

In Defense of the Fourth Way and its Metaphysics

Submitted by
Monty De La Torre

Bachelor of Arts in Music and Philosophy
Master of Arts in Theology
PhD Candidate in Philosophy

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School of Philosophy
Faculty of Theology/Philosophy

Australian Catholic University
University Graduate Research Office
North Sydney Campus (MacKillop)
19-21 Berry Street-Level 4
North Sydney NSW 2059

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Abstract

The Fourth Way of Thomas Aquinas is one of the least popular and heavily neglected demonstrations one can find for the existence of God. Most scholars in the field of natural theology or the philosophy of Aquinas are well versed in Aquinas' other Ways. But the Fourth Way is, for some reason or other, rarely afforded the time of day. This is very unfortunate. However, recent scholarship has shed some much needed light on the proof, arguing for its metaphysical lucidity and defensibility among its detractors and interlocutors. Edward Feser is one such scholar who has gone to great lengths to promote and defend Aquinas' general metaphysics and its application to all of Aquinas' Five Ways within the area of contemporary analytic philosophy. This dissertation is meant to defend and promote Edward Feser's interpretation of the Fourth Way and, with equal importance, it seeks to defend and promote the Aristotelian-Thomistic principles that underscore the Fourth Way as a challenge to mainstream contemporary philosophical circles that view such a philosophical system as a refuted relic from the past. Principles such as the transcendentals, essence, being, analogy of being, instantiation, universals, et al., are all part and parcel to upholding a correct understanding of the Fourth Way and a correct understanding of the metaphysical structure that binds reality together. Ultimately, the Fourth Way accomplishes what Aquinas intended in arguing that the gradation of things leads to an ultimate cause of being, goodness, truth, and all other perfections.

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Preface

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is well known for his great contributions in both the areas of theology and philosophy. Among his philosophical writings it is his proofs or demonstrations for the existence of God as articulated in the *Five Ways* that bring him the most exultant adulation and staunch criticism.¹ In particular, it is the Fourth Way that seems to reach the pinnacle of censure from scholars all around. The Fourth Way, as with the other Ways, is stated succinctly:

The fourth way is taken from the gradation of things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But “more” and “less” are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph. ii*. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all being the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.²

Indeed, of Aquinas’ Five Ways, the Fourth Way has been characterized as the most obscure, difficult, or just outright implausible, as noted by the contemporary analytic Thomist philosopher Edward Feser in his book *Aquinas*: “of all the Five Ways, the Fourth is generally regarded as the most difficult for modern readers to accept or even to understand.”³ Yet despite such heavy reticence and mixed reviews, the argument has had its share of advocates who have endeavored to defend what Aquinas set out to prove in his laconic formulation. There are of

¹ *Summa Theologiae* I, 2, 3: “I answer that, the existence of God can be proved in five ways.”

² *Ibid.*

³ *Aquinas*, (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), 100. See also Edward Feser, “Existential Inertia and the Five Ways” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 85, No. 2 (2011), 249. Cf., David E. Alexander, *Goodness, God, and Evil* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 114: “While I am no Aquinas scholar, I do know that attempting to defend, let alone explain, the fourth way is a monumental task. Many Aquinas scholars have attempted to do so and, at one stage or another, have given up.”

course those on the opposite side of the spectrum who have found no such defense to the Fourth Way's avail. As to be expected from such a chasm, there is no general consensus among commentators past or present as to an exact approach on the Fourth Way. Certainly, there is plenty of disagreement among scholars as to the specific metaphysical doctrines employed by Aquinas – yet alone his intention behind them. For instance, some understood Aquinas as arguing vis-à-vis Platonic principles with the emphasis on *exemplar causality* as the causal thrust of the argument.⁴ Others stressed the so-called *henological principal*, which attributes the *manyness* of creation as necessarily leading up the chain of being to the *one* (i.e., God) as source and cause of all creation.⁵ Further still, stress was placed on the unique role of *participation* – unarguably Platonic in origin – as a doctrine certainly implied by Aquinas and pivotal to the argument's success.⁶

The overall difficulty that the Fourth Way presents to contemporary readers can also readily be identified in the almost non-existent treatment it is afforded in the area of philosophy of religion. Most, if not, all contemporary readings in this field simply omit any treatment of the Fourth Way. What one usually finds are expositions on some form of the cosmological argument, ontological argument, arguments from design, moral arguments, or, if Aquinas' ways are specifically treated, they are simply listed as part of an anthology of texts without any additional commentary leaving the Fourth Way open to the imagination.⁷ It would seem, then,

⁴ Arthur Little, *The Platonic Heritage of Thomism* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1949); Maurice R. Holloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959); Gerard Smith, *Natural Theology: Metaphysics II* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966).

⁵ George Hayward Joyce, *The Principles of Natural Theology* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1923); Charles A. Hart, *Thomistic Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the act of Existing* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959); Reginald Garrigou Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature. A Thomistic Solution to Certain Agnostic Antinomies Vol. 1* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1944).

⁶ Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960).

⁷ Just to name a few examples: Michael Rea and Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, (Stamford, Connecticut: Cengage, 2014); Michael Peterson and William Hasker, *Reason & Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (5th Edition), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); David Stewart,

that the Fourth Way proves to be the “uninvited guest” of arguments for the existence of God. On the other hand, all is not lost, as new ground has been broken in favor of the arguments lucidity despite its detractors and any and all unpopularity. Edward Feser argues that much of the problematic accredited to the Fourth Way has been “greatly exaggerated” and that the Fourth Way “is perfectly comprehensible and even defensible” when read in light of Aquinas’ “general metaphysical commitments.”⁸

In view of this assurance the goal of this dissertation is fivefold: (1) to defend Feser’s treatment of the Fourth Way not only in its conclusion, that is, that the existence of God can be proven or demonstrated by investigating the metaphysical implications found in the gradation of things, but in addition, defending his interpretation of the Fourth Way as standing above what has been handed down from twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship. Doing so will comprise a defense of his overall pedagogical approach to the Fourth Way. This involves three components. Feser first introduces the argument through the lens of Plato’s theory of forms in order to establish “a useful first approximation to what Aquinas is getting at” but this only as a first approximation; he will go on to argue that a Platonic reading of the argument only introduces deep complications that in effect can only be remedied by acknowledging Aquinas’ *moderate realism*, something many interpreters neglect to mention.⁹ Second, Feser responds to objections raised against the Fourth Way, clearing away some of the common difficulties associated with a Platonic orientation of the argument in order to cement an Aristotelian one.

Exploring the Philosophy of Religion (7th Edition), (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009); Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction*, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2008); William Wainwright, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Brian Davies, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Gary E. Kessler, *Philosophy of Religion: Toward a Global Perspective*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1999).

⁸ *Aquinas*, 100.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Third, with a proper context established and some difficulties answered, Feser turns specifically to threading together and defending the main principles in the argument leading to its conclusion;

(2) to contribute additional clarification and defense of certain metaphysical principles in Feser's commentary that are in need of further development as well as a more specific understanding of their direct involvement in the Fourth Way. This input will involve a more detailed look into the character of Aquinas' realism along with the role of *participation* and its ontological meaning and implication on the relationship between particulars and their accidents or properties; and the role of causality, whether the argument is relying solely upon exemplar or efficient causality. The *analogy and hierarchy of being*, and the *transcendentals* will be given their own specific treatments incorporating Feser's analysis of these principles from some of his other writings in addition to answering specific criticisms surrounding the transcendentals and their convertibility with being.

(3) to establish the doctrines of potency and act, hylemorphism, the real distinction between essence and existence as playing a necessary role in upholding the Fourth Way. These doctrines have had various emphasis attached to their use in the argument by interpreters, but never have all three in conjunction been acknowledged as explicitly meaningful to the argument. The general metaphysical context they afford only serves to bolster and confirm those metaphysical doctrines more universally understood as present and active in the Fourth Way.

(4) to answer further objections and criticisms that are either not specifically addressed or simply lacking in comment by Feser's engagement with the argument. For example, whether the first part of the argument¹⁰ is meant to stand alone from the second,¹¹ and thus rely on formal

¹⁰ "The fourth way is taken from the gradation of things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something

rather than efficient causality; or whether the use of participation, analogy, and hierarchy of being are justified despite no specific reference to them by Aquinas; or whether the Fourth Way simply collapses into a version of the Second or Fifth Way negating its own unique character and distinction as an independent argument.

(5) to endorse and defend Feser's Analytic Thomism, which is a brand of Thomism that upholds, in analytic fashion, a traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic or Scholastic philosophy. This apology serves not only as an exercise in classical philosophy generally, and classical metaphysics specifically, but as absolutely necessary for the right advancement of contemporary metaphysics, and even more specifically, right advancement within Catholic philosophical circles.¹² If philosophy is meant to be an actual and genuine movement toward the pursuit of wisdom, rather than mere opinion, then the requirement for objective and accurate philosophical principles is crucial for any philosophical system to find a lending ear. Most especially from the natural sciences and all those within the field who would argue that natural science claims the gold standard on all objective knowledge – it would also go far in alleviating general suspicions, blank stares, and alarms raised at any claim for the existence of a maximum in being as the Fourth Way certainly means to do.

This dissertation is divided into thirteen chapters: Chapter 1 will introduce Edward Feser and his general philosophical approach; a specific brand of analytic Thomism that separates itself from other schools of Thomism such as *transcendental* Thomism, *existential* Thomism,

noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph. ii.*"

¹¹ "Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all being the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God."

¹² Alfred J. Freddoso has high hopes for such an advancement. See his paper, "The Vindication of St. Thomas: Thomism and Contemporary Anglo-American Philosophy" Available online: <http://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/Reflectionscatholic.html> Accessed on 19 February 2015.

phenomenological Thomism, et al. Expounding upon these schools of thought will set the stage for the overall philosophical approach to be taken in this dissertation.

Chapter 2 investigates the meaning of proof or demonstration concerning the existence of God – arguing how the exercise of metaphysics, understood as a science, yields actual knowledge of reality not unlike its empirical counterparts and, thus, yielding objective and rational knowledge of God’s existence. In conjunction, Aquinas’ own thought on rational demonstration for God’s existence is explained and defended against claims of theological assumptions or “faith conditions” that are somehow “always and already” presupposed in his line of thought, ultimately yielding a demonstration for God’s existence that is anything but *purus philosophia*.

Chapter 3 furnishes a crucial part of this thesis providing exegesis on the commentaries of numerous prolific Thomists and their own interpretations of the Fourth Way. This chapter is pivotal for illuminating all discrepancies found between interpretations as a whole and in their relation to Feser’s own interpretation. Their thought on the Fourth Way and especially that of Feser’s only serves to bring about more clarity on a demonstration for God’s existence that has a history of being viewed as either deficient and problematic on the one hand, or completely obsolete and inaccessible on the other.

Chapter 4 presents the first of a series of subsequent chapters on the metaphysics behind the Fourth Way. The argument will be made that potency and act are one, if not, the most fundamental of metaphysical principles. This cohesive principle will set the ground for the entire metaphysical structure used to explain and defend the Fourth Way.

Chapters 5-6 will explain and defend the existence and real distinction between prime matter and substantial form, along with that between essence and existence. Clarifying these

principles of being will help to confirm the overall relational nature between objects and the transcendental perfections that Aquinas makes use of in the Fourth Way.

Chapter 7 investigates and defends Aquinas' realism, a crucial and necessary step for upholding the existence and function of universals as a component of essences; and, by extension, the transcendentals, given their existence as an aspect of essences.

Chapter 8 naturally extends the conversation from chapter 7 by articulating the role of participation or what contemporary philosophers would describe as the *instantiation relation*. Instantiation, generally speaking, defines the relation between universals and particulars, or between things and their metaphysical constituents (principles of being, accidents, properties, etc.). Within the context of the Fourth Way, the approximation found between particulars and transcendental perfections directly implies a participatory relation or the instantiation of particulars (whether real or conceptual) with a corresponding universal (e.g., goodness, truth, being, etc.).

Chapter 9 brings the discussion to focus on the specific mode of causality in the Fourth Way. As indicated above, some commentators have interpreted Aquinas relying solely on exemplar causality to arrive at his intended conclusion. It will be argued that any exemplar causality necessarily implies efficient causality eliminating a strict Platonist interpretation to Aquinas' causal approach.

Chapters 10-11 will treat the key metaphysical doctrines that run through Aquinas' argument according to Feser. Chapter 10 explores the transcendentals (their existence and their role as convertible aspects of being) followed by chapter 11 which will pursue the themes of analogy and hierarchy of being (how analogy connects all being as being simultaneously

acknowledging its unique independence in addition to the hierarchical setting that structures being itself).

Chapter 12 brings the thesis to a conclusion with a defense and development of Feser's interpretation of the Fourth Way in light of all previous material discussed.

In conclusion, this dissertation is meant to distinguish itself in three important ways. First, a dissertation length exposition devoted entirely and specifically on the Fourth Way, its metaphysics, and a clarification of objections and difficulties has been long overdue from the relevant literature. Second, as part of this exposition, a compilation of twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship on the Fourth Way has additionally been lacking from contemporary literature. A gathering of such extent is something not very common to see even among Aquinas' more popular Ways. Third, the promotion and defense of an Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical system advocated by Feser and others as a direct response to the contemporary claims of scientism and mainstream contemporary philosophy that view the core doctrines of Aristotle and Aquinas (and Scholasticism in general) as an out of date, outmoded, thoroughly refuted, and thus irrelevant set of philosophical dogmas.

The term *Thomism* is meant to define a synthesis of theological and philosophical thought that issues specifically from the works of Aquinas.¹³ Those who would promote and carry on the theological or philosophical doctrines (or both) of Thomism can generally be labeled as *Thomists*. The history behind Thomism, its philosophical-theological involvement in various academic circles and its own overall development as a movement is dense.¹⁴ The movement itself was born into and came to rise within a religious milieu, that is, Thomism was an academic or intellectual movement that grew within the confines of the Catholic Church meant to promote and defend church doctrine among other things.¹⁵ What one can take away from the historical development of Thomism is a general divide between those who claim to hold a true continuity with Aquinas' doctrines, and others who would adjust those doctrines with foreign elements not original to his thought.¹⁶ What eventually came to develop from such a divide were various *schools* of Thomism. Each school had its own particular point of view or philosophical-theological insistence with the overall intention of promoting their Thomistic system as an

¹³ This voluminous academic synthesis is a product of Aquinas' own collection and development of the great thinkers that came before him, for example: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Dionysius, Boethius, Averroes, Anselm, Damascene, et al. According to Shields and Pasnau, "at the height of his productivity, Aquinas was writing an astonishing four thousand words a day." Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields, *The Philosophy of Aquinas* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), 1.

¹⁴ See Romanus Cessario, *A Short History of Thomism* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005). Cf., Gerald A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Aquinas' overall philosophical and theological project was concerned with getting at the truth of reality: describing and defending a wholly objective picture of what exists, as it actually and must exist – a right ordering of the world and its consequences starting with the philosophical and inevitably leading to the theological. "Hence, just as it belongs to the wise man to meditate especially on the truth belonging to the first principle and to teach it to others, so it belongs to him to refute the opposing falsehood... Now, while we are investigating some given truth, we shall also show what errors are set aside by it; and we shall likewise show how the truth that we come to know by demonstration is in accord with the Christian religion." *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.3-4.

¹⁶ See John Haldane, "Thomism," In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London: Routledge. Online edition: <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/N067> Accessed 5 February 2015. Cf., Brian J. Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 1.

answer to philosophical and theological problems that were in place during Aquinas' time and that had arisen over the centuries since his death. Some of these problems developed from medieval debates on realism and nominalism, in addition to debates that came to evolve from the Protestant Reformation, and especially those from the advent of the Enlightenment culminating in the overall criticisms brought forward by modern philosophy and the natural sciences.¹⁷

In order to better appreciate the overall philosophical context from which Feser approaches the Fourth Way and which this dissertation defends, it will do well to briefly outline some of the variant Thomisms that currently exist or have existed leading up to the analytic Thomism held by Feser. A useful summary is presented by Feser of six different kinds of Thomism that developed from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the present.¹⁸

Neo-Scholastic Thomism was the direct result of a revival of Thomism within the Catholic Church that was set into motion by Pope Leo XIII's papal encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879). This branch of Thomism came to be noted for its systematic presentation of Aquinas' thought in a pedagogical method that made extensive use of manual-like text books. It also held to a "strict observance" of Aquinas' doctrines as transmitted by some of his well-known commentators (e.g., Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Sylvester of Ferrara, Capreoulus) with "its core philosophical commitments...summarized in the famous Twenty-Four Thomistic Theses."¹⁹

¹⁷ Edward Feser provides a brief historical survey of some of the key philosophical differences that arose after the *renaissance* and the *reformation* leading to the inauguration of *modern* philosophy with Descartes. *Locke* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 21-7.

¹⁸ Edward Feser, "The Thomistic Tradition, Part I," Available online: edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2009/10/thomistic-tradition-part-i.html. Accessed on 11 February 2015.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* This brand of Thomism can also fall under the label of "Essentialist" or "Conceptualist" Thomism, holding, as it does, "that the subject of metaphysics is conceived in the third degree of abstraction according to the analysis of the Dominican Thomist Cardinal Cajetan (1468-1534)." See Benedict M. Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom: An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 46-7. It is also sometimes referred to as "Leonine Thomism." See Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 17-19.

Existential Thomism made a mark for itself by emphasizing and claiming accurate historical exegesis of Aquinas' works within the medieval background that had influenced him. Moreover, the placement of *being* was heralded as the core facet of Aquinas' metaphysics along with "deemphasizing Aquinas's continuity with the Aristotelian tradition..." contra some of the Neo-Scholastics, although both were in complete agreement on Thomistic realism's rejection of the modern turn toward "immanent consciousness."²⁰ The movement's main and most notable advocates were Etienne Gilson (1884-1978) and Jacques Maritain (1882-1973).

