the intellect, likewise, is capable of knowing *all physical objects*, capable of taking on their forms. (For the purposes of *this* argument, it does not matter whether the intellect is *also* capable of knowing *immaterial* objects.) Thus it acts *like* prime matter in a way, just as the visual faculty did. And like prime matter, it cannot by nature have *any* of these forms that it is able to take on. *Conclusion:* The intellective faculty, or mind, does not *by nature* have any corporeal form. It simply doesn't need any, and in fact could not do its job if it had one. That is why Aristotle says it is not "mixed with the body". See passage (4) in Text \s2.

What we have here is an argument for the *separability* of the intellective faculty. It doesn't need a physical body, which is where you find corporeal forms. And since it doesn't need a physical body, it can survive death - that is, the separation of the soul from the body. See passages (5) and (6) of Text \s2.

There are three problems with this argument - at least problems of *interpretation*, if not outright problems with the doctrine itself:

(1) Does the argument contain a quantifier mistake? That is, does it argue like this: Since for all corporeal forms *F*, the intellective power can do without *F*, therefore, it can do without *all* corporeal forms whatever? (Similarly, I can do without any particular kind of food, since I can substitute another kind to get all my "essential nutrients". But it does not follow that I can do without *all* foods whatever.)

(2) Does it confuse the intentional with the real? To say that the intellective faculty does not need to *be intentionally* what any physical object *is really* is not automatically to say that the intellective faculty need not *be really* what some physical object *is really* - that is, that it need not really be a physical object. Or is it? In other words, if the mind were really a physical object, "mixed with the body", as Aristotle puts it, and so had a corporeal form of its own, would it follow that it *also* had that form in the *intentional* sense of "having a form"? Some such assumption seems to be required if Aristotle's argument is going to work.

(3) Would not exactly the same kind of argument show that *prime matter* likewise "is not mixed with the body", and that therefore prime matter too is *separable* from, could exist apart from, any physical object? But that of course would be definitely non-Aristotelian. *If* Aristotle held a theory of prime matter at all, he certainly did not think it could exist separately, on its own, apart from physical bodies. Prime matter is a distinct metaphysical ingredient, but it only exists in combination with a corporeal substantial form.

Let us just set these problems aside. Perhaps they are really more problems of interpretation than they are real sore points in the theory itself. (Perhaps they aren't.) Instead, I want to turn to two other questions that can be asked of this theory:

(1) If sensation is of particulars or individuals, but understanding is of universals, how is it possible to have any intellectual knowledge of singular things, of individuals? This is an important sticking-point for Aristotelian epistemology. In part it was difficulties over just this question that led to the abandonment of Aristotelian epistemology in the fourteenth century.

(2) How is the intellect reduced from potency to act? What causes the indeterminate matter-like intellect to become to some extent determinate, to take on a form? What is the agent cause here? (Remember from above, we always need an agent whenever we have something reduced from potentiality to actuality.)

In sensation, the agent cause was the physical, external object, which acted on the senses. Recall the signet-ring metaphor again.

The point of the ring metaphor is that each impression leaves the same *individualized* form in different substrates. So we can't just say that it is the same physical object, which acts

like the ring and leaves an impression on the sense faculty, that also acts like a ring and leaves an impression in the same way on the *intellect*. For then the intelligible species would be just as individualized as the sensible species, and there would be no distinction between sensation and intellection.

Hence we need a different agent cause in the case of intellection. Something has to be done to the object's individualized form - the accidents have to be stripped off - to make it *ready* to be impressed on the intellect.

Now it turns out there are really *two functions* to the intellect. The intellect, or that function or part of the intellect, which is *passive and receptive* is called the "possible" intellect or "material" intellect by various later people. But the job of *preparing* the form to be imposed on this possible or material intellect is performed by something else, something called the "agent" intellect. And this is a new ingredient. See passage (7) in Text \s2.

The idea is that *individual* forms, the things that get impressed on the sense faculty, are only *potentially* intelligible, just as colors are only potentially visible until light shines on them. The agent intellect then is the "Light of the Mind". This terminology goes back to Plato's Allegory of the Cave, and his metaphor of the sun, in the *Republic*, and it sounds a bit like Augustinian illumination. It is quite a different theory, of course, despite the terminological similarities. Nevertheless, keep an eye on these terminological resemblances.

On the other hand, material objects are *actually sensible*, and therefore there is no need for a separate *agent sense* to reduce the passive sense-faculty from potentiality to act. The object itself can do that. (The external object may be said to be only "potentially sensible" insofar as, for example, a visible object needs to have light cast on it before it can be actually seen. But the point still stands. We don't need to introduce a new side to the sense faculty itself, an *agent sense*. I should mention here that some later authors in the Middle Ages did in fact speculate about whether this was correct, about whether an agent sense was needed just as much as an agent intellect was. But I don't want to get into their reasoning now.)

Later on in the same passage (passage (7) in Text \s2), Aristotle says that it is mind (*ψυχή*) in *this* sense - that is, the *agent intellect* - that is separable and unmixed, and it alone. *Passive mind*, he says, is corruptible. It dies with the body.

But now we have a problem. What about the *argument* Aristotle just gave us in the previous chapter (*De anima*, III, 4, rather than III, 5 - see passage (4) in Text \s2), that *mind*, by which he there meant *passive* mind, was unmixed and separable?

On the basis of this apparent conflict in the Aristotelian texts, there were two problems inherited by his successors:

(1) Is only the agent intellect, or are both the agent and passive intellect, separable? This was the problem of immortality, or part of it. Just what is it that survives death?

(2) Is the agent intellect *in* the soul, even though it is separable? Or is it something outside the soul, and for that matter something one and the same for all people, just as (to use Aristotle's own metaphor) the light of the sun, which reduces potentially visible objects to actually visible ones, is the one and the same for everyone? (You begin to see at least one reason why some people might think that the cases of the agent intellect and an "agent sense" are not all that different.) This is the problem of *personal* immortality, or part of it. If the only part of my soul that is immortal is one and the same for everyone - or worse, if it was never really *in* my soul at all, but is rather some odd external thing - then I can hardly speak of my own *personal*



immortality. Once again, see Chapter 7 above on the distinction between *no-id* and *juq-id*, mind and soul.

Precisely because Aristotle had so little to say in the end about all this, it became a focal point for a long and involved tradition of interpretation. Let's look at that tradition.

First of all, I must give you the following table for convenient reference:

[illegible]

-.4i\3(not the same)

s table, the terminology is going to get a bit thick.

Let us look first at Themistius, an important fourth-century Greek commentator on Aristotle. Themistius has three kinds of intellects. Or more precisely, he has three terms for what are really two different kinds of things. Themistius distinguishes the active or agent intellect from the material or possible intellect. These correspond to Aristotle's active and passive

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## THEMISTIUS

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Themistius distinguishes the *active* or *agent* intellect from the *material* or *possible* intellect. These correspond to Aristotle's active and passive intellects. He answered question (2) - just before the above table - by saying that *both* are in the soul, and that each person has one of each, his *own* one of each. That is, for Themistius, \f9no\i+3d^\-i-3duv is in \f9juq\i+7d^\-i-7dy, the mind is a part of the soul. And furthermore, we each have our own mind. We don't *share* one. This holds for agent mind as well as for material or possible (Aristotle's passive) mind. Themistius also answered question (1) - just before the table - by saying that *both* are separable. This is going to be essentially Aquinas' position in the thirteenth century. Note that it violates Aristotle's explicit statement (in passage (7) of Text \s2) that *passive mind is corruptible*.

Themistius also talks about something called the "speculative" intellect. This is not a third entity. The "speculative" intellect is just what the *possible* intellect is called after it has been acted on by the active or agent intellect. It is what you end up with after the whole business is completed and we actually have a concept successfully formed and in our thought. (Similarly, remember, for Augustine a "man" was not a different *entity* from a soul. Rather it is just that the soul is *called* a "man" when it satisfies certain conditions. See Chapter \s8 above.)

## ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS

So much for Themistius. Now let's look at Alexander of Aphrodisias, a major Greek commentator on Aristotle from around 200 a.d. He was earlier than Themistius, but I wanted to treat Themistius separately, since Alexander's doctrine begins the more influential tradition. His commentary on the *De anima* was strongly influenced by Platonic and neo-Platonic considerations, so that what you end up with is hardly pure Aristotle.

The main features of Alexander's position are these:

(1) The soul or \f9juq\i+7d^\-i-7dy is the form of the body, and *therefore* is corruptible, like all forms of corporeal objects.

(2) There is a passive intellectual faculty *in* the soul, called the *material* intellect (this was also Themistius' term for it), and there is a distinct one of these for each person. This much is like Themistius. But, unlike Themistius' doctrine, Alexander's has it that the material intellect dies with the body, since it is part of the corruptible soul or \f9juq\i+7d^\-i-7dy.

(3) There is also an *agent intellect* outside the soul, which activates the material intellect, reduces it from potentiality to act. It acts like the light of the sun. This is not at all like Themistius' version of the agent intellect, which was *in* the soul.

(4) The action of the agent intellect on the material intellect results in the "acquired intellect" (*intellectus adeptus*). This is the same notion as Themistius' *speculative* intellect; only the term is different. Is it immortal? Probably not.

(5) There is only one agent intellect. It services all people. Furthermore, and this is something new, *the agent intellect is identical with God*.

It is interesting to go back and compare this doctrine with the Aristotelian texts, to see how the theory fits them, and also to see what Alexander has to add to get a coherent picture.

This kind of theory prevailed in later Greek philosophical circles, and *influenced Augustine*. It was more or less "in the air" in intellectual circles in Augustine's day, even though he himself certainly never read any Alexander. (His Greek was terrible, as he himself admits.)

Notice some of the main features of this doctrine:

First, there is no *personal immortality*. There is nothing unique to a given individual human being that survives his death. Augustine of course won't be able to buy that.

But there is also the theme that the intellectual powers that belong to a person as his own are quite incapable of arriving at any knowledge by themselves. They need help from outside. The human mind needs to be *illuminated* by the agent intellect, which is God. Recall Aristotle's own "light" metaphor. Alexander is here interpreting Aristotle's words in a way that sounds *very* Platonic. (Remember the allegory of the cave.)

This of course should sound suspiciously like the good old doctrine of illumination, as we saw it in Augustine (Chapter 9 above). Let us pause to look at this a bit.

Recall one of the differences between Plato's theory of reminiscence and Augustine's theory of illumination. For Plato - or at least for a strong element in Platonism - human souls were lesser *gods*. And so when they came in contact with the Forms, which were eternal and immutable and so had the characteristics of divinity, they could *under their own power* acquire knowledge of those Forms by acquaintance. There was no unbridgeable difference of rank or station. In Augustine, however, there was a clear gap between creator and created mind. The latter could *never* under its own power acquire knowledge.

Alexander's position fits more closely with Augustine's than with Plato's on this point. There is an important difference between God and everything else. God is the agent intellect, and the only one there is. Every other intellect *requires* the action of the agent intellect in order to know. It cannot know under its own power. And that inability is not just a matter of degree, but a matter of *kind*. Augustine, of course, did not pick up the Aristotelian technicalities and terminology. But the basic idea remains. The unbridgeable gap between creator and created intellect on his view mirrors the unbridgeable gap between the agent and the material intellects for Alexander. The latter can never do the job of the former all by itself.

In this connection, it is curious that Aristotle, who on the whole has a very *strong* opinion of the unaided human intellect, should have been interpreted in a way that makes it impossible for the *unaided* intellect to have any knowledge at all.

Alexander's interpretation was not only indirectly influential on Augustine and his Latin successors. It was also influential on the Arabs. That is why you get something very like an Augustinian doctrine of illumination in Arabic philosophy; they had a common source. It is also why when, in the thirteenth century, the Arabs began to be widely read by the Latins, the Latin

Augustinians could so readily absorb what they read. Gilson has coined the term "Avicennizing Augustinism" for this. But before we get to Avicenna, there is a preliminary episode in our story, namely, Alfarabi (870-950).

## ALFARABI

Alfarabi lived shortly after Eriugena. He enriches and embellishes Alexander's doctrine, but basically stays in the same line of interpretation. Whereas Themistius and Alexander had *three* intellects (or at least three *terms* - the third intellect is just the result of the interaction of the other two), Alfarabi has no fewer than *four* intellects. They are:

(a) The *potential* intellect. This is Alexander's "material" intellect, Themistius' "material" or "possible" intellect, and Aristotle's "passive" intellect. It is *like* matter. Alfarabi uses Aristotle's analogy of the wax (see Hyman and Walsh, p. 215). The potential intellect is *in* the soul, and there is a different one for each person.

In discussing the potential intellect, Alfarabi seems to introduce a distinction we haven't seen yet. There are *two* senses in which the potential intellect for Alfarabi can be said to be potential: (i) in an absolute sense - that is, when it has no forms impressed on it yet at all; (ii) in a relative sense - after it has a form impressed on it, it still remains potential with respect to other forms. This does not by itself *entail*, but it nevertheless *suggests* something I think Alfarabi in any case accepts, namely that the potential intellect can take on *several forms* simultaneously. He talks about this kind of thing when he is working up to the *third* kind of intellect, which I'll discuss in a moment. See Hyman and Walsh, p. 216. (It does not entail this, any more than the fact that a lump of clay that *in fact* has a certain shape is nevertheless still potential with respect to *other* shapes entails that the lump of clay can have *two* shapes at once. It is potential with respect to those other shapes in the sense that it can take them on, but only by *losing* the shape it now has.)

Notice, incidentally, how the doctrine that the potential intellect, which is *like* prime matter, can take on a *plurality of forms* at once, is just the epistemological correlative to the metaphysical doctrine of the *plurality of forms* discussed in Chapter \s2 above. That metaphysical account was a characteristically Platonic/neo-Platonic one.

Notice also that if the potential intellect can take on several forms simultaneously, then the argument for the *separability* of that intellect, why it cannot be "mixed with the body", loses much of its efficacy. (See passage (4) in Text \s3.) We shall see below what Alfarabi has to say about immortality.

(b) When the potential intellect takes on a form (or several forms), it becomes the *actual* intellect. This is Alexander's "acquired" intellect, or Themistius' "speculative" intellect. It is *not* the agent intellect.

(c) Alexander also has something he calls the "acquired" intellect (Hyman and Walsh, pp. 216-217). Although we have seen this *term* in Alexander, Alfarabi's *notion* is one we haven't seen yet. It's pretty strange, so hang on. Let's start by considering the kinds of things that *actually exist* in the world.

(i) There are, first of all, material objects. They can be understood insofar as they have in them individual forms, which, until they are made intelligible by abstraction (the agent intellect), are only *potentially* intelligible.

(ii) So we understand material objects by abstracting their forms. Such a form then becomes an intelligible, not just in potency, but *in act* - that is, it becomes *actually intelligible*.

Hence it is now one of the "actually" existing things of the world, and so I can understand *it* too by a kind of reflex act.

In short, first I understand the form insofar as it comes from matter. Then, I understand it insofar as it is *intelligible in act*.

Now the intelligible form *in act*, that is, as actually understood, is formally identical with the intellect itself - the *actual* intellect, in Alfarabi's sense of the term. (This is just good old Aristotelianism. The knower is the known. See Chapter §4 above.) Thus when the intellect understands the forms in the second of the two ways just distinguished, it in fact *understands itself*. See Hyman and Walsh, p. 216.

When it does this, it becomes what Alfarabi calls the "acquired intellect". But this is *not* the "acquired intellect" in Alexander's sense of the term. Alfarabi seems to say that this comes about only *after* the intellect gets *all* the forms in actuality. That is, the acquired intellect for Alfarabi is the intellect that has reached a complete and thorough understanding of the material world.

All of this sounds pretty strange, to be sure. Nevertheless, you may be surprised to learn, it does have an authentically Aristotelian text to back it up. See passage (8) in Text §3 below. Whatever that text meant to Aristotle, this is what happened to it at Alfarabi's hands. Alfarabi wasn't just making it up out of whole cloth.

It is the *acquired intellect*, in this sense, that for Alfarabi is *immortal*. With the acquired intellect, we begin to understand things insofar as they are *separated* from matter. This is the lowest degree of such understanding of immaterial things. As we shall see, there is a kind of neo-Platonic hierarchy here.

(d) Finally, there is the *agent intellect*. This is separated from matter, as it is for Alexander. And, again in agreement with Alexander, it is one and the same for all people. But, in contrast with Alexander's doctrine, for Alfarabi the agent intellect *is not God*.

Here is where the neo-Platonism that gets mixed up into later Aristotelianism becomes quite plain. The neo-Platonic One is identified with Allah or God. It contemplates itself and produces an *intellect*, which is the first *emanation*. This intellect is the *First Intelligence*, which acts as a final cause of the motion of the outermost, all-encompassing celestial sphere.

This First Intelligence in turn produces a *Second Intelligence*, which moves (as final cause) the sphere of the fixed stars.

And so on. Just exactly how many stages there are in this process is an *astronomical* question, but here is the basic idea. The First Intelligence is the final cause of the motion of the outermost sphere. The Second Intelligence is the final cause of the motion of the sphere of the fixed stars. In the same way, we have a Third Intelligence going with the sphere of Saturn, a Fourth with the sphere of Jupiter, a Fifth with the sphere of Mars, a Sixth with the sphere of the Sun, a Seventh with Venus, an Eighth with Mercury, a Ninth with the moon, and the Tenth and last Intelligence, which is the final cause of motion down here in the so called *sublunary* world.

The *sublunary* world is the world *below* the moon in the astronomy of the time. In other words, it is *our* world, down here on earth. It is the world of generation and corruption. The celestial spheres are subject to local motion, but not to generation or corruption. The *Tenth Intelligence* is the final cause of the generation and corruption in this sublunary realm. It is the *cause* of the succession of forms that come and go here. Hence, Avicenna later on would call it the "*Dator Formarum*" - the "Giver of Forms". (Actually, he called it something in Arabic, which was then *translated* as "Dator Formarum".)

Now why do we need all these stages? Well, there is of course a general neo-Platonic difficulty with seeing how to get plurality out of unity. Lots of people felt that there was something conceptually wrong with doing this in one step. You cannot do it directly. Plurality has to be far removed from the *direct* activity of the One. Of course, Judaeo-Christian doctrine will have none of this. God acts *directly* on his creation. There is no need for these intermediary intelligences - at least not for this kind of job.

The details of all this are obscure, and need not detain us. But there is one other very important point to notice. This Tenth Intelligence, which Avicenna will later on call the "Dator Formarum", is *also the agent intellect* for Alfarabi. In short, the Tenth Intelligence not only puts forms into matter, it also puts them into minds, into potential intellects. What it does on the physical level with generation and corruption it does also on the epistemological level too.

Here are two things to notice about Alfarabi's theory:

(1) There is *one* agent intellect for all people. It is the Dator Formarum or the Tenth Intelligence. It is *not* God.

(2) Alfarabi's view allows personal immortality in a rather unusual form, via the acquired intellect. But notice that the theory does not *guarantee* personal immortality. If you don't spend your life getting all those forms into your intellect, you won't make it.

## AVICENNA

Moving right along, after Alfarabi we come to Avicenna (980-1037). He was about twenty years older than Peter Damian. Anselm was four years old when Avicenna died.

Avicenna was arguably the greatest of all the Arab philosophers, and for that matter one of the greatest philosophers of all time. In his interpretation of Aristotelian psychology, however, he depended almost entirely on Alfarabi. Basically, his schema is the same as Alfarabi's, with the following changes:

(1) Alfarabi's potential intellect is called the "material" intellect, following the earlier terminology of Alexander and Themistius.

(2) Alfarabi's *actual intellect* is called the *intellect in effectum*. I'm not sure whether this is really a difference or not - even a terminological one, since I've not yet seen the Latin text of Alfarabi on this point. This peculiar use of the phrase *in effectum* to mean "actual" or "in act", as opposed to "in potency", is a characteristic Arabism. When you see it in Latin texts, you know that some Arabic influence is operating behind the scenes.

(3) Avicenna has nothing like Alfarabi's acquired intellect.

(4) He does, however, have an intellect *in habitu*. That is to account for "habitual knowledge", knowledge in the sense in which I can be said to know Latin even when I am asleep and not actually exercising that knowledge. Alfarabi has nothing like this. Aristotle of course has the notion of habitual knowledge, but he doesn't reserve a special kind of *intellect* for it. I am not sure how Avicenna relates this intellect to the others.

(5) Avicenna also has something called the "given" intellect (*intellectus accommodatus*), which is the material intellect *as receiving* the form. Again, I am not clear how this differs from the intellect *in effectum* except perhaps insofar as a process differs from its result.

Let us now look at some problems with this "Alfarabic-Avicennian" theory:

(a) On this view, how is it that *we* have to *work* to acquire knowledge? Why not just sit back and wait on the agent intellect to do its job? Recall that we had *exactly* the same problem with Augustinian illumination (Chapter 5 above).

Alfarabi tries to answer this (Hyman and Walsh, p. 220, toward the bottom of the page). He says that the matter (that is, the potential intellect) must be "prepared" and "impediments" must be removed. He's right, of course. We *do* have to work hard to prepare our minds to know. But this is not much of an *explanation* of that need. Avicenna also talks like this.

(b) The agent intellect does not *act* on impressed forms received from external physical objects in sensation (the sensible species). It does not do something to *them* (to wit, make them abstract and universal) and then impress the result on the potential intellect. In other words, the form the agent intellect impresses on the potential intellect is not one it originally got (before "doing something" to it) from the activity of the external, physical object. Rather, *it takes it from its own store*. That is why is a "Dator Formarum".

In short, the whole tone of this view has changed. We started off with Aristotle, for whom all our knowledge comes ultimately from the senses, and for whom the agent intellect operates on the sensible species acquired from external objects, makes them abstract and then impresses them on the passive intellect. Now the whole thing is turned around. *No* intellectual knowledge comes from the senses. It is all implanted by the agent intellect, which got it from its own store of forms. The agent intellect did not *have* its own store of forms for Aristotle. It was not a warehouse but a processing plant. The whole job of the agent intellect has been radically altered.

What has happened is that Aristotelian texts and Aristotelian terminology have been used to come up with a doctrine that is a virtual duplicate, in more technical terminology, of Augustinian illumination. The only thing that's been added is the hierarchy of intermediary emanations.

## AVERROES

Finally, let us look at Averroes (1126-1198). Averroes (pronounced Uh-VAIR-oh-ease) lived in Moorish - that is, Islamic - Spain, at least for part of his life, whereas Avicenna and the others lived in the Eastern part of Islam.

Averroes was the last of the great Islamic philosophers in the Middle Ages. And, unlike his predecessors, he was a *strict* Aristotelian, or at least he wanted to be. He wanted to *purify* Aristotle from the Platonic and neo-Platonic elements that had come to be associated with it.

Averroes wrote a number of commentaries on Aristotle. These commentaries became so well known in the Latin West that Averroes was referred to simply as "the Commentator". (What is the one exception? See Chapter \s6 above.)

Averroes thought things had got out of hand. Aristotle's psychology had got just totally turned around by Avicenna and his predecessors.

Averroes argues that, since Aristotle in some places says that the passive intellect is separable from the body and capable of surviving death, and in other passages seems to deny this, obviously he must have had distinct things in mind!

For Averroes, there is indeed an agent intellect and a passive intellect, which he calls the *material* or *possible* intellect (using Themistius' terms). They are distinct from one another, as Aristotle had argued. But *neither* of them is in the soul as one of its faculties. The soul is the form of the body, and like all bodily forms, is destroyed when the body *of which* it is the form is destroyed. Thus, the soul is not immortal - as a whole, or in any part. The agent and material or possible intellects, therefore, since they survive the death of the body, were *never* forms of the body or parts of that form. They are separated all along.

Furthermore, Averroes thinks that the agent intellect and the material or possible intellect are both *one for all men*. It is not that I have my own separated agent and material intellects, and you have yours. We both have the same agent intellect, and we both have the same material or possible intellect, which is distinct from the agent intellect. I do not know his argument for this.

Furthermore, when Aristotle talks about a *passive* intellect that *is* part of the soul and corruptible with the body, he is not talking about the agent or material (possible) intellect. Instead, he is talking about the *imagination*, the faculty of storing up and presenting sensible species or phantasms. (Imagination here is not just the *fancy* - it is a combination of that and *sensory memory*.) This faculty is intimately tied up with sensation. I can imagine in the *visual* mode - that is, I can picture to myself things I have seen or things I have made up. Similarly, I can imagine *aurally*, run through a tune in my head. And, since it is so intimately tied up with sensation, and so with the physical organs of sensation, the faculty of imagination dies or is destroyed when those organs die.

Hence, we have a *new* intellect with Averroes. He calls it the "passive intellect". It is identical with imagination. It is the *only* thing in the entire psychological apparatus that is *personal* and *private*. I have my imagination or passive intellect and you have yours - they are distinct. Just as our bodies are distinct, so too our passive intellects. But the passive intellect is also corruptible. Therefore, there is *no personal immortality* for Averroes. The only thing personal here is *not* immortal.

What is the connection between the separated agent and material intellects and the individual knower? Aristotle had held that human knowledge *always* requires the presence of a *sense image*, a phantasm or sensible species. (See *De anima* III, 7, 431a14-17.) For Aristotle, knowledge is *derived* from these sensible species.

This is so not only for our originally acquiring a concept, but also whenever we *use* a concept already acquired. There is always some sense image or other that accompanies our thoughts, and from which we *read off* the abstract concept. Just as geometers use figures, so too here. This is so even when we are dealing with things of which no sensible representation will be adequate or accurate - for instance, the separated substances or geometrically perfect circles.

Now Averroes thinks that the agent and material intellects, which are separated, come into contact with the soul only through the *phantasms* (images). He realizes the radically non-Aristotelian element in Avicenna's claim that the agent intellect has its own store of concepts. He rejects that view entirely.

For Averroes, the agent intellect has no forms of its own. It takes as its materials, *not* any forms from its own store, but the phantasms. It acts on *them*, abstracting the universal concept and implanting it in the separated possible intellect.

The *materials* worked on here are private and personal. They are my own personal sense images (sensible species). The *processing plant*, however, and the material intellect, where the results are ultimately sent, are common and public, and separated from me. The only connection with me is this very tenuous one: they are *my* sense images that are being worked on.

The weak spot in this theory is of course the exact nature of the connection between the separated intellects and the imagination. Averroes never works this out very well, and some Latin authors, especially Aquinas, will hit him hard on this very point.



## Chapter 46:

### Preview of Coming Attractions

From this point on, we are going to adopt a somewhat more thematic and less chronological approach. Several of the thirteenth and early-fourteenth century authors will be discussed as a unit. For continuity, I recommend you to the secondary sources you have no doubt been studying carefully hitherto. Copleston's *History of Philosophy*, vols. 2 and 3 are quite good here.

Please read as much of the following material as soon as you can. We will be skipping around a bit henceforth.

Bonaventure: Hyman and Walsh, pp. 456-469.

Aquinas: Read all of *On Being and Essence*, and Hyman and Walsh, pp. 523-558.

Read the Hyman and Walsh section on the Condemnation of 1277. In Text \s2 in Volume 2, below, I give you the texts of the propositions not listed in Hyman and Walsh. Read all that too.

Duns Scotus\i+3d: Read Text \s3 in Volume 2, below. This is the same as section 5 of John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, Allan Wolter, ed., in the Library of Liberal Arts Series. But that volume is now out of print, so I retranslated the text myself. In the Hyman and Walsh volume, read pp. 624-639. (The first part of this passage is an extract from Scotus' *Opus Oxoniense*, Book II, d. 3, qq. 1-6, on the problem of individuation. I have translated some other passages of the same series of questions as Text \s4 in Volume 2, below. A *complete* translation of these questions may be found in John Duns Scotus, *Six Questions on Individuation from the Oxford Lectures, Book II, Distinction 3*, Allan Wolter, tr. This translation is available through the Translation Clearing House, Department of Philosophy, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. (The Clearing House's "Catalog reference number" for this translation is S-20-25w.)

William of Ockham: In Hyman and Walsh, read pp. 649-692. If you can find a copy, you might also want to read sections 1-5 and section 7 of William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*, Philotheus Boehner, ed., in the Library of Liberal Arts Series. But, like the Scotus volume in that series, this one is out of print, so you may not be able to find it. Some of the material in the Boehner volume is reproduced in Hyman and Walsh, but not all of it. When we talk about Ockham, I shall occasionally give page references to Boehner, just in case you locate a copy.

The Adams and Kretzmann volume on Ockham will come toward the end of this survey. At that time I will also ask you to read the section on Nicholas of Autrecourt in Hyman and Walsh.

Here are some of the topics we will be discussing in the following chapters:

The later history of the doctrine of illumination.

The problem of universals in Avicenna, Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham.

Aquinas' rejection of the twin doctrines of universal hylomorphism and the plurality of forms. (See Chapter \s5 above.) His doctrine of *esse*.

The distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition in Scotus, Ockham and other folks.

## Chapter 47: The Early Thirteenth Century

What happened to Aristotelian/Arabic epistemology when it came into the Latin West? At first, it was the neo-Platonic version via Alfarabi and Avicenna (see Chapter \s2 above) that was most influential. Averroes was translated and circulated somewhat later, and took longer to be assimilated, since it did not fit so well with the standard Augustinian complex of doctrines.

Dominic Gundissalinus (accent on the penultimate syllable, rhymes with "Don't come between us."): Late-twelfth century translator of the Toledo group. (See Chapter \s3 above.) He also wrote some works on his own. He was strongly influenced by Boethius' *Theological Tractates*, as well as by the texts he himself was translating - especially by Avencibrol's (Ibn Gabirol's) *Fons vitae* (\f4=\f4"Fountain of Life"). Basically, he accepted *universal hylomorphism and the plurality of forms*, from Avencibrol. He also accepted Avicenna's and Alfarabi's account of so called Aristotelian epistemology. But, of course, he had to get rid of their neo-Platonic intermediaries between God (the One) and the sublunary world. Gundissalinus therefore argues *against* the Avicennian dictum: *From the One inasmuch as it is One, there proceeds only what is One*. Gundissalinus argues that this would be no "procession" or production at all. If the direct product of the One's emanation is so one, simple and unique, it differs in no respect from the One itself, and so just *is* the One itself, and there has not really been any production after all. Gundissalinus argues that, quite the contrary, if the One is going to produce anything at all, it *has* to produce a plurality. He works it out as follows. The *direct* products of God's creation are universal matter and universal form. From these everything else is constituted. Note how we are suddenly in the framework of Avencibrol. Since Gundissalinus denied the Avicennian hierarchy of intelligences, he identified the agent intellect with God. We are right back with Augustinian illumination, and right back to Alexander of Aphrodisias. (Gundissalinus perhaps knew of Alexander's work, but he was writing in the immediate context of Avicenna.) Gundissalinus, unlike Alexander, wants the material intellect to be immortal. This kind of doctrine was also held by *William of Auvergne* (c. 1180-1249), Archbishop of Paris. William is an important but little studied figure in the early-thirteenth century.

Albert the Great (1206-1280). One of the first Dominican philosophers. (The Dominican order was founded in the thirteenth century.) Albert was one of the teachers of Thomas Aquinas. By this time Averroism was beginning to influence people. Latin philosophers were growing more and more able to distinguish authentic Aristotelianism from the neo-Platonic accretions with which it was delivered to them. Albert agrees with Averroes, against Avicenna and Alfarabi, on the relation of the agent to the possible or material intellect. The agent intellect is not a warehouse of forms. It has no forms of its own. Both the agent and the possible intellects are independent of matter. But, unlike Averroes' doctrine, both are inside the soul - faculties of the soul - and are accordingly "multiplied according to the number of individuals". (You'll see this kind of phrase a lot. It just means that there are as many of them as there are individuals.) Each person has his own agent intellect and his own possible intellect. The agent intellect is a kind of *natural light* - recall Aristotle's light imagery and Descartes' own "light of nature". This natural light of the agent intellect illuminates the phantasms, abstracts the universal from them, and implants it in the possible intellect. It is a *natural* faculty in the sense that it is part of the

nature of the soul to do this. Yet Albert thinks it is *insufficient* to do this all by itself. It needs some additional help - a kind of *super*-natural assistance, a kind of grace. This was a common view, namely, that even with the human agent intellect, there is also needed a kind of Augustinian illumination by God as, so to speak, a "super-agent intellect".

Some people later on - for example, Peter of Spain, who wrote a very influential textbook of logic, and who later became Pope John XXI and was Pope during the Condemnation of 1277 - will adopt a view roughly like Albert's, adding that it is only the human agent intellect that is immortal, not the passive intellect. Roger Bacon (ca. 1214-ca. 1292) also held a view like Peter's. Peter of Spain departed from the "Standard Albertine" view also to the extent that the *separated* agent intellect was not God. He was more Avicennian about it. [*Note for the lore and gossip section of this survey*: Peter of Spain, as I just said, later became Pope John XXI. The story has it that this is how he died. As Pope, he had the papal apartments remodeled. After the work was completed, he retired to his new quarters one evening and was minding his own business when the roof collapsed on him and crushed him to death.]

Aquinas and Duns Scotus later on will argue that the individual human agent intellect is sufficient to explain all the knowledge we ever get anyway. There is no need, they think, to appeal to any kind of supernatural assistance. This doctrine can be found as early as John de la Rochelle (d. 1245).

## Chapter 48:

### Chronology of Late Mediaeval Philosophy

On the next page is a diagram sketching the chronology of some of the main figures of late mediaeval philosophy. Be warned that some of the dates given are only approximations. Where things get especially uncertain, I have used dotted lines instead of solid ones. Note also that the people listed are only a few among many.

1464

\*\*\* FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (1453), when with a crash of cymbals and a flourish of trumpets, the Middle Ages officially drew to a close.

c. 1180

Wm. of Auvergne chapter 14

1249

N of chapter 14

Autrecourt chapter 14

chapter 14

THE BLACK DEATH

(1349 at Oxford)

cians and scientists.

1251 Peter chapter 14

1251 Auriol chapter 14

1251 Albert the chapter 14

1251 Great chapter 14

1280

c. 1214

R chapter 14

o chapter 14

g chapter 14

e chapter 14

r chapter 14

c. 1292

1251 Aquinas chapter 14

1251 Sparta chapter 14

Ockham chapter 14

Figure 1: Chronology of Late Mediaeval Philosophy

## Chapter 49:

### Bonaventure and the Augustinian "Complex"

In the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries, a number of traditional themes came together into what Gilson calls a "doctrinal complex". These are themes or doctrines that at first don't seem to have anything to do with one another, but nevertheless in fact always seem to be found together, from the thirteenth century on, in various forms. They are all broadly speaking Platonic/Augustinian. But they come from various sources: from Augustine himself, from Boethius, Anselm, Avicenna, Avencibrol, and so on.

Saint Bonaventure (1221-1274) is a good example for this thirteenth century doctrinal complex. He represents the most important statement of the conservative Augustinian cause against the new Aristotelianism. (But he was by no means a mindless reactionary. He definitely *knew his Aristotle*, and was a pretty sharp thinker in his own right.) The main elements of the doctrinal complex, all of which are present in Bonaventure, are these:

- (1) Universalhylomorphism. See Chapter \s2 above.
- (2) Plurality of forms. See *ibid*.

Both of these doctrines are associated with Avencibrol. They were found together so often that they came to be called the *binarium famosissimum* (see Chapter \s2 again). They are also probably present in Avicenna. See Chapter \s2 yet once again for the conceptual underpinnings and connections between these two seemingly independent doctrines. We've already, in effect, seen the doctrine of plurality of forms in Clarenbald of Arras, William of Champeaux's first theory, and in Boethius' strong realism of the *De trinitate*. (Chapters \s3 and \s4 above.) Recall that in all these manifestations, the role of matter was never mentioned. If you now *add* matter (that is, literally "matter" and not some metaphorical "material essence" as in William of Champeaux's first view) to this traditional doctrine, you get the *binarium*. Hence the theory from the Arabs and Avencibrol fits naturally into the received tradition.

- (3) Realism on the question of universals.
- (4) An ontological/ethical doctrine of truth. This doctrine comes from Augustine but is first formulated systematically by Anselm in his *De veritate* (which we have not previously discussed). The idea is that truth is a rectitude or rightness perceivable by the mind. And "rightness" means doing what you ought. In this sense we say that sentences are "true" when they are "right" - that is, when they say what they ought, say what is the case. But more. *Actions* are true too, if they are what they ought to be. An evil action is a kind of *lie*, since by doing the action we are implicitly saying that it *ought* to be done. Similarly, *things* are true if they are what they ought to be. In this sense, we speak of a true coin, a true friend, and so on. A counterfeit coin or a treacherous friend is a kind of lie. Some of this notion of truth is present in Bonaventure's doctrine of illumination.
- (5) Illumination. This, of course, comes from Augustine, but by now it is getting more technical through the Arabic developments.

In addition to the above points of common doctrine, which Bonaventure shares with a number of other people all of whom hold more or less the same "doctrinal complex", there are also some personal features of Bonaventure's thought that you should know about.

(a) Recall Chapter \s5 above. The *basic* difference between Plato and Aristotle was that Aristotle was interested in what was true, whether it was important or not, whereas Plato was interested in what is important (I won't say, "whether it is true or not"). Bonaventure is strictly Platonic on this point. He is not interested in just anything that happens to be true; that is nothing

more than vain curiosity. Rather he is interested only in what is *important* - and in his context that means: what contributes to salvation. See the first of the Bonaventure texts in Hyman and Walsh, from his *Conferences on the Hexaemeron* ("Hexaemeron" = "Work of the Six Days", the six days of creation). There Bonaventure talks about the proper subordination of philosophy, the theological summas, and even the works of the Church Fathers ("the originals") to Scripture.

(b) Bonaventure thinks that Aristotle went seriously wrong. His basic error was in rejecting Platonic "exemplarism" - that is, the Platonic Forms. (Bonaventure, of course, did not know the writings of Plato directly. He thinks that Plato's Forms are divine ideas.) In the second Bonaventure text in Hyman and Walsh, he runs through the errors he thinks follow from this central and primary one (p. 460):

(i) There is no providence, no foreknowledge, and therefore we are resigned to fatalism. If there are no ideas in God, then he can hardly have any knowledge, much less concern, for us. Bonaventure is right. There is no providence, no foreknowledge in Aristotle.

(ii) The eternity of the world. It is harder to see how this follows. I think the basic reasoning is this: If the world is not eternal, then it began at some moment. For that you need a creator, to *plan* the creation at that moment, and for that you need in turn *divine ideas*. (If the world were there all along, you don't need any creator or planner, acting for the sake of an end, to account for it. This step of course needs some work.) Again Bonaventure is right about Aristotle. Aristotle's eternal world has no divine creator, and hence needs no *plan*.

Note that Bonaventure thought he could prove *philosophically* that the world had a beginning. Aquinas later on argued - following Maimonides - that you could *neither* prove philosophically that the world *was* eternal, as Aristotle thought you could, *nor* prove that it *wasn't*, as Bonaventure thought you could. For Aquinas, the question is philosophically undecidable, although theologically, of course, it was quite clear.

(iii) The unity of the intellect (in the Arabic sense of that phrase - the intellect is one for all people) or else the transmigration of souls. Actually, what Bonaventure means is not quite this. What I think he means is that it follows that there is no *personal* immortality (or at least not for everyone). *Proof*: If the world is eternal (see (ii) above), then the succession of human generations requires an infinite number of men up to now. (Remember, for Aristotle there was no evolution. The species we now have are the same ones that have been around all along.) Now there is an important Aristotelian principle: It is impossible to have an actually infinite multitude existing all together at the same time. Of course, you may say, the infinite number of men required if the world is eternal do *not* all exist at the same time, but rather in succession. Nevertheless, the soul or mind (or at least part of it) is, according to Aristotle, separable from the body and immortal. Therefore, if *each* man has his own immortal soul or mind, then there is *now* an infinite multitude of them actually existing. And that is false, on the basis of Aristotle's dictum about infinities. Therefore, it is false that each man has his *own* immortal soul or mind. Either there is *one* for everyone, or in any case there must be *some* doubling up and sharing - transmigration, for instance. (Incidentally, this seems to me to be a valid extrapolation from legitimate Aristotelian doctrine. If you are an Aristotelian, you had better decide what you are going to do about this.)

(iv) Therefore, there is no *personal* reward or punishment in an afterlife - or at least not for everyone. This follows from (iii), insofar as there is no *personal* afterlife at all for everyone.

(c) Note Bonaventure's fondness for symbolism and numerical prestidigitation - for instance, in his "Retracing the Arts". (See Hyman and Walsh.) This kind of thing pervades his work, and is indeed rather mild in the "Retracing". The main point of this work begins in section

8 of it, Hyman and Walsh p. 464. Bonaventure is claiming that we find the truths of theology symbolically present in all the arts. They all "lead us back" ("reduce", in the etymological sense) to theology. This is all part of Bonaventure's exemplarism. The divine ideas, the patterns in the Godhead, are not only the archetypes in some metaphysical sense, but in a deep and pervasive symbolic sense also.

## Chapter 50:

### The Condemnation of 1277

I'm not sure just how to work this in, so I'm going to put it here. Please read Hyman and Walsh's introductory remarks on pp. 582-584. In Text \s2 in Volume 2, below, I give you a translation of those propositions not included in the Hyman and Walsh selection. Together, that will give you the complete text. Not all of the propositions are of equal importance for our purposes - or of equal intelligibility, for that matter. But do look at the complete list, to get some idea of the nature and extent of the condemnation. The condemnation was *not* a minor event. I regard it as something of a watershed in the history of philosophy. For a long time afterward, people would refer to the "articles condemned at Paris".

A very important secondary source on the condemnation is Roland Hissette, *Enqu\et e sur les 219 articles condemn\i+3d3\-\i-3des \i+3d\i+3d\-\i-3da Paris le 7 Mars 1277*, (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1977). Note: Published for the 700th anniversary.

This volume examines all the propositions condemned, tries to figure out what they really meant, who held them, what they were taken to mean, and whether they were really of dubious orthodoxy.

Look at some of the doctrines that were under attack. Proposition #10, for instance, had been maintained by Maimonides, who was certainly respected. But it was also maintained by Aquinas, who was regarded as rather daring on the whole, and had also been held by Eriugena, who was regarded as outright heretical. Why should this proposition be condemned? Perhaps what is being condemned is the view that nothing can be known about God - in this life or in the next, or perhaps nothing can be known about God even by God himself, except.\f4, and so on. Propositions #13 and #15 are straight Aristotle. Proposition #20 refers to Greek and Arab necessitarianism. Propositions #28 and #34 are versions of Avicenna's dictum. Some of the Thomist propositions included in the list are marked by Hyman and Walsh with an `A'. The Condemnation was not an unqualified triumph of the old-line Augustinians over the new-fangled Aristotelians. See, for instance propositions #123, which condemns a characteristically Augustinian doctrine, and seems to side with the Aristotelians.

One of the main consequences of the condemnation was a very strong reemphasis on divine omnipotence. (Recall how this was connected with the doctrine of creation. See Chapter \s3 above. In effect, the condemnation was a reaffirmation of the traditional notion of creation, purifying it of Greek and Arab elements that compromised it.) God's power, for instance, is not limited by Aristotelian natures - that is, by the laws of Aristotelian physical theory. See proposition #17. This gives a certain impetus to the *denial* of Aristotelian natures altogether - and was perhaps partly responsible for the popularity of nominalism among some people in the fourteenth century. (The conceptual connections here, however, would have to be examined *very* closely.)

Look at the extremely important proposition #69. A "secondary cause" is any cause other than God. (God is the primary cause, of course, whose causal power is operative even in the causal activity of lesser causes.) A denial of the condemned proposition #69 amounts to the claim that if any cause *C* can produce an effect *E*, then God can produce *E* all by himself - without resorting to *C*. If billiard ball *A* rolls across the table and strike billiard ball *B*, causing the latter to roll over to the other side of the table, God could - if he wanted to - caused billiard ball *B* to move over there directly, without resorting to billiard ball *A* at all. All he would have had to do is say, "\i+3dB\i+3d, get over there!", and off it goes. Billiard ball *A* is entirely extra.



This claim leads to marvelous epistemological problems. Normally, we want to say that the species intelligibilis or concept in the mind is caused, at least in part, by the object conceived. For that matter, so is the *species sensibilis*. Our sensory and intellectual knowledge of the world is caused in part by the world itself. But then, given the denial of proposition #69 (these propositions are *condemned*, remember), it follows that God could all by himself produce that *same* knowledge in us even if *there were no external world*. Once people began to realize this, the obvious question was: If God *can* do this, *how do we know he doesn't*? In short, how can we be sure of the existence of the external world?

This problem was all of a piece with the problems the Augustinians were having in the late thirteenth century over just what illumination was and how it worked. Matthew of Aquasparta, in his works on knowledge from around 1270 or so, says in the end that we can only know the existence of the external world *by faith*. Illumination, which for him guaranteed this knowledge, was a *theological* doctrine for Matthew; we could only be sure of illumination - and therefore of what illumination was supposed to guarantee - by faith. Henry of Ghent, in his *Summa*, starts off by asking as his very first question, whether man can have *any knowledge at all*. The entire fourteenth century discussion of "intuitive cognition" and the problem of "intuitive cognition of non-existents" was a spinning out of the implications of the condemnation of proposition #69. (We will be discussing some of these matters below.) The emphasis on knowledge, so characteristic of "modern" philosophy from Descartes on, in fact had its beginnings in the thirteenth century. The condemnation was partly a cause and partly a symptom of this. So don't believe all that propaganda about how Descartes - or even Kant - began the "epistemological" or "critical" turn in modern philosophy. Bunk!

Chapter 51:  
The Later History of the Theory of Illumination:  
Bonaventure, Aquasparta, and Olivi

Bonaventure

The most important figure here is Bonaventure (see Chapters \s2. \s3 and above). Bonaventure accepts the basic Augustinian line on illumination:

- (1) Truth or knowledge worthy of the name is necessary and immutable.
- (2) There is nothing of this sort - necessary and immutable - in the sensible world. We cannot therefore get truth worthy of the name from the senses.

Hence everything that is known with certitude is known *in the light of* the eternal reasons (that is, the divine ideas). We *need* this "light", in order to know the truth. (See Chapter \s5 above.)

These reasons or divine ideas are God himself, and are therefore immutable. Not even the human mind is stable enough to base this certain knowledge. Once again, we have the basic Augustinian line here: You can't build solid structures on shaky foundations.

Now we all know that "illumination" is a metaphor. Bonaventure wants to get behind the metaphorical talk to some extent, and to see what is really going on. He considers three interpretations of what might be happening in illumination. See the passage in Volume 2, Text \s6, below. (1) The first interpretation is this: The "evidence" of the eternal light (that is, the contribution of the divine ideas) is the *sole and entire* reason for our knowing. That is, besides our minds and the "eternal reasons", as he calls them, nothing else is needed or does any good.

On this view, the eternal reasons are both the objects known and the "light" by which they are known. They are, so to speak, the sources of the very light by which we see them. (In this respect, they are like the sun.)

But this won't work, Bonaventure says. If that is what is involved in knowing with certainty, then certain knowledge in this life is identical with the Beatific Vision, the vision of God face to face that is supposed to be reserved for the blessed in the next life.

We saw this problem when we looked at the theory of illumination in Augustine (Chapter \s5 above). How do we keep the knowledge of mathematics, for instance, from turning into the Beatific Vision - the ultimate end and goal of mankind? Bonaventure spins out the implications in some detail. We would have no knowledge of things, except "in the Word" - that is, except insofar as we see their exemplars in the divine mind. Hence:

- (a) Knowledge in this life would not differ from knowledge in the next.
- (b) Knowledge in the Word would not differ from knowledge in its own genus. That is to say, knowledge of a thing gained by looking at the *thing* would not differ from knowledge gained by looking at its exemplar in the divine mind. (In effect, what this consequence means is that the normal cases of knowledge are assimilated to the extraordinary cases.)
- (c) *Scientific* knowledge would not differ from the knowledge that is *wisdom*. (This is explained more fully by (d) and (e).)
- (d) Knowledge acquired by nature would no longer be distinct from knowledge acquired by grace.
- (e) Knowledge acquired by reason would no longer be distinct from knowledge acquired by revelation.

Consequence (d) refers to a basic Augustinian distinction that can be made somewhat more precise in an Aristotelian framework, the distinction between nature and grace. Some powers and perfections a creature has by nature - they are built in, so to speak - or else are such that they *follow* from its nature. Even accidents a thing may be said to have "by nature". For although they are not built into the nature, and do not follow necessarily from the nature, still the power or ability to take them on is something natural. On the other hand, the creature may or may not have yet *further* powers and perfections. These would be *supernatural*, "gratuitous" gifts - in a word, "graces".

The basic problem with the first interpretation of illumination, then, is that it makes *all* knowledge supernatural. Under its own power - that is, naturally - the mind can know nothing at all - and does not even contribute to what knowledge it does have.

On this interpretation, it no longer makes any sense to define man as a rational animal. His rationality is not part of his nature or essence. It is a supernatural gift - a grace. This is the Augustinian low opinion of the human mind pushed to an extreme. Bonaventure recognizes that it is too much. It destroys distinctions we want to continue to be able to draw. Hence he considers a second interpretation:

(2) On the first interpretation, the divine ideas were both the object of knowledge and the source of "light" by which we *see* that object - just as when you look at the sun or at a light bulb. On the second interpretation, the divine ideas are no longer the object known, but they are still the source of the light in which other things are seen - just as we read a newspaper in the light of the sun or of the bulb. This interpretation avoids turning all knowledge into the Beatific Vision, and yet preserves the need for this extra light, this outside help.

Many people think this is the proper way to interpret Augustine himself. For example, Copleston does (see Chapter 5 above). But Bonaventure says not. First, he thinks you have to contort the texts to get them to say this. (*Note:* This is an argument from authority; but it is followed at once in the text by an argument from reason. You will find this kind of pairing quite often in the mediaeval texts, and you should get sensitive to it.)

But furthermore, on this interpretation, what role would this extra light play? To give it a name, Bonaventure calls it an "influence" - literally, a "flowing in" or "influx". Perhaps "concurrence" would do just as well. In any case, what kind of concurrence of influence from the divine ideas is involved on this second interpretation?

(a) Is it nothing more than a case of the general influence or concurrence of God to all his creatures? For example, God is the prime mover, and therefore his influence is present and concurs in every action of every creature. Is *that* all we mean? Is the "influence" we are talking about in illumination nothing more than God's general cooperation with nature?

Presumably not. We are trying to explain how our natural cognitive powers are *insufficient* to gain knowledge under their own *natural* powers, and require something more. But if the influence or concurrence we appeal to is of this very general kind, then it's the same kind of influence that is operative whenever a dog wags its tail, or whenever fire burns or water wets, or rocks fall. But all those are natural events - they can all be accounted for by *natural* powers. So too, then, on this interpretation our natural cognitive powers *are* sufficient after all to get us knowledge. There is no sense in which we have gone beyond nature on this interpretation. All we've done is to observe that nature cannot work without the general cooperation of God. That's true, no doubt, but it's not what we want.

This, incidentally, is *exactly* the way Aquinas and Scotus will interpret the doctrine of illumination. For them, that's all it amounts to. For Aquinas, see *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 84, a. 5 (Hyman and Walsh, pp. 550-551.) We will talk about Scotus in a little while.

(b) Well, if (a) won't work, then is the "influence" we are talking about a *special* influence or concurrence, one that goes *beyond* nature? It looks like it. But then it is supernatural, a grace. And there is no difference between science and wisdom, reason and revelation - although there *is* on this alternative a difference between knowledge in this life and the Beatific Vision. So we have made *some* progress over interpretation (1) above. But we still have the problem of how the infidel or reprobate can have any knowledge at all. We seem to have destroyed distinctions we are trying to preserve.

(3) As a result of what he regards as unacceptable consequences on views (1) and (2), Bonaventure adopts a third interpretation of illumination, a kind of middle ground. For Bonaventure, the "influence" or concurrence of the divine ideas is neither general nor special, but something in between. And just what is that?

Well, unfortunately, the Bonaventurian school never completely solved this problem. Here is how Bonaventure himself tried it:

The divine ideas are the source of the light in virtue of which we see. (Which is a fancy way of saying that we *need* them somehow.) In this he agrees with both view (1) and view (2). But they are also objects seen. They play both a *ruling* and a *moving* (motive) role. That is to say, they are not only the "rules" *in* the light of which we know, they not only *guide* the mind, as the second view holds. They are also *objects seen*, objects *of* knowledge, objects that *move* the intellect, prompt it, get it going. In this Bonaventure agrees with view (1) against view (2). So he avoids the special problem with view (2). We are not just talking about some kind of "influence".

But he also avoids the problem with view (1), because for Bonaventure the divine idea is not the *only* object seen or known in an act of knowledge. It is not only "intuited", as an object of intellectual intuition, it is "contuited". (See his use of that term in Text \s6, line 48, below.) That is, it is seen *together* with a *created ratio*, a creaturely concept or intelligible species. There are thus *two* things before the mind's eye in any instance of certain knowledge: the creaturely intelligible species, which the natural faculties of man are sufficient to produce, and the divine idea. Both are required for certitude. Our own natural powers are not sufficient for knowledge, but they definitely have a positive role to play.

On the other hand, the divine idea does not appear in full clarity. We see it in this life "only in part", as Bonaventure says. This is a reference to I Cor. 13\i+3d:\i+3d12. The "obscurity" of our vision of the divine ideas in ordinary knowledge in this life is in part what prevents this view from obliterating the distinction between ordinary knowledge and the Beatific Vision reserved for the blessed in the next life. (The other part, of course, is the role of the created *ratio*.) In that next life, as St. Paul says, we will see those ideas "face to face". But not here.

Now that's basically all Bonaventure says. He avoids the problems with the first two views. There is no danger of turning natural knowledge into the Beatific Vision. Furthermore, our natural powers *are* required for knowledge. They have a real role to play. But they are not enough.

The difficulty with Bonaventure's position is just that it is hard to see in what sense there are *two* objects before the mind's eye in instances of certain knowledge, a created species or ordinary, garden-variety concept, and in addition an uncreated *ratio* (a divine idea). Just exactly what does that add? How does it help? How does it make things any more certain? This is never very well worked out in the Bonaventurian tradition.

Again, even though there is no danger any more of turning natural knowledge into the Beatific Vision, it still seems that we need something supernatural, some "grace", to have any certain knowledge at all. So, once again, how can the reprobate do mathematics?

## MATTHEW OF AQUASPARTA

The Bonaventurian school wrestled with these problems. One Matthew of Aquasparta, for instance, worked on it. He lived from 1234 or 1240 or thereabouts until 1302. (He is *not* a minor figure. He's a moderately major figure. But I don't know a whole lot about him, so I won't say very much.) Aquasparta was a disciple of Bonaventure, and wrote in the 1270s. The relevant text for our purposes is from his *Ten Disputed Questions on Knowledge*, q. 2. A translation of the complete text of this question may be found in McKeon, *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, vol. 2. I'll just give you a mere summary here.

Like Bonaventure, Aquasparta wanted to find a kind of middle ground. He lays out Bonaventure's line of reasoning. He rejects the view that would preserve the "way of wisdom" by doing away with the "way of science" (that is, unaided human knowledge, by our own natural powers). This is Bonaventure's view (1); Aquasparta attributes it to Plato. He also wants to reject the view of those who would preserve the way of science but do away with the way of wisdom. This was the second view Bonaventure considered, the "influence" view, where the influence is nothing more than the *general* concurrence of God with his creation. Aquasparta attributes this view to Aristotle and his "followers" - by which he means Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas did in fact say something like this (Hyman and Walsh, pp. 550-551. For Aquinas, it is true to say that we "participate" in the uncreated light, which is God. But for Aquinas all that is just a fancy way of saying that we have agent intellects. Nothing more. The agent intellect is a kind of human participation in the uncreated, divine "light". But it is also entirely *natural*; it is very much built into our natures as rational animals. So Aquasparta is not distorting Aquinas here.

Aquasparta did *not*, so far as I can see, solve the problem any more satisfactorily than Bonaventure did. He is still forced into something like Bonaventure's "more special, yet not special" influence.

## JOHN PETER OLIVI

Finally, I want to refer you to John Peter Olivi (the French call him Olieu), who died in 1298. He was a Frenchman. (One of the few Frenchmen of even minor philosophical significance during this period. Curiously, although the University of Paris was the hottest intellectual institution in all Europe in the thirteenth century, almost none of the important people associated with the University of Paris were native Frenchman. They were all imports. Albert the Great was a German, Aquinas and Bonaventure were Italians. And when Duns Scotus came to Paris for a while at the very end of the century, he was of course from across the Channel. And so on. It is interesting to speculate on what factors might be responsible for this. Certainly it does not stay true. In the fourteenth century, for instance, the Frenchman John Buridan dominated the University of Paris - and for that matter much of intellectual Europe - for a long time.)

In any case, Olivi saw the difficulties the Augustinians were getting themselves into here. Basically, they wanted to say that our *natural powers* were not only insufficient for *super-natural* knowledge, but also insufficient even for *natural* knowledge. That is, our natural powers are insufficient even for the knowledge we get through our natural powers alone. No wonder they were having problems making sense of this! Olivi's response to this (see the end of Text \s6) was to say in effect, "I don't know how illumination works. But I believe in it because Augustine and other people I respect said so." It is small wonder then, if this is what people were being pushed to, that the doctrine soon disappeared - or at least went underground. (Remember Descartes' "light of nature" and Malebranche's "occasionalism".)

But before we abandon the theory of illumination entirely, let us look at what Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus had to say on the matter.

## NOTE TO Chapter \s0

1. I have found through classroom experience that, by presenting only this one, odd text of Olivi's, I sometimes leave the impression that he was something of a dim bulb, one who preferred a simple, pious loyalty to his intellectual heritage over the rigors of hard thinking. But that's emphatically false! Although Olivi did say the words I quote in Text \s6 (or rather their Latin equivalents), he also said a great deal more, and actually had worked out a view of his own about illumination. For a sketch of it, see Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 692-693, n. 40.

## Chapter 52:

### Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus on Illumination

Please read Volume 2, Text \s2, below. This passage is from Scotus' *Ordinatio*, Book I, distinction 3, question 4. The *Ordinatio* is Scotus' Oxford commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. This is not the same as Scotus' Paris commentary. (He commented on the Sentences more than once.) The Oxford commentary is revised by Scotus' own hand for publication. That's what the word '*ordinatio*' means in this context. Publication in this case, of course, meant sending it off to the scribes to be copied out by hand. The printing press was still quite a long way off.

Given our discussion in Chapter \s3, we ought now to be in a position to understand what Scotus' question is about (Text \s2, lines 1-4):

. . . whether any certain and pure truth can be *naturally* known by the understanding of [someone] *in this life* without a *special* illumination from the *uncreated* light?

I have italicized the key words in this statement of the question. The term 'special illumination' refers to Bonaventure's distinction between general and special influences. (See Chapter \s3.) The phrase 'certain and pure truth' translates the Latin '*certa et sincera veritas*'. '*Certa*' (*f4=f4*"certain") is a word with Arabic overtones. The Latin translations of the Arabs frequently spoke of the 'certitude' of a thing. This is literally "certitude" or "certainty", but it would be quite wrong to think of it in a predominately epistemological sense. The "certitude" of a thing was its fixity, its definiteness - in short, its essence or nature. We still retain traces of this usage in English when we speak of a "certain person". We *don't* mean "one who has made up his mind". Rather we mean a fixed or definite person. In the present context, 'certain truth' does not mean truth we can be sure of, but rather *a fixed or definite or immutable* truth. (The word '*sincera*', on the other hand, is of Augustinian lineage.)

Now, after setting out the preliminary arguments (we have the *quaestio*-form here - see, for example, Chapter \s4 above), Scotus reviews the opinion of one Henry of Ghent. Henry of Ghent was an important philosopher. Much of Scotus' doctrine is set in the context of what Henry had to say. Henry was a "secular" master (that is, he was not one of the "regular" clergy - see Chapter \s5 above), and taught at the University of Paris from 1276 to 1292. (Once again, a non-Frenchman.) Scotus' summary of Henry's view is quite a fair account of it, so we don't have to look at Henry's text separately, at least not for present purposes. Here is how Henry's view went:

Recall how Augustine had said that the term 'man' signified only the *soul*, but with a kind of oblique reference to its governing and ruling a *body* (Chapter \s6 above). So too, Henry thinks, with the terms 'being' and 'true'. They are what had come to be known as *transcendental* terms. That is, they have the broadest possible application, and are truly predicable of everything whatever. Hence, they cut across all the Aristotelian categories, "transcend" them in this sense. If there were such a thing as a super-genus, including all the categories, these terms would belong there. The theory of the "transcendentals" was part of the common coin of the philosophical realm by Henry's day, although of course different people would be likely to develop the theory in different ways. 'Being', of course, is a transcendental term, but most people also included 'true', 'good', 'one', and perhaps some others. Note that, in view of our discussion of Augustine and the neo-Platonists, the "equivalence" of 'being', 'one', and 'good' is by no means something to be taken for granted. The development of this peculiar theory of the transcendentals is part of

the Augustinian heritage of the Middle Ages. Just how you fit 'true' into the picture is not obvious at first. Here is how Henry does it.

'True', Henry says, is predicated of exactly the same things as 'being' is. But 'true' in addition makes a kind of oblique reference to the thing's conformity to an exemplar (lines 60-61), just as for Augustine 'man' makes a kind of oblique reference to the *body* that the soul governs and rules. This "conformity to an exemplar" is connected with the ontological/ethical notion of truth, part of the Augustinian "complex". (See Chapter 7 above.) It goes back at least to Anselm, if not before.

In a sense, what Henry has is a kind of "correspondence"-theory of truth. But it is broader than what we usually mean by that phrase. We usually have in mind the correspondence between our thoughts or our judgments or sentences and some external reality or fact. Here, however, we have *any* kind of correspondence between a thing and its exemplar. The particular case in which we have a correspondence between our *thoughts* or *statements* and a reality they are supposed to be patterned after is just that - a particular case.

Now it is possible in theory to know *the true* (that is, *what* is true, the thing that is true because it conforms to an exemplar), without knowing *its truth* (that is, without knowing its conformity, or knowing *that* it conforms, to an exemplar).

Henry thinks this is not just possible in theory. It is also obvious in practice, if we just consider the acts of the mind. In concept formation, for instance - what Henry calls "simple apprehension" (the terminology here is quite standard - simple apprehension is "simple" as opposed to what happens when we put concepts together into judgments, or "complexes") - it is possible for us to grasp *what* is true, the thing that is true. But *its truth* is grasped only in *judgment*, only when we *compare*. And of course we can form concepts without making judgments with them. (Lines 63-67.)

Now the intellect, Henry thinks, can know or understand *the true* - that is, *what* is true - by simple apprehension, by its *unaided natural powers* (lines 68-70). But those powers are *not* enough for knowing *its truth* - that is, its *certain and pure truth* (recall Scotus' formulation of his question), infallible and unshakeable truth.

Truth, we said, is conformity to an exemplar. But there are two kinds of exemplars involved in knowledge (lines 78-84):

(a) The *created* exemplar. That is, the concept in our mind, caused (at least in part) by the external thing. It is this that we form by simple apprehension. The conformity of the object to *this* exemplar is *one* kind of truth. Let us call it "first truth". (*Note*: This is *not* conformity to a *judgment*. *Note also*: Why doesn't it go the other way? Why doesn't Henry think of the *concept* as conforming to an exemplary *reality*? That would seem more natural. Then we would speak of the *concept* as being true or false according as it does or does not succeed in conforming to its object. As it stands, it is the *object* that is said to be true or not insofar as it does or does not conform to our *concept* of it. I do not know the explanation for this.)

(b) The *uncreated* exemplar. That is, the divine idea. Conformity to this amounts to another kind of truth. Let us call this one "second truth". (Since *every* real object is patterned after some divine idea or other, it seems to follow therefore that *every* object is a true something or other - by "second truth". The terminology of "first" and "second truth" is mine, not Henry's.)

Hence the picture we get is this:

DIVINE IDEA

↓

chapter 25



Why do we need the third side of this triangle - illumination? Well, Henry thinks, we can at least know first truth (and not just the true - see above) by our unaided powers. We can, in other words, tell whether an object conforms to our concept of it all by ourselves. But our unaided powers are not enough to give us an infallible truth - a certain and pure truth. (Here is the familiar Augustinian exalted notion of truth.) Why not? There are three reasons:

(a) (lines 97-101). The created and therefore mutable object cannot cause an immutable and unshakable concept (exemplar). But we can only be *certain* that something is true in virtue of some *immutable* reason. In short, the mutable cannot cause the immutable.

(b) (lines 105-110). The soul itself is creaturely and mutable. We forget, change our minds, and so on. And the *concept* is even more flimsy than the soul itself. Therefore, the concept, the created exemplar, cannot *correct* the mind, cannot provide a basis for firm knowledge and unshakable truth.

(c) (lines 113-118). The created exemplar (the concept) is not by itself enough to enable us to distinguish real truth from mere appearance. I'm not entirely confident I understand this point. It seems to imply that the truth we *can* get through the created exemplar (first truth) is merely *phenomenal truth* ("such and such *appears* to me"). This sounds rather weaker than what we were led to believe earlier, when we were told that our unaided minds were sufficient to grasp the conformity of the object to our concept of it. Henry gives the example of *dreams*. In short, he seems now to be saying that by our unaided powers we can only be sure that it *appears* that *x* is white, but not that *x is* white.

For all the difficulties involved here, you begin to see how epistemological and skeptical problems were starting to worry people at this time. This is the sort of thing that led to the Cartesian and Kantian emphasis on knowledge. (See Chapter \s8 above.)

For these three reasons, therefore, Henry thinks that infallible knowledge requires a different exemplar - the *uncreated* exemplar, the divine idea (lines 126-131). How does it work? Well, let's see.

Contrary to Bonaventure, Henry does *not* think that we see the divine exemplar as an object. We do not catch a direct glimpse (even an obscure one) of the divine ideas in this life. Rather we see objects *in the light of* the divine exemplars, as we see things in the reflected light of the sun (lines 132-147). This of course is just the second view that Bonaventure considered. For Henry, the "influence" involved here is not just a case of the *general* cooperation of God with his creation; it is a *special* influence, supernatural. It is an "actualizing light" - that is, it triggers the mind, turns it on. It is an "altering species" - that is, it shapes the created exemplar in our mind. It is a "configuring stamp" - a kind of epistemological branding iron. (I must admit, the last one is a little mysterious. The allusion of course is to the familiar seal-ring metaphor.)

For *perfect* knowledge, both the created and the uncreated exemplars are needed.

Now Scotus does not say so in his report of Henry's view, but in fact Henry goes on to claim that this light is *open to all*, but is not given to us as a *right*. If it were not open to all, then we get problems about how infidels can have knowledge. For Henry, this light has nothing to do

with *merit*. But neither do we have any *right* to demand it. It is not ours *by nature*; we have no claim to it. The fact that God distributes his illumination equally to all (or if not exactly *equally*, at least we all get *some* of it) is not a matter of nature. It just turns out that this is the way God wants to do it.

If you push it, of course, this might seem to lead straight to skepticism. If we don't have any kind of right to this illumination, if it is not ours by nature, then how can we ever be sure we are getting it at any given moment?

I am by no means an expert on Henry of Ghent, so there are many aspects of this theory I am not quite sure how to interpret. Nevertheless, insofar as I understand it, the real difficulties with the theory arise over Henry's reasons (a)-(c) why we need the uncreated exemplar. If we ignore Henry's actual reasons (a)-(c) for a moment, I think we can motivate the rest of the theory by thinking of it like this:

Consider how we do science. We gather information about how, for instance, balls behave when they roll across a billiard table. We observe how gases behave when compressed in various ways. And so on. No doubt we observe all this and store that information away in the various concepts produced by those observations, the "created exemplars" as Henry says. And, just as Henry says, we are quite capable, by our own natural powers, of checking all this and making dead sure that the objects conform to our concepts, that we have accurately pictured the facts of the matter.

But that's not the whole story. In order to do serious science, in order to discover the scientific *laws* that govern the behavior of these objects, we must do something else. We have to *idealize*. The laws that govern the physical world are laws that appeal to things like perfectly elastic bodies, frictionless surfaces, ideal gases. The actual billiard balls we observe are only *approximations* of those perfectly elastic bodies, the billiard table is not quite a frictionless surface, and the gases we compress don't really measure up to the behavior of ideal gases. Nevertheless, it really *is* true that the best way to understand the behavior of those *real* physical objects is to view them "in the light of" *other* things that they are *not* - namely, idealized, "perfect" versions of themselves. We never get to observe any of those perfectly elastic bodies, frictionless surfaces or ideal gases, of course. We don't even get a "glimpse" of them. And yet the whole of physical nature *refers* to them, *appeals* to them. Everything we really observe is just crying out to be viewed against the background of those ideal objects we don't really observe. And we don't really understand what we do observe, we don't know the laws that govern it, until we come to think in those terms. Those unseen ideal objects serve as an "actualizing light"; they trigger our mind to see the relevant patterns. They are "altering species"; the concept of the billiard ball itself is somehow altered once I come to think of the ball as an *approximation* of a perfectly elastic body. (I confess I don't know quite what to do here with Henry's third phrase, 'configuring stamp'.)

Now of course Henry of Ghent was not thinking in terms of ideal gases and frictionless surfaces. People just didn't do science in this idealized way in his day. But nevertheless, I think his theory of illumination can be viewed in very much the same terms. We can of course record the *facts* we observe in the world around us, and we can check and double-check to make sure those facts conform to the ideas we have of them. In short, we can get at the so called "first truth". But we don't *really* understand those facts, we don't really understand the immutable laws that govern them, we can't get at "second truth", until we come to understand the *patterns* in accordance with which these facts are fashioned - and that of course is a matter involving the divine Ideas. (Remember Bonaventure's fondness for number symbolism, and his view that

theological truths are found reflected in all the *arts*? We are now in a position to see how this kind of symbolism has a theoretical basis, and is not necessarily just a matter of arbitrariness and "anything goes" caprice. If the whole world is patterned after the divine Ideas, this kind of thing is just what we ought to expect.)

If this interpretation is not entirely off the mark, then perhaps the best way to interpret Henry's three reasons - (a)-(c) above - why we need an *uncreated* exemplar for certain and pure truth is along these lines. Where Henry talks about "immutability" and "unshakable" concepts, let us just read 'lawlike'. (This still leaves reason (c), however, which I continue to find puzzling.)

Notice that, on this interpretation, the skepticism that I said might seem to be threatening, once Henry said that illumination was not something we have by right or by nature, is really not a threat at all. Our human nature does not *guarantee* that everyone will have the peculiar ability to see the ideal patterns behind the far-from-ideal realities around us. But so what? That's no basis for skepticism, any more than the fact that not everyone is a talented scientist is a basis for skepticism.

On this interpretation, the reasons Henry himself actually gives for why illumination is necessary are rather off the mark. He speaks of immutability and unshakable certainty. But, as we have come to view it, all that is really involved is *lawlikeness*.

In any case, it is on the basis of exactly the three reasons Henry gives - (a)-(c) - that Duns Scotus questions Henry's theory, and finds it wanting. On the basis of the reasons Henry actually gives, Scotus thinks, illumination does not *guarantee* our natural knowledge; on the contrary, it in effect makes it *impossible*.

If the *created* exemplar is insufficient for knowledge, illumination from an *uncreated* exemplar is not going to help one bit - at least not if problems (a)-(c) are the ones we're concerned about.

*Ad (a):* (Lines 178-185) With respect to Henry's reason (a) above, if the object is so mutable, because it's a creature, then the unchanging light is not going to stop it; it's *still* a creature. There can simply *be* no "certitude" about such an object. It is not "certain". (See above on this term.) In fact, Scotus thinks there *is* enough stability in things to provide certainty, contrary to Henry. There is a *common nature* that provides *limits* to change (see Chapter \s9 above, on Aristotle). But of course this means that, contrary to Henry, the *created* exemplar is enough after all to give us certainty. We don't need any divine illumination to give us a concept of that common nature; it's out there to be observed in the object itself.

*Ad (b):* (Lines 186-197) With respect to Henry's reason (b), if the *created* exemplar and the soul are so changeable, then *nothing* in the soul is going to rectify this: ". . . since whatever is put in the soul as in a subject is mutable, even the very act of understanding, it follows that *nothing* in the soul corrects the soul so that it not fall into error."

Henry speaks of the *concurrence* of the created and the uncreated exemplar. But something changeable plus something unchangeable yields a sum that is changeable. That is, *mutability is contagious*. If any *part* of a whole is changeable, then the whole itself is changeable. How then can the divine idea in any sense concur with our changeable mind to yield an unchangeable result?

Notice that, as long as Henry continues to speak in terms of *mutability*, Scotus appears to have him. Not even a divine influence is going to make a mutable creature immutable. Mutability is *the mark of a creature*; immutability is reserved for God alone. This applies to creaturely minds as well as to creaturely concepts and creaturely knowledge. On the

interpretation I have suggested above, what we really need here is not *mutability*, but *lawlikeness*. Scotus has not said anything that addresses *this* point.

*Ad (c)*: With respect to Henry's reason (c), Scotus says (lines 198-203):

. . . if the species abstracted from the thing concurs in every knowledge, and [if] it cannot be judged when it represents itself as itself and when [it represents] itself as the object, therefore, whatever else concurs, no certitude can be had through which the true might be distinguished from the apparently true.

In short, Scotus thinks all Henry's reasons simply aren't going to work. On the contrary, he thinks it is possible to have quite *natural* certitude. That is, we don't need any special illumination in order to be certain of our facts. In particular, we can have this natural certitude in four kinds of cases (lines 256-260):

(1) In the case of *self-evident* propositions and the conclusions drawn from them by strict logic. 'Self-evident' (literally, "known through themselves") should here be taken in the Aristotelian sense: such truths can be known to be true by anyone who has the requisite concepts. (That is not to say that everyone *does* have the requisite concepts. 'Self-evident' does not imply "universally agreed upon", but it does imply that no one "*dis*-agrees".) For instance, whoever has the concept of a whole and the concept of a part sees at once that the whole is greater than the part. We don't need any special illumination for this, Scotus thinks. (Lines 286-363.)

(2) "Experiential" knowledge of *general* truths. Scotus gives a curious and, in my opinion, ultimately unsatisfactory discussion of something like the Principle of Induction. Take a look at it. (Lines 364-423.)

(3) Our own actions - that is, our internal mental states. Recall Augustine, in Chapter \s2 above, and compare Avicenna's famous *Suspended Man* passage, in Chapter \s3 and Text \s4 below. (Lines 424-469.)

(4) *Present* sensory knowledge. Here too, Scotus appeals to a kind of Principle of Induction. (Lines 470-523.)

The details of these need not concern us now. To Henry's three reasons for why the created exemplar isn't sufficient, and an uncreated exemplar is needed, Scotus replies:

*Ad (a)*: (lines 528-574) The changing world has unchanging features in it - enough to ground quite certain knowledge. These unchanging features are found in *common natures*. (See Chapter \s5 again.) We will talk more about Scotus on common natures later on.

*Ad (b)*: (lines 575-592) As for the mutability of the soul, this notion can cover two quite different kinds of change: (i) From ignorance to knowledge or vice versa, in learning and forgetting. But *this* kind of change is going to be possible for *any* theory of knowledge. (ii) Change from error to correctness. Scotus *denies* that the soul is indeed mutable in this sense in the case of "evident" knowledge of the above four kinds. We simply cannot make a mistake about whether the whole is greater than the part, once we get the requisite concepts that go with those words. We cannot *be* in a state of *error* about that, and hence we cannot change from or to that state of error.

*Ad (c)*, the claim that the created exemplar cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood. To this Scotus replies (lines 593-621): On Henry's view of the created exemplar, this is correct. For him, the exemplar is a kind of *image* - a *representation* from which you have to *infer* what is going on outside, what is causing it. Scotus is much more Aristotelian on this point. For him, the created exemplar is the *intelligible species*, and is *formally identical* with the object; there is no *inference* involved. (See Chapter 3, above.) Henry's argument (c) was the one with

which I had the greatest difficulty to begin with, so that I do not pretend to be able to adjudicate between Henry and Scotus here.

In any event, by adopting the Aristotelian view that the intelligible species is formally identical with the object, and that no *inference* from the one to the other is needed, Scotus is of course leaving himself open to the standard Aristotelian problem: how to explain the fact that we can mistakes at all.

Here is the upshot of Scotus' argument. Illumination, as a special influence of the uncreated light, is not necessary, on the *correct* way of looking at things. And on the *erroneous* view - Henry's view (and others, for that matter) - according to which illumination *is* necessary, it is still insufficient. That is to say, the very grounds that led Henry and others to think that something like illumination is going to be needed for certain knowledge are also sufficient grounds to guarantee that illumination - and anything else, for that matter - will be insufficient. In short, they are *really* reasons for saying that we have no knowledge at all, which is a consequence Henry, like Scotus, will not accept.

Nevertheless, despite this rejection of Henry's theory of illumination, Scotus is willing to continue to talk about the need for something he calls illumination. But it turns out that this is only a case of what Bonaventure called the *general* influence or cooperation of God with his creatures. We *are* illumined, Scotus says. We *do* participate in the divine light. But we do this by our having our purely natural agent intellect. (For Scotus, each of us has his own private agent intellect.) That is sufficient, and that is all there is to it.

This was also the view held by Aquinas (see Chapter \s6 above), and goes back at least to a certain John de la Rochelle (d. 1245).

After looking at the text of Scotus, you are perhaps utterly confused by all the jargon and technical fancy business. If so, that can't be helped. Recall how, a long time ago, I told you that we would gradually see philosophy become more and more technical and academic after about 1000. Well, here we are!

## Chapter 53:

### Avicenna's "Suspended Man" Hypothesis

Please read Text \s2 in Volume 2, below. Here I simply want to call your attention to it, and to describe it briefly.

The text is Avicenna's famous "Suspended Man" passage (what Hyman and Walsh call the "flying man", p. 234). The passage is supposed to show a "real distinction" between the body and the soul, and results in a "two substance" view of man (soul and body, each a substance in its own right) rather than a "one substance" view (the soul is the *form* of the body, and the two together constitute *one* composite substance). The former view is Platonic/Augustinian, and later Cartesian. The latter view is Aristotelian. Note the bald *assumption* (there is no argument) that the Suspended man *would* affirm his existence - or indeed that he would be conscious at all. This too fits with Platonic/Augustinian/ Cartesian "introspection". Compare Descartes' argument for the real distinction between mind and body in *Meditation* VI. We will have more to say about this passage when we talk about the theory of distinctions, a little later on. For the present, recall Scotus' view that we can be absolutely certain of our own mental states (see Chapter \s3 above).

This text gets cited by all kinds of people. It is an interesting test case to see whether an author agrees or disagrees with Avicenna here: would the Suspended Man in fact affirm his existence? You can tell a great deal about what an author thinks about many other issues by looking at what he says about this passage. Be on the lookout for it.

## Chapter 54: Some Main Themes in Aquinas

This material is going to come primarily from Aquinas' *On Being and Essence* (a very difficult book), and from his disputed question *On Spiritual Creatures*, article 1, "Whether a spiritual substance is composed of matter and form?" The latter text was included in the first edition of Hyman and Walsh, on pp. 468-479, but was omitted from the second edition in order to make room for other texts. The translation in the first edition was taken from Mary C. Fitzpatrick and John J. Wellmuth, trs., *St. Thomas Aquinas: On Spiritual Creatures (De Spiritualibus Creaturis)*, ("Mediaeval Philosophical Texts in Translation," no. 5; Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1949), pp. 15-29. If you can find a copy of this text, you may want to read it. It is pretty difficult, but *extremely* interesting. If you can't find it, no matter. You will be able to follow along anyway. In any case, I will give page references to this text in the Fitzpatrick and Wellmuth version, followed by the page numbers in the *first* edition of Hyman and Walsh.

Read the rest of the Aquinas material in Hyman and Walsh on your own. You are no doubt keeping up with the secondary reading - in particular, Copleston - without my having to tell you. So there is no need for me to talk about Aquinas' life and dates, his works, and so on.

Recall the *binarium famosissimum*, the regular "pairing" of the doctrines of universal hylomorphism and plurality of forms. (See Chapters \s2, \s3 and \s4, above). Avencibrol is a big source for this doctrine in the later Middle Ages. But of course it fits right in with the realist tradition in the West back at least to Boethius' *De Trinitate* (see Chapter \s5 above). The common philosophical basis for both views was the notion that *the structure of our true judgments reflects the structure of reality*. (If you will recall, I also claimed in Chapter \s6 above that at least one form of this principle has historically motivated realism with respect to universals. So it is no wonder that we find this fitting into the realist tradition.) These twin doctrines became a common theme in the Augustinian tradition.

Important: Aquinas rejects the *binarium famosissimum*. He does this in *On Being and Essence*, Ch. 4, in *On Spiritual Creatures*, a. 1, and elsewhere. It is a big thing with him. Let us look more closely. Consider the following three principles:

(1) Only God is entirely simple. Creatures are composite. Composition or complexity is the mark of creaturehood. We have seen this theme several times. It is neo-Platonic in origin, but the doctrine is not confined to neo-Platonism, by any means. On this view, God is the One.

(2) *Composition always requires matter and form*. This is the basic universal hylomorphist theme (see Chapter \s2). Composition is reflected in the distinction between subject and predicate, and that in turn is reflected in the distinction between matter and form, insofar as the predicate *determines* the subject, makes it more definite.

Before we go any further, let's explore how these first two themes, already solidly part of the Augustinian "complex", entail or are suggestive of certain other themes in that complex (see Chapter \s4 above). All these things are connected by deep conceptual links that are not at first obvious.

(a) If the human soul can survive separation from the body, then it cannot be entirely *simple* in that state - otherwise it would turn into God at death, by (1) above. Hence the soul must be a composite, and so must have its own *matter*, by (2) above, quite over and above the matter

that is added to it when it is united to the body. We have then *two* kinds of matter: *corporeal matter and spiritual matter*. (See Chapter \s2 on spiritual matter.)

(b) Hence the soul is a *complete substance* in its own right, a composite of matter and form. Its union with the body, then, is not the Aristotelian union of two partial substances, matter and form, to form a single unified substance. It is rather more the Platonic/Augustinian *two-substance* unity. The exact nature of that union is problematic.

(c) Since the soul, even *separated* from the body, is a fully constituted substance, it must have its own proper activities even then, just as any fully constituted substance has. These are, of course, the processes of *knowing*. And they are therefore *independent of the body*. The *binarium famosissimum*, therefore, has a secret conceptual link to the doctrine of illumination. The link is nothing so strong as an entailment, but it is pretty strong nonetheless.

Now let us add to these first two principles a third one, taken from Aristotelian epistemology:

(3) *Matter impedes intelligibility*. If you go back to Chapter \s7 and look at what I said there about Aristotle's theory of intellection, you will see that there are *two* senses in which matter impedes intelligibility:

(a) First, matter *in the object* impedes intelligibility, and must be *removed* before the object can be understood. This happens quite early in the game, at the level of the sensible species, where the matter is already left behind.

(b) Second, matter *in the knower* impedes intelligibility in the sense that the intellect cannot be "mixed with the body" if it is going to be able to do its job. Recall Aristotle's argument for this, discussed in Chapter \s7.

Let me dwell on this a bit. In Aristotle's epistemology, the mind takes on the *form* of the object, is *formally identical* with the object, although it is distinct from the object "in being". (The difference is one of substrate. The real object has prime matter as a substrate; the concept of the object has the passive intellect, which is *like* prime matter, but is *not* prime matter.) Now the original object is a combination of *form* (including the essential and perhaps also accidental forms) plus *matter*. Hence, if the mind has any matter of its own, then when it takes on the *form* of the object, we would have *form plus matter* in the mind - that is, we would have the *original object* there, and this time not just "formally" but "in being" as well. Hence we would have no *knowledge* of the object in the Aristotelian sense. It is the immateriality of the intellect that keeps us from turning into trees when we know trees. (See *On Spiritual Creatures*, p. 22; Hyman and Walsh, first edition, pp. 473-474.)

Now look at these three principles and think about them a bit. Put them together and what do you get? Presto! You get the inevitable consequence: *Only God is a knower*. No way around it. This is of course an unacceptable consequence for everyone, even for the Augustinians who tended to have such an exalted notion of knowledge that it began to look divine itself. Even they wanted to say that we do know things, even if we need outside help to do so, and could never do it on our own. The question then is where we are going to compromise on these three principles.

Both Aquinas and the Augustinians accept (1). (For Aquinas, this is at least in part because he accepts the Avicennian view that composition *always* requires a cause, to put the components together. But God is uncaused.) The Augustinians deny (3). They distinguish. *Corporeal* matter is not the same as *spiritual* matter. Some Augustinians, therefore, might try to say that it is only *corporeal* matter that impedes knowledge, not *spiritual* matter. (It is not clear at once just *who* among the Augustinians would say this, or who did in fact say this, if anyone.)



This already grants a lot to Aristotelian psychology. An Augustinian illuminationist who knew what he was about would perhaps not want to grant even this much.)

In any case, Aquinas doesn't think this trick will work. See *On Being and Essence*, Ch. 4, section 2, pp. 52-53. How, after all, does corporeal matter differ from spiritual matter? Well, Aquinas says, because it has a *form* that gives it extension in space and makes it corporeal - in other words, by a form of *corporeity*. (Remember, talk of the form of corporeity was right at home in the hylomorphist camp.) Spiritual matter, on the other hand, lacks the form of corporeity; it presumably has the correlative form of *spirituality*, or something like that.

Aquinas is not distorting the doctrine here. This *has* to be the difference between the two, given the underlying motive for the doctrine to begin with (see Chapter \s2), and the universal hylomorphists explicitly said so.

But, Aquinas argues, if this is so, then what *really* makes corporeal matter impede intelligibility is just what distinguishes it from spiritual matter, which does *not* so impede intelligibility, namely *the form of corporeity*. But that cannot be, Aquinas says, since *form is the principle of intelligibility*. Insofar as things have forms, they are *intelligible*, not *un-intelligible*. (Form, after all, is what is impressed on the passive intellect.)

Hence the hylomorphist cannot get out of the problem by restricting (3) to just *corporeal* matter. What he should have done all along, of course, is to reject (3) entirely, as being far too Aristotelian.

But Aquinas won't do this. His sympathies are with Aristotle on this point. Instead, he rejects principle (2). In order to have a composite substance, you do *not* need to have matter and form. That is *one* kind of composition, to be sure. But there is a much more basic kind of composition: *the composition of a thing's essence with its existence*. ('Existence' translates the Latin *'esse'*, the infinitive serving as the nominative of the gerund - see Chapter \s8 above, on how to translate Abelard's "*status*" talk, which likewise uses infinitival expressions - and meaning "the *act* of being", what a "being" in the participial sense *does*.)

The composition of essence and existence is absolutely crucial to understanding Aquinas. I do not mean to suggest that he himself set it up in the way I have just done, as a dodge to avoid the conclusion that only God is a knower. He certainly didn't. But the conceptual linkage is there.

How does all this work? Well, in the so called "separated substances" - angels and human souls (*not* God, for present purposes) - there is *no* matter. They are intelligences, just as they were for Aristotle, and so *cannot* have matter. Aquinas has just argued this, in the business about spiritual matter above. On the other hand, the separated substances are composites. They are not so altogether simple as God is, since only God is simple in that absolute way, by (1). They are *real* composites of two *really* distinct principles: their *essences* and their *acts of existing*. See *On Being and Essence*, Ch. 4, sections 2 and 6. (*Note*: The distinction between essence and existence has to be a *real* distinction - and not just some mental distinction that doesn't correspond to an ontological division out there. Otherwise, if they are not *really* distinct, then their composition is not a *real* composition, but only a matter of speaking. And if the composition is thus not *really* composite, then the composite cannot be *really* distinguished from God, and the whole point of the thing breaks down.) Hence, for Aquinas we have three kinds of cases:

(a) *Material creatures*. They have an *essence*, and that essence is composed of *prime matter and substantial form*. They also have an act of existence, an *esse*. It is perhaps best to think of the *esse* as a kind of ontological *bolt* that holds the matter and form together (although that kind of imagery won't work in other cases).

(b) *Spiritual creatures*. They too have an *essence* and an act of existence, an *esse*. But the essence in this case is *not* composed of prime matter and substantial form. It has only a *substantial form*. There is no matter involved. That is why we have a spiritual creature and not a material one.

(c) *God*. God of course is *absolutely* simple. Not only do we not have a composition of matter and form in him, we do not even have the composition of essence and *esse*. And yet God surely exists; there is an act of existing involved. Hence, we must conclude that this is *all* that is involved. God is *nothing but* a pure act of existing, a pure *esse*, "*ipsum esse subsistens*" ("subsistent being itself").

(If you want, of course, you can say that God has *no* essence or you can say that he *does* have an essence and that it is identical with his *esse*. In part, this is purely a terminological point - *provided* you don't link up essence with intelligibility to the extent that saying that God has no essence would amount to saying that he is not intelligible, even to himself. Then it is *not* just a terminological point. But in any case, you don't want to say that God has an essence *that is in any way distinct from his esse*. That is the important thing here.)

Now where did all this come from? Well, go back to Chapter \s2 above. We have already seen Avicenna distinguish essence and existence. *William of Auvergne* (see Chapter \s3) picked up on this and made it an important part of his own philosophy. For both Avicenna and William, however, the *existence* of a thing (except God, of course) was a kind of *accident* that its essence may or may not take on. Recall the considerations that led to this kind of "accident" talk, in Chapter \s2.

Aquinas does something much more radical. Avicenna and William, by calling the existence of a thing an *accident*, betray that they are still thinking in terms of *forms*. The *existence* of a thing is clearly not its matter, and if it is not the essence or part of the essence - that is, an essential form - then it must be an *accidental form*. That is the only thing left.

Aquinas says no. Accidents are ontologically dependent and derivative. But a thing's *existence* is more basic to it than that. No - *it is not a form at all*.

And with that move, Aquinas introduces a whole new dimension to the philosophical picture. Let us look at some of the consequences of this move.

(1) *Form* is what we grasp in concepts. Form is what gets impressed on the passive intellect. Hence, if *esse* is not a form, we can have *no concept* of it. We have no concept at all of a thing's existence.

But that's odd. If we have not concept of it, then what have we been talking about? Let's note carefully what this means. We have no concept of *esse* acquired by *acquaintance*. That is, we have no *simple* concept of existence, got by abstracting it from instances we have observed, after the fashion described in Chapter \s7 above. For then it would have to be a form. If we *try* to form such a concept by acquaintance, the best we can do is to form the very general concept of "being", which applies to absolutely everything that exists, and so is the widest and emptiest of all concepts, not metaphysically rich and important. Another way to put this is to say that if we try to form a simple concept of *esse*, we miss the target and end up with a participial concept rather than the gerundial one we are after.

But to say that we have no simple concept formed by acquaintance is not to say that we cannot *construct* a complex concept that *describes* existence. After all, prime matter is not a form either, but we can still talk about it intelligibly, and even *conceive* it after a fashion, as "that which underlies forms in changeable substances, and makes them changeable", or something like

that. So too we can construct a complex concept that describes existence as "that which makes a being a being", or something like that. ('Being' here taken participially.)

But the fact remains, we have no real understanding, in the Aristotelian sense, no intellection. We never really *get at* a thing's *esse* by way of concepts. Rather, we grasp a thing's *esse* in the act of *judging*. And, indeed, the copula of a subject/predicate judgment, just as it joins the parts of the judgment together, so too it *reflects* the composition on the part of the thing. But don't think Aquinas has some kind of simple-minded view about the relation between judgments and reality. It is not a simple part-by-part matching as it is for some realists and for holders of the *binarium*. The relation is a very complicated one for Aquinas. We don't have to pursue it here.

(2) Aquinas' notion of *esse* has a role in his theory of individuation. This is a very complicated theory in Aquinas. (Everything is a very complicated theory in Aquinas.) Basically, Aquinas uses the notion of individuation for two quite distinct kinds of functions. And accordingly, the "principle of individuation" for him will be two quite distinct kinds of things. They answer two quite distinct questions:

(a) There is what I shall call the "Principle of Individuation" properly so called (this is *my* terminology now, not Aquinas'). It answers the question "What gives a thing its identity, what makes it the individual it is?" *Answer*: Its *esse*. How many individuals do you have? Well, count up the *esses*. In a given material individual, for instance, matter does not have its own *esse*, substantial form another, and accidental forms their own. There is *one esse* binding the whole business together like a bolt. And since there is but one *esse*, there is but one individual here.

(b) Second, there is what I will call the *Principle of Differentiation*. (Hector-Neri Castañeda taught me to distinguish between these two.) It answers the question, "What makes individual *A* distinct from individual *B*?" *Answer*: The one has some *form* the other one doesn't.

But now things get complicated (again). If *A* and *B* are not in the same species, so that they differ not only in their accidental forms but also in their *substantial* forms, and therefore in their *essences*, then nothing more need be said. *The substantial forms differentiate*. It is the fact that they are two distinct substantial forms that *allows* you to have two *esses* and therefore two individuals.

But if *A* and *B* are in the *same* species, so that they do not differ in their substantial forms, but formally differ only in their accidents, then the case is more difficult. Here we have to appeal to *accidental* forms, of course, given the general principle that differentiation comes by forms. But still, we don't want to get ourselves into the situation Boethius got himself into in his *De trinitate* realist view (see Chapter \s5 above), where we *freeze* the individual and tie it to a complete and fixed set of accidents. We want to allow for accidental change (especially if we're Aristotelians). Well, all this is extremely sticky in Aquinas, but in the end he thinks that *matter* is required here.

Therefore, we get an important "theorem": *Wherever there is a plurality of individuals in a given species, they are all material.*

Of course, there is an immediate corollary: *Angels, since they are immaterial, can come only one to a species*. Each angel constitutes a species unto itself, just as the members of certain Philosophy Departments do. The archangels Gabriel and Michael are as unlike one another as a lizard is from an elephant.

This thesis about angels was a characteristically Thomist doctrine, and was condemned in 1277. See Hyman and Walsh, propositions #42-#43 of the Condemnation of 1277. *Why* it was condemned is not so clear. It is rather novel, but hardly a *dangerous* view.

Now, if we have the corollary about angels, you have probably anticipated my next point. There is an obvious problem then. What about *human souls*? You might say that when they are *joined* to the body there is matter involved, and so there is no problem. But what happens after death, when the body falls away, and we have these *immaterial* things flitting around up there (or down there)? They are immaterial, and yet they are all in the same species; they are all *human* souls, *specifically* human.

There is obviously some *connection* with matter, since although the soul is separated now from the body, it was once *in* the body. But it's not there now, and how can that be reconciled with the principle that *intraspecific differentiation requires matter*? Aquinas' doctrine here is extremely delicate and fine. It is Aquinas at his very best - and when Aquinas is at his very best, he is very, very good indeed. He will take your breath away. It was on questions like this one that Aquinas earned his reputation. Unfortunately, Aquinas is also at his most difficult on questions like this - as you might expect, since he is making *very* nuanced distinctions. I will discuss all this briefly in Chapter \s2 below. I will also have more to say about the role of matter in individuation and differentiation in Chapter \s3. But for the present let's push on.

In order to maintain his denial of principle (2) above (remember it?), Aquinas must hold that in every creature, essence and *esse* are really distinct. This does not mean of course that they are mutually independent. You can't have the essence without having its *esse*, since if you *have* the essence at all, it must *exist*, and then you have the existence too. You can't have what doesn't exist. So what do you suppose Aquinas *does* mean here? What sort of real distinction are we talking about? How does Aquinas argue for it?

On this see *On Being and Essence*, Ch. 4, sections 6-8. Aquinas begins with an argument that reminds one of Kant's "refutation" of the ontological argument. (This is on p. 55 of the Maurer translation of *On Being and Essence*.) Here it is:

1. No essence can be understood without its "parts" - that is, without whatever enters into its definition - its *real* definition, in terms of genus and species.

2. But I can understand *what* a man is, or *what* a phoenix is (that is, I can understand *what it is* = *quid est* = its quiddity = its essence) without understanding *whether* it is, that is, without knowing whether there *is* any man or phoenix in fact.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, *esse* is not part of the essence of a man or a phoenix.

(Recall the reasoning discussed in Chapter \s4 above, and notice a very similar criterion of real distinction employed in Avicenna's "Suspended Man" passage, in Text \s5 of Volume 2, below. See also Chapter \s6 above.

Now as it turns out, I think this is not a good argument. But even if it worked, we would need something more. We would need to establish the claim for *all and only* creatures, not just for man and phoenix. And Aquinas has a two-stage argument to establish this biconditional.

(a) The first stage comes in section 6 of his text. *If* there is anything the essence of which is *identical* with its existence (that is, for which the real distinction fails), then there is *only one such thing*. In short, this first stage argues that there is *at most* one case in which the distinction fails to hold. The argument is that if there were *two*, there would be nothing to differentiate them, so that we would not have two after all, but only one. We would have to get much further into Aquinas than we are going to do here before we would be in a position to evaluate this argument. Let's just go on.

(b) The second stage comes in section 7 of Aquinas' text. This is an argument that there is *at least* one case in which the distinction between essence and existence fails. Here Aquinas gives us a kind of infinite regress argument.

Actually, if you look closely at section 7 of the text, it turns out that what Aquinas is really establishing is something rather weaker: that there is at least one being the *esse* of which is *contained* in its essence or definition. In order to get the two parts of the argument to mesh - (a) and (b) above - we need an additional argument, that if existence is *contained* in the essence of anything (in whatever sense is involved in part (b) of the argument), then it is *identical* with that essence - there is nothing more to the essence than that very existence. Aquinas in fact has a rationale for this. But he doesn't give it here, and neither will

I. We can't do everything. Let's just grant the point.

What we have here then is a rudimentary argument for the existence of God. Aquinas thinks of God as *ipsum esse subsistens*, a pure act of existing and nothing else, no distinct essence, no accidents, no matter. Recall Exodus 3:14. (See Chapter \s7 above.)

A little while ago I said that Aquinas' argument on p. 55 of the text (the one about man and phoenix) was a bad one. Why? (*Note*: You don't strictly *need* that argument if you can otherwise get the second stage of the two-stage argument above.)

Well, if no essence can be understood without its "parts", and if the essence of God is purely and simply to exist, as Aquinas frequently says, then I cannot understand God without understanding that he exists. That is, his existence follows from his very concept. Hence, an ontological argument for the existence of God works. But Aquinas *rejects* any ontological argument. (See *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 1, Hyman and Walsh, pp. 523-524, objection 2 and reply.) We have to extrapolate a bit from the text, but the basic idea seems to be that we do not really *understand* the essence of God. That is to say, we have only a *complex* concept of God, formed by description. We do not have a *simple* concept formed by acquaintance, by abstraction. (The modern distinction between "knowledge by acquaintance" and "knowledge by description" is a very useful tool to keep at hand when reading certain mediaeval texts. Although the *terminology* is an anachronism, the distinction itself is not. There *was* such a distinction underlying several mediaeval theories, although we should be careful about importing other baggage that might go along with the modern version of the distinction.)

To the extent that we ever *can* have such an acquaintance with God, we will get it only after death, in the Beatific Vision. Then we will see God face to face, and will be able to get a simple concept of him by abstraction. And if we have a *simple* concept of God, then we will not be able to think of God without realizing what is entailed by that concept (no essence can be understood without its "parts", remember). In short, for Aquinas an ontological argument will work, but only if you have the right circle of "acquaintances". Unfortunately, *we* do not - at least not yet. The only ones who do are the angels and the Blessed who enjoy the Beatific Vision. But they of course don't *need* an ontological argument, or any other argument, to prove the existence of God for them, since they see him face to face. In short, for Aquinas, an ontological argument for the existence of God will work only for those who don't need it.

But what does all this have to do with the argument on p. 55 of *On Being and Essence*? Well, if in step (1) of that argument ("No essence can be understood without its `parts'"), the word `understood' is taken in the broad sense, to include understanding by a mere description as well as understanding by means of a concept gained by acquaintance, then that step (1) is simply false, since it would follow from (1) that an ontological argument for the existence of God would work *for us*, in this life. And, according to Aquinas, that just isn't so.

On the other hand, if you take step (1) in the *narrow* sense, that is, reading `understood' there as applying only to understanding by acquaintance, then step (2) must be read in the same sense (or else you have a fallacy of equivocation). But in that sense, step (2) is false. I cannot in

that sense understood *anything* without being acquainted with it, and therefore knowing good and well that it exists, whether its existence is "part" of its essence or not. Step (2) is true only for 'understood' in the broad sense, taken to include understanding by description. (After all, I hardly know the phoenix *by acquaintance*.) But if we read 'understood' in the *narrow* sense in (1) and in the *broad* sense in (2), the argument is fallacious. And, as far as I can see, that is exactly what happens.

A lot of fuss has been made in the secondary literature about this text, as though it encapsulated Aquinas' central argument for the distinction between essence and existence in creatures. But, if I am right, the argument is just a *mistake* on Aquinas' part, and shouldn't be given too much stress. Furthermore, Aquinas doesn't need it to establish the real distinction between creaturely essence and creaturely existence, if he can get the other, two-stage argument to work.

Now let's look briefly at one other thing. There might appear to be another big problem. If God is just pure and simple *esse*, does this mean that the *esse* that enters into composition with creatures is *God*? Is *my own esse* God himself? If so, then since *esse* is the principle of individuality, it follows that all creatures are God. This is about as strict a formulation of pantheism as you could possibly want. Is Aquinas then a crypto-pantheist?

Of course not. But in order to see *why* not, we need to clear up some things. Let us perform a mental experiment. Just as we did in Chapter \s8, when discussing the problem of universals, let us peel the metaphysical onion. Take Socrates, a combination of prime matter, substantial form, and accidents, all bound together with an *esse*. Now pull off the accidents, and then the substantial form, and finally drain away all the matter - until you get down to the bare *esse*, until you have nothing left but the *esse* alone. Now that bare, pure *esse* *must* be God, mustn't it, since we already have an argument that there can be only *one* thing that is a pure act of existing, and we call it God. But if the *esse* of Socrates *is* God, then Socrates himself is identical with God, since *esse* is the principle of individuality. Now, what are we going to do about this?

Well, Aquinas' basic approach to problems like this is to ask: What makes you think you can actually perform this experiment? For Aquinas, when you pull off Socrates' accidents, his substantial form and his matter - what you end up with is *not* a bare, pure *esse* at all. (If you did, it *would* be God.) Rather what you end up with is *nothing at all*. In dismantling Socrates this way, you have destroyed his *esse* too.

The *esse* of Socrates is capable of being *thought of* in isolation in this way (by description, of course, since we have no *simple* concept of existence, by acquaintance). But it cannot actually *be* in isolation, any more than the prime matter can. The *esse* of Socrates just *is* that *esse* which actualizes Socrates' substantial form - his soul - in such a way that if you take away the form, the *esse* disappears too. (The *esse*'s relation to the *body* is more problematic, since we are dealing here with the special case of a human being, for which the substantial form is a soul that can exist apart from the body. These matters are discussed in Chapter \s2 below.) In sum, the *esse* of Socrates is not a *subsistent* in the technical Boethian sense (Chapter \s9), which Aquinas is employing when he calls God "*ipsum esse subsistens*".

God's *esse*, on the other hand, not only can be *thought of* in isolation (again, of course, only by description). It can also *exist* in isolation. In fact, it can exist *only* in isolation. It *is* subsistent - and that is enough to differentiate it from creaturely *esses*. Recall our formulation above of the so called "Principle of Differentiation". It was not that what allows *A* and *B* to be

two individuals is that they have *different forms*, but rather that one of them has a form the other one doesn't have. Hence any *esse* that actualizes a form will automatically be distinct from God.

## Chapter 55:

### Aquinas on the Differentiation of Human Souls

This picks up a problem left over from Chapter \s2.

For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, the distinction between an essential form (substantial form) and an accidental form of a thing is not the same as the distinction between a form the thing necessarily has (given that it exists) and one it may or may not have (given that it exists). For both Aristotle and Aquinas, there are such things as inseparable or *necessary* accidents. The basic schema may be illustrated by a pin-cushion. The pins are the accidents, the cushion is the essence. In a spiritual substance, the cushion consists of a substantial form only. In a material substance, it consists of a substantial form together with prime matter. Some of the pins may be permanently attached. (Think of them as bent at the end, like fish-hooks. You can't pull *these* pins out of the cushion without ripping the whole thing to shreds \i+3d!\i+3d) They are no less accidental for all that.

What holds the whole business together is an act of existing, an *esse* that binds all the parts together and actualizes them. It is the *esse* that gives the whole apparatus its identity, that makes it the individual it is. (*Esse* is the *Principle of Individuation or Individuality*.) What *differentiates* one individual from another (we might also say what differentiates one *esse* from another) is the particular combination of things bound together. Not all of them, of course, since then we would have the frozen individuals of Boethius' *De trinite* (Chapter \s3 above). We want to allow for accidental change. Hence we include only those things that are *inseparably* bound together among the differentiating features of a thing. The substantial form differentiates the individual from all individuals of a different species. *Within* the same species, if there are several individuals, they are differentiated from one another by certain *inseparable accidents*. It is Aquinas' view that these differentiating accidents require prime matter. Intraspecific differentiation requires prime matter.

Now the human soul is the substantial form of the body. Aquinas follows Aristotle here. The individual man therefore is differentiated by a unique combination of prime matter, soul (substantial form) and certain differentiating accidents that require matter. When he dies, however, that combination is broken up. Nevertheless, Aquinas argues (and he has an argument - this is not just a matter of faith) that the soul survives death. The *esse*, which originally bound together all the inseparable parts of the living man, continues to actualize the separated soul after death. Aquinas wants to say it is the *same esse* that formerly actualized the composite living man - otherwise what survives would be a different individual, since *esse* is the principle of individuality. There would be no *personal* immortality.

But how can this be? When the soul is separated from the body, how can it retain the very same intraspecifically differentiated *esse* it had while in the body, since all the differentiating accidents, which required matter, are gone?

Aquinas' answer: As a matter of terminology, we shall say that a substance is complete if and only if its *esse* is differentiated from that of other substances by what it inseparably actualizes or binds together. We must now ask: *inseparable on pain of what?*

*Answer:* Not necessarily inseparable on pain of destroying the *esse*, but inseparable on pain of destroying the *substance*. The *esse* of a *complete* substance, then, is differentiated from others by what it inseparably actualizes or binds together on pain of destroying *that substance*. On the other hand, to destroy a complete substance is not necessarily to destroy its *esse*. A composite man, for instance, is a complete substance. His *esse* is differentiated by certain



accidents and other features that cannot be separated from him without destroying (killing) him. But when he is destroyed, his *esse* is not destroyed. It continues to activate his substantial form or soul, and carries the individuality of the former man along with it. The existing separated substantial form or soul is a substance in its own right. It is the same *individual*, but not the same *substance* as the original man. It has to be the same individual, since the *esse* is the same; it cannot be the same substance, since the essence is not the same. The essence of the man included prime matter; that of his separated soul does not.

Now notice: The *esse* of this separated substance or soul inseparably actualizes or binds together - on pain of destroying the separated substance or soul - only the substantial form and whatever inseparable accidents *it* has, accidents that do *not* differentiate, since differentiating accidents require matter. Hence the *esse* of the separated soul is not differentiated by what it inseparably actualizes or binds together on pain of destroying *the soul*. That is, on the basis of our earlier definition, the separated soul is *not a complete substance*. Rather, we shall call it "*incomplete*".

The *esse* of a human soul is not differentiated by what it inseparably actualizes or binds together on pain of destroying the soul, but rather on pain of destroying the composite man whose soul it is. If the man is destroyed, his *esse* is not destroyed, and *it does not cease to be differentiated*. It can still be identified as the unique *esse* that actualizes or binds together that which cannot be separated from *this particular man* without destroying him. It's just that it is not doing so now (which is another way of saying that the man is dead). In short, there is a sense in which this *esse* "goes with" this particular man, even after the man has died. And that is all we need.

Human souls are the *only* incomplete substances. God's *esse* is differentiated from others' by inseparably actualizing nothing other than itself. No other *esse* is like that. An angel's *esse* inseparably actualizes an essence (and some accidents, although non-differentiating ones). No other *esse* actualizes the same essence; there is only one angel to a species. The *esses* of material substances (including man) inseparably actualize prime matter, a substantial form, and inseparable accidents, including differentiating ones. No other *esse* binds together the same ingredients.

This delicate notion of an incomplete substance is what allows Aquinas to maintain simultaneously: (a) a man's soul is his substantial form; (b) it is nevertheless able to survive the death of the composite man; (c) intraspecific differentiation requires matter. Each of these points, of course, has to be argued separately, and Aquinas does have arguments for each of them.

## Chapter 56

### Aquinas on Designated Matter

Aquinas talks about something called "designated matter" or "signate matter" in *On Being and Essence*, Ch. 2, section 4. What is it all about? Well, hang on!

Prime matter *qua* prime matter is said to be "numerically one" in a kind of negative sense: not that it has any one determinate form, but rather it lacks the features that would differentiate and diversify it.<sup>41</sup> But if this is so, how can there be any more than one material substance at a time? One might suggest that one material substance combines its substantial form with only *part* of the prime matter there is, while another material substance combines its substantial form with another part. But how can that be if prime matter *qua* prime matter lacks all diversity and doesn't have parts? If prime matter (hereafter *PM*) *qua PM* has no parts, won't one substantial form take it all? (Examine your mental pictures that accompany these questions. Are we being misled by our imagery?)

It was this kind of consideration that led Avicenna to suppose that PM had to be diversified or partitioned in some way before any substantial form advened. The most straightforward way to do this was to divide it spatially - that is, to take *PM* as extended in three dimensions and thus as diversified internally according to places. Then one substantial form could combine with a certain volume of *PM*, and another with another volume. This is the doctrine of *designated matter* that Aquinas accepts in *On Being and Essence* - "matter considered under determinate dimensions" (Ch. 2, section 4). The "determinate" dimensions here imply a fixed size and shape.

Of course, as just presented, this doctrine suggests that spatial extension, which is an accident in the category of quantity, inheres in PM "before" any substantial form. Whether this "before" is taken in a temporal sense or in some other sense, it suggests the doctrine of the plurality of forms, which Avicenna seems to have accepted at least to this extent. The form corporeity is attached to matter before any substantial form is. (On the plurality-of-forms doctrine, see Chapter 52 above.) Aquinas will have none of this; he rejects the doctrine of the plurality of forms. It makes nonsense, he thinks, of the distinction between substantial and accidental forms. Let us just take his reasoning for granted here.

So we should not think of quantity's "inhering" in PM in any sense "before" any substantial form. Rather, we should think of it as happening all at once - or better, as not "happening" at all, but as just being so. Several substantial forms together with accidental forms responsible for fixing the dimensions of the substances (and hence for dividing them off spatially from one another) are attached to PM. The substantial forms locate things in genus and species, and the accidental forms (in the category of quantity) keep them spatially apart. Hence accidents of quantity are responsible for allowing there to be several material substances at once, and also, by the way, for allowing there to be several substances of the same species. On the other hand, *PM* is also required, since quantity (or at least *this* kind of quantity) is an accident that requires a material substance in which to inhere.

Hence Aquinas can adapt Avicenna's view in such a way that it does not require a plurality of quasi-substantial forms piled one on top of another. Nevertheless, when he wrote his Commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate*, q. 4, a. 2,<sup>42</sup> shortly after the *On Being and Essence*, he rejected this view. The argument is simple. If material substances were individuated by matter under a fixed volume and shape, then they could not grow or change shape without losing their identity and becoming another individual instead. This

is the same *kind* of problem (but not *exactly* the same problem) we saw earlier with Boethius' frozen individuals (Chapter \s3 above).

Hence, in his commentary on Boethius, which contains his longest sustained discussion of individuation, he adopts *Averroes'* view instead, that designated matter, which individuates, is *PM* under *undetermined* dimensions. By *undetermined* dimensions he means not this definite shape and volume, and not that one, but rather *some* shape and volume or other - that is, this one or that one taken disjunctively. (Averroes states this doctrine in his tract *On the Substance of the Celestial Sphere*, Ch. 1, translated in Hyman and Walsh, p. 319.) Also, by the way, Aquinas' own discussion of individuation in his commentary on Boethius occurs exactly in his commentary on the passage in which Boethius says that individuation is *by accidents*. (See passage (3) of Text \s4 below.)

The problem with this view is patent, and it is hard to see why Aquinas (or Averroes) ever took it seriously. All material substances are alike in having *some* volume and shape or other. Undetermined dimensions are just too vague and indefinite - too, well, too *undetermined* - to distinguish things.

Aquinas appears to have dropped this view in his later works. But curiously, no fully articulated view is ever put in its place. He continues to use the phrase 'designated matter', and to link individuation with quantity (for instance, in *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 30, a. 3), but it is never very clear exactly what is going on. In fact, there is evidence that, after writing the first part of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas later gave up the connection of quantity with individuation altogether. For instance, in *Quodlibet* I, q. 10, a. 21 and a. 22, he argues that it is possible, by the power of God, that two material bodies occupy the same place. In his earlier commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate*, q. 4, a. 3, he had argued that this was not possible because the two would become one.

What *did* Aquinas finally come to think about individuation? In some passages, we get the suggestion that *esse* is the principle of individuation. This is crucial when it comes to the unity of the human composite - as we saw in Chapter \s5 above. Man is a substance. Yet his soul is also a substance (*On Being and Essence*, Ch. 4, paragraph 1). Do we then have two substances? No, because there is only *one esse* that is simultaneously the *esse* of the man and the *esse* of his soul. How many substances do you have? Count up the number of *esses*.

On the other hand, Aquinas never gave up the view that prime matter is in some sense also tied up with individuation. Here we must distinguish two questions, as we did in Chapter \s6: (1) What makes a substance *one* substance? The answer to that is *esse*. (2) What allows you to have *several* substances - and so several *esses*? Let us divide that second question: (2a) What allows you to have distinct species? The answer to that is straightforward: essence, and in particular, substantial form. Substantial forms are just distinct from one another all by themselves. (2b) What allows you to have several substances *in the same species*? The answer to that is "designated matter", whatever that is.

Let us then call *esse* the *principle of individuation*, substantial form the *principle of interspecific differentiation*, and designated matter the *principle of intraspecific differentiation*. How does the latter work? I suggest that in this connection the last chapter of *On Being and Essence* is helpful, even though it is an early work. There we find that some accidents "derive" from matter in such a way that they are the ones that differentiate (note the word) individuals within the same species (paragraphs 5-6 - see also *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 54, a. 3, ad 2). No special status is given to quantity. What seems to happen then is this. Some accidents must stick with an individual as long as he remains that individual. Aquinas suggests that an animal's sex is

an accident of this kind. In view of recent surgical triumphs, we might substitute the animal's genetic make-up as an alternative. Accidents of this kind tend to differentiate individuals within the same genus.

But accidents of this kind are not sufficient to render the individual fully determinate. For then we would have the problem about determinate dimensions again. Of course, it is always the case that the individual *is* fully determinate, but that only means that some of the accidents that an individual has at a given time do not contribute to his intraspecific differentiation. Such accidents might be place and position (despite his earlier views), the fleeting thoughts and volitions that come and go without violating my identity, and so on.

Such a view yields an important consequence: There are never as many individuals within a given species as there are members of a maximally consistent set of completely determinate individual descriptions in that species. In other words, there are always individuals you can *describe* in a given species that don't exist. At least this is so for any species the individuals of which are subject to accidental change - which includes all the species we observe. It is also true for any species the individuals of which have free choice. For otherwise, if they had chosen differently, they would have been entirely different individuals within the same species. Now Aquinas thinks that all separated substances are intelligent, and that free choice inevitably goes along with intellect. Hence the above principle applies to all species whatever, except perhaps to material species the individuals of which are unperceivable - if there are any such species.

Still, granted that some accidents differentiate individuals within the same species, how does this involve matter? After all, it is supposed to be prime matter as under these accidents, designated prime matter, that is the principle of intraspecific differentiation. The question amounts to this: Why couldn't angels, which have no matter, be differentiated within the same species by some of their accidents? Aquinas, of course, thinks they cannot - each angel is a distinct species. This is a long story, but the final answer to it I think is that Aquinas wants to hold that any individual object subject to intraspecific substantial change is also subject to interspecific substantial change - that is, it can change substantially into an individual of a *different* species. You'll just have to take my word for it.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER \S0

1. See, for instance, Aquinas, *The Principles of Nature*, paragraph 16, in *Selected Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Robert P. Goodwin, tr., ("Library of Liberal Arts"; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. 13-14.

2. There is an English translation of the entire commentary, along with Aquinas' *On the Unity of the Intellect, against the Averroists*, in Thomas Aquinas, *The Trinity and the Unicity of the Intellect*, Rose Brennan, tr., (St. Louis: Herder, 1946). The relevant passage is on pp. 104-113.

## Chapter 57:

### Common Natures

This is just our old friend, the problem of universals, back again with some new terminology and some new twists. On the topic of this section, the best single thing you could possibly read is the following paper: Joseph Owens, "Common Nature: A Point of Comparison between Thomistic and Scotistic Metaphysics," *Mediaeval Studies* 19 (1957), pp. 1-14.

This is an extremely interesting and informative paper, and very useful for organizing the material I am about to discuss. Nevertheless, there are some problems with it. But I will talk about the problems later. For the present, I will use Owens' paper to organize my own presentation, and tentatively adopt his interpretation of Aquinas' theory of common natures. I will tell you everything you need to know (for present purposes) about the paper, so you don't absolutely *have* to go read it. But it will be well worth your trouble.

(Note: Some of the passages Owens quotes - without benefit of translation - in that paper are translated in Text \s2 in Volume 2 below. And in any case, Owens gives a close paraphrase of all the texts he quotes, even though he doesn't actually *say* that's what he is doing. So you can benefit from his paper, even if you cannot read Latin.)

Both Aquinas and Scotus have their point of origin on the question of common natures in some passages of Avicenna - see Text \s2 below. So let us begin there.

#### Avicenna

We start with Avicenna's *Logica*, where he is worried about predication. Recall the way Abelard had set up the question of universals (Chapter \s3 above). For him it was a question of "What is predicated of many?" If you say "things", then you are a realist; if you say "only words", then you are a nominalist. (Also, remember that this is *not* the way Boethius had set up the problem. Boethius says nothing about predication in this connection. See Chapter \s4 above.)

When the question is framed this way, Avicenna is a realist, and for that matter, so will Aquinas and Scotus be realists. But they are realists with a difference. It is not the straightforward kind of realism we found in Boethius' *De trinitate* (passage (3) of Text \s5 - see also Chapter \s4 above), or in William of Champeaux's first theory (see Chapter \s3).

Given this realism of predication, let us look at passages (1) and (2) of Text \s2 below. "Animal", Avicenna says, is *in itself* a certain something, but *in itself* it is neither singular nor universal. ('Singular' here means "individual".) This is passage (1). Here is the argument for this claim:

(a) If animal were in itself universal, then it could never be predicated of singulars. Anything that is an animal would be universal. There could be no singular or individual animals.

(b) If on the other hand *animal* were *in itself* singular, then it could not be predicated of *many* individuals. There would be only *one* animal.

So the facts of predication, that *animal* is predicated of singulars, and that it is predicated of several of them, require that *all by itself* it be neither singular nor universal. Passage (2) of Text \s2 tells us that, instead, universality and singularity are things that are *accidental* to *animal*.

What on earth is going on here? Let us look at Text \s2, passage (3), for some clarification. This is a passage not from Avicenna's *Logica* but from his *Metaphysics*. In this passage, he talks about *horsehood* (~~f4=~~f4 *equinitas*, "equinity") rather than *animal*, but the principle is the same. So let's continue to put it all in terms of *animal*, for the sake of uniformity.

What belongs to animal *by itself*, it seems, is exactly what is included in the definition of animal, and whatever else is *entailed* by that definition. No more, no less. Hence, *A* by itself is *B* if and only if *B* is entailed by the definition of *A*. (\i+3d`A' and `B' are to be replaced by general terms here; we're talking about the problem of universals, after all.)

Now the definition of animal is 'sensate, animate, corporeal substance'. And *that's all*. There is no mention, for instance, of singularity or individuality. That is not built in or entailed. There is nothing there about *this* sensate, animate, corporeal substance. Neither is *universality* built into the definition. There is nothing said there, or implied there, about that.

It is *animal*, as just described, that is "predicated of many", this *animal* that in itself is neither singular nor universal. In fact, only it *can* be predicated of many. And it is what later authors will term a *common nature*. (The actual term 'common nature' is apparently not in Avicenna.)

Let us pause now to head off two objections, and thereby to clarify what is going on here.

(1) First objection: Step (a) of Avicenna's argument is fine, but step (b) is just a fallacy. If animal is in itself just whatever is included in or entailed by the definition of animal, then if animal were in itself universal, it would indeed follow that it could never be predicated of singulars. This follows on the general ground that if *B* is predicated of *A*, then the definition of *B*, and the various parts of the definition of *B*, are also predicated of *A*.

But no such consideration will support step (b) of Avicenna's argument. If animal is in itself singular or individual, it does not by any means follow that animal cannot be predicated of many individuals, as Avicenna says. All that follows is that every one of the many individuals of which animal can be predicated will be a singular. And that is hardly objectionable.

Reply ad (1): This looks like a good objection at first. Hence it is all the more instructive to see why it fails. The objection gets its plausibility, I think, from regarding predication as exclusively a matter of language, so that 'predicate' means 'predicate-term'. But that is not so for Avicenna. For him, the *animal* that is "predicated of many" is not just a piece of language; it is a *piece of the world*. Predication is a metaphysical relation primarily, of which predication in language is just a reflection.

For Avicenna, to say that *animal*, for instance, is predicated of Socrates, is to say that there is a certain metaphysical something out there (we know that it will later be called a "common nature"), and that this something enters into a certain intimate metaphysical relation with Socrates. The details of that relation remain to be seen, but we can say this much at least already: it is *in virtue of* this metaphysical something that Socrates comes to have all the features that are built into or entailed by the definition of *animal*. The reason Socrates is "sensate" (has sensation), for instance, is just that this feature is *brought to* Socrates, *contributed*, by the entity *animal* that we say is "predicated" of Socrates and that Socrates "has", in some sense yet to be explained. In other words, the reason Socrates is "sensate" is just that *animal* itself is "sensate".