Laval or River Forest Thomism strongly emphasized the Aristotelian roots of Aquinas's philosophy, "and in particular the idea that the construction of a sound metaphysics must be preceded by a sound understanding of natural science, as interpreted in light of Aristotelian philosophy of nature. Accordingly, it is keen to show that modern physical science can and should be given such an interpretation."²¹ As Feser points out, this Aristotelian Thomism is not all that different or, rather, finds much crossover with Neo-Scholastic Thomism given their common ground in Aristotle's influence on Aquinas.²²

Transcendental Thomism fathered by Joseph Marechal (1878-1944), incorporated philosophical premises instigated by Descartes, Hume and especially Kant, in an attempt to yield a collective between modern philosophy and Aquinas.²³ All in all, this branch of Thomism

²⁰ Feser, "The Thomistic Tradition, Part I." Cf., Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition*, 6, 10-12.

²¹ "The Thomistic Tradition, Part I." Ashley provides the crux of Aristotelian Thomism: "1. There can be no valid metaphysics formally distinct from natural science unless its subject, Being as Being (*esse*), as it analogically includes both material and immaterial being, has first been validated in a manner proper to the foundations integral to natural science by a demonstration of the existence of immaterial being as the cause of material beings. 2. Modern natural science can achieve such a demonstration, but only if its own foundations are rendered unequivocally consistent with sense observation by an analysis such as is exemplified by Aristotle's *Physics* as interpreted by Aquinas." *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 53.

²² Feser, "The Thomistic Tradition, Part I."

²³ "What gave Transcendental Thomism its family resemblance was the shared conviction that the contemporary relevance of Thomism required it to accept the modern turn to the subject as its starting point. The transcendental task was to show how one could begin with the immanent realm of subjectivity and still conclude

became much more prevalent among theologians than philosophers as it was considered “the most radical rereading of Aquinas.”²⁴

Lublin Thomism also known as *Phenomenological Thomism*, not unlike Transcendental Thomism, mixes together Thomistic principles with modern ones. In this case, “it seeks to make use of the phenomenological method of philosophical analysis associated with Edmund Husserl and the *personalism* of writers like Max Scheler in articulating the Thomist conception of the human person,”²⁵ all the while (at least in one of its greatest ambassadors Karol Wojtyla, who would later become Pope John Paul II), “retaining the critical realism of Aquinas against Husserl’s constitutive idealism.”²⁶

Finally, *Analytical Thomism* is one of the most contemporary and newest approaches of Thomistic thought.²⁷ Here, Thomism is approached from the analytic tradition as exemplified (generally speaking) by thinkers such as Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, and Ludwig Wittgenstein – placing a strong emphasis on “clarity of expression, explicit and rigorous argumentation,” “clear definitions, distinctions, and ‘good reasons’ for assertions,” along with the use of modern logic.²⁸ Feser distinguishes between three different strands of analytic Thomism. Philosophers in the first strand (e.g., Anthony Kenny, Robert Pasnau) are representative of defending some of Aquinas’ principles while rejecting others “(perhaps precisely because of their perceived conflict with assumptions prevalent among analytic

to some form of epistemological and metaphysical realism that could lay claim to continuity with Aquinas.” Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition*, 13.

²⁴ John Haldane, “Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy,” *New Blackfriars* 80 (1998): 164. Cf., Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 48-9.

²⁵ Feser, “The Thomistic Tradition, Part I.”

²⁶ Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 51.

²⁷ Edward Feser, “The Thomistic Tradition, Part II,” Available online: edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2009/10/thomistic-tradition-part-ii.html Accessed on 11 February 2015.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; Cf., Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2008), 275; *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm, Germany: editiones scholasticae, 2014), 8; Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 51. A distinction can also be made between analytic Thomism and Wittgensteinian Thomism. Again, see Fergus Kerr, *Aquinas*, 21-2.

philosophers)... this sort of ‘analytical Thomism’ might be said to emphasize the ‘analytical’ element at the expense of the ‘Thomism.’”²⁹ Philosophers in the second strand (e.g., Peter Geach, Brian Davies, C. F. J. Martin) defend those Thomistic principles that would seem to conflict with certain analytic principles by interpreting them or reinterpreting them in order to avoid the conflict thus giving “both the ‘analytical’ and the ‘Thomistic’ elements of analytical Thomism equal emphasis...”³⁰ The third strand of analytic Thomism is unapologetic about its adherence to Aquinas’ core doctrines. Feser defines the third strand as follows:

“... there is a third possible category of ‘analytical Thomists,’ namely those whose training was in the analytic tradition and whose modes of argument and choice of topics reflects this background, but whose philosophical views are in substance basically just traditional Thomistic ones, without qualification or reinterpretation. Here the ‘Thomism’ would be in the driver’s seat and the ‘analytical’ modifier would reflect not so much the content of the views defended but rather the style in which they are defended. The work of writers like Gyula Klima and David Oderberg seems to fall into this category. Moreover, some writers who appear to fall into the second category of analytical Thomists when writing on certain topics seem closer to this third category when writing on others. (Martin, Davies, and Haldane would be examples, since while some of their work attempts to harmonize analytic themes with Thomistic ones, at other times they are more inclined to challenge certain common analytic assumptions in the name of Thomism.)”³¹

As for Feser himself:

“In the interests of full disclosure, I might mention that my own understanding of Aquinas has been influenced most by the work of writers in the Neo-Scholastic, Laval/River Forest, and Analytical schools (especially the third category of analytical Thomism that I distinguished). In particular, I follow these approaches in reading Aquinas as the pivotal figure in an ongoing ‘Aristotelico-Thomistic’ tradition, a ‘perennial philosophy’ which has its roots in the best ancient Greek thought and continues to this day.”³²

²⁹ Feser, “The Thomistic Tradition, Part II.”

³⁰ “all of whom would attempt to harmonize Aquinas’s doctrine of being with Frege’s understanding of existence) and Germain Grisez and John Finnis (who would interpret Aquinas’s ethics so as to avoid what Moore call the ‘naturalistic fallacy’). The work of Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump also possibly falls into this second category, though since it is often interpretative and scholarly rather than programmatic, it is harder to say.” Ibid. By reinterpretation I take Feser to mean that these philosophers would attempt at harmonizing Thomistic principles with modern analytic principles that, fundamentally, cannot actually harmonize.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. Cf., Edward Feser, *Neo-Scholastic Essays* (South Bend, Indiana: 2015), vi.

It is in the third kind of analytical Thomism that this dissertation claims its ground.

This form of analytic Thomism finds itself within a general revival of Aristotelianism, and even a Thomistic or Scholastic-Aristotelianism in contemporary analytic metaphysics. What once developed into a general repudiation of Aristotelian principles by modern philosophy (e.g., Descartes, Bacon, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, et al.) that is still currently echoed³³ has now become the subject of renewed interest and a direct challenge to some of those repudiations.³⁴ One may ask why such a challenge is being conducted today. What relevance does Aristotle and Aquinas have to contemporary philosophy? According to Feser their relevance cannot be stressed enough, for in his mind, “*abandoning Aristotelianism, as the founders of modern philosophy did, was the single greatest mistake ever made in the entire history of Western thought.*” [original emphasis].³⁵ And why was such a philosophical defection so problematic? Feser is very clear on the consequences:

“... this abandonment has contributed to the civilizational crisis through which the West has been living for several centuries, and which has accelerated massively in the last century or so. It is implicated in the disintegration of confidence in the rational justifiability of morality and religious belief; in the widespread assumption that a scientific picture of human nature entails that free will is an illusion; in the belief that there is a ‘mind-body problem’ and that the only scientifically and philosophically respectable solution to it is some version of materialism; in the proliferation of varieties of relativism and irrationalism, and also of skepticism about the legitimacy of any authority, and the radical individualism and collectivism that have followed in its wake; and in the intellectual and practical depersonalization of man that all of this has entailed,

³³ J. C. Beall is quick to point out the apparent refutations of Aristotle’s thought. “At the Intersection of Truth and Falsity” in Graham Priest et al., eds., *The Law of Non-Contradiction*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 2. Cf., David Conway, *The Rediscovery of Wisdom: From Here to Antiquity in Quest of Sophia* (Great Britain: MacMillan Press, 2000), 16-30.

³⁴ See for example, Edward Feser, Ed., *Aristotle on Method and Metaphysics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Rafael Huntelmann and Johannes Hattler, eds., *New Scholasticism Meets Analytic Philosophy*, (Heusenstamm: Editiones Scholasticae, 2014); Lukas Novak, et al., eds., *Metaphysics: Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic* (Heusenstamm: Ontos Verlag, 2013); Tukomos E. Tahko, ed., *Contemporary Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Daniel D. Novotny and Lukas Novak, eds., *Neo-Aristotelian Perspectives in Metaphysics* (New York: Routledge, 2014). Not to mention the work of Benedict Ashley as already cited and Thomas Joseph White, *Wisdom in The Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* (Ave Maria, Florida: Sapientia Press), 2009.

³⁵ *The Last Superstition*, 51.

and which has in turn led to mass-murder on a scale unparalleled in human history.”³⁶

The crises, at least as it goes in mainstream academic philosophy, can be easily vouched for by stepping into an “Introduction to Philosophy” class in any standard four year college or university. What one will generally find is a plethora of philosophical ideas and stances tossed around without so much as a single hint or direct claim for objectivity on their behalf. This is not to insinuate that Aristotle (or Aquinas) was always and everywhere completely in the right. But more often than not, they were correct on many things, and their efforts had a tremendous effect: “it was the logical development of Aristotelian ideas (primarily by his medieval Scholastic admirers) that provided the most powerful and systematic intellectual foundation for the traditional Western religion and morality – and for that matter, for science, morality, politics, and theology in general – that has ever existed.”³⁷ Without a doubt, the greatest of these Scholastic admirers was Aquinas and it was his collective synthesis of the works of Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, Avicenna, Averroes, Dionysius, Boethius, etc., that has brought Thomism such high regard and notoriety along with great internal conflict among both its adherents and opponents.

This presents the general backdrop for the analytic Thomism which Feser belongs to. It is meant to affirm as wholly and objectively true an Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics; a metaphysics consisting of and not limited to the doctrines of potency and act, hylemorphism, the four causes, the real distinction between essence and existence, Thomistic realism (or Scholastic realism), the transcendentals, divine simplicity, hylemorphic dualism, the analogy of being, the hierarchy of being, and others. This system is presented as a remedy for the philosophical

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 52.

problems³⁸ that have cemented themselves as “unavoidable” and “conclusive” in the study of philosophy and their enduring effect on society as a whole. Moreover, this classical paradigm of metaphysics is meant to fit within an overall apologetic endeavor pursued “at the highest intellectual level, in a way that addresses the deepest assumptions” against those who would discredit such an Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy and especially any attempts made at a purely rational demonstration for the existence of God leading to the establishment of theism and, most especially, any objectivity to the claims of Christianity, which one could argue with force naturally follow from theism.³⁹

Now metaphysics has a specific place within this endeavor and it is part and parcel not only to Feser’s general approach to philosophy, but to natural theology (the investigation of God’s existence and attributes from rational inquiry alone) and, specifically, the Fourth Way. In approaching the Fourth Way, as with any of Aquinas’ Ways, or for that matter, approaching any demonstration for the existence of God, it is crucial and necessary to consider the appropriate metaphysical context or the *metaphysical prolegomena* which underlays the argument.⁴⁰ What this simply means is that the Fourth Way is not some effortless twelve-step program that anyone can undertake. On the contrary, the Fourth Way is a very complex argument dealing as it does with some heavy abstract machinery. As it will become apparent by the end of this dissertation, numerous chapters on metaphysical principles need to precede the argument before one can approach the Fourth Way within an accurate context. With that said, a great amount of criticism has been tossed at Aquinas for giving such terse and trite arguments that *prima facie* do very

³⁸ Cf., Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004); Mortimer Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (New York: Touchstone, 1985).

³⁹ Edward Feser, “What We Owe the New Atheists” Available online: edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2014/04/what-we-owe-new-atheists.html Accessed on 6 February 2015.

⁴⁰ Edward Feser, “Pre-Christian Apologetics.” Available online: www.edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2014/05/pre-christian-apologetics.html Accessed on 16 May 2014.

little to defend themselves from the all too obvious objection. Here again, most grievances and fluster stem from an inadequate conception of the metaphysical context. Feser is acutely aware of this emphasizing as he does the importance of maintaining such a context in regard to the Five Ways:

... it is crucial to understand that they are *summaries*. Aquinas never intended for them to stand alone, and would probably have reacted with horror if told that future generations of students would be studying them in isolation, removed from their original immediate context in the *Summa Theologiae* and the larger context of his work as a whole. The *Summa*, it must be remembered, was meant as a textbook for beginners in theology who were already Christian believers, not an advanced work in apologetics intended to convince skeptics. The Five Ways themselves are merely short statements of arguments that would already have been well known to the readers of Aquinas's day, and presented at greater length and with greater precision elsewhere. For example, he gives two much more detailed versions of the proof from motion, along with versions of the proofs from causality, the grades of perfection, and finality, in the *Summa contra Gentiles*. The proof from motion, having originated with Aristotle, is also naturally discussed at length in Aquinas's commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.⁴¹

Even with that in mind, some might argue in the opposite direction, arguing that such a lengthy investigation takes away from the original simplicity of the demonstration; or that it can work against its intended conclusion by unnecessarily complicating matters (contra Ockham's razor); or that any proof for the existence of God must be nice and neat, easy to follow and accept if it is to prove anything at all. This line of criticism is mistaken.⁴² As Feser notes, to give

⁴¹ Aquinas, 62-3. Cf., Ralph McInerney, *Praeambula fidei: Thomism and The God of The Philosophers* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 159. "There can be little dispute that at the outset of the *Summa theologiae* Thomas refers to the philosophical sciences as already known by his reader, pointedly asking if the philosophical science dubbed theology renders redundant the effort he is about to undertake. At least historically, then the philosophical sciences are distinguished from the *sacra doctrina* that is studied in the *Summa* and the beginner for whom the *Summa* was written is assumed already to have studied philosophy and thus likely to have the problem addressed by the opening discussion. But there is as well general agreement among students of St. Thomas that philosophical work is not only presumed by the theologian; philosophizing also seems contemporary with and intrinsic to the task of *sacra doctrina*."

⁴² "Related to this is a tendency to approach the subject as if a successful argument for God's existence should be the sort of thing that can be stated fairly briefly in a way that will convince even the most hardened skeptic. Again, no one treats other arguments this way. If a fifty page article on materialism, free will, utilitarianism, etc. fails to convince you, the author will say that you need to read this book. If the book fails to convince you, he will then say that the problem is that you have to master the general literature on the subject. If that literature fails to convince you, then he will say that the issue is a large one that you cannot reasonably expect

a proper explanation of such a proof requires a good amount of conceptual groundwork, thus the reason for not only providing an explanation and defense of those principles that are arguably working most explicitly in the Fourth Way (e.g., the transcendentals, analogy of being, hierarchy of being), but as well as those implicit principles (e.g., potency and act, hylemorphism, the real distinction between essence and existence) that are still necessary in providing the fullest treatment of the argument (or so it will be argued). Feser makes another point about the necessity of establishing a correct context, this time in response to short hand attempts for proofs:

The trouble is that presenting such semi-formalized arguments – ‘Here’s the proof in ten steps’ – you risk encouraging the lazier sort of skeptic in his delusion that if such an argument is any good, it should be convincing, all by itself and completely removed from any larger context, to even the most hostile critic. Naturally, it will never be that, because it will not properly be understood unless the larger conceptual context is understood. But the lazy skeptic will not bother himself with that larger context. He will simply take the brief, ten-step (or whatever) semi-formalized argument and aim at it any old objections that come to mind, thinking he has thereby refuted it when in fact he will (given his ignorance of some of the key background concepts) not even properly understand what it is saying. (That is why a reader of a book like my *Aquinas* has to slog his way through over 50 pages of general metaphysics before he gets to the five ways. There are no shortcuts, and I do not want to abet the lazy or dishonest skeptic in pretending otherwise.)⁴³

This is one aspect of Feser’s modus operandi concerning his philosophical work that sets him apart from other analytic contemporaries; the insistence that classical metaphysics or, more specifically, Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy as exemplified in the *24 Thomistic Thesis* cannot

anyone decisively to settle to the satisfaction of all parties. By contrast, if you suggest that the existence of God can be demonstrated, many a skeptic will demand that you accomplish this in an argument of the sort which might be summarized in the space of a blog post. If such an argument fails to convince him, he will judge that it isn’t worth any more of his time, and if you tell him that he would need to read a book or even a large body of literature fully to understand the argument, he might even treat this (bizarrely) as if it made it even *less* likely that the argument is any good!” Edward Feser, “Q. E. D.” Available Online: edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2014/09/qed.html Accessed on 10 October 2014.

⁴³ Ibid.

simply be ignored in any philosophical investigation especially one involving the existence of God as it occurs in natural theology.⁴⁴ The apologetic for a natural theology

... presupposes a number of basic metaphysical assumptions. So too, at the end of the day, does specifically Christian apologetics, and indeed the whole system of Christian dogmatic theology when given a rigorous intellectual articulation. Specifically, I would argue, these background assumptions include the key elements of Scholastic metaphysics: the theory of act and potency, the Scholastic theory of causal powers, the principle of causality, the principle of finality, formal and material causes, the Scholastic account of substance, the distinction between essence and existence, and so forth. To some extent the notions in question can be introduced and defended in the course of giving this or that argument in 'natural apologetics.' For example, you could at least introduce the theory of act and potency in the course of setting out the argument for the existence of an unactualized actualizer (i.e. 'unmoved mover'). And you typically won't find, in old Neo-Scholastic works on apologetics and natural theology, a section or chapter devoted specifically to metaphysical prolegomena. One reason is that the metaphysical background assumptions in question were perhaps somewhat more widely known and less controversial in those days. Another is that there were in any event a great many Neo-Scholastic works devoted entirely to metaphysics and philosophy of nature... These days, however, there is so *much* ignorance and misinformation regarding the metaphysical underpinnings of Scholastic arguments in 'natural apologetics' that I think a prolegomenon devoted to those underpinnings is necessary. (That is why you have to plow through 50 pages or so of abstract metaphysics in *The Last Superstition* and *Aquinas* before you get to natural theology, philosophical anthropology, and natural law.⁴⁵

To be more specific about his approach, Feser typically begins the conversation by addressing general issues or themes found in metaphysics and or philosophy of nature.⁴⁶

Normally, Aristotelian-Thomistic principles are juxtaposed against their contemporary equivalents. Here, the goal is to present and distinguish the presuppositions at work in both camps, sorting the specifically philosophical issues from the scientific ones. This helps the reader to understand the objective limits of what the natural sciences claim to hold over reality from

⁴⁴ The theses are available on-line: <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/catholicteaching/philosophy/thomast.htm> accessed 2 February 2015. See also, Edouard Hugon, *Les Vingt-Quatre Theses Thomistes*, (Paris: Téqui, 1927).