The same thing holds, of course, for all the other features built into or entailed by the definition of *animal*. They are not just features of *other* things, of which we then say that *animal* is "predicated". They must also be features of *animal* itself. If *animal* did not itself have these features, then the presence of *animal* in Socrates and Plato and Brownie the ass would hardly be enough to guarantee, as it does, that *they* have these features. That is, after all, where they *get* them.

What this means is that not only are Socrates and Plato and Brownie the ass "sensate, animate, corporeal substances"; so is *animal* itself. In other words, *animal* itself is an

animal! In general, *common natures are self-predicable*. They have to be, if they are going to do their job.

We are now in a position to see why part (b) of Avicenna's argument does hold after all. If *animal* were *in itself* singular, that is, if singularity were built into or entailed by the very definition of *animal*, then in virtue of self-predication, *animal* itself would be a singular. And if there is one thing we can say about singulars, it is that they are *not* "predicated of many". Remember how Abelard quoted Porphyry on this point. (See the beginning of Chapter \s3 above.)

The key to all of this is to think of "predication" in metaphysical terms, not as a relation confined exclusively to the realm of language.

(2) *Second objection*: I raised and responded to the first objection mainly to remove an obstacle to the correct understanding of this theory. But the second objection will lead into the heart of the theory itself. It goes like this:

Earlier, we saw that it is *animal* in itself, with neither universality nor singularity built in, that is "predicated of many", and that in fact it is the only kind of thing that *can* be "predicated of many". On the other hand, you may object, I thought Aristotle had defined the *universal* as what is "predicated of many". (Abelard has a quotation here too. See, once again, Chapter \s3, near the beginning.) So doesn't it follow that the "common nature" *is* universal after all, even though we just said that it isn't?

*Reply ad (2)*: Sure it is universal - no doubt about it. But it is *not* universal *in itself*. In other words, its being predicable of many is not something built into the definition, and it doesn't follow from what *is* built into the definition either. But that doesn't mean that *animal* is not predicable of many; it just means that it is not *in itself* predicable of many.

I suppose we had better take a closer look. The common nature can *exist*, Avicenna says, in two modes:

(a) *In singular things* - in particulars. Insofar as singulars have definitions at all (they do not properly have definitions in an Aristotelian context), such a singular animal would be defined as "*this* sensate, animate, corporeal substance", or something like that. Singularity *does* accrue to the common nature insofar as it exists in external things.

(b) *In the soul* - in concepts. This, of course, is the Aristotelian theory according to which the nature of the external object is in the mind of the knower. And in concepts, the common nature is *abstracted* from all singularity, all individuating conditions. In the concept, therefore, the common nature is universal.

The common nature animal *by itself* is neither singular nor universal. By itself it is just sensate, animate, corporeal substance, and whatever all that implies - but no more. The common nature animal, however, *is* singular - only not just in itself. That is something added on. It is singular in individual animals. Although the definition of animal does not mention singularity, the definition of *this* animal (if it had one) does.

Likewise, the common nature animal *is* universal - only not just in itself. That is something added on. It is universal in *concepts*. Although the definition of animal does not mention or entail universality, the definition of the *concept* "animal" does.

Now look at passage (4) of Text \s2. The question of unity or multiplicity simply cannot be sensibly asked about the common nature taken *by itself*. Recall, on Boethius' realist view, the view of William of Champeaux's first theory and the view of Clarenbald of Arras, the humanity of Socrates and the humanity of Plato were *one* humanity. On Boethius' view in the *Commentary*

on Porphyry, William of Champeaux's second theory and Gilbert of Poitiers' view, they were *two* humanities.

Avicenna is saying that, if you ask about the humanity that is in Socrates - insofar as it is humanity, and not insofar as it is in Socrates - there is nothing to make it any *different* from Plato's. There is nothing *singular* about it. But neither is there anything in the definition of humanity that says it is *one* in Socrates and Plato. There is nothing *universal* about it either.

Hence the common nature *in itself* has no unity. This is not to say that it *lacks* unity, in the sense that it is a multiplicity or plurality. It does not have that either. The question of unity or multiplicity simply *doesn't arise* at that

level. It arises when we ask in what *mode* (see the two "modes" distinguished above) that common nature is taken as existing. But then we are not asking about the common nature *in itself* any more, but rather about the common nature *as* in singulars, or *as* in a concept.

Nevertheless, look at passage (5) of Text \s2. Although common natures have no *unity* (or for that matter plurality) all by themselves, they do have a kind of *being* all by themselves. Although they *exist* only in individuals or in the mind, nevertheless they have some kind of *being* of their own. This is not the *being of existence* (*esse existentiae*, as people later put it). That they do *not* have all by themselves. They only get that insofar as they are *in* individuals, or alternatively, *in* the mind.

Rather this being that belongs to the common nature all by itself is a kind of *lesser being* - what came to be called *esse essentiae* or the *being of an essence*. (This terminology is not Avicenna's, but was used by later Scholastics who got the basic idea ultimately from Avicenna.) The idea is that the common nature is an entity in its own right. And while by itself *animal* is neither singular nor universal, it certainly *is* all by itself a different entity from the common nature *stone*, for instance. Each common nature has an integrity of its own, as a kind of metaphysical block - and that is what we call its *lesser being*. It has *some* "ontological status", as it used to be fashionable to say; it is not absolutely nothing all by itself, even though all by itself it does not fully exist.

So we have a curious state of affairs when we put all these passages together. Common natures have a kind of *lesser being*, but they have no *unity* at all. (This is not to say, of course, that they are multiple or plural.) All this, of course, is with respect to the common nature *in itself*.

Now what do you suppose happened when you took this doctrine and injected it into Latin philosophy, which was by now thoroughly Augustinian, and very conscious of the Augustinian equation of being with unity? (This was pretty much accepted even by those Latin philosophers who were not otherwise especially Augustinian in their outlook. It was a kind of metaphysical axiom.) Avicenna is not quite so clear about this equation. In some places he seems to accept it, but here he does not. Apparently it was not an important matter for him. But it *was* an important matter for the Latins.

They could not tolerate Avicenna's doctrine here just as it stood: a lesser *being* but no *unity* at all. For them, being and unity went hand in hand. Hence, they could go one of two ways:

(a) They could take seriously Avicenna's denial of unity to common natures in themselves, and conclude that they have no *being* by themselves either, not even a *lesser being*, contrary to what Avicenna said.

(b) Or they could take seriously Avicenna's claim that common natures have a lesser *being* all by themselves, and conclude that therefore they have a lesser *unity* all by themselves too, despite Avicenna's denial that they



do. On this alternative, you would distinguish kinds or grades of *unity* to go with kinds or grades of *being*.

## AQUINAS

According to Owens in his paper "Common Nature", Aquinas took the first road, Scotus the second. Let us look at Aquinas first. I am going to present the interpretation of Aquinas that Owens gives, because it represents what has come to be a more or less standard - or at any rate common - interpretation. I think there are serious difficulties with this interpretation as a philosophical theory, although as an *interpretation* it may be perfectly correct. But I will tell you about that later.

For Aquinas, on Owens' interpretation (I won't bother adding that hereafter), the *only* kind of being a thing has is its act of existing, its *esse* or what later would be called its *esse existentiae*. Aquinas has no room for Avicenna's "lesser being".

In part, this is because of his theory of predication. Aquinas does not think that true judgments in general correspond part for part with the world. But he does think this is so in some cases - for example, in the judgment 'Socrates is a man'. Just as the predicate 'man' is there bound to the subject 'Socrates' by the copula 'is', so too the judgment so formed is *true* because in reality the common nature *man* is bound into the individual Socrates by an *esse*. If the common nature already had its own *esse* by itself, Aquinas thinks, then this would *prevent* that kind of composition. It would get in the way. (The sticky details of Aquinas' theory of predication would repay close study. But we won't do it here.)

Let's look a bit more closely at Aquinas on common nature. With one small addition, this discussion can be turned in to a partial commentary on the notion of *form* in the very obscure Chapters 2 and 3 of *On Being and Essence*. Here is the addition:

Aquinas in Ch. 2, section 12, pp. 43-44 of *On Being and Essence* (see also p. 31, n. 7 of the text) distinguishes what he calls the *form of the part* from the *form of the whole*. The form of the part is the same as the substantial form, *without matter*. (The omission of matter is what makes it partial; it is only part of the essence.) In man, for instance, the form of the part is the rational

soul. The form of the whole, on the other hand, is the whole essence or quiddity, including both the substantial form *and prime matter*. In the case of a man, the form of the whole is *man* or *humanity*. It is a bit perverse, perhaps, to call this a "form", since it includes matter, but that is what he calls it. (There is in fact some *motivation* for calling this a "form", but we needn't stop over that here.)

In an immaterial substance, of course, the distinction between the form of the part and the form of the whole vanishes. The substantial form just *is* the essence in that case. There is no matter involved.

Henceforth, we are concerned only with the form of the whole, the entire essence, Avicenna's common nature. I mention the form of the part only to set it aside.

Now these common natures may be *thought of* or considered from various points of view. These give rise to different concepts, expressed by different *terms*. Let us approach it like this:

In the case of each term *T*, let us ask ourselves what *other* terms *T\** we can join to *T* as a predicate in such a way that the resulting sentence '*T* is (a) *T\**' (I put the indefinite article 'a' in parentheses, because Latin doesn't have one, and because English doesn't use it when *T\** is an adjective) is (a) necessarily *true* (in that case we shall say that *T\** is "included" in *T*); (b) necessarily *false* (and in that case we shall say that *T\** is "excluded" from *T*);

(c) *contingent* (and in that case we shall say that  $T^*$  is neither included in nor excluded from  $T$ ).

(Note: This is *my* way of setting things up. Aquinas doesn't do it this way. Rather, this is intended to be an explanation of what he does do.)

Now, given all that, we can say that an essence or common nature or form of the whole can be considered:

(1) As a part of the individual, abstracting *with precision* (see Chapter 4 above on this term) from all *other* ingredients of the individual - that is, from its accidents, from *esse*, from *everything* else. This means that we don't just leave those other ingredients or parts out of consideration; we positively *exclude* them. We cut them off (*praescindere*), which is what is "precise" about the concept. The word that expresses the common nature considered in this way is '*humanity*'. Grammatically, it is the *abstract* form of the noun. Using the machinery just above, we can say that *humanity* then (i) *includes* just exactly what is contained in the definition of '*man*' (and what is entailed by that - hereafter let's just leave this clause to be tacitly understood), and (ii) *excludes everything else*.

(2) The essence or common nature or part of the whole can also be considered *as a whole*, that is, abstracting *without precision* from everything else. The other ingredients of the individual thing, its accidents, its *esse*, are left out of account, but are not positively ruled out. The term to express the common nature considered in this way is just '*man*'. Grammatically, it is the *concrete* form of the noun.

We're not done. Item (2), the form of the whole considered as a whole, comes in three subdivisions. It can be considered

(a) *Absolutely*. We don't have any special terminology reserved to express this in every case, but when it is in *subject* position, we frequently express it by '*as*' or '*qua*' talk. For example, '*man as man*', or '*man qua man*'. (Or maybe '*man as such*'.) The form of the whole considered as a whole and *absolutely* in this way includes exactly what is in the definition of '*man*', and excludes only what is incompatible with the definition of man (what is incompatible with what it includes).

Everything else is neither included nor excluded. The form of the whole considered as a whole can also be considered:

(b) According as it has *esse*, and this in two subcases:

(i) *Esse* in this or that individual. (It is a bit hard to see how this is said to be *abstract* at all.) Considered in this way, it *includes* whatever belongs to the individual, and *excludes* everything else. (I would say that it includes whatever is in the *definition* of the individual, and excludes everything else. But for Aquinas, and Aristotle, individuals don't *have* definitions, strictly speaking.)

(ii) *Esse* as a *concept*. Considered in this way, it includes whatever is in the definition of the *concept*, and *excludes* everything else.

I'm sorry. I realize some of this is pretty murky, particularly (2b) and its subdivisions. But no matter. I think we can see our way through enough to make some points about what is going on.

First, although Avicenna is sometimes undecided about whether to use the abstract or the concrete form of the noun (for instance, he uses '*animal*' but also '*humanity*'), I think (1) above is what he means by the *common nature taken in itself*. That is, he means what Aquinas calls "the form of the whole considered as a part". It is neither singular nor universal - both must be *added externally*. If I am right, for Avicenna *this* is what is predicated.

For Aquinas, (1) *has no being*. The term 'humanity', for instance, is simply a non-denoting term. It *prescinds* from - that is, *excludes* - everything that is not included in the definition or essence of man. But that of course means it prescinds from or excludes *esse*, which is "included" only in the "definition" or essence of God. (Avicenna of course would say it prescinds only from the *esse* that is *accidental* to it, not from its own *lesser being*, but Aquinas is not buying any of that.) Since *esse* is positively excluded, *of course* humanity cannot exist.

*Humanity*, then, does not exist. Only the *composite* of humanity plus various differentiating accidents - for instance, the composite Socrates - *exists*. (This commits us to the perhaps odd view that an existing whole has *non-existing* ingredients or "parts" - and indeed, non-existing *essential* parts. For Aquinas, you cannot weasel out of the oddity of this by allowing that while this "part" doesn't really *exist*, nevertheless it's still *out there*, with at least some minimal kind of *lesser* reality. Many people will find this too much to take. It is worth considering whether they are just engaging in philosophical prejudice, or whether there is really any good *argument* to rule out this kind of theory as impossible.)

Furthermore, given some funny business with Aquinas' theory of predication, I think it follows that for him, (1) above - that is, the form of the whole considered as a *part* - is *not* what is predicated, contrary to Avicenna's view. In order to be predicated at all on Aquinas' theory, the common nature must be taken in a way that doesn't positively exclude *esse*. Hence, we need some form of (2) above. In order to be predicated *of many*, it must not *include* this or that *esse*, either in individuals or in the mind. That of course would preclude its being predicated of anything else. (See the remarks above on Avicenna's similar move.) Hence, for Aquinas only (2a) remains. Only that is what is *predicated of many*.

Putting it another way, (1) cannot be predicated of many because it *excludes* too much. (2b), in either of its alternatives, cannot be predicated of many because it *includes* too much. (2a), however, is "just right", and it is *that* that is predicated of many.

Now, so far we have the common nature or essence *considered* in these various ways, and in some cases *expressed* by special terminology to reflect these various ways of conceiving it. What we want to know now is what these various ways of conceiving or considering the common nature have to do with ontology, with what is really out there. In *each* case - (1), (2a), and (2b) in both alternatives - our way of considering the common nature is a *correct* representation of what is going on, in the sense that we are not *including* anything that isn't there. But under what circumstances is our way of conceiving the common nature an *exact* representation of what is going on? When we have included everything? In short, according to which of the above divisions and subdivisions does a common nature *exist* in exactly the way we consider it? Obviously, the answer is: only (2bi) and (2bii). The common nature taken as in (1) does not exist, as we have already seen, since it *excludes* *esse*. Similarly, the common nature taken as in (2a) does not exist *just like that*, since, just like that, it takes no account of *esse* at all. Taken *absolutely*, it is just too indeterminate to exist.

Let's put this another way. For Aquinas, there is a *being* (in the participial sense) that answers to the term 'the *man* Socrates', and another that answers to the term 'the *concept* man'. But there is *no being* that answers to the term 'humanity' (or even to the term 'the humanity of Socrates'), although there *are* beings of which *humanity* is a constituent part. And there is no *being* answering to the term 'man' taken absolutely, or as we sometimes put it, 'man *qua* man'.

Thus, what is predicated of many has no being in reality. There is none of this "lesser being" stuff that Avicenna talks about. Neither does what is predicated of many have any *unity* of its own. (Aquinas agrees with Avicenna here.)

Let us go back to the experiment we have performed several times before. Pull the accidents off Socrates and Plato, until you get down to the common nature. How many do you have left? Boethius' strongly realist theory in the *De trinitate* (passage (3) of Text \s5, below), William of Champeaux's first theory and Clarenbald of Arras all say: *One*. Boethius' theory in the other passages discussed earlier (Chapter \s4), William of Champeaux's second theory and Gilbert of Poitiers all say: *Two*. Avicenna says that you indeed have a common nature left, and it has its own proper being, but the question *how many* you have is simply *inapplicable* when you frame the question this way.

What is Aquinas' answer? *ZERO!*

Although you can *talk* about doing this kind of thing, what you end up with *verbally* or *conceptually* is just the common nature taken either according to (1) or according to (2a). And *nothing* answers to that.

On this interpretation of Aquinas' theory of common natures, there are *two* mistakes to avoid:

(i) Common natures do not exist. That's wrong. They do exist, for Aquinas. They exist in individuals and in the mind. But they do *not* exist in abstraction *with precision* or in abstraction *without precision and absolutely* - that is, according to (1) or (2a). They derive no being at all from themselves.

(ii) Since sameness and difference do not pertain to the nature taken in abstraction without precision and absolutely - that is, (2a) - or for that matter with precision - that is, (1) - therefore the common nature *man* in Socrates and that in Plato are not diverse and are not the same. They are neither the one nor the other, but rather some kind of indeterminate third something in between. That is wrong too. They *are* diverse. The nature in Socrates is all tied up with Socrates' matter, with Socrates' differentiating accidents and with his *esse*. The one in Plato is all tied up with Plato's. They are *quite* diverse. They are just not diverse (or, for that matter, the same) considered in abstraction with precision or in abstraction without precision and absolutely. It *is* diverse in diverse things - which is to say, *not* taken absolutely or with precision.

(Incidentally, note that (i) and (ii) address the question of *being* and *unity*, respectively.)

Well, that is Owens' interpretation of Aquinas - or rather my way of putting that interpretation. It is a very influential interpretation, and many people accept it - both as the correct *interpretation* and as the correct *theory* in its own right. And, it must be said, there is some pretty strong textual support for this interpretation.

Nevertheless, I think there are some *insuperable* objections to it. This is not to say that Aquinas didn't really hold this theory. But if he did hold it, he *shouldn't* have held it.

What is the problem? Well, I think there are *two* problems. They are distinct, but closely related.

(a) First, how on earth is this theory ever going to account for the *community* of the "common" nature? For Aquinas, if the interpretation sketched above is correct, the nature taken in abstraction without precision and absolutely - that is, (2a) above - is what is predicated of, and so is somehow metaphysically *in*, Socrates and Plato, and for that matter also "in" the mind. On the other hand, on this same interpretation, there is nothing *answering* to the nature so taken, as we have just seen. Nothing at all! So it looks as if Aquinas is heading straight for nominalism. There is *nothing* out there that is really *common*. But if that is the case, then why do we say we have a *man* in all these cases? Why do we group them together under that one word? Isn't it just arbitrary?

(b) There is an altogether similar problem with the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, which Aquinas by and large accepts. (He accepts enough of it to give us *this* problem.) If the nature in the mind is not somehow *the same* as that in the thing, then how do I ground the objectivity of knowledge? I thought the whole *point* of this Aristotelian approach to knowledge was to say that *were* the same.

On the interpretation given above, Aquinas turns out to be unable to make up his mind. Sometimes he sounds like a nominalist, sometimes like a realist. If you stress the claim that knowledge and common predication is grounded in the common nature, then he looks like a *realist*. But if you stress the fact that the common nature, taken in the only sense in which it can do these things, *doesn't exist*, then he certainly sounds like a *nominalist*.

You see, on this interpretation, although Aquinas doesn't want to grant any reality at all to the common nature in the relevant sense, he nevertheless wants it *to do work* for him. He refuses to give it any metaphysical *rights*, but yet he demands that it take on epistemological and predication *duties*. It is supposed to ground the objectivity of knowledge; it is supposed to be the justification for the fact that we predicate the same term 'man' non-arbitrarily of Socrates and Plato. These are not trivial tasks. And yet we are supposed to entrust them to a complete non-entity? Doesn't this violate a basic philosophical principle, a kind of "Principle of Fair Play": *No philosophical duties without corresponding metaphysical rights*? But perhaps, you may say, such a "Principle of Fair Play" is just philosophically wrong! Maybe you *can* get away with this. Maybe, in fact, this is the *only* way you can end up with an adequate theory of common natures, which is to say, an adequate "solution" to the problem of universals. After all, I don't have any knock-down *argument* that you can't make complete non-entities do philosophical work for you. Do you? (Gut feelings do not count as arguments where I come from.)

Nevertheless, however *you* stand on that, and however *I* stand on it, it seems to me that *Aquinas* is committed to accepting what I called a "Principle of Fair Play" at least in this case. That is, the particular *kinds* of jobs Aquinas is asking the common nature to do are jobs that, *on his own grounds*, cannot be done without granting them some kind of *being*.

What are these jobs? They are *unifying* jobs. Look at problems (a) and (b) above. The common nature in Socrates and the common nature in Plato must somehow be the same nature, or else there is no real basis for Socrates' and Plato's both being *men*. What is it, then, that is the same in both Socrates and Plato? Or, to put it in terms of predication, what is it that is *predicated* of both? On the grounds we have seen above, it can only be the nature taken as a whole and absolutely - that is, in sense (2a). That is what is supposed to account for the fact that Socrates and Plato are both men, since that is what is predicated of many. But it can only do this if the nature, taken in that way, is *the same* in Socrates as it is in Plato. On the other hand, to say it is *the same* is just to say it is *one*. (Aquinas explicitly accepts the identification of sameness with unity in many texts.) And to say it is *one* is just to say that it *does* have being after all, on the basis of the Augustinian identification of being with unity, *around which Owens built his entire paper!*

In other words, to say that *the same* one common nature in sense (2a) above is what is predicated of many, and then to say that this same *one* common nature has no being at all, is to *deny* the Augustinian equation of being and unity, not to *uphold* it in the face of Avicenna's theory, as Owens makes it out to be. And since I think there is incontrovertible evidence that Aquinas adhered to the Augustinian equation, I also think there is good evidence that either

Owens' interpretation of Aquinas' theory is wrong, or else Aquinas himself has a hopelessly inconsistent theory. (I lean toward the latter.)

The same thing can be said with respect to problem (b) raised above. If there is no sense whatever in which we can say that the common nature that exists mentally in cognition and the common nature that exists externally in Socrates and Plato is *the same one* common nature, then the entire Aristotelian account of knowledge collapses, and with it the Aristotelian guarantee of the *objectivity* of our knowledge. That account depended *crucially* on our being able to say that there is *no inference* needed to be sure that our concepts match reality, since our concepts are formally *identical* with (the same as, =) the realities out there. But if we say that they *are* the same, then we are committed, on the basis of the Augustinian equation, to saying that they have some degree of *being* too, contrary to the theory.

Notice that it does no good to say that, yes, the common nature *does* have being; it has *one* (mental) being in the mind, and *another* being in Socrates, and yet a *third* being in Plato. Now we have *three* beings, and so *three* unities. And *none* of them is what we want. Each of them is confined to its own little realm, to the mind, or to Socrates or to Plato, and none of them is *common*. Hence none of them is available to take on the duties Aquinas requires. The only way to do that, as far as I can see, is to give the common nature in sense (2a) some degree of being on its own. And that is why I think Owens' interpretation, while it may or may not be a good interpretation, is certainly a bad theory.

*Digression:* Interesting things will happen if we make the same kinds of divisions that Aquinas made above for the common nature, only this time not for natures but for *esse*. Even though we do not have a simple concept of *esse*, we do have a complex descriptive concept of it, and we can presumably consider it in the same ways we can consider a common nature. If we do, then we get:

(1) *Esse* in abstraction with precision. When we were talking about common natures, we said there was nothing answering to this division. But when we are dealing with *esse*, there is: it is *God*. A common nature taken in this way cannot exist, since it prescinds from (excludes) *esse*. But if you take *esse* itself this way, of course you don't have that problem. And God, for Aquinas, is just *ipsum esse subsistens*.

(2) *Esse* in abstraction without precision. This can be taken (a) absolutely, or (b) according as it is the *esse* of this or that thing. Nothing answers to (2a), just as nothing answered to the corresponding division for common natures, on Owens' interpretation. There is no *esse* that is common and shared. Socrates' *esse* is diverse from Plato's insofar as the one is Socrates' and the other is Plato's. (My objections just above, *mutatis mutandis*, apply here too.) This goes back to the question we discussed at the end of Chapter 6 above: Is God the *esse* of creatures? We are now in a position to see a little more clearly why not. (Note that this much is true no matter how much weight you give to my objections to Owens' view. Whether *esse* in abstraction *without* precision has any kind of reality or not, it is certainly not the same as *esse* in abstraction *with* precision.) *End digression.*

Let us now recall a very important principle appealed to, for instance, by Avicenna in his famous "Suspended Man" passage (Text 7 below and Chapter 8 above). It is also in Descartes. Here it is (I'm paraphrasing):

If it is possible to conceive *x* without *y*, then *x* and *y* are *really distinct*. Each has its own being, and *x* is independent of *y*.

It is this principle that allows Avicenna (and Descartes) to claim the real distinction of mind and body, and also allows Avicenna to claim that common natures have their own lesser

being. I can think of "man", after all, without thinking of Socrates or Plato, so that "man" must be something distinct from individual men, something with its own ontological integrity.

I know of no place where Aquinas directly attacks this principle but, if Owens is right, then *in effect* Aquinas can say that Avicenna has confused two things:

(a) it is possible to conceive *x* without conceiving of *y*, and

(b) it is possible to conceive of *x-without- y*. That is, it is possible to conceive of *x separated* from *y*.

('Conceive' here means something like "consistently conceive.") Now Aquinas will accept Avicenna's principle in sense (b), but not in sense (a). If he were to accept it in sense (a), then we *would* have common natures with their own lesser being, which is not so bad, from my point of view. But if Owens is right, then even though I can *consistently conceive* of common natures *absolutely* - that is, in sense (2a) above - it does not follow that they have any *being of their own* in that absolute way.

Notice, incidentally, that sense (a) just above is *exactly* what Aquinas himself uses in *On Being and Essence* on p. 55, where he argues that *esse* is really distinct from essence (the business about knowing what a man or a phoenix is, but not knowing *whether* one is). But earlier (Chapter 6 above) I said that I thought this was a bad argument on other grounds, so I can hardly appeal to it here as evidence against Owens' interpretation.

## DUNS SCOTUS

Let us now see what Duns Scotus has to say about all this.

For Avicenna, remember, common natures in themselves have no unity, but they do have a lesser being. For Aquinas, on the interpretation outlined above, they have no unity or being at all. For Scotus, they have *both* a lesser being and also a lesser unity.

Avicenna had distinguished kinds or degrees of being, but not of unity. That is Scotus' contribution.

For Scotus, natures are always *individuated* when they *exist* in reality. We can also *conceive* a nature universally, in the mind. And between these two conditions, there is the nature *just in itself*.

Scotus seldom uses the term 'common nature'. He simply speaks of 'natures'. Sometimes he also calls them 'formalities', or just 'realities'. But he *never* calls them '*res*', '*things*'. For Scotus, a *res* is always an *individual*.

Natures are *indifferent* in themselves to *esse* or existence, just as they are for Avicenna. This is the doctrine of the "neutral essence". Yet they have their own being, a kind of *esse quidditativum*, a "quidditative being", or "essential being". In addition to having their own kind of *being*, natures just in themselves have a kind of *unity* of their own too. The nature *stone* has a kind of unity of its own, and the nature *man* also has a unity of *its* own. And the two are in some sense *distinct*. We can say all of this without ever considering the question of *existence*. But we could *not* do this if they did not have some unity and being of their own.

For Scotus, there are three levels, so to speak: the level of the individual (*res*), the level of the concept, and the level of the nature or formality just in itself, which can *exist* in either individuals or concepts. For each of these levels, we get a kind of *unity* (sameness) and a kind of diversity or distinction. This is a rather sticky but *very* important part of Scotus' doctrine. It is sticky because it is not clear exactly how to *define* these various notions. And Scotus seems to have changed his mind on some of them over the course of his career. But it goes *roughly* like this (for help, compare passage (3) in Chapter 4 above).

(1) At the level of the *individual or thing* (≠*res*), the *unity* is called *numerical unity*. Socrates is *numerically one*. This is the kind of unity an individual thing has. Logicians today like to treat this "unity" as a relation, and call it "self-identity". The *distinction* that goes with this level is called the *real distinction*. It occurs whenever you have numerically more than one thing. *Tentatively*, the criterion for real distinction is this:

*x* is really distinct from *y* if and only if it is possible for *x* to exist without *y* or else for *y* to exist without *x* (or both).

The word 'possible' here refers not to *natural* possibility - that is, the laws of nature - but to the power of God. (See Chapter 9 above, for the emphasis on divine omnipotence.) Roughly, for Scotus, this amounts to "consistently conceivable". Thus, Socrates and Plato are really distinct, since it is possible to have either without the other. Similarly, God and creatures are really distinct, since while it is not possible to have creatures without God, it is possible to have God without creatures. Likewise, an individual substance is really distinct from its accidents. Not only can you have the substance without its accidents, that is, its separable accidents. You can also have the accidents without the substance - *at least by the power of God*. Many people thought that this is exactly what happens in the Eucharist.

(2) At the level of the *concept*, the *unity* that is appropriate is the kind of unity the concept of man has as *one* concept. Scotus has no special term for this. The kind of *distinction* that goes here is the (mere) *distinction of reason*. This is a very low-grade distinction. *Tentatively*, the criterion is:

*x* and *y* are distinct by a mere *distinction of reason* if and only if the *concepts* of *x* and *y* are just *two* concepts for the same *item*.

*Note*: I do not say the same *thing* (≠*res*). It can also be the same *nature* or *formality*. If it is the same *thing*, then the sameness or unity is *numerical* unity. If it is the same *nature*, then the sameness or unity is the unity that *natures* have. (See below). As an example, Cicero and Tully are distinct only by a distinction of reason; they are *numerically one*. So too, man and rational animal are distinct by only a distinction of reason; they are *one* with the kind of unity *natures* have.

As far as I can see, this whole level of concepts is not very important for the theory of unity and distinction in Scotus.

(3) Between (1) and (2), we have the level of the *nature or formality*. Here is where Scotus makes his big contributions. The *unity* that goes with this level is called *real less than numerical unity* or *real minor unity*. ('Minor' is just Latin for "less".) It is *real* - that is, it is not just a product of our minds, it is grounded in reality, on the side of reality, *ex parte rei*. I don't just make it up. And yet it is *less than numerical* - that is, it does not amount to singularity. For then the nature would be an individual.

The *distinction* appropriate to this level is the celebrated *formal distinction*. (And unlike most uses of the word 'celebrated', I can well imagine a real *celebration* of the formal distinction, with noisemakers and funny hats. It is well worth such a celebration!) As a *tentative* criterion, let us try:

*x* and *y* are *formally distinct* if and only if *x* can be conceived without *y*'s being conceived, or vice versa (or both).

This is a distinction that applies *not* in the order of individuals - that is, of actual existence. It is not the *real distinction*, in the technical sense introduced above (although of course it is "real" in the looser sense that it is "on the side of reality" - we do not make it up).



Neither is it in the order of concepts or understanding - which is the other kind of *act* that can accrue to natures. Rather it belongs to the order of *essence* or quiddity.

Since *essences* are what is *conceived*, the criterion can be put in terms of conceivability, as above. But since essences or formalities have their own *quidditative being*, the distinction is one that is *on the side of reality*. It has a basis in reality.

(Notice, once again, that this is not called a *real* distinction, even though it has a real basis. The term 'real distinction' is reserved for something else. On the other hand, less than numerical unity of the kind that belongs at this level *is* called a "real" unity. That is because the opposite of the *real distinction* is not called "real" unity, but "numerical" unity. So the term "real unity" is not already spoken for, and is free to be used.)

For instance, there is a formal distinction between:

(a) Socrates and the common nature man. I can conceive the latter without the former.

(b) man and animal.

(c) man and ass.

(d) God, God's will, God's intellect. This is a curious and important application of the doctrine of the formal distinction. Some people thought this threatened to destroy the divine simplicity, since the formal distinction is after all based in reality.

Now, as I have signaled above, the *criteria* for these kinds of distinction are very tentative. A lot of work needs to be done to straighten all this out. ¶4

(Which is to say, *I* at least need to do a lot of work before I am completely confident on these matters.)

Now let us ask some questions and make some observations about these kinds of identity and distinction:

(1) Are Socrates and Plato *formally* distinct? Are humanity and asininity *really* distinct? Both pairs satisfy the respective definitions, given above. For that matter, while Socrates and the common nature man are formally distinct, are they also *really* distinct? After all, I can have the nature (in Plato, say) without having Socrates.

The answer to all of these questions is supposed to be: No. The criteria will have to be adjusted in that case. The real distinction is meant to be a distinction between *individuals* only - or at least between *individuated* items. The *formal distinction* must have at least *one side* among *natures* - for instance, Socrates and his nature, or man and animal (in the latter case, of course, *both* sides are natures).

(2) There is nothing wrong with having *numerical* unity combined with *formal* distinction. For example, God, his will, his intelligence - all these are *numerically* one, but *formally* distinct.

(3) There is nothing wrong with having *real distinction* combined with *real minor unity*. The common nature *man* that is present in both Socrates and Plato is *one* with a real less than numerical unity, and yet the nature as it is in Socrates is *really* distinct from the nature as it is in Plato.

(4) For Aquinas, this entire middle realm is rejected. There is no real minor unity, and there is no formal distinction. Consider the following text from Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*, I, Ch. 26: What is common to many is not anything over and above the many except *by the reason alone*.

That is, the distinction between the common nature and the individuals that have it - man and Socrates, for instance - a *formal* distinction for Scotus, is only a "distinction of reason" for Aquinas. We have two distinct words or concepts, "man" and "Socrates". But *ex parte rei*, there

is nothing to answer to the common nature *man* except just *individual* men, Socrates and all the rest. The distinction between Socrates and his nature is merely one of reason. They are numerically the same.

(Note that this text is strong evidence in favor of Owens' interpretation of Aquinas. Nevertheless, the theoretical difficulties I raised against that interpretation still stand. If what is "common" to Socrates and Plato is nothing over and above the individuals, then in what sense is it "common"? In my own view, there is equally strong textual pressure to interpret Aquinas as granting some kind of reality to natures in themselves: every passage in which he affirms the Augustinian equation of being and unity is such evidence. But, however you stand on that, it is *quite* clear that Aquinas does not have the *vocabulary* to allow different grades of identity and distinction on the side of reality. That comes with Scotus.)

(5) Recall Avicenna's "Suspended Man" criterion of *real* distinction, above. (Avicenna of course does not use that term, since he does not distinguish *degrees* of unity, as he does of being.) Recall the ambiguity I noted above in that criterion:

(a) *x* can be conceived without conceiving of *y*, or vice versa;

(b) it is possible to conceive of *x-without- y*, or vice versa.

Aquinas accepted (b) as a criterion of *real* distinction, but denied that (a) is a criterion for any distinction at all on the side of reality. (At least, he *in effect* denied this.) Scotus *agrees* that (b), not (a), is the criterion of the *real* distinction. If one can *exist* without the other, then I can consistently conceive of that's occurring, and vice versa. But Scotus thinks that (a) is the criterion of a distinction on the side of reality too: the *formal* distinction. Avicenna blurred the distinction between (a) and (b). Aquinas accepted one criterion but did not accept the other as a criterion of any distinction on the side of

reality. Scotus accepts *both* criteria, but as criteria of different kinds of distinction.

Here is a little table to help you to keep some of this terminology straight:

\x\k\f8\h2iUnity\h4iDistinction

Thing\h2inumerical\h4ireal

Nature,\h2ireal minor

formality,\h2i (real less\h4iformal

reality\h2i than numerical\b

Concept\h2i(no special term)\h4iof reason\b

FIG. \s0-I\I+3D: SCOTUS: KINDS OF UNITY AND DISTINCTION

In Scotus, we must carefully distinguish two notions: community, as opposed to universality. (Actually, you have to make the same distinction with Avicenna too.) Community is what the nature in itself has. Universality is what the concept has.

What is the difference? Scotus says that for Aristotle, the universal is one *in* many, and *predicable* of many things. The ability to be *in* many things is what Scotus calls *community*, and amounts to *Boethian universality* (see Chapters \s4 and \s3 above). The ability to be *predicated* of many is what he calls *universality*, and it amounts to universality in the sense Abelard had talked about.

The formality or nature in itself has community. It *can* be in many things at once; it is not "repugnant" to it to be so. But it is not *by itself* able to be *predicated* of many. In order to be able to be predicated of many, it has to be *thought* - and this is what constitutes it as a *universal*. (I take it the idea here is that "predication" is not something that happens in the logical or semantical abstract. Predication is an act that *human beings* perform, and they do it with their

*minds*. So nothing can be predicated without being thought of or conceived. This *seems* to be perhaps the implicit reasoning here.)

So for Scotus it is the *concept* that is predicated of many, not the nature in itself. Recall, however, that for Avicenna, the basic starting point of this whole business was the notion of predicability. He *needed* to have some real nature that was neither of itself singular nor of itself universal in order to allow for predication. This was what the real common nature was for. But for Scotus, the common nature in itself is *not* what is predicated. Hence, whatever motive Scotus had for positing these real common natures or "formalities", it cannot have been Avicenna's concern for predication.

Well, what *were* Scotus' motives? Before we answer that, we need to fill out the point just above. Recall that Avicenna had an *argument* why the universal could not be what is predicated. How does Scotus get around this argument?

The argument was that if what is predicated were of itself universal, then whatever it was predicated *of* would be universal too. It could not be predicated of singulars. It was just the converse of the argument about singularity.

When I predicate 'man' of several people - say, of Socrates and Plato - what I predicate is just what is contained in the definition. I predicate "rational, sensate, organic, material, corporeal substance" of them. I do *not* predicate "*this* rational, sensate, organic, material, corporeal substance" of them. For I could say *that* only of one thing. (See above on why this is not a fallacy.) Neither do I predicate "*universal* rational, sensate, organic, material, corporeal substance" of them, since I cannot say that of *any* singular.

*Note the assumption:* that singularity and universality accrue to the nature like accidents in the quidditative or intelligible order. That is, when you add these accidents, you change or *add* to the intelligible content of what you started with. That's why they get in the way of predication.

Not so for Scotus. Singularity and universality for him are not further *determinations* of the nature. Rather, they are what he calls "modes". This notion of a "mode" is characteristic of the Scotist school.

A "mode" for Scotus is whatever can be added to a nature without changing its intelligible content. For instance, the *intensity* of white light is a *mode* of that light. (What does this notion of "mode" have to do with the notion of a "mode" in Descartes and Spinoza later on?)

Note, incidentally, that the introduction of modes allows a new kind of distinction: the *modal* distinction. The light and its intensity are only *modally* distinct. It is not a *real* distinction, between two *res*, or a formal one between two formalities or between a formality and a *res* (since formalities *determine*), or a mere distinction of reason (since it seems to be on the side of reality). (*Question:* Is there a special kind of *unity* to go with the modal distinction?)

Existence, it turns out, is a *mode* of a nature. (This, incidentally, sounds a lot like Kant.) Hence Scotus rejects Aquinas' *real* distinction between essence and *esse*. (There is a problem trying to figure out just what the criterion of a real distinction was for Aquinas. It does not appear to be the "separability" criterion that Scotus uses.)

Singularity and universality are also modes of the nature. They do not change its intelligible content, they do not determine the nature any further in the quidditative or intelligible order. Hence they do not get in the way of predication. And since Scotus has *independent* reasons for wanting the universal to be what is predicated, he is now free to do so.

Now, what are Scotus' grounds for positing a real common nature? Basically, he gives two "metaphysical" reasons and three epistemological ones. *Note:* All along, I have been maintaining that the basic motivations behind realism were epistemological, not metaphysical or

ontological ones. Hence, it is extremely interesting to see Scotus giving metaphysical reasons for his special brand of realism. They must be examined very closely, to see if they really do the trick. Here are his metaphysical reasons:

(1) Real common natures are needed to account for *real* relations, and in particular to account for real relations of *sameness*. There are relations of "sameness" in three of the Aristotelian categories:

(i) Substance, where it is called *identity* or sameness proper (in Latin 'sameness' and 'identity' are the same word, *identitas*, from *idem* 'same'), and where "sameness" means belonging to the same genus or species, or being the same *individual*. (Digression: Numerical identity was not generally treated as a relation in the Middle Ages. They regarded relations as always involving at least two *distinct* terms. There was no *reflexivity* in the mediaeval theory of relations. They would not say that Socrates is identical with himself, but rather that Socrates is *numerically one*. That is, they treated numerical identity as a "property" (in our loose, present-day sense) rather than as a relation. You can tinker with this, and see whether it makes any difference.)

(ii) Quality, where it is called *similarity*.

(iii) Quantity, where it is called *equality*.

(Get used to these terminological fine points, and observe them. Mediaeval authors did not say "equal" where they meant "identical", or vice versa.)

In any case, in order to account for real relations of sameness, Scotus thinks there must be something in each case on the part of reality that *joins* the relata. This something cannot be numerically one of itself, or else it could not be in both relata at once to join them. Therefore, it must have a *real* unity, but a unity that is less than *numerical*. It must be *real*, because real relations of similarity, equality and identity are not just the products of the intellect.

In a real relation of this kind, you have three things involved:

(a) Two *res* that are related, the so called "relata". Each of these is numerically one, and the two are really distinct from one another.

(b) A *foundation* for the relation - that is, something that is shared, a common nature, a formality. This has a real less than numerical unity.

(c) The relation itself, relating the two relata and founded on the common nature. For instance, similarity, equality, generic or specific identity.

For Scotus, the relation itself is a third thing, a third *res*. It is *really* distinct from the two relata. The foundation is only *formally* distinct from the relata. If *A* and *B*, for instance, are both white, then *A* and *B* are really distinct. That is, *A* can exist without *B* (or vice versa). But if that happened, then the similarity would vanish. So the relation is really distinct from the relata. So too, *I think* Scotus thinks you can have the similarity - that is, the relation itself - without having these particular relata, but I'm not sure how this goes. (Is it just that this same relation can be grounded in two *other* such relata instead?) *Question*: What about the distinction between the foundation and the relation? I suspect they are probably only *formally* distinct, but I am not sure.

(2) Real common natures are needed to explain *causality*. Between the cause and the caused there is (generally) a nature shared. For example, fire causes fire. (This is so in the case of what is called "univocal" causality. People also recognized an "equivocal" kind of causality, when the cause and the effect did *not* share a common nature - for instance, in the case of God and creatures. But Scotus' point only requires that *some* cases of causality be univocal.) This would be so even if there were no intellect. So this unity is not just a product of the mind, it is

not a mental fabrication. It must be *real*. But it cannot be *numerical* unity, since nothing causes itself. Therefore, it must be a real but less than numerical unity.

Here are Scotus' *epistemological* reasons for positing common natures:

(3) We need them to provide a proper object for the intellect *and for the senses*. For the intellect - that is fairly clear. The idea is that the object of the intellect is the *common*. We frame our knowledge in terms of the common or general. We pigeonhole things. Now, unless the mind is to produce its own objects, these common natures must be *real* - that is, mind-independent. Knowing is supposed to be a *discovery*, not a *making*.

The case for the *senses* is rather more interesting. Recall the Aristotelian dictum (Chapter \s2 above): "Sensation is of particulars, but understanding of universals." (\i+3dSensus est particularium, intellectus autem universalium.\i+3d) Scotus disagrees with both sides of this slogan. As for the side about the intellect, the disagreement is mainly verbal. The proper object of the intellect is not the universal, he thinks, but the common nature. Scotus is willing to accommodate the traditional terminology by calling the universal *concept* a "complete" universal or universal "in act", whereas the common nature all by itself is only an "incomplete" or "potential" universal. In any case, it is only the common nature, not the fully universal concept, that is the object of the intellect for Scotus.

But more important, Scotus disagrees with the part of the slogan about *sensation* too. For Scotus, intellect and sense have the same kind of proper object. (What then is the difference between intellection and sensation? That is a good question for Scotus.)

The argument for this interesting view is as follows. I hear *sound*, I see a *color*, and so on. The proper object of hearing is not *this individual occurrence* of the sound, and the proper object of vision is not *this individual occurrence* of the color. If it were, I could never perceive *other* occurrences. (The term 'proper object' leads to complicated business. Without getting too technical about it, just think of it as meaning something like "characteristic object".)

The proper object of a sensory faculty, therefore, is going to have a *real* unity, to be sure, but not a *numerical* unity. Therefore, it will be a *real less than numerical unity*. Sight distinguishes white from green, but not *this* occurrence of white from *that* one.

We do perceive individuals, to be sure, but we can discriminate individuals in perception only if we take into account the so called "common sensibles" - features that can be perceived by more than one sense faculty - for example, place and position. If we do *not* take those into account, then we cannot discriminate occurrences. The *proper* object of sensation is the common nature, and only it.

Suppose God created two physical objects of the same dimensions, color, and so on. The sense of sight could not distinguish them on the basis of proper sensibles, but only on the basis of *position*, which is a *common* sensible. If position is not at stake, then sight cannot discriminate between them at all. Suppose the entire field of vision were filled by a certain shade of red. Then it disappears and things get completely dark, and then the same shade of red returns and again fills the entire field of vision. What do we say? Do we say "There it is again" or do we say "There's another one just like the one before"? We don't know which to say, which just shows that sensation, when left to its proper sensibles, does not reach as far as *individuals*, but stops at the level of the common nature.

(4) Common natures are needed to explain predication. This does not mean of course that the common nature just by itself is *what* is predicated. Rather the *universal concept* is what is predicated. Instead, the common nature is needed to ground the *objectivity* of predication. If the

universal were *totally* a work of the mind, rather than a work of the mind done to something *real*, then predication would be a fiction. Once again, knowing is *discovering*, not *making*.

(5) Common natures are needed to provide proper subjects for the sciences. According to Aristotle, science deals with the "universal". (See his *Posterior Analytics*.)

Here is a case where "authority has a nose of wax". (Remember this phrase?) Scotus interprets Aristotle's dictum here as being about the *incomplete* universal - the common nature. The basic idea here is that science is not about this individual or that one, but deals with types and classes. If these (incomplete) "universals" were not *real*, then science would be a pure product of the mind. Once again, the same point: Knowledge is discovery, not making.

Scotus argues, if the objects of a science were not real, but totally the works of the mind, then every science would deal with *concepts*. (They are the products of the mind.) Now the science that deals with concepts - that is, with what is *predicated* - is *logic*. Hence if there were no real common natures, all the sciences would *reduce to logic*. Several other people appealed to an argument like this too.

Now I want to weave together a few different themes:

On Scotus' view, remember, there is no need for a special divine illumination to ground certitude. (See Chapter \3 above.) The classical Augustinian reason for saying there was such a need was that the individual object was changeable and mutable, and so too was the intellect. Neither was firm enough to ground certain knowledge. This is a basically Platonic attitude.

For Scotus, it is simply not so. Material individuals are changing, to be sure, but they have *immutable* common natures in them. And so there is something in the individual, after all, that is sufficient to ground certitude.

This was just Aristotle's answer to Plato. (See Chapter \4 above.) Just as Aristotle doesn't need the theory of reminiscence, so too Scotus doesn't need the theory of illumination.

Aquinas, as we saw, was another one to make this move explicitly. He can do it too because he wants to find a fixed and immutable nature in things. But Aquinas' and Scotus' views on how the common nature in the individual works in knowledge will be quite different.

The difference concerns the role of the agent intellect. Aquinas accepts the Aristotelian dictum: "Sensation is of particulars, but understanding of universals". In fact, for Aquinas, this makes the distinction between sensation and intellection fairly clear.

Recall from the above that for Aquinas, there is no distinction *on the side of reality* between the individual and its nature. There is no *real* distinction, and there is certainly no *formal* distinction, since Aquinas simply has no such notion as a formal distinction in *any* case. Hence there is only a distinction of reason. (He actually does say this. See the quotation a little above, from the *Summa contra gentiles*, I, Ch. 26.) Therefore, when sensation gets through doing its job, the nature preserved in the sense image is still *individual*. It is not yet *common*. (See Chapter \2 above on the general picture of sensation and intellection I am presupposing here.)

What the agent intellect has to do then is to work *on* the sense image, to separate the common nature from the individuating conditions. Just how it does this is not very clear. Aquinas' descriptions are more a kind of program of what has to be done than an explanation of *how* it gets done. The agent intellect in Aquinas is a real *black box*. Think of it as somehow "warming up" the sense image, so that it mysteriously releases these vaporous *natures*. (The difficulties on this point are just another form of the difficulties I have discussed above with Aquinas' theory of common natures.)

*Then*, only after all that is done is the nature ready to be impressed on the possible intellect. The agent intellect does this chore too. So for Aquinas, the agent intellect has *two* jobs

to do. First it must somehow *get* the common nature out of the particularized sense image, and then it must, second, stamp that on the possible intellect.

For Scotus, the agent intellect has much less to do. In the individual *thing*, the individual and its nature are distinct. There *is* a distinction for Scotus on the side of reality. It is more than just a distinction of reason. It is not a full-fledged *real* distinction in the technical sense of that term, but it is a *formal* distinction. Hence the nature present in the individual *already* has a *community* - that is, it already has the ability to be *in* many.

That is why Scotus can say that the sensible species or image is of the *common nature* and not of the *individual*, without needing to posit any kind of *agent sense* after an analogy with the agent intellect. Nothing has to be done to the nature to get it ready to be a proper object of sensation. (That's true for Aquinas too, but for a completely different reason - for Aquinas, the object of sensation is the individual.)

Likewise, for Scotus nothing has to be done *to* the nature to get it ready for the intellect. There is no "warming up" needed here. Scotus' agent intellect doesn't have that task to perform. All it has to do is to *read off* the common nature from the sense image, and then impress it on the possible intellect. For Scotus, the agent intellect is first a *selecting* device, and then a kind of *press*. That first task is quite different from what goes on for Aquinas. The agent intellect for Aquinas has to do more than just *select*. The common nature is *not* already there in the sensible species or image, just waiting to be read off. There is nothing *to* select. That is his whole point about the *metaphysics* of common natures.

The agent intellect has less to do for Scotus than it does for Aquinas. For Scotus, the agent intellect really *acts*, but it doesn't act *on* the sense image. It acts only on the possible intellect.

Remember how I said that Aquinas sounded like a realist if you pushed him one way, and like a nominalist if you pushed him another way? Here we see how Aquinas splits the difference. The difference between Scotus' and Aquinas' *realism* is in the role of the agent intellect. It has more to do for Aquinas than it has for Scotus, and to that extent Aquinas is *less realistic*, I suppose. (The more realist you are, the less work you will think the agent intellect has to do.)

William of Ockham - and we might as well begin talking about him now to some extent - will be a nominalist. He doesn't think we even *have* an agent intellect. And this is not because its task would be so *easy* that it is not needed. (There is nothing like an agent intellect, after all, on a strict Platonic theory.) Rather, it is because the job of *abstracting* on Ockham's theory would be so difficult as to be *impossible*. For Ockham we simply cannot form concepts by abstraction in the traditional way. He is a nominalist of the strict observance.

Aquinas distinguishes himself from Ockham's view insofar as for Aquinas, the agent intellect still has a *possible* task to perform. It is not asked to do the impossible. (At least, *he* thinks it isn't impossible; you, like Ockham, might disagree.)

Remember the two sides to the old problem of universals, the metaphysical side and the epistemological side. (See Chapter 5 above.) We can give a metaphysical and an epistemological formulation of both realism and nominalism, as they developed in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries:

Realism      Nominalism

Metaphysical      The common nature (taken absolutely, as Aquinas would say) has a being of its own.

Epistemological            The common nature (taken absolutely, as Aquinas would say) is the ground of our knowledge, its basis in the world.

FIG. 2: VERSIONS OF REALISM AND NOMINALISM

No, it doesn't.

No, it isn't.

In these terms, we can set up the following table:

1.5 Aquinas    3 Scotus    4.5 Ockham

Metaphysical    1.5 nominalist    3 realist    4.5 nominalist

Epistemological    1.5 realist    3 realist    4.5 nominalist

FIG. 3: AQUINAS, SCOTUS AND OCKHAM    REALISM VERSUS Nominalism

If you concentrate on metaphysics, Aquinas sounds almost indistinguishable from Ockham. If you concentrate on epistemology, he sounds like a realist, and so a bit like Scotus. Only if you take both sides into consideration do you see what is going on in the large. Of course, there are still huge problems with Aquinas' theory, as I have indicated above. Here these problems show up in his theory of the agent intellect. Its performance is very mysterious in Aquinas.

Here are some further questions to keep in mind when thinking about Scotus:

(1) How to distinguish sensation from intellection. They both have the same object for Scotus, the common nature. What then is the difference between these two mental faculties? Why do we need them both? Or do we?

(2) How do we get knowledge of the individual? This is sticky in both Scotus and Aquinas. Aquinas has trouble saying how we can *understand* or intellectually know anything about the individual, since "sensation is of particulars, but understanding is of universals". For the same reason, of course, he has *no* trouble saying how we *sense* the individual. Scotus has trouble on both sides. Ockham will press Scotus on this point. We obviously *do* know things - both at the level of sensation and at the level of understanding - about individuals. We will discuss this later, when we talk about the theory of "intuitive cognition".

(3) Why is the agent intellect needed at all for Scotus? If the common nature is present in the individual and already capable of impressing itself on the sense without the aid of any *agent sense*, then why can it not impress itself on the possible intellect too, without the aid of any *agent intellect*? (A possible reply: The common natures are presented *all together*, all mixed up, in the sense image. Something is needed to *select* the one to be impressed on the possible intellect. But still, does that mean that the *second* job of the agent intellect distinguished above, its "impressing" function, is idle?)



## Chapter 58:

### John Duns Scotus on Individuation: Doctrine

Two of Scotus' big contributions to philosophy were the notion of real minor unity and the formal distinction. Another was his theory of individuation, with its famous account of "*haecceity*" or "*thisness*". That is what we are going to talk about here.

For Scotus, natures by themselves have community, a real minor unity. So there is no need to inquire about a cause or principle of community. They just come that way. But, on the other hand, natures are not by themselves universal, and they are not by themselves singular either. Something must be done to them to make them universal or singular. Hence it is appropriate to ask about the "principle of universalization" (and that is the mind, as we saw in Chapter \s2) and about the "principle of individuation". We still have to look for the latter. What is it, then, that *contracts* the common nature to *this individual*? (This "contraction" talk is characteristic. Get used to it.)

Remember the two senses of 'principle of individuation' I distinguished when I was talking about Aquinas in Chapter \s3 above:

- (a) What makes a thing an individual, and the individual it is, rather than, say, just a heap?
- (b) What *contracts* (to use the new terminology) the specific common nature to the individual? In other words, what allows you to have *several* individuals of a kind, in one species?

For Aquinas, these two questions had different answers. In the Boethian tradition of individuation by accidents (Chapter \s5 above, and passage (3) from Text \s4 below), the two questions have the same answer. In the present instance, it seems to me that Scotus is primarily concerned with question (b), but it is not altogether clear. In answering (b), we may also be answering (a) for Scotus.

Scotus treats the issue in a number of places, but perhaps most importantly in a series of questions in his Oxford Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, the so called *Ordinatio* (see the beginning of Chapter \s6 above on this term), Book II, distinction 3, questions 1-6. He there considers a series of views purporting to identify the principle of individuation. Scotus argues against all of them, and then gives his own answer. Here is a road-map of this little "treatise" of six questions, together with the people who held the various views Scotus considers:

q. 1: Is a material substance individual *ex se*?

q. 2: . . . by a negation?

q. 3: . . . by existence?

q. 4: . . . by quantity?

q. 5: . . . by matter?

q. 6: Scotus' own position.

(Richard of Middleton, Godfrey of Fontaines, William of Ockham)

les of Rome)

nas - roughly)

stotle, Aquinas)

FIG. \s0-I\I+3D: SCOTUS' "TREATISE" ON INDIVIDUATION

Some of the discussion in these six questions has been translated in the Hyman and Walsh volume, and some small snippets have been translated by me in Text \s7 below. For a reference to a complete translation, see the note at the beginning of Text \s7. Now let us look at what is going on in this series of six questions.

In q. 1 Scotus asks, is the common nature one or singular all by itself - *ex se*? That is, does it just come that way? Is it *de se hoc* ("by itself a *this*")? Some people had said yes, and others would continue to say yes later on. For example, Richard of Middleton, Godfrey of Fontaines, and good old William of Ockham.

Scotus argues against this view. We have already seen some of his reasons, in the context of the two metaphysical and the three epistemological reasons for positing common natures, described in Chapter 2 above. (Not all of those reasons are brought out in this question.)

But if the common nature is not *de se hoc*, then of course we must look for an additional *principle of individuation*. Scotus tries various alternatives. See the little road-map in the Figure above. (Notice, incidentally, that there is nothing whatever in this discussion about individuation by all the *accidents*, as we found it passage (3) of Text 4 (see also Chapter 5, above), the strongly realist passage from Boethius' *De trinitate*. Notice also that *Avicenna* had explicitly maintained individuation by accidents in passage (5) of Text 8 below.)

Question 2 considers the view that individuation is somehow accomplished by a *negation*. This peculiar-sounding view was maintained by Henry of Ghent. You remember Henry of Ghent. He was Scotus' "adversary" in the discussion of illumination in Chapter 6 above.

According to Henry's theory, the common nature is not contracted to the individual by adding any new *positive* principle. So there is no *positive* principle of individuation. Henry's point is based on the very notion of an *individual*. An "individual", as the etymology of the term (*individuum*) would suggest, is *undivided*. This means *two things* for Henry:

(a) The individual is *not* identical with any other being. (Otherwise it would be, in a sense, *divided from itself*.)

(b) The individual is also *internally un-divided*. It is not a *heap*, but more a *unity* than that.

(Notice how these two points correspond to the two senses of "individuation" I distinguished for Aquinas above.)

Observe that both (a) and (b) are put *negatively*. and since (a) and (b) encapsulate just what it is to be an individual, this means that individuality can be described in purely *negative* terms. This twofold negation is the principle of individuation. No *positive* principle is required. See passage (1) in Text 7 below.

Scotus replies to this view (see passages (2) and (3) of Text 7) as follows. This is indeed what we *mean* by an individual. But what is it that *makes* it impossible for an individual to be internally divided in this way? What *prevents* it from being identified with any other being? Henry has tried to find the principle of individuation by simply *describing its effects*. That is not enough.

Furthermore, Scotus argues, this twofold negation appears to be just the same in the case of Socrates as it does in the case of Plato. *Both* are unities and not heaps, and *neither* is identical with anything distinct from itself. So it looks as if the twofold negation Henry describes is *itself common*, and so stands *itself* in need of individuating. We are a long way from solving our problem. It appears that we must look for some *positive* principle of individuation.

Hence we go to question 3, where we consider one suggestion for such a positive principle of individuation. This is *existence*. Scotus is not thinking of Aquinas here, for whom existence is a principle of individuation in one sense (sense (a) above), but not in another sense (sense (b) above). Instead he is thinking of *Giles of Rome*, who thinks that existence also answers question (b) above. The theory seems to be as follows:

Actual existence is the ultimate and final *actuality* of a being. And actuality or *act* (as opposed to potency) always determines and distinguishes. Therefore, actual existence will be the last determining and distinguishing feature of a thing, the one that is responsible for taking the last step toward making it a fully determinate *this*.

Giles is thinking here of the *Porphyrian Tree*, a kind of traditional diagram of genera and species. (It is named after Porphyry, who talked about genera and species of course in his *Isagoge*. See Chapter \s5 above.) Here is how part of the tree looks in the case of "man", which is the only branch of the tree that was ever really developed very fully. (If it doesn't look very much like a "tree" - never mind.)

SUBSTANCE\! MAIN LINE

\f8BODY

\f8ORGANISM

\f8ANIMAL

\f8MAN \B

\F8SOCRATES

\l0d\f3\i+.125i\i+1dl\f8 \f3\b\! SLANTED ARROWS

\i+.125ifferences\b

FFERENCES

ving

ent

onal

ncorporeal

ving

nsentient

rrational

ntermediary

GENERA

AND

SPECIES\F3

\F8\\_MOST SPECIFIC SPECIES\\_

(INFIMA SPECIES)\F3

ndividual

FIG. \s0-2\I+3D: THE PORPHYRIAN TREE

Substance is potential toward being either corporeal or incorporeal. The differentiae actualize that potency, they determine and distinguish. (Incidentally, the negative differences on the right are also differentiae, but not of man, so we just ignore them. You might say they fall into "the shadow of the Porphyrian Tree".)

The last step on the tree is the individual - Socrates, in this case. But it is the individual that actually exists. So it looks as though actual existence is the individual difference - like the "specific difference" - that determines individuals within the species. That is, it is what fills in for the question mark on the diagram. (That question mark represents the "principle of individuation" we are searching for.) See passage (4) of Text \s7.

Scotus' reply to this view is twofold. See passage (5) of Text \s7. First, existence pertains to a nature only after it has already been fully determined or contracted to an individual. In other

words, existence comes too late to be a principle of individuation. When I am given 'substance', I can ask, "Is it corporeal or incorporeal?" So too, when I am given 'Socrates', the individual nature, I can still ask, "Does he exist or not?" Existence, remember, is a mode of natures (see Chapter 2 above), and so for Scotus is not on the tree at all. It has nothing to do with intelligible content, which is what the tree is all about. Hence it cannot serve as an individual difference or principle of individuation. It cannot fill in for the question mark on the tree.

Aquinas would accept the basis of this objection. Esse for Aquinas is an act, but it is not of the same order as the differentiae on the tree. Esse is totally off the tree. So esse is not a principle of individuation in the sense that it is what contracts the species and allows it to contain many individuals. This of course does not prevent esse from being a "principle of individuation" in the sense that you have as many individuals as you have esses.