⁴⁵ Feser, "Pre-Christian apologetics." David Oderberg, writing within the overall context of *essentialism* (i.e., formal causality), impresses upon his readers the gravity of upholding such a metaphysical paradigm, describing it as "a system of logically related concepts, principles, and distinctions; to lose one is to lose them all." *Real Essentialism*, preface xi. Naturally, this interconnectedness between principles and such extends to all other principles defended in this dissertation.

⁴⁶ I would like to thank Dr. Feser for providing me with some specific insights on his methodology as noted in this paragraph.

those of philosophy and the general priority in nature that philosophy places over science. For instance, in *Scholastic Metaphysics* Feser will introduce and provide a thorough explanation of a specific theory traditionally found in Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy (or Scholastic philosophy in general) followed by its recounting and application by contemporary philosophers to various topics in various branches of philosophy or science. Feser will then proceed to defend those Aristotelian-Thomistic principles against its contemporary critics (both philosopher and scientist alike). In this manner, Feser is able to reveal how contemporary philosophy and science is, indeed, indebted to the existence and relevance of those Aristotelian-Thomistic principles that are often held with contempt or disdain among contemporary philosophers and others.

In the end, Feser is pushing for a defense of Thomism that is undiluted and unapologetic; a remedy for the problems that have entrenched mainstream contemporary philosophy and its ramifications that have spilled over onto society. On the one hand, a direct response to contemporary philosophy

... requires, first, a return to classical apologetics; second, a return to the classical, Scholastic metaphysical foundations that a sound apologetics requires; third, a defense of the classical theistic conception of God toward which the best arguments of traditional apologetics point, and which was championed by the Scholastics; and fourth, a return to a general systematic Christian theology of the sort developed within the Scholastic tradition. Only a recovery of the breadth and depth, argumentative rigor and conceptual precision of Scholasticism, can do the job needed.⁴⁷

And on the other hand, a direct call to arms, sort to speak, to Catholic philosophical and theological circles.

Hence there is an urgent need for Catholic theologians and philosophers to return to the task of writing works of apologetics with the depth, breadth, analytic rigor, and systematic character prized in the Scholastic tradition. (It is only fair to note that the Eastern Orthodox philosopher Richard Swinburne is something of a model, having produced over the decades an apologetic oeuvre

⁴⁷ "What We Owe the New Atheists."

of remarkable depth, breadth, analytic rigor, and systematic power. If only he were a Scholastic, and if only he weren't a theistic personalist!)⁴⁸

This dissertation is meant to toe the line with Feser's recommendations. In this respect, not only as an endorsement of Feser's philosophical approach as an answer to mainstream philosophy vis-à-vis Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics but, more specifically, as an answer to the general criticism that has colored the Fourth Way as an argument that simply misses the mark. As this dissertation will show, the Fourth Way, far from missing the mark, is completely on target once the metaphysics behind its structure are carefully worked out and defended.

⁴⁸ "Pre-Christian apologetics." See the following post for Feser's concerns over *theistic personalism*: <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2012/07/classical-theism-roundup.html> Accessed on 19 February 2015. In a similar vein, Alfred J. Freddoso acknowledges an extensive abandonment of Thomism within Catholic institutions of higher learning taking place in the latter half of the twentieth century. This led to regrettable intellectual and moral consequences within the Catholic Church. See, "The Vindication of St. Thomas: Thomism and Contemporary Anglo-American Philosophy" Available online: <http://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/Reflectionscatholic.html> Accessed on 19 February 2015. For another relevant article, see R. R. Reno, "Theology After the Revolution" *First Things* (May, 2007), Available online: <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/05/100-theology-after-the-revolution> Accessed on 20 February 2015.

The history and method of Western philosophy is generally recognized as having its genesis in the ancient Greek world. It is with the Greeks where the perennial questions of life and the cosmos were embraced and nurtured for discussion and debate, ushering in an era of intellectual and dialectical inquiry that had until that time never been fully realized.⁴⁹ Despite its rich antiquity, the study of philosophy has, in modern times, had a tendency of being caricatured as an impractical and pointless endeavor. It can be viewed as more-or-less a mere intellectual exercise that may aid in the overall development of critical thinking skills yet, in the long run, the entire endeavor is incapable of yielding any “real knowledge” about reality – this, it is claimed, is an endeavor that only the natural or empirical sciences are equipped to accomplish.⁵⁰ Even within the field of philosophy one finds an exclusive “tip of the hat” to the sciences.⁵¹ This

⁴⁹ “The Greeks, then, stand as the uncontested original thinkers and scientists of Europe.” Frederic Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Volume I: Greece and Rome* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 16. This is not to say that the practice of philosophy was somehow void in other regions of the world, but by far it is in the Greco-Roman world beginning with the Pre-Socratics and moving onwards where its strongest development, elaboration, and defense would take hold and carry the greatest ethical, political and overall social influence.

⁵⁰ It is no wonder that philosophy is viewed with such glibness given the following description from someone considered to be one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century: “Thus to sum up our discussion of the value of philosophy: Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination, and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.” Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004), 113.

⁵¹ “Our substantive claim is that the worthwhile work to be done by naturalistic metaphysics consists in seeking unification, but this is not based on an analysis of ‘metaphysics’. Let us just stipulate, then, that inquiry into the possibility of impossibility of metaphysics is ‘metametaphysics’. Then naturalistic metametaphysics, we hold, should be based on naturalistic metaphysics, which should in turn be based on science.” James Ladyman, Don Ross, David Spurrett and John Collier, *Everything Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6. Cf., Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist’s Guide To Reality: Enjoying Life Without Illusions* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 6-7: “... the methods of science are the only reliable ways to secure knowledge of anything; that science’s description of the world is correct in its fundamentals; and that when ‘complete,’ what science tells us will not be surprisingly different from what it tells us today... science provides all the significant truths about reality, and knowing such truths is what real understanding is all about.”

characterization is simply unjustified. The present chapter will hopefully clarify a number of important points fundamental to any discussion on the importance and methodology of philosophy and metaphysics, and philosophical inquiry concerning the existence of God.

First, the procedure and practice of philosophy, understood as a science in the classical sense of the term, yields real knowledge of reality not unlike its empirical counterparts, this is to say, philosophy reveals deep and concrete explanations for how reality *must* be rather than just probabilistic explanations. Second, it is the principles of *metaphysics* – the most foundational of principles within the field of philosophy – that first and foremost ground the existence and function of reality, and not the empirical sciences, all of which presuppose and take for granted the existence of metaphysical principles, not to mention those principles intimately connected with metaphysics such as principles of logic and those from the philosophy of nature.

As this chapter progresses it will become evident how natural reason and philosophical investigation viz. metaphysics paves the way for the verity of evident and self-evident principles that ground the foundation of all reality. Once it is understood how philosophical or metaphysical investigation works and how it bears the fruit of knowledge, the focus will shift from general knowledge of reality to acquiring specific knowledge of God's existence. On this second point, by comparing and commenting on two of Aquinas' most notable texts, the line of rational argument *dependent* upon principles from metaphysics and the philosophy of nature and *independent* of any theological or ontological presuppositions will be defended as true of his intentions and overall approach for demonstrating the existence of God. This is a necessary point to defend given that Aquinas explicitly argues that the existence of God can be demonstrated through reason alone. Some have interpreted the Five Ways as laced with theological points and

presuppositions denying them the character of true philosophy and thus implying either a complete or partial impotence on the part of natural theology.

2.1 Philosophy as Science

One who engages with honest and sincere interest will quickly realize that the history of philosophy begins by a frank and direct investigation of the material world. The natural sense of wonder drives, if not, compels one toward an exploration for answers to the most basic and fundamental questions that underlie the anatomy of reality.⁵² As already alluded to above, for the ancient Greeks these questions engaged a diverse spectrum of topics. Some revolved around the origins of the material universe – focusing on the material side of things; others the nature of mathematics and the mind – focusing on the abstract and conceptual side of things; still others had a more ethical concern, what is the meaning of justice and what effect does justice have on the governance of a city and its citizens – here the focus is more social or practical in orientation. The examples can be multiplied indefinitely. The never ending quest for answers to such questions and many others runs deep throughout the history of philosophy. Needless to say, these questions, for the most part, were generally pitched with sincere intentions, and the answers

⁵² One of philosophy's greatest spokesmen sheds some light on this view: "For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about greater matters, e.g. about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and the stars, and about the genesis of the universe. And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (whence even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom, for myth is composed of wonders); therefore since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end." Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.2, 982b13-22.

Cf. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologia* I-II.3.8: "... when a man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause, there naturally remains in the man the desire to know about the cause, 'what it is.' And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry, as is stated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (I,2). For instance, if a man, knowing the eclipse of the sun, considers that it must be due to some cause, and know not what that cause is, he wonders about it, and from wondering proceeds to inquire. Nor does this inquiry cease until he arrive at a knowledge of the essence of the cause."

provided were held in great esteem but, more importantly, with definitive acceptance.⁵³ The reason why the answers of philosophy carried such gravitas was due to the fact that philosophical investigation was considered a thoroughgoing scientific endeavor that yielded knowledge of how the world actually is. Philosophy, simply put, was a *science (epistêmê)*.⁵⁴ It served as “an organized body of knowledge, presenting the completed results of inquiry, expressed using demonstration.”⁵⁵ This classical notion of science was derived by Aristotle and it was used to describe both the process of attaining *epistêmê* or real facts about reality, and its actual attainment; the intellectual possession of knowledge as the fruit of discursive inquiry. Again, philosophy as *epistêmê* extended into all areas of inquiry, from ethics and politics, to mathematics and physics. It was taken as a given that philosophy as all-encompassing as it was yielded real knowledge in these areas – knowledge that could be held as certain and unbreakable as any contemporary empirical science could discover.

Unfortunately, the conception of philosophy as a true full-blown scientific enterprise has been lost in translation since the era of the Enlightenment. The scientific revolution along with the *mechanical philosophy* of Descartes (just to name one key figure and movement) set the stage for a fundamental split between what used to be a mutual relationship between philosophy

⁵³ Generally speaking, to ask basic questions about the world and the phenomena within it is to engage in philosophy on a primordial level, and it is on this elementary level that every person is a philosopher by nature. When a person asks questions such as, *why* is life this way, rather than that way? or *why* does $2 + 2 = 4$? they begin to philosophize because they begin to meditate about and question the reality they find themselves in. They seek answers and explanations that will ease or fulfill their natural appetite for knowledge. In contrast, when it comes to the academic or professional study of philosophy, the kind you find in a university classroom, philosophy takes on a more systematic and structured account; surveying the writings of philosophers from times past to the present and the implications and influence their questions and answers have had on the empirical sciences, cosmology, epistemology, ethics, politics, religion, etc. Philosophy, in this latter sense, becomes a rigorous exploration for knowledge that involves a much more sophisticated, abstract, and eminent use of logic and reasoning. And because it becomes all the more thoughtful and serious-minded, the acceptance of answers to philosophical questions carry with them certain consequences and repercussions that can and have heavily influenced society over the course of time.

⁵⁴ *Epistêmê* is the Greek word for *knowledge*. It would later be translated into Latin and function as a verb, *scire* (to know); or as a noun, *scientia* (knowledge) from which the English word for science is derived.

⁵⁵ Christopher Shields, *Aristotle* 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2007), 492.

and science. Following a mechanistic paradigm, if the world is reduced to the realm of mere extension and quantity, a world consisting of nothing more than particles in motion coupled with the belief that the empirical sciences are the only means of procuring real knowledge (*vis-à-vis scientism*), then philosophy, which in its *classical conception* acknowledged the intrinsic features of reality as being composed of both material and immaterial principles with the former dependent on the latter, simply has no room for any serious consideration.⁵⁶ But prior to this chasm philosophical inquiry and scientific inquiry were virtually one in the same. Philosophy was considered as scientific as one finds in today's lectures, textbooks, conference papers, think-tanks, government committees and more, produced and organized by today's physicists, chemists, biologists, geologists, cosmologists, sociologists, anthropologists, ethicists, and anyone else who wears the badge of "scientist." This may sound strange to the modern reader given that the empirical sciences and its professionals are generally regarded in today's mindset as the arbiters of all truth while philosophy and its philosophers are definitely not. It is the collective of science and its scientists that are constantly ushering in new discoveries, cures, insights, and technologies by way of scientific method. This is the real currency of science, but what does philosophy cash out?⁵⁷ Does philosophy really lead one down the path toward actual knowledge? Can philosophy and its metaphysics be trusted as anything other than a kind of conceptual analysis? Do these not depend on the success of science?

Before responding to such questions it should be noted that both fields maintain a certain similarity in their approach toward investigating the world. Broadly, yet, fundamentally

⁵⁶ For a more extensive overview of what *classical philosophy* or a *classical conception of philosophy* entails, see David Conway, *The Rediscovery of Wisdom: From Here to Antiquity in Quest of Sophia* (Great Britain: Macmillan Press, 2000), 1-5. See also Ralph McInerny, *Praeambula fidei*, 35-6.

⁵⁷ Then again, even the objective knowledge that science produces has been highly contested in the past century. For an appraisal of skepticism against science and its vindication from those who would deny any necessary truths arising out of the sciences, see James Franklin, *What Science Knows And How It Knows It* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009).

speaking, both move forward in their acquisition of knowledge through the use of demonstration, that is to say, they rely on the acceptance and study of causal relations and their effects observed in and through the action of real phenomena.⁵⁸ This inductive approach takes the initial form of arguing from the particular (what is more generally known) to the universal (what is more specific or difficult to determine). However, the entire pursuit of knowledge presupposes a host of inter-related and immutable principles responsible for the philosophic-scientific paradigm to even commence.⁵⁹

Both the scientist and the philosopher are only interested in the actual furnishings and facts that underpin reality. Both the scientist and philosopher are concerned with what actually is the case, what is legitimate to believe, and what necessarily follows given the data. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines science as “any system of knowledge that is concerned with the physical world and its phenomena and that entails unbiased observations and systematic

⁵⁸ As Aquinas notes, all knowledge, either scientific or philosophical, begins with a truth of some sort which implies that all scientific and philosophical inquiry begins with the acknowledgment of something real (i.e., some verifiable starting point): “We have knowledge of truth only when we know a cause. This is apparent from the fact that the true things about which we have some knowledge have causes which are also true, because we cannot know what is true by knowing what is false, but only by knowing what is true. This is also the reason why demonstration which causes science, begins with what is true...” *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, II, lesson 2, 291.

⁵⁹ Aristotle noted that the pursuit of *scientia* is not done in a vacuum, a sort of self-sufficient autonomous activity. One cannot begin to grow in knowledge without the objects of knowledge already in place and the capacity to understand, receive, and experience them. “All teaching and all intellectual learning come about from already existing knowledge. This is evident if we consider it in every case; for the mathematical sciences are acquired in this fashion, and so is each of the other arts. And similarly too with arguments – both deductive and inductive arguments proceed in this way; for both produce their teaching through what we are already aware of, the former getting their premises as from men who grasp them, the latter proving the universal through the particular’s being clear.” *Posterior Analytics* 1.1, 71a1-9. Cf., 1.2, 71b16-25; *Metaphysics* 1.1, 981a5-30; 4.4, 1006a6-18; 7.15, 1039b27-1040a7.

In essence, Aristotle’s scientific method is not at odds with what one finds in the contemporary understanding of the *scientific method*: “It is now commonly represented as ideally comprising some or all of (a) systematic observation, measurement, and experimentation, (b) induction and the formulation of hypotheses, (c) the making of deductions from the hypotheses, (d) the experimental testing of the deductions, and (if necessary) (e) the modification of the hypotheses; though there are great differences in practice in the way the scientific method is employed in different disciplines (e.g. palaeontology relies on induction more than does chemistry, because past events cannot be repeated experimentally)...” “Scientific Method,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition: <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/383323> accessed 1 August 2014.

experimentation. In general, a science involves a pursuit of knowledge covering general truths or the operations of fundamental laws.”⁶⁰ The “unbiased observation of phenomena” and the “pursuit of knowledge” through “the operations of fundamental laws” are part of the links in the chain that connect philosophy and science. But their divergence takes place in the fact that all the empirical sciences and all knowledge that is derived from them is necessarily dependent upon evident and self-evident principles stemming from logic, metaphysics, and the philosophy of nature, among others.⁶¹

2.2 Metaphysics as Philosophical Demonstration

Science and its entire methodological praxis for the facts and foundations behind the causes and effects that comprise reality begin with empirical premises. From physics to astronomy the scientific method is beholden to the physical world and what can be collected and formulated through its observations, experimentations, inferences, probabilities, theories, and everything in between. Philosophical or metaphysical demonstration, on the other hand, which is what philosophical inquiry is in the business of doing, grounds its knowledge by utilizing *both*

⁶⁰ “Science,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition: www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/528756/science, Published 1-27-2014, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁶¹ Aristotle argues the necessary function of self-evident principles (i.e., *primitives* or *immediates*) as the epistemological foundation for all knowledge. These are the “fundamental laws” of metaphysics which the “fundamental laws” of nature, i.e., the *laws of nature* of empirical science presuppose.

“Now some think that because one must understand the primitives there is no understanding at all; others that there is, but there are demonstrations of everything. Neither of these views is either true or necessary. For the one party, supposing that one cannot understand in another way, claim that we are led back *ad infinitum* on the grounds that we would not understand what is posterior because of what is prior if there are no primitives; and they argue correctly, for it is impossible to go through infinitely many things. And if it comes to a stop and there are principles, they say that these are unknowable since there is no *demonstration* of them, which alone they say is understanding; but if one cannot know the primitives, neither can what depends on them be understood *simpliciter* or properly, but only on the supposition that they are the case. The other party agrees about understanding; for it, they say, occurs only through demonstration. But they argue that nothing prevents there being demonstration of everything; for it is possible for the demonstration to come about in a circle and reciprocally. But *we* say that neither is all understanding demonstrative, but in the case of the immediates it is non-demonstrable – and that this is necessary is evident; for if it is necessary to understand the things which are prior and on which the demonstration depends, and it comes to a stop at some time, it is necessary for these immediates to be non-demonstrable.” *Posterior Analytics* 1.3, 72b5-23.

the empirical premises and outcomes of science but, more importantly, it begins with the immaterial principles that necessarily sustain the very same material order observed by those empirical sciences.⁶² The difference between empirical demonstration and metaphysical demonstration is the difference between something necessarily being the case as opposed to being probabilistic. This is not to imply that science is incapable of reaching necessary conclusions of any sort since it is quite obvious that it does, but insofar as it does it will be reliant upon and presuppose certain truths about the structure of reality that are not encapsulated or restricted by the very starting point of its inquiry via empirical premises.⁶³ That is to say, in order for the methods of natural science to investigate reality and be successful at it, it must presuppose the reality of *reality* and the laws or principles that shape and govern it, not to mention that reality itself exists as capable of being scientifically scrutinized in the first place. In

⁶² Cf., Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition*, 82-83. The branch of philosophy known as *metaphysics* is traditionally understood as the study of *being as being*. This definition may sound pseudo cryptic, almost tautological, but what metaphysics seeks to understand are the “building blocks” or fundamental principles that constitute reality. Cf., Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 6-7; William A. Wallace, *The Elements of Philosophy: A Compendium for Philosophers and Theologians* (New York: Alba House, 1977), 85; Peter van Inwagen, “Metaphysics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.): <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/metaphysics/>>. Accessed 28 June 2014; Kit Fine, “What is metaphysics?” in *Contemporary Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 8-9: “Metaphysics is concerned, first and foremost, with the nature of reality. But it is not by any means the only subject with this concern. Physics deals with the nature of physical reality, epistemology with the nature of knowledge, and aesthetics with the nature of beauty. How then is metaphysics to be distinguished from these other subjects? It is distinguished, in part, from physics and other branches of science by the a priori character of its methods. The claims of science rest on observation; the claims of metaphysics do not, except perhaps incidentally. Its findings issue from the study rather than from the laboratory.”

⁶³ “Metaphysics is one of the main branches of philosophy, the branch that is concerned with the concept of being (that is, existence) and with several other closely related concepts. The study of concepts plays a central role in all of philosophy. In fact it is often held that philosophy is nothing more than the study of certain very general, characteristically ‘philosophical’ concepts – for example, existence, truth, knowledge, justification, mind and goodness (and a multitude of narrower philosophical concepts closely related to the general ones). These sorts of concepts are rarely explicitly treated in the special sciences and, when they are, they are treated in fundamentally different ways. But philosophical concepts underlie all genuine scientific inquiry because science cannot even begin in the absence of philosophical assumptions and presuppositions. These assumptions are generally not stated explicitly and so may not even be noticed by practicing scientists or students of science...as an example, physics presupposes the following three things: (1) that there exists a physical reality independent of our mental states; (2) that the interactions of the stuff constituting this reality conform to certain general laws; and (3) that we are capable of grasping physical laws and obtaining evidence that favors or disfavors specific proposed laws.” Michael Jubien, *Contemporary Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 1.

other words, if there is no reality or “laws of nature” then the art of science ceases to exist. If this is the case, then, what principles do science and reality presuppose for their existential dependence?

Just to give two examples that are both logical, but only because they are first metaphysical – the *principle of identity* points out the fact that something simply is what it is, for example, an apple is an apple and not an orange; and the *principle of non-contradiction* (or contradiction) points out the fact that something cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect, for example, an apple cannot exist as an orange while at the same time existing as an apple. Given the nature and implications of such principles, for any empirical science to function at all, it must already acknowledge the identity of reality as is and not as entailing a real contradiction. The principles of identity and contradiction are two examples that serve as both metaphysical and logical prerequisites for science to function in its pursuit of knowledge.⁶⁴

It is important to realize that these principles, similar to the laws of nature from natural science, are not directly observable to the senses the way material objects are, nor are they merely logical principles rather than metaphysical. For the most part the scientist of whatever particular field of science he or she so happens to be an adherent of is customarily in direct contact with physical phenomena (the biologist will be verifying the behavior patterns of *actual* animal life as manifest in, say, *actual* baboons; and the sociologist will be verifying socio-

⁶⁴ “The first principles of metaphysics are one and the same with the first principles of logic. This stands to reason, when we consider that logic is known as the science of correct thinking. The principles do not function in the same way in the two sciences, however. In logic, the principles are applied primarily to ideas (mental entities), and to the relations among ideas. The application of the principles in metaphysics is more directly existential, in the sense that they are addressed to real being, not merely mental being. And it is just for that reason that the first principles, taken as metaphysical principles, are foundational with respect to the first principles as they are operative within the science of logic. Real being (*res in mundo*) precedes logical being (*entia in mente*). We are able to have ideas in our minds only because antecedently there are actually existing things in the world.” D. Q. McInerney, *Metaphysics* (Elmhurst, Pennsylvania: The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 2004), 20, see footnote 1.

political patterns within societal groups made up of *actual* human beings). Through constant, steady, and sometimes tedious observation and experimentation, causal relations are established, grounded, and catalogued. This is what science generally, if not exclusively, grounds itself in: the predictability of causes and their effects. Yet all the while the scientist and philosopher are hard at work, the principles of identity and contradiction (among others)⁶⁵ are already in act as it were, fully present, applying a universal governance upon everything in reality, both real and logical, without a fault. Only within the framework of these first principles of logic/metaphysics can any notion of existence or causality actually hold. Science must presuppose that such axioms are in place doing what they do, or reality simply has no inherent power to receive the work of science.

With that said these first principles of logic/metaphysics bare three significant features worth pointing out: 1) they are objective and necessary. For instance, if the principle of non-contradiction did not actually place a necessary metaphysical governance upon the world, how would or could the logical formulation of any propositional content convey any objectivity? Indeed, what would “objectivity” mean in a world where the objective could be negated in the same instance as it is affirmed?⁶⁶ Fortunately, reality is not this way. The presence of such concrete principles also suggests that they are not merely logical principles or fabrications of the mind but, rather, they are discovered by the mind. If the mind exists, it exists exactly because it is what it is (principle of Identity), and its existence cannot be negated at the same time as it is affirmed (principle of Non-Contradiction); 2) these principles are bereft of physical extension; they are not a kind of material substance, or reliant for their existence upon matter. That they are abstract and immaterial is due to their universal and intrinsic application to *everything* material in

⁶⁵ I have here in mind the principles of sufficient reason, excluded middle, causality, finality.

⁶⁶ And the fact that it never is, is only due to the principle in question.

the natural world, and other things that are arguably immaterial and abstract, such as numbers, concepts, and propositions. Plus, given their mind-independent status, it would necessarily follow that their existence would be independent of any material thing since all material things presuppose the principles in question for their own being (again, something cannot exist and not exist at the same time, thus any material or immaterial being that does exist is always already in obeisance of the principle);⁶⁷ 3) these principles bare an intelligibility to the structure of their very being that admits of a certain intellectual agency.⁶⁸

Just as the gravitational forces and other laws of nature that science demonstrates are truly present and active throughout the universe, they nevertheless remain hidden to the human eye because the reality that is gravity does not constitute a material substance of some sort even though all material substances are affected by gravitational forces. In other words, there is no direct perception with the *essence* or *nature* that is gravity. The first principles of logic/metaphysics are similar to that of gravitational forces. Their immaterial constitution is part and parcel of what allows them to directly affect and apply to all material and immaterial being, which is to say, they have an immanent relation to both material and immaterial being. Take another example, this time from mathematics: “a typical mathematical truth is that there are six different pairs in four objects...”⁶⁹ Once this truth about mathematics is grasped, it becomes

⁶⁷ Ultimately, the laws of logic are the laws of essences. The laws are mere descriptions of how essences behave as manifest in hylemorphic compositions or independent of matter, yet with an act of existence.

⁶⁸ “...it is also hard to see how they could exist apart from *any* mind whatsoever: a proposition, for example, just seems clearly to be the sort of thing that exists only as entertained or contemplated by a mind.” Feser, *Last Superstition*, 90. Although Feser is specifically referring to numbers and mathematical propositions, the same observation about their existence being derived from some creative mind can be applied to the very form or structure of those logical/metaphysical principles at hand. In other words, the nature and structure of these realities belies against the idea that somehow they are byproducts of pure randomness, chance, or somehow originating from *nothing*.

⁶⁹ “The objects may be of any kind: physical, mental or abstract. The mathematical statement does not refer to any properties of the objects, but only to patterning of the parts in the complex of the four objects. The truth is thus about pure structure, and is also quantitative, in dealing with the necessary relation between the number of objects and the number of pairs. If the statement seems to us a less solid truth about the real world

conceptually impossible to think otherwise, or to deviate from its necessity and objectivity, or even for “science” to somehow disprove this truth without falling into an abyss of incoherence. Acknowledging such first principles inaugurates the path toward metaphysical demonstration and how certain realities are *proven or demonstrated* by philosophy.⁷⁰

Certain contemporary philosophers might find such an argument establishing the contingency of science on such a priori logical/metaphysical principles as comprising an “immodest attitude” on the part of metaphysics.⁷¹ It becomes immodest insofar as “it takes metaphysics to be of grander importance than it is.”⁷²

... The mistake on the immodest philosopher’s side is to think that scientific theorizing works this way: it first makes certain general assumptions (that there is a material world, that it contains objects, that they change, that there are numbers, etc.) and then given these assumptions science tries to find out some more of the details. To the contrary, the sciences establish their results without needing any further vindication from philosophy. That there are numbers and that change is possible is implied by the relevant theories, not assumed or presupposed. The above version of the immodest attitude is based on the wrong picture of how science works. And it smells like a regress waiting to happen. If I have to presuppose that change is possible at all before I can explain particular changes, then don’t I also have to presuppose, say, that metaphysics can figure anything out at all, before trying to figure something in particular out? And can I then not figure something out until I discharged that assumption, that anything can be figured out at all?⁷³

than, say, the causation of flu by viruses, that is simply due to our blindness about relations, or our tendency to regard them as somehow less real than things and properties. But relations...are as real as colours or causes. There is nothing to be said for the view of engineers that mathematics is no more than a grab-bag of methods and formulas, a ‘theoretical juice-extractor’ for deriving one substantial truth from others. The truth about pairs of objects is not hypothetical or logical or symbolic in nature, but a straightforward truth about objects – objects of any kind, physical or otherwise, but real objects.” James Franklin, *An Aristotelian Realist Philosophy of Mathematics: Mathematics as the Science of Quantity and Structure* (United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 1-2. Edward Feser argues the same point, but from the existence of geometrical figures such as triangles. See *Locke*, 10-11.

⁷⁰ “In Thomistic terms: *intellectus* (apprehension/insight) of basic truths gives the epistemological prerequisite for *ratio* or rational argumentation. Were this not the case, we would fall into the error of thinking we had to prove everything we know demonstratively, which is absurd.” Thomas Joseph White, “Engaging the Thomistic Tradition and Contemporary Culture Simultaneously: A Response to Burrell, Healy, and Schindler,” *English Edition*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2012): 608-612. Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.3-4.

⁷¹ Thomas Hofweber, “Ambitious, Yet Modest, Metaphysics” in *Metametaphysics: New Essays On The Foundations Of Ontology*, ed., David J. Chalmers, David Manley and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 263.

⁷² *Ibid.*, “Ambitious, Yet Modest, Metaphysics”

⁷³ *Ibid.*

According to Hofweber the immodest attitude of metaphysics is the one unjustly harboring the presuppositions. But metaphysics, just like science, begins its investigation of the world through the world itself. It discovers in reality that reality is held in place not by physical objects, but by immaterial, immutable, and universal principles or laws such as the principles of non-contradiction and identity. How else is the material world to make coherent sense if not in light of the existence of such metaphysical realities? Other than metaphysics and logic, the claims of science also tend to rest on assumptions that are primarily based in the philosophy of nature. Take, for instance, the problems associated with motion in the world, that is, the “problem of change.” Change is a real commonplace product in the world. Yet science can only explain why certain changes take place within certain conditions, it does not, and cannot, in principle, explain why there is any change *per se*. Hofweber argues that the problem of change has been answered by science, for instance, by observing a melted candle sitting on a windowsill, science will provide an explanation for the multitude cause and effect relationships that occur between the heat of the sun and the effect it has on the candle; thus science explains and solves the problem of change.⁷⁴ But this is hardly the case. Science will be able to describe the physical structure of a candle (and that only to a certain extent) and the physical structure of heat and the effects that the latter have on the former, but it will not be able to explain why it is the case that the physical structure of wax is structured as such so as to melt under the heat of the sun rather than produce some other effect. That wax melts under the sun rather than turning neon green in color, or turning into a gas, or a rabbit is something that wax does, not because science merely describes the phenomena, but because it is in the physical structure of wax to do so. But *why* there is change not only in this instance, but in any, is a metaphysical principle found in nature that science requires to already be *in situ* in order to acknowledge that there is such a thing as change

⁷⁴ Ibid., 261.

and in order to make any attempt at an authoritative claim as having the final say on the matter. Notice, too, that Hofweber's example entails *efficient causality* given that it is the heat of the sun *qua* efficient cause that *causes* the candle to melt in the first place. This point is no less metaphysical than the problem of change. Causality itself is yet another principle that is being taken for granted and presupposed by science, again, since science requires the existence of causality to provide descriptions of cause and effect relationships in the first place. Contrary to Hofweber's claims, the metaphysician is not the one being immodest here.

Sometimes it is alleged that metaphysical principles are based on "ungrounded intuitions" generating "excessive conservatism" as "inimical to the philosophical spirit" encouraging "complacency" among philosophers; or as justifiable only insofar as they resolve the *aporia* of the world; or that to argue from self-evident principles is to "judge metaphysics by the standards of mathematics."⁷⁵ The discovery of metaphysical principles may begin with a commonsense approach to reality, but they are in no way determined by one's commonsense or "intuitions." The whole point of establishing the verity of such principles is brought about by an investigation that seeks to understand the objective basis for the nature and function of reality, an endeavor that is hardly complacent, but by its nature is meant to establish concrete conclusions. Philosophy is no different from science in that they both want to know how reality actually is arguing for an objective rather than a subjective or relativistic understanding. Therefore, the discovery of metaphysical principles like causality, identity, non-contradiction, etc., rely on their own objective authority based in their actual existence and not on the authority of common sense or intuitions. Neither do they lead to "excessive conservatism" as "inimical to the philosophical spirit" anymore than the Pythagorean theorem leads to "excessive conservatism" as "inimical" to

⁷⁵ Stephen Boulter, "The Aporetic Method and the Defense of Immodest Metaphysics" in Edward Feser, *Aristotle on Method and Metaphysics*, 40; 45-6.

the mathematical spirit.⁷⁶ One must conform to what is true of reality no matter how “conservative” that truth may be. Nor is metaphysics being judged by the standard of mathematics because the very existence (or denial) of numbers, mathematical propositions, and so forth, are themselves metaphysical questions and thus their answers will also be metaphysical in nature, therefore, any “mathematical standards” presuppose metaphysical ones, not the other way around. And that any philosophical *aporia* in the world can be resolved such as “the problem of change” will be done so by the work of the metaphysician, since change is, by its very nature, a metaphysical problem, not an empirical one. Thus the reliance on objective metaphysical principles is needed to solve any philosophical *aporia*, but this in no way entails that metaphysics only has value insofar as it serves to resolve any philosophical *aporia*. Nor does it follow that one has to presuppose, as Hofwebber maintains, that “metaphysics can figure out everything,” and that, in turn, requiring some further verification ad infinitum. Ultimately all metaphysical principles themselves will require some causal explanation in order to put any infinite regress to rest. And that it can be put to rest is not the result of some probable cause, but of a necessary cause as Aquinas argues in the Five Ways. And this line of argumentation found in the Five Ways begins with the reception of reality viz. the senses and the discovery of evident and self-evident principles (as understood from metaphysics, logic, and the philosophy of nature) and the necessary conclusions that follow from their existence.