A second criticism Scotus raises to this view Aquinas would not accept. It runs like this (see passage (5) again in Text 7). Existence, like the nature itself, is not individual all by itself; it is not *de se hoc*, by itself a this. Hence it cannot serve as a principle of individuation. Existence needs to be contracted to the individual just as much as the nature does. In fact, existence is more common than any species or genus is. It is the most common thing of all, and hence needs to be contracted most of all.

Aquinas would not accept this. Esse for him is not something common; it does not need to be contracted. Since Aquinas does not share the Scotist theory of modes, therefore, if esse were common, it would be just like any other common nature. There is no other way of being common for Aquinas. But the whole point of Aquinas' doctrine of esse is to contrast it with natures. It stands over against natures.

In question 4, Scotus considers the suggestion that quantity is the principle of individuation. The position here is like this. Take a common nature - say, fire. Now this fire differs from that fire only insofar as the form of fire is received into different parts of matter. But one part of matter differs from another part of matter only by quantity, that is, by size and shape. Hence it is only quantity that divides part from part, and therefore the principle of individuation in the end reduces to quantity. This of course is the theory of designated or signate matter associated with Aquinas, and in different variations with Avicenna and Averroes. (See Chapter 2 above.) Aquinas, however, might not have recognized his own doctrine when it is presented like this.

Again, Scotus raises a twofold objection. (See Hyman and Walsh for the text.) First, quantity is an accident of an individual substance. But substances are naturally prior to their accidents. Therefore, quantity cannot individuate. (Recall one of Abelard's criticisms of William of Champeaux's first theory, in Chapter \s3 above.) We need a principle of individuation that is not accidental, but belongs to the substance itself. In terms of the pin-cushion analogy we have used before, we need a principle of individuation that is down there in the cushion, and is not one of the pins. Quantity comes on the scene too late.

Second, quantity is not *de se hoc* any more than the nature is. It is common too, and so it also needs a principle of individuation.

Just as for question 3, the objections here are that quantity (a) comes too late to do the job, and (b) is not *de se hoc* anyway, and so itself stands in need of individuation.

As a last resort, Scotus considers in question 5 the view that matter is the principle of individuation. This view is associated with Aquinas, but as we have seen (Chapters \s4-\s5), Aquinas' view is much more complicated and involves much more than just matter. Aristotle, however, appeals to matter as a principle of individuation in several places. For instance, in *Metaphysics* V, VII, and XII. Also in the *De caelo*.

Aristotle thinks this is so not only in the sensible world, but also in the intelligible world. Aristotle has a peculiar notion of "intelligible matter". This geometrical circle, studied by this mathematician, differs for instance from that one only in virtue of its intelligible matter. Again - and perhaps more clearly - when a geometer says that two triangles are congruent, what makes them two? Intelligible matter. The geometer abstracts from anything like existence or accidents other than shape and size - and as for shape and size, the triangles are congruent, after all. So they could hardly individuate.

Intelligible matter is a little like the spiritual matter we saw in the Augustinian tradition (see Chapter \s4). But the motivation is different. Intelligible matter is not introduced for the purpose of making sure all these geometrical circles and triangles will be composite and therefore distinct from God. Rather Aristotle is concerned only to make sure you can have several of them exactly alike.

Scotus' objection to this view runs like this. (It isn't in Hyman and Walsh, and I didn't translate it.) Matter is part of the nature of a material substance, together with the form. Hence it is just as common as the nature itself is, and stands in need of a principle of individuation too.

Here is where the notion of designated or signate matter comes in. Aristotle may or may not have had something like this. It is hard to tell. In any case, Aquinas does. See Chapter \s5 above. Part of the motivation behind signate matter is to answer just this problem, to individuate matter, so to speak. But there are monstrous problems with the theory of signate matter, as discussed in Chapter \s5, and Scotus' objection still seems to apply.

Finally, after exhausting the opposition, Scotus turns to explain his own theory on the topic, in question 6. (See Hyman and Walsh.)

For Scotus, the individual difference is a special kind of thing, not to be identified with any of the items considered above. Let us ask what conditions it must fulfill.

\f1(1) On the Porphyrian tree, each of the inferior or lower steps contains something not contained in the superior or higher steps. Each lower step adds a positive determination. So the individual difference must be a positive entity. We already know this from Scotus' criticism of Henry of Ghent's theory.

(2) Furthermore, the individual difference must combine with the specific nature to form a substantial unity, not just an accidental aggregate. We already know this from Scotus' criticism of the *quantity*-view.

(3) The individual difference must be the *last* difference on the Porphyrian tree. (See Figure \s0-2 above.) At each lower division of the tree, all the *higher* stages still apply. But this *stops* at the level of the individual. If you divide *man* up into Socrates and Plato, each of them is a man, an animal, an organism, and so on. But if you divide *Socrates* up, you get *parts* of Socrates, which are not Socrates. (This is the difference between a so called "universal" whole, made up of "subjective" parts, and an "integral" whole made up of "integral" parts.)

(4) The individual difference is not *quidditative*, in the sense that it is not *conceivable*. If it were, it would be *common* and would itself need a further principle of individuation. The individual difference must be *de se hoc*.

Points (3) and (4) are what make the *individual* difference special. It is in these respects unlike the other differences on the tree.

The idea behind point (4) is that *community* must stop at the level of the lowest *species*.

Now since *common natures* are the proper objects of the understanding, and even of sensation, the individual difference is not going to be easy to get at or to understand. The individual difference is a very mysterious entity for Scotus. The mind is not at home there. The mind is most at home with common natures. Even the senses have only a very indirect awareness of individuals. For Scotus, the most mysterious thing around us is *individuality*. (Compare this situation with the comparably mysterious status of *esse* for Aquinas.)

In the literature on Scotus, you sometimes see the term 'haecceity' (\f4=\f4"thisness"). This is *perhaps* not Scotus' own term for the individual difference. The manuscripts do not agree with the editions here. (The editions are quite old and badly in need of revision.) Perhaps the term was coined by the early followers of Scotus and soon found its way into the manuscripts. In any case, it is a pretty good term to describe what is going on. How do you get from animal to man? Add rationality. How do you get from man to *this* man? Simple: add *thisness*.

Haecceity for Scotus is not a *thing* (a *res*\i+3d). It doesn't combine with the nature as two *things* combine to form a third thing, as matter and form, for instance, combine to form a composite material object.

(For Scotus, matter and form are *really* distinct. God can make either exist without the other. This is part of the Augustinian tradition: matter even by itself has a minimal degree of actuality. This is quite unlike Aquinas' view, for instance.)

Socrates' nature (humanity) and his haecceity are not two *things*, but two *realities*, not two *res* but two *realitates*. There is a *formal distinction* between them, although a numerical unity.

*Note:* Haecceity really introduces a kind of fourth level into Scotus' ontology, in addition to things, common natures and concepts. Haecceity is not a *thing*, it certainly isn't a nature, and it isn't a concept. Is it a *mode* (see Chapter \s7 above)? I'm not sure.

*Note also:* Formal distinctions apply to haecceity. That is, one term of a formal distinction can be a haecceity.

Remember how both community and singularity belong to the nature outside the mind. Community, as we said, is the *possibility* of being *in* many. That is, it is not "repugnant" or inconsistent with the nature to be in many. (Whether this community or commonness is a positive or negative feature was a disputed point among Scotists.) Even if there were only one human being, humanity would still be common. Community is something the nature has *ex se*.

As for singularity, the nature has it too outside the mind, but not *ex se* - rather only from something else, namely, the individual difference, the haecceity.

Haecceity or thisness at first looks a bit like the recent notion of a *bare particular*. But it's not the same at all. It does not *underlie* anything, it does not *exemplify* anything, it is not a subject of predication. The haecceity of Socrates is not Socrates. Keep these differences in mind when you read various recent philosophers who announce that they are going to do such and such in a "Scotist" way, or that such and such in their theory is the equivalent of Scotus' haecceity. Those I've seen are not equivalent at all.

If we look back over Scotus and Aquinas, and look ahead a bit to Ockham, it is worth saying that one of the big differences among these people is over the question *where you want your great mystery*. For Aquinas, it is *esse*, which is very strange stuff for him. For Scotus, it is haecceity or individuality. For Ockham, as we shall see, it is universality or commonness.

Scotus' haecceity in some ways plays a role in his philosophy comparable to that of *esse* for Aquinas. It is worth thinking about this a long time. Both are at the *very heart* of their respective philosophies. In both cases, it is the *positive* principle of individuation (although we may be equivocating on the notion of individuation in saying this), there is no proper concept to be had of it, it is not a common nature, not a universal. Each individual has its own. And it is not a *thing*, but a kind of "principle". It is not a *thing* (even though for Aquinas, *esse* is *really distinct* from essence, which raises the question what he means by a real distinction) because it cannot exist separately, and what it combines with cannot exist separately from it. But nevertheless, haecceity is *unlike esse* in that it is a principle of *differentiation*, whereas *esse* is not for Aquinas.

Let me finish this Chapter with a few miscellaneous remarks.

First, Scotus' view of God. God is special in Scotist ontology. For Scotus, the divine nature is the *only* nature that is *de se hoc*. God just comes already singular. He needs no principle of individuation to narrow divinity down to God. Everything in God is *de se hoc*. There is a *formal* distinction, to be sure, between God and his will, his intellect, and so on, but all those formally distinct features are nevertheless numerically one and *de se hoc*. Just exactly how this is supposed to work, I am not sure. But perhaps even more important in view of what is just coming up in the following Chapters, for Scotus there is *nothing really common between God and creatures*. If there were, then this would have to be *contracted* to God, and so God would *not* be *de se hoc* after all. For Scotus, therefore, there is quite a sharp and radical metaphysical gap between God and creatures. There is *nothing in common* there. Nevertheless, we can form a universal *concept* common to God and creatures - for instance, the concepts "being", "good", and so on. We can do this because creatures are *like* God in various degrees, even though they share no nature of any kind with God. (It is possible to view this as problematic in Scotus.)

Second, remember the basic principle that goes back to Parmenides, the identification of *being* with *intelligibility*. That which is most fully real is also most fully intelligible. Now in the Aristotelian tradition in which Scotus finds himself, the *individual* is what is most fully real, most fully is. Hence the individual is *in itself* intelligible. There is nothing in the individual that is opaque to intelligence, including its haecceity or thisness. God and the angels, for instance, know the individual through and through; they know the individual *intuitively*. (On "intuitive" knowledge, see Chapter \s6 below.) We do not, unfortunately. *For us*, individuals and their individuality constitute the most mysterious things around us. In our present life, we have a direct and immediate knowledge only of common natures - both in intellection and in sensation. Sensation nevertheless can get *some* small grasp on the individual by means of the *common*

*sensibles*, as discussed in Chapter \s7 above. So too the intellect can get a minimal grasp on the individual by *turning to* the sensible species or image, the "phantasm".

Aquinas has a similar doctrine, the so called *conversio ad phantasmata* as an account of our intellectual knowledge of individuals. How does it work in Scotus? Remember that the job of the agent intellect for Scotus was to read off one by one the common natures that were all simultaneously present, but mixed up, in the sense-image (see Chapter \s7). The sense-image presents *all at once* a number of common natures. These will include the *proper* objects of the various senses - colors, sounds, and so on - and also the *common* sensibles - place, shape, orientation, size, and so on. Note that all these are *accidents*, and are all *common*. We do not come into direct cognitive contact with common natures in the category of *substance*. Neither do we come into direct cognitive contact with *thisness*. Nevertheless, we can form a *complex concept* of the individual by describing it in terms of these *accidental features*, including position and the common sensibles, which are included in the sense-image. If we think of concepts as forming the vocabulary of a mental language (as Ockham and others would do), then there are no proper names in a Scotist mental language, only descriptions. Knowledge of the individual can only come about in this very discursive and laborious way. *Essences* (in the category of substance) and *haecceity* are opaque *to us*. Recall the Boethian tradition of individuation by accidents (passage (3) of Text \s8 below - see also Chapter \s9 above). Scotus is in effect saying that, while *metaphysically* that doctrine is just backwards - putting the prior after the posterior - nevertheless *epistemologically* it is correct. That is exactly the way we come to *know* the individual, even if it is not the way it comes to be constituted.



## Chapter 59: Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition

For Scotus, there are two kinds of being: quidditative being, which common natures have all by themselves ("lesser being"), and existential being, the "being of existence" (*esse existentiae*). Both kinds are real, in the sense that neither is just something the mind makes up. Similarly, there are two kinds of knowledge for Scotus, one directed to the *esse existentiae* and the other to the *esse quidditativum*. These two kinds are called, respectively, intuitive and *abstractive* cognition. (See Hyman and Walsh, pp. 631-632.)

This distinction in Scotus is not a distinction between knowledge of the individual and knowledge of the universal or common. 'Abstractive' here has nothing whatever to do with abstraction from particulars. Intuitive cognition Scotus also sometimes calls just intuition, or sometimes *vision* - in a metaphorical sense, of course.

Here is a Scotist definition of intuition: "A direct knowledge of an existent as existing and present." (All words in this definition are important.)

Abstractive cognition, by contrast, does not reach as far as the actual existence of a thing. It stops at the level of quidditative being; it "abstracts", so to speak, from actual existence or non-existence. For instance, I know this piece of paper *intuitively*, but I know China or Rome only abstractly. (Of course I *believe* China and Rome exist, but we are talking about *knowledge*, not just belief.)

The distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition holds for both sensation and intellection. On the level of sense, intuitive cognition is called external sensation, while abstractive cognition is called imagination. One kind of abstractive cognition at the level of the intellect is science (in the sense of the Posterior Analytics). Science, in the strict Aristotelian sense of the word, is always abstractive knowledge. It doesn't concern itself with the actual existence of things, which is contingent. Rather, it deals with the "universal" (that is, the potential universal or common nature - see Chapter \s2) and necessary, and therefore must stop at the level of quiddity. On the other hand, abstractive knowledge is not *always* of the "universal" and necessary. It can also be of the individual and contingent. For the individual *of itself* is neither determined to exist nor determined not to exist. Recall Scotus' critique of Giles of Rome's theory of *esse* as the principle of individuation. (See Chapter \s3.)

*Problem for Scotus:* This is a problem that became quite a serious one later on. How can we know that something does *not* exist? This is not altogether the same as the question how we could ever know there is nothing of a certain *kind* - for instance, how we could ever know that no other snowflake is exactly like this one. The problem in that case is knowing when you have exhaustively surveyed all the candidates. But our present question is more general (it includes the former question) and addresses a different point. How can I *ever* have knowledge of non-existence? What kind of knowledge would it be? For instance, when I look in the cupboard and discover that *I am out of coffee*, that there is no more coffee there, what kind of knowledge is that? Not intuitive knowledge, if you will go back and check the definition. And not abstractive knowledge either, since abstractive knowledge doesn't have anything to do with the question of existence.

Note also that for intuitive knowledge, the mere existence of the object is not enough. The object must also be present to the knower. A representation or likeness - for example, a sense-image - is not enough. That is not the object, but rather a *substitute* for the object. Recall

Augustine on this issue (Chapter \s4 above). Sense-images are indifferent to existence and non-existence; we do, after all, have illusions and hallucinations. Recall also Scotus' critique of Henry of Ghent's third reason for postulating illumination - the created exemplar could not suffice, Scotus said, to distinguish illusion from reality. (See Chapter \s5 above. Henry denied intelligible species in the usual sense of the term. For him, the created exemplar was just a sense-image.)

While the sense-image is never sufficient for intuitive cognition, it may be *necessary* - at least for us in this life. Scotus is not altogether clear here. An image or representation is *certainly* required for *abstractive* cognition.

Ockham has a theory of intuitive and abstractive cognition too. See Boehner's *William of Ockham: Philosophical Writings*, pp. 21-35. Also consult the outline below, with the various divisions of knowledge for Ockham. The outline is based on the passages given by Boehner, and other passages too.

Notitia ( = *COGNITIO*)

A. incomplex

1. intuitive

(a) sensitive (needs an "organ"), of material things

(b) intellectual (does not need an "organ")

(i) of material things (we do not have this kind of knowledge in this life)

(ii) of "intelligible" things (pains, joys, etc.)\ b

2. abstractive

(a) sensitive ( = imagination)

(b) intellectual ( = ideas, concepts)

B. complex ( = judgments). (All judgments are abstractive.)

#### *FIG. 1: OCKHAM: KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE*

In what follows, notice the new concern with knowledge of individuals and contingent things. This is a marked departure from the standard Aristotelian - and for that matter Platonic - concern with the universal and necessary.

For Scotus, intuitive cognition required the existence and presence of its object. The object was at least a partial cause of the cognition. For Ockham, the situation is somewhat different. Intuitive cognition for him is knowledge in virtue of which I can judge with evidence whether the thing exists or not. (See Boehner, p. 26.) 'Evidence' here does not mean hints and clues. It doesn't just tend to support the judgment based on it; it guarantees that judgment.

For Ockham the definition of intuitive knowledge leaves open the possibility of an intuitive knowledge of a thing's non-existence too. Scotus' definition ruled this out.

Note: For Ockham, the intuitive cognition is not the *judgment* that the object exists (or doesn't), but rather that which *authorizes* the judgment. Abstractive knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge in virtue of which I *cannot* judge with evidence concerning the object's existence or non-existence. *All* judgments are abstractive knowledge for Ockham. The fact that I make a judgment about a thing never authorizes all by itself my judging that the thing exists or that it doesn't exist. There are other kinds of abstractive cognitions, however, which are not judgments - not complex, but rather simple. On the level of sensation, this occurs in imagination;

on the intellectual level, it occurs with ideas or concepts (both singular and general?). Further, intuitive knowledge can likewise be either sensitive (requiring a sense organ, and *of* material things) or intellectual (not requiring a sense organ). The latter can be either of *immaterial* things, like pains and joys, or of *material* things. But Ockham thinks we don't have this last kind of intuitive knowledge in this life. On all this, see the above Figure.

Look closely at Ockham's definition of intuitive cognition, given above. It does not include Scotus' requirement of existence and presence. For Ockham, we *can* have intuitive cognition of something's not existing. But while Ockham seems to be clear that we can have such knowledge, he is not at all sure *how* we can have it. In the Boehner volume, section 2 of the material on "Epistemological Problems", Ockham says that it is possible by the power of God. This seems on the right track. The object itself obviously cannot cause such knowledge, since by hypothesis it doesn't exist or at least isn't present (which means that it is not in "cognitive contact" with the knower). But God can do it if anything can. Nevertheless, if you look closely at the arguments in the passage, he seems to be talking about something rather different. The arguments do not seem to be addressed to the worry over how we can tell when something doesn't exist. (In fact, I know of nowhere Ockham deals with this question in any depth.) Instead, he seems to be concerned with the question whether we can have an intuitive cognition of something's *existing* even if it *doesn't exist*. That is, could I have a cognition in virtue of which I can judge with evidence that the thing exists - even though it doesn't really exist after all? *This* is the question Ockham in fact is addressing here, and he answers it in the affirmative. It *is* possible, at least by the divine power.

Here is the reason: Intuitive cognition is a *distinct thing* from the object it concerns. Naturally - that is, not supernaturally - the existing and present object *would be* a partial cause of the intuitive cognition of the thing, just as Scotus says. But cause and effect, here as elsewhere, are really distinct. And so God can produce either without the other. That is, God can produce the cognition without the object. God can give us a cognition that enables us to judge *with evidence* (= "with certainty") that *x* exists, even if it doesn't. The basic principle involved here is just the famous proposition #69 from the Condemnation of 1277 (Chapter \s6 above and Text \s7 below): Whatever comes about by means of secondary causes God can bring about directly, without the intermediation of secondary causes. So we have here a serious problem about our knowledge of contingent things. If God could do this, *how do we know he doesn't?* Here is the result of our giving up Aristotelian epistemology, according to which knowledge and the known are *not* really distinct, as Ockham says they are, but *formally one*, and of the new emphasis on divine omnipotence arising out of the Condemnation of 1277.

*Note:* Ockham's concern here is theological. The emphasis on divine omnipotence comes from the Creed ("I believe in God, the Father *Almighty* ..."), and ultimately from the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation (see Chapter \s8 above). Ockham is *not* concerned here with the problem of *illusion*, sense-deception. He's just not talking about that at all.

But other people did. For example, one *Peter Auriol*, who lived shortly before Ockham. For Auriol, intuitive cognition meant any cognition that presented its object as *really existing*. Auriol gives examples of cases where we have intuitive cognitions (in his sense of the term) of non-existing things: after-images, dreams, in "terrors or grave fears" (= hallucinations?), weak eyes, those "deceived" (by stage plays, prestidigitation, and so on?). Note that, unlike Ockham's discussion, this account allows intuitive cognition of non-existents on the purely *natural* plane. Auriol is leading up to a skepticism of the senses (although he

himself does not seem to be too worried about it). Ockham's problem, on the other hand, is the direct ancestor of something else: *Descartes' Evil Demon*. And that is an altogether different matter.

*Note:* Auriol's definition of intuitive cognition seems to be the one adopted by Bernard of Arezzo and quoted by Nicholas of Autrecourt in his first letter to Bernard. (See Hyman and Walsh, p. 703.) E. A. Moody, in his paper, "Ockham, Buridan, and Nicholas of Autrecourt", *Franciscan Studies* 7 (1947), pp. 113-146 (reprinted in the collected volume of Moody's papers, *Studies in Medieval Philosophy, Science, and Logic: Collected Papers, 1933-1969*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975)), attributes this definition to Ockham. This is an important error (although Moody later recognized it), and affects the conclusions Moody draws in that paper. Nevertheless, the paper is an *excellent* one, and provided you are aware of that one fault, deserves to be read and studied with care.

There is a pretty good book on topic of this Chapter: Sebastian Day, *Intuitive Cognition: A Key to the Significance of the Later Scholastics*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1957). There's a lot of polemic in this book, which is ugly and embarrassing to read, but just ignore that.

## Chapter 60:

### William of Ockham on Universals

There is a work called *De principiis theologiae* ("On the Principles of Theology"), written sometime before 1350. (Critically edited by L. Baudry in *Le Tractatus de principiis theologiae* attribui G. d'Occam, (Paris: Vrin, 1936).) The work has been attributed to Ockham, but it probably isn't really his. Nevertheless, the doctrine is certainly by and large Ockhamist. The little treatise systematizes all of Ockham's philosophy under two big guiding principles:

(1) God can do whatever is not *absolutely* impossible. This is a result of the Condemnation of 1277. See proposition #7 of the Condemnation, for instance. (Not that Ockham would have *denied* this had it not been for the Condemnation of 1277. Everyone held this, and had for centuries. But there is a new *emphasis* on the power of God after the Condemnation of 1277. God is not bound by *natural* necessity, the laws of nature. In short, God is boss, not Aristotelian physics.)

(2) The so called "Ockham's Razor": "Don't multiply entities beyond necessity." In other words, get by with as much theoretical economy as you can. Note that Ockham nowhere enunciates this principle in the form in which it is usually given. And even if he had, there would have been nothing novel about it. You can find similar things in Scotus, after all. Almost everyone agrees on the *principle*; the disputes are always over how many entities are really "necessary".

Principle (1) is primarily a theological principle; it follows from the doctrine of creation, as I discussed in Chapter 2 above. And Ockham explicitly recognizes it as such. See the Boehner volume (if you can find a copy), p. 28. The principle will be especially important in epistemology, as we have already seen in Chapter 3 above.

Principle (2) is the main thing that leads to Ockham's nominalism. Ockham rejects Scotus' theory of *common natures*. He doesn't think they are needed to explain the facts. For Ockham, the only things that exist are individual *substances* and their individual *qualities*. There is nothing common.

(Note: Ockham not only does away with universals. He also does away with all the Aristotelian categories except substance and quality. All the rest can be reduced, he thinks, to those two. This is frequently taken to be just another aspect of his "nominalism". But it is an entirely independent question. A great deal of confusion could be avoided among historians of fourteenth century philosophy if they would distinguish these quite distinct issues.)

Therefore, there is no such thing as Scotus' real minor unity, no such thing as the formal distinction. The only kind of real unity is numerical unity. The only kind of distinction on the part of reality is the *real* distinction between two things that can exist separately, at least by the power of God. There are no Scotist *formalities*, only *things* (~~res~~). So far, except perhaps for the criterion of real distinction, this sounds just like Thomas Aquinas.

The world is therefore made up of a number of isolated units, sharing nothing in common. Again, this sounds like Aquinas. Ockham thinks this is Aristotle's doctrine, and is moreover confirmed by experience. We encounter only individuals, after all. (So much for Scotus' view that we *never* encounter individuals, even at the level of sensation, but only common natures - see Chapter 4 above.)

Ockham thought he was perhaps the first one to understand all the implications of this. He thought his predecessors had betrayed this basic idea by giving lip-service to it, but then granting that nevertheless *in some sense* there is universality or community in the world anyway.

In effect, what Ockham has done is to take Scotus' view of the relation between *God and creatures* and make it *paradigmatic* of the relations among *all* things. (See Chapter \s3 above.) In other words, Ockham is arguing in effect, if you can have a concept that is equally a concept of God and creatures, even though there is nothing really common or shared by them, then why can't you do the same thing in the case of creature and creature? Remember Scotus' arguments about the need for real common natures to ground the objectivity of our concepts (Chapter \s4). If those arguments were any good, then they would apply just as much to concepts common to God and creatures as they do to concepts common only to creatures. There was nothing in those arguments that made them apply only to *certain* concepts and not to others; they were quite general. Conversely, therefore, if those arguments do *not* apply to concepts common to God and creatures, then there must be something wrong with the arguments. But then why should we think they apply *anywhere*?

Of course, Ockham is not going to pin his metaphysics on the adequacy or inadequacy of Scotus' view of God's relations to creatures. He needs independent arguments, and has to show that Scotus' arguments do not hold.

There is another way too in which Ockham will take Scotus' talk about God as paradigmatic. Scotus says that the divine nature is *de se hoc*, but is the *only* nature like that. Ockham is going to say that the same thing holds of *every* nature whatever. Every nature is *by itself a this*. It is *already* individuated - or rather, not individuated, but just *individual*. (See Chapter \s3. This is just the view Scotus discussed in his question 1. Others had held it before Ockham, so Scotus wasn't prophesying about what Ockham would later say.)

Therefore, there is no need to look for a *principle of individuation*, as Scotus and others did. That is so much wasted effort. What we need to explain is not the individual, but the universal *concept*. How do we get *that*, if everything is as individual as Ockham says it is?

In his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, Book 1, distinction 2, questions 4-8, Ockham gives a long "treatise" on the universal. Part of it is translated in Hyman and Walsh. There are also some other texts on this topic in the Boehner volume on Ockham, pp. 35-43 (not from the *Commentary on the Sentences*, but from Ockham's *Summa logicae*), and on pp. 44-46 part of question 8 from the *Commentary*.

Below I give you a little outline of this discussion, so you will be able to keep track of what is going on. As the discussion unfolds, Ockham considers progressively less and less realistic views, until he concludes that the universal is *only* in the mind, is *only* a concept. Recall Abelard's *somewhat* similar procedure (Chapter \s5 above).

WHERE DO UNIVERSALS EXIST?

I. Outside the mind, *in* individuals, and *somehow* distinct from them.

A. Distinct on the side of reality.

\h+.25i1. Real distinction.

\h-.25i(a) Not multiplied in individuals (q. 4). (Boethius' passage (3) of Text \s6 below, William of Champeaux's first theory, Clarenbald of Arras)\b

\h-.25i(b) Multiplied in individuals (q. 5). (Boethius' *Commentary on Porphyry* and passages (1)-(2) of Text \s6, William of Champeaux's second theory, Gilbert of Poitiers)\b

\h+.25i2. Formal distinction (q. 6). (Scotus)

B. Distinct only according to reason (q. 7).

\h+.25i1. An unidentified view.  
 \h.75i2. Singular according to actual *esse*, universal according to *esse* in the mind. ("Aquinas")\b \h.75i3. The individual affects the mind two ways. Under one concept it is singular, under another universal. (Henry of Harclay)\b

## II. Only in the mind (q. 8).

A. As only a conventional sign. (Roscelin)

B. As a natural sign. The following are various "probable" theories:

*Esse objectivum* (\i+3dfictum\i+3d) theory. The universal is not real, not in the categories.\b

*Esse quidditativum* theory. The universal is a *quality* in the soul.\b

\h1.25i(a) It is the *act* of understanding.\b

\h1.25i(b) It is a *likeness* of the thing known.\b

\h1.75i(i) A *prior* likeness. (Intelligible species)\b

\h1.75i(ii) a *posterior* likeness. (The "concept" or *verbum mentis* = "mental word")

FIG. \s0-1\i+3D: OCKHAM'S "TREATISE" ON THE UNIVERSAL

Now, let's go through it. In question 4, Ockham considers the view that a universal is a real thing, outside the mind and in individuals, really distinct from them, and not "multiplied" according to the multiplication of individuals. That is to say, you have only one in several individuals; it is shared. This is the view of Boethius' passage (3) in Text \s6 below, William of Champeaux's first theory, and the view of Clarenbald of Arras (Chapter \s5 above). Ockham says that the reasons given for this view are:

\f1(a) To explain definition. I define the universal man, *not* the

individual. (The individual cannot be defined on an Aristotelian view.) That is why these people say there is a *real distinction* between the individual and the universal (otherwise when I define the one I *would* have defined the other), and why the universal is not multiplied according to the multiplication of individual (why should it be, since they are really distinct?).

(b) To explain essential predication. When I predicate 'man' of Socrates, *man* must be really *in* Socrates, not separated from him. That is why these people say the universal is *in* individuals.

(c) To ground the objectivity of the sciences. See Scotus' epistemological arguments in Chapter \s4 above. (But Ockham is not thinking of Scotus here. He comes later.)

Ockham's reply to this view is that it is *totally false and absurd*. (It is fun to watch how these epithets get less and less strong as Ockham considers less and less realist views.) If the universal is really distinct from the individual, then Ockham says it would follow that God could create the universal without the individual and vice versa. But if you can have the individual without its universal, then what good does it do to posit the universal nature to begin with? (Don't multiply entities beyond necessity.)

*Note:* For Scotus (and *perhaps* for Aquinas - but not always?) to say that *x* and *y* are really distinct seemed to amount to saying that *x* could exist without *y* *or* vice versa. Ockham here seems to have a *stronger* criterion. He seems to be raising the disjunction '\i+3dor vice versa' to a conjunction '\i+3dand vice versa'. But it is not explicit. Note that if this *is* what he means, then his view has the consequence that God and creatures are not really distinct, since you cannot have creatures without God (even though you can have it the other way around). Ockham surely wouldn't want that. On the other hand, the definition I have just attributed to Scotus would appear to have the consequence that the individual and its common nature are *really* distinct, since I can have the common nature *man*, for instance, in Plato without having it

in Socrates (if Socrates doesn't exist). Hence it can be said to be really distinct from Socrates. But surely Scotus doesn't want this. All this goes to show that the exact definitions of the various kinds of identity and distinction in these people need to be carefully considered.

Furthermore, Ockham says, this strongly realist view would not solve the problem of essential predication, which was one of the considerations that motivated it. If *man* is *really* distinct from Socrates, then it is present in him only as a *part*, and parts are not predicated of their wholes. (Recall Boethius in Chapter \s7 above on how universals are not present by *parts*. Ockham is in effect saying that this first view would have the consequence that they *are* present in this way, which spoils the whole thing.)

Ockham thinks that what is predicated is not any real universal, but simply a common *term*. There is a sharp distinction in Ockham between ontology and language. A term is individual just like anything else, ontologically speaking. But it is "common" or "universal" in the sense that it *stands for* many things, or as Ockham says "supposits" for many things. ('Supposition' is a technical term in mediaeval logic. For present purposes, just read it as "stands for" or "refers to". The origin of the term is rather obscure. But it appears to come out of speculations on the Trinity. The term '*suppositum*' is a technical term in the theology of the Trinity - and of the Incarnation, for that matter - where it means that in which other things "inhere" - as for instance accidents inhere in a substance - but does not itself inhere in anything else. One of the main branches of "supposition" is called "personal supposition", which certainly suggests the kinds of issues that arise in discussions of the Trinity and the Incarnation.) The term '*man*' in '*Socrates is a man*' stands for or supposits for *men* - for all of them. So too in the sentence '*Plato is a man*'. Those sentences are true if and only if the predicate term '*man*' stands for or supposits for what the subject stands for or supposits for (and perhaps more besides). Predication can be explained without appealing at any point to real universals. (Notice how all this sounds a lot like Abelard. See Chapter \s5 above. The details, of course, are quite different.)

As for consideration (a) that motivated this first theory of universals (the consideration about definition), Ockham has a theory of definition according to which *terms* are defined, not *things*. And of course the universal or common *term* is really distinct from the individual or singular *term*. But that is no argument for ontological realism.

With respect to consideration (c) above (the one about science), Ockham holds that it is true, as Aristotle had said, that science deals with universals. But the only universals there are for Ockham are universal *terms*, and primarily terms in *mental language* or *thought*, which is to say, primarily *concepts*.

For Ockham, the *object of a science* is simply *sentences with general terms in them*. That's how he accommodates Aristotle's dictum that science deals with the universal. See section 1 of the Boehner volume.

This of course doesn't mean that we can never get beyond the level of language in our knowledge. For Ockham, there are two senses of '*know*' (*scire*, from which comes *scientia*):

- (i) As above, to know a sentence or a term in that sentence. In this sense, the object of a science is universal.
- (ii) We can also be said to know what that sentence is *about*, what the term in it *stands or supposits for*. What we know in this sense is invariably the *individual*, ontologically speaking, and is *not* the object of science in the sense Aristotle is talking about.

Traditionally, there were *three* kinds of sciences that people distinguished: (a) the "real" sciences, physics, metaphysics and mathematics; (b) "rational" science, that is, logic; and (c)



"grammatical" science or grammar. For each of these kinds of science, Ockham distinguishes a kind of "supposition" (see Boehner, section 1, and also the sections on supposition-theory later in the Boehner volume):

(a) Going with "grammatical" science there is what is called "material" supposition, in which terms stand for words they do not signify. For example, in 'Man has three letters', the subject 'man' is in material supposition. (But don't make the mistake of thinking that Ockham's "material supposition" is just what we do with quotation marks. It is more complex than that.)

(b) Going with the "rational" science of logic, there is what is called "simple" supposition. There terms stand for *concepts* they do not signify. These concepts are the genera and species that logic talks about. For instance, in 'Man is a species', the subject term 'man' stands for the *concept* "man", which *is* a species, that is, a species-concept. It definitely does *not* stand for any real universal *man*.

(c) Going with the "real" sciences, there is what is called "personal" supposition (which has nothing especially to do with persons - see above on the probable origin of this term). There terms stand for the things they signify. For example, in 'Man is an animal', the subject term 'man' is in personal supposition and stands for individual human beings. They are the ones who are animals. The spoken or written word is not an animal, and neither is the concept.

This is just a tiny taste of a very elaborate and subtle doctrine. But notice, no universal entities are needed to do any of this. This is in effect Ockham's answer to Scotus' epistemological arguments for common natures. They are just not needed for predication or science - or for definition, for that matter.

There is another Scotist argument, however, that has not yet been answered. It is the epistemological argument that common natures are needed to serve as the objects of intellect and sensation. Remember the dictum "Sensation is of particulars, but understanding of universals". Scotus had disagreed with this, and said that intellect and sense have the *same* object, the common nature.

Ockham too denies the dictum. He thinks sensation and intellection have the same object, but he goes the opposite way from Scotus. For Ockham, that object is the *individual*. On Ockham's ontology, there is simply nothing else for it to be. I can know an individual term that stands or supposits for many things, and can *in that sense* be said to know a universal, since by means of the term I can be said to know the many things it stands for. But there is no appeal to a common nature involved in any of this.

So much for question 4. In question 5, Ockham considers a somewhat less realistic view of universals. This is approximately the view of Gilbert of Poitiers and Boethius in his *Commentary on Porphyry*. It is also William of Champeaux's second theory. According to this view, the universal is a *res* outside the mind, *really distinct* from individuals but nevertheless *in* them, and *is* multiplied according to the number of individuals. (It is the last clause that distinguishes this view from the one considered in question 4.) On this view, the universal is *multiplied* in the same way that the impression of the signet ring is "multiplied" according to the number of times you stamp it on different spots of wax.

Ockham's verdict on this view is that it is *simply false* (which is not so bad as being *totally false and absurd*, as the first theory was, to its shame). On this view, Ockham says, there is an individuating difference, contracting the nature and multiplying it. The nature is *really distinct* from the difference, and therefore God can create the humanities of Socrates and Plato, say, without the individuating differences. (Note the criterion of real distinction here.) And if that happened, the humanities would *still* be two

humanities. But, in the absence of the individuating differences, they would perforce be two *all by themselves*. (If they were not *two*, then we would be back to the first view, in question 4.) Hence the individual difference is superfluous. The only function it is supposed to perform can be done just as well without it.

This is a curious argument, and I am not sure I fully understand how Ockham thinks it goes. Surely William of Champeaux and Gilbert of Poitiers never spoke of any individuating difference like this.

In both questions 4 and 5, Ockham is perhaps taking unfair advantage of the notion of real distinction. Clarenbald and Champeaux, on his first view, and for that matter Gilbert and Champeaux on his second view, surely never meant to say that the universal could exist separately. When they said that the universal is really distinct from the individual (or from the individuating difference - although it is not clear that they ever talked *that way* at all), all they probably meant was some kind of distinction *grounded in reality*. That could perhaps be less than what later came to be defined as a *real* distinction. Perhaps something like Scotus' *formal* distinction would be closer to what they had in mind.

Well, this brings us naturally to Scotus' own view, which Ockham discusses in question 6. He gives an accurate account of what that view is. (Ockham was pretty scrupulous about presenting Scotus' views correctly.) We have already seen what Scotus has to say about all of this (Chapter \s4 above). Here the universal (Scotus would call it only an "incomplete" or "potential" universal, the common nature) is *outside* the mind, *in* individuals, but distinct from those individuals by a distinction based in reality - only that distinction is not a full-fledged *real* distinction, but rather a *formal* distinction.

Ockham thinks this theory is *unreasonable* (which is not so bad as being *totally false and absurd*, or even as being *simply false*). He simply rejects it. For Ockham, only concepts are common - and, derivatively, we can say that spoken and written *words* are common insofar as they are subordinated to common concepts, that is, insofar as they express those concepts through the conventions of our language.

Ockham simply refuses to accept the notion that there is any distinction at all on the part of reality, real or formal, between the individual and its nature. What about Scotus' arguments then? What does Ockham have to say to them?

Well, the epistemological arguments have in effect already been answered. We talked about them when we were discussing Ockham's question 4, dealing with a stronger form of realism than Scotus had, to be sure, although the same kinds of considerations apply.

But what about Scotus' metaphysical arguments for common natures? There were two of them (Chapter \s4): First, that they were needed to account for real relations of sameness, similarity, and equality, and second that they were needed to account for real univocal causality. Since the basis for the second argument is the idea that the effect must be similar to the cause, the second argument is really just a special case of the first one. So Ockham has to show us how we can have real relations of similarity, equality, and so on, without appealing to Scotist common natures.

Ockham's answer is: Let's just proceed empirically here. We observe men, let us say, to be much alike. Because of their being similar, we can form a specific concept of "man". Ockham uses the term 'abstraction' to describe this formation process, but it is certainly not abstraction in the usual sense. It doesn't mean there is anything *shared* by those similar men.

Things *are* really similar. Ockham never denies that. But they are not really similar in virtue of some third entity, a *similarity*. They are just similar *all by themselves*. If there is no

common nature needed to ground the fact that creatures resemble God in varying degrees, then none is needed to ground the fact that one creature resembles another.

Furthermore, Ockham gives some arguments against Scotus' theory of relations in general. First, he gives a kind of "regress"-argument that I don't understand very well. Second, he argues that if, as Scotus says, the *relation* is a third *thing* really distinct from the *relata*, then God could create it separately. Hence we could have a *similarity* without there being anything *similar*. And Ockham thinks that is just silly.

For Ockham, *relations* are just relational *terms*. Things really are related to one another, but they are not related to one another in virtue of some entity that we call a *relation*. They are just related to one another all by themselves.

In question 7, Ockham considers an even less realistic view of universals - but still too realistic for his tastes. According to this view, universals are outside the mind and in individuals (notice, incidentally, that Ockham does not consider the view that universals are outside the mind but *separated* from individuals - like Platonic Ideas, if you think they qualify as universals), but *not* distinct from those individuals by *any* distinction on the side of reality, either a real distinction or a formal distinction. The distinction between the universal and the individual is only a distinction of reason. Ockham considers three variants of this view. The first one has not been identified, so let's just skip over it. The second one, however, is Aquinas' view - or at least the way certain Thomists put Aquinas' view. According to that view, the same common nature is singular according to the actual *esse* it has in things, but it is universal according to the *esse* it has in the mind.

Ockham's response to this is just that nothing can be made universal just by thinking about it, just by being considered. For Ockham, understanding something is *not* a case of *doing something to it*. It is not *acting* on the thing. That seems obvious. But Aquinas' view seems to be committed to the opposite. For Aquinas, the agent intellect *acts on* the nature and separates out the individuating conditions.

Why is Aquinas committed to this implausible view? He wants to say that in the two sentences 'Man is an individual' and 'Man is a universal', one is talking about *the same thing*, the same nature. In the first sentence we are talking about it as it is in real, external objects. There it *is* individual. But in the second sentence we are talking about the same nature as it is in the mind. There it is *universal*. The Aristotelian theory of knowledge, according to which the knower is the known (see Chapter \s8 above) requires that we be talking about the same thing in these two sentences.

Ockham does not have any of these theoretical commitments. For him, the two sentences simply involve two different kinds of supposition. In the first case, the term 'man' has personal supposition, and in the second case it has simple supposition. The terms stand for quite distinct things. As he sees it, Aquinas is just equivocating.

What this means is that Ockham is *giving up* the old Aristotelian principle that the knower is the known. And with it, of course, he is giving up one of the best guarantees of the objectivity of our knowledge. It is not surprising therefore that nominalism is tied up with *skepticism*.

The third variant view Ockham discusses in question 7 is the view of *Henry of Harclay*, originally a follower of Scotus, who later turned critical of Scotus. This view is very close to Ockham's own - but it is still not quite there. On this view, the universal is outside the mind, in things, not distinct from them by anything greater than a mere distinction of reason, and not in such a way that thinking about it makes it universal. For Henry, outside the mind *everything* is

individual *de se*. Ockham would applaud this. There is no individual difference. None is needed. Ockham would cheer this. But, Henry says, each individual can affect the mind in two ways:  
(a) It can make me know it distinctly, that is, it can cause a *clear* concept of itself.  
(b) It can also make me know it "confusedly", that is, it can cause a more vague concept in me, one that represents not only that individual but also any other individual similar to it in certain relevant respects.

Henry appeals to no common nature in any of this. Nevertheless, it is still too realistic for Ockham. But what, you may well ask, is realistic about this? It looks like a pretty austere nominalism. Well, Ockham says, Henry is still trying to find *some* ground for the universal concept in things. What it all comes down to is this:

For Henry, like everyone else we have been considering so far, it is possible to derive a universal concept from *a single experience* of a thing. For fairly strong realist views this is quite easy; the mind just *reads off* a universal that is already present in its experience, even a single experience of a single instance. This is the way it is for the realism of William of Champeaux's first view and the theory of Clarenbald of Arras. This is also pretty much the way it is for Scotus. For Aquinas, it's a bit harder. The agent intellect has more work to do. It cannot simply *read off* the universal from the single experience. But still, it can *get* the universal concept from a single experience, if just goes to enough effort.

For Ockham, however, *no universal concept can ever be derived from a single experience*. It takes at least *two* experiences, which are then *compared* with one another, before we can get a universal concept. (In this respect, Ockham's view is like, say, Locke's.) And that is what is wrong with Henry of Harclay's theory. As long as *the same object* can all by itself affect the mind in two ways, in one way producing a singular concept that is a concept only of that object, and in the other way producing a general or universal concept of that thing and of other things similar to it - as long as the same object can do that all by itself, that is too much for Ockham.

(Incidentally, this provides us with an instructive rule of thumb that is very useful for measuring an author's realism or nominalism: "Can we or can we not form a general or universal concept on the basis of a single experience?")

In question 8, Ockham draws his conclusion from all this. Universals are not outside the mind at all. Universals are *in* the mind. They are *concepts*. And he doesn't then compromise this, as Scotus did, by then saying that of course there is a kind of "incomplete" universal or common nature out there in the world. No - community too can only be found in the mind. (Ockham is willing to say that spoken and written terms, which are not in the mind, are also universal or common. But their universality or community is derivative from that of concepts, and is by no means the kind of thing realists are thinking of. So it is not oversimplifying things too much to say that for Ockham universality and community can be found only in the mind.)

Universals then are concepts. But what sorts of things are concepts? Well, Ockham considers four theories.

The first theory makes the concept a *conventional* sign. That is, what it is a concept *of* is a matter of arbitrary agreement or convention. This view has been attributed to Roscelin, but heaven only knows what Roscelin really thought. In any case, Ockham rejects the view. For him, the concept is a *natural* sign. That is to say, what it is a concept *of* is not a matter of convention or arbitrariness. It is fixed by *nature*. In fact, Ockham thinks that concepts are *likenesses* of the

things they are concepts of. He has a kind of "picture"-theory. Such "picture"-theories are notoriously difficult to work out in detail, but at any event it is clear that for Ockham it is not just a matter of *taste* what concepts are concepts of.

Setting that view aside, then, there are three other theories that Ockham says are "probable" - which means that they are "plausible". (This is not "probability" in the statistical sense.) And in this passage from the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Ockham just leaves it at that. He does not seem to make up his mind and decide among the three, although he leans toward what is called the "fictum"-theory. The three views he considers are these:

(a) The "fictum"-theory, that the concept is a *thought object*, and has only an *esse objectivum* (objective being" - objective not in our sense, but in the sense of being an *object of thought*, an *intentional object*). On this theory the concept is not identical with the *act* of understanding, but is rather the object of that act. The theory is much like Abelard's *fictum*-theory in Chapter 5 above. On this view, the concept is very much like a "picture".

Ockham later rejected the *fictum*-theory. A *fictum*, a merely intentional object, would not be *real* in the sense that it would not fall into any of the ten Aristotelian categories. How then could it possibly be *like* the objects it is supposed to represent? Concepts are supposed to be natural likenesses of their objects. But how could something that is not even in an Aristotelian category be like something that is? Furthermore, this view leaves itself open to all the skeptical difficulties of a representational theory of cognition. For all these reasons, then, Ockham later gave up the *fictum*-theory.

According to the two other "probable" views, the concept or universal has an *esse subjectivum* - a "subjective being". (Something funny happened to the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' in the history of philosophy. They got completely turned around. Ockham's *subjective* being means what we would mean by *objective* being - the being of a real *subject* or substance, or if not a substance, then at least a real subject of predication.) On these two views, the concept is a real *quality* existing in the soul, and therefore does fall into the Aristotelian categories. Concepts are *accidents* of the mind, and really inhere in the mind just as color really inheres in a body.

*Note:* It would seem that at least the first objection that led Ockham to reject the *fictum*-theory would also apply here. How can a *quality* in the mind be really *similar* to the substance Socrates? They are not even in the same category! So there is just as much a problem of getting concepts to be in general natural likenesses of their objects on this theory as there is on the *fictum*-theory. I don't know why Ockham apparently didn't see this point.

There are two varieties of this view, the first variety with two subcases:

(b) The concept is *distinct* from the act of understanding but is still a real quality inhering in the mind. On this view, the concept can be either:

(i) Prior to the *act* of understanding. Then it would be the *intelligible species* we have seen before. This was the usual term for what the agent intellect somehow got out of the sense-image and *then* impressed on the possible intellect. (Of course that process is totally different for Ockham than it is for the other people we have looked at.) Or it could be

(ii) Posterior to the act of understanding. This is called the *mental word* (*verbum mentale*, or *verbum mentis* - the term applies to theories besides Ockham's). This is the term for the *result* of the agent intellect's impressing the intelligible species on the possible intellect. (The "act of understanding" in all this presumably refers to the act of the agent intellect in impressing the intelligible species on the possible intellect.)

(c) The concept just *is* the act itself. This is the so called *intellectio*-theory. Abelard referred to it (Chapter \s5), but rejected it without any real argument.

In the early *Commentary on the Sentences* (which is the passage we are working through now), Ockham seems to favor the *fictum*-theory, although he does not unequivocally come down for any one of them. But in his later *Commentary on the De interpretatione* (see the Boehner volume, pp. 46-48), he seems to favor the *intellectio*-theory. It does not lend itself to the difficulties of the representational theory of cognition as the *fictum*-theory does. And there is no need on the *intellectio*-theory for an intelligible species, as there is on both forms of theory (b), so that on grounds of theoretical economy, it is perhaps preferable. In any case, in his late work, the *Quodlibets*, Ockham definitely comes down in favor of the *intellectio*-theory.

Now, you may well be asking yourself, how does Ockham suppose the mind is able to form these universal concepts? After all, he's made it pretty hard for himself since he won't even allow Henry of Harclay's minimal degree of realism. Well, here it is. Ready? Ockham says: nature operates mysteriously here, *occulte operatur*. In other word, "I don't know". It is a very mysterious process, but the mind obviously has the power to do it. This is strong evidence for my claim that nominalists have difficulties over epistemology. Ockham in effect just gives up.

In Chapter \s3 above, I said that one way to view the main differences between Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham is in terms of the question "Where do you want your great mystery?" For Aquinas, it was the *esse* of a thing; for Scotus it was individuality. For Ockham, it is universals - which for him means universal *concepts*. It is possible to regard Ockham's "nature operates mysteriously" remark as just a sign of desperation, an indication of a major weakness in his philosophy. But it is equally possible to regard it as a heroic admission on Ockham's part that he does indeed have problems, and he doesn't know what more to say about them. Aquinas and Scotus had these gray, mysterious areas too; they were just in different places. And I don't know of any passage where either Aquinas or Scotus admits his difficulties quite so frankly as Ockham does.

## Chapter 61:

### Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents

Please read Adams and Kretzmann, William of Ockham: Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents.

We saw the problem of God's foreknowledge as early as Augustine: If God knows what we're going to do before we do it, then in what sense are our actions free? (See Chapter \s2 above.) Augustine's discussion, remember, suffered from what I claimed was a twofold confusion:

- (a) Thinking that the question was really a question of whether foreknowledge *caused* our actions or vice versa, a question of which causes which.
- (b) Confusing freedom in the sense of absence of external constraint with freedom in the sense of a real ability to do otherwise.

Boethius (Chapter \s2 again) was clear on both those points. He states the problem clearly, sees just what is involved, and tries to solve it by saying that God's knowledge is not like ours, and that *all times are equally present to God*. Anselm, on the whole, represents a regression to Augustine's confusions, at least as far as I have been able to determine. Aquinas basically accepts Boethius' approach. *But Scotus does not*. Scotus wonders what it means to say that all times are *equally present* to God.

There was a common simile used to express this notion. The moments of time, it was said, are like the points on the circumference of a circle, and God's knowledge is like the circle's center. The points on the circumference may be ordered with respect to one another, but the center bears the same relationship to each of them. Moral of the story: God's knowledge is related to the past, the present, and the future, in *exactly the same way*. They are all "equally present" to him.

In more recent literature, the same point is sometimes made by adopting a variant on the same theme. For example, it is said, for us life is like a labyrinth or a maze. We wander through it, never able to see very far ahead. We make a decision at each turning, but what lies around the next corner is continually hidden from us. We can only come to know the labyrinth a bit at a time, and only *in sequence*. But God is not, so to speak, down here in the labyrinth of life. He is perched outside the labyrinth altogether, above it and, so to speak, looking down on it. He is in a position to see the labyrinth as a whole *all at once* and *without any succession*. He knows what lies around the next turn; it is all "equally present" to him.

Well, Scotus doesn't talk about the "labyrinth"-simile, but he does discuss the "circle"-simile. He is not worried so much about the *cyclic* view of time it suggests as he is by the fact that, in order to take the simile seriously - and so the theory it is meant to illustrate - you have to postulate a kind of "space" in which all the points coexist. (The same thing applies to the example of the labyrinth.) I have translated some of the relevant material below in Volume 2, Text \s3. Please go read that now.

Scotus thus rejects this simile, and with it all talk of everything's being equally "present" to God.

When we talked about Boethius in Chapter \s2 above, I suggested that the only way to make out what he was saying was to suppose that all *tensed* sentences or truths could be translated *without loss of content* into a *tenseless* language with explicit time-specifications

attached. I also suggested that, purely as a question of tense-logic, it was an open question whether this could in fact be done.

Scotus rejects the Boethian solution, and with it rejects this notion of a *tenseless* language. There are no *timeless truths* for Scotus. God knows things *in time* exactly as we do. (That is, he knows them in time in exactly the same sense as we do, although the mechanism of knowledge is of course different.) *How* this works is discussed by Adams and Kretzmann, in their introduction, pp. 21-24. Ockham *rejects* Scotus' solution, and for good reason, but he *retains* Scotus' commitment to *tensed* language. There are no *timeless truths* for Ockham any more than for Scotus.

So far, we have discussed this problem in terms of *knowledge*. That is, the problem of divine *foreknowledge* and free will is a problem about relating knowledge to future contingent acts. There is an exactly parallel problem about relating *will* to future contingent acts, and this is the problem of *predestination* and *reprobation*. The problem is: If God has already *willed* in advance whether we are to be saved or damned (which is what the talk about predestination and reprobation comes to), then how can our salvation or damnation be in any sense up to us any longer? Who are we to interfere with God's will?

The problems are *exactly* parallel. You might think that what is involved here is something funny in the concepts of knowledge and will. But in fact that is not so. Indeed, the notions of knowledge and will simply obscure the issue. The *real* problem here is one of *future contingents* - a problem of pure tense and modal logic. This becomes clear once you consider limiting cases of knowledge and willing, namely, *omniscience* and the *divine* will. To say '*x* knows that *p*' implies *p*, in virtue of the general notion of knowledge; knowledge requires truth. Hence, in general: *x* knows that *p*. But in the case of *omniscience*, we also have the converse: '*p*' implies *x* knows that *p*. Since God is omniscient, we have '*p*' implies God knows that *p*. That is, we have the *biconditional*. Similarly, since nothing happens without God's willing it, we have '*p*' implies God wills that *p*. And since God's will is efficacious (or at least what Ockham calls his "consequent" will - on this see Adams and Kretzmann), we also have 'God wills that *p*' implies *p*. Hence, again we have the biconditional '*p*' implies God wills that *p*. In short, in the case of God, *knowledge* and *will* simply drop out of the picture (at least at a certain stage of the problem - there are further issues raised by these notions on their own). To talk about *God's knowing* future contingent truths or his *willing* future contingent truths is needlessly complicated. The *real* question is whether there *are* any future contingent truths.

Go back and look at Chapter 4 above, and at Fig. 4-1 there. Remember what I said then about how *the past is necessary*. That is, there is only one way *down* the tree of time from any given point. In other words where '*p*' is a *past*-tensed sentence, then at *any point* on the tree, we have '*p*' (Remember, the box is read 'necessarily'.) And since, for any sentence whatever, we have '*p*' implies *p*' (unless we have a very weak modal logic indeed), it follows that we have '*p*' for past-tensed sentences. In short, *all* modal distinctions disappear when we are talking about the past. The *true*, the *possible*, the *necessary* - it's all the same when we are talking about the *past*.

The *present* is a bit funny, as I discussed in Chapter 4. Let's not worry about it again now. But let's look at the *future*. From the perspective of any given point on the tree, what is *future* is not yet *settled* or *fixed*. While there is only one path *down* the tree from a given point, there are many diverse paths *up* the tree from a given point. So not *everything* that happens in the future is *necessary*. Neither is everything that *fails* to happen in the future



*impossible*. There is room for *future contingents*. Note that this is in no sense an *argument*; this is not a *proof* that the future, or any part of it, is contingent. It is just a kind of sketch of a view.

So far so good. That much we went through in Chapter 4. But now we get a *new* problem. It may very well be the case that not all statements about the future are either necessary or impossible. But if they are neither necessary nor impossible, how can they be true or false? How does this new problem work?

The sentence ' $\phi$  happened  $n$  time units ago' is *true* with respect to any point  $x$  on the tree if and only if, travelling *down* the tree  $n$  units from  $x$  to a point  $y$ , ' $\phi$  is happening' is true at  $y$ . There is only *one* way *down* the tree, and so there will always be a *unique* stopping point  $y$ .

Similarly, we now want to say, ' $\phi$  will happen  $n$  times units hence' is *true* with respect to any given point  $x$  on the tree if and only if, travelling *up* the tree  $n$  times units from  $x$  to point  $y$ , ' $\phi$  is happening' is true at  $y$ . The problem is that there are *many* paths *up* the tree from a given point, and so there will *not* be a unique stopping point  $y$ . Hence, we have to ask: *Which* paths are we talking about? *All* of them? Or only *some* of them? Let us try each alternative.

(a) *Some of them*. That is, the sentence is true if and only if, on *some* path into the future from  $x$ , there is a point  $y$ ,  $n$  times units after  $x$ , such that ' $\phi$  is happening' is true at  $y$ .

But this won't work. For suppose  $\phi$  is some future contingent event. Then on *some* paths into the future from  $x$ ,  $\phi$  does happen  $n$  times units afterwards. Hence, it is *true* to say at  $x$  that ' $\phi$  will happen  $n$  times units afterwards'. But similarly, on some *other* paths into the future from  $x$ ,  $\phi$  does *not* happen  $n$  times units afterwards. (There *must* be such other paths, since by hypothesis  $\phi$  is contingent.) Hence, it is true to say at  $x$  that ' $\phi$  will *not* happen  $n$  times units afterwards', and so, on any reasonable treatment of negation (and I do not necessarily mean a two-valued treatment), it is *false* to say at  $x$  that ' $\phi$  will happen  $n$  time units afterwards'. So at  $x$  it is both *true* to say it will happen and also *false* to say that. This violates the semantic version of the Law of Non-Contradiction (no sentence is simultaneously true and false - or more generally, no sentence has more than one truth value). Note that it does *not* violate the "syntactical" version of that principle:  $\neg(\phi \wedge \neg\phi)$ . That is not true on *any* path  $n$  time units after  $x$ .

(b) *All of them*. That is, the sentence is true if and only if, on *every* path into the future from  $x$  there is a point  $y$ ,  $n$  times units after  $x$ , such that ' $\phi$  is happening' is true at  $y$ .

But this is just as bad. For on some paths into the future from  $x$ ,  $\phi$  does happen after  $n$  times units, and on some paths it does not. By hypothesis, remember,  $\phi$  is contingent. Hence at  $x$  it is neither true to say that ' $\phi$  will happen after  $n$  time units', nor true to say that it won't. On any reasonable treatment of negation, this means that it is neither true nor false to say that it will. This violates the *Law of Bivalence* (that every statement is either true or false). Case (b) of course is just the logical dual of (a). And just as (a) did not violate the "syntactical" version of the "Law of Non-Contradiction", so too (b) does not violate the "Law of Excluded Middle":  $\phi \vee \neg\phi$ . For it is true to say at  $x$  'Either  $\phi$  will happen  $n$  time units hence or it will not'. On *every* path  $n$  time units into the future from  $x$ , we reach a point  $y$  where 'Either  $\phi$  is happening or it is not happening' is true. (That's true at *all* points on the tree.) The *syntactical* principles,  $\neg(\phi \wedge \neg\phi)$  and  $\phi \vee \neg\phi$ , are preserved on either approach (a) or (b). But their semantical correlatives don't fare so well.

Both these views, (a) and (b), thus have a very curious and exciting property. The logical *laws* (valid sentences) turn out to be *exactly* the good old classical ones (you can prove this), but the *semantics* is highly unorthodox. In fact, on the second view, even the logical *rules* of

*inference* turn out to be quite classical. (Actually, this needs to be qualified somewhat, but we needn't worry about it here. I presume the same thing happens on the first view, but I have not worked it out.) There is in fact a modern logical technique that handles the second view - theory (b) - exactly. It is the theory of *supervaluations*, developed by Bas van Fraassen.

I bring this up because this second theory, (b), is a view that Ockham and many others (including van Fraassen) attribute to Aristotle. The passage they all have in mind is in *De interpretatione* 9, where Aristotle discusses whether there will be a sea-battle tomorrow or not. Exactly what Aristotle's theory is is unclear, but Ockham and many others think, with considerable justification, that he holds approach (b).

Now what is wrong with (b)? It requires us to maintain that *now* it is simply neither true nor false to say that such and such a contingent event will come about - although it *is* now true to say that either it will or it won't. And since it is not now true that it will, and not now true to say that it will not, it follows that *God cannot know now how it will come out*. But of course, in a funny sense, that in no way compromises God's omniscience. God is still omniscient - he knows all truths. It is just that in this case, there is as yet *no truth to be known*.

Some people thought this was an attractive solution to the problem of reconciling divine omniscience with future contingent events and so with human free will. For instance, the author of a set of eight questions on the *De interpretatione* attributed (probably falsely) to Duns Scotus. Also Peter Auriol (d. 1322), whom we have already met briefly in connection with intuitive and abstractive cognition (Chapter \s5). Also one Roger Swyneshed (pronounced just as you fear: "Swine's Head") around 1330, in a tract on the Liar Paradox.