Succinctly put, the ascent toward knowledge begins with the discovery of self-evident principles and then proceeds to argue from them toward necessary conclusions, such as the existence of abstract or immaterial objects considered through, for example, the reality of numbers and the relations that bind them together, the laws of nature, potency and act, formal

⁷⁶ This line of thought presumes a Bertrand Russell like picture of philosophy, that is, philosophy is not really about the attainment of objective principles of truth because philosophy is incapable of reaching a consensus on such matters.

and final causality, the existence of transcendental properties of being (as will be demonstrated later on) and much more.⁷⁷

The ancient Greek philosophers were quite aware of this abstract and immaterial reality imbedded into the fabric of things, and their arguments depended on it. As will be spelled out in greater detail further on, Aristotle understood that in order to make sense of why change or motion takes place in the concrete objects of this universe, things *must* by *necessity* upon pain of incoherence transition between a state of being in *potency* to that of *actuality*. For instance, the reason why the atomic structure of an apple lends itself to be cut in half is because it possesses the potency to be cut in half (an inherent power that allows for this result to occur in the thing itself), which is due to its very structure or essence as an apple (one of many features or characteristics that make apples distinctive as what they are). The particular structure of things allow them to undergo certain changes and relations that other things may not be privy to, as displayed in the particular potencies that a certain substance may or may not actualize, all of which aid in distinguishing it from other substances. Without the principles of potency and act it becomes impossible to give a coherent account of why, on the one hand, anything changes at all, and on the other, why certain changes take place over and above others. The metaphysical principles of potency and act, not unlike mathematical propositions and principles of logic, are universal, immaterial, and mind independent. This is what the philosopher and, more

⁷⁷ Feser clarifies the issue of philosophical or metaphysical demonstration succinctly in replying to critics who challenge Aquinas' understanding of demonstration in regards to the existence of God: "What is meant is that the conclusion that God exists follows with necessity or deductive validity from premises that are certain, where the certainty of the premises can in turn be shown via metaphysical analysis. That entails that such a demonstration gives us knowledge that is more secure than what any scientific inference can give us (as 'science' is generally understood today), in two respects. First, the inference is not a merely probabilistic one, nor an 'argument to the best explanation' which appeals to considerations like parsimony, fit with existing background theory, etc.; it is, again, instead a strict deduction to what is claimed to follow *necessarily* from the premises. Second, the premises cannot be overthrown by further empirical inquiry, because they have to do with what any possible empirical inquiry must presuppose." "Q. E. D.?" edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2014/09/qed.html Accessed on 4 October 2014.

specifically, the metaphysician, is acutely aware of. These immaterial principles are the base tools of *both* metaphysical and empirical scientific demonstration and argumentation. These are the guiding pillars of metaphysics. They are the glue which ground the progressive and discursive discovery of reality. Beginning with first principles the metaphysician can embark with a firm foundation on the path toward knowledge. This is why, contra Hofweber, metaphysics is not “immodest” or “esoteric” and why, contra Ladyman and Ross, metaphysics is not “vindicated by the success of science.”⁷⁸ To reiterate, metaphysical inquiry is not immodest because the physical universe, which the natural sciences depend on, is itself contingent upon the existence of metaphysical principles; and these principles are not “esoteric” (i.e., ambiguous or lacking any coherent explanation) because they are all but ambiguous, or incoherent, or only available to the privileged few since they can be discovered through the analysis of the material world. Neither is metaphysics vindicated by science since science only functions in light of metaphysical principals such as, change or motion (i.e., the interplay between potency and act), causality, identity, etc., and it is through apprehension of the physical world (which includes the use of intuition and common sense, although it is not exhausted or determined by it), where both metaphysical and scientific inquiry begins.

2.3 Aquinas on Demonstrating God’s Existence

With an understanding of how metaphysical demonstration works how, then, does arguing for the existence of God proceed? Even more specifically, how does Aquinas understand a rational argument or demonstration for the existence of God?⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Hoffweber, “Ambitious, Yet Modest, Metaphysics,” 267; Ladyman, *Everything Must Go*, 7, 10.

⁷⁹ It is sometimes argued that to raise the question of God’s existence entails question begging. The poor apologist is already committed to the existence of God and therefore is not *really* proving anything, but is merely implanting something he or she already believes to be true. This objection is unjustified. How exactly a question

Aquinas states that “the existence of God can be proved in five ways.”⁸⁰ There should be no ambiguity concerning the meaning behind Aquinas’ use of the word *way* or *ways* (*via*, *viis*) to describe his demonstrations for the existence of God. One sometimes hears that Aquinas’ “ways” were either never or only partially meant to be taken as strict metaphysical proofs. Instead, as “ways” they are, perhaps, “signs” or “promptings” providing various avenues, a roundabout way that one can begin to contemplate about God, but a contemplation that is “always already” rooted in human nature as an innate knowledge of God that is unescapable. Of course, one possible inference from this comes as a sort of implicit (or explicit) denial over the possibility of a fully rational demonstration for the existence of God.⁸¹ The *via* toward God’s existence may appear as an inward existential search or reflection of the individuals deepest longings, which may or may not yield the acceptance of God as the fulfillment of those longings and the ultimate source of all creation. However it seems quite evident and unequivocal from numerous passages in the opening questions of Aquinas’ most revered works, the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa*

simultaneously equates to an answer is left to be explained. A question about the origins of all creation is exactly that, a question, nothing more and nothing less. It is the demonstration or proof that carries the verity of the proposition through, not the proposition itself, or the specific promptings behind it.

⁸⁰ *Summa Theologiae* 1, 2, 3.

⁸¹ See for instance, D. C. Schindler, “Discovering the Given: On Reason and God,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2012: 563-604: “But, as the Platonic tradition strives always to recollect, as it were, if God is the transcendent cause of reality, then the meaning of God does not simply emerge *after* we get clear about the meaning of the world and so wholly on the basis of that meaning, but rather precisely because it is the meaning of *God* we must come to see that this meaning was always already operating in a manner that we can only ever be insufficiently aware of at any point over the course of our thinking. In other words, reason cannot attain to God exclusively in a *a posteriori* manner, but God must always also be ‘*a priori*’ in *some respect* precisely insofar as he is the transcendent cause of all reality.” 580. In the same publication, Fr. Thomas Joseph White summarizes another angle of thought on the matter attributed to David Burrell: “... creation is not so much something to be *demonstrated*, for Aquinas, as it is something to be presumed (‘prephilosophically’ in faith) and then *explicated* grammatically and metaphysically... this anti-rationalist vision of human reason intends to underscore where the soul’s authentic source of mystical transformation lies: not in rationalist demonstrations, but through experience of the energies of grace and divine love.” “Engaging the Thomistic Tradition and Contemporary Culture Simultaneously: A Response to Burrell, Healy, and Schindler,” 607. Cf., Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), ch. 3-4. Against such anti-intellectualist critiques, Ralph McInerney provides one of the most impressive and conclusive defenses of the *praeambula fidei*, that is, the rational principles used to argue for the existence of God independent of Divine or Special Revelation. *Praeambula fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers*.

Theologiae, that this interpretation is definitely not what Aquinas had in mind.⁸² Aquinas will admit a natural knowledge of God but, properly understood, it is not a direct knowledge of God's essence, but a likeness (*similitude*) derived through God's effects. And these effects are nothing other than what one can and does observe in the natural world. Keep in mind that Aquinas held, as articulated above, that philosophy was a true science, producing objective knowledge of the world, and not some mere semantic or poetic art.⁸³ Each of the Five Ways begins with premises specifically derived from metaphysics and/or the philosophy of nature. In the First Way, Aquinas takes motion or the *aporia* from change as the main premise of the argument; the Second Way begins with efficient causality, a principle any philosopher would be hard-pressed to deny its metaphysical character; the Third Way takes its premises from the domain of what contemporary philosophers would identify as *modality* (hardly un-metaphysical); the Fourth Way, as this dissertation will demonstrate, is exclusively dependent upon numerous metaphysical principles (e.g., instantiation, transcendentals, et al.); the Fifth Way begins with a different form of

⁸² This topic is also addressed in his commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard and in his commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate*. Again, see McInerney, *Praeambula Fidei*, 26-32.

⁸³ "...since the essence of science consists in this, that from things known a knowledge of things previously unknown is derived..." Commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*, 2.2. Cf., *Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 72a25-72b4. See also C. F. J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas: God and Explanations* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1997), Ch. 1. David Burrell would argue against such scientific confidence with an eye on language as the ever pervasive strong-arm on what is to be considered objective through philosophical investigation. *Analogy and Philosophical Language* (London: Yale University Press, 1973), 6. Against such Heideggerian and Wittgensteinian influences, McInerney paints a much more classical and realist understanding of philosophy.

"The principles of philosophy are certain truths within the immediate ken of every human person. Such truths are not only theoretical, but practical as well. It is the mark of both that they are *per se nota quoad omnes*. Who could fail to grasp being, since it is grasped in anything we conceive? Who could fail to see that it makes no sense to affirm and deny the same thing at the same time? Who does not know that good is to be done and evil avoided? Augustine said that he had many men who wished to deceive others, but none who wished to be deceived. That is a good basis for reminding them of the great moral metatruth: you should not do to other what you would not have them do to you.

It is the very modesty and matter-of-factness of this that must have attracted Thomas to Aristotle. Access to these principles is the great binding force in the human community because it puts us in tune with the way things are. These threshold truths have a permanent and pervasive role to play in our search for truth, but of course wonder at the world will lead us beyond the obvious and common to the increasingly difficult. The ultimate end of theoretical reasoning, the quest for causes, for answers to why things are as they are, is knowledge of the First Cause. The telos of philosophy is God and its ultimate inquiries can be called, and were called, theology." *Praeambula fidei*, 87.

causality, this time from final causality. Taking the Five Ways either individually or as a whole, it becomes apparent that Aquinas is interested in providing a purely metaphysical (philosophical) demonstration of God's existence.

2.4 *Summa Contra Gentiles*⁸⁴

It is telling that in the third chapter of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* Aquinas makes clear how some truths about God are above demonstration from natural reason (one such truth is the doctrine of the Trinity) and, therefore, anything short of divine revelation will not aid in the discovery of those divine truths. However, he goes on to say, “there are some truths which the natural reason also is able to reach. Such are that God exists, that He is one, and the like. In fact, such truths about God have been proved demonstratively by the philosophers, guided by the light of the natural reason.”⁸⁵ Aquinas is very precise on this theme: one can, through natural reason, demonstrate the existence of God definitively, as his philosophical predecessors have in the past.⁸⁶ Following this, Aquinas asserts that there is no direct knowledge of God's essence and due to the very fact of this chasm between the intellect's capacity to directly know substances (i.e. essences) and actual knowledge of the Divine essence itself, one can only reach knowledge

⁸⁴ The *Summa Contra Gentiles* was written somewhere between the years 1259-65. The intentions behind the work are regarded with uncertainty. Some believe it was meant as a manual for purposes of evangelization, specifically targeted at Muslims and their conversion, but this is questionable since not much is said about Islam and its structure is far from being a “missionary” manual. Cf., Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide & Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6, especially foot note 23; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 17.

⁸⁵ *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.3.2.

⁸⁶ Sure enough, in chapter 13 he will elaborate upon Aristotle's arguments. Aquinas also makes it a point to speak of the *philosophers (philosophi)* from the past, “guided by the light of natural reason” not the *theologians (theologi)* from the past (Cf., I, 12, 6: “...the pursuit of the philosophers, who have striven to demonstrate that God exists”). This, of course, implies that Aquinas is genuinely interested in demonstration on rational grounds alone. Aquinas makes a similar distinction between “philosophers” and “believers.” Cf., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II.4.

of God indirectly through “sensible things” and not via *a priori* demonstration.⁸⁷ In chapter 9 Aquinas lays out his “manner of procedure,” for this entire *Summa*.⁸⁸ This is important to stress because it provides a great indication of what Aquinas has in mind concerning demonstration and God’s existence, for instance he says, “now, among the inquiries that we must undertake concerning God in Himself, we must set down in the beginning that whereby His Existence is demonstrated, as the necessary foundation of the whole work. For, if we do not demonstrate that God exists, all consideration of divine things is necessarily suppressed.”⁸⁹ They would be suppressed exactly because they would lack a rational foundation for their belief.

In chapters 10 and 11 Aquinas discusses and addresses a series of arguments made by those who believe that the existence of God is self-evident. The main argument and the offshoots that Aquinas critiques circle primarily around Anselm’s ontological argument.⁹⁰ Aside from reiterating the previous point that direct knowledge of God’s essence is not possible and therefore not self-evident, he brings up the following argument: “Consequently, if God Himself could be thought not to be, then something greater than God could be thought.”⁹¹ To this Aquinas replies that it does not necessarily follow that if God is that greatest thought (which itself is not self-evident), ergo, the implication of that thought not existing in actuality is impossible and so God must exist; the intellect’s inability to comprehend God’s essence as is, is at fault, and this is why God’s existence is proven by reasoning from effect to cause (from what

⁸⁷ And, “only on the basis of a great deal of labor spent in study” *Ibid.*; Cf., I, 3.4. This is valuable to add because Aquinas is being both direct, yet modest in his claims.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 9,5.

⁹⁰ “The proposition *God exists* is of this sort. For by the name God we understand something than which a greater cannot be thought. This notion is formed in the intellect by one who hears and understands the name God. As a result, God must exist already at least in the intellect. But He cannot exist solely in the intellect, since that which exists both in the intellect and in reality is greater than that which exists in the intellect alone. Now, as the very definition of the name points out, nothing can be greater than God. Consequently, the proposition that God exists is self-evident, as being evident from the very meaning of the name God.” *Ibid.*, I, 10, 2. Cf. Anselm, *Proslogion* 2-3.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, I, 10, 3.

is known, to that which *becomes* known as science would have it).⁹² The third argument in the series takes the proposition “God Exists” as self-evident since “the predicate is consequently either identical with the subject or at least included in the definition of the subject.”⁹³ If one had actual knowledge of God’s essence, then one can make the claim for self-evidence, “but, because we are not able to see His essence, we arrive at the knowledge of His being, not through God Himself, but through His effects.”⁹⁴ The fourth argument claims that one’s natural gravity toward happiness is none other than God, and therefore, “that God exists is naturally known since...the desire of man naturally tends towards God as towards the ultimate end.”⁹⁵ In reply, Aquinas agrees that the natural desire for *beatitudo* is, in the long run, a desire for God, but this natural desire for God can only ever be understood as such *after* a demonstration of God’s existence: “On this basis, it is not necessary that God considered in Himself be naturally known to man, but only a likeness to God. It remains, therefore, that man is to reach the knowledge of God through reasoning by way of the likenesses of God found in His effects.”⁹⁶

Chapter 12 is probably the most direct question concerning the inquiry over Aquinas’ understanding of demonstration and God’s existence. Here, Aquinas introduces the argument which claims that knowledge of God’s existence can only be reached either through faith or divine revelation. The first argument defending this thesis asserts a lack of distinction between God’s essence and His existence; *that* He is and *what* He is are identical and, therefore, “following reason we cannot arrive at a knowledge of what God is”; demonstration is not possible since the very thing one is trying to demonstrate is already part of the very definition or

⁹² “It arises, rather, from the weakness of our intellect, which cannot behold God Himself except through His effects and which is thus led to know His existence through reasoning.” *Ibid.*, I, 11, 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, I, 10, 4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 11, 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 10, 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 11, 6.

essence of the thing itself.⁹⁷ Second, without knowing God's essence, there is nothing to demonstrate (demonstration presupposes *something* to be demonstrated).⁹⁸ Third, all demonstration begins with the senses, but given that God transcends the material world due to His immaterial nature, transcending any ability of the senses to appropriate something of His essence, then it follows that His existence cannot be demonstrated.⁹⁹

Against the first argument, indeed God's essence and His existence are identical (this will be demonstrated later on), but once more, God's essence is not knowable as such *directly*; "the reference is not to the being that signifies the composition of intellect."¹⁰⁰ That being the case, the argument's conclusion can only be accepted as true "when our mind is led from demonstrative arguments to form such a proposition of God whereby it expresses that He exists"; in this case, demonstration based on the real distinction between essence and existence in everything else other than God.¹⁰¹ Against the second argument, demonstration of God's existence need not begin with knowledge of God's essence, rather, one can begin with effects found in the world (such as the reality of potency and act as he will argue in the first way).¹⁰² Finally, in response to the third argument, God does indeed transcend all matter, but everything that is "sensible," namely God's effects, are what establish the basis for a demonstration of God's existence, given that knowledge begins with the senses.¹⁰³ As Aquinas concludes, "the effort to demonstrate the existence of God is not a vain one."¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Ibid., I, 12, 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., I, 12, 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid., I, 12, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., I, 12, 7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., I, 12, 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid., I, 12, 9. "His effects, on which the demonstration proving His existence is based, are nevertheless sensible things. And thus, the origin of our knowledge in the sense applies also to those things that transcend the sense."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., I, 13, 1.

2.5 Summa Theologiae¹⁰⁵

Leading up to the article on the existence of God and his exposition of the Five Ways, Aquinas provides answers to some key questions that will shed more vital light on his cogito behind rational demonstration of God's existence. The very first article in the Summa asks whether there really is a need for any other science or discipline aside from philosophy.¹⁰⁶ Aquinas replies in the affirmative. He acknowledges that philosophical science is "built up by reason" and from reason man can reach "those truths about God," but reason alone can only provide a limited amount of knowledge concerning God's existence and not without "the admixture of many errors."¹⁰⁷ Because God is man's final end and man cannot act toward achieving that end without some knowledge of the end in question, Aquinas argues it was necessary that "certain truths" (not all truths), be revealed for man to have a more adequate comprehension of his final end.¹⁰⁸ This presents an honest assessment of the intellect's capacity for demonstrating the existence of God. Aquinas, on the one hand, neither denies that one can have philosophical knowledge of God and, on the other, is very clear that that knowledge is

¹⁰⁵ As with the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, there seems to be a good amount of speculation over Aquinas' intentions in writing the *Summa Theologiae*. In general, this *Summa* is taken as a manual in theology and philosophy, meant to instruct fellow Dominicans, probably still in formation, but not necessarily limited to them either. For the most contemporary discussion on the matter, see Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae*, 7-17. Cf., McInerney, *Praeambula fidei*, 159. "There can be little dispute that at the outset of the *Summa theologiae* Thomas refers to the philosophical sciences as already known by his reader, pointedly asking if the philosophical science dubbed theology renders redundant the effort he is about to undertake. At least historically, then, the philosophical sciences are distinguished from the *sacra doctrina* that is studied in the *Summa* and the beginner for whom the *Summa* was written is assumed already to have studied philosophy and thus likely to have the problem addressed by the opening discussion. But there is as well general agreement among students of St. Thomas that philosophical work is not only presumed by the theologian: philosophizing also seems contemporary with and intrinsic to the task of *sacra doctrina*."

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 1, 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* Aquinas does not say that apart from revelation man cannot know the existence of God but, that revelation was necessary, as he puts it, "that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely..." thus the revelation of certain truths.

definitely limited and in need of an assistance that goes far beyond what one can establish through natural reason alone.¹⁰⁹

In the very next article Aquinas asks “whether sacred doctrine is a science?”¹¹⁰ Here, Aquinas gives more insight behind the meaning of the term science. There are sciences which begin with self-evident principles, that is, “a principle known by the natural light of intelligence” and there are sciences which depend on the principles established by a more fundamental science, for example, every empirical science other than physics is dependent upon the principles set-down by physics on account of the fact that it is the most fundamental of all the empirical sciences, making all other sciences reliant upon the revelations of physics.¹¹¹ Clearly Aquinas believes that the intellect is capable of discovering the reality of certain first principles (non-contradiction, etc.) and, from such, the procession of knowledge aside from those principles via science can move forward.¹¹² This is the path of metaphysical inquiry and the path Aquinas is set on utilizing for demonstrating the existence of God.

Further down the line, Aquinas concludes that the existence of God is not self-evident because His essence is not known directly by the intellect.¹¹³ He further adds that despite this

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., I, 12, 12.: “Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God as their cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen. But because they are His effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God ‘whether He exists,’ and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him.”

¹¹⁰ Ibid., I, 1, 2.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Cf., I, 1, 6: “The principles of other sciences either are evident and cannot be proved, or are proved by natural reason through some other sciences.”; I, 1, 8: “As other sciences do not argue in proof of their principles, but argue from their principles to demonstrate other truths in these sciences...”; I, 2, 1: “If, therefore the essence of the predicate and subject be known to all, the proposition will be self-evident to all; as is clear with regard to the first principles of demonstration, the terms of which are common things that no one is ignorant of, such as being and non-being, whole and part, and such like.”

¹¹² Commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, IV, lesson 6, 596-610.

¹¹³ Ibid., I, 2, 1.: “Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their name – namely, by effects.”

absence of God's essence in human knowledge, man has something "by way of nature" that points him in the direction of God's existence, but this is obviously not any actual knowledge of God's essence, since he just stated that that is impossible.¹¹⁴ Instead, the natural desire or final cause of man is God as evidenced by his ongoing search for happiness and truth but, "this, however, is not to know absolutely that God exists; just as to know that someone is approaching is not the same as to know that Peter is approaching, even though it is Peter who is approaching..."¹¹⁵ Man's unending search for truth and happiness, according to Aquinas, is placed in man by God, but these desires should not be confused with actual knowledge of God's existence, yet alone His essence.

Then, of course, there is the question whether it can be demonstrated that God exists?¹¹⁶ Aquinas argues that God's existence can be demonstrated *a posteriori*, meaning, from an effect to its cause (this is, for Aquinas, the second manner of demonstration).¹¹⁷ Because the essence of God is unknowable (i.e., there is no direct contact established with God's essence so that one can announce that "this is God" in the same manner that one can conclude from "this is an animal" and "this is a man" to "man is an animal"), and God's existence is not self-evident, and every *effect* must have a cause, then any demonstration must begin with those effects – the concrete sense datum of the world.¹¹⁸ In his reply to the first objection, Aquinas is certain on a number of fronts: a) there is a distinction between what natural reason can tell us about God from what divine science reveals (i.e., divine revelation); b) these truths from natural reason are not articles of faith, because they come from human effort, and are not divinely revealed; c) those truths

¹¹⁴ Ibid., "To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature..."

¹¹⁵ I, 2, 1, ad 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., I, 2, 2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Cf. I, 1, 9: "Now it is natural to man to attain to intellectual truths through sensible objects, because all our knowledge originates from sense."

known through natural reason serve as *preambles* to that which is divinely revealed; d) the existence of God “is capable of being scientifically known and demonstrated.”¹¹⁹

On the actual question concerning whether God exists, as addressed above, Aquinas is straightforward on the mode of procedure.¹²⁰ Just as the physicist begins with the material things of the world, so too does metaphysical demonstration. The opening premise in each of Aquinas’ Five Ways begins with some piece of evidence gathered from the material world.¹²¹ Each way introduces an a posteriori appeal that in no way presupposes or even implies God’s existence as part of some question begging strategy. On the contrary, it is in Five Ways derived from five different aspects of reality observable either directly or indirectly that provides the groundwork for a rational demonstration.

If this commentary on both his treatises has indicated anything, it should bring awareness to the fact that Aquinas wholeheartedly believed that the existence of God could be demonstrated on rational grounds alone. Philosophy, as a methodological science, was indeed the framework Aquinas and many of his philosophical forerunners relied upon for their metaphysical demonstrations. This approach was never fully abandoned, despite the advances made by the pioneer thinkers of the Enlightenment and their loyal adherents. It was Aquinas’ predecessors, those who studied and commented upon his work in the name of Scholasticism or Thomism that

¹¹⁹ Ibid., I, 2, 2, ad 1.

¹²⁰ Ibid., I, 2, 3.

¹²¹ The First Way begins with the reality of motion in the world: “It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion.” The Second Way begins with the discovery of efficient causes in the world: “In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes.” The Third Way begins with possibility and necessity: “We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be.” The Fourth Way begins with the gradation of transcendental perfection in things: “Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like.” The Fifth Way begins with final causality in the world: “We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result.”

took up the task of promoting and defending the philosophic or, rather, the scientific demonstration of God's existence.

3

The Fourth Way and Some Commentators

All scholarship and ensuing commentary written in the last hundred years or so on the Fourth Way falls short of breadth and scope when compared to the extensive enterprise that has engaged the other of Aquinas' classic arguments for the existence of God as articulated in his *Summa Theologiae*. It may very well be the case, as Feser states, that "of all of the Five Ways, the fourth is generally regarded as the most difficult for modern readers to accept, or even to understand."¹²² This may provide a great insight as to why the corpus of Thomistic studies runs somewhat tenuous on this particular proof for God's existence. Nonetheless, there is light at the end of the philosophical tunnel. There have been numerous scholastic philosophers of note and others who have supplied valuable exegesis on the argument. The following chapter is meant to supply a condensed summary of what certain Thomists and non-Thomists have commented on the Fourth Way either in their attempt to defend its line of thought, or simply to get a better grasp of the overall intention, or to make clear its shortcomings. The final end of this gathering of authors is not only meant to analyze the various approaches that they have undertaken to address the Fourth Way respectively, it will also help to illuminate the critical and crucial questions and methods of approach that have traditionally surrounded any investigation of the argument, in addition to distinguishing Feser's commentary as the most profitable as it will be argued in the final chapter. In general, the following collection of commentary that is to ensue provides some insightful and illuminating interpretations on the structure of Aquinas' metaphysical locus and its praxis at work in the Fourth Way.

¹²² Edward Feser, *Aquinas*, 100.

The abundance of commentary seems to fall under either one of two contexts (though not without some correlation), either a specifically apologetic purpose, that is, with the expressed intention of defending the Fourth Way as a serious argument whose conclusion is correct, or under an academic survey of Thomas' metaphysical thought. With that said, not all commentators reach the same conclusions and some are far from enthusiastic about the argument's method, bringing some critical attention to what they perceive as deficiencies behind Aquinas' rationale in his formulation of the premises. The arrangement of the following commentary is organized in chronological order beginning with early twentieth century commentators and ending with the most contemporary discussion on the matter.

3.1 George Hayward Joyce¹²³

Joyce introduces the Fourth Way as the *henological argument*.¹²⁴ The henological principle illustrates and argues from the numerous and multifaceted things of the world, in the specific case of the Fourth Way, things that share in truth, goodness, nobility, and so forth, to a principle source of being as their efficient cause; a unitary and perfect principle of being, as source and summit, is derived from the imperfect manyness of being, that is to say, the manyness of being can be traced back metaphysically speaking to a single source of being as the cause of all being. The principle is only a definition and not a thought out rationale proving the existence of what it defines. Nevertheless, proceeding from this principle, Joyce begins by identifying and elaborating upon certain characteristics that define and shape the specific perfections (i.e., the

¹²³ Jesuit Father and Anglican convert to Catholicism, George Hayward Joyce (1864-1943), was a noted professor and scholar of theology and philosophy at Stonyhurst College in the United Kingdom. He was the author of several books: *Principles of Logic* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1920); *The Question of Miracles* (London: Manresa Press, 1914); *The Catholic Doctrine of Grace* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1960); *Principles of Natural Theology* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1923); *Christian Marriage: An Historical and Doctrinal Study* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933).

¹²⁴ *Principles of Natural Theology*, 105.

transcendentals or, those perfections necessarily predicated of all being as understood through six different aspects or modes: *being, one, true, good, thing, something*) that Aquinas had in mind. These perfections are devoid of genus and species and are *convertible* with being in all its categories, that is, any particular *being* is (formally) also a *thing, something, one, true, and good*.¹²⁵ They lack no imperfection in their essence as what they are; it is only outside of the perfection itself when it is predicated of things where a gradation is discoverable, but the perfection itself is not in any way necessarily dependent or tied down to anything that it is predicated of especially any material body.¹²⁶ In addition, they have a proportionally *analogous* relation with finite being and not a *univocal* one.¹²⁷ With that in place, Joyce proceeds to give a concise rendition of the argument:

When one and the same perfection is found in different beings, it is impossible that they should possess it independently; all must have received it from one and the same source. And if the perfection in question is one, the idea of which connotes no imperfection, the source from which it is received is none other than the perfection itself, subsisting as an independent being. Now the things of our experience possess in common the perfections of being or reality, of goodness, of truth, and of unity: and these are perfections which involve no idea of imperfection. Hence we must admit the existence of the Real, the Good, the True, the One. Moreover, it may be shewn that these are not distinct the one from the other, but are one supreme and infinite Being.¹²⁸

After his restatement of the argument, Joyce replies with a question: Is it not possible to conceive of triangle A as true, both in triangle A's essence as triangle, and in addition to truth being truth

¹²⁵ "The animality and the rationality of Socrates are alike *real*: so too are his qualities, his quantity, etc., etc. In the same way *goodness* may be predicated of all these. Manhood is a good thing: so is strength: so too the size due to a human body: so also the relation of paternity. Again, one and all these things are capable of becoming the object of intellectual knowledge. They are therefore *true*." Ibid. 106.

¹²⁶ In other words, *goodness* is found to be more and less in things but, through itself, it admits of no approximation. *Goodness*, by itself, is simply *goodness*. And it has no necessary attachment to any one material thing since a distinction can be made, for example, between *goodness* and *dogness*.

¹²⁷ "The goodness of a man is not identical with the goodness of a horse, nor can the two kinds of goodness be expressed by a concept which remains the same as applied to each of them. Yet there is a proportionate resemblance in the two cases." Ibid., 108. The issue of analogy will be a reoccurring theme for some commentators in their explanation of the relation between the transcendentals and being.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 109.

qua universal? In other words, why must there be a distinction between the truth in things and truth itself? Why must the many true things be explained via some *one*?

In reply, Joyce argues the point that a thing is what it is given its essence and in so far as particulars falling under a certain kind or concept are represented as numerically distinct, their individual identity cannot be the basis for their falling under that class to begin with. For example, what makes two wooden triangles actual triangles? Is it the triangles themselves, qua individuals, or is it that they fall under the concept (i.e., universal), *triangle* or *triangularity*? What Joyce is attempting to demonstrate is that things are what they are by some higher cause, or participatory relation, that “the perfection held in common must have been received from another. And as diversity will never account for unity we are driven back at last to a single cause to which that common perfection must be referred.”¹²⁹

Returning to the transcendentals, Joyce reiterates the point that these perfections involve no limitation in their essence; “the concept of goodness as such expresses goodness in an infinite degree.”¹³⁰ Any limitation to be found in goodness is due to the discovery of that perfection in material things, and thus limited in finite being, but this does not affect the reality of goodness itself as a pure perfection. Furthermore, the higher cause of the transcendentals will contain these perfections *eminently*, as opposed to *formally*, for example, “goodness and reality will be found *formally* in the cause producing them. The cause of goodness will itself be good: the cause of reality will be real; though the mode in which these perfections belong to it will not be identical with, but analogous to, the same perfections as found in its effects.”¹³¹ In the end, all

¹²⁹ Ibid., 110. Ten *good* things cannot explain why any one of them should have *goodness* at all. Participation is meant to denote the metaphysical relation in place between a thing and its properties.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 112.

¹³¹ Ibid., 113. *Good* things are good, but not in the same manner as that which is goodness itself. In the former case, things are good formally since they contain goodness, but they do not exhaust goodness itself. Only

transcendentals terminate in a single cause that is not in possession of them as finite beings are, but is each transcendental in an infinite capacity.¹³²

In summary, by engaging the Fourth Way through the *henological* principle, Joyce intends to dispense a type of general metaphysical paradigm that accents the arguments use of being in its rank of perfections to a maximum in being as the efficient cause of all being. The perfections that are exclusively being employed are those transcendental perfections all of which are *convertible* with being under different modes or aspects. Though the term (convertible) is never employed by Joyce, he does provide some examples of how this convertibility works but, if anything, Joyce focuses the conversation not on the convertibility of the transcendentals, but to what he describes as the *principle of perfection* and the *principle of limit*.¹³³ The former principle marks out the transcendentals as unlimited in their very essence, which is underscored by the latter principle, which identifies the limitation of any given thing's possession of any one transcendental so as to mark a distinction between its essence and its participation with that transcendental (equating to a "more and less" of that transcendental). As will be pointed out in further commentaries, Joyce never remarks about the "Platonic" feel of the argument and neither is the principle of participation given its due course (all of which later commentators will explicitly stress as important features of the argument). In the final analysis, the grades of transcendental perfection in being are distinguished as pure perfections, invariable in their essence goodness, truth, nobility, and the like, that are found to various degrees in finite being.

that which is goodness itself will it possess goodness to an eminent degree, which is to say, a fuller degree than that which merely has it formerly.

¹³² "Pure goodness, as we have seen, is absolutely simple and is uncaused. It is at the same time *real*. Hence it is not merely uncaused goodness, but uncaused being. It does not possess being; but it *is* being. It is therefore infinite being as well as infinite goodness. So, too, in regard to truth. The true is an absolutely simple and uncaused perfection. Moreover, like the Good, it is real: otherwise it would be nonentity. It, therefore, also is identical with uncaused and infinite being." *Ibid.*, 114-15.

¹³³ These two principles will be distinguished by later commentators as the *per se/per accidens* distinction.

But given that these transcendentals are all convertible with one another, the causal relation between them and all particulars necessarily leads, via efficient causality, to an ultimate source of all being, goodness, truth, etc., as uncaused and infinite being.

3.2 Arthur Little¹³⁴

Arthur Little presents an interesting and extensive overview of Aquinas' use of Platonic metaphysics in the Fourth Way.¹³⁵ In so doing, Little will argue that Aquinas rests the argumentative power of the proof in exemplar causality alone as opposed to efficient causality.¹³⁶ Little does not negate Aquinas' use of efficient causality in his other arguments for the existence of God but, considered as an aspect of efficient causality, exemplar causality alone suffices in the Fourth Way.¹³⁷

For the sake of ease upon the reader, Little provides two worked out summaries of the proof.¹³⁸ In the first summary, Little takes the reader through six progressive stages. First, the more and less of perfections is another way of understanding things as being limited in some fashion via the *principle of limitation*.¹³⁹ An example will help elucidate this principle. In so far as tree A is less good than tree B, tree A will be *limited* in its goodness not just in comparison to tree B, but more importantly, as ontologically limited, given that goodness, considered through

¹³⁴ Biographical information on Arthur Little proved difficult to come by. All that I could discover was a critique of his Platonic interpretation of Aquinas. See Benedict Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 47.

¹³⁵ Arthur Little, *The Platonic Heritage of Thomism* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1949).

¹³⁶ "Our conclusion is twofold: (i) That...St. Thomas is proving the existence of God by the way of exemplarity, and that his words give us no ground whatever for inferring that he implied the dependence of the conclusions on the principle of efficient causality. (ii) If we can show that exemplarity, not considered as including efficiency, was a way to the knowledge of God from which Aristotle was averse in principle we can prove that the Fourth Way is even more Platonic than the henological argument, which is a version of the Third Way." *Ibid.*, 67-68.

¹³⁷ "...we can consider what is in fact an effect extrinsic to the agent as an imitation of its exemplar and disregard its other relations (of efficiency and finality) to its origin." *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 110-113.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

itself or *per se*, would simply not be limited in any way (goodness is *tout court* goodness). Second, the limitation set forth by this principle also includes all *possible* perfections. For example, one may have the ability to develop the capacity to speak one of several different languages other than their native tongue. If these perfections (various languages) never become actualized by the individual they can be referenced as true limitations of the person since those perfections being completely possible, never become actual. In contrast, someone unlimited in this respect would never have to achieve or actualize a thing since they would simply have those perfections already in act.¹⁴⁰ Third, the limitation of possible perfections is objective (things are limited by what they do not possess or actualize). Fourth, that which is limited in perfection can only be understood as actually limited in light of the infinite or unlimited in perfection.¹⁴¹ So there must be something that is infinite perfection. Fifth, anything composed of parts is ultimately limited by its very distinction from the parts it is composed of since those parts themselves are susceptible to limitation as much as the whole and vice versa.¹⁴² Sixth, all finite being is limited by reason of real and possible perfections, moreover finite being is metaphysically composed (made up of parts that are limited themselves) rather than simple (lacking no parts). Therefore, for anything to be limited and finite requires a being that is unlimited and infinite; “it is surely evident that the actual existence realizing an infinite reality whether the latter is actual or possible is itself infinite. A simple infinite perfection actually existing is therefore a necessary condition for the possibility of the finite.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ “Hence the lack of all possible perfection, actualised or not, outside of what the limit admits, whether it is possible in the limited thing or only outside it, constitutes the limit.” *Ibid.*, 111. In other words, things are compounds of potency and act. If a thing were unlimited, it would simply be pure act devoid of any potency.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* Little is suggesting that the notion of limitation only makes conceptual sense in light of its opposite.