But for all its attractiveness, there is a problem still. While the view makes divine *omniscience* compatible with free will, it rules out divine *foreknowledge* of our future free acts. Omniscience, on this view, does not entail foreknowledge. If you think it is part of the faith not only that God is omniscient, but also that he has *foreknowledge* of our future acts (and this seems to be part of at least one way of interpreting *providence*), then this view is unacceptable (if you want to preserve the faith, that is). Ockham thought it was indeed unacceptable.

But what alternative is there? We've tried the view that says we only have to look at *some* paths into the future (that is, *one* will suffice), and the view that says it takes *all* of them to do the trick. What other possibility is there?

Ockham's response in effect says: You're treating all paths alike, as though there were no difference between one possible future and another. And if you do that, then of course you have problems - just the problems we've seen above. But in fact there *is* a difference. *One* of those paths into the future is the *real* future - the one that actually will occur. *We* do not know which one it is, of course, but there is one. Whichever it is, let us call it the *designated path* into the future. So instead of worrying about whether we should consider *some* or *all* paths, let's just evaluate sentences along the *designated path*. If *n* time units hence,  $\phi$  happens on the *designated path* into the future from here, then it is *now* true to say it will (whether we know it or not). Otherwise, it is now false to say it will.

It's not *necessary* - since it doesn't happen on *all* the paths into the future - but it's *true*. The other paths are *real alternatives*. They must be taken into account in the assessment of future necessities, possibilities and impossibilities, but not in the assessment of future *truths* and *falsehoods*.

What does this mean in terms of points on the tree? Here I am extrapolating a lot from Ockham's explicit view for the sake of a general theory. Nevertheless, let's do it.

For *each* point  $x$  on the tree, there is a *designated* path running through  $x$ . (I am now making the notion of a designated path *relative* to a point on the tree.) Then

(1) The sentence ' $\phi$  happened  $n$  times units ago' is true with respect to  $x$  if and only if ' $\phi$  is happening' is true at the unique  $y$ ,  $n$  times units before  $x$  along the designated path for  $x$ .

(2) The sentence ' $\phi$  will happen  $n$  time units hence' is true with respect to  $x$  if and only if ' $\phi$  is happening' is true at the unique point  $y$ ,  $x$  time units after  $x$  along the designated path for  $x$ .

The reason for making the notion of a designated path *relative* to a given point is that we not only want to talk about the *actual* past, present, and future, but also about possible but non-actual ones. For instance, '*If* we were at such and such a point on the tree (but we are not, and never will and never have been), *then* what would happen?' If I were to become Herbert Hoover, what then? This approach tells us how to answer such questions: look to the designated path running through that point - even though it doesn't run through the point we are actually at. (Note: This is *not* enough to give you anything like a general theory of counterfactuals, as you will see at once if you tinker just a bit.)

Note: If there is an actual *beginning to time* - that is, a single bottom point where all the paths converge - then it is possible to single out one of these point-relative designated paths as the *real* history of the world. The designated path with respect to the starting-point is that path. Of course, Ockham, who believed in creation, thought there *was* such a unique starting-point. If there is *not*, then there seems to be no way to single out any path as the *actual* history of the world in any absolute sense. The best you can do is to say what is actual *for you* - the designated path you happen to be on. This is a sort of *relative* notion of actuality like (but not *exactly* the same as) the notion David Lewis develops in his "Anselm and Actuality" (see Chapter 6 above.)

Now this clears up a lot of the problem. But there is *still* a difficulty. There still seems to be a way of doing away with all future contingents. Consider the following argument:

1.  $\phi$  will happen  $n$  time units from now.

2. It always was the case that  $\phi$  will happen  $n$  time units from now.

3. The past is necessary.

4. It is necessary that (2).

5. (1) follows from (2).

(Hypothesis)

n.)

6. The contingent does not follow from the necessary.

7. Therefore, (1) is necessary.

(A modal law everyone agreed on.)

(The 'now' in step (2) refers to the same "now" as the 'now' in step (1).)

This argument, if it works, shows that despite everything we have said previously, the future *is* fixed after all, and there are really no future contingents.

Ockham solves this problem by saying that (2) is only *verbally* about the past, but not *really*. In order to evaluate (2) for truth or falsehood, we must "go back" into the past and evaluate (1) there. But the truth of (1) back then in the past does not depend on anything that happened back then - rather it throws us into the *future*, indeed  $n$  time units into the future,  $n$  time units from where we started.

When we have sentences with *nested* tenses like this, we cannot take them at face value. They are not always *really* about the time indicated by the main verb.

On the other hand, when we say the past is necessary, we mean that what *happened* in the past is such that we can *now* say it *necessarily* happened. We do not imply that any old true sentence with a main verb that just happens to be in the past tense is a *necessary* sentence. So when Ockham talks about a sentence *de praeterito* or *de futuro*, it is wrong to translate this as "past-tensed" or "future-tensed" - at least without an explanation. They must be read quite literally: "about the past", "about the future". Those are not the same notions.

Consider the example. The real *event* that makes (2) true is still in the *future*. That's where we *ultimately* have to look to evaluate (2). So true sentences with past-tensed verbs in them are *in general* necessary *only if*, when you unpack whatever nested tenses may be involved, you *end up* in the past. Only *then* in general can we say that it is *settled*. In effect, Ockham denies step (4) of the above argument.

We have been dealing so far with more or less pure tense and modal logic. We are now in a position to draw some consequences from Ockham's view for God's knowledge and will.

If, alas, I will go to hell when I die, then God has always known that I will go to hell. But what is the *event* that makes that true? What ontologically makes it true to say that God has always known - way back when - that I will go to hell? If there is any *reality* back there in the past, any *real* property of God or of anything else - anything we might identify, for instance, as a *real act of knowledge* on God's part that I will go to hell - any reality back there that *makes it true then* that God knew I will go to hell, then we don't have to go any further. The matter was settled long ago, and it is now necessary. There is nothing *I* can do about it any more, if indeed there ever was.

Similarly, if God's *predestination* of some people to heaven and his *reprobation* of others to hell amounts to his having made a *real* act of will long ago that the one will be saved and the other damned, then there is no longer any contingency in the matter.

Either view does away with free will - either approaching it from the angle of God's knowledge or approaching it from the angle of his will.

So, Ockham argues, God's *knowledge* and his *predestination* and *reprobation* (or in general, his *willing*) are not *real acts or properties of God* that he has had all along. To say that God has always known that I will go to hell, or that he has always willed (with what Ockham calls *consequent* will - see Adams and Kretzmann) my salvation is not really in the end to say anything about God at all. Really, all that is being said is that I *will* go to hell or that I *will* be saved. Nothing about God in the past is involved, since that would destroy our free will. Furthermore, nothing *new* "happens" to God in the future, at the moment of my damnation or salvation, since that would involve a *change* in the immutable God. God doesn't seem to be involved at all!

The point is important, so let me go over it again. If there was any metaphysical configuration that obtained back there in the past and that *entailed* that I will be saved (let us be optimistic this time), then my salvation is no longer under my control. What occurred in the past is now necessary, and the necessary entails only what is necessary. Hence, under pain of doing away with my free will in regard to my own salvation, we are forced to say that God's *knowing* or *willing* my salvation back there in the past was not a real "metaphysical configuration" or event that took place back then. There was nothing we could point to back then and say, "Here, *this* is what it is that makes it true to say even now that God already knows or wills so and so's salvation". What made it true even then is an event that still lies in the future even now.

Furthermore, when the time comes and I die and am saved (we continue to hope), God's knowledge that that is going on and his *subsequent* knowledge that it did go on can involve *no change* in him, since he is immutable.

In short, to say that *God knows that p* is not only *equivalent* to saying just that *p*, and it is not only *strictly equivalent*. It seems to amount *by analysis* to nothing but *p*. God isn't really involved at all. The reference to him is misleading. He simply does not enter into the truth-conditions for such sentences at all.

But now we have ourselves in a pretty fix. Why continue to talk in terms of God's omniscience and will if this is all it comes to? Isn't it just perverse to call *this* omniscience or efficacious consequent will? Ockham tells us (Adams and Kretzmann, p. 48) that it is "difficult" to see how this works. I'll say it is! But what is *really* difficult here is to see what is left of the doctrine Ockham claims to be defending. God's knowledge and will seem to have disappeared. The requirements that human beings have free will has forced us to analyze them away completely!

I do not mean to suggest that people were not sensitive to problems like these, or that there is no final solution to them. But they *are* real problems.

Chapter 62:  
Nicholas of Autrecourt and the Rejection of Aristotelianism

In the thirteenth century, the main problem was to assimilate Aristotelianism. Those opposed to Aristotle were old-line conservatives. The new and trendy thing to do was to "baptize" Aristotle. Aquinas was the most successful at this kind of thing. There were some problems of course. These arose from two sources:

(a) Theological problems. Aristotle had said some things that were just plain heretical. For instance,

(1) The world is eternal.

(2) God and the separated substances do not care about the world.

(3) There was Aristotle's dubious doctrine of the soul and its immortality.

(4) There was the Aristotelian notion of natural necessity that seemed to put restraints on God's omnipotence. God's power was subordinated to natures and the "laws" of nature.

There were reactions to all of this - for example, the Condemnation of 1277. Another reaction was the so called "double truth" theory, associated with the "Latin Averroists" (also called the "radical Averroists", and so on). The main name here is Siger of Brabant (ca. 1240-ca. 1284, a text of his appears in Hyman and Walsh). It is not clear whether Siger actually held the view attributed to him (or whether anyone else did either, for that matter), or whether it is just a distortion, the kind of thing you accused your opponents of holding. But in any case, the view is as follows. The Aristotelian principles contrary to the faith are *true*, according to philosophy (that is, according to natural reason), but *false* according to theology and the faith. And, if you asked whether philosophical or theological truth takes precedence, the Latin Averroists were supposed to have just shuffled their feet and changed the topic.

(b) As the thirteenth century wore on, it became clear that there were not only theological reasons to be hesitant about Aristotle, there were also philosophical reasons. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the tide had turned. Aristotle was now the old-fashioned stuff; it was now trendy and up-to-date to criticize Aristotle. This was not true everywhere, of course. Indeed, Latin Averroism was strong in parts of Italy in the fourteenth and even the fifteenth centuries. It was, however, true elsewhere. What then were the *philosophical* problems with Aristotelianism?

(1) There were problems with his physical theory and his theory of motion. These problems were pursued by the famous *Merton School* (named after Merton College, Oxford, where they seemed to be centered). Some of the names in this circle include William Heytesbury, Richard Swyneshed (called the "Calculator", and not to be confused with *Roger* Swyneshed, whom I mentioned in Chapter 2 above), and Thomas Bradwardine. At Paris, these problems were taken up by John Buridan (see Hyman and Walsh), and his pupil Albert of Saxony. These are just a few of the names.

(2) There were also big problems for Aristotle's theory of knowledge. For instance, (i) for Aristotle, the individual substance was primary - it was the main kind of being. And since being was to be identified with intelligibility, as we have seen all along, the individual should be most fully intelligible too. And yet "*sensation* is of particulars, but *intellection* of universals". There is something in a material substance that defies understanding: its matter. The intelligibility of an individual resides exclusively at the level of form, which is to say, the species or common nature. This tension in Aristotle became more and more obvious in the fourteenth century. (ii) The proper objects of the various senses were all qualities: color of vision, sound of hearing, taste,

texture, heat, cold, odor, and so on. So too, many of the common objects of the senses (that is, those that come to us through more than one sense) are qualities: shape (from sight and touch), and so on. Others, such as position or orientation, were not *qualities* in the traditional Aristotelian division of the categories, but were nevertheless *accidents* (orientation or "*situs*", as it was called, was a separate Aristotelian category). Still other common sensibles, such as motion, fell into no category at all, but were *changes* in an accidental category.

Hence, if all our knowledge comes from the senses, then it appears as if all we can know about things are their accidents and accidental changes. But, in that case, what about the thing's *essence*? How do I come to know *it*? I cannot *abstract* it from the sensible species, since we have just seen that is simply isn't *there* in the sensible species, which presents only accidental features of objects. Aristotle and the Aristotelians often admit this. It is "difficult", they say, to penetrate to the nature or essence of material or sensible things. Aquinas at one point says "We do not even know the nature or essence of a single fly".

If you push this line of thought - and I don't see any reason why we shouldn't push it - then it is not just "difficult" to know essences via the senses. It is *impossible*. But if it is impossible, then what is all this elaborate machinery of the *agent* and *passive intellects*? What is all that for? The whole point of that complicated theory was to explain how the *accidents* of a thing are stripped off mentally, and how we get down to the *essence* of the thing. Aristotle and his followers thus appear to have a very convoluted theory to explain how we do something we in fact never do - and *cannot do on principle*! In the fourteenth century, people began to realize this problem too.

Thus, despite the fact that mediaeval philosophy is often regarded as nothing more than pious repetition of Aristotelian platitudes, it turns out that Aristotelianism really *dominated* for only a very short time. By 1350 it was losing ground fast in France and England, and by 1400 we begin to see Renaissance *Platonism* all over the place. Platonism returns to reclaim its traditional position. The dominance of Aristotle lasted for at most two hundred years - and began getting rather shaky as early as a hundred years before, by around 1300.

I've just pointed out some of the tensions in Aristotelianism. Now I want to point out another. All throughout this survey, we've seen two main themes (among others):

- (a) the question of universals or common natures - at least in part a *metaphysical* issue;
- (b) the question of the *extent* of the unaided intellect's powers - an *epistemological* question.

Now point (a), while it is a metaphysical question, also has epistemological overtones, as we have seen. If our knowledge is going to be well-grounded, and not just a total fabrication of the mind, then there must be some general things out there in the world to ground our general concepts. That is: *Knowledge entails realism*. Conversely, *nominalism entails skepticism*. It severs the connection between our concepts and the world. ('Entails' here should be read as referring to *intellectual pressures*, not necessarily to anything absolutely rigid and unavoidable.)

Hence, given the "intellectual dynamics" of these issues, you might expect *a priori* that, historically speaking, the doctrine of metaphysical realism would be associated with a doctrine *emphasizing* the intellect's ability to know under its own unaided powers. Similarly, you would expect also that the doctrine of metaphysical nominalism would be associated with a highly skeptical view of the unaided intellect's powers. When we look at Platonism and Aristotelianism, however - considered now not as the doctrines of the historical Plato and the historical Aristotle, but as the *traditions* that have come to be associated with their names - we find that in both cases it's *just the reverse*. Platonism, in the sense of the "Platonic tradition", has always been associated with views that combine realism with a very *low* opinion of the powers of the unaided

intellect. Aristotelianism, on the other hand, combines a very *high* opinion of the powers of the unaided intellect with the claim that it is the individual *substance* that is the basic unit of reality - a claim that was very often interpreted as an attack on the realism of that other ("Platonic") tradition, and therefore as supporting, or at least tending toward, *nominalism*.

That is, in the Platonic tradition, we have *realism and little (natural) knowledge*; in the Aristotelian tradition we have *nominalism and lots of (natural) knowledge*. Now combine these historical facts with the "entailments" above. We find that Platonism, although it combines these things in a way we would not automatically have expected, given the intellectual dynamics that we've looked at, is not in any internal conflict with itself - at least not on this account. While an emphasis on the worth of our intellectual powers would seem to entail realism, the converse is not the case. It is perfectly consistent to maintain realism and yet have a low opinion of our knowing powers. There may very well be universal or common entities to ground our general concepts, and yet our knowledge may be hindered or prevented *for other reasons*. This is exactly what happened in the Platonic/Augustinian tradition. There are plenty of *universal objects* for our concepts to grasp. That's not the problem. The problem is the *mutability* of material things, *and of our minds*. Platonism is not in conflict on *this* point.

But Aristotelianism is. The Aristotelian tradition combines a tendency toward nominalism with an emphasis on human knowing powers. And yet nominalism entails skepticism. So Aristotelianism has got itself into trouble. On the one hand, you want to deny the doctrine of illumination, as traditionally conceived, because it has too low an opinion of the unaided human intellect. On the other hand, you hold or at least tend toward a metaphysical doctrine the consequences of which are that the unaided - or even the aided - human intellect isn't good for anything anyway.

We've seen people struggle with this. First on the metaphysical side. Duns Scotus, one of the first to deny illumination and emphasize the power of the intellect, got out of the problem by pushing his Aristotelianism in a realist direction - and to that extent perhaps compromised his commitment to the Aristotelian tradition. Aquinas, who also denied the doctrine of illumination, got out of the problem by trying to have his cake and eat it too. He wants to be both a realist and a nominalist. We need common natures to ground the objectivity of our knowledge; and so we have them. But they don't exist or have any kind of being at all in the form in which they are common; and so we don't have them. And it's only disguising the problem to think that the mysterious agent intellect is going to be able to get around this.

After the Condemnation of 1277, with its attack on Aristotelianism - and in particular on Aristotelian *natures* as compromising divine omnipotence - it becomes increasingly difficult to push Aristotelianism in a realist direction as Scotus did; there was therefore an additional *theological* motive for pushing toward nominalism. This new emphasis shifts the problems into the realm of epistemology. (Nominalists have difficulties over knowledge, remember.) Once the focus shifts to epistemology, people begin to take a close look again at Aristotle's theory of knowledge - and discover that there are some serious problems with it all by itself, quite apart from any metaphysical issues. I've mentioned some of these problems above.

As part of the anti-Aristotelian movement that was flourishing in the fourteenth century in certain quarters, I want to look briefly at *Nicholas of Autrecourt*. (See Hyman and Walsh.) Note especially Moody's paper, "Ockham, Buridan, and Nicholas of Autrecourt," and see the remark on this paper at the end of Chapter \s3 above. This is a terrific paper, and is to be enthusiastically recommended.



Nicholas was Master in the Arts Faculty at Paris, and later a Bachelor of Theology. His main work is called *Exigit ordo executionis* (after its opening words), written sometime between 1340 and 1345 or so. There is a critical edition in an early volume of *Mediaeval Studies*. The work is a critical examination of Aristotelianism and Averroism. Nicholas is a *philosophical skeptic*, a probabilist - that is, he offers "probable" theories rather than philosophical *demonstrations* - and a strong anti-Aristotelian. Nicholas was condemned - called before the papal court at Avignon, and condemned by Pope Benedict XII in 1346. His book was burned (which was mainly a ceremonial act, and by no means succeeded in destroying all the copies), and he was made to recant.

Aristotle, he says in *Exigit ordo executionis*, is "like the God of our age". Yet none of his doctrines is adequately founded. In fact, Aristotle gives no good reasons for his theories at all. A certain Giles, Nicholas says, wrote that it would not be difficult to show that Aristotle knew *scientifically* a thousand conclusions. But, Autrecourt counters, he has found a thousand *attempted* demonstrations in Aristotle, yet not a single one of them is certain.

Nicholas wanted to oppose the authority of Aristotle as "The Philosopher" in Christian theology. He wanted to found philosophy on something more stable than Aristotle. He tried to revive atomism of the Democritean variety. He did not propose it as certain, of course, but only as a viable alternative to Aristotle.

Look at his second letter to Bernard of Arezzo, translated in the Hyman and Walsh volume. He says on p. 708: There is one and only one foundation for all our certitude, and that is the *Principle of Non-Contradiction*. As he proceeds, however, it becomes clear that this needs to be qualified in *two* ways:

(1) This is only the foundation for all our *natural* certitude. There is also the certitude of *faith*, which is no more and no less certain, but is simply based on a different foundation. See his third corollary, p. 709.

(2) Further, it seems that Nicholas wants to include under the Principle of Non-Contradiction also *experience* as a source of certitude. Some of his arguments just make no sense otherwise. That is, we are certain that nothing is both so and not so. Hence, when we are certain (by the certitude of experience) that such and such *is* so, we are also certain that it is not the case that it is *not* so.

On the basis of this, Nicholas draws out six corollaries, and then makes the important claim (p. 710): From the fact that some thing is known to exist, it cannot be evidently inferred, by evidence reduced to the first principle or to the certitude of the first principle, that some other things exists. This of course sounds very much like Hume's attack on the notion of *causality*. And indeed, Autrecourt is sometimes called "the mediaeval Hume". From the fact that one thing exists, it never *follows* on pain of contradiction that something else must exist. Causal connections therefore cannot be *demonstrated*.

But notice that he does *not* say that we cannot know *any* causal connections with certitude. In fact, Nicholas *does* seem to think that we frequently can be certain *by experience* (not by demonstration) of the causal action of one thing on another. We can *see* the causal action of one billiard ball on another; we cannot *demonstrate* it. And of course we can only *experience* the causal action of one thing on another when we experience *both* the one and the other, both the cause and the effect. Where we do not have certain experience of the one side of this causal relation, we can not *infer* it from the other. Hence:

(1) We cannot philosophically prove the existence of God. (This is not brought out explicitly in the letter.) The proof would have to proceed from effect to cause, and we cannot do

that. *Note:* He doesn't even consider the ontological argument, according to which the existence of God can be deduced from the "Principle of Non-Contradiction" without any appeal to causality.

(2) We have no reason to believe in Aristotelian substances underlying accidents. See the second letter, pp. 711-713. All we perceive, all we are certain of by experience, are the *accidents*. And we can never infer the existence of anything else from them - in particular, not the existence of some underlying substrate.

Here we see one of the problems with Aristotelian epistemology, raised above, simply solved by giving it up. We do *not* have any knowledge of substances, or of the essences underlying the sensible accidents. Furthermore, we don't even have any good reason to think there are such things.

Nicholas also opposed so called "faculty psychology", according to which knowledge entailed a *faculty* or *power* of knowing (the intellect), and willing entailed a *faculty* or *power* of willing (the will), and so on. For Nicholas, this was nothing more than another form of the causal argument.

## Chapter 63: Nicholas of Cusa

With Cusa, we come back again to the neo-Platonism of the more exotic variety.

Cusa was born in Kues in 1401. He and his brother endowed a hospital there, and his library is still preserved there. As the last good item in the lore and gossip part of this survey, I should report that Cusa's heart is buried at Kues. I don't know where the rest of him is.

Cusa studied canon law at Padua, between 1417 and 1423. At that time, Padua was also a center of scientific studies. Cusa encountered new movements in astronomy and statics. He ended up denying that that earth was the center of the universe - although hardly for what we would think of as scientific reasons.

In 1426 Cusa became the secretary of Cardinal Orsini, a member of the humanist circle looking for manuscripts of the classics. (We are now on the verge of the Renaissance, if not already well into it.) He became a palaeographer (that is, one who could read "old writings", the manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which were written in an extremely compressed kind of shorthand - quite an art, let me tell you), and discovered an important manuscript of Plautus.

In 1437 he was sent to Constantinople as one of a commission to negotiate the reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches. He was raised to the rank of cardinal in 1445, and died in 1464.

Cusa's trip to Constantinople didn't come to anything politically, but it did philosophically. On the way back by boat, he had time to reflect on theological problems. And he had a revelation. This was the source of his subsequent theologizing and his philosophy.

He described this experience in a letter to a Cardinal Julian: "In learned ignorance," he says, (*in docta ignorantia*), he grasped the incomprehensible, transcended reason. This is the key to his doctrine: "Learned Ignorance". It is the title of his most famous work: *On Learned Ignorance*. There is a complete English translation.

Learned Ignorance transcends the truths of reason. It is not the ignorance of pure stupidity or lack of information. This should already begin to remind you of the neo-Platonic One that transcends Being and therefore Intelligibility, and of Pseudo-Denis' and Eriugena's "way of eminence". Indeed, Cusa used Pseudo-Denis' *On the Divine Names* a lot.

Cusa begins his *On Learned Ignorance* by observing that all men by nature desire to know. This of course is the famous opening line of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. But Cusa draws a totally non-Aristotelian conclusion from it. Since all men by nature *desire* to know, it follows that do *not yet* know. We don't *desire* what we already have (although of course we may desire to *keep* it, which is something else altogether). Since we desire to know, but do not know, we therefore need a rational inquiry, a kind of *movement* of the mind from what we take to be certain to what is yet uncertain. This whole process is a relating, a *comparatio*, of what is unknown to what we take to be known, of conclusion to premises. Cusa is right. We make "advances" in knowledge by taking something we regard as unfamiliar, and "reducing" it to what we take to be familiar. We proceed after the general pattern, "Think of it like this".

The greater the distance between premises and conclusion, the harder and more hazardous it is to draw that conclusion. Now, suppose the distance is infinite. Then we can never reach our goal of certain truth. We will always be moving toward it.

The distance, or difference, between God and the human mind is infinite in this way. God is an *absolute* - there are no *degrees* in him, no *relativity*, no perspectives or *comparisons* in him.

Thus, since rational inquiry proceeds by relating and comparing, we can never grasp God by reason. The very *method* of human reason won't allow us to comprehend the infinite and absolute God.

In fact, rational inquiry in this way is inadequate to reveal the *full* truth about *anything*. For every truth is an absolute, with no degrees. We are hindered by the relational and comparative character of all rational inquiry.

Cusa is here thinking of the Augustinian/Anselmian notion of the *truth of things* (see Chapter \s2). Truth is the essence or nature a thing. Truth for Cusa is a goal, a fixed essence the mind is trying to reach and grasp.

The mind can come closer and closer to the truth, but can never really reach it. It is always possible to comprehend something in our rational way better than we already do. Truth is "the conformity of the thing and our intellect", according to a classical formula. But this conformity is an ideal we never live up to. In fact, there is always an infinite distance between the mind and its object. All we can know of truth is the fact that absolute truth is beyond our reach. The more profoundly we learn this lesson of ignorance, the more closely we approach this truth - but not, of course, through *reason*.

Cusa calls all our knowledge "conjecture". He wrote a separate work *On Conjectures*. This doesn't mean just "guesses". Rather, a "conjecture" in this sense is a true assertion, but true only as far as it goes. It doesn't fully measure up to its object.

Cusa is full of imagery and examples, which are very striking but not always entirely helpful. Here is one of his examples of our "conjectures".

Consider the eye's looking at a man's face from different positions. Here we get a number of partial views. Each is true, but none is exhaustive. Even if all the views are added together, we have no adequate picture of the face, since the views are many and fragmented but the face is one whole.

Reality in the same way is just such a *coincidence of opposites*. Just as in the example of the head, we had two opposed views, from opposite sides of the head, yet reconciled in the head itself, so too the same kind of thing happens in reality at large.

This is particularly true of our rational knowledge of God. We know many attributes, even contradictory ones. For instance, we know him as good, and yet we know him as not good (that is, not good in *merely* our human sense). This of course sounds like straight Pseudo-Denis, with his three-fold way. (See Chapter \s3 above.)

For Cusa, the principle of non-contradiction is the primary principle of Aristotle's philosophy. On the other hand, the human mind is led into contradiction by its very nature - as witness our knowledge of God. Hence Aristotle's philosophy is necessarily inadequate. The law of non-contradiction is a necessary rule of human thought. And yet we violate that rule because in reality we find a coincidence of opposites.

Cusa disliked the Aristotelians of his day, who stubbornly maintained that the coincidence of opposites is heresy. In fact, he thinks, the coincidence of opposites is the first step to mystical theology.

Cusa does not deny that Aristotle's philosophy is quite all right on a certain level. The various partial views we have are *true*, remember. Conjecture is not guesswork, and it is *definitely* not error. Aristotelian philosophy is true as far as it goes - but it's only one perspective.

We must go beyond *reason*, which formulates the Aristotelian philosophy, to *intelligence*. Intelligence is a knowing power higher than Aristotelian reason. It is a power of intellectual *intuition*. It doesn't use the *discursive* method; it doesn't relate and compare. Its method is not a *process*. It *sees* unity where reason discovers only difference and opposition. Recall Boethius' *Consolation*, Book V, where we had God's knowledge proceeding by *intelligence*, for which there is no *procession* of past, present, and future, while our knowledge proceeds by mere *reason*, which is discursive. (See Chapter \s4 above.)

There is a coincidence of opposites in God, since he is the "absolute maximum", since he is everything he can be. He is infinite in a positive sense. He includes all conceivable perfections, even incompatible ones. There is nothing outside God to limit him.

How do we know such a thing exists? Well, by definition, it includes all perfections, including, therefore, *existence*. Hence, its existence follows from its very definition.

*Note:* Here is a version of the ontological argument *quite different* from Anselm's version, and very much more like Descartes'.

Cusa has another Cartesian sounding argument. We cannot conceive the finite without conceiving the infinite. We cannot think of a boundary without thinking at least implicitly of what is *beyond* the boundary. So too, there cannot *be* a boundary without an "other side". There can be no finite thing without an infinity.

God for Cusa can contain no otherness. There is nothing outside him; he is infinite, remember. God is not *other* than anything. Of course, all this sounds pantheistic; perhaps it is.

With Cusa we have come full circle. We started with the Platonism of the Fathers, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Denis. We have ended with the Platonism of the Renaissance. In between, there has been a glorious and intense, but brief period of Aristotelian *technical* philosophy, which shifted into the schools and universities, became progressively more "sterile", as its critics put it, and eventually burnt itself out. And by this time, you may feel that you have burnt yourself out too.



A Survey of  
Mediaeval Philosophy

by

Paul Vincent Spade

Volume 2 : Texts

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How charming is divine philosophy!  
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
But musical as is Apollo's lute,  
And a pertetual feast of *nectared sweets*,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns. --

John Milton, Comus, 476 ff.

Text 1:

Plato, Alcibiades I, 130a-c

Translated from Platonis opera, John Burnet ed., vol. 2. Note: There has been some dispute about the authenticity of this dialogue.

Socrates. At any rate, I don't think anyone disagrees with this point.

Alcibiades. With what?

S. That man is one of three things.

A. Which ones?

S. The soul, or the body, or the composite, the whole.

A. What then?

S. But didn't we agree that man was what rules the body?

A. We did agree.

S. Then does the body rule itself?

A. Certainly not.

S. Rather we say it is ruled.

A. Yes.

S. So this is not what we are looking for.

A. It seems not.

S. But does the composite rule the body, and is it the man?

A. Maybe so.

S. That least of all. For where one part does not rule, there is no way for the whole to rule.

A. That's right.

S. Since, then, neither the body nor the composite is the man, it remains, I think, that either he is nothing at all or else, if he is something, he turns out to be nothing but the soul.

A. Of course.

Text 2:

Plotinus, Ennead, IV, 6

Translated from Plotin: Enneades, vol. iv, Emile Bréhier, ed., (Paris: Société d'édition "Les belles lettres", 1927).

Plotinus Ennead, IV, 6: "On Sensation and Memory"

(1) Since we maintain that sensations do not come about as impressions or seal-imprints in the soul, accordingly we shall say that memories are by no means retentions of the knowledge and sensations of an impression, remaining in the soul, that did not come to be [there] in the first place.

The same reasoning applies in both cases. Either [an impression] comes to be in the soul, and remains [there] if it is remembered, or else [someone who] does not grant the one [claim] does not grant the other one either. Now insofar as we maintain neither [claim], we shall have to explain how each<sup>1</sup> [does occur], since neither do we say that an impression of the sensed object comes to be in the soul and impresses it, nor do we maintain that memory is *of* an impression remaining within.

If we consider what happens in the case of the clearest [kind of] sensation,<sup>2</sup> and transfer that to other sensations, we shall no doubt find what we are looking for. Now surely it is clear in every case that when we grasp any sensation through sight, we see it and engage it with the eye there, where the visible object lies, straight ahead. The apprehension occurs *there*, and the soul looks outward inasmuch as, on my view, no impression occurs in it, and it does not see by grasping a seal-imprint, like that of a ring in wax. For it would hardly need to look outwards if it already had in itself the visible object's form, in virtue of the latter's entering into it, and it looked at the impression [so produced].

The soul attributes distance to the visible object, and tells how far away the vision occurs. How then could it regard what is inside it, not separated at all from it, as if [it were] far off?

The size of the object, how big it is in the external [world] - how could [the soul] say how big it is, or [how could it say] it is large - for example, the [size] of the heavens - since there cannot be so large an impression inside [the soul]?

And, most important of all, if we grasp *impressions* of what we see, it will be impossible to look at the things themselves we see, but [only] at appearances and shadows of the things seen, so that the things themselves are not the same as what is visible to us.

In general, just as it is said to be impossible for someone to see if he places the visible object against the pupil,<sup>3</sup> but rather he must stand off [at a distance] to see, [so too] this must be carried over [to apply] even more to the soul. If we posit in [the soul] an impression of the thing seen, [the soul] would not see the [impression], by which it is imprinted, as a visible object. Seer and seen must be two. On one side, there must be the one who sees the impression situated off somewhere else, not situated where [the seer] is. In order for vision to occur, the vision must not be of what is situated [in the soul], but of what is not situated [there].



(2) If this is *not* the way [sensation occurs], how then [*does* it occur]?

[Sensation] speaks of things it does not possess. For it is characteristic of a power, not to undergo something but to be capable and, within its reach, to act. I think it is in this way, then, that the soul distinguishes a visible from an audible object. [This would] not [happen] if by nature they were both impressions, but rather [only] if they are not impressions or passivities but acts belonging to what they are in.<sup>4</sup>

But since we do not believe this, [and tend to think] that no [sense-] power is able to know its object unless it is struck [by the external object], we make it out not to *know* what is near it, but to *endure* it passively. [Yet] it is supposed to rule it, not to be ruled [by it].

We have to regard the same thing as happening in the case of hearing.<sup>5</sup> The impression is a certain articulated striking of the air, [made up] of letters, so to speak, inscribed by what made the sound. The power and substance of the soul recognizes, as it were, those impressions written in the air when they come near where they are apt to be seen.

For taste and smell, on the one hand there are the passive experiences [of the body], and on the other there are the sensations and judgments about those [experiences]. The acts of knowing the experiences are other than the experiences [themselves].

Knowledge of the intelligibles is not passive, and proceeds without impressions. On the contrary, they come forward so to speak from the inside, while it is what [comes] from outside that is viewed [in sensation]. The [intelligibles] are more, and more properly, "acts". For each [intelligible object] of [knowledge] is knowledge in action.

But whether the soul, as double, sees itself as something else, whereas [it sees] the intellect as one, and both of the two<sup>6</sup> as one - we shall discuss that in another place.

(3) All this being said, we must next talk about memory. First, we say that it is not surprising - or rather [even if] it *is* surprising, we must not doubt such a power of the soul - that although it receives nothing into itself, it [nevertheless] succeeds in perceiving what it does not have [inside it]. For the nature of the soul is the *reason* of all things, a reason last among all the intelligibles and all the things *in* the Intelligible, and first among those in the whole sensible [world]. Hence it stands in relation to both [realms] - brought back to life and made comfortable from the one [side] but, tricked by [mere] resemblance from the other [side], it sinks as if spell-bound.

Standing in the middle, it senses both [realms]. It is said to understand things that have come into its memory when it turns toward them. For it knows [them] by somehow *being* them. It knows [them] not by settling down among them, but by possessing them somehow and seeing them and *being* them in an obscure manner, and [by] growing clearer out of that obscurity, as if by [a kind of] waking, and [by] passing from potentiality to act.

In the same way, linked so to speak to the [realm of] sensibles, it makes them light up and brings it about that they are before its eyes. [Its] power is ready and, as it were, in labor toward those [sensibles]. Thus, when it exerts itself toward any of [those] appearances, it is as if it stays [there] a long time, facing the [object] present [to it]. And the more strongly [it exerts itself], the longer it stays [there].

That is why children are said to have better memories, because [the object] is not removed but stands before their eyes, since they do not yet look to a large number [of things], but at [only] a few. For those whose intellect and power [are directed] to many things, they so to speak run away and do not remain. But if impressions remained [in the soul], a large number [of objects] would not make us less able to remember.

Again, if impressions remained, there would be no need to look [back] in order for us to remember, or to remember afterwards things forgotten earlier, since they are right there.

And the efforts [we make] to acquire [a good memory] show that the results pertain to the *powers* of the soul, just as exercises of the hands or feet [are directed] toward doing easily what does not lie [naturally] in the hands or feet, but for which they can be made ready by continual [practice].

For why, when one hears [a thing] once or twice, does he not remember it, but [he does] when [he hears it] many times, and [why] did he not retain what he heard earlier, but now, a long time afterwards, he remembers it? It is not because earlier he possessed [only] parts of the [overall] impression. For he should have remembered those [at least]. Rather [the memory] comes to be as if all at once, out of the later hearing or effort [to fix] the thing [in memory].<sup>7</sup>

These facts testify to an inclination of the power of the soul by which we remember, [an inclination produced when that power is] reinforced [by repeated practice] either in general or with respect to this [or that]. And when not only is the [object] of memory present to us in the case of things we have taken care over, but those who have committed many things [to memory], by accustoming themselves to using recitation, easily perform so called "commitments [to memory]" for other things too, what more could anyone ask of memory than to be a power that has been reinforced?

Lingering impressions would indicate weakness rather than power. For what takes on an impression does so by yielding. And, since an impression is [something] passive, what remembers better is the more passive.

But what appears to happen is [just] the opposite of this. For in no case does exercising something make what is exercised passive, since even in the case of the senses, it is not the weak one that sees, for example, [a weak] eye, but the one that has the greater power to act. Hence too, old people are weaker both with respect to the senses and likewise with respect to memory.

Sensation therefore is a kind of power, and so is memory. Again, since sensations are not impressions, how can memories be the retainings of what were not put in there in the first place?

But if it is a kind of power, a preparedness for quick [action], why do we get around to recollecting the same things, not when they occur, but afterwards? [It is] because the power must be set up and prepared. For we see this with other powers too. When they are prepared for what they can do, some act right away and others [only if] they collect themselves [first].

For the most part, those who remember well are not the same as those who are shrewd, because the power involved is not the same. Similarly, the boxer and the runner are often not the same [man]. For different ideas govern in the two cases. Still, nothing prevented someone who is superior in certain faculties of the soul from recognizing things that [merely] lie [directly before the soul], or [made<sup>8</sup>] someone so armed acquire an inability to undergo and retain a passive experience.

In general, it is not surprising that everything about the soul is otherwise than people suppose because they do not inquire into [the matter], or than the convenient notions, with their deceptive analogies, that arise from sensibles. They<sup>9</sup> regard sensations and memory as like letters inscribed on notice-boards or writing-tablets. Neither those who think of the soul as corporeal, nor those [who think of it as] incorporeal see how many impossibilities follow on this hypothesis of theirs.

## NOTES TO TEXT

1. That is, sensation and memory.
2. That is, sight.
3. See, e.g., Aristotle, *De anima* II, 7, 419a12, 419a26.
4. That is, to the soul. The reasoning in this paragraph is not altogether clear.
5. Plotinus is now passing from "the clearest kind of sensation" (see above) to the other kinds, and from there to intellectual knowledge. For some unexplained reason, the sense of touch is omitted.
6. Apparently, soul and intellect. The sense is not clear.
7. The point is that where repetition fixes a thing in memory, the memory as a whole is not built up piecemeal in such a way that each individual repetition leaves behind a *part* of the whole memory. Rather we do not remember the thing *at all* until the one repetition that finally succeeds in establishing that memory as a whole.
8. The sense seems to require some such word. The 'prevented' earlier in the sentence cannot continue to govern here. The idea is that, if memory were a matter of merely reading off passive impressions, then it would take no special *power* to do so, so that shrewd people *would* after all be very often good remembers too.
9. The reference is ambiguous. It can be either the "notions" or the "people".



### Text 3:

#### Some Passages from Augustine: Statements against Skepticism

See also *On Free Choice of the Will*, II, 3, 20-21; & *The City of God*, XIX, 3 (quoted in Hyman and Walsh).

(1) *The City of God*, XI, 26, lines 7-35, translated from Sancti Aurelii Augustini *De civitate dei* (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vols. 47-48, Turnholt: Brepols, 1955). (See also *Confessions*, X, on knowing with and without images.)

For we exist, and we know that we exist, and we delight in that being and knowing. Now in these three things I [just] mentioned no persuasive [*veri similis*] falsehood disturbs us. For we do not touch these things with any bodily sense, as [we do] the things outside [us] - for instance, we sense colors by seeing, sounds by hearing, odors by smelling, flavors by tasting, hard and soft things by touching. Also, in thought we turn toward the images of these sensibles, quite similar to them and [yet] not corporeal, we hold them in memory and are aroused to desires for them by means of these [images]; but without any delusive imagining of phantasies or phantasms, it is quite certain to me that I exist and that I know and love that fact. In these truths there is no fear of the arguments of the Academics, who say, "What if you are mistaken?" For if I am mistaken, I exist. He who does not exist certainly cannot be mistaken. And therefore, if I am mistaken, by that very fact I exist. Because I exist if I am mistaken, how can I be mistaken that I exist when it is certain to me that, if I am mistaken, I exist? Therefore, because I, who would be mistaken, would exist even though I were mistaken, there is no doubt that in the fact that I know I exist I am not mistaken. And as a consequence, in the fact that I know that I know, I am not mistaken. For just as I know I exist, so too do I know the fact that I know. And when I love these two facts, I add to the things I know that same love, as a third item no different in worth. Neither am I mistaken that I love, since I am not mistaken about the things I love - although, even if they were false, it would be true that I love false things. For on what grounds could I be rightly blamed and rightly forbidden to love false things if it were false that I loved them? But since these things are true and certain, how can anyone doubt that the love of these things, while they are being loved, is true and certain? Further, just as there is no one who does not want to be happy, so there is no one who does not want to exist. For how can he be happy if he is nothing?

(2) *On the Trinity*, XV, 12, 21, lines 1-86, translated from Sancti Aurelii Augustini *De Trinitate*, W. J. Mountain, ed., (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vols. 50 & 50a; Turnholt: Brepols, 1968). (For the progression from sensory illusions, through dreams and madness, to absolute certainty, note the striking parallel with Descartes' first *Meditation*. Augustine skips the "Evil Demon" stage.)

First of all, that knowledge around which our thought is truly formed when we say what we know, what kind and how much [of it] can arise in a man, however expert and learned [he is]? For, apart from the things that come into the mind from the bodily senses, among which so many are otherwise than they seem that one who is overly impressed by their illusoriness [*verisimilitudine*] seems to himself to be healthy, although he is insane - hence the Academic philosophy has so prevailed that, doubting about all things, it would rave even more pitifully - apart from these things that come into the mind from the bodily senses, what remains of the things that we know, as we know that we are alive?

On that point we are absolutely without fear that perhaps we are deceived by some illusion. For it is certain that even he who is deceived is alive. Neither is this included among those objects of sight that strike [us] from outside so that the eye is deceived about it, just as it is deceived when the oar seems broken in the water, and a tower [seems] to move to those sailing past, and six hundred other things that are otherwise than they seem. For this one is not perceived with the eye of the flesh.

It is an intimate knowledge by which we know we are alive, where even the Academic cannot say, "Maybe you are asleep and do not know it, and you see in your dreams." Certainly, who does not know that the things seen by those who are dreaming are exactly like the things seen by those awake? But he who is certain about knowing he is alive does not say thereby "I know I am awake" but "I know that I am alive". Therefore, whether he is sleeping or awake, he is alive. Neither can he be deceived by dreams in that knowledge, because both sleeping and seeing in dreams belong to the living.

Nor can the Academic say in opposition to this knowledge, "Maybe you are mad and do not know it." For the things that appear to the mad are also exactly like those that appear to the sane. But he who is mad is alive. Nor does he say against the Academics "I know I am not mad" but "I know I am alive".

Therefore, he who says he knows he is alive is neither deceived nor lying. And so, let a thousand kinds of deceptive visions be set before one who says "I know I am alive". He will fear none of them as long as even he who is deceived is alive.

But if only things like these pertain to human knowledge, they are pretty few - unless in each kind they are so multiplied that they are not only not few, but in fact are found to stretch to infinity. For he who says "I know I am alive" says he knows one thing. Then if he says "I know I know I am alive", there are two. But now the fact that he knows these two things is a third bit of knowledge. [And] in this way he can add both a fourth and a fifth - and countless many, if he is up to it. But because one cannot exhaust [*comprehendere*] an uncountably large number by adding units, or say [something] countless times, this very fact he comprehends, and says both that it is true and that it is so uncountable that he cannot exhaust the infinite number of its expression [*uerbi ejus*] and say it.<sup>1</sup>

This can also be observed for a will that is certain. Who is there for whom it is not impudent to reply "Maybe you are deceived" when he says "I want to be happy"? And if he says "I know that I want this, and I know that I know this", he can now add to these two a third item, that he knows these two, and a fourth, that he knows he knows these two, and proceed in this way to an infinite number.

Again, if someone says "I do not want to make a mistake", [then] whether he makes a mistake or does not make a mistake, will it not nevertheless be true that he does not *want* to make a mistake? Who is there for whom it would not be most impudent to say to such a one "Maybe you are deceived"? For certainly, whenever he is deceived, nevertheless he is not deceived about not *wanting* to be deceived. And if he says that he knows this, he adds as much as he wants to the number of things known, and observes that the number is infinite. For he who says "I do not want to be deceived, and I know I do not want that, and I know I know that" can indicate this infinite number, although not by its full expression.

Other things are found too that work against the Academics, who maintain that nothing is known by man. But we must put a stop to this, especially since we have not taken up that task in the present work. There are three books of ours [= the *Contra academicos*], written right after our conversion. Surely none of the many arguments that are made up by [the Academics] against

the perception of truth will influence anyone who is able and wants to read these [books], and understands them when he has read them.

For while there are two kinds of things that are known, one [consisting] of those the mind perceives through bodily sense and the other of those [it perceives] through itself, these philosophers have chattered on a great deal against the senses of the body, but they have never been able to call into doubt the mind's most steadfast perceptions, [which] it gets through itself, of true things - for example, "I know I am alive", as I said.

But far be it from us that we should doubt the things we have learned through the bodily senses. For through them we have learned about heaven and earth and the things in them that are known to us, insofar as he who made both us and them wanted [them] to become known to us. Far be it from us too that we should deny that we know what we have learned through the testimony of others. Apart from them, we do not know there is an ocean; we do not know there are the lands and cities that famous reports describe for us; we do not know that the men and their deeds existed that we learn about by reading history; we do not know the things that are reported every day from whatever quarter and are confirmed by indications that are consistent and in agreement [with one another]; finally, we do not know in what places or from what people we arose. For all these things we believe on the testimony of others.

If it is quite absurd to say all that, [then] it must be confessed that not only the senses of our own bodies, but those of other people's bodies too, add to our knowledge.

(3) From *Soliloquies*, II, 1, 1, PL 32, col. 885. (The *Soliloquies* are a dialogue between Augustine and Reason.)

*Reason.* You who want to know yourself, do you know that you exist?

*Augustine.* I know that.

*R.* Whence do you know that?

*A.* I don't know.

*R.* Do you feel that you are simple or multiple?

*A.* I don't know.

*R.* Do you know that you are moved?

*A.* I don't know.

*R.* Do you know that you think?

*A.* I know that.

*R.* Therefore, it is true that you think.

*A.* It is true.

*Note:* With all these passages, compare Arnauld's objection to Descartes' *Meditations*, in the fourth set of Objections, Haldane and Ross, trs., vol. 2, p. 80. Arnauld in effect says that it is remarkably odd that the great Descartes should have based his entire system on the doctrine of Augustine. See also Descartes' rather limp reply, *ibid.*, p. 96, where he says he will not bother to thank the eminent Arnauld for citing Augustine as being on Descartes' side. In other words, "Let's not dwell on the fact that this is all derivative and unoriginal."

*SOUL AND BODY*

(4) On the Customs of the Catholic Church [= *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*], I, 4, 6, PL 32, col. 1313.

Therefore, let us ask what is better than man. That of course will be hard to find out, unless we first consider and discuss what man himself is. I do not think a definition of man is now demanded of me. What seems to be asked of me at this point is rather the following: since there is almost universal consensus - or at least it is agreed on between me and those I am now dealing with, and that suffices - that we are composites of soul and body, what [then] is the man himself? Is he both of the things I [just] mentioned, or the body alone, or the soul alone?

For although soul and body are two things, and neither would be called a "man" if the other did not exist (for neither would the body be a man if the soul did not exist, nor in turn would the soul be a man if a body were not animated by it), nevertheless it can happen that one of these should be regarded as the "man" and called [such].

Therefore, what do we call the "man"? [Is he] soul and body, like a "team" [of horses] or a centaur<sup>2</sup>? [Is he] the body alone, which is being *used* by a soul that rules it, like a "lantern", [which is] not the flame and the container together but only the container, although we *call* it [a lantern] because of the flame? [Or] do we call nothing but the soul the "man", but *on account of* the body it rules, just as we call a "rider" not the horse and the man together but only the man, yet [only] insofar as he is suited to governing the horse?

It is hard to decide this issue. Or if it is easy to figure out, [in any case] it requires a long explanation. We do not have to accept and take on that job and delay [here]. For whether both, or only the soul, takes the name of 'man', the best thing for the man is not what is best for the body. Rather what is best for the soul and body together, or for the soul alone, that is best for the man.

(5) Ibid., I, 27, 52, PL 32. col. 1332.

Therefore man, as he appears to man, is a rational, mortal and earthly soul using a body.

(6) On the Size of the Soul (= *De quantitate animae*), 13, 22, PL 32, col. 1048. (The *De quantitate animae* is a dialogue between Augustine and Evodius. In the present passage, Augustine is speaking.)

. . . But if you want to define the mind for yourself, and so ask what the mind is, it is easy for me to reply. For it seems to be to be a certain substance, partaking in reason, and fitted to ruling the body.

#### DIVINE IDEAS

(7) On Eighty-Three Different Questions, q. 46, 2, translated from Sancti Aurelii Augustini *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, *De octo Dulcitii quaestionibus*, Almut Mutzenbecher, ed., (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, vol. 44a; Turnholt: Brepols, 1975).

Therefore, in Latin we can call the Ideas "forms" or "species", in order to appear to translate word for word. But if we call them "reasons", we depart to be sure from a proper translation - for reasons are called "logoi" in Greek, not Ideas - but nevertheless, whoever wants to use this word will not be in conflict with the fact. For Ideas are certain principal, stable and immutable forms or reasons of things. They are not themselves formed, and hence they are eternal and always stand in the same relations, and they are contained in the divine understanding. And although they neither arise nor perish, nevertheless everything that is able to

arise and perish, and everything that does arise and perish, is said to be formed in accordance with them.

Now it is denied that the soul can look upon them, unless it is a rational one, [and even then it can do so] only by that part of itself by which it surpasses [other things] - that is, by its mind and reason, as if by a certain "face", or by an inner and intelligible "eye". To be sure, not each and every rational soul in itself, but [only] the one that is holy and pure, that [is the one that] is claimed to be fit for such a vision, that is, the one that keeps that very eye, by which these things are seen, healthy and pure and fair and like the things it means to see.

What devout man imbued with true religion, even though he is not yet able to see these things, nevertheless dares to deny, or for that matter fails to profess, that all things that exist, that is, whatever things are contained in their own genus with a certain nature of their own, so that that they might exist, are begotten by God their author, and that by that same author everything that lives is alive, and that the entire safe preservation and the very order of things, by which changing things repeat their temporal courses according to a fixed regimen, are held together and governed by the laws of a supreme God? If this is established and granted, who dares to say that God has set up all things in an irrational manner?

Now if it is not correct to say or believe this, it remains that all things are set up by reason, and a man not by the same reason as a horse - for that is absurd to suppose. Therefore, single things are created with their own reasons. But where are we to think these reasons exist, if not in the mind of the creator? For he did not look outside himself, to anything placed [there], in order to set up what he set up. To think that is sacrilege.

But if these reasons of all things to be created and [already] created are contained in the divine mind, and [if] there cannot be anything in the divine mind that is not eternal and unchangeable, and [if] Plato calls these principal reasons of things "Ideas", [then] not only are there Ideas but they are true, because they are eternal and [always] stay the same way, and [are] unchangeable. And whatever exists comes to exist, however it exists, by participation in them.

But among the things set up by God, the rational soul surpasses all [others], and is closest to God when it is pure. And to the extent that it clings to God in charity, to that extent, drenched in a certain way and lit up by that intelligible light, it discerns these reasons, not by bodily eyes but by that principal [part] of it by which it surpasses [everything else], that is, by its intelligence. By this vision it becomes most blessed. These reasons, as was said, whether it is right to call them Ideas or forms or species or reasons, many are permitted to call whatever they want, but [only] to a very few [is it permitted] to see what is true.

#### *SENSATION*

(8) From On Music [= De musica], VI, 5, 9-10, PL 32, cols. 1168-1169. (The De musica is a dialogue between a "Master" and a "Disciple". The Master does all the talking in this passage.)

Master. I will say directly what I think. Either follow me, or even go ahead [of me] if you can, if you notice that I am delaying or hesitating.

For I do not think this body is animated by a soul except by the intention of the maker. Neither do I suppose [the soul] undergoes anything from [the body], but rather acts on [the body] and in it, as if [the body were] subjected by divine order to [the soul's] domination. Yet sometimes [the soul] operates with ease, sometimes with difficulty, according as the bodily nature yields to it more or less, in proportion to its merits.



Therefore, whatever corporeal things are imposed on the body or hurled against it from outside, they produce something in the body itself but not in the soul. [The body] either resists its task or else agrees with it. And so, when [the soul] struggles against the resisting body, and with difficulty forces the matter subjected to [the soul] into the ways of its own task, it becomes more attentive because of the difficulty of the action. This difficulty, when it does not pass unnoticed, is called "sensing" because of the attention. And this is called 'trouble' or 'labor'.

But when what is introduced or applied [to the body] is agreeable, [the soul] easily turns all of [the body], or as much as is needed of it, to the paths of its own task. And this action of [the soul], by which it conjoins its body to an agreeable external body, does not pass unnoticed, because it is carried out more attentively on account of that extraneous factor. But, because of its agreeableness, it is sensed with pleasure. . . .

And, lest I go on too long, it seems to me that when the soul senses in the body, it does not undergo anything from [the body], but rather acts more attentively in the midst of [the body's] passive processes [*passionibus*], and that these actions, whether they are easy because of an agreeableness or hard because of a disagreeableness, do not pass unnoticed by [the soul]. And all this is what is called "sensing".

(9) From On the Size of the Soul [= *De quantitate animae*], 23, 41, PL 32, col. 1058. Note that in text (7) above, sensations were the soul's own actions that did not pass unnoticed. Here, and more clearly in the next text, it is passive bodily processes that count as sensations.

Augustine. Pay attention, then. For I think sensation is that what the body undergoes does not pass unnoticed by the soul. . . .

(10) Ibid., 25, 48, PL 32, cols. 1062-1063.

Augustine. Now turn your mind to that definition of ours, and when you have considered it more expertly, fix it. For we had found that, although it was supposed to be the definition of sensation, it included something else that was not sensation. Hence [the definition] is not true when it is [logically] converted. For perhaps 'Every sensation is a passive process of the body that does not pass unnoticed by the soul' is true, just as 'Every man is a mortal animal' is true. But, just as 'Every mortal animal is a man' is false, because beasts are also that, so [too] 'Every passive process of the body that does not pass unnoticed by the soul is a sensation' is false. For my nails are now growing on me, and that does not pass unnoticed by my soul, since I know it. But I do not sense it. Rather I know it by inference.

Therefore just as 'rational' is added to the [above] definition of man to complete it, [and] when it is added, the beasts that were contained [in the definition] together [with man] are excluded, and we include nothing besides man, and every man, in such a [revised] definition, do you not suppose there is something to be added here too, by which the foreign element [our proposed definition of sensation] contains may be separated out and nothing understood in it except sensation, and every sensation?

*Evodius*. I do suppose so, but I don't know what can be added.

A. Every sensation is certainly a passive process of the body that does not pass unnoticed by the soul. But this proposition cannot be converted, because of that passive process of the body by which it either grows or shrinks while we know it - that is, so that it does not pass unnoticed by the soul.

E. That's right.

A. What? Is it through itself or through something else that this passive process does not pass unnoticed by the soul?

E. Through something else, obviously. For it is one thing to see bigger nails, and another to know that they are growing.

A. Therefore, since growing is itself a passive process that we do not come in contact with by any sense, while the size that we do sense is produced by that same passive process [but] is not that passive process, it is clear that we do not know such a passive process through itself, but through something else. If therefore it were *not* through something else that it did not pass unnoticed by the soul, would it not be sensed rather than inferred?

E. I understand.

A. So why do you doubt what is to be added to the definition?

E. Now I see that [sensation] must be defined as follows, that "Sensation is a passive process of a body that *through itself* does not pass unnoticed by the soul." For both every sensation is like that, and everything like that, I think, is a sensation.

(There is more along these lines in the *De quantitate animae*, but you get the idea.)

#### ILLUMINATION

(11) *Retractationes*, I, 8, 2 (review of *De quantitate animae*, 20, 34), PL 32, col. 594.

In that book, my statement, "The soul seems to me to have brought away with it all the arts, neither does what is called learning [seem to me] to be anything other than remembering and recalling," is not to be taken as if on that basis I approved [the view] that the soul had at some time lived here in another body, or anywhere else, whether in a body or outside the body, and that the things it answers when asked, since it did not learn [them] here, it had learned beforehand in another life. For it can happen, as we have said above in this book [*Retractationes*, I, Ch. 4, 4], that this is possible because [the soul] is an intelligible nature and is connected not just to intelligible but even to immutable things, and is made as belonging to such an order that when it turns itself to the things it is connected with, or to itself, it gives true answers about them, to the extent that it sees them. Indeed, it did not bring all the arts away with it in the way [supposed], and [does not] have them with it [now]. For, unless one has learned [them] here, one cannot discuss [*and in particular, give correct answers to questions about*] the arts that pertain to the bodily senses - for instance, many [parts] of medicine [and], for instance, all [the parts] of astrology. But when [the soul] is skillfully questioned either by itself or by someone else, it answers and recalls, in virtue of what I said [*in the quotation from De quantitate animae*, above], the things the understanding alone grasps.

(12) From *Epistle* 120, 2, 10, PL 33, col. 457.

[*Illumination makes apparent to us*] . . . what we believe that is unknown, what we hold that *is* known, which bodily shape we remember, which one we make up in thought, what the bodily sense reaches, what the mind imagines as like a body, what is contemplated, certain and [yet] altogether unlike any body, by the intellect.

#### NOTES TO TEXT

1. This last sentence trades on the word '*comprehendere*'. The basic meaning is "to grasp completely", to "get your hand completely around" something. In an epistemological sense, to "comprehend" something is to know it exhaustively. Augustine also uses the word here in another sense, where to "comprehend" a process is to "get completely around it", that is, to

*complete* it. So too, to "comprehend" a number is to "get completely around it", that is, to be able to count up to it and beyond. The point of the sentence then is that, although one can in principle reiterate "I know that *p*", "I know I know that *p*" etc., to infinity, nevertheless, one cannot actually utter such an infinitely long sentence, or even actually count up the number of reiterations in it. Nevertheless, I *can* "comprehend" (in the epistemological sense) that very fact and say that there is this truth that I cannot ever get to the end of saying.

2. The point seems to depend on the rather odd view that a centaur is not *half* horse and *half* man, but rather a *combination* of a complete horse and a complete man.

Text 4:

Boethius: On the Hebdomads

Translated from the Stewart and Rand edition in Boethius: Tractates, De consolatione philosophiae, ("Loeb Classical Library"), pp. 38-50.

Boethius

How Are Substances Good Insofar as They Exist,  
Since They Are Not Substantial Goods?

You ask me to set out and to explain a little more plainly the obscurity of the question from our Hebdomads that concerns the way in which substances are good insofar as they exist, since they are not substantial goods. You say this should be done because the method used by writings like that is not known to everyone. Now I myself am your witness how enthusiastically you have treated these things before. But for myself, I deliberate privately on the Hebdomads, and save my thoughts for memory rather than share them with any of those people whose impudence and heedlessness allows nothing to be discussed without jest and laughter. So do not be opposed to the obscurities of brevity, which, while they are a faithful guardian of a secret, have this advantage, that they speak only to those who are worthy. Therefore, as is customary in mathematics and in other disciplines, I have set out terms and rules, by which I shall work out everything that follows.

[Terms]

A common conception of the mind is a statement that everyone approves once it is heard. There are two kinds of these. One kind is so common that it pertains to every man. For instance, if you propose 'If you take equals from two equals, what remain are equals', no one who understands it denies it. But the other kind pertains only to the learned, yet is included among the common conceptions of the mind. For instance, 'Things that are incorporeal are not in a place', and so on. Not the common masses but rather the learned assent to these.

[Rules]<sup>2</sup>

(1) Being and that which exists<sup>3</sup> are diverse. For being itself does not yet exist; what exists, however, exists and hangs together once the form of being is taken on.

(2) What exists can participate in something, but being itself participates in no way in anything. For participation occurs when something already exists; something exists, however, when it assumes being.

(3) That which exists can have something besides what it itself is, but being itself has nothing else mixed in besides itself.

(4) [For a thing] merely to be something, and [for it] to be something insofar as it exists, are diverse. For in the former an accident is signified, in the latter a substance.

(5) Everything that exists<sup>4</sup> participates in that which is being,<sup>5</sup> so that it may exist, but it participates in [something] else so that it may be something. Hence that which exists participates in that which is being, so that it may exist, but it exists so that it may participate in [something].

(6) Everything simple has as one [both] its being and that which exists, [but] for everything composite being is one thing [while] it itself is another.

(7) Every diversity is discord, but likeness is to be sought. And what seeks [something] else is shown to be itself, by nature, like that very thing it seeks.

These premises then suffice. Each [of the following points] will be supplied with its arguments by the careful interpreter of the reasoning.

#### [The Question]

Now the question is like this. Things that exist are good. For the common view of the learned holds that everything that exists tends to the good. But everything tends to its like. Therefore, things that tend to the good are themselves good.

But, one must ask, how are they good - by participation or by substance?

If by participation, then they are in no way good by themselves. For what is white by participation is not white by itself, insofar as it itself exists. And it is the same with other qualities. If therefore they are good by participation, they are in no way good by themselves. Hence they do not tend to the good. But it was granted that they do. Therefore, they are not good by participation, but rather by substance.

But for those things the substance of which is good, that which they are are<sup>6</sup> good. Now that which they are they have from that which is being. Therefore, their being is good. Therefore, the being of all things is itself good. But if their being is good, then things that exist are good insofar as they exist, and for them being is the same as being good.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, they are substantial goods, because they do not participate goodness.

Now if being itself is good in them, then there is no doubt that since they are substantial goods they are like the first good. And so they will be this good itself. For nothing is like it but it itself. From which it follows that all things that exist are God, [and] it is wicked to say that. Therefore, they are not substantial goods, and so being is not good in them. Hence they are not good insofar as they exist.

But neither do they participate goodness. For then they would not tend to the good. Therefore, they are in no way good.

#### [THE SOLUTION]

For this problem a solution like the following can be employed. There are many things that, while they cannot be actually separated, are separated nevertheless by the mind and in thought. For instance, while no one actually separates a triangle or other [geometrical figure] from the underlying matter, nevertheless, separating it out by the mind, one examines the triangle itself and its property apart from matter.

Let us, therefore, put out of our mind for a while the presence of the first good. (To be sure, it is certain that this exists, and it can come to be known from the view of all the learned and unlearned, and from the religions of barbarian races.) Therefore, having set this aside for a while, let us take all the things that are good and suppose them to exist. And let us consider how they could be good if they did not to any extent flow down from the first good.

From this point of view, I observe that in them it is one thing that they are good, and another that they exist. For let one and the same good substance be supposed to be white, heavy, and round. Then the substance itself would be one thing, its roundness another, its color another, its goodness another. For if each of these were the same as the substance itself, then its heaviness would be the same as its color, and as the good, and the good [the same] as its heaviness. [But] nature does not allow this.

Therefore, in their case, it is one thing to be; it is another to be something. They would indeed be good, but they would hardly have [their] being itself good. Hence, if they in any way

existed, they would not be from the good. They would be goods, but they would not be the same as goods. Rather being would be one thing for them, being good another.

But if they were entirely nothing else but good, neither heavy nor colored nor extended in spatial dimension, nor were there any quality in them, except only that they were good, then it would seem that they were not things but the source of things. Nor would "they" seem [so]; rather, "it" would seem [so]. For there is one and only one like this, which is only good and nothing else. But because they are not simple, neither could they exist at all, unless that which is only good willed them to exist.

Therefore, because their being flows down from the will of the good, they are called goods. For the first good, because it exists, is good insofar as it exists. But a secondary good, because it flows from that the very being of which is good, is itself also good. But the being of all things itself flows from that which is the first good, and which is such a good that it is rightly said to be good insofar as it exists. Therefore, their being is itself good. For it [is] then in it.<sup>8</sup>

This answers the question. For, granted that they are good insofar as they exist, yet they are not like the first good. For it is not according to just any manner in which things exist that their being is itself good. Rather since the being of things cannot itself exist unless it flows down from the first being (that is, the good), for that reason [their] being is itself good and not like that from which it comes. For the latter, however it exists, is good insofar as it exists. For it is nothing else but good. But the former, unless it<sup>9</sup> were from the first good, could perhaps be good, but it could not be good insofar as it exists. For then it would perhaps participate in the good, but [its] being, which they would not have from the good, they could not have [as] itself good.

Therefore, setting the first good apart from them by mind and thought, they would indeed be good, and yet they could not be good insofar as they existed. And since they were unable actually to exist unless that which is truly good had produced them, therefore both (a) their being is good and (b) what flows from the substantial good is not like it. And unless they flowed from it, then although they were good, nevertheless they could not be good insofar as they exist, because they would be [something] besides good and not from the good, while it itself is the first good and is being itself and the good itself, and being good itself.

#### *[OBJECTION AND REPLY]*

But will not white things have to be white insofar as they exist, since those things that are white flowed from the will of God, so that they are white? Not at all.<sup>10</sup> For it is one thing to be, and another to be white.<sup>11</sup> This is because he who made them so that they would exist is indeed good, but not at all white. Therefore it followed from the will of the good that they were good insofar as they exist. But the property of that which exists, that it would be white insofar as it exists, did *not* follow from the will of what is not white. For neither did they flow from the will of the white. And so, because he who was not white willed them to be white, they are merely white. But because he who was good willed them to be good, they are good insofar as they exist.

#### *[ANOTHER OBJECTION AND REPLY]*

Following this reasoning, therefore, must all things be just, because he is just who willed them to exist? No again. For to be good relates to essence, but to be just relates to an act. Now in him it is the same thing to exist as to act. Therefore, [for him] it is the same thing to be good as it is to be just. For us, however, to exist is not the same as to act. For we are not simple. Therefore, for us it is not the same thing to be good as it is to be just, but for all of us, being is the same insofar as we exist. Therefore, all things are good, but not also just.

Further, "good" is general, but "just" is special. And species does not descend into all [the members of its genus]. Therefore, some things are just, some something else, but all good.

## NOTES TO TEXT

1. Boethius' question is a good one, since, in virtue of Rule 4, the answer seems to be that if they are good insofar as they exist, they must be substantial goods. Boethius in effect solves the problem raised in the title, and preserves Rule 4, by denying that substances are not substantial goods. They are indeed substantial goods. What Boethius does is to point out the fallacy in the argument that tries to show that if they are substantial goods they must be God. Hence the title raises a loaded question. Stewart and Rand translate this title 'How substances can be good in virtue of their existence without being absolute goods'. This suggests, perhaps more strongly than does my interrogative translation, that Boethius is going to try to show how substances can indeed be good insofar as they exist and at the same time be not substantial ("absolute") goods. This would be misleading.

2. I have departed from the usual division and numbering of the rules. That usual arrangement takes the preceding paragraph as Rule 1, and breaks my Rule 6 into two (after the comma in my translation), with the result that there are nine rules rather than seven. This traditional arrangement has the authority of the manuscripts, and is followed by mediaeval commentators as well as modern editions. Nevertheless, my arrangement has the following points to recommend it: (a) Boethius explicitly says that he is going to set out two kinds of things, terms and rules. The material in the preceding paragraph of the text clearly is an explanation of the Stoic term 'common conception'. Just as clearly, the following passages are not defining terms in this way. (b) The rules all begin by stating a contrast: "Such and such holds for this, but something else holds for that". This stylistic uniformity is lost if what I count as Rule 6 is broken into two. (c) Finally, the seven rules that result from my arrangement perhaps shed some light on what the mysterious "Hebdomads" are. Perhaps they have something to do with these seven rules themselves.

3. *Id quod est*. This phrase, together with its inflected forms in other passages, is one of the most treacherous phrases in the Boethian idiom. It has at least a threefold ambiguity that Boethius deliberately exploits. It means either: (a) that which exists, as in the present passage; (b) what it is - that is, a thing's essence or being, so that although Boethius tells us that for composite things being and *id quod est* in sense (a) are distinct, nevertheless in sense (b) they are identical; (c) in the phrase '*in eo quod est*' or simply '*eo quod est*': "insofar as it exists" or "in that it exists". On the other hand, if we read '*in eo quod est*' as containing the ablative of '*id quod est*' in sense (b), we get: "in that which it is" or "in what it is" - that is, "essentially" or "by substance". As we shall see in Rule 4 and in lines 58-63 below, Boethius systematically identifies this reading with that in (c) above. *What* a thing is, it is insofar as it exists, and vice versa. That is, the essential features of a thing are those it has in virtue of the very fact of its existing - those it must have, if it is going to exist at all.

4. Although Stewart and Rand include the 'exists' (*est*) in their edition, they note that the best manuscripts omit it. Without the word, the sentence reads: "Everything that participates in that which is being, so that it may exist, yet participates in [something] else so that it may be something."

5. *Id quod est esse*. Stewart and Rand (p. 42 n.) suggest that this is equivalent to the Greek  $\tau\acute{o}\tau\iota\varsigma\ \epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\nu\ \epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\nu$ .

6. *Id quod sunt bona sunt*, following the editions. One would have expected the singular with '*id*'.

7. Reading '*bonis esse*' with Peiper ed., p. 170 line 69.

8. That is, in the first good.

9. The only singular antecedent for the pronoun would appear to be 'the being of things' in line 125 (see also 'it' in line 125), so that the sentence says in part that the being of things "could perhaps be good". But this is ruled out by the fact that in lines 130-132, Boethius says that the being of things would *not* be good. It appears instead that what Boethius is referring to here is the "things" themselves (secondary goods) of line 125, not their being, and that he has simply written a singular pronoun where the plural would have been more appropriate. After a series of singular verbs and adjectives, Boethius suddenly reverts to the plural in line 131 ("they would not have").

10. Punctuating (beginning in line 144) with  $\text{Ha}\text{-}\text{f62ring}$ , following Gilbert's text. See  $\text{Ha}\text{-}\text{f62ring}$ , p. 383 lines 72-73.

11. *Albis esse*. On the case, see Gilbert of Poitiers' explanation in  $\text{Ha}\text{-}\text{f62ring}$ , p. 225, para. 172.

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Text 5:  
From Boethius' Second Commentary  
on Porphyry's Isagoge

The following passage is translated from Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii In Isagogen Porphyrii commenta, editio 2a, lib. I, ca. 10-11, Samuel Brandt, ed., p. 159 line 3 - p. 167 line 20.

[Passage from Porphyry]

As for genera and species, [Porphyry] says, I shall decline for the present to say (1) whether they subsist or are posited in bare [acts of] understanding only, (2) whether, if they subsist, they are corporeal or incorporeal, and (3) whether [they are] separated from sensibles or posited in sensibles and agree with them. For that is a most noble matter, and requires a longer investigation.

[Commentary]

I omit the nobler questions, he says, so that I not upset the beginnings and first fruits of the reader whose mind takes these things in at the wrong time. But, in order that he not make the reader overlook [these things] altogether, so that he would think there is nothing more hidden [here] than what [Porphyry] himself had said, he adds [a mention of] the very matter about which he promises to postpone following out the question. [He does this] so that he might in no way swamp the reader by treating these matters in an obscure and exhaustive way, and yet [the reader], strengthened by [a certain degree of] knowledge, might understand what [it is that] could rightly be asked about.

Now the questions about which [Porphyry] promises to say nothing are both very useful and also mysterious. They have been attempted by learned men, but have not been solved by many [of them]. The first of them is as follows:

Everything the mind understands, it either conceives by the intellect that which exists, constituted in the nature of things, and describes it to itself by reason, or it paints for itself, by empty imagination, that which does not exist. Therefore, the question is: of which sort is the understanding of genus and the other ["predicables" discussed in Porphyry's Isagoge]? Do we understand species and genera as [we do] things that exist, and from which we take true understanding, or do we lie to ourselves when we form for ourselves, by the vain thought of the mind, things that do not exist?

But if it should be settled that they do exist, and [if] we should say that the understanding [of them] is [taken] from things that exist, then another, a greater and more difficult question raises a doubt, since the greatest difficulty is shown [to arise] in discerning and understanding the nature of genus itself. For because everything that exists is necessarily either corporeal or incorporeal, genus and species will have to be in one of these [groups]. Therefore, of which kind is what is called genus? Is it corporeal or [is it] rather incorporeal? For [the question] what it is cannot be carefully considered unless it is known in which of these [groups] it should be placed.

But not even when this question has been resolved is every doubt ruled out. For there is something [else] that, if genus and species are said to be incorporeal, blocks and holds back the intellect and insists on being solved: whether they subsist in connection with bodies or seem to be incorporeal subsistences over and above bodies.

For in fact there are two [kinds of] forms of incorporeal [things]. Some [of them] can exist apart from bodies, and endure in their incorporeality separated from bodies. For instance, God, the mind, [and] the soul. But other things, even though they are incorporeal, nevertheless cannot exist apart from bodies. For instance, the line or the surface, or number or single qualities (which, although we declare them to be incorporeal since they are not in the least spread out in three dimensions, nevertheless so exist in bodies that they cannot be torn away from them or separated, or else if they *are* separated from bodies, do not remain at all).

Although it is hard even for Porphyry himself, who for the time being declines to resolve these questions, yet I shall undertake it, in order not to leave the reader's mind troubled [about them], and so that I myself do not devote time and labor to things that are outside the order of the job I have taken on.

First, then, I shall set out a few things regarding the dilemma raised by the question. After that, I shall try to untie that same knot of doubt, and to explain it.

#### [The PROBLEM]

Genera and species either exist and subsist, or are formed by the understanding and by thought alone.

#### [THE ARGUMENT AGAINST UNIVERSALS]

But genera and species cannot exist. This is understood on the following grounds. For everything that is common to several thing at one time cannot be one. What is common is "of many", [and] especially [so] when one and the same thing is *as a whole* in many things at one time. For no matter how many species there are, [their] genus is one [thing] in all [of them]. Not in such a way that each single species snatches, as it were, some part of it. Rather, [all the] single [species] have the whole genus at one time. Whence it comes about that the whole genus cannot be posited as one [thing] in several singulars at one time. Neither can it come about that, although it is a whole in several [things] at one time, [nevertheless] in itself it is one in number.

But if this is so, then a genus cannot be one [thing]. Hence, it is nothing at all. For everything that exists exists for the reason that it is one. And the same thing can be said about species.

But even if genus and species do exist, but are multiple and not one in number, there will be no last genus. It will have another genus above it that includes that multiplicity in the word [expressing] its one name. For just as because several animals have a certain similar [something], yet are not the same, for that reason their genera are sought out, so too because a genus that is in several [things] and [is] therefore multiple has a likeness of what is a genus, but it is not one because it is in several [things], [for that reason] another genus *of* that genus is also to be searched for. And when that has been found, [then] for the same reason as was said above, once more a third genus is tracked down. And the argument necessarily goes on to infinity, since this procedure has no end.

Now if a genus is one in number, it cannot be common to many. For one thing, if it is common, is either:

(a) Common by parts. And then *the whole* is not common. Rather its *parts* belong to single [things]. Or also:

(b) It passes into the use of those who have it, over time, so that it is common like a slave or a horse. Or:

(c) It is common at one time to all, yet not so that it constitutes the substance of the things to which it is common, as a stage-play is, or some spectacle, which is common to all the spectators.

But genus can be common to [its] species in none of these ways. For it is supposed to be common in such a way that both the whole [of it] is in [all] the single [things to which it is common], and at one time, and also that it be able to constitute and form the substance of the things to which it is common.

Therefore, if it is neither one because it is common, nor many because another genus too is to be sought for that multitude, it will seem that genus does not exist at all. And the same thing is to be understood for the other [predicables discussed in Porphyry's Isagoge].

#### [THE ARGUMENT FOR UNIVERSALS]

But if genera and species and the rest are grasped only by [acts of] understanding, [then] since every [act of] understanding arises from a subject thing, either as that thing is [really] disposed or as the thing is not [really] disposed (for no understanding can arise from no subject), [therefore] if the understanding of genus and species and the rest comes from the subject thing in such a way as the thing that is understood is [really] disposed, then they are not posited in the understanding alone, but also stand in the nature of things. And once again it must be asked what is their nature. The question above tracked this down.

But if the understanding of genus and the rest is taken from the thing, but not in such a way as the thing subjected to the understanding is [really] disposed, [that] understanding must be empty which is taken from a thing, to be sure, but not as the thing is [really] disposed. For that which is understood otherwise than the thing [really] is is false.

So therefore, because genus and species neither exist nor is the understanding of them true when they are understood, there is no doubt but that all this careful arguing over the five [predicables] set out [by Porphyry] is to be discarded, since it is inquiring neither about a thing that exists nor about that about which anything true can be understood or uttered.

#### [THE SOLUTION]

For the present, this is the question about the matters mentioned above. We shall solve it, agreeing with Alexander [of Aphrodisias], by reasoning as follows.

We do not say it is necessary for every understanding that arises from a subject, but not as that subject itself is [really] disposed, to be seen [as] as false and empty. False opinion, rather than intelligence, occurs only in those cases that arise from composition. For if one puts and joins together by the understanding that which nature does not allow to be joined, no one fails to realize that that is false. For example, if someone in imagination joins a horse and a man, and portrays a centaur.

But if this [understanding that arises from a subject, but not as that subject is really disposed,] arises from division and from abstraction, [then] the thing, to be sure, is not [really] disposed in the way it is understood. Yet that understanding is not false at all.

For there are several [kinds of] things that have their being in other things, from which they either cannot be separated at all or, if they are separated, there is no way they can subsist. To make this clear by a widely known example, the line is, to be sure, something in a body. And what it is it owes to the body. That is, it keeps its being through the body. This is explained as follows. For if it is separated from the body, it does not subsist. Who ever grasped, with any

sense faculty, a line separated from the body? But the mind, when in itself it grasps confused and mixed up things from the senses, distinguishes them by its own power and thought.

The sense faculty delivers to us, together with the bodies themselves, all incorporeal things like this that have their being in bodies. But the mind, which has the power both to put together what is disjoined and to loose what is put together, distinguishes what are delivered [to it] by the senses, confused and conjoined to bodies, in such a way that it gazes on and sees the incorporeal nature by itself and apart from the bodies in which it is made concrete. For there are distinctive peculiarities of incorporeal things mixed with bodies, even if they are separated from bodies.

Therefore, genera and species and the rest are found either in incorporeal things or else in things that are corporeal. If the mind finds them in incorporeal things, it at once has an incorporeal understanding of the genus. But if it observes the genera and species of corporeal things, [then] as is its habit, it removes the nature of [those] incorporeals from the bodies, and looks upon it, alone and pure, as it is a form in itself. In this way, when the mind takes on these things all mixed up with bodies, it divides out the incorporeals, and gazes on them and considers them.

Therefore, let no one say that we think falsely about the line because we grasp it by the mind as if it were beyond bodies, although it cannot exist beyond bodies. For not every understanding is to be regarded as false that is grasped from subject things otherwise than as they themselves are [really] disposed. Rather, as was said above, the one that does this by putting [things] together is false, as when [someone] joins a man and a horse and thinks a centaur exists. But the [understanding] that does this by divisions and abstractions and taking things [away] from the things in which they exist, not only is it not false, but it alone is able to find out what is properly true.

Therefore, things like this exist in corporeal and sensible things, but they are understood apart from sensibles, so that their nature can be gazed on and their distinguishing peculiarity comprehended. For this reason, when genera and species are thought, then their likeness is gathered from the single [things] in which they exist. For example, from single men, dissimilar among themselves, the likeness of humanity [is gathered]. This likeness, thought by the mind and gazed at truly, is the species. Again, the likeness of these diverse species, which [likeness] cannot exist except in these species or in their individuals, makes a genus when it is considered.

And so these things exist, to be sure, in singulars, but they are thought of as universals. And species is to be regarded as nothing else than the thought gathered from the substantial likeness of individuals that are unlike in number. Genus, on the other hand, [is] the thought gathered from the likeness of species. But this likeness becomes sensible when it exists in singulars and becomes intelligible when it is in universals. In the same way, when it is sensible it stays in singulars, [but] when it is understood it becomes universal. They subsist, therefore, in the realm of sensibles, but are understood apart from bodies.

For it is not ruled out that two conceptually diverse things should be in the same subject, like a convex line and a concave one. Since these things are bounded by diverse definitions, the understanding of them is diverse. Yet they are always found in the same subject. For the same line is concave as is convex. So too in the case of genera and species - that is, in the case of singularity and universality - there is one subject, to be sure, but it is universal in one way, when it is thought, and singular in another, when it is sensed in the things in which it has its being.

Now that these matters are finished, every question is answered, I think.

[Ad (1)] For genera and species subsist in one way, but are understood in another.

[Ad (2)] They are incorporeal, but subsist, joined to sensibles, in sensible things. On the other hand, they are understood as subsisting by themselves and as not having their being in other things.

[Ad (3)] But Plato thinks that genera and species and the rest are not only understood as universals, but also exist and subsist apart from bodies. Aristotle, on the other hand, thinks they are understood as incorporeal and universal, but subsist in sensible [things].

I did not regard it as appropriate to decide between their views. For that belongs to a higher philosophy. But we have pursued Aristotle's view zealously [here], not because we would recommend it most of all, but rather because this book [= the *Isagoge*] is written about the *Categories*, the author of which is Aristotle.

Paul Spade, A Survey of Medieval Philosophy

Boethius: From the Theological Tractates

(1) From Boethius' *Contra Eutychen*, "Loeb Classical Library" edition, pp. 86-90, at pp. 86-88:

. . . essences can indeed be in universals, but they "substand" only in individuals and particulars. For the understanding of universal things is taken from particulars. Hence, since these subsistences are indeed in universals, but take on substance in particulars, they [that is, the Greeks] rightfully called \_\_\_\_\_ the subsistences substanding particularly. For to one who looks carefully and with subtlety, subsistence and substance will not seem to be the same.

For what the Greeks call \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, that we call "subsistence" or "to subsist". But what they call \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, that we translate as "substance" or "to substand". For that "subsists" which does not need accidents in order to be able to be. But that "substands" which furnishes a certain subject to other accidents, so that they may be. For it "stands under" them, as long as it is a subject for accidents. Hence genera and species only subsist. For accidents do not befall genera or species. But individuals not only subsist, they also substand. For neither do they need accidents in order to be. For they are already informed by their peculiar features (*propriis*) and specific differences, and provide to accidents the opportunity to be - that is to say, as long as they are subjects.

(2) From *De trinitate*, "Loeb Classical Library" edition, pp. 2-30, at pp. 10-12:

The judgment of this [Christian religion] about the unity of the Trinity is: "The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Therefore, Father, Son, Holy Spirit are one, not three gods." The reason for this conjoining is lack of difference (indifferentia) . . . . Therefore that is truly one in which there is no number, in which there is nothing besides that which it is. Neither can it be a subject. For it is a form, and forms cannot be subjects. When another form, like humanity, is a subject for accidents, it does not take on accidents insofar as it is, but insofar as matter is subjected to it. For, as long as matter, subject to humanity, takes on any accident, humanity itself appears to take it on. But a form that is without matter cannot be a subject, and cannot be in matter. For it is not a form but an "image". From the forms that are outside matter come the forms that are in matter and make a body. We misuse the others, which are in bodies, when we call them "forms" while they are images. For they are made like those that are not constituted in matter.

(3) From *De trinitate* again, ed. cit., p. 7:

For the principle of plurality is otherness. Neither can it be understood what plurality is without otherness. Now of three things, or however many, there exists a diversity in genus, in species, and in number. For in however many ways 'the same' is said, in that many ways 'diverse' is said too. Now 'the same' is said in three ways: (a) either by genus, as a man is the

same as a horse, because there is the same genus for them, to wit, animal; (*b*) or by species, as Cato is the same as Cicero, because he is the same species, to wit, man; (*c*) or by number, as Tully and Cicero, because he is one in number. Hence 'diverse' is also said either by genus or by species or by number. Now it is the variety of accidents that makes for difference in number. For three men are distinguished not by genus or species, but by their accidents. If by the mind we separate all their accidents from them, nevertheless *place* is diverse for each of them, and we can in no way suppose that it is one. For two bodies will not occupy one place, which is an accident. And therefore they are several in number, because they are made several by their accidents.

Text 7:

Pseudo-Denis the Areopagite:

The Mystical Theology

The passage translated below is the complete text of Pseudo-Denis' The Mystical Theology. I have chosen it because it is short, and yet very important in the history of mysticism. Please read the whole thing, if only to get the flavor of the man's completely outlandish style. He really does write like this; it is not just my translation.

The translation is from PERI MUSTIKYS CEOLOGIAS PROS TIMOCEON, PG 3, (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857), cols. 997-1048.

On Mystical Theology, to Timothy

Ch. 1: What is the divine darkness?

I

Supersubstantial, superdivine, supergood Trinity, overseer of Christians' divine wisdom, direct us to the superunknown, superbright outermost summit of mystical oracles where in the superlight, the darkness of mystical silence, there lie hidden the simple, unconditioned and unchanged mysteries of theology that outshine in deepest darkness what is most superbright and that, in the wholly intangible and invisible, fill eyeless intellects to overflowing with superbeautiful splendors. These things I pray.

But you, dear Timothy, in your earnest study of mystical sights, leave behind sensations and intellectual activities, all things sensible and intelligible, all non-beings and beings, and be lifted up in an unknowable manner to the unity of what is above all being and knowledge, insofar as that can be reached. For, by an irresistible and purely unconditioned going out from yourself and from all things, you will be lifted up to the supersubstantial ray of divine shadow, setting aside all things and turned loose from all things.

II

But see to it that none of the uninitiated hear these things, by whom I mean those tangled up in beings, who imagine that there is nothing supersubstantially above beings but rather think that by their own knowledge they know Him Who has made darkness His hiding place. But if the divine mystical initiations are above these people, what will one say about those still less initiated, those who, in terms taken from what is the least among beings, characterize the underlying cause of all things and say that it in no way surpasses the godless and multiformed figures they make up? For one must posit and affirm of it, as cause of all, all the positive features of beings, yet more properly deny them all [of it], as being superior above all, and not think that the denials are opposed to the affirmations, but that, above every removing and positing, far more is it above privations.

III

So, at any rate, says blessed Bartholomew, and also that theology is great, and yet the smallest, and the Gospel broad and large, and again concise. It seems to me that he marvelously understands the fact that the good cause of all is both loquacious and taciturn and speechless, as possessing neither speech nor understanding, because it super- substantially lies above all things and appears truly and without disguise only to those who cross over all things polluted and pure, climb above every ascent of all the holy peaks, leave behind all divine lights and sounds and



heavenly words, and enter into the darkness where, as the Scriptures say, He truly is Who is above all.

For blessed Moses himself is not simply commanded to be first purified and, again, to be separated from those not such; after all the purification he also hears many-voiced trumpets, sees many lights flashing forth pure and broadly diffused rays. Then he is separated from the many and, together with the sacred elect, arrives at the peak of divine ascents. But he does not meet God Himself by these means; he does not see Him, for He is unseen, but rather the place where He is.

I think this signifies that the most divine and highest of things seen and understood are certain subordinative reasons of things subject to what surpasses all. Through them is indicated its presence above all thought, standing on the intelligible summits of its most holy places.

Then he abandons the seen things themselves and also those who see [them], and enters into the truly mystical darkness of unknowing. There, belonging entirely to what is above all and to nothing [else], whether himself or another, he shuts out all cognitive apprehensions and emerges in the altogether intangible and invisible. By the inactivity of all knowledge, he is united in his better part with the entirely unknown. And by knowing nothing, he knows superintellectually.

#### CH. 2: HOW ONE MUST BE UNITED WITH AND TELL OF THE CAUSE OF ALL, [WHICH IS] ABOVE ALL THINGS.

We pray that we may reach this darkness above light and, through blindness and unknowing, see and know the not seeing or knowing that is itself beyond sight and knowledge - for this is really to see and to know - and supersubstantially to tell of the supersubstantial through the separation of all beings, just like those making a life-like statue who, removing all the hindrances that impede the pure view of what is hidden, show forth, by a mere separation, the concealed beauty itself, by itself.

Now I think the separations must be told of in opposite manner to the positive features. For we were positing the one kind [when], beginning with the very first, we went down through the intermediaries to the last. But, performing the ascents from the last to the originals, we separate all things, so that we may unconcealedly know the unknowing concealed under all the knowns among all beings, and may see the supersubstantial darkness hidden away under all the light in beings.

#### CH. 3: WHAT ARE THE AFFIRMATIVE THEOLOGIES, AND WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE ONES?

Now we told the most important points of affirmative theology in the *Theological Outlines*: how the divine and good nature is called one, how triple; what Fatherhood and Sonship are in it; what the theology of the Spirit means to show; how, from the immaterial and undivided good, the lights at the heart of goodness were born and remained, not departing from the abiding that is coeternal with their shooting forth, in it and in themselves and in one another; how the supersubstantial Jesus took on substance among the truths of human nature; and all the other things, made known in the Scriptures, that are told in the *Theological Outlines*. In *On the Divine Names*, on the other hand, [we told] how it is called good, how being, how life and wisdom and power, and all the other things in the intelligible theonymy.

In the *Symbolic Theology*, [we told] what metaphors for the divine [are] taken from sensibles: what [are] the divine forms, what the divine shapes and parts and organs, what the

divine places and ornaments, what the angers, what the pains and the wraths, what the drunkennesses and hangovers, what the oaths and what the curses, what the sleeps and what the wakings, and whatever other sacred-formed shapes belong to the symbolic sketching of God.

I think you have observed how the last are more extensive than the first. For the *Theological Outlines* and the explication of the divine names had to be briefer than the *Symbolic Theology*. For, to the extent that we raise our heads toward the uphill slope, general views of the intelligibles, just as even now, as we enter into the darkness above intellect, we shall find not brevity but total speechlessness and absence of thought. In the former [treatises], the reasoning was broadened to an extent proportional to the descent. But now, ascending from below to what lies above, it is contracted according to the measure of its ascent. And after the whole ascent it will be wholly speechless and wholly united with the unutterable.

But after all, you say, why do we begin the divine separation with the last things, when we posit the divine positive features [beginning] from the very first ones? Because in positing that which is above every positive feature, we had to posit [beginning] from what is most akin to it, the subordinative affirmation. But in separating what is above all separation, [we had to] separate [beginning] from the things more distant from it. Is it not more life and goodness than air and stone? And [is it not] more non-hungover and non-wrathful than it is not spoken of nor thought?

#### CH. 4: THAT THE CAUSE, BY SUPERABUNDANCE, OF EVERY SENSIBLE IS NONE OF THE SENSIBLES.

We say, therefore, that the cause of all, being above all things, is neither insubstantial nor lifeless nor unreasoning nor mindless, nor is it a body. Neither does it have shape nor form nor quality nor quantity nor mass. Neither is it in a place nor is it seen nor does it have a sensible feel. Neither does it sense nor is it sensed. Neither does it have disorder and trouble, disturbed by material passions. Neither is it powerless, subject to sensible misfortunes. Neither is it in need of light. Neither is it, nor does it have, alteration or corruption or division or privation or flowing away, or anything else among sensibles.

#### CH. 5: THAT THE CAUSE, BY SUPERABUNDANCE, OF EVERY INTELLIGIBLE IS NONE OF THE INTELLIGIBLES.

Ascending once more, we say it is neither soul nor mind. Neither does it have imagination nor opinion nor reasoning nor understanding. Neither is it reasoning nor understanding. Neither is it spoken of nor thought. Neither is it a number nor an arrangement, neither greatness nor smallness, neither equality nor inequality, neither similarity nor dissimilarity. Neither has it stood still nor is it moved. Neither is it at rest nor does it have power nor is it power, or light. Neither does it live nor is it life. Neither is it a substance nor eternity nor time. Neither is there intellectual contact with it. Neither is it knowledge nor truth nor dominion nor wisdom, neither one nor unity, neither divinity nor goodness. Neither is it Spirit, as we know it, nor Sonship nor Fatherhood, nor anything else of the non-beings nor any of the beings. Neither do beings know it as it is, nor does it know beings as they are beings. Neither is there any reasoning about it, nor a name nor knowledge. Neither is it darkness nor light nor error nor truth. Neither in general is there a positing nor a separating of it. Rather, we do positings and separatings for things [that come] after it; it we neither posit nor separate, since the all-perfect and unitary cause of all things is above every positive feature, and the superabundance of what is freed absolutely from all things and beyond all things is above all separation.

## NOTES TO TEXT

1. \f3i+12dH\-\i-12dupero\i+12d'\-\i-12dusie. In general, I have translated forms of \f3o\i+12dh\-\i-12dus\i+5d'\-\i-5dia'

by the corresponding forms of 'substance'. Other alternatives include 'essence' and 'being' - although words like 'superbeing' sound more nominal than adjectival in English, and so could not be easily used, as here, for

\f3i+12dH\-\i-12dupero\i+12d'\-\i-12dusie.

In these opening lines, and less regularly later on, I have quite mechanically translated compounds with \f3i+12dH\-\i-12duper-

by 'super-', in order to reflect the quite mechanical way Pseudo-Denis attaches this prefix to just about anything he wants to say about God. When it is not in a compound, I have always translated

\f3i+12dH\-\i-12dup\i+5d'\-\i-5der' by 'above'.

2. outshine = \f3i+12dH\-\i-12duperl\i+9d'\-\i-9damponta  
= literally, "supershine".

3. fill to overflowing = \f3i+12dH\-\i-12duperplyro\i+4d'\-\i-4dunta  
= literally, "superfill".

4. The "Timothy" is of course supposed to be the Timothy to whom St. Paul wrote two epistles. Pseudo-Denis, whoever he really was, is here forging his credentials before our very eyes.

5. going out = \f3i+9dh\-\i-9dekst\i+7d'\-\i-7dasei = ecstasy.

6. Compare Ps. 18\i+3d:\i+3d11.

7. positive features = \f3c\i+5d'\-\i-5deseiv.

The word is troublesome in this text. Sometimes it means "positive features", as here, but other times it means the *acts* of positing. I have accordingly sometimes translated it by 'positings'.

8. The double comparative is in the Greek:

\f3i+12dH\-\i-12dwv \i+12dH\-\i-12dup\i+5d'\-\i-5der p\i+7d'\-\i-7danta  
\i+12dH\-\i-12dupero\i+12d'\-\i-12dusV.

9. I must confess I do not entirely see the point here. Would an *opposition* be a *privation*? Is the idea that a privation somehow involves *both* affirmation and negation?

10. Bartholomew the apostle? See Mat. 10\i+3d:\i+3d3.

11. \f3i+12dH\-\i-12duperfu^\-wv = literally, 'supernaturally'. But the word has a more common and ordinary meaning: excessively, marvelously.

12. \f3pol\i+9d'\-\i-9dulogov. Here and in the next several lines it should be remembered that

\f3l\i+5d'\-\i-5dogov' not only means 'word', but also 'reason', and has much the same range of meaning as Latin '*ratio*'. I will note occurrences of \f3l\i+5d'\-\i-5dogov' and its compounds where appropriate.

13. taciturn = \f3braq\i+12d'\-\i-12dulektov.

14. speechless = \f3i+3dh\-\i+3d'\-\i-6dalogov.

15. speech = \f3l\i+5d'\-\i-5dogon.

16. words = \f3l\i+5d'\-\i-5dogouv.

17. not such: i.e., not purified.

18. subordinative reasons = \f3i+12dH\-\i-12dupocetiko\i+12d'\-\i-12dov

. . l*i+5d*<sup>-</sup>*i-5dogouv* = hypothetical reasons, in the sense that they are the "hypotheses" or prerequisites for other things, not in the sense that they themselves depend on yet further hypotheses or prerequisites.

19. he = Moses. Rolt takes the subject to be 'it' (i.e., God) of the previous sentence.

20. tell of = *f3i+7dh-i+5d-i-12dumnouv i+7dh-i-7danatici+7d-i-7denai*  
= literally, 'to devote hymns to'. Compare Latin '*laudo*'.

21. see . . . knowledge: *f3i+3dh-i-3didei-5d-i+5din ka-i gn+i+2d-i-2dwnai t+i+5d-i-5do i+12dh-i-12dupi+3d-i-3der c+i+5d-i-5dean ka-i gn+i+2d-i-2dwsin a+i+12dh-i-12dut+i+3d-i-3do t+i+3d-i-3do m+i+5d-i-5dy i+3dh-i-3didei-5d-i+5din myd+i+3d-i-3de gn+i+2d-i-2dwnai*. The syntax is dubious. The apparatus in Migne also shows datives *f3a+i+12dh-i-12dut+i+3d-i-3d@-w t+i+3d-i-3d@-w* for *f3a+i+12dh-i-12dut+i+3d-i-3do t+i+3d-i-3do*. This would yield: "see and know what is beyond sight and knowledge, by not seeing and knowing." Most translations (but not Jones) follow this sense.

22. I follow Rolt here in construing 'to tell of' as parallel to 'see' and 'know' in 'see and know the not seeing', etc. Other translations construe it as parallel to 'to see' and 'to know' in the clause beginning 'for this is really'.

23. life-like = *f3a+i+12dh-i-12dutfu+i+3d-i-3dev* = natural. The usual sense is opposed to 'artificial', but that is hardly appropriate in describing a statue.

24. theologies = *f3ceologi+3d-i-3diai* = statements about God.

25. No longer extant (if indeed it ever existed).

26. took on substance = *f3o+i+12dh-i-12dus+i+5d-i-5diwtai*.

27. among . . . nature: Following Rolt's construal of the syntax.

28. Also no longer extant (if it ever existed).

29. words = *f3li+5d-i-5dogoi*.

30. reasoning = *f3li+5d-i-5dogov*.

31. speechless = *f3i+4dh-i+5d-i-9dafwnov*.

32. subordinative: See n. 18, above.

33. unreasoning = *f3i+4dh-i+5d-i-9dalogov*.

34. The sense of this sentence seems to be that bodies are insubstantial (in comparison to the intelligibles), lifeless, unreasoning and mindless, so that since the cause of all sensibles is none of these things, *therefore* it is not a body. This "inferential" reading is suggested by Rolt's translation, and is quite plausible, but is not literally there in the text.

Text 8:

Fridugisus of Tours: On the Being of Nothing and Shadows

There have been several editions of Fridugisus' letter. I have consulted those in PL 105, cols. 751-756; Francesco Corvino, "Il 'De nihilo et tenebris' di Fredegiso di Tours," *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* 11 (1956), pp. 273-286; and the most recent and authoritative edition, in Concettina Gennaro, *Fridugiso di Tours e il "De substantia nihili et tenebrarum"*. Fridugisus' letter survives in four manuscripts. Nevertheless the text is corrupt in places, and all editors have had to suggest emendations here and there. For my translation I have followed Gennaro's edition, but not always her interpretation. There is another translation by Hermigild Dressler, in Wippel and Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy from St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, pp. 104-108.

On the Being (Substantia) of Nothing and Shadows

On the Being of Nothing

Fredegisus the deacon, to all the faithful of God and of our most fair lord Charles, gathered together at his sacred palace.

I diligently turned it over [in my mind] and considered the matter, and at last it seemed right to me to undertake the question about nothing, which has been bandied about by a great many people for a long time, but which they have abandoned without [seriously] discussing or examining it, as if it were impossible to explain. Breaking the powerful bonds in which it seemed to be tangled up, I have resolved [the question] and untied [the knot]. Dispersing the cloud, I have brought [the matter] back into the light, and have taken care that it be entrusted to the memory of posterity for all ages to come.

Now the question is as follows: Is nothing something or not?

If one answers "It seems to me to be nothing", his very denial, as he supposes it, compels him to say that something is nothing, since he says "It seems to me to be nothing", which is as if he were to say, "It seems to me that nothing is something". But if it seems to be something, it cannot appear not to be in any way at all. Hence, the only remaining alternative is that it seems to be something.

But if this is the answer given, "It seems to me to be nothing and not something",<sup>1</sup> this answer is to be countered first by reasoning, to the extent that human reason allows, and then by authority - not just any [authority], but only by divine [authority], which alone is [truly] an authority and [which] alone reaches unshakeable certitude.

Let us proceed therefore by reason. Every finite name signifies something. For instance, 'man', 'stone', 'wood'. As soon as these [words] are said, at the same time we understand the things they signify. Thus, the name 'man', uttered without any differentiating [word], designates the universality of men. 'Stone' and 'wood' include their generality in the same way. So, if 'nothing' is a name at all, as the grammarians claim [it is], it is a finite name. But every finite name signifies something. Now it is impossible that this finite something is not anything. It is impossible, therefore, that nothing, which is finite, is not anything. And in this way it can be proved that it exists.

Again, 'nothing' is a significative word. But every signifying is related to what it signifies. [Hence,] on these grounds too it is proved that nothing is unable not to be anything [at all].

Again, another [argument]. Every signifying is a signifying of that which is. But 'nothing' signifies something. Therefore, 'nothing'-s signifying is of that which is - that is, of an existing thing.

Now because we have provided only a few points from reason to demonstrate that nothing is not only something but even something great, although nevertheless countless such examples could be brought into the discussion, we wish to turn [now] to divine authority, which is the safeguard and fixed foundation of reason.

For indeed the whole divinely instructed Church, which arose from the side of Christ, was raised on the food of his most sacred flesh and the drink of his precious blood, [and] was educated from the cradle in the mysteries of secret things, confesses that it holds with unshakeable faith that the divine power produced earth, water, air and fire, along with light and the angels and man's soul, out of "nothing".

The edge of the mind, therefore, must be listed up to the authority of so great a summit, which no reason [can] shake, no arguments [can] refute, no powers can oppose.

For this is [the authority] that declares that the things first and foremost among creatures are produced out of nothing. Therefore, nothing is a great and distinguished something. It cannot be assessed how great is that from which so many and so distinguished things come, since not one of the things generated from it can be assessed for what it is worth or be defined.

For who has measured the nature of the elements in detail? Who has grasped the being and nature of light, of angelic nature, or of the soul?

Therefore, if we are unable to comprehend by human reason these things I [just] mentioned, how shall we [ever] reach [the knowledge of] how great and what kind of thing it is from which they draw their origin and their genus.

I could have added a great many other things. But we think that, from the points [above], enough has [already] penetrated into the breasts of whoever can be taught.

#### ON THE BEING OF SHADOWS

Since I have appropriately put an end [to the previous discussion] after saying the [few] brief things [above], I have next turned [my] attention to [other] matters that must be explained, [matters] that have not undeservedly seemed to inquisitive readers [to be] worth asking about.

There is the opinion, then, among some people that shadows do not exist, and that it is impossible that they exist. How easily this [opinion] can be refuted, the prudent reader will recognize from the authority of Sacred Scripture, once it has been brought into the discussion.

So let us see what the story in the book of Genesis thinks about this.

It says, "And the shadows were over the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2).

If they did not exist, by what inference is it said that they "were" [over the face of the deep]? He who says that shadows "are", by affirming a thing, posits [it]; but he who [says they] "are not", by denying the thing, takes [it] away. For example, when we say "Man is" we affirm a thing - namely, man. When we say "Man is not", by denying the thing - namely, man - we take [it] away. For a substantial verb<sup>2</sup> has it in its nature that, whatever subject it is joined to without a negation, it makes known the being of that subject. Therefore, in saying 'were' in the quotation "the shadows were over the face of the deep", a thing is affirmed that no negation separates or

divides from being. Again, 'shadows' is the subject, [and] 'were' makes [it] known. For it makes [it] known by declaring that shadows in some way are.

Observe how invincible authority, accompanied by reason, together with reason acknowledging authority, declare the same thing, namely, that shadows exist.

But, although the above points, given for the sake of example, are enough to demonstrate what we claimed, nevertheless in order that there remain no opportunity for enemies to contradict [us], let us bring out into the open a few [other] passages from Scripture, gathering [them] from among the many [possible], [so that,] shaken by the fear of them, [such people] will not dare to hurl their ridiculous words against them any more.

When the Lord punished Egypt with terrible plagues because of [its] oppressing the people of Israel, he enveloped it with shadows so thick they could be felt. Not only did they deprive men's sight of [its] objects, but because of their density, they could even be touched by the hands. Now whatever can be touched and felt must be. Whatever must be, it is impossible for it not to be. And so it is impossible for shadows not to be because it is necessary for [them] to be, as is proved from the fact that it<sup>3</sup> can be felt.

Moreover, the fact is not to be ignored that when the Lord made the division into light and shadows, he called the light "day" and the shadows "night" (Gen. 1:5). For if the name 'day' signifies something, the name 'night' cannot help but signify something. Now 'day' signifies the light, and light is a great something. For the day both is and is something great. What then? Do shadows signify nothing when the name 'night' is imposed on them by the same maker who imposed the title 'day' on the light?<sup>4</sup> Is divine authority to be shaken [in this way]? No indeed! It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for divine authority to be moved from its station.

The creator stamped names on the things he made, so that each thing would be known when it is called by its name. Neither did he form any thing without its [corresponding] word, nor did he establish any word unless that for which it was established existed. If it were the case [that God had established a word with no corresponding thing, the word] would seem entirely superfluous. And it is wicked to say God has done that. But if it is wicked to say God has established something superfluous, [then] the name God imposed on the shadows cannot appear in any way to be superfluous. But if it is not superfluous, [then] it is in accordance with [some] method. And if it [is] in accordance with a method, it [is] also necessary, since it is needed in order to distinguish the thing signified by it. And so it is certain that God has established things and names, which are necessary for one another, in accordance with a method.

And the holy prophet David, filled with the Holy Spirit and knowing that 'shadows' does not mean something empty and like a wind, plainly expresses [the fact that] they are something. Thus he says, "He sent shadows" (Psalms 104:28). If they do not exist, how are they sent? What is can be sent, and can be sent to where it is not. But what is not cannot be sent anywhere, since it is nowhere. Therefore, the shadows are said to have been sent because they were.

Again, the passage: "He put the shadows as his hiding place" (Psalms 17:12). Of course he put what existed, and he put [it] a certain way, so that he put the shadows, which were his hiding place.<sup>5</sup>

Again, another [passage]: "Like his shadows" (Psalms 138:12). Here it is indicated that they are in [his] possession, and therefore it is made plain that they exist. For everything that is possessed exists. But the shadows are in [his] possession. Therefore, they exist.

Although these passages are enough, as many and as great as they are, and offer a secure fortress against all attacks, so that with an easy rebuff they can turn missiles back on those who

threw them, nevertheless certain passages from the steadfastness of the Gospel should be required [too].

Therefore, let us set down the words of the Saviour himself. "The children of the kingdom," he says, "will be cast forth into the shadows outside" (Matt. 8:12). Now observe that he calls the shadows "outside". For 'out' (extra), from which 'outside' (exterius) is derived, signifies a place. Therefore, when he says "outside", he is indicating that shadows have locations. There would not be shadows "outside" unless there were also [others] "inside". Now whatever is outside must be in a place; what does not exist is nowhere. Therefore, the shadows outside not only exist but also have locations.

Also, in the Lord's passion the evangelist declares that shadows were made from the sixth hour of the day until the ninth hour. Since they were made, how can they be said not to exist? What has been made cannot be caused not to have been made; rather what does not always exist, and is never made, never exists. But shadows are made. Hence it cannot be brought about that they do not exist.<sup>6</sup>

Again, another [passage]: "If the light that is in you is shadows, how great those shadows will be!" (Matt. 6:23). I believe no one doubts that quantity is attributed to bodies, which are divided [from one another] by quantity. And quantity is accidental to bodies. But accidents are either in a subject or predicated of a subject. Therefore, in the quotation 'how great those shadows will be', quantity is shown to be in a subject.<sup>7</sup> Hence it is inferred, by a persuasive argument, that shadows not only exist, they are also corporeal.

And so I have taken the trouble to write to Your Dignity and Prudence these few points collected from reason and authority together, so that, adhering fast and immovably to them, no false opinion will be able to seduce you to stray from the path of truth.

But if perhaps something in disagreement with this reasoning of ours should be said by anyone, you will, by having recourse to this [letter] as if to a rule, be able to overthrow foolish contrivances on the basis of its statements.

THE END.



## NOTES TO TEXT 8

1. The second clause in this formulation is intended to prevent the kind of objection raised to the first answer, in the preceding paragraph. In other words, I take both of these answers to be on the negative side of the question. I therefore agree with Corvino (p. 281, n. 8), and disagree with Gennaro (pp. 124-125, note m), on the proper way to read the first answer.

2. A "substantial verb" is a form of the verb 'to be' when not used as a copula - that is, when it means "to exist". Other verbs, which can be resolved into a copula plus a participle (e. g., runs = is + running), are called "adjectival verbs". The exact metaphysical importance of this distinction is of course subject to discussion. But the terminology itself was standard.

3. The text has the singular here, presumably referring to 'whatever can be touched and felt' two sentences earlier. One would have expected a plural, agreeing with 'shadows'.

4. There seems to be some confusion here about what is signifying what. The point would be clearer, and the parallel with the fact that 'day' signifies the light would be stronger, if the text read: "Are shadows nothing when the name 'night' is imposed on them by the same creator . . .".

5. The general point of the paragraph is clear enough, but I find the exact sense a little shaky.

6. Presumably this is not supposed to mean that things that are made cannot be destroyed, but only that what is made exists, and nothing can change that fact.

7. As it stands, this is of course a blatant non sequitur. But the words 'or at least predicated of a subject' could be added to the sentence without spoiling the point of the paragraph.

Text 9:

Passages from John Scottus Eriugena

All translations are from the text in PL 122.

(1) Liber de praedestinatione, I, 1: "For thus," as Saint Augustine says, "it is believed and taught, and is the chief point of human salvation, that philosophy, that is, the zeal for wisdom, is not one thing and religion another. For they whose teaching we do not approve do not share the sacraments with us." (Augustine, On True Religion, I, 5.) What is it to treat of philosophy, other than to expound the rules of the true religion, by which God, the highest and principal cause of all things, is humbly tended and reasonably investigated? Hence it is brought about that true philosophy is true religion, and conversely, true religion is true philosophy.

(2) De divisione naturae, I, 66: And so let no authority frighten you away from the things that the persuasion of reasonable contemplation teaches. For genuine authority is no opponent of right reason, nor right reason of genuine authority.

(3) Ibid., I, 69: Indeed authority proceeds from true reason, but reason never from authority. For every authority which is not approved by true reason is seen to be weak. But because true reason, fixed and immutable, is fortified by its own powers, it needs no support from the agreement of authority. For genuine authority seems to me to be nothing other than the truth discovered by the power of reason and approved for posterity's advantage by the holy Fathers in their writings.

(4) Ibid., V, 3: For there is nothing among visible and corporeal things, in my judgment, that does not signify an incorporeal and intelligible something.

(5) In prol. S. evan. sec. Ioannem: The Word has two feet, one of which is the natural order of visible creation, the other the spiritual understanding of divine Scripture. One is concealed in the sensible forms of the sensible world, the other by the surface-shapes of the divine letters - that is, of the Scriptures.

(6) De divisione naturae, II, 28: Therefore how can the divine nature understand what it is, since it is nothing? For it surpasses everything that is, since it is not itself a being, but rather every being comes from it. It stands out above all essence and substance by virtue of its excellence. Or how can the infinite by itself be defined in something, or be understood in something,, since it knows itself above everything finite and infinite, and above finitude and infinity? And so God does not know what he is, because he is not a "what". For, both to himself and to every intellect, he cannot be comprehended in anything.

(7) Ibid., I, 45: For, from the things that are founded by him (*compare Romans 1:20*), the cause of all things, which is God, can only be known to be; by no argument from creatures can we understand what he is. And thus this definition alone is predicated of God: that he is, who is more than being.

(8) Ibid., II, 28: For I am not persuaded that God is ignorant of himself; rather that he is only ignorant of what he is. And rightly so. For he is not a "what". For he is in fact infinite, both

to himself and to all that come from him. And therefore in this kind of ignorance there smiles most openly and beautifully the highest and unspeakable wisdom.

(9) *Ibid.*, II, 1: For God is not the genus of a creature, nor is a creature a species of God. Likewise, a creature is not the genus of God, nor is God a species of a creature. Whole and parts have the same reference; but God is not the whole of a creature, nor is a creature a part of God, and in the same way, a creature is not the whole of God, nor God a part of a creature.

(10) *Ibid.*, III, 19: So long, therefore, as it is understood as incomprehensible, it is not undeservedly called "nothing", because of its excelling. But when it begins to appear in its theophanies, it is said to proceed, as it were, *ex nihilo*, into something, and what is regarded as properly above every essence is properly too known in every essence. And so every visible and invisible creature can be called a "theophany", that is, an apparition of God . . . Therefore, the divine goodness, which is called "nothing" because it is beyond all things, those that are and those that are not, is found in no essence. From the negation of all essences into the affirmation of the whole universe of essence, it descends from itself into itself, as it were *ex nihilo* into something, from inessentiality into essentiality, from unformedness into innumerable forms and species.

(11) *Ibid.*, IV, 7: *Master*: Therefore, we can define man thus: Man is a certain intellectual notion eternally made in the divine mind. *Disciple*: This is the truest and most approved definition of man. And not only of man, but also of all things that are made in the divine wisdom.

(12) *Ibid.*, IV, 9: For if man had not sinned, he would certainly not have fallen into so deep an ignorance of himself. So too he would not have suffered disgraceful generation from two sexes after the likeness of irrational animals.

(13) *Ibid.*, V, 7: And so man gave up the honor of the divine image, and of equality with the heavenly powers. Rather he withdrew into the likeness of irrational animals. For indeed his nature, which was founded to crave and prize heavenly things by nature, is loaded down with longings and desires of the flesh. Ordained to enjoy reason, it is rolled around by an irrational motion . . . Now in the nature of things there is nothing lower than what lacks life, reason and sense; rather the lowest of all is the corruptible body. For no nature is allowed to return to nothing, and where he sets the end of his ruin, there he begins to return again. Now the end of his ruin is the dissolution of the body . . . The dissolution of the flesh, which is usually called by the name of "death", is more reasonably called the "death of death" than the "death of the flesh" . . . Therefore, the first reversion of human nature occurs when the body is dissolved, and called back to the four sensible elements of the world, from which it was put together. The second will be fulfilled in the resurrection, when each one will receive his own body from the coming together of the four elements. The third, when the body will be changed into spirit. The fourth, when spirit and, that I may speak more plainly, the whole nature of man is turned back into the primordial causes, which are always and unchangeably in God. The fifth, when that very nature with its causes will be moved into God, just as air is moved into the light. For God will be all in all, when there will be nothing but God alone.

(14)

*Comm. in Evang. sec. Ioannem*: The sin of the world is called original sin, which is common to the whole of the world, that is, of human nature.

(15)

*Hom. in Prol. sec. Ioannem*: Yet we ought to understand three worlds. The first of these is that which is filled absolutely only with the invisible and spiritual substances of powers. Anyone who

comes into this world possesses a full participation in the true light. The second is opposed by way of diversity to the first, because it is absolutely constituted out of both invisible and bodily natures. And although it has the lowest proportion in the universe, yet the Word was in it and it was made by the Word. And, for those who wish, it is the first step toward ascending to the knowledge of truth. For the species of visible things attract the deliberating spirit to the knowledge of invisibles. The third world is that which has the aspect of a mean, and it joins in itself the superior world of spiritual things and the inferior world of bodily ones, and makes one out of the two. And it is understood only in the case of man, in whom every creature is united. For it consists of body and soul. Gathering the body from this world and the soul from the other, it makes them one beautiful world. And the body possesses every bodily nature, while the soul possesses every incorporeal one. Which, when they are amassed together in one structure, together make man's every worldly ornament. And so man is called all things. For every creature is melted together in him, as it were in a certain kind of workshop.

(16) *Ibid.*, I, 56-58: And since these things are so, you must necessarily acknowledge that bodies can be resolved into incorporeals, so that they are not bodies, but dissolved from within. Now incorporeals, by their natural coming together in a marvelous harmony, constitute bodies.

Text 10:

Selections from Peter Damian's Letter on Divine Omnipotence

Translated from the edition in Pierre Damien: *Lettre sur la toute-puissance divine*. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes, André Cantin, ed. & tr.

I

To lord Desiderius, most reverend rector of the monastery at [Monte] Cassino, and to the entire holy convent [there], Peter the sinner, a monk, [sends you] the kiss of peace in the Holy Spirit . . . .

For once, as you can recall, while the two [of us] were sitting around the table, the following [passage] of blessed Jerome came up in our conversation: "I dare say," he says, "although God can do all things, he cannot raise up a virgin after her fall. True, he can free her from punishment, but he cannot crown her [with the crown of virginity] once she has been corrupted."<sup>1</sup> Although I was terrified, inasmuch as I would not dare to argue about the testimony of so great a man, nevertheless to a father of like mind [with me] - namely, to you - I said exactly what I thought. "This view," I said, "I confess has never been able to satisfy me. For I pay attention to what is said, not to by whom it is said. It seems too much a dishonor that an inability should be ascribed so lightly to him who can do all things, unless sworn to by a higher intelligence."

But you replied, on the contrary, that what was said [by Jerome] was sure and quite authenticated, namely, that God is not able to raise up a virgin after her fall. Then, after running through many [points] with long and wordy arguments, you finally brought the conclusion of your explanation down to this, that you would say that on no other account is God unable [to do] this than because he does not want to.

To this I say, if God can do nothing he does not want [to do], but [rather] he does nothing except what he wants, therefore, he can do nothing at all that he does not do. And so consequently, to speak freely, God does not [make it] rain today for the reason that he cannot. He does not raise up the feeble for the reason that he cannot. For that reason [too] he does not kill the unjust. For that reason he does not free the blessed from their oppressions. These and many other things God does not do, for the reason that he does not want to. And because he does not want to, he cannot. It follows, therefore, that whatever God does not do, he is altogether incapable of doing. But, really, this seems so absurd and so ridiculous that not only is the assertion incompatible with the omnipotent God, it cannot even be applied to fragile mankind. There are many things, after all, that we do not do and yet are able to do.

Nevertheless, if it should happen that we find some [statement] like this in the mystical and allegorical [passages of] Scripture, it should be taken with caution and reverence rather than broadcast boldly and freely according to its literal sense. For example, what was said by the angel to Lot, [who was] hurrying to Segor. "Hurry up," [the angel] said, "and save [yourself] there, because I will be unable to do anything until you enter in there"

(Gen. 19:22). And "I repent of having made man" (Gen. 6:7).<sup>2</sup> And that God, taking warning in advance about the future, is touched within by a sorrow of the heart, and many things of that kind. So if anything like that is found included in the Holy Scriptures, it should not be spread around right away all over the place with insolent and presumptuous, vulgar impudence, but rather under the restrained discipline of sober discourse. For if it should reach the common people that God is asserted to be impotent in some respect (which is a wicked thing to say), the

unschooled masses would instantly be confused and the Christian faith would be upset, not without grave danger to souls.

### III

Clearly God is said to be unable in the same way that he is said to be ignorant. For instance, whatever is bad, just as he cannot do it, so he does not know how to do it. For he neither can nor knows how to lie or to commit perjury or to do anything unjust, even though he says through the prophet, "I the Lord who forms the light and creates the shadows, who makes peace and creates evil" (Isaiah 45:7).<sup>3</sup> . . .

Many such things are found in the statements of the Scriptures. If we are intent on taking them according to their meaning on the surface, we will be unable to pour out light but rather [only] to give birth to the darkness of shadows.

So the claim that God cannot [do] anything evil, or does not know how to, is not to be referred to ignorance or impossibility, but rather to the rectitude of [his] perpetual will. For because he does not want evil, it is rightly said that he neither knows how nor is able [to do] anything evil. For the rest, whatever he wants he no doubt is able [to do], according to the Scripture, "You however, the master of strength, judge with calm and treat us with great respect. For power is available to you when you want [it]" (Wisdom 12:18).

### IV

The will of God is in fact the cause of all things, whether visible or invisible, that they exist, to such an extent that all things [that are] made, before they proceed to the visible appearances of their forms, were living already, truly and essentially, in the will of their maker. "What was made," says John, "in him was life" (John 1:4). And in Revelations, he bears witness that the twenty-four elders said the same thing. "You are worthy, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, because you created all things, and because of your will they were and were created" (Rev. 4:11). First it is said that they "were", and afterwards that "they have been created". For the things that are expressed outwardly, through the making of the product, were already [there] within, in the providence and plan of the maker.

But furthermore, just as the will of God is the cause that what has not yet been made should come to be in the first place, so too is it no less powerful a cause that things that have been lost should return to the rank [appropriate to] their station. "For do I will the death of the impious?, says the Lord. Rather, I will that he be converted and live" (Ez. 18:23).

So, to get back to the point, what prevents God from being able to raise up a virgin after falling? Is he unable to do it because he does not want to? And does he not want to because it is evil, just as it was said that God neither wants nor is able to lie, to commit perjury, or to do anything evil? But heaven forbid that it should be bad for a violated woman to turn into a virgin! Indeed, just as it is evil for a virgin to be violated, so there is no doubt it would be good for her, once violated, to revert to [being a] virgin [again], if the order of the divine plan granted it . . .

### V

To be sure, for a virgin to be "raised up" after falling is understood in two ways, namely, either with respect to the fullness of merit or with respect to the integrity of the flesh. So let us see whether God is strong enough to do both.

Now with respect to merit, the Apostle calls the company of the faithful a "virgin" when he says to the Corinthians, "For I promised you to one man, a chaste virgin to show to Christ" (2

Cor. 11:2). For in that people of God there were not only virgins, but also many women bound in marriage or living continentally after losing their virginity.

And the Lord says through the prophet, "If a man puts his wife aside, and she goes off and takes another man, will he ever go back to her? Will not the woman be called defiled and polluted? But you have fornicated with many lovers. Nevertheless, come back to me, says the Lord" (Jer. 3:1).

This coming back to the Lord, as far as the quality of the merit is concerned, is plainly this, that a corrupted woman should become whole [again], that a virgin be retrieved from prostitution . . . .