¹⁴² The whole is limited because it has parts, and the parts are limited because, presumably, they depend on the whole.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 112. Again, ontological limitation can only be made sense of via the unlimited.

Little's second formulation of the proof:

The prerequisite condition of limited being is the reality in some way of all possible being as the standard of its perfection. But the only adequate way in which all possible being can be such a standard is by the inclusion of its perfections in an actually existing being infinite absolutely or under every respect. Therefore an actual being absolutely infinite is the necessary condition for limited being.¹⁴⁴

What Little contends in the major premise is the existence of a most or maximum of being as the means by which something can be derived of as more or less in being and this is something that Little takes as somewhat self-evident; "...to enable one to conclude validly to the real existence of God this statement must mean that whatever is more or less requires an actually existing Most or Absolute in order to *be* more or less."¹⁴⁵ Things are truly limited by the fact of their predication as more and less. These limitations are not merely conceptual but are actual perfections absent in the thing; "therefore a limited thing is limited by excluding all possible perfection except its own on condition that this excluded possibility is in some way real perfection or being."¹⁴⁶

In explaining the first minor premise Little points out that all perfections actual and possible in something that is limited can be conceived of as infinite, only because all possible perfections implies an infinite amount of perfections by their possibility. But, something that is infinite itself does not admit of any further possibility, or any possibility at all, it simply contains all perfections; "therefore the perfection of the limited thing and all further possible perfection is included in one simple perfection (which is, consequently, the standard of limited perfections

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 113.

outside of these latter).¹⁴⁷ The final premise reiterates the point made above concerning the differences between something composed of parts from that which is metaphysically simple.¹⁴⁸

In summary, it would seem that Little attempts to maintain that the mere acceptance of something truly being more or less (i.e., limited) in any perfection is to implicitly acknowledge the existence of God. Given his two summaries of the proof, whatever perfections one acknowledges a thing to have regardless of their being transcendental or not, it is obvious that no one thing exhausts the possibility of having more perfection or, in other words, nothing has *all* perfections. But, if this is the case, then how is any gradation or degrees of being possible without there being some source from which all things receive their perfections in the first place (especially that of being). And, how does one make sense of approximations, degrees and grades of more and less (especially truth and being) without at least some implicit understanding of a real maximum? Then again, any recognition of such a maximum even implicitly so is to open the door to an ultimate source of perfection, which in Little's mind is understood as the exemplar of infinite perfection, and thus the exemplar cause of all finite perfection.

3.3 Maurice R. Holloway¹⁴⁹

Holloway argues that the Fourth Way is “directly and explicitly based upon exemplar causality, but only implicitly on efficient causality.”¹⁵⁰ In his mind, this is the only way to comprehend and explain why there would be various degrees of transcendental perfections found

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “An absolute infinite or infinite under every respect is one that entirely excludes non-being or limit. But what is constituted of a plurality of realities contains in each of its parts the non-being of the other parts and in the whole lacks the perfection of being perfect or infinite in all that constitutes it. Therefore what is constituted of a plurality of realities cannot be an absolute infinite.” Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Maurice R. Holloway (1920-2008) was a professor of philosophy at several institutions in the United States including St. Louis University, Rockhurst University, and Fordham before becoming the founding member of the philosophy department at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania. A PhD graduate from the Gregorian University in Rome, his life's research concentrated on the works of Aquinas.

¹⁵⁰ *An Introduction to Natural Theology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959), 130; 133.

in being in the first place.¹⁵¹ The *degrees* of perfections being alluded to in the argument are a manifest datum of reality. In proving this, Holloway introduces the *hierarchy of being* to illustrate how there are objective degrees of being within animate being and, therefore, actual degrees of perfection.¹⁵² His explanation of this doctrine is somewhat deficient, considering that it is not explicitly clear how one being has greater ontological value over another something which Holloway merely asserts as being the case. And whether it is necessary to use the hierarchy of being to get this first premise off the ground rather than appealing to more obvious examples that other commentators will employ is also questionable. Moving forward, an important distinction between the types of perfections and their functions is brought in. There are *essential* perfections (i.e., formal causes considered as perfections), “for example, the perfection of man, the perfection of animal, and so on: these perfections constitute the natures or essences of things and so are incapable of different degrees.”¹⁵³ It is somewhat easy to understand that the essence of a man, a turtle, and a brick of gold cannot delineate from what each is essentially.¹⁵⁴ There are also *mixed* perfections “those in whose very perfection there is present some potentiality or limitation, and hence imperfection.”¹⁵⁵ And, finally, there are “perfections proper

¹⁵¹ This is how he states the problem: “Among the beings of our experience we find common perfections possessed by these beings in different degrees. Is it possible that these different degrees of perfections demand for their intelligibility as differing degrees the existence of a maximum degree of this perfection, and therefore the existence of a being who possesses this perfection in its maximum degree?” Ibid., 119.

¹⁵² “For example, men, animals, and plants all share in the perfection of life. All are living beings; but life is seen to be more perfect in man than in the animal and more perfect in the animal than in the plant. Again, we see that some beings are nobler than others; the being of man is more noble than the being of a dog; and the being of a dog is nobler (of greater ontological value) than the being of a rock, and so forth. Thus there are different grades or degrees of the same perfection, for example, life, goodness, beauty, truth, nobility, in the different beings that exist around us.” Ibid., 119-20.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 132.

¹⁵⁴ This is the principle of identity at work.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Holloway is referring to those things that exist in material form alone, such as dogs and cats, and not numbers or propositions. Dogs and cats contain potencies that can be actualized and predicated of as being ‘more and less’ whereas numbers and propositions, for the most part, cannot. However, all perfections are limited by potency in respect to their being.

to a being as being.”¹⁵⁶ These are what other commentators would describe as pure perfections, that is to say, they contain no movement from potency to act (except in regards to an act of existence). For example, *goodness* and *truth* are predicated of things, but only *analogously* as when this apple is good and true to a certain extent without it actually exemplifying goodness or truth through itself. This last category represents the transcendentals, those perfections employed by Aquinas in the argument. From these considerations, Holloway argues that “the different degrees of the same perfections possess no intelligibility unless there exists a supreme degree of this perfection, we show that God exists, since he is this supreme degree.”¹⁵⁷ How is this exactly? The many “good” things that exist in reality, can only be considered good through participation with that which makes them good, i.e., goodness itself as unparticipated (a pure being); and given that the transcendentals are all convertible with one another, all things which possess anyone transcendental possesses it from that which is the ultimate perfection of them all. Now, why is there principally exemplar causality at work rather than efficient causality? The transcendentals act as divine ideas (exemplars) in the mind of God and when God creates in light of those ideas, those created effects are direct products of those same ideas (in other words, without the idea of truth, there would be no equivalent transcendental perfection, and from this angle, exemplar causality can be understood as the grounding principle in the argument). Then again, it is not the ideas themselves that literally cause a thing. It would truly be difficult to comprehend how the transcendentals, without Gods volition or efficient causality, could have any causal function of their own.

In summary, the predication of transcendental perfections to being and to its various degrees is an undeniable facet of the fabric of things. These perfections (transcendentals) differ

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 132-33.

from all other perfections in regard to their formal structure being devoid of potency, from which they can be understood as pure beings. And it is from these perfections, through participation with them, that all things are good, true, being, noble and the like. But these perfections serve as causal exemplars, all at once convertible which each other, finalizing in one ultimate exemplar of being. And this is God.

3.4 Charles A. Hart

Charles A. Hart, former professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of America, leads his discussion on the Fourth Way with a strong and confident declaration stating that out of all of Aquinas' ways for the existence of God, the Fourth is the "simplest, most certain...the one indubitable argument for the Self-Existing Being."¹⁵⁸ The Fourth Way seeks to examine all of the objects of reality in light of their gradation in perfections, which as will become apparent with further commentators, is another way of putting forward the reality of their participation in the various aspects of being, and most fundamentally, with being itself; and insofar as their being is entirely dependent within this doctrine of participation, then the argument is made for a being that does not participate with being, but simply is the maximum *of* being (i.e., unparticipated being), the Self-Existing Being. This is why Hart believes the Fourth Way to be the most fundamental argument in so far as it highlights this key relationship between existence and participation. The argument is labelled by Hart as the *henological argument* or, what can be understood as "the graded hierarchical character of participated beings to what must be their adequate cause..." that is, "from the various aspects of being to the 'one' of being itself."¹⁵⁹ He

¹⁵⁸ Charles A. Hart, *Thomistic Metaphysics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), 104.

¹⁵⁹ Hart, 104. Bernard Weullner provides a more in depth: "explaining by unifying or unity; one in the source or principle that explains plurality. Hence, it differs from a monistic explanation of plurality by some unity of substance or substratum of all things. The term names the proof of God's existence and unity from participated

begins by noting that Aquinas makes no explicit reference to metaphysical accounts of potency and act within finite being (a theme that is prevalent either explicitly or implicitly in the other four Ways). Instead, the argument “is based entirely on the fixed or static metaphysical constitution of the participated beings of our experience.”¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the Fourth Way “concerns itself with the ultimate cause of the very being or existence of things, and is the only one that comes directly to Self-Existing Being – the only proper designation of God in Thomistic philosophy.”¹⁶¹

Hart advances his investigation by acknowledging in all finite being a *participatory* relation with being or, rather, all finite being participates with an act of existence and from this one derives the conclusion that no finite being has existence as something intrinsic to it as a property flowing from its essence. This is an illumination of the contingency that permeates all finite being and as a consequence the inability for any finite being to account for its own existence. This participation takes metaphysical priority over potency and act, and so the argument, as with all of Aquinas’ other arguments, one begins with finite being under a certain aspect, in this case, from participation, rather than act and potency (i.e., motion and change in the Aristotelian sense).¹⁶²

grades of being.”, 124. *A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Hart, 104. Though it is true that Aquinas makes no explicit reference to the doctrines of potency and act in the argument, in their wake, it cannot be denied that insofar as there is any participatory role within being, this too involves a transition from potency (possible participation with being, goodness, truth, etc., and therefore possible existence, goodness, truth, etc.) to act (actual participation and therefore actual existence, goodness, truth, etc.). The foundational role of potency and act in this case is unavoidable. To take it a step further, it can be argued that potency and act, as possibly the most fundamental principles of being, are the first to be analyzed in any progressive study of being. See for example Thomas Joseph White, “Engaging the Thomistic Tradition and Contemporary Culture Simultaneously: A Response to Burrell, Healy, and Schindler” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, 10, no. 2 (2012): 609-10; Cf., Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 7. See also chapter 4 on potency and act.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 105.

¹⁶² Ibid. Again, one can only begin with participated being or with the actuality of participation from the *potency* for participation (the possibility of participation). But even all participated being, which fundamentally is

Moving ahead, the observation that perfections in finite being vary in degree (and ultimately presuppose an exemplar), is illustrated by Aquinas as he utilizes a simple example derived from the nature of heat; for example, things that are characterized as hot (a kettle full of hot water) can be identified as containing or participating with heat to various degrees (one kettle of water at 200°F another at 212°F - boiling point).¹⁶³ Nonetheless, since the argument is fundamentally concerned with “beings existing in the hierarchical order,” this example yields little fruit and is possibly counterproductive.¹⁶⁴ The real thrust of Aquinas’ argument, according to Hart, involves “the gradation of beings simply as existing and the gradations in their transcendental aspects, such as truth, goodness, nobility and the like (which every being shows simply because it exists and in the degree it possesses existence).¹⁶⁵ What this initial thrust amounts to is the acknowledgment of a two-fold participation within all finite being, first with existence, since no finite being is the source of its existence, second, its additional participation with those transcendental aspects, truth, goodness, nobility, etc. This is all derived from direct acquaintance with actual truth, goodness, and nobility found in real being, allowing Aquinas to make the observation that, “among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like.¹⁶⁶ Hart proceeds by placing the argument in syllogistic fashion:

Major Premise: Beings of our experience showing varying degrees of the perfections of existence and of its transcendental aspects, such as unity, truth, goodness, etc., must ultimately require for their very existence a Being of Unlimited or Infinite Existence, Unity, Truth, Goodness, etc., that is, the Self-Existing Being.

Minor Premise: But the universe of our immediate experience manifests such beings of varying degrees of existence and of its transcendental aspects of unity, truth, goodness, etc.

made up of a participatory act between essence and an act of existence, will gain its existence through its essence. From this point of view, essence has a certain asymmetry with existence as form or essence is what makes matter exist.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. The example from Aristotle that Aquinas borrows is meant to be a mere illustration, as a point of reference for the use of *participation*. See Hart, 82-93. And as Hart has already stated, the real point is the participatory role of all finite being with existence (being).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 106.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 2, 3.

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe of our experience ultimately requires for its very existence a Being of Unlimited Existence, Unity, Truth, Goodness, etc., the Self-Existing Being (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*).¹⁶⁷

What Hart tries to elucidate in the major premise is the finite nature of things and their limited degree of participation with existence and the transcendentals. No one being's essence is its existence and neither is it the fullness of any one transcendental property. Beings "cannot have such existence and its aspects or properties as proper and intrinsic to their very essences because anything intrinsic and proper to the essence of a being must be possessed, not in a limited degree, but fully."¹⁶⁸ Essence gives the "whatness" of a being, but it does not entail its existence, but it does entail the participatory relation between an instance and its kind or a referent and the concept it falls under (e.g., fido being classified under the concept *dog*; the particular participating with the universal; the one with the many). With this said, the minor premise is made certain from participated being discoverable in the real world. Given that a being's essence and existence are not one in the same and neither is it one and the same with any of those transcendental properties, Hart concludes that "they were given such existence; that is, they were caused as to their existence, ultimately, by a being that does have existence, with its aspects unity, truth, and goodness as intrinsic and proper to its very nature or essence."¹⁶⁹ Because a thing lacks the efficient causality for these features, it cannot be accredited with any existential causal relation when it comes to them, that is, finite beings are causally inert when it comes to imparting their own act of existence or any of their transcendental properties.¹⁷⁰ All of these

¹⁶⁷ Hart, 106.

¹⁶⁸ Hart, 106.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Hart provides another restatement of the argument; "there must be one source for a perfection possessed by many and that source must possess the perfection essentially, that is, the perfection must be of the

conclusions point to the existence of a “unique Self-Existing or Un-participated Being” that “can account for the existence of dependent participated beings.”¹⁷¹ Without this Self-Existing being, there would be no source for the transcendental properties nor for the existence of any being whatsoever. The argument begins with intelligible being as participated being and ends with un-participated being as the efficient cause of all participated being. Hart concludes, “once the principle of identity is granted, we may say the argument gives a metaphysical or absolute certitude far superior to the physical or moral certitude of the truths of the various sciences...”¹⁷²

In summary, Hart argues that the Fourth Way asks one to contemplate the various perfections that are contained in being in order to arrive at the understanding that no finite being can be registered as the fullness of any one of those perfections; perfections such as truth, goodness, etc. With enough careful inspection this contemplation will also come to the conclusion that the fundamental perfection of existence comes from without finite being not from within. Existence must terminate with a being that simply is existence itself or an infinite chain of contingency will ensue that leads to fatal epistemological and ontological results. Therefore, there must be a maximum of being that is the efficient cause of all participation with being, truth, goodness, etc. Whether this is truly the simplest argument for the existence of God may be an overstatement but, once the ontological cards that Hart places on the table are conceded, it seems obvious enough that the conclusion must follow. Hart’s take of the argument rests on a number of ontological principles, most notably the doctrine of participation, the principle of identity and efficient causality, yet all within an emphasis on the contingency of being in relation to an act of existence. But without a detailed inspection of the transcendentals

very nature of the being that is the common source. Since it is a perfection that is not of the essence of the many nor required by their very nature, they must receive it from the common source.” *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 108.

and their convertibility and how it is that particulars participate with their universal counterpart it would seem that the argument is not as neat and simple as one would like without already assuming the coherence of these latter principles.

3.5 Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange¹⁷³

In his essay of the Fourth Way, Lagrange identifies its purpose as seeking “a sign of contingency in the ultimate profundities of created *being*.”¹⁷⁴ This contingency of being was also a strong point of emphasis for Hart. Lagrange, echoing Hart and Joyce, introduces the *henological* principal to illustrate the baseline thought at work in the argument, alluding to the multi-faceted aspects of the many finite beings and their gradations in perfections from which an argument is made for their ultimate source in the one source of all perfection.¹⁷⁵ The first aspect of the argument introduces a real gradation or variation of degrees in perfection as readily observable in the world through the objective predication of “more and less” to things. But more specifically, it is those transcendental perfections that are being precisely referred to in the argument (goodness, truth, nobility) that provide the basic ontological direction for the proof – because so many things are good, true, or noble, it becomes clear through the analogical interplay between the transcendentals and the real objects in the world where “being, unity, and goodness are predicated of different beings on *various grounds and in various degrees*.”¹⁷⁶

But, how does the recognition of transcendental variance in being lead to a maximum of being as the cause of all being? In order to answer this, Lagrange highlights the use of the

¹⁷³ The French Dominican priest, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964) was a highly influential figure in the fields of both theology and philosophy during the early and middle periods of the twentieth century. See Chapter 2 for more details on the Neo-Scholastic brand of Thomism which is normally attributed to Lagrange.

¹⁷⁴ *God: His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies Vol. 1* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1934-1936), 302.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 306.

doctrine of participation and a subsequent principle; “if a note, the concept of which implies no imperfection, is found in a *being* in an imperfect state, i.e., mingled with imperfection, this being does not possess this note in its own right, but has it from another which possesses it in its own right.”¹⁷⁷ In elaborating on the doctrine of participation, it is clearly apparent that one may find many things that are labelled or predicated of as, for example, beautiful. There are beautiful trees, and beautiful flowers, and beautiful people, and beautiful buildings. But, it cannot be the case that any one of them is the ultimate exemplar of beauty since they are all labeled beautiful to various degrees rather than being *beauty* itself without degree or variance. Furthermore, a thing simply is what it is given its essence, of which serves as the basis for its principle of identity, so that a distinction is marked between what a thing is through its essence from what it is not. In this case a commonality through beauty does not necessarily equate to anyone one thing being beauty itself through its essence or as its principle of identity.¹⁷⁸ Beings possess beauty to various degrees but, beauty itself is not susceptible to variation or imperfection since it (*beauty*) serves as the source for all beauty, therefore, whatever does possess beauty in variance merely plays a participatory role with beauty which is *above* the thing itself, ontologically speaking.¹⁷⁹

Elaborating on the second principle, Lagrange returns to certain perfections, reiterating the fact that beauty, goodness, et al., imply a lack of limitation to their essence as such.¹⁸⁰ Only

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 311. By *note* Lagrange means a certain perfection.