Observe that it has been proved, in my opinion, that with respect to merit, God can "raise up" a virgin after falling.

But with respect to the flesh, who can doubt even with an insane mind that he, who restores crushed [spirits], [who] releases those in chains, who cures every weakness and every infirmity, cannot restore the virginal barrier? Oh yes, he who put the body itself together out of the thinnest seminal fluid, who in the human form diversified the species through the various features of the limbs, who made what did not yet exist into the pinnacle of creation - once it existed, he could not get it back when it went bad?

I say it outright, I say without fear of contradiction by scoffing quibbles, I affirm that the omnipotent God is strong enough to make any women, [even one who has been] married many times, a virgin again, and to restore in her flesh the seal of incorruption, just as she emerged from her mother's womb.

I have said these things, not to defame blessed Jerome, who spoke with pious zeal, but to disprove with the unconquerable reason of faith those who take the occasion from his words to assert that God is incapable.

## VII

I see I must respond finally to what many people, on the basis of your holiness's [own] judgment, raise as an objection on the topic of this dispute. For they say: If, as you assert, God is omnipotent in all things, can he manage this, that things that have been made were not made? He can certainly destroy all things that have been made, so that they do not exist now. But it cannot be seen how he can bring it about that things that have been made were not made. To be sure, it can come about that from now on and hereafter Rome does not exist; for it can be destroyed. But no opinion can grasp how it can come about that it was not founded long ago. . . .

## VII

But what do they want for themselves, these useless men, [these] introducers of sacrilegious doctrine, who, while they contrive the snares of their questions for others, pay no attention to the fact that they themselves have fallen headlong into them first, [who,] while they put the traps of frivolous questioning in the path of simple travelers, tripped themselves up instead on the stumbling-block?

They say, "Is God able to act so that, after something has once happened, it did not happen?" - as if this impossibility should seem to arise for past [times] alone, and is not also found likewise in the case of present and future times. For whatever even now is, as long as it is, no doubt necessarily is.<sup>4</sup> It is not possible, as long as something exists, for it not to be.

Again, it is impossible for what will be not to be going to be, even though there are some things that can equally come about and not come about. For instance, my going riding or not going riding today, seeing or not seeing a friend, its raining or there being fine weather. These things and [others] like them the wise men of this world usually call "indifferent", because they are equally prone to happen and not to happen.

But they are called "indifferent" more in accordance with the variable nature of the things than in accordance with the inference-relations among statements. For according to the natural order of diverse sequences, it can come about that it rains today, and it can also come about that it does not rain. But with respect to inference-relations in discourse, if it will come about that it rains, [then] it is altogether necessary that it rain. Hence it is absolutely impossible that it not rain.

Therefore, what is said about past things follows no less for present and future things, so that just as for everything that was, it is necessary for it to have been, so too for everything that is, as long as it is, it is necessary for it to be, and for everything that will be, it is necessary for it to be going to be.

And so, with respect to the arrangement of discourse, for whatever was, it is impossible for it not to have been, and for whatever is, it is impossible for it not to be, and for whatever will be, it is impossible for it not to be going to be.

Hence, let the blind thoughtlessness of [these] naive "wise [men]", who inquire about groundless [questions], see that if they boldly apply to God these things that pertain to the art of discourse, they make him altogether impotent and incapable not only in the case of past things, but also for present and future things.

Because they have not yet learned the elementary points about words, they discard the foundation of a clear faith because of the obscure darkneses of their arguments. Still ignorant of what boys treat in school, they hurl the slanders of their complaints at the divine mysteries. Because they have acquired no experience in the rudiments of learning or the humane arts, they upset the study of ecclesiastical purity with the murkiness of their curiosity.

Plainly, these things, which arise from the arguments of logicians or rhetoricians, are not to be easily adapted to the mysteries of divine power. Heaven forbid that these [people] should stubbornly introduce into holy laws things invented so that they might progress in the tools of syllogisms and [in] rhetorical periods, and that they should oppose to divine power the necessities of their inference.

Yet, if skill in the humane art is sometimes used in dealing with Scripture, it should not arrogantly grasp for itself the right of a master, but rather play a certain subordinate role as a servant, like a handmaiden to her mistress, lest it should fall into error if it take the lead, and while following out the consequences of the outwardly [expressed] words, it lose the light of innermost power and the right path to truth.

Who does not plainly see that, if faith has recourse to these arguments, taking their wording as it stands, the divine power would be made to appear impotent at all moments of time? For, according to the contention of this empty line of inquiry, God is not strong enough to act in such a way that things that happened a while ago would not have happened, or on the other hand [in such a way that] things that now are, as long as they are, are not, or things that will be will not be, or contrariwise, [that] things that will not be will be.

The old [authors] who discussed the liberal arts - not only pagans but also partakers of the Christian faith - have treated this question at great length. But none of them has dared to put forward the insanity that would ascribe a mark of incapability to God and would doubt his



omnipotence (especially if he was a Christian). Rather they argued about concluding necessity or impossibility with respect to the mere power of the [dialectical] art only, so that they made no mention of God in these disputes. But the people who nowadays take up the old question, eager to know higher things than they [are able to] grasp, instead dull the edge of their mind because they are not afraid to give offense to the author of light himself.

So the question, because it is shown to pertain not to the discussion of the divine majesty's power but rather to skill in dialectical art, not to the power or material of things but rather to the manner and order of speech and to the inferential connection among words, has no place among the mysteries of the

Church. [This question] is aired in the schools by secular boys. For it pertains not to the rule of the faith or to the good character of [one's] behavior, but rather to the richness of speech and the dazzle of words.

Therefore, let it suffice for us to defend in [this] brief [treatment] the faith we hold; to the wise men of the present age we concede the things that are theirs. Those who want may hold on to the letter that kills, provided the life-giving Spirit, through God's mercy, does not withdraw from us. . . .

## XVII

. . . we can say without absurdity that God, in that invariable and always most stable eternity of his, can make it so that what was made, with respect to our transience, was not made. That is, so that we may say "God is able to act so that Rome, which was founded in antiquity, was not founded". The expression 'is able', in the present tense, is used appropriately here, as far as the immovable eternity of the omnipotent God is concerned. But with respect to us, for whom there is uninterrupted mobility and continuous movement, we would more properly say 'was able', as we usually do. Hence we understand the above statement 'God is able [to act] so that Rome was not founded' from the point of view of him, namely, for whom "there is no shifting, or shadow of alteration" (James 1:17). Of course for us this means 'God was able'. For with respect to his eternity, whatever God was able [to do], he also is able [to do] it, because his present never turns into the past, his today does not change into tomorrow or into any alteration of time. Rather, just as he always is what he is, so [too] whatever is present before him is always present before him.

Thus, just as we can properly say 'God was able [to bring it about] that Rome, before it had been founded, was not founded',<sup>5</sup> so can we no less appropriately say 'God is able [to bring it about] that Rome, even after it has been founded, was not founded'. He "was able" with respect to us; he "is able" with respect to himself. For the being able that God had before Rome came to be persists, always unchangeable and immovable, in God's eternity. Hence, whatever thing we can say God "was able" [to do], so no less can we say that God "is able" [to do] it. For his being able, which is of course coeternal with him, is always fixed and immobile. It is only with respect to us that there is a "having been able" for God. With respect to himself, however, there is no having been able, but rather always an unmoved, fixed and invariable being able.

Whatever God was able [to do] no doubt he also is able to do. For him, certainly, just as there is no being and having been, but [only] everlasting being, so [too] as a consequence [there is] no having been able and being able, but [only] an always immobile and everlasting being able.

Just as he does not say "I am who was and am" but rather "I am who am" and "He who is sent me to you" (Ex. 3:14), so there is no doubt that he says as a consequence not "I am who was

able and am able" but rather "[I am] who immovably and eternally am able". For that being able that was with God before the ages [still] is today, and that being able that belong to him today belonged [to him] no less before the ages, and will eternally persist, still fixed and immobile, for all the ages to come.

Therefore, just as God was able, before all things were made, [to bring it about] that they would not be made, so no less is he able even now [to bring it about] that the things that were made had not existed. For the being able that he had then is neither changed nor taken away. Rather, just as he always is what he is, so too God's being able cannot be changed. For it is he who says through the prophet, "I am God, and I am not changed" (Mal. 2:6), and in the Gospel, "Before Abraham came to be, I am" (John 8:58).<sup>1</sup> He is not changed, after the fashion of our [own] condition, from being about to be to being, or from being to having been. Rather, he is always the same, and always is what he is.

Thus, just as one and the same God always is, so being able [to do] all things is present in him, imperishably and without failing. And just as we say truly and without any contradiction that what now and always is God was [also] before the ages, so no less truly do we say that what now and always God is able [to do] he was [also] able [to do] before the ages. Thus, if through all [ages] God is able [to do] whatever he was able [to do] at the beginning, but before the foundation of things he was able [to bring it about] that things that have now been made were not made in any way, therefore he is able [to bring it about] that the made [things] did not exist at all.

In fact, his being able is fixed and eternal, so that anything he was ever able [to do] he always is able [to do]. Neither does the difference of times make any room for change in eternity. Rather, just as he is the same now as he was in the beginning, so too he is able [to do] everything whatsoever that he was able [to do] before the ages.

We must, therefore, put an end to the dispute before us. Accordingly, if being able [to do] all things is coeternal with God, God was able [to bring it about] that things that have been made were not made. Therefore, it is to be asserted steadfastly and faithfully that God, just as he is said [to be] omnipotent, so with absolutely no exception he is truly able [to do] all things, whether with respect to things that have been made or with respect to things that have not been made.

Thus, the passage of Esther may be placed as an inviolable seal at the end of our work: "Lord, omnipotent king, all things are put in your power, and there is no one who can resist your will. For you made heaven and earth and whatever is contained in the circuit of the heaven. You are lord of all; neither is there anyone who resists your majesty" (Esther 13:9-11).

## NOTES:

1. Jerome, *Epistle 22 ad Eustochium*, 5. "Loeb Classical Library" ed., p. 62.
2. This example and the next one seem to be illustrating a somewhat different point than the earlier example did.
3. Damian goes on to give a number of other examples, which I shall omit.
4. An allusion to Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, 9, 18b8. As you might expect, this perplexing line in Aristotle has occasioned much commentary, both in the Middle Ages and thereafter.
5. This is awkward in Latin too. The sense is: 'God was able, before Rome was founded, to bring it about that it would never be founded'.

Text 11:

Selections from Anselm's Correspondence, concerning Roscelin

Letter 128: From John the Monk, to Anselm

Translated from S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera omnia, F. S. Schmitt, ed., vol. 3, (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946), pp. 270-271. Written c. 1090.

To his lord and father Anselm, brother John his servant and son - with respect to the lord a servant, with respect to the father a son.

We surely know, reverend father, we truly know that your keenness [of mind] is of use in untying even those knots of Scripture where many other people are found wanting. Hence, for the common advantage of catholics, let your diligence not disdain to write to me and certain others what the faith and simple prudence, and your prudent simplicity, thinks about the three [persons] of the deity.

For Roscelin of Compi\egne raises the following problem: If the three persons are only one thing and not three things on their own, like three angels or three souls, in such a way that nevertheless they are the same in will and power, therefore the Father and Holy Spirit were incarnated along with the Son. He says that the lord Archbishop Lanfranc had granted this statement and that you grant it in arguing the point with him. But Saint Augustine's simile of trinity and unity in the case of the sun, which is one and the same thing and contains heat and brightness inseparably within itself, is altogether opposed to the simile of trinity and identity in the case of three angels and three souls.

May your integrity be preserved safe and sound [both] now and in the future by the three-in-one God who is our topic. Amen.

Letter 129: Anselm's Reply

Translated from *ibid.*, pp. 271-272. Written c. 1090-1092, in reply to Letter 128.

To [his] lord and dear brother John, brother Anselm [sends the wish that you] always advance to better things.

I have delayed so long in replying to the letter Your Amiability sent me, about the [man] who says that the three persons in God are three things, or else the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnated together with the Son, because I wanted to speak about this matter more fully. But because many engagements have prevented me since I got your letter, I have been unable [to do so]. In the meantime, therefore, I am replying briefly. But I plan to treat this topic at greater length in the future if God deigns to grant me the opportunity.

Now when he calls the three persons "things", he means [that] to be understood either with respect to three relations - that is, insofar as God is called Father and Son and the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son - or else with respect to the fact that he is called God.

But if [it is] the three relations he says are three "things", there is no point in [his] saying this. For no one denies that the three persons are three "things" in that sense. Nevertheless, [this must be taken] in such a way that it be carefully understood how these relations are called "things" and what kind of "things", and whether or not [these] same relations make some [difference] in the substance, as many accidents do.

Even so, it seems he does not understand the three "things" he mentions in this sense, because he adds [the claim] that there is [only] one will and power for [all] three persons. For these three persons do not have [their] will and power insofar as [they are] relations but insofar as each person is God.

But if he says the three persons are three "things" insofar as each person is God, [then] either he means to set up three gods or else he does not understand what he is saying.

For the present, let these things suffice to indicate to Your Amiability what I think about the view mentioned. Stay well always.

[P. S.] As for your request to visit me before you start out for Rome, rest assured that I would wish [for that] with pleasure, as far as [my] love for Your Grace is concerned. But, as far as I can see, it would be of little use to you - and in fact an obstacle for you - because of my many engagements. For I feel quite strongly that unless you stay with the bishop until you start out, he will be of little or no help in what you must do. And I cannot do anything to assist [you] in making [your] trip.

Letter 136: *TO FULCO, BISHOP OF BEAUVAIS*

Translated from *ibid.*, pp. 279-281. Written after Letter 129, but before the Council of Soissons in 1092, in which Roscelin's views were condemned.

My very dear lord and friend, the reverend Bishop Fulco of Beauvais, brother Anselm, called the abbot of Bec, [sends his] greeting.

I hear, although I cannot believe it without [some] doubt, that Roscelin the cleric is saying that in God the three persons are three things, separated from one another like three angels, but in such a way that [their] will and power is one [for all], or else the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnated [too]. If [common] usage permitted it, [he goes on,] we could truly say there are three gods. He claims that Archbishop Lanfranc, of venerable memory, held this view, and that I do [now].

Because of this, I was told, a council is to be gathered together soon by reverend Rainaldus, Archbishop of Rheims. So, because I suppose Your Reverence will be in attendance there, I want you to be prepared for what should be replied in my defense, if the occasion should demand [it].

His life, known to many religious and wise men, is enough to acquit Archbishop Lanfranc from this accusation. And his absence and death denies [the opportunity for] any new charge against him. But as for me, I want all men to have [my] true opinion, as follows.

I hold the things we confess in the Creed, when we say, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator,"<sup>1</sup> and "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker,"<sup>2</sup> and "Whosoever wants to be saved, above all he must hold the catholic faith,"<sup>3</sup> along with the [words] that follow [these opening lines]. These three principles of the Christian confession, which I have here set out, I so believe them (I say) with my heart and confess with my mouth, that I am certain anyone who wants to deny any of these things, whether he is a man or an angel - and anyone specifically who asserts as the truth the blasphemy that I maintained above I have heard [to be] said by Roscelin - is anathema.

In support of this, let me say: Let him be anathema as long as he keeps up this stubbornness. For he is not a Christian at all. If he was baptized and raised among Christians, he is not to be listened to in any way. No explanation of his error is to be required from him, or [from us] to him of our [own] truth. Rather, as soon as his treachery comes to be known beyond

doubt, either let him anathematize the venom he vomits forth in his utterances, or else let him be anathematized by all catholics if he does not come to his senses.

It is completely senseless and stupid to call back again into the doubt of shaky questions, because of every single [person] who fails to understand, what has been most solidly founded on a firm rock. For our faith is to be defended by reason against the impious, but not against those who acknowledge that they rejoice in the honor of the name 'Christian'. From the latter it is rightly to be demanded that they unshakably maintain the commitment they made in [their] baptism; but to the former it is to be shown in a reasonable way how unreasonably they scorn us.

For a Christian ought to progress through faith to understanding, not to approach faith through understanding, or if he cannot understand, to depart from the faith. But when he can reach understanding, he is delighted; when he cannot [do this], he venerates what he cannot grasp.

I insist that this letter of mine be taken by Your Holiness to the aforesaid council. Or, if perhaps you will not be going, I insist that it be sent through one of your literate [associates]. Let it be read in the hearing of the whole convention if the matter of my name should require [it]. But if not, there is no need [for it] to be shown.

*PASSAGES FROM ANSELM'S LETTER ON THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD*

Translated from *ibid.*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946), pp. 1-35, at pp. 1, 4-5, 9-10, 10-11, 30. Written to Pope Urban II (pope 1088-1099), after the Council of Soissons in 1092.

To the lord and father of the whole Church wandering on earth, the supreme Pontiff Urban, brother Anselm, a sinner by life, a monk by habit, called by God - whether by his command or by his permission - [to be] bishop of the city of Canterbury, [sends his] due submission, together with humble service and devotions.

. . . When I was still the abbot of the monastery at Bec, the claim was ventured by a certain cleric in France: "If," he said, "the three persons in God are one thing only, and are not three things, each one separate by itself like three angels or three souls, yet in such a way that they are altogether the same in will and power, therefore the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnated together with the Son.

When this reached me, I began a certain letter against this error, which I neglected to finish after part of it had been composed. I believed there was no need for it, since the [man] against whom it was written had repudiated his error in the council gathered by the reverend Archbishop Rainaldus of Rheims, and since there seemed to be no one who did not know that he had been in error. Nevertheless, the part I had completed certain brothers transcribed without my knowledge, and sent it to others to be read. I say this so that, if that part should come into someone's hands, although there is nothing false there, still it was left incomplete and unfinished. What I began there must be begun [again] more carefully here and finished.

After I was taken and kept in England for the episcopacy, by I know not what arrangement of God, I heard that, persevering in his view, the author of the aforesaid novelty said that he had repudiated what he had said for no other reason except that he was afraid of being killed by the people. Because of this, certain brothers compelled me by their entreaties to untie the question in which he had been so tangled up that he believed he could in no way get himself free from it without entangling himself in [the theory of] the incarnation of God the Father and the Holy Spirit, or else in multiplying gods . . .

All [people] are to be reminded to approach questions about Sacred Scripture with the utmost caution. Those dialecticians of our time, rather those heretics of dialectic, who think universal substances are nothing but a verbal puff (*flatum vocis*), and who cannot understand color as other than body, or a man's wisdom [as other] than [his] soul, are to be altogether "puffed" out of [any] argument about spiritual matters. In fact, in their souls, reason, which ought to be the prince and judge of all things in a man, is so covered up in bodily imaginations that it cannot roll itself away from them, and they are unable to discriminate from those [imaginings] the things that ought to be contemplated alone and pure.

For he who does not yet understand how several men are one man in species, how can he comprehend in that most secret and highest nature how several persons, each one of which is individually the whole God, are one God? And [he] whose mind is darkened to judging between his horse and its color, how will he discriminate between one God and the several relations in him? And lastly, he who cannot understand that something is a man if it is not an individual will in no way understand man unless [as] a human person. For every individual man is a person. So how will he understand that man, [but] not a person, is assumed by the Word - that is, that another nature, not another person, is assumed? . . .

## II

He who is said to maintain that the three persons are like three angels or three souls [also] says, I hear, "The pagans defend their law, [and] the Jews defend their law. Therefore, we Christians too ought to defend our law." Let us listen to how this Christian defends his faith. "If," he says, "the three persons are one thing only, and not three things, each one separate by itself like three angels or three souls, yet in such a way that they are altogether the same in will and power, therefore the Father and the Holy Spirit were incarnated together with the Son."

Look what this man says! How this Christian defends his faith! Surely either he means to acknowledge three gods or else he does not understand what he is saying. But if he acknowledges three gods, he is not a Christian. If he affirms what he does not understand, he ought not to believe it . . .

XI . . . . I have been unable to see anything of his writings to whom I am replying in this letter, except for what I mentioned above . . . .

## NOTES TO TEXT 11

1. That is, the Apostle's Creed. This creed survives in several versions. See Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 30.

2. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. See *ibid.*, 150.

3. The Pseudo-Athanasian "Quicumque". See *ibid.*, 75.

Text 12:

From Odo of Tournai's On Original Sin

The passage below is taken from Odo's *De peccato originali*, Book II, PL 160, cols. 1078C-1079D, 1081D-1082B, and 1084A. There are some textual difficulties, which I have flagged in the notes.

Behold, here it is plainly pointed out that we have men as fathers of our flesh and God as father of our spirits, so that the flesh alone comes from man, but a new spirit is given by God in a new flesh. Following the [Scriptural passages cited earlier], a very difficult question arises. For if I have the body alone from Adam, and the soul not from Adam but from God, then since sin is only in the soul and not in the body, how am *I* said to have sinned in Adam? Adam sinned, and the sin was in his soul alone, and not in the body. But my soul, where the sin is, I do not have from him. How [then] am I said to have sinned in him? When he sinned in [the body],<sup>1</sup> my body was then in that [body], [and] I was rightly said to have sinned in him - *if* the sin was in the body. But now that sin is in the soul alone, how am I said to have sinned when he sinned, if my soul was not in him at all?

#### On Genera and Species and Individuals

To this question the orthodox give the following reply, and say that individuals are related to species otherwise than species are to genera. For species have more by substance than genera [do]. Neither does a genus suffice for a species' substance, because by substance a species has a difference in addition to the genus, and the species is more by substance than the genus [is]. For man is more than animal, because man is rational and animal is not rational. On the other hand, individuals by substance have nothing more than species. Neither are they by substance other - [for instance,] Plato other than man. Now it is not something substantial that brings it about that there are several individuals under one species, but rather accidents. Therefore, it is possible for a solitary individual to be under a species, although a solitary species cannot be under a genus. For instance, taking away all individual men besides Peter, the species man has Peter alone as an individual. He is an individual because of the collection of his accidents, just as man is a species because it can be common to many individuals. For "phoenix", although it does not have but one individual, is a species because it *can* be common to many. Phoenix is one thing, *this* phoenix is another. Phoenix is a specific nature which can be common. But *this* phoenix is a nature that is only individual. Neither can it be other than singular. Phoenix is bounded by genus and differences; *this* phoenix is distinguished by the peculiarity of its accidents. An individual cannot be said except of one. A species, even if it is said of only one, is universal; the individual, however, is only singular.

Reason grasps the species from genus and differences; sense knows the individual from the peculiarities of its accidents. The interior reasoning of the reason reaches to the universals, but exterior sensuous cognition to individuals. We sense individuals bodily; we perceive universals by reason. And when the species is said of a solitary individual, only then is it valid to attribute an accident both to the individual and to the species, although principally and in the first place accidents are in individuals.

### That in Every Case the Individual is to Be Distinguished from the Species

Therefore, when man was first made, and the human soul was made first in one individual and then divided in another, the nature of that human soul was whole and entire in two persons. I say "entire" because it was never outside them, "whole" because nothing of the human soul was lacking to any person. Listen and distinguish [these] three things. There was the human soul, there was Adam's soul, and there was Eve's soul. The three are diverse. Adam's soul is an individual, or if you prefer, a singular or a person, and is said of nothing. Likewise, Eve's soul is an individual, or<sup>2</sup> person, or a singular, and is said of nothing. The human soul is a specific nature, not individual but common, which is said of two persons and is divided in them. Distinguish these three things, and do not use only your sense in distinguishing them, but your reason [too]. For it is not by sense, but only by reason, that an individual is distinguished from a species . . .

### That the Nature's Guilt Is in the Person's Guilt

Lo, each person sinned at the instigation of the serpent. Each one sinned, I say, while there were as yet none who had the substance [of those two] anywhere else but in them, and it was not yet anywhere else but there. If, therefore, the person sinned, he did not sin without his substance. Therefore, the substance of the person is vitiated by sin, and the sin infects the substance, which is nowhere outside the sinning person. Now the substance is one and the same for either person, [and is] common to them and specific. Therefore, in the sinning persons the specific nature, which is nowhere but in them, is infected with sin. Therefore, in Adam's soul and in Eve's soul, which personally sinned, the whole nature of the human soul is infected with sin. That nature is a common substance and specific to each. For it has not yet come about that it is outside them. For if it had been divided in others, the whole would not have been infected on account of them alone, because if these had sinned, perhaps others would not have sinned, in whom the nature of the human soul would have been saved. But now where could the human soul be clean, which was everywhere a sinner?

### How Human NATURE DOES NOT SIN BY ITSELF, BUT THROUGH A PERSON

But perhaps someone will say: If the common nature, namely, the human soul, sinned in its persons, who can deny that the species sinned? But it is absurd to say this of the species itself, and to ascribe to universals what pertains only to persons. Moreover, universals are always what they are, and however you vary the individuals, the universals stand immutably. And although the mutability of individuals may truly be said of the universals, it is not truly in them. But we do not say that the species sinned by itself, but only through its persons . . .

### THAT HUMAN NATURE CANNOT BE TRANSMITTED TO OTHER PERSONS WITHOUT GUILT

And since the whole human soul is in Adam subject to sin, it cannot be transferred without sin to<sup>3</sup> other persons. Neither can a human soul [now] be made without the vice of sin. It draws with it everywhere the vice, grown together with it, which it has within itself from the beginning. . . .

### NOTES TO TEXT 12

1. Inserting 'corpore' after 'in' in the edition.
2. Reading 'sive' for the edition's 'sine'.
3. Reading 'ad' for the edition's 'ab'.



Text 13:

From William of St. Thierry's *Aenigma fidei*

From William's *Aenigma fidei*, PL 180, col. 418:

Where first it is to be known that categories of this kind are foreign to the nature of faith - for instance, substance and accident, and what is called relation, and genus and species and the rest. For they are the common and vulgar instruments of reason and human art, for the discerning of common things. They are unworthy of divine things, and foreign to the form of words used by those sound in the faith.

#### Text 14:

#### An Extract from Peter Abelard's *Dialectica*

The passage below is taken from Peter Abelard, *Dialectica*, Lambert De Rijk, ed., (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1970), p. 541 lines 24-37. The words in pointed brackets are De Rijk's own editorial insertions. There is only one surviving manuscript of this work, and the text it presents is not altogether reliable, so that this kind of editorial tampering is justified, provided it is carefully done. I have no quarrels with De Rijk's editorial judgments in this passage.

Now, however, <when> it is said that the division of a genus is made through differences,<sup>1</sup> and differences are said to be put in the place of species,<sup>2</sup> it helps to ask diligently whether by the difference-names we mean the very forms of the species,<sup>3</sup> or whether we rather understand these difference-words - which are said by some people to be taken in the role of species-names and to be used for designating species - in such a way that 'rational' is equivalent to 'rational animal', and 'besouled' [=animate] is equivalent to 'besouled body', so that in difference-words there is contained not only the signification of the *form*<sup>4</sup> but also of the *matter*.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the latter view seemed [to be the one] to have the most influence on our master W.<sup>6</sup> For, I recall, he wanted there to occur such an abuse of words that, when the difference-name would be inserted in place of a species in the division of a genus,<sup>7</sup> [that difference name] would not be taken from the difference itself but <would be> inserted as a substantival name of a species.<sup>8</sup> Otherwise the division of a subject<sup>9</sup> could be said to be into accidents,<sup>10</sup> according to the view of him<sup>11</sup> who wanted differences to inhere in the genus as accidents.

#### Notes to Text 14

1. This refers to the traditional Aristotelian way to define a substance, by genus plus difference. For example, man is traditionally defined as a rational animal. Animal is the genus, and rational is the "difference". It is what "differentiates" a man from other things within the same genus animal. The genus animal may then be said to be "divided" by its "differences" *rational* and *irrational* into *man*, on the one hand, and *brute* (or whatever you call it - there was no special term for this), on the other. This would be of course only one possible "division"; there might be other ways of doing it too.

2. The point of this will come out in the following lines.

3. In William's terminology, this might be expressed: whether difference- words signify only the advening forms that constitute a species, and not the underlying material essence - that is, not the genus.

4. Understand: advening forms, as in William's first theory.

5. Understand: the material essence.

6. That's what the manuscript says: just "W". Presumably, this refers to William of Champeaux.

7. For example, if you say that *animal* is "divided" into "the rational ones" (*men*) and "the irrational ones" (*brutes*), instead of saying that it is divided by the differences *rational* and *irrational* into *man* and *brute*. Either way is a perfectly legitimate way to talk.

8. That is, if 'rational' means "the rational ones", that is, the rational animals, as in the previous note, then in effect it just means "man", the species.

9. That is, the genus.

10. And, William apparently reasoned, substance *cannot* be divided into accidents.

11. Apparently William of Champeaux.

Text 15:

Some Passages from Abelard's *Logica ingredientibus*

The following passages are taken from Peter Abelard's *Logica ingredientibus*, in Bernhard Geyer, ed., *Peter Abaelards philosophische Schriften*, (*Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, XXI.1-3), Münster i. W.: Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1919-1927.

(1) From the Glosses on the *Categories*, p. 112 lines 5-6:

Now Boethius, in explaining the purpose of this book, calls these ten names the 'first words' signifying the primary genera of things.

(2) Also from the Glosses on *the Categories*, p. 113 lines 26-29.

Now because 'signifying the primary genera of things' is implicit in the statement of the purpose [of the book], he decides that these [primary] words must be understood to be the ten most general genera, namely, those that signify the natures of things as primary, that is, naturally prior in status to the others, as has already been said.

(3) From the Glosses on the *De interpretatione*, p. 315 lines 26-37.

. . . Hence Plato calls [the images] incorporeal - that is, intangible by the bodily senses. Some people maintain that they are in the first instance designated by words, which [opinion] Aristotle rejects entirely. For words were not set up because of the likenesses of things, or because of the likeness of the [act of] understanding, but rather because of the things themselves and the [acts of] understanding them, so that [the words] would effect a teaching about the natures of things, not about such figments, and would establish understandings *of* the things, not *of* the figments but only *through* the figments, when we establish them for the things that are absent, like certain intermediary signs of the things. Hence the words, by means of these [figments] we use like intermediary signs, establish understandings of things, not of [the figments] themselves, when the words turn the hearer's mind to the likeness of the thing, so that in that [likeness] he attends not to it, but to the thing *for* which it is put.

Text 16:

Passages from the School of Chartres

Gilbert of Poitiers

The following passages are taken from Nikolaus M. Hartmann, ed., *The Commentaries on Boethius by Gilbert of Poitiers*, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1966). I have followed Hartmann's paragraph numbers. Gilbert's Latin is pretty compressed, so I have had to fill it out in places. I have enclosed my insertions in square brackets. The first four passages are from Gilbert's *De trinitate* (that is, a commentary on Boethius' *De trinitate*), I, 1, 21 and 27-29, *ed. cit.*, pp. 76-77. Gilbert is commenting on passage (3) of Text 12 above.

(21) Again, 'the same' is said by species. For instance, Cato is the same as Cicero because there is the same species for Cato and Cicero, namely, man. For diverse subsistences, which are one species, make them substantially alike. By one of these subsistences Cato [is a man], and by another Cicero is a man. . . .

(27) Many subsistents are also called "one" and "the same", not by a singularity of one nature, but rather by the union of many [natures] which comes about by reason of their likeness. For by this [kind of union] several men [are said to be] "one" or "the same" man, and several animals "one" or "the same" animal.

(28) He who thinks about something diverse from a "this one" must not only compare what is opposite [to it] by essence but also [what is opposite to it] by unlikeness, and oppose [them] by means of [the latter] comparison - for instance, horse to man and stone to animal. These [things] are said [to be] "diverse" by species or genus. Others like them, which the con-formity of diverse natures unites, are called "one" by genus or species.

(29) In this unity, which the uniting produces, there is always a number not only of subsistents but also of subsistences. For just as things [are] not diverse unless [they are diverse] by number [at least], so [too] only things that are diverse according to number can be con-formed. For Cato would not be a man in like manner as Cicero is, unless their subsistences, by which each one is a something, were also diverse in number. The numerical diversity of their subsistences makes [the men] be diverse in number.

Here is another passage, from *ibid.*, I, 5, 24, *ed. cit.*, p. 144. Gilbert is commenting on Boethius' discussion of the Aristotelian category of relation.

(24) Often, however, singulars [that are] diverse in number are [nevertheless] con-formed with respect to some of the things *by* which they are. And so not only the things that are, but also the things *by* which they are con-formed, are one "dividual" (*dividuum*). Therefore, none of the things *by* which the things that are are con-formed is an "individual" (*individuum*). For if likeness makes a "dividual", unlikeness makes an "individual".

## Clarenbald of ARRAS

The following passage is taken from Nikolaus M. Hartmann, ed., *The Life and Works of Clarenbald of Arras: A Twelfth-Century Master of the School of Chartres*, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1965), *Tractatus super Boetii "De trinitate"*, I, 12-15, pp. 90-91. I have again followed Hartmann's paragraph numbers. Clarenbald is commenting on passage (2) of Text 16 above.

(12) Certainly Socrates, Plato and Cicero are men by the same humanity. And yet since Socrates is a man and Plato is a man and Cicero is a man, there is no doubt that there are three men. And no wonder, because although they are men by the same humanity, nevertheless a plurality of men slips in among them because of the variety of their accidents . . . .

(13) But because we just said that Socrates, Plato and Cicero are men out of the same humanity, nevertheless because certain famous doctors have spread it about that single men are men by singular humanities, even though it does not contribute much to the explanation of the present tract,<sup>1</sup> we have considered it worth the trouble to show that it is one and the same humanity by which single men are men. This will be clear as follows: Every most specific species is the whole substantial being of all its individuals. No one disagrees with this truth except one who, by an impudent obstinacy, contradicts the authorities [both] of the doctors of logic and of logical arguments. Now humanity is the same species as man is. Those who attribute singular humanities to single men agree with us in this. If, therefore, the species man is not but one, so too the species humanity is not but one.

(14) But here someone will object as follows: Although man is not but one species, nevertheless there are many men under that species. Therefore, since [a] man and [a] humanity are the same species,<sup>2</sup> there are many humanities under the species man. To this objection we reply as follows: For ages, it has never been heard that individuals confer substantial being on some thing. The substantial [things] rather are genus, species, difference, and definition. But if humanity is a most specific species, then no instance of it in the categorial order can be a species.

(15) Therefore, no singular humanity confers *being men*<sup>3</sup> on Socrates, Plato, or Cicero. There is no [singular humanity] . . . .

## NOTES TO TEXT 16

1. That is, Boethius' *De trinitate*.
2. The objection gets its plausibility from the lack of an indefinite article in Latin, and trades on an ambiguity between *a* man and man as a species.
3. "being men" = *homines esse*. Note that this is the same grammatical construction Abelard uses for his *statusa*.

Text 17:

### The Condemnation of 1277

The following are the propositions condemned at Paris in 1277, but omitted from the selection in Hyman and Walsh. They are arranged and numbered according to Mandonnet's edition in his *Siger de Brabant*, vol. 2, pp. 175-191. The original text of the condemnation (as published by Denifle and Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. 1, pp. 543-558) was completely haphazard. Following the list of propositions, I have added a table translating the number in Mandonnet's arrangement into the number in the original text.

3. That for a man to have any certainty about any conclusion, he must ground himself on self-evident principles. [This is] an error, because it speaks in general both about the certainty of apprehension and that of adherence.

7. That all the sciences are necessary, over and above the philosophical disciplines, and that they are necessary only because of human custom.

11. That it is unintelligible for God to be a being through himself positively. Rather, he is privatively a being through himself.

12. That the understanding according to which God understands himself is in its [very] notion other than [that by which he understands] other things. [This is] an error because, while the notion by which he understands is other [in the first case than it is in the second], nevertheless the understanding [itself is] not other according to its [very] notion.

(Note: In Hyman and Walsh, line 2 of proposition #17, read 'what' for 'when'.)

19. That an active power that is able to exist without operating is mixed together with a passive power. [This is] an error if it is meant with respect to every operation.

21. That from an old [act of] willing [something] new cannot proceed without a preceding transmutation.

29. That, unless it tempered its own power, the first cause could produce an effect equal to itself.

31. That there are three principles for celestial things: the subject of eternal motion, the soul of the celestial body, and the first mover, [which moves things] insofar as [it is] desired. This is an error with respect to the first two.

32. That the eternal principles are two, namely, the body of the heaven and its soul.

35. That God never did create an intelligence more than he now does create [it].

36. That the first simply immobile [thing] does not move [anything else], except by means of some moved intermediary, and that such an immobile mover is part of [what is] moved of itself.

37. That the first principle is not the proper cause of eternal things except metaphorically, because it conserves them - that is, because unless it existed, they would not exist.

41. That the separated substances, because they have no matter through which they are in potency before [they are] in act, and [because they] are from a cause that always stays the same way, are therefore eternal.

44. That in separated substances no transmutation is possible. Neither are they in potency to anything, because they are eternal and immune from matter.

45. That an intelligence is completely made by God from eternity, because it is immutable as a whole. The soul of heaven, however, is not [completely made from eternity].

46. That the separated substances are their essence, because in their case that *by* which [a thing] is is the same as *what* it is.

47. That the knowledge of an intelligence does not differ from its substance. For where there is no diversity between the understood [object] and what understands [it], there is [likewise] no diversity among understood [objects].

48. That an angel understands nothing new.

49. That separated substances are actually infinite [in number]. For infinity is not impossible except for material things.

51. That everlasting substances [that are] separate from matter [already] have [all] the good possible to them when they are [first] produced. Neither do they desire anything that they lack.

56. That through their understanding, the separated substances create things.

57. That an intelligence receives its being from God through intermediary intelligences.

58. That superior intelligences create rational souls without [any] celestial motion. But inferior intelligences create the vegetative and sensitive [souls] by means of a celestial motion.

59. That an angel cannot [do] immediately opposite acts, but rather [only] mediated [opposite] acts, with [something] else, like a [celestial] sphere, in between.

60. That superior intelligences are not the cause of anything new in inferior [ones], and that [superior] intelligences are the cause of eternal cognition in inferior [intelligences].

62. That outward matter obeys a spiritual substance. [This is] an error if it is meant absolutely and with respect to every kind of transmutation.

65. That if all causes should be at rest at some time, [then] we must claim that God is movable.

70. That God can do contraries, that is, by means of a celestial body that is in different places.

71. That the nature that is a principle of motion in celestial bodies is a moving intelligence. [This is] an error if the intrinsic nature, which is an act or form, is [what is] meant.

72. That celestial bodies of themselves have the eternity of their substance, but not an eternity of [their] motion.

74. That an intelligence moves the heavens only by [an act of] will.

75. That the celestial soul is an intelligence, and the celestial spheres are not instruments of intelligences but rather [their] organs, as the ear and the eye are the organs of a sensitive power.

77. That the heavens never rest, because the generation of inferior things, which is the goal of celestial motion, ought not to stop. Another reason [is] because the heaven has its being and its power from its mover, and it conserves these [things] by its motion. Thus, if it stopped moving, it would stop being.

78. That there would be nothing new unless the heavens were changed with respect to the matter of generable things.

81. That for all forms the immediate efficient cause is a [celestial] sphere.

88. That time is infinite at both ends. For even though it is impossible for an infinitude [of things] to have been traversed, some one of which had to be traversed, nevertheless it is not impossible for an infinitude [of things] to have been traversed, none of which had to be traversed.



90. That the universe cannot stop, because the first agent has [the ability] to transmute in succession eternally, now into this form, now into that one. And likewise, matter is naturally apt to be transmuted.

93. That some things can come about by chance as far as the first cause is concerned, and that it is false that all [things] are preordained by the first cause. For then they would come about of necessity.

94. That fate, which is the arrangement of the universe, does not proceed immediately from divine providence, but rather by means of the motion of the higher bodies, and that this fate does not impose necessity on lower things, because they have contrariety. But [it does impose necessity] on higher things.

95. That in order for all effects to be necessary as far as the first cause is concerned, it is not enough that the first cause cannot itself be impeded. Rather, it is required that the intermediary causes cannot be impeded. [This is] an error. For then God could not make a necessary effect without the later causes.

97. That in the case of the higher causes, it is part of [their] dignity to be able to make mistakes and [to make] monstrosities that are not intended. For nature can do this.

98. That, in the case of efficient causes, the secondary cause has [some] action it did not receive from the first cause.

103. That from a diversity of places the necessities of events are acquired.

104. That, from different signs in the heavens, the different conditions of men are indicated, both of spiritual gifts and of temporal things.

105. That when a man is generated as to his body, and consequently as to [his] soul, which follows the body, there is a disposition in the man [coming] from the order of superior and inferior causes, [and] inclining [him] to such and such actions or events. [This is] an error unless it is meant [to apply only] in the case of natural events and [for an inclination] by way of disposition.

106. That one who says that if fortune glances toward him he will live, [and] if it does not glance [toward him], he will die, attributes health, sickness, life and death to the position of the stars and to the glance of fortune.

107. That God was unable to have made prime matter except by means of a celestial body.

108. That just as from matter nothing can come without an agent, so neither can anything come from an agent without matter, and that God is not an efficient cause, except with respect to what has being in the potency of matter.

109. That a form that has to be and become in matter cannot be actively [produced] by what does not act on matter.

111. That by a primal generation the elements were made out of chaos. But [nevertheless], they are eternal.

113. That man is man over and above [his] rational soul.

114. That a man is able, through nutrition, to become another [man] numerically and individually.

119. That celestial motions are for the sake of the intellective soul. And the intellective soul, or the intellect, cannot be brought forth except by means of a body.

120. That the form of man is not from outside, but is [rather] drawn out from the potency of matter. For otherwise there would not be a univocal generation.

121. That no form coming from outside can make [something] one with matter. For what is separable does not make [something] one with what is corruptible.

124. That humanity is not the form of the thing but [rather the form] of the reason.

125. That the operation of the non-united understanding is coupled with the body in such a way that the operation belongs to a thing that does not have the form by which it operates. [This is] an error, because it maintains that the understanding is not the form of a man.

127. That the human soul can in no way be moved in place, either through itself or accidentally. And if it is put somewhere through its substance, it will never be moved from here to there.

128. That the soul would never be moved unless the body were moved, just as the heavy or the light would never be moved unless the air were moved.

130. That the human understanding is eternal, because it is from a cause that always stays the same way, and because it does not have matter through which it is in potency before [it is] in act.

132. That the understanding, when it wants to, puts the body aside, and when it wants to, it puts it on.

134. That the rational soul, when it leaves an animal, still remains a live animal.

137. That the generation of man is cyclic, insofar as the form of a man comes back several times onto the same part of matter.

139. That although the generation of men can stop, [nevertheless] in virtue of the first [sphere] it *will* not stop. For the first sphere not only moves for the sake of the generation of the elements, but also of men.

142. That the possible intellect is absolutely inseparable from the body, as far as the act is concerned that is the reception of species, and as far as the judgment is concerned that occurs through the simple attainment of species or the putting together of intelligibles. [This is] an error if it is meant for reception of all kinds.

144. That out of what understands and the [object] understood, there comes to be one substance, insofar as the understanding formally *is* the understood [objects].\f41

145. That the intellective soul knows all other things by knowing itself. For the species of all things are created together with it. But this cognition is not due to our intellect insofar as it is ours, but rather insofar as it is the agent intellect.

148. That the knowledge of master and student is numerically one. Now the reason that the intellect is so one: because a form is not multiplied except because it is drawn out of the potency of matter.

149. That the dead Socrates' intellect does not have knowledge of the things of which he did have knowledge.

152. That all voluntary motions are reduced to the first mover. [This is] an error unless it is meant [that they are reduced] to the absolutely first, non-created mover, and meaning motions according to substance, not according to deformity.

153. That the will and the understanding are not actually moved by themselves but by an everlasting cause, namely, the celestial bodies.

155. That a sphere is the cause of a doctor's will to cure.

164. That man's will is necessitated by his knowledge, just as the appetite of a brute [animal is].

170. That every good possible to a man consists in intellectual virtues.

171. That a man who is [well-]ordered as far as [his] understanding and emotions are concerned, to the extent that the intellectual virtues and other, moral [virtues], about which the Philosopher speaks in the *Ethics*, are sufficient to bring this about, is well-enough disposed for eternal happiness.

173. That happiness cannot be imparted immediately by God.

175. That because Socrates was made unable to receive eternity, [therefore] if he is going to be eternal, it is necessary that he be transmuted in nature and species.

176. That God or an intelligence does not infuse knowledge into the human soul in a dream, unless by means of a celestial body.

178. That men's intentions, and the changes in [their] intentions, are known by certain signs, and whether the intentions are to be accomplished, and that through such figures the arrivals of strangers are known, [and also] the capture of men, the release of captives, and whether they are learned men or thieves.

179. That the natural law prohibits killing irrational animals, although not only that.

184. That the absolutely possible or impossible (that is, in all ways), is the possible or impossible according to philosophy.

185. That God is not three and one, because trinity is inconsistent with maximal simplicity. For where there is a real plurality, there necessarily there is addition and putting together. For example, a pile of stones.

186. That God cannot generate [anything] like himself. For what is begotten has a principle in something on which it depends. And that, in God, to generate would not be a sign of perfection.

187. That creation ought not to be called a change to being. [This is] an error if it is meant for change of every kind.

190. That he who generates the world as a whole sets up a vacuum. For place necessarily precedes what is generated in a place. And then, before the world's generation, there would have been a place without [anything] placed [in it]. That is a vacuum.

192. That the theologians who say that the heavens sometimes are at rest argue from a false assumption. And that to say that the heavens exist and are not moved is to say contradictory things.

193. That it is possible for there naturally to occur a universal flood of fire.

194. That material form cannot be created.

195. That a man could not be made by God without [the man's] own agent [cause], to wit, [his] "father", and "a man".

196. That to make there be an accident without [its] subject has the aspect of the impossible that implies a contradiction.

197. That God cannot make there be an accident without [its] subject, or several dimensions be together.

198. That an accident existing without [its] subject is not an accident, unless equivocally [speaking]. And that it is impossible for a quantity or a dimension to be by itself. For this would be for it to be a substance.

199. That since God is not to be compared to beings after the fashion of a material or formal cause, he does not make there be an accident without [its] subject. It belongs to the notion of [an accident] to inhere actually in a subject.

201. That if something is said to be heretical because it is contrary to the faith, [then] one should not care about the faith.

202. That one ought not pray.
203. That one ought not to confess, except for show.
204. That one ought not to care about being buried.
205. That simple fornication, for instance, between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, is not a sin.
206. That a sin contrary to nature - for instance, perversion during sex - even though it is contrary to the nature of the species, nevertheless is not contrary to the nature of the individual.
207. That pleasure in sexual acts does not prevent the act or use of the understanding.
208. That [sexual] continence is not essentially a virtue.
209. That chastity is not a greater good than complete abstinence.
210. That complete abstinence from the carnal act corrupts virtue and [corrupts] the species.
211. That humility, to the extent that someone does not display the things he has, but reviles and humbles himself, is not a virtue. [This is] an error if it is meant: neither a virtue nor a virtuous act.
212. That a pauper as to the goods of fortune cannot do well in moral affairs.
213. That death is the end of terrible things. [This is] an error if it rules out hell's terror, which is the final one.
214. That God cannot give perpetuity to a transmutable and corruptible thing.
215. That a corrupted body cannot come back the same in number. Neither will it rise again the same in number.
217. That to say that God gives happiness to one [person] and not to another is [to speak] without reason and [to utter a mere] figment.
218. That nothing can be known about the understanding after its separation [from the body].
219. That the separated soul does not suffer at all from fire.

Text 18:

Two Texts on the Later Doctrine of Illumination

Bonaventure

From Bonaventure, *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi*, q. 4, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 5, (Quarrachi: College of St. Bonaventure, 1891), pp. 17-27. The passage is part of the *Responsio*, pp. 22-23.

In order to understand the above, note that when it is said that everything that is known (*cognoscitur*) with certainty is known in the light of the eternal reasons,<sup>1</sup> this can be understood in three ways:

(1) In one way, so that it is understood that for certain cognition the evidence of the eternal light concurs as the whole and sole reason for knowing. And this way of understanding it is a less correct one, insofar as, according to this way, there would be no cognition of things except in the Word. And then cognition in this life<sup>2</sup> would not differ from cognition in the next,<sup>3</sup> or cognition in the Word from cognition in a proper genus, or cognition by science from cognition by wisdom, or cognition by nature from cognition by grace, or cognition by reason from cognition by revelation. Since all of these things are false, this interpretation is in no way tenable. For from the view that some people held, namely, that nothing can be known (*cognoscitur*) with certainty except in the archetypal and intelligible world (the first Academics were of this view) there is born the error, as Augustine says in *Contra academicos*, Book II, that one can know (*scire*) nothing whatever (as the new Academics claimed), insofar as the intelligible world is hidden from human minds. And therefore, wanting to maintain the first assumption, they fell into a plain error. For a small mistake in the beginning is a big one in the end.<sup>4</sup>

(2) In another way, so that it is understood that for certain cognition an eternal reason necessarily concurs with respect to an influence, in such a way that the knower (*cognoscens*) does not in knowing (*cognoscendo*) attain to the eternal reason itself, but only to its influence. And this manner of speaking is not enough, according to the words of blessed Augustine, who shows by his explicit words and arguments that the mind in certain cognition has to be regulated by immutable and eternal rules, not as if by a *habit of the mind*, but as by things that are *above* it in the eternal truth. And therefore to say that our mind in cognizing does not extend itself beyond the influence of the uncreated light is to say that Augustine was deceived, since it is not easy to contort his authoritative texts to this sense. This is a quite absurd thing to say about such a Father and Doctor, the most highly authoritative among all the expositors of Sacred Scripture.

Moreover, that influence is either a general one, insofar as God "flows in" to all creatures, or it is special, as God "flows in" by grace. If it is general, then God ought no more to be called the "giver of wisdom" than "giver of the earth's fertility". Neither would knowledge (*scientia*) be said to be from him any more than poverty is. If it is special, as it is in the case of grace, then in accordance with this every cognition is *infused*<sup>5</sup> and *none is acquired* or *innate*. All of which is absurd.

(3) And therefore there is a third way of understanding this, holding as it were the middle ground between the other two, namely, that for certain cognition there is necessarily required an

eternal reason as a ruling and moving reason - not, to be sure, alone and in its complete clarity, but together with a created reason, and "in part"<sup>6</sup> constituted by us according to our status as wayfarers in this life.

And this is what Augustine suggests in *De trinitate* XIV, Ch. 15: "The reprobate remembers, so that he turns to the Lord, as to that light by which he is touched in a certain manner even when he turns away from it. For hence it is that even reprobates think of eternity, and rightly reprove and rightly praise many things among the affairs of men." A little later he adds that they do this by the rules written in the book of that light which is called truth.

John Peter Olivi

From John Peter Olivi (pronounced "Oh-LEE-vee"), *Quaestiones de deo cognoscendo*, in *Petrus Johannis Olivi OFM: Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, Bernard Jansen, ed., vol. 3, (Quaracchi: College of St. Bonaventure, 1926), appendix pp. 512-513.

These things, because I do not know how to explain them fully, I propose only as with a warning. For, although the above position is in itself solemn and sane, yet it can be very dangerous to those who do not carefully pay attention to these things. And so I hold the aforesaid position in itself, because it is the position of most distinguished men. But the explanation of the above problems I leave to their wisdom.

#### Notes TO TEXT 18

1. That is, the divine ideas. 'Reason' (=ratio) often means "idea" or "concept".
2. Literally, "on the way".
3. Literally, "in the homeland". Compare n. 2. This pair of terms is frequent. The idea is that heaven is our real home, and this life is merely a kind of journey back to our homeland.
4. Aristotle, *De caelo*, I, 5, 271b8-13. This is a famous text, and is frequently cited. See, for example, the beginning of Aquinas' *On Being and Essence*.
5. "Infused knowledge" is a technical notion in mystical theology.
6. An allusion to I Cor. 13:12: "Now we know in part ...".



Text 19:

Duns Scotus on Illumination

The following text consists of Scotus' *Ordinatio*, I, d. 3, a. 4, in *Opera*, vol. 3, (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1954, pp. 123-172).

Finally, with respect to the business of knowability, I ask whether any certain and pure truth can be naturally known by the intellect of [someone] in this life without a special illumination from the uncreated light.

I argue not:

(1) [Augustine,] *On the Trinity*, IX, Ch. 6 or 151: "Let us look on inviolable truth, from which we may define how man's mind ought to be with respect to the everlasting reasons." And in the same place, Ch. 15<sup>2</sup>: "We are convinced by other rules, which remain above us, either to approve or disapprove, when[ever] we approve or disapprove of something, whether rightly or not rightly." And in the same place, Ch. 17<sup>3</sup>: ".. grasping with simple understanding an unspeakably beautiful art, above the pinnacle of the mind." And in the same [Book], Ch. 8 or 18<sup>4</sup>: "We observe the form in that truth from which all temporal things are made, and thence we have for ourselves a truthful conceptual knowledge, like a `word'."

(2) Again, in *Book XII*, Ch. 25: "It is the job of the more sublime reason to judge about these bodily things in accordance with the everlasting reasons."

(3) Again, in the same [Book] XII, Ch. 14 or 326: "There are unchangeable reasons not only for sensible things, put in a location," and so on. That [Augustine] is thinking there of the eternal reasons [that are] truly in \n0God is proved from the fact that in the same place he says that "It is the business of the few to arrive at them". Now if he were thinking about the first principles, it is not the business of the few to arrive at them, but of the many, since they are common to and known by all.

(4) Again, in *Book XIV*, Ch. 15 or 34,7 speaking about the unjust man who "rightly praises and blames many things in the behavior of men," [Augustine] says, "By what rules does he judge," and so on. And at the end, he says, "Where are those rules written except in the book of light?" The "book of light" is the divine intellect. Therefore, he means that in that light the unjust man sees the things that are to be justly done, and that he sees [this] in or through something impressed [on him] by that [book], as he says in the same place: "Hence every just law is transferred into a man's heart not by [a kind of] `migration', but rather by an impressing, as an image passes from the ring and into the wax, but does not leave the wax [there, since the wax was there to being with]." Therefore, we see in that light by which justice is impressed on a man's heart. But that is an uncreated light.

(5) Again, *Confessions XII*8: "If we both see [what is] true, you do not [do so] in me and I do not [do so] in you. Rather both [of us see it] in that which is above the mind, the unchangeable truth." But there are many other passages from Augustine, [found] in many places, to support this conclusion.

On the contrary:

(1) *Romans 19*: "From the creation of the world, the invisible things of God are observed, understood through the things that have been made." These "eternal reasons" are the "invisible

things of God"". Therefore, they are known from creatures. Therefore, before the vision of these [eternal reasons], a certain knowledge of creatures is had.

[Henry of Ghent's Theory]

One opinion on this question is such that general intentions have a natural order among themselves. Let us speak [here] about two [of them] that are relevant to our purpose, namely, about the intention of "being" (entis) and [that] of "true".

The first intention is of "being". This is proved by the statement in the Book of Causes, the fourth proposition: "The first of created things is being (esse)", and in the comment on the first proposition: "Being (esse) is of stronger adherence."

The reason is that "entity" is absolute, [whereas] "truth" indicates a relation to an exemplar. It follows from this that a being can be known under the aspect of entity even if not under the aspect of truth.

This conclusion is proved also from the side of the intellect. For a being can be conceived by an [act of] simple intelligence, and then that which is true is conceived. But the aspect of truth is not conceived except by an [act of] intelligence that composes and divides.<sup>10</sup> Simple intelligence precedes composition and division.

Now if a question arises about knowledge of a being, or of that which is true, it is said that the intellect, from its purely natural powers, can understand the "true" in this way. This is proved, because it is absurd "for there to be a nature that lacks its proper operation", according to [John] Damascene.<sup>11</sup> And this is all the more absurd in the case of a more perfect nature, according to the Philosopher, *On the Heavens and Earth*, II, [the passage] on stars.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, since the proper operation of the intellect is to understand the "true", it seems absurd for nature not to have granted to the intellect the things that suffice for this operation.

But if we are talking about the cognition of *truth* [as distinct from *what is true*], the answer given is that, just as there are two [kinds of] exemplar, the created and the uncreated (according to Plato in the *Timaeus*,<sup>13</sup> namely, the made exemplar and the non-made one, or the created and the non-created one - the "created exemplar" is the universal species caused by the thing, [while] the "uncreated exemplar" is the Idea in the divine mind), so [too] there are two [kinds of] conformity to an exemplar, and two [kinds of] truth.

One [kind] is the conformity to the created exemplar. In this sense Aristotle held that the truths of things are known through their conformity to the intelligible species. Augustine too seems to hold this in *On the Trinity*, VIII, Ch. 7,<sup>14</sup> where he says we have a general and a special knowledge of things, gathered from the senses, according to which we judge the truth of whatever happens, that it is such and such.

But that through such an acquired exemplar in us we should have an entirely certain and infallible knowledge of the truth of the thing - that seems altogether impossible. And this is proved with three reasons, according to them. The first is taken from the side of thing from which the exemplar is extracted, the second from the side of the subject in which it exists, and the third from the side of the exemplar in itself.

The first reason is this: The object from which the exemplar is abstracted is mutable. Therefore, it cannot be the cause of anything immutable. But someone's certain knowledge about something under the aspect of truth is had in him by means of an immutable aspect. Therefore, it is not had by means of such an exemplar.



This is said [to be] Augustine's reasoning in *On Eighty-Three Questions*, question 9,<sup>15</sup> where he says that "truth is not to be expected from sensibles" because "sensibles are continually being changed".

The second reason is this: The soul of itself is mutable and subject to error. Therefore, it cannot be corrected or regulated, so that it not fall into error, by anything more mutable than it [is]. But such a [created] exemplar in [the soul] is more mutable than the soul itself is. Therefore, that exemplar does not completely regulate the soul so that it does not fall into error.

This is said [to be] Augustine's reasoning in *On True Religion*<sup>16</sup>: "The light of all the arts," and so on.

The third reason [is this]: No one has a certain and infallible knowledge of truth unless he has the means of distinguishing the true from the apparently true. For if he cannot distinguish the true from the false or from the apparently true, he can doubt whether he is mistaken. But by means of the aforesaid created exemplar he is not able to distinguish the true from the apparently true. Therefore, and so on.

Proof of the minor [premise]: Such a species can represent itself as itself, or else, in another way, [it can represent] itself as the object, as happens in dreams. If it represents itself as the object, there is falsehood. If [it represents] itself as itself, there is truth. Therefore by means of such a species there is nothing had sufficient to distinguish when it represents itself as itself from [when it represents itself] as the object, and so nothing sufficient to distinguish the true from the false.

From these [arguments] it is concluded that if a man should happen to have certain knowledge and to know the infallible truth, this does not happen to him in virtue of [his] looking to an exemplar taken from the thing by the senses, no matter how much it is purified and made universal. Rather it is required that he look back to the uncreated exemplar.

The way [they] maintain [this works] is as follows: God does not have the aspect of an exemplar as "what is known", by looking to which the pure truth is known. For he is known [only] in [terms of some] general attribute. Rather, he is the "reason for knowing" as the bare exemplar and the proper reason of the created essence.

An example is given how he can be the "reason for knowing" and [yet] not known. For, just as a ray from the sun sometimes comes from its source at a reflected angle, as it were, [and] sometimes directly, [and] what is seen in the ray that comes in the first way, even though the sun is the "reason for seeing" it, nevertheless [the sun] is not seen in itself, but the sun is the "reason for knowing" what is seen in the second way, in such a way that it is seen too, therefore, when this uncreated light illumines the intellect directly, as it were, it is, as seen [itself], the "reason for seeing" other things in it. But it illumines our intellect in this life as it were at a reflected angle. And therefore to our intellect it is an unseen "reason for seeing".

Here then is how it is claimed [this uncreated exemplar] has a threefold relation to the act of seeing, namely the relation of (a) an actualizing light, (b) an altering species, and (c) a configuring stamp or exemplar. From this it is concluded further that a special influence is required [for seeing, and analogously for knowing]. For just as the [divine] essence is not naturally seen by us in itself, so [too] it is not seen naturally insofar as that essence is an exemplar with respect to some creature. [This is] in accordance with Augustine in [his] *On seeing God*. For it is in his power to be seen. "If he wishes, he is seen; if he does not wish, he is not seen."<sup>17</sup>

Finally, it is added that a perfect knowledge of the truth occurs when the two exemplary species concur in the mind, the one inhering [in the mind], namely the created one, and the other

descending into [it], namely the uncreated one. And in this way we arrive at the word<sup>18</sup> of perfect truth.

[CRITICISM OF HENRY OF GHENT'S THEORY, IN SIX ARTICLES]

Against this opinion, first I show that these [three] reasons are not reasons that form the basis for any true opinion. Neither [are they] in accordance with Augustine's meaning. Rather they favor the [skeptical] opinion of the Academics. Second, I show how the opinion of the Academics, which seems to be concluded on the basis of these arguments, is false. Third, I reply to these reasons insofar as they are not conclusive. Fourth, I argue against the conclusion of this opinion. Fifth, I resolve the question. [And] sixth, I show how these [three] reasons, insofar as they are Augustine's, imply Augustine view, not the one for which they are here introduced.

[ARTICLE 1]

First, these [three] reasons seem to imply the impossibility of [any] certain natural knowledge.

The first one [does so], because if the object is continually being changed, we cannot have any certitude about it under the aspect of the immutable. Indeed [such] a certitude could not be had in any light, because there is no certitude when the object is known otherwise than it is. Therefore, there is no certitude in knowing the mutable as immutable.

It is clear also that the antecedent of this [first] reason, namely that "sensibles are continually being changed" is false. For this is opinion attributed to Heraclitus in *Metaphysics* IV.<sup>19</sup>

Likewise [for the second reason]. If, because of the mutability of the exemplar that is in our soul, there could be no certitude, [then] since whatever is put in the soul as in a subject is mutable, even the very act of understanding, it follows that *nothing* in the soul corrects the soul so that it not fall into error.

Likewise, according to this opinion the created species inhering [in the soul] concurs with the species that descends into [it]. But when something that is inconsistent with certitude concurs, no certitude can be had. For just as from one [premise] about [what is] necessary and another about [what is] contingent no conclusion follows except about [what is contingent], so [too] from the certain and the uncertain, concurring in some cognition, no certain cognition follows.

The same thing is clear in the case of the third reason. For if the species abstracted from the thing concurs in every knowledge, and [if] it cannot be judged when it represents itself as itself and when [it represents] itself as the object, therefore, whatever else concurs, no certitude can be had through which the true might be distinguished from the apparently true.

Therefore, these [three] reasons seem to imply every *un*-certainty, and the opinion of the Academics.

I prove, however, that this conclusion is not in accordance with Augustine's meaning.

Augustine, in *Soliloquies*, II, [says], "Everyone grants without doubt that the proofs in the [various] disciplines are most true."<sup>20</sup> And Boethius in *On the Hebdomads* [says], "A common conception of the mind is one that everyone approves once it is heard."<sup>21</sup> And the Philosopher, in *Metaphysics*, II, [says], "The first principles are known to all, like the door to a house. For, just as the door is plain even though the things inside the house are hidden, so the first principles are known to all."<sup>22</sup>

On the basis of these three passages, it is argued as follows. Whatever pertains to all [the individuals] of some species, follows on the specific nature. Therefore, when anyone has an infallible certitude about first principles, and further, the form of the perfect syllogism is naturally evident to everyone (from the definition of the perfect syllogism [given] in *Prior Analytics*, I<sup>23</sup>), the knowledge of conclusions, however, is dependent only on the evidence of the principle and on the evidence of the syllogistic inference, therefore any demonstrable conclusion whatsoever can be known from self-evident principles.<sup>24</sup>

Second, it appears that Augustine granted the certitude of things that are known through sensuous experience. Thus he says in *On the Trinity*, XV, Ch. 12 or 32, "Far be it [from us] that we should doubt the things we have learned through the bodily senses. For from them we have learned about heaven and earth and the sea, and all the things that are in them."<sup>25</sup> If we have no doubt about the truth of those things, and we are not deceived, as is plain, therefore, we are certain about things known by way of sensation. For certitude is had when doubt and deception is excluded.

Third, it is plain that Augustine grants certitude in the case of our [own] acts, in the same place, XV, Ch. 12 or 31, "Whether he is sleeping or awake, he is alive, because both sleeping and seeing in dreams belong to the living."<sup>26</sup>

Now if you say that living is not a second act but a first one,<sup>27</sup> [the answer] follows in the same place, "If someone says 'I know that I know I am alive', he cannot be deceived," [and so] too for any number of iterated reflectings on the first known [fact in the series, that he is alive].<sup>28</sup> And in the same place [he says], "If someone says 'I want to be happy', how would it not be impudent to reply 'Maybe you are deceived'?", and there [too the same thing holds for iterated] reflectings to infinity, "I know I want [to be happy]," and so on.<sup>29</sup> In the same place, "If anyone says 'I do not want to make a mistake', will it not be true that he does not want to make a mistake?"<sup>30</sup> "Other things are found," he says, "that work against the Academics, who maintain that nothing is known by man."<sup>31</sup> In the same place, there follows [this remark] about the three books *Against the Academics*, "[For] one who understands those [books], the many arguments of [the Academics] will not move [him] at all against the perception of truth."<sup>32</sup>

Again, in the same place, Ch. 15 or 38, "The things that are so known that they can never be lost, and pertain to the nature of the soul itself - for example, the fact that we live, which we know ...."<sup>33</sup>

It is to be noted that there are four [kinds] of cognitions in which there is necessary certitude for us, namely, [cognition] (a) about absolutely knowable things, [that is, first principles and conclusions drawn from them]; (b) about things known through experience; (c) about our [own] acts; and (d) about things known by us "as of now" through sensation. (The first [kind] is plain. The third [kind] is concluded to be self-evident; otherwise, we could not judge what would be self-evident. The second and fourth [kinds] include an infinitude of self-evident [truths], to which others are joined from the several senses.) An example [of the first kind is], 'A triangle has three [angles equal to two right angles]', [of the second kind] 'The moon is eclipsed', [of the third kind] 'I am awake', [and of the fourth kind] 'That is white'. The first and third [kinds] need sensation only as an occasion, because there is absolute certitude even if all the senses were in error. The second and fourth [kinds] hold through the [rule] 'Whatever often comes about from something non-free, has that [non-free thing] as [its] natural cause through itself.' From this the point follows. Both in the second and in the fourth [kinds] sometimes a necessary proposition is added [as a further premise]. And so, put off [the discussion of] the passages from Augustine until the second article, which addresses the [heart of the] matter, or

which gives the solution [to questions about these four kinds of certain cognition, which the quotations from Augustine are meant to confirm].<sup>34</sup>

Thus the first point is clear.

[ARTICLE 2]

With respect to the second article, in order that the Academic's mistake may not find a foothold in [any] knowable things, we must see what is to be said in the case of [each of] the aforesaid three [kinds of] knowable [objects], namely, [first] for self-evident principles and for conclusions, secondly for things known through experience, and thirdly for our [own] acts<sup>35</sup>: whether an infallible certitude can be had naturally.

[FIRST PRINCIPLES]

Therefore, with respect to certitude about principles, I say this: The terms contained in self-evident principles have such an identity that plainly the one necessarily includes the other. And therefore when the intellect puts those terms together [in a statement of the principle], from the very fact that it apprehends them it has before itself the necessary cause of [that] act of composition's<sup>36</sup> conformity with the very terms of which it is an [act of] composition. And [it] also [has before itself] the *evident* cause of such a conformity. And therefore this conformity, the evident cause of which [the intellect] apprehends in the terms, is necessarily plain to it.<sup>37</sup> Therefore the apprehension of the terms, and their composition, cannot be in the intellect without having the conformity of that composition with [its] terms, just as there cannot be [one] white thing and [another] white thing without there being a similarity [that arises between them].

Now this conformity of the composition with its terms is the *truth* of that composition. Therefore, there cannot be a composition of such terms without being true. And so there cannot be a perception of that composition and a perception of the terms without there being a perception of the conformity of the composition to [its] terms, and so the perception of truth. For when the former are perceived, they evidently include the perception of this truth.

This reasoning is confirmed with an analogy by the Philosopher, in *Metaphysics* IV,<sup>38</sup> where he says that the opposite of a first principle cannot come into anyone's intellect, namely, of the [principle] 'It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be', because then contrary opinions would be together in the mind. This is in fact true about contrary opinions, that is about those that are formally inconsistent, because the opinion attributing being to something and the opinion attributing non-being to the same thing are formally inconsistent.

So in the present case I will argue [that there is] some inconsistency of intellections in the mind, even though not a formal one. For if the conception of "whole" and "part" is in the intellect, and their composition, [then] since these, as a necessary cause, include the conformity of the composition to [its] terms, [therefore] if the opinion that this composition is false should be in the intellect, there will be inconsistent conceptions - not formally, but rather the one conception will be there with the other, and yet will be a necessary cause of the conception opposite to it, which is impossible. For just as it is impossible for white and black to be together, because they are formally contraries, so it is impossible for white to be so necessarily together with that which is precisely the cause of black, that the former cannot be without the other without contradiction.

Once certitude is had about first principles, it is clear how it will be had about conclusions inferred from them because of the evidence of the form of the perfect syllogism,

since the certitude of the conclusion depends only on the certitude of the principles and on the evidentness of the inference.

But will the intellect not err in this knowledge of principles and conclusions if all the senses are deceived about the terms?

I reply, as far as this kind of knowledge is concerned, that the intellect does not have the senses as a cause but only as an occasion, because the intellect cannot have the knowledge of the simple [terms of a judgment] unless [they are] taken from the senses. Yet as soon as they are taken [from the senses], [the intellect] can put [those] simple [terms] together. And if there should be an evidently true complex [made up] of such simple [terms], the intellect will assent to that complex in virtue of itself and of the terms, not in virtue of the sense from which it takes those terms from outside.

For example, if the notion of "whole" and the notion of "greatness" are taken from sensation, and the intellect puts together the [proposition] 'Every whole is greater than its part', the intellect, in virtue of itself and of these terms, will assent without doubt to this complex - and not only because it saw the terms conjoined in reality, as it assents to this [proposition] 'Socrates is white' because it saw the terms united in reality.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, I say that [even] if all the sensations from which such terms are taken were false - or, which is more apt to cause deception, some sensations false and some sensations true - the intellect would not be deceived about such principles. For it would always have before itself the terms that would be the cause of truth. Hence, if the species of whiteness and of blackness were miraculously impressed in a dream on someone blind from birth, and they stayed there afterwards when he was awake, [his] intellect, abstracting from these [notions], would put together the [proposition] 'The white is not black'. And [his] intellect would not be deceived on this matter, even though the terms are taken from an errant sense. For the formal aspect of the terms, to which he has arrived, is the necessary cause of the truth of this negative [judgment].

#### *[THINGS KNOWN THROUGH EXPERIENCE]*

About the second [kind] of knowable [objects], namely, [those] known through experience, I say that even though experience is not had about all the singulars, but [only] about several of them, neither is it had always but [only] often, nevertheless one who is experienced [in some matter or other] knows infallibly that it is so both always and in all cases. [He knows] this through the following proposition dormant in the soul: 'Whatever comes about in most cases<sup>40</sup> by some non-free cause is a natural effect of that cause'. This proposition is known to the intellect even though its terms might be taken from an errant sense. For a non-free cause cannot non-freely produce "in most cases" an effect to the opposite of which it is [naturally] ordained, or to which it is not ordained by its form. But a chance cause is ordained to producing the opposite of a chance effect or not producing it. Therefore, nothing is a chance cause of an effect that is frequently produced by it, and so, if it is not free, it will be a natural cause. Now the effect [under discussion here] comes about from such a cause "in most cases". This is taken from experience. For by finding such a nature now with this kind of accident, now with that, [but in both cases associated with a given effect,] we have found that no matter how great the diversity of accidents might be, it was always from this nature that such an effect followed. Therefore, such an effect follows, not through some accidental feature of this nature, but through the very nature in itself.<sup>41</sup>

But further, it is to be noted that sometimes experience is had of a conclusion - for instance, the moon is frequently eclipsed - and then, assuming that the conclusion is so, the cause of such a conclusion is sought by the method of analysis. Sometimes too, from an experienced conclusion one arrives at principles known through [their] terms. In that case, on the basis of such a principle known from [its] terms, the conclusion [that was] formerly known only through experience is known [even] more certainly, namely, by the first kind of cognition, [discussed in the previous section of this article], because [it is known] as deduced from a self-evident principle.

For instance, this is self-evident, that an opaque object] interposed between a visible [object] and a light-source prevents the light from reaching the visible [object].<sup>42</sup> And if it is found by an analysis that the earth is such a body interposed between the sun and the moon, [then] it is known most certainly, through a *propter quid* demonstration (because through the cause),<sup>43</sup> [that the moon is eclipsed], and not only through experience, as this conclusion was known before the discovery of the principle.

But sometimes there is experience of a principle such that one cannot by the method of analysis find a further principle known from [its] terms [from which the original principle can be derived]. Rather we come to a halt with something true "in most cases", the extremes<sup>44</sup> of which are known by experience to be frequently united - for instance, that this herb of such and such a species is hot. Neither is there found any other prior middle [term] through which [this] attribute might be demonstrated *propter quid* of [this] subject. Rather we come to a halt with this as the primary [fact], known through experiences. In that case, even though the uncertainty and fallibility might be removed by means of the proposition 'An effect "in most cases" of some non-free cause is a natural effect of it', nevertheless this is the last [and lowest] degree of scientific knowledge. And perhaps in such a case no knowledge of the *actual* uniting of the extremes is had, but only of an *aptitude* [for such a uniting of the extremes]. For if the attribute is an absolute thing<sup>45</sup> other than the subject, it could without contradiction be separated from the subject, and [then] the experienced [person] would not have a knowledge that [the uniting] is [really] the case, but [only] that it is naturally apt to be.

[OUR OWN ACTS]

About the third [kind of] knowable [objects], namely our [own] acts, I say that there is certainty about many of them just as [there is] about first and self-evident [principles]. This is clear in Metaphysics, IV, where the Philosopher says about arguments claiming that all appearances are true, that those arguments ask "whether we are now awake or sleeping. But all such doubts come to the same thing. For they think it fitting that there be a reason for all things."<sup>46</sup> And he goes on, "They seek a reason for things of which there is no reason. For there is no demonstration of the principles of demonstration."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, according to him in that passage, it is self-evident that we are awake, like a principle of demonstration.

Neither is there any problem about the fact that this is contingent. For, as was said elsewhere,<sup>48</sup> there is an order among contingencies such that one is first and immediate. Otherwise there would be an infinite regress of contingencies, or else some contingency would follow from a necessary cause. Both of these are impossible.

And just as there is certitude about being awake, as about [something] self-evident, so too for many other acts that are in our power - for instance, that I understand, that I hear - and about others that are completed acts. For even though there is no certitude that I see a white thing placed outside me or in such an such a subject or at such and such a distance, because there can arise an illusion in the medium [between the object and the sense-organ] or [in] the [sense]-

organ, and in many other ways [too], nevertheless there *is* certitude that I see, even if there does arise an illusion in the organ. (This seems to be the greatest [kind of] illusion. For instance, when an act [of sensation] arises in the organ itself, not from [any] object present [to it], [but] such as naturally arises from a present object.) And so, supposing such an assumed case, if the power had its action [in it], there would truly be there what is called "vision", whether that is an action or a passivity or [a combination of] both.

But if an illusion occurred not in the organ proper but in something nearby that *seems* [to be] the organ - for example, if the illusion did not occur in the gathering of nerves, but rather there arose in the eye itself an impression of a species such as naturally arises in it - the [sense of] sight would still see. For that species would be seen, or what is naturally seen *in* it [would be seen], since it is far enough from the organ of sight, which is in the gathering of these nerves.<sup>49</sup> Thus it appears from Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XI, Ch. 2,<sup>50</sup> that after-images are seen remaining in the eye when the eyes are closed. And [it appears] from the Philosopher, *On Sense and the Sensed*,<sup>51</sup> that the flash is seen that is generated by violently raising the eye and is transmitted to the closed eyelid. These are true "visions", although not the most perfect ones, because here there are great enough distances between the species and the main organ of sight.

But<sup>52</sup> how is there certitude about things that come under acts of sensation [as their objects], for instance that something external is white or hot, just as it appears [to be]?

I reply: In the case of such an object of knowledge, either the same things appear opposite to distinct senses, or else [they do] not, but rather all the senses that know it have the same judgment about it.

If [it happens] in the second way, then there is certitude about the truth of the known [object], based on the senses and based on this prior proposition 'What comes about "in most cases" from something [else], has the latter as its natural cause if it is not a free cause'. Therefore, since from this [thing] present [to the senses], the transformation of the sense comes about "in most cases", it follows that the transformation (the generated species) is a natural effect of such a cause. And so, the external [object] will be white or hot, or something such as is naturally presented through the species generated by it "in most cases".

But if distinct senses have distinct judgments about something seen externally - for instance, sight says the stick is broken, part of which is in water and part is in air, [and] sight always says that the sun is of smaller size than it [really] is and that everything seen from afar is less than it [really] is - in such cases there is certitude [about] which is true and [about] which sense is in error. [This certitude is] based on a proposition latent in the soul, more certain than any judgment of sensation, as well as on the combined acts of several senses. Thus [there is] always some proposition [that] corrects the intellect about which of [our] acts of sensation is true and which false. In the case of this proposition the intellect does not depend on sensation as on a cause but as on an occasion.

For example, the intellect has this proposition latent [in it], 'Nothing harder is broken by contact with something soft that yields to it'. This is so self-evident on the basis of [its] terms that, even if they were taken from errant senses, the intellect can have no doubt about it. Indeed, the opposite includes a contradiction. But that the stick is harder than the water and the water yields to it - both senses say that, both sight and touch. It follows therefore: the stick is not broken as the [one] sense judges it [to be] broken. And so in the case of the broken stick, the intellect judges on the basis of [something] more certain than every act of sensation which sense is in error and which not.

Likewise, in the other case.<sup>53</sup> That a quantity, [when] applied [as a measure] to [another] quantity, is [nevertheless always] altogether equal to itself, this is known to the intellect no matter how much the knowledge of the terms is taken from an errant sense. But that the same quantity can be applied to the seen [object] when nearby and when far away - both sight and touch say that. Therefore, the quantity is equal, whether seen from nearby or from afar. Therefore, the [sense of] sight that says it is less is in error.

This conclusion is inferred from self-evident principles and from the acts of two senses that know it to be so "in most cases". And so, wherever reason judges a sense to be in error, it judges this not through some knowledge taken precisely from the senses as a cause, but through some knowledge occasioned by sensation (in which [knowledge] it is not deceived even if all the senses are deceived), and through some other knowledge taken from the sense or from the senses "in most cases". The latter they know to be true by means of the proposition frequently cited [above], namely "What comes about "in most cases", and so on.

### [ARTICLE 3]

As for the third article, on the basis of [all] these things [said above], we must reply to the three reasons [cited earlier in favor of Henry of Ghent's theory].

To the first [reason], [that is] to the one about change in the object. The antecedent is false. Neither is it Augustine's view. Rather it is the error of Heraclitus and his disciple Cratylus, who did not want to speak but [only] to move his finger, as it is said in *Metaphysics IV*.<sup>54</sup> [Furthermore, even] granting that the antecedent were true, the inference is invalid. For, according to Aristotle, certain cognition could still be had about the fact that everything is continually being moved.

Also, it does not follow "If the object is mutable, therefore what arises from it is not representative of anything under the aspect of the immutable". For it is not the *mutability* in the object [that is] the reason for [its] giving rise [to the representation]. Rather, it is the *nature* of the mutable object

itself. Therefore, what arises from [the object] represents the nature in itself. Therefore, if the nature *qua* nature has some immutable relation to [something] else, that other [thing] through its exemplar, as well as the nature itself through its exemplar, are represented as immutably united. And so through two exemplars, generated from two mutable [objects] not insofar as they are mutable but in so far as they are natures, knowledge of their immutable union can be had.

[But], even though it does not generate [a representation] insofar as it is mutable, nevertheless if it *is* mutable, how is its relation to [something] else immutable?

I reply [that] a relation is immutable in this sense, because the opposite relation cannot hold between the extremes [of the relation]. Neither can this one *not* hold, given the extremes. Nevertheless, through the destruction of [one] extreme or of [both] extremes, [the relation itself] is destroyed, [and so it is not immutable in that sense].

To the contrary: How can a proposition be affirmed [to be] necessary, if the identity of [its] extremes can be destroyed?

I reply: When a thing does not exist, it has no real identity. But in that case, if it exists in an intellect, there is an identity insofar as it is an object of the intellect, and [this identity] is necessary in a certain respect, because in such [mental] being the extremes cannot exist without that identity [between them]. But that [identity] can fail to exist, just as the extremes can fail to be understood.



Therefore, a proposition is "necessary" in our intellect [only] in a certain respect, because it cannot be changed into [something] false. But [a proposition] is not "absolutely necessary" except in the divine intellect, just as [its] extremes do not have their [mutual] identity with absolute necessity in any [kind of] "being" except in that "understood being" [in God's mind].<sup>55</sup>

It is plain also that a representative [that is] mutable in itself can represent something under the aspect of the immutable. For God's essence is represented to the intellect under the aspect of the immutable by something entirely mutable, whether that is a species or an act [of the mind]. This is clear from an analogy, because something can be represented under the aspect of the infinite by a finite [thing].

To the second [reason], I say that two kinds of mutability can be understood [to belong] to the soul: one from affirmation to negation, and conversely - for instance, from ignorance to knowledge or from non-intellection to intellection - and the other from contrary to contrary - for instance from correctness to deception or conversely.

Now with respect to any object whatever, the soul is changeable by the first [kind of] mutability. This kind of mutability is not removed from it by anything existing formally in [the soul]. But it is not changeable by the second [kind of] mutability except with respect to those complexes that do not have [their] evidence from their [very] terms. With respect to those, however, that *are* evident from their terms, [the intellect] cannot be changed by the second [kind of] mutability. For when these terms are apprehended, they are the necessary and evident cause of the conformity of the produced composition to those terms. Therefore, [even] if the soul is absolutely changeable from correctness to error, it does not follow that it cannot be made correct by something other than itself. It can at least be made correct for those objects for which the intellect cannot be in error.

As for the third [reason], I say that if it held any persuasiveness [at all], it would count more *against* the view that denies the intelligible species (which is the view of the one who holds this opinion here<sup>56</sup>). For the species that in dreams can represent a sensible as an object would be a phantasm, not an intelligible species.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, if the intellect used only a phantasm through which the object is presented to it, and not any intelligible species, it does not seem that it would be able to distinguish the true from the apparently true by means of something in which the object shines forth. But if we assume a species in the intellect, the reasoning is invalid. For the intellect cannot use that [species] as an object, because it cannot use it [at all] in sleep.<sup>58</sup>

Suppose you object: If the phantasm can represent itself as an object, therefore the intellect can be in error because of the error in the imaginative faculty - or at least it can be bound up so that it cannot operate - as is clear in the case of dreams and in madmen.

It can be said [in response to this] that, even if it is [so] bound up when there is such an error in the imaginative faculty, nevertheless the intellect is not in error, because in such a case it does not have any action [at all].

But then how will the intellect know or be certain when the imaginative faculty is not in error? Yet in order for the intellect not to be in error, it is required that [the imaginative faculty] not be in error.<sup>59</sup>

I reply: The following truth is latent in the intellect, that a power does not fall into error about its corresponding object, unless it is malfunctioning. And it is known to the intellect that the imaginative faculty does not malfunction while awake to such an extent that it makes the phantasm represent itself as the object. For it is self-evident to the intellect that he who understands is awake, so that the imaginative power is not bound up while awake as it is in dreams.<sup>60</sup>

But there is still an objection against the aforesaid certitude about [our own] acts, as follows: [Sometimes] it seems to me that I see or hear, when nevertheless I do not see or hear. Therefore, there is no certitude about this.

I reply: It is one thing, against [one who] denies some proposition, to show it to be true. It is [quite] another thing to show someone who grants it *how* it is true. For example, in *Metaphysics*, IV,<sup>61</sup>, [arguing] against [one who] denies the first principle [of demonstration], the Philosopher does not lead [him] into the absurdity that contrary opinions would exist together in the soul. They would grant that as a premise. Rather, he leads them into other absurdities that are more obvious to them, although not [more obvious] in themselves.

But to those who accept [that] first principle, he shows *how* it is known, because [it is known] in such a way that its opposite cannot come into the mind. He proves this because [if its opposite *could* come into the mind], then contrary opinions could exist together [in the mind]. This conclusion is more absurd there than the hypothesis [is].

So [too] here. If you grant that nothing is self-evident, I do not want to argue with you, because it is obvious you are just being captious and are not convinced [of what you say], as your own actions make plain (as the Philosopher objects in *Metaphysics*, IV<sup>62</sup>). For when you dream of being in the process of obtaining [some] nearby [object], and wake up afterwards, you do not pursue it as you would pursue [it] if you were that close to reaching it while awake.

But if you grant that some proposition is self-evident, and that a malfunctioning faculty can fall into error about any [proposition] whatever, as is plain in dreams, therefore in order for some [proposition] to be recognized as self-evident, one has to be able to recognize when the faculty is functioning properly and when not. Consequently, in the case of our [own] acts, knowledge can be had of when a faculty is so functioning that what appears to it to be self-evident is [indeed] self-evident.

As for the [actual] formulation of this quibbling [objection], I say then that just as it appears to a dreamer that he sees, so [too] the opposite of a non-speculative self-evident principle can appear to him. And yet it does not follow that that principle is not self-evident. So too it does not follow that it is not self-evident to the hearer that he hears. For a malfunctioning faculty can fall into error in either case, but not a properly functioning one. And when it is functioning properly and when not - that is self-evident. Otherwise no other [proposition] could be recognized to be self-evident. For it could not be recognized which [proposition] is self-evident, whether the one to which the intellect would give its assent while disposed in the one way, or [the one to which it would give its assent while disposed] in the other.

#### [ARTICLE 4]

As for the fourth article, I argue against the conclusion of [Henry of Ghent's] opinion as follows. I ask what he means by "certain and pure truth"? Either [he means] infallible truth, that is, without doubt and deception. And it was proved and explained above, in the second and the third article, that that can be had on the basis of our purely natural powers. Or else he means the truth that is an attribute of being (entis). In that case, since "being" can be naturally understood, therefore so [can] "true" insofar as [that] is its attribute. Therefore, "truth" too [can be understood], by a [process of] abstraction. For whatever form can be understood as in a subject can [also] be understood in itself and in abstraction from a subject.

Or else, in [yet] another way, he means by "truth" a conformity to an exemplar. If [it is conformity] to the created [exemplar], the point is clear. But if [it is conformity] to the uncreated exemplar, the conformity to that cannot be understood except in [terms of] that exemplar as

known, because a relation is not knowable unless [its] extreme is known. Therefore, what is claimed [by Henry's theory] is false, that the eternal exemplar is the reason for knowledge but not an [object] known.

Furthermore, secondly [I argue] as follows: An [act of] simple understanding can [come to] know by way of definition everything that it understands [at first only] confusedly. [It can do this] by seeking the definition of that known [object] by the method of analysis. This defining [kind of] knowledge seems to be the most perfect [kind] pertaining to simple understanding. But from this most perfect knowledge of the terms, the intellect can most perfectly understand the principle [based on those terms], and from the principle [it can understand] the conclusion. At that point intellectual knowledge seems to be complete, so that there does not seem [to be any] necessary knowledge of truth beyond the truths mentioned.

Again, [I argue] thirdly: Either the eternal light that you call necessary for having pure truth causes something naturally prior to the act [of knowledge], or else [it does] not. If so, therefore [what it produces] is either in the object or in the intellect. Not in the object, because the object, insofar as it has being in the intellect, does not have real being but only intentional [being]. Therefore, it is not capable of [having] any real accident.

If [what the eternal light produces] is in the intellect, therefore the uncreated light does not transform [the mind] to know the pure truth except by means of its effect. And so the common view seems to hold that knowledge [takes place] in the uncreated light just as fully as this opinion [of Henry's] does. For [the common view] holds that [knowledge] is seen in the agent intellect, which is an effect of the uncreated light - and a more perfect one than that accidental created light [of Henry's theory] would be.

But if [the eternal light] causes nothing naturally [prior] to the act [of knowing], therefore either the light alone causes the act, or else the light together with the intellect and the object [does]. If the light alone [does it], therefore the agent intellect has no operation [to perform] in the knowing of pure truth, which seems absurd. For this operation is the most noble [act] of our intellect. Therefore, the agent intellect, which is the most noble [factor] in the soul, concurs in some manner in this action.

And the absurdity that is inferred here is also concluded in another way on the basis of the aforesaid opinion. For, according to the one who holds this view, an agent that makes use of an instrument cannot perform an action that exceeds the action of [that] instrument. Therefore, since the power of the agent intellect cannot [reach] knowledge of pure truth, it follows that the uncreated light, using the agent intellect, cannot perform the action of this knowing of pure truth in such a way that the agent intellect would play there the role of an instrument.

If you say that the uncreated light causes this pure truth<sup>63</sup> together with the intellect and the object, that is [just] the common theory, which holds that the eternal light, as a remote cause, causes every certain truth. Therefore, either this view [of Henry's] will be absurd or else it will not disagree with the common view.

#### [ARTICLE 5]

Therefore, to the question [asked at the beginning], I say that on account of Augustine's words, one must grant that infallible truths are seen in the eternal rules, where the word 'in' can be taken [to mean] "in an object". And this [can be understood] in four ways: either (a) as in a proximate object, or (b) in [something that] contains the proximate object, or (c) as in that *in virtue of which* the proximate object moves [the intellect], or else (d) in a remote object.

To the first way of understanding ['in'], I say that all intelligibles have intelligible "being" from an act of the divine intellect. And in them, all the truths about them shine forth, so that the intellect that understands them, and in virtue of them understands necessary truths about them, sees the necessary truths "in" them as in objects. Now these [intelligibles], insofar as they are secondary objects of the divine intellect, are [themselves] truths, because they conform to their exemplar, that is to the divine intellect. And they are a "light", because they are manifest. They are also "immutable" there, and "necessary". But they are "eternal" [only] in a certain respect, because eternity is a condition of [something] that exists, and they do not have existence except in a certain respect. In this way, therefore, we can be said to see "in" the eternal light in the first [sense], that is, in a secondary object of the divine intellect that is "truth" and an "eternal light" in the manner explained.

The second way [of taking the word 'in'] is likewise plain, because the divine intellect contains these truths, as it were [like] a book, as the passage of Augustine says, *On the Trinity*, XIV, Ch. 15,<sup>64</sup> that "these rules are written in the book of eternal light", that is, in the divine intellect insofar as it contains these truths. And even though that book is not seen, nevertheless the truths that are first written in that book are seen. And to that extent our intellect can be said to see the truths in the eternal light, that is, in that book as in what contains the object.

The one<sup>65</sup> of these ways [of taking 'in'] seems to be Augustine's meaning in *On the Trinity*, XII, Ch. 14,<sup>66</sup> [where he says] that "the notion of a square body remains incorruptible and immutable", and so on. But it would not remain such unless insofar as it is a secondary object of the divine intellect.

But there is a doubt about the first way [of interpreting 'in']. For if we do not see these truths as they are in the divine intellect (because we do not see the divine intellect), how will we be said to see "in" the uncreated light things that have being in the uncreated light as in a knowing intellect, [merely] because we see "in" a light [that is] eternal [only] "in a certain respect"?

The third way [of taking 'in'] answers this. It is as follows. Those things, insofar as they are a secondary object of the divine intellect, do not have being except in a certain respect. But there is no true [and] real operation that pertains to something [that is] only a being in a certain respect in virtue of itself. Rather, if in some way it does pertain to it, this has to be by virtue of something to which being pertains absolutely. Therefore, it does not precisely pertain to these secondary objects to move the intellect [to knowledge], unless by virtue of the being of the divine intellect, which is being in the absolute sense and [is that] through which these things have being in a certain respect. In this way, therefore, we see "in" a light [that is] eternal [only] in a certain respect, as in a proximate *object*. But, according to [this] third interpretation, we see "in" the uncreated eternal light as in a proximate *cause* in virtue of which the proximate object moves [the intellect to knowledge].

On this account, it can also be said, as far as this third interpretation is concerned, that we see "in" the eternal light as in the cause of the object in itself. For the divine intellect, by an act of its own, produces these [intelligibles] in intelligible being, and by an act of its own it gives to one object one kind of being, and to another [object] another. As a consequence, it gives them such and such an aspect as an object. Through these aspects they later on move the intellect to certain knowledge.

It is apparent from an analogy that it could [quite] properly be said that our intellect sees "in" the light because the light is the cause of the object. For, [analogously,] we are properly said to understand "in" the light of the agent intellect, even though that light is nothing but an active

cause, one that *makes* the object in an act of its own, or in virtue of which the object moves [the intellect to knowledge], or both.

Therefore, this twofold causality of the divine intellect, which is an uncreated light - namely, [the causality] that produces the secondary objects in intelligible being, and [the causality] which is that in virtue of which the produced secondary objects also actually move the intellect [to knowledge] - can as it were make up a third alternative [way of taking this third interpretation of 'in'], on account of which we are truly said to see "in" the eternal light.

Suppose it is objected against these two kinds [of causality] making up the third alternative [way of taking] the "causal" [reading of 'in'], on the grounds that in that case it seems we would be said to see more in God who *wills*, or in God insofar as he is will, than in God insofar as he is light. For the divine will is the immediate principle of every act aimed at something external [to God].

I reply: The divine intellect, insofar as it is in some way prior to the act of the divine will, produces these objects in intelligible being. Thus, with respect to these [objects] it seems to be a merely natural cause. For God is not a free cause with respect to anything except what in some way presupposes a will, in the sense of an *act* of will, prior to itself. And, just as the intellect, as prior to the act of will, produces the objects in intelligible being, so [too], as a prior cause, it seems to cooperate with those intelligibles [in producing] their natural effect - namely that, when apprehended and put together [in a judgment], they cause the conformity of that apprehension to themselves. Therefore, it seems to involve a contradiction for the intellect to form some such a composition and [yet] for the composition not to conform to the terms, even though it is possible for those terms not to be put together. For even though God voluntarily acts together [with the intellect] in order that the intellect put the terms together or not put them together, nevertheless, when it *has* put them together, the fact that the composition conforms to its terms seems to follow necessarily from the meaning of the terms that they have in God's intellect, which naturally causes those terms in intelligible being.

From this it is apparent how a special illumination is not necessary for seeing in the eternal rules. For Augustine does not claim that [anything] is seen in them except truths that are necessary in virtue of their terms. In such cases there is the strongest natural [relation], both of the remote and of the proximate cause, to the effect - for instance, both between the divine intellect and the objects that move [the intellect to knowledge], and between those objects and the truth of the complex [formed] from them. Also, even though there is not so great a natural [relation] to perceiving this truth that the opposite, [namely, not perceiving it,] includes a contradiction, nevertheless there is [some such] natural [relation] on the part of the proximate cause, with the help of the remote cause. For when the terms are apprehended and put together, they naturally cause the conformity of the composition to the term to be evident.

And if it is maintained that God acts, together with the terms, [to bring about] this effect by [only] a general influence, but not by a natural necessity, [I reply]: Whether it is a general influence or (which is the stronger [assumption]) a natural necessity of influencing the terms [to bring about] this effect, it is clear that a special illumination is not required.

The assumption about Augustine's meaning<sup>67</sup> is plain from his own [words], *On the Trinity*, IV, Ch. 35 (he is talking about the philosophers)<sup>68</sup>: "Some of them were able to raise the pinnacle of [their] mind above every creature and to reach, even if only in the smallest part, the light of unchangeable truth. They laugh at many Christians, living only from faith, who cannot do [this]." He means, therefore, that Christians do not see in the eternal rules the things they believe, but the philosophers see many necessary things in them.

[He says] the same thing also in *On the Trinity*, IX, Ch. 6,<sup>69</sup> "Not a mind like that of just any man", and so on, as if he were to say contingent things are not seen there, but rather necessary ones.

And in the same [work], IX, Ch. 36,<sup>70</sup> he argues against those philosophers, "Are they, because they argue most truly that all temporal things come about in the eternal reasons, therefore able to observe in these reasons how many kinds of animals there are, [and] how many seeds there were of each kind at the outset?", and so on. "Did they not inquire after these things, not through that unchangeable science, but through the history of places and times, and [did they not] believe the things experienced and written down by others?" Therefore, he understands that through the eternal rules those contingencies are not known that are known only through the senses or believed through reports. And yet a special illumination is needed more in matters of belief than in necessary objects of knowledge. Indeed, in the latter case most of all a special illumination is dispensable; a general one by itself suffices.

To the contrary, why then does Augustine say in *On the Trinity*, XII, Ch. 14,<sup>71</sup> "It belongs only to the few to arrive with the pinnacle of the mind at the intelligible reasons"? And in *On Eighty-Three Questions*, question 46,<sup>72</sup> "None but the pure souls reach them"?

I reply: This "purity" should not be understood as [purity] from vices, because in *On the Trinity*, XIV, Ch. 15,<sup>73</sup> he says that the unjust [person] sees in the eternal rules what just [act] is to be done. And in Book IV, the chapter cited above,<sup>74</sup> he says that the philosophers see the truth in the eternal rules without faith. And in the same question<sup>75</sup> he says that no one can be wise (in the same way as they would grant, say, that Plato is wise) without a knowledge of the Ideas. Rather this "purity" should be understood [as the purity that results] by raising the intellect to the consideration of the truths as they shine forth in themselves, not only as they shine forth in the phantasm.

Here we have to consider that the external sensible thing causes in the imaginative faculty a phantasm, confused and [only] accidentally "one", namely, [a phantasm] that represents the thing according to [its] size, according to [its] shape and color and other sensible accidents. And just as the phantasm represents only confusedly and accidentally, so [too] many people perceive only an accidental being.<sup>76</sup> But the first truths are ["first"] precisely because of the proper meaning of their terms insofar as those terms are abstracted from everything accidental [that is] conjoined to them. For the proposition 'Every whole is greater than its part' is not a primary truth insofar as "whole" is in a stone or in wood but rather insofar as "whole" is abstracted from all the things to which it is accidentally conjoined. Thus the intellect that never understands a totality except in an accidental concept - for instance, in the totality of the stone or of the wood - never understands the pure truth of this principle. For it never understands the precise meaning of the term, which [meaning] is responsible for [the principle's] truth.

Therefore, it belongs [only] to the few to reach the eternal reasons, because it belongs only to the few to have "essential" (*per se*) concepts, [whereas] it belongs to the many to have such "accidental" (*per accidens*) concepts. But these few are not said to be distinguished from the others on account of a special illumination but rather because of [their] better natural [powers] - because they have an intellect that abstracts more and is more penetrating - or because of [their] broader investigation, through which [one] equally talented [person] arrives at a knowledge of quiddities that another [person], who does not investigate, does not know.

This is the way that [passage] of Augustine is meant in *On the Trinity*, IX, Ch. 6,<sup>77</sup> about the observer on the mountain who sees the fog below and the pure light above. For he who always understands only accidental concepts, in the way that phantasms represent such objects as

if they were accidental beings, is, as it were, in a valley, surrounded by fog. But he who separates the quiddities [of things] by understanding them exactly, in an "essential" concept, even though they shine forth in the phantasm along with many other accidents joined to them, will have the phantasm, like a fog, below [him]. He is on a "mountain" insofar as he knows that truth and sees [what is] true above [him] as that greater truth in virtue of the uncreated intellect, which is the eternal light.

According to the last way [of interpreting the word 'in' in the phrase 'in the light'], it can be granted that the pure truths are known "in" the eternal light as in a *remote* object of knowledge. For the uncreated light is the first principle of beings [as objects of] theoretical speculation, and the last goal of practical things. Thus from it the first principles are taken, both theoretical and practical. So the knowledge of all things, both of theoretical and of practical matters, through principles taken from the eternal light insofar as it is known, is more perfect and purer than knowledge taken from principles [found] in [the object's] own genus. In this sense the knowledge of all things pertains to the theologian, as was said in the question about the subject of theology,<sup>78</sup> and is more exalted than any other [kind of knowledge].

In this sense, pure truth is said to be known. For through that [remote object of knowledge] there is known what is only truth, not having anything of non-truth mixed in. For [it is known] through the first being, from which, when it is known, the principles of this [kind of knowing] are taken. Anything else, however, from which principles are taken for knowing [a thing] in [its] genus is [only] deficiently true.

In this way, only God knows all things in a pure manner only. For, as was said in the question on the subject of theology,<sup>79</sup> only he knows all things precisely through their essence. Every other intellect can be moved by another object to know some truth in virtue of him.<sup>80</sup>

For to know that a triangle has three [angles equal to two right angles] insofar as this is a certain participation in God and has a status in the universe such that, as it were, it expresses more perfectly God's perfection, this is to know that a triangle has three [angles equal to two right angles] in a more noble manner than [to know it] through the notion of a triangle. So too, to know that one ought to live temperately in order to achieve final blessedness, which occurs by attaining God's essence in itself, is to know this more perfectly than [to know it] through some principle in the genus of "behavior" - for instance, through the fact that one ought to live honorably.

In this sense Augustine speaks of the uncreated light as known, *On the Trinity*, XV, Ch. 27 or 82,<sup>81</sup> where, speaking to himself, he says, "You have seen many true things, and those that you have discerned by this light through which you have seen, when it shines on you. Lift your eyes up to that light and fasten them on it if you can. For so you shall see how the birth of the Word of God differs from the procession of the Gift of God." And a little later on,<sup>82</sup> [he says], "These and other things this light has shown to your interior eyes. Therefore, why can you not see it with the Opinnacle [of your mind] fixed, unless indeed [because of your own] feebleness?", and so on.

From the things said [above], it is clear [what to say] about all the passages of Augustine [cited above, at the beginning,] on the negative side [of this question]. The passages of Augustine that deal with this matter can be interpreted according to one or another of the aforesaid way of "seeing in".

As for the sixth article, we have to see how the three arguments made in support of the first opinion<sup>83</sup> do imply something true insofar as they are taken from Augustine, even though they do not imply the false conclusion for which they are introduced.

Here we have to know . . . .<sup>84</sup>

## NOTES TO TEXT 19

1. Augustine, *De trinitate*, IX, c. 6, n. 9 (PL 42, col. 966). I am not yet sure about the significance of Scotus' odd way of citing his source here ("Ch. 6 or 15"). Generally this sort of thing reflects alternative ways of dividing up the work.

2. *Ibid.*, n. 10 (PL 42, col. 966).

3. *Ibid.*, n. 11 (PL 42, col. 967).

4. *ibid.*, c. 7, n. 12 (PL 42, col. 967).

5. *Ibid.*, XII, c. 2, n. 2 (PL 42, col. 999).

6. *Ibid.*, c. 14, n. 23 (PL 42, col. 1010).

7. *Ibid.*, XIV, c. 15, n. 21 (PL 42, 1052).

8. Augustine, *Confessions*, XII, c. 25, n. 35 (PL 32, col. 840).

9. Romans 1:20.

10. That is, an act of judgment, as opposed to mere concept-formation.

11. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, III, c. 15, n. 234 (PG 94, cols. 1055 and 1058).

12. Aristotle, *De caelo*, II, 8, 290a29-31.

13. Plato, *Timaeus*, 27d-28d.

14. Augustine, *De trinitate*, VIII, c. 4, n. 7 (PL 42, col. 952).

15. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 9 (PL 40, col. 13).

16. Augustine, *De vera religione*, c. 30, n. 56 (PL 34, col. 147).

17. Augustine, *Epistola 147, ad Paulinum, De videndo deum*, c. 6 n. 18 (PL 33, col. 603).

18. That is, a completed act of knowing. The term 'mental word' is frequently used in connection with the theory of concept-formation. It is meant to suggest both the relation of thought to outward speech and also the Augustinian theory of the Trinity, in which the second person, as a kind of intellectual product, is called "the Word". See also John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word," etc.

19. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 5, 1010a7-11.

20. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, c. 8, n. 15 (PL 32, 877).

21. See Text \s2, lines 18-19, above.

22. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II, 1, 993b4-5.

23. Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, I, 1, 24b22-24.

24. "Self-evident" = *per se nota*. Literally, "known through themselves". I make no apologies for the syntax of this complicated conditional. That's the way Scotus wrote it.

25. See the beginning of the penultimate paragraph in passage (2), Text \s3, above.

26. See the end of paragraph 3 in passage (2) of Text \s3 above.

27. First act is the nature of a thing. A second act is an operation that is based on a nature. For example, in Aristotle's famous definition the soul is defined thus: "Therefore the soul is the first act of a natural body potentially having life." (*De anima*, II, 412a27-28)

28. See paragraph 6 in passage (2) of Text \s3 above. The "quotation" is only a paraphrase. The point of the argument here is that, even if living is part of the nature or first act



of a human being, knowing is an operation and so a second act. By iterating the word 'know', the example is changed from one of knowing a first act to one of knowing a second act.

29. *Ibid.*, paragraph 7.

30. *Ibid.*, paragraph 8.

31. *Ibid.*, paragraph 9.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Augustine, *De trinitate*, XV, c. 15, n. 25 (PL 42, col. 1078).

34. This entire paragraph is a later annotation added in Scotus' own handwriting. There are several such additions in the manuscript, all duly recorded in the Latin critical edition. I have translated only those that seem especially pertinent or interesting, and have flagged them whenever I have done so.

35. This does not refer to the discussion in the immediately preceding paragraph, which is taken from a later addition by Scotus, and lists four kinds of certitude, not three. Rather it refers to the three kinds of certitude supported by the series of quotations from Augustine, above.

36. The word 'composition' in this passage means either the mind's *act* of putting terms together to form a judgment stating the principle, or else the *product* of that act, the actual judgment or statement of the principle.

37. The words 'And [it] also .... plain to it' (lines 293-296) are a later annotation in Scotus' own hand.

38. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 3, 1005b29-32.

39. The point is that the intellect is not just assenting to a matter of fact, but to a lawlike connection.

40. "In most cases" = *ut in pluribus*. The phrase is a kind of technical expression in contexts like this.

41. Note the implication. Scotus is in effect saying that Mill's "Method of Agreement" is self-evident.

42. Literally, "prevents the multiplication of the light to such a visible [object]". I don't want to get into the details of mediaeval optical theory. I don't know enough about it.

43. On the difference between demonstration *quia* ("of the fact") and demonstration *propter quid* ("of the reasoned fact"), see Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I, 13.

44. The "extremes" of a proposition are its subject and predicate.

45. "Absolute" things are to be contrasted with "relative" or "respective" things, such as relations.

46. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 6, 1011a3-9.

47. *Ibid.*, 1011a12-13.

48. In the Prologue to the *Ordinatio*, n. 169, Vatican ed., vol. I, p. 113.

49. The point here is that, in order to sense, there must be some separation between the sense-organ and its object. If the illusion arises in the organ itself, then although there is really a sensory activity taking place, there is nothing *sensed* - not even something *illusory*. But if the illusion arises somewhere else, then not only is there sensory activity, there is also something sensed, although it is illusory. The difference is roughly the difference between an out and out hallucination, on the one hand, and seeing the apparently bent oar in the water, on the other.

50. Augustine, *De trinitate*, XI, c. 2, n. 4 (PL 42, col. 987).

51. Aristotle, *De sensu et sensibilibus*, 2, 437a23-26.

52. This passage addresses the fourth kind of certain cognition mentioned in Scotus' annotation translated above, things known by us "as of now" through sensation. This was not

discussed in the original list of quotations from Augustine. The fact that Scotus treats it here was perhaps the reason for his adding the earlier annotation.

53. That is, with respect to sight's judging distant objects to be smaller than they really are.

54. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 5, 1010a7-15.

55. The passage "[But] even though ... [in God's mind]" (lines 547-568) is a later annotation in Scotus' own hand.

56. The words in parenthesis are an annotation in Scotus' own hand. The reference is to Henry of Ghent.

57. In an act of intellection, the intelligible species is not an object of thought. Rather it is that representation in the mind *through* which the object is presented. A phantasm or "image", however, *is* an object of thought, even if it represents some further object of thought as well. Henry of Ghent rejected the theory of intelligible species and appealed to phantasms or images instead.

58. The point is that, on Henry's theory, there would be no way to distinguish infallibly between the phantasm or image and what it represents. Since both are objects of thought, the one may sometimes be confused with the other, as for instance in dreams. Scotus' point is that this cannot happen if we substitute a theory of intelligible species for phantasms, because the intelligible species in a given act of intellection is never an object of thought presented in that act.

59. If the imaginative faculty is presenting mere phantasms as though they were real objects, the intellect, which judges about these matters, might very well be fooled.

60. But earlier (lines 606-607) he said it was the intellect, not the imaginative power, that was bound up in dreams. That would make better sense here too. Otherwise the argument, which is difficult enough in any case, would be a blatant *non sequitur*. But the edition has it the way I have translated it.

61. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 3, 1005a29-1006a18.

62. *Ibid.*, IV, 5, 1010b3-11.

63. Rather, the knowledge of that pure truth.

64. Augustine, *De trinitate*, XIV, c. 15, n. 21 (PL 42, col. 1052).

65. The first.

66. *Ibid.*, XII, c. 14, n. 23 (PL 42, col. 1011).

67. Lines 833-835 above.

68. *Ibid.*, IV, c. 15, n. 20 (PL 42, cols. 901-902).

69. *Ibid.*, IX, c. 6, n. 9 (PL 42, col. 966).

70. *Ibid.*, IX, c. 6, n. 9 (PL 42, col. 966).

71. *Ibid.*, XII, c. 14, n. 23 (PL 42, 1010).

72. See passage (7) in Text \s3 above.

73. Augustine, *De trinitate*, XIV, c. 15, n. 21 (PL 42, col. 1052).

74. *Ibid.*, IV, c. 15, n. 20 (PL 42, cols. 901-902).

75. Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 46, n. 1 (PL 40, col. 29).

76. That is, not a being in one of the nine categories of accident, but rather an incidental ("accidental") combination of factors, such as "musical man", "pale musician". See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V, 7, 1017a8-23.

77. Augustine, *De trinitate*, IX, c. 6, n. 11 (PL 42, col. 966).

78. John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, prol. n. 206, Vatican ed., vol. 1, pp. 138-139.

79. *Ibid.*

80. The words from "as was said", in two paragraphs above, to "virtue of him", in this paragraph (lines 937-948), are a later annotation in Scotus' own hand.

81. Augustine, *De trinitate*, XV, c. 27, n. 50 (PL 42, col. 1097).

82. *Ibid.*

83. That is, Henry of Ghent's.

84. Scotus' text ends here, incomplete.



Text 20:

Avicenna's "Suspended Man" Hypothesis

The translation below is taken from the Latin edition by S. van Riet, ed., *Avicenna Latinus: Liber de anima seu sextus De naturalibus*, 2 vols., (vol. 1, Louvain: E. Peeters, and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972; vol. 2: Louvain: Editions orientalistes, and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), I, 1, vol. 1, pp. 36-37 lines 49-68 (=Venice edition of 1508, fol. 2rb, marginal letter X):

We shall say, therefore, that someone from among us ought to be thought of as if he were created all at once and full grown, but with his eyes covered so that he would not see external things. And he would be so created as if he were moving in the air - or in a void, in such a way that the density of the air would not touch him that he might sense it. And his limbs would be, as it were, spread out in such a way that they would not come together or touch one another.

Now let him see if he affirms the being of his essence. For he will have no doubt about affirming that he exists. Yet he will not affirm outward things about his limbs, or interior things about what is inside him, neither his mind nor his brain, nor anything else outside him. But he, whose length or breadth or depth he will not affirm, will affirm that he exists. If, however, it were possible for him at that time to imagine a hand or another limb, still he would not imagine it to be a part of him, or necessary to his essence.

Now you know that what is affirmed is other than what is not affirmed, and what is granted is other than what is not granted. And, because the essence that he affirms to exist is proper to him, insofar as he is that very essence, and is something besides his body and his limbs, which he does not affirm, therefore, once he has been awakened, he has a pathway to proceed in full wakefulness to knowing that the being of his soul is other than the being of his body. Indeed, he does not need the body in order to know the soul and perceive it. But if he is a dullard, he will have to turn to that way [and rely on the body to gain a knowledge of the soul].

Text 21:

Some Passages from Avicenna on Common Nature

The first two passages below are translated from the Latin text in Avicenna, Opera, Dominic Gundissalinus, tr., (Venice: Bonetus Locatellus for Octavianus Scotus, 1508). Unless there is a modern critical edition, this 1508 edition is the one usually cited. The last three passages are translated from the Latin text in Avicenna Latinus: Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina, S. Van Riet, ed., 2 vols., (Louvain: E. Peeters, and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977, 1980). For these last three passages, I have also given the folio reference to the 1508 edition.

(1) Logica, III, fol. 12ra:

Animal is in itself a certain something, and it is the same whether it is sensible or is understood in the soul. But in itself it is neither universal nor is it singular. For if it were universal in itself, so that animality from the fact that it is animality would be universal, it would be necessary that no animal be singular. Rather, every animal would be universal. If, on the other hand, animal from the fact that it is animal were singular, it would be impossible for there to be more than one singular, namely, the very singular to which animality is due. And it would be impossible for another singular to be an animal.

(2) Ibid.:

Now animal in itself is a certain something, understood in the mind that it be animal. And according as it is understood to be animal, it is nothing but animal only. If, on the other hand, beyond this it is understood to be universal or singular, or anything else, then beyond this, namely, that which is animal, there is understood a certain something that happens to animality.

(3) Metaphysica V, 1, Van Riet, ed., II, p. 228 lines 31-36; 1508 ed., fol. 86va:

Horsehood, to be sure, has a definition that does not demand universality. Rather it is that to which universality happens. Hence horsehood itself is nothing but horsehood only. For in itself it is neither many nor one, neither is it existent in these sensibles nor in the soul, neither is it any of these things potentially or actually in such a way that this is contained under the definition of horsehood. Rather [in itself it consists] of what is horsehood only.

(4) Ibid., Van Riet, ed., II, p. 231 lines 74-81; 1508 ed., fol. 86vb: Hence, if someone should ask whether the humanity that is in Plato, insofar as it is humanity, is other than that which is in Socrates, and we say no, as we must, we will not have to agree with him when he says, "Therefore, this one and that one are the same in number", because the negation was absolute and we understood in it that that humanity, insofar as it is humanity, is humanity only. But insofar as it is other than the humanity that is in Socrates, that is something extraneous. On the other hand, he did not ask about humanity except insofar as it is humanity.

(5) Ibid., Van Riet ed., II, p. 233 lines 36 - p. 234 line 44; 1508 ed., fol. 87ra:

Now animal can be considered by itself, although it is together with what is other than it. For its essence is together with what is other than itself. Therefore, its essence belongs to it by itself, but its being together with what is other than it is something that happens to it, or something that accompanies its nature, like *this* animality, or humanity. Therefore, this

consideration, ["insofar as it is animal",] precedes in being both the animal that is this individual because of its accidents, and also the universal that is in these sensibles and is intelligible, as the simple precedes the composite, and as a part the whole. For from this being there is neither genus nor species nor individual, neither one nor many. Rather from this being there is animal only, and man only.

Text 22:

John Duns Scotus on Individuation: Some Passages

See also Hyman and Walsh, pp. 624-631. The passages below supplement the translations there. These passages are taken from Scotus' Oxford lectures on the Sentences of Peter Lombard (= the *Opus Oxoniense*), II, d. 3, qq. 1-6, in John Duns Scotus, *Opera omnia*, vol. 6, part 1, Luke Wadding, ed., (Lyon: 1639; reprinted 1968 by Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim). Note: Whenever possible, always use the new critical edition of Scotus, being published at the Vatican by the so called "Scotus Commission". This critical edition is not yet complete, however, so that for other works of Scotus one must rely on earlier editions. The standard earlier edition is the 1639 edition by Luke Wadding, in twelve volumes. Basically this same edition was reprinted (with altogether different pagination) in twenty-four volumes, Paris: Viv\64-es, 1891-1895. This edition omits Wadding's indices. Both these early editions include a *great* number of spurious and dubious works attributed to Scotus, and so should be used only with caution.

A complete translation of the six questions from which the passages below are taken may be found in John Duns Scotus, *Six Questions on Individuation from the Oxford Lectures*, Book II, Distinction 3, Allan Wolter, tr., available through the Translation Clearing House, Department of Philosophy, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, 74078. (Catalogue reference number S-20-25w.)

(1) In II Sent. (Op. Ox.), d. 3, q. 2, p. 373: Whether a material substance is de se individual through something intrinsic and positive?

No, because 'one' does not indicate anything but the privation of division in itself and the privation of identity with another. Therefore, since singularity or individuation indicates only this twofold negation, one need not seek its positive cause. Rather, negation is sufficient . . .

Here it is said [by Henry of Ghent] that [a material substance] is not individuated through something positive, because that would be either matter or form or something consequent on matter or form - and this [latter] is either [something] absolute or [something] relative. [It is not individuated] through matter, as will be shown later. Nor through form, because [then] I will ask about the form: "Through what is it individuated?" For [it is] not [individuated] through itself, just as the nature [is not individuated through itself] either. We spoke about this earlier.<sup>1</sup> Hence, I will ask, "Through what [is it individuated]?", and then [I will ask the same question] of that other [thing that answers this question], and so on to infinity. Neither can [what individuates a material substance] be given as something consequent [on matter and form] and absolute, because I shall ask [the same question] about it in the same way. Nor [is what individuates a material substance something consequent on matter and form and] relative, because a relation presupposes a foundation, and so does not individuate it. Therefore, a negation is the reason [for the individuation of a material substance]. Hence Henry [of Ghent] maintains that [the principle of individuation in a material substance] is a twofold negation. See his *Quodlibet* V, q. 8.

(2) Ibid., p. 374: Therefore, the meaning of the question in this case is "What is it in this stone, through which, as through a proximate foundation, it is simply inconsistent with [the stone] to be divided into several items each of which is [the stone] itself, as such a division is proper to a universal whole [divided] into its subjective parts?"

(3) *Ibid.*: Likewise, I ask how the negation comes to be a "this", since it has the same configuration in this as in that. For just as in Socrates there is a twofold negation, opposite to the [twofold negation] in Plato, so in Plato there is a negation that has a dual configuration [too]. Therefore, how does Socrates come to be singular by *this* proper and determinate singularity, and not by the singularity of Plato? One cannot say, without saying how the negation comes to be *this* negation. And this cannot be except through something positive.

(4) *Ibid.*, q. 3, p. 379: Third, I ask without [the usual preliminary] arguments,<sup>2</sup> whether a material substance is individual, or [is] the reason for individuating something else, through actual existence.

It is said that it is, because, from *Metaphysics* 7, act determines and distinguishes. Therefore, the last distinction is [made] by the last act. Now the last act in the case of individuals is [the one] according to *esse existentiae*, \n0because everything other than this is understood [as] in potency to this.

(5) *Ibid.*: To the contrary, in a [given] categorial rank there are all the items that pertain by themselves to that rank, everything else being aside that does not belong to that rank. For according to the Philosopher in *Posterior Analytics*, I, there is a higher and a lower level in each category. Therefore, just as the highest in a genus is found, considering it precisely under the aspect of a genus, and [just as] intermediary genera and species and differences are found, so too there is found a lowest, that is, the singular, *without any actual existence*. This is plainly evident, since *this man* does not formally include existence any more than does *man*.

Moreover, there is the same question about existence as [there is] about nature, how and whence it comes to be contracted so that it is a *this* that is. For if the specific nature is the same in several individuals, it has the same kind of existence in them. Therefore, just as it is proved in the solution to the first question that this nature is not *de se* a *this*, so [too] it can be asked, "By what is existence a *this*?" For one cannot say that it is *de se* a *this*. So it is not enough to posit existence [as] the first [feature] by which a nature is a *this*.

## NOTES TO TEXT 22

1. In question 1. See Hyman and Walsh, pp. 624-628.

2. But don't be misled - he gives one anyway in the following sentences.



Text 23:

Scotus on Time and Eternity

The following passage is taken from John Duns Scotus, *Lectura in librum primum Sententiarum*, d. 39, q. 5, Vatican edition, vol. 17, p. 486 line 2 - p. 487 line 4, and p. 506 line 12 - p. 507 line 9.

There is another opinion, which maintains God's certain cognition of future contingents as follows.

Those who talk this way say that all things are present to God in eternity according to their actual existence. For they say that it is not to be imagined that time and the things that flow in time are present in eternity as a stick, if it is stuck in the middle of a river, is present to the whole river.<sup>1</sup> For the stick is *successively* present to the whole river. But eternity is *simultaneous* with the whole [of] time and with all things that flow in time, in such a way that the whole [of] time and whatever successively is *in* time is present to eternity. For example, if it is maintained that eternity is like a center and the whole [of] time flows [around it] like a circumference, then even though the circumference is moved continuously, and part succeeds part, nevertheless it always stands in a uniform manner in comparison with the center.

They give another example about someone existing on the roof of a house.<sup>2</sup>

They argue for this opinion [with the following argument]. Unless eternity, or God, were simultaneous with the whole [of] time, he would not be "immense"<sup>3</sup>, just as, if he were not everywhere together with all the parts of space, he would not be immense. Therefore, he is simultaneous with the whole [of] time. And so those things that are successively in time are, according to their actual existence, simultaneously present to God and to eternity. . . .

[Reply]

To the other example, about the center in<sup>4</sup> the circumference, it is to be said that it argues for the opposite conclusion. For if a straight line is drawn, one end-point of which makes a center, and the other end-point is revolved around [the center], as the geometer imagines it, in such a way that [the outer end-point] leaves behind nothing remaining but only causes the circumference by its "flowing", that center is not simultaneous with the whole circumference. For [the whole circumference] does not simultaneously exist.

So it is with time, that nothing of it exists except an instant. And therefore, even though it flows continuously, there will not be a simultaneous whole with respect to eternity. Hence a circumference that remains is not time. Rather it is a circumference that flows. And therefore, nothing is present to eternity except the "now" of time.

## Notes to Text 23

1. The point is not that the stick is present to "the whole" river in the sense of being present to *both sides* of the river. The idea is rather that it is present to the whole river in the sense that the whole river *flows by* the stick, although not all at the same time.

2. I presume this is the familiar metaphor about seeing all at once, from above, what can be seen only bit by bit down here on the ground. On the ground, we have actually to *turn the corner* to see what is around there, whereas someone perched above the whole thing can see everything at once.

3. `Immensus' has etymologically to do with being "immeasurable" in extent, and so implies being "infinite". With that understanding, I'll just translate it "immense" and leave it at that.

4. That's what the edition has. Some manuscripts have `in', which would seem to be better.

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