¹⁷⁸ Lagrange elaborates on this point: “Phaedo and Phaedrus cannot possess beauty *from themselves*; *what properly constitutes them as individuals* cannot explain why they are beautiful; for the individualizing traits in each of them are different, whereas both have beauty in common; *the diversity cannot be the reason of unity*. To say that Phaedo and Phaedrus are beautiful in and by themselves, should be to say that the diverse is of itself one with a unity of similitude, in other words, that elements *in themselves* diverse and not alike, are of *themselves* alike by reason of that which properly constitutes them as individuals. This would involve a denial of the principle of identity or non-contradiction.” Ibid., 312.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 314.

¹⁸⁰ “*In itself*, beauty excludes ugliness, knowledge excludes ignorance or error, and goodness excludes egotism.” Ibid., 316.

in beings themselves does one find a certain restriction of any given perfection such as truth or beauty. What, then, accounts for the restricted participation to begin with? Is it the being itself in possession of the perfection, albeit, in a restricted manner? To the latter question Lagrange responds in the negative for two reasons; first, it is a being's essence that determines it to be what it is apart from its participation with beauty or truth, and second, a thing's essence cannot be qualified ontologically to various degrees, unlike beauty which can be said to exist in a being to various degrees.¹⁸¹ Lagrange is demonstrating that those transcendental aspects of being do not make up the entire essence of anyone particular being. A flower is not beautiful through its essence, it is a flower through its essence and only beautiful through participation with the transcendental perfection of beauty. It would seem that Lagrange takes as a given the convertibility of the transcendentals, and in so doing this leads him to conclude that all finite being participates with the transcendentals via exemplar causality yet ultimately terminating in an efficient causal relationship with the one being that is being, truth, beauty, itself. This being is, therefore, the cause of all being and its transcendental aspects.

In summary, all finite being participates with the transcendentals allowing for things to be predicated of as more and less, true, one, something, noble, etc. Whatever *is* is exactly what it is because of its essence as its principle of identity. But exactly because essence establishes the identity of things and, all things are *only ever* more and less of anyone of the transcendentals, it follows that any given thing cannot be, on the one hand, what it is *essentially* (e.g., a dog) and on the other hand, a transcendental *essentially*. It is only through *participation* that dogs are good leaving a clear distinction between dog qua dog essentially, from dog qua goodness essentially.

¹⁸¹ "To say that Phaedo is beautiful in his own right, admitting at the same time that what properly constitutes him as an individual is something different from beauty, would be the same as saying that elements of *themselves* diverse *are of themselves* in some way one; that the unconditional union of diverse elements is possible – which would involve a denial of the principal of identity." Ibid., 317.

Because all finite being is participated being, meaning, things have being only through participation rather than essentially and, since being itself cannot further participate with being upon pain of an infinite regress that would negate all being, then all finite being is caused to participate with being from that which is subsistent being itself. As was noted with Hart, the principles of participation, identity, efficient causality, and transcendental convertibility make-up the strong elements of Lagrange's case for the Fourth Way.

3.6 Jacques Maritain¹⁸²

It is clear to identify in things a “qualitative ‘more or less,’” a description of something that concludes with a declaration that such and such a thing contains a certain degree of a certain perfection.¹⁸³ Flower A is beautiful, yet not as beautiful as flower B, and then there is flower C, which is even more beautiful than flower B and so forth. Aside from the perfection of beauty there are also other perfections such as truth and goodness that are predicated of things to various degrees. Wherever one finds gradation of this sort “it is necessary that there exist, somewhere, a supreme degree or a maximum (*a most*).”¹⁸⁴ This last claim may cause some to pause. Is it not the case that the predication of beauty to some object, being subjective as it is from individual to individual, could possibly extend indefinitely since one can always discover a flower, car, mathematical equation, star (or anything for that matter), that can be predicated of as evermore

¹⁸² Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) was another key and influential Thomist philosopher of the same time period as Lagrange and is considered to have been ‘the most widely-read pre-Vatican II Thomist’ (Brian J. Shanley, *The Thomist Tradition* [Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002], 6). Maritain pushed for a classical orientation of Thomistic thought that, on the one hand, drew from the knowledge of Aquinas’ previous commentators such as John of St. Thomas (John Poinsot) and, on the other, sought to engage modern culture in an attempt to promote Thomism. In addition, Maritain also separated himself from the *transcendental* and *essentialist* schools of Thomism, siding with an *existential* Thomism, an interpretation of Aquinas’ metaphysics that placed a general primacy on existence as the primary subject of metaphysics (Ashley, *The Way Toward Wisdom*, 50).

¹⁸³ Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955), 40.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

beautiful, good, noble, true, etc.? In other words, how does anyone establish a most beautiful of any one particular? Not only that, but because of this seemingly indefinite predication, no one particular flower or object is able to exhaust or completely encapsulate the fullness of beauty, so that if ever identified, one could say that they had truly discovered beauty itself?

In response to the latter point, what is at play here is a type of participation where by things are considered beautiful, good, and more, but in themselves *are not the reason for* their being good, beautiful, and such, “for *that* it would be necessary that it be good *by reason of itself* or *in essence* (then it would have goodness in all its plenitude. But such is not the case).”¹⁸⁵ From these considerations, Maritain argues that no being can possibly be the original source of its goodness. This must be caused in the being that has goodness to whatever degree or grade by a “First Cause” that is goodness itself through its essence.¹⁸⁶ With that said, it is a clear consequence given the convertibility of the transcendentals, something which Maritain takes as a given, that this “First Cause” will incorporate all of the transcendentals through its essence, or *per se*. But a question still remains on the table, does a gradation necessarily point to an exemplar?

If one understands this gradation in purely material terms, then it will seem highly implausible that an exemplar can be reached. For example, is there an individual flower or an individual woman that can *literally* be considered to be the most beautiful of their kind? Is there some object in the real world that contains, again, in the literalist sense, the most goodness? This may present an unclimbable peak in the world of real phenomena, but, from the lens of *analogy*, the evidence for an exemplar will become evident, since the very concept of “comparative relation” requires a source for whatever is being compared – two things being compared in terms

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

of their goodness require *goodness itself* to be compared to, or else there would be nothing to compare.¹⁸⁷ But by extension of reason, would this not also admit of material exemplars as well? For example, is there literally a hottest thing, coldest thing, smelliest thing, hardest thing, softest thing, roundest thing, deepest thing, greenest thing, etc.? Maritain argues that in fact one would find in nature an exemplar to all of these, but these perfections are *generic* as opposed to *transcendental*; they are not transcendental because they are not identical to and convertible with being, they communicate their influence through univocal causality in the order of material being (e.g., the “hottest thing” making *only* those things hot which come into direct contact with it) and not through participation in the order of ontological being (e.g., the “hottest thing” making *all of* being hot in some way as the exemplar of heat in everything that contains heat). What the Fourth Way is concerned with are those transcendental perfections that are not limited by any genus or species thus confined univocally; “they are analogical, and exist in things by participation, without at any moment being in any subject, however exalted it may be, according to the plenitude of their intelligible content.”¹⁸⁸

In summary, Maritain, as with other commentators, identifies the principle of identity as the limiting factor preventing any one thing from being any of the transcendental perfections through its essence. Only through the principle of participation, distinguishing between the things that *are* good, from that which *is* good *through its essence*, will one arrive at the common and intuitive understanding of what it is for something to *be* good. Therefore, each transcendental through its essence is distinguished from all other beings by its participation with the multitude of finite beings. The argument only concerns the transcendentals because all other perfections are limited by not encompassing all of being; they lack the analogical and convertible

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

nature of their transcendental counterparts. In the end, some efficient cause as the maximum of all being, can be the only viable response for why it is that the transcendentals participate with any object in the first place.

3.7 Etienne Gilson¹⁸⁹

The Fourth Way begins with an observation that is based in reality at large. In the world there are gradations of ‘more and less’ that are used and implemented to describe and delineate the day to day artefacts that one encounters. This gradation is “intelligible to all, and all can quote without hesitation observable realities to which these two qualifications correctly apply.”¹⁹⁰ Here, as with the other Ways, the approach to God begins with a natural and intuitive survey and study of the material world. These grades are gradations or approximations of beauty, truth, nobility, and more. But, these degrees are ontological in nature, and not epistemological: “what is here at stake is the good inasmuch as to be good is to be, and the truth inasmuch as to be true is a certain way of being.”¹⁹¹ According to Gilson, the example that Aquinas provides of heat corresponding to the ‘hottest’ as its ontological source of heat was a type of visual meant to make the connection from a gradation of truth, goodness, etc., found in being, to an ultimate exemplar. Aquinas’ cue is all but perfect, but “it was no more than an illustration of a metaphysical truth for which no adequate example can be found in the physical world.”¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Etienne Gilson (1884-1978), yet another leading and highly influential Thomist of the mid-twentieth century who, along with Maritain, gave an interpretation of Thomistic metaphysics that placed a strong emphasis on existence as the beginning principle of metaphysical inquiry. Being a historian, he was naturally sensitive to the interaction between medieval and modern historical contexts and both their positive and negative influences on Thomistic philosophy.

¹⁹⁰ Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960), p. 75; Cf. *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York, NY: Dorset Press, 1975), 89.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, *Elements*, 75.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 76. In other words, a maximum of all being is literally unapproachable in reality. In the case of heat, variations in temperature allude to the reality that is heat itself (i.e., through its essence). Only through

How, then, are *things in themselves* true, good, noble, and the like? It is by way of *participation* where a being is said to be good, true, noble and more, but not goodness itself, truth itself, noble itself, etc. Even though no one can claim to come into direct contact with the abstract entities that are beauty itself, or truth itself, nevertheless, one does come to know this ontology however implicitly through the existence of things, and by virtue of their participation. And this participation can only make sense to exist in light of an actually existing exemplar of that kind; things are only good if there really is something that is *goodness* itself allowing for an ontological participation between itself and all particulars. The same conclusion follows with truth, nobility, and so forth.¹⁹³ Further still, these exemplars are all convertible with being – “different ways of being.”¹⁹⁴ Whatever has being, but is not being itself, is only participating with being and is deriving its being in a participatory manner from that which is truth, goodness, noble, and finally, the maximum of being.¹⁹⁵ This terminates in a final and supreme source of being from which everything else receives its being through participation.

In summary, Gilson’s argument hinges upon the principles of participation and identity. All existent being can only exist as what it is via the participatory relation between essence and existence, and by extension, with truth, goodness, nobility, etc. Because no being is the efficient cause of its own being, and neither of its own truth, goodness, nobility, these perfections are

analogous predication can we deduce a similar variation in all finite being as presented in the transcendentals, pointing to a maximum of being.

¹⁹³ Because these perfections are intelligible and knowable through actual being, they provide the *a posteriori* starting point for Aquinas’ proof: “Viewed from this aspect, the beautiful, the noble, the good and the true – for there are degrees of truth in things – constitute realities which we can grasp; from the fact that their Divine exemplars escape us, it does not follow that their finite participations escape us also. But, if this is the case, nothing prevents us from taking them as the starting-point of a new proof; the movement, the efficacy and the being of things are not the only realities demanding an explanation. Whatever good, noble and true there is in the universe also requires a first Cause...” *Elements*, 91.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76: “All the things that are said to be more or less any one of these perfections are therefore said to be more or less, and since they all are more or less inasmuch as they more or less participate in being, there necessarily must be a supreme being that is the cause that each and every thing that is, is a being.”

given through participation by that which is being, goodness, truth, and nobility itself. These principles (existence, et al.) being of such a fundamental nature, Gilson believed that the Fourth Way was the “deepest,” metaphysically speaking, of all the ways.¹⁹⁶

3.8 Austen M. Woodbury¹⁹⁷

Woodbury approaches the argument in a careful and systematically drawn out way. He begins by defining key terms from the argument. First, by *perfection* is meant “the fullness or integrity of being,” examples such as “heat, life, wisdom, goodness, animality, shape, etc.” indicate that perfections are “any attribute, property, action, change, passion, or relation that belongs to a thing and can be predicated of it or that is thought of as belonging to and predicable of a thing.”¹⁹⁸ Some things have certain perfections that others lack and vice versa as “water is perfect (perfectly water), though it may lack the perfection which is heat.”¹⁹⁹ Moving from a basic definition of perfection, Woodbury proceeds to define a higher level of perfection, those that are *transcendental* in nature: “transcendental perfection is perfection which is by identity in all being, or convertible with being.”²⁰⁰ Transcendental perfections such as being, unity, truth, goodness, can be predicated of everything that exists so that by analogy the transcendental perfection becomes convertible with any actual existing thing, for example, a rock is a *being*, and

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Austen M. Woodbury (1899-1979) was a student of Garrigou-Lagrange during his studies as a seminarian in Rome. Woodbury developed a reputation as a charismatic and influential teacher in the Thomistic tradition of his mentor. He would go on to establish the Aquinas Academy in Sydney in 1945, an evening school devoted to the laity (James Franklin, *Corrupting the Youth: A History of Philosophy in Australia* [Paddington, N.S.W.: Macleay Press, 2003], 80). Needless to say, Lagrange’s guidance had a tremendous impact and influence on Woodbury who never undertook the task of publishing a book, however his general metaphysical thought and his interpretation of the Fourth Way is contained in his voluminous collection of notes. See *Natural Philosophy* (Sydney: Centre For Thomistic Studies Inc., 2002); *Metaphysics* (Sydney: Centre For Thomistic Studies Inc., 2002); *Logic* (Sydney: Centre For Thomistic Studies Inc., 2000); *Ethics* (Sydney: Centre For Thomistic Studies Inc., 2002).

¹⁹⁸ Woodbury, *Natural Philosophy*, 101-2.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 102.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

it is a *unit*, and so forth. Woodbury continues by distinguishing between *non-transcendental* and *relatively transcendental* perfections. Non-transcendental perfections amount to perfections that cannot be predicated of all being, such perfections as *animality* are only found in animal life not in rocks, or *plasticity* which cannot be said of animals. The *relatively transcendental* perfection is a perfection not unlike a purely transcendental perfection, which is convertible with being, nonetheless, the following relative transcendentals: intellect, knowledge, wisdom, science, appetite, will, love, freedom, life, all have being as their object and are “related by relation of agreement,” that is, the intellect is directed toward being; knowledge is directed toward being; wisdom is directed toward being, and so forth.²⁰¹ Perfections are further catalogued by Woodbury as either *pure* or *mixed*. The *pure* perfection is the actual transcendental or the relatively transcendental perfection; its purity consists in its convertibility with or relation and agreement with being, making it *pure* because it involves no limit or imperfection in what it is.²⁰² The mixed perfection is limited because it can be subsumed under a genus or species; it is all but comprehensive as it were.²⁰³

Woodbury clearly sees in Aquinas’ proof a concern only with the transcendental and pure perfections found in reality.²⁰⁴ From this point, Woodbury goes on to verify a very important distinction found in the structure of being itself. Something is what it is in one of two ways, first through its very essence, so that it *is* what it is, for example a being that is existence or goodness

²⁰¹ Ibid., 102.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid. In other words, mixed perfections, are not convertible with all things.

²⁰⁴ Despite Aquinas’ mention of heat and its gradation as analogous to transcendental participation, Woodbury believes that Aquinas is not arguing from mixed perfections: “this proof is not taken...from material perfections, such as heat or redness because, even if it happens that there be a most in them (e.g. a hottest, or a reddest), neither is this necessarily the efficient cause of all those which are less such, nor is it necessarily the prime and universal cause...” Ibid., 103.

through its essence is existence and goodness *itself* and not merely in possession of it.²⁰⁵ Second, a thing is what it is through *participation*, for example, given that no finite being is the ontological source of its very own existence it must, therefore, participate or form a bond with an act of existence to actually *be* or exist.²⁰⁶ Not unlike Hart, Joyce, and Lagrange, Woodbury also elaborates upon the henological principle as the “proper principle” of the argument.²⁰⁷ As previously noted, what this principle seeks to establish is the cohesion and the real distinction between the unity that being manifests not through its essence as indicated in the distinction made above, but through its participation with perfections in general, while simultaneously establishing the diversity that is apparent in the *manyness* of being. Moving forward, when considering something to be through its essence, for example, if something is goodness through its essence – it is goodness itself – then being what it is, it cannot be lacking in its structure or identity as *goodness* – just the same if a being whose essence is its existence cannot not exist at all or to any lesser degree.²⁰⁸ If a being were through itself, and therefore through its very essence any one of those transcendental perfections, it would indeed be perfect “according to all such perfections,” that is, given that all of the transcendental perfections are convertible with one another, one transcendental implies all the rest, not only incorporating every one of them, but in addition, incorporating each transcendental in its fullest capacity since that being would be truth itself (in its entirety), goodness itself, beauty itself, etc.

²⁰⁵ “Thus that is GOOD BY ESSENCE, between whose essence and goodness itself there is identity, i.e. which not merely has goodness, but is goodness.” Ibid.

²⁰⁶ “And something is GOOD BY PARTICIPATION, if between its essence and the form whereby it is good there is real distinction, - so that it is not goodness, but only has goodness.” Ibid.

²⁰⁷ “Diverse things not according to themselves are united, but there must be some one cause of their union.” Ibid.

²⁰⁸ “Therefore if, for example, something is good by essence, or beautiful by essence, it is MOST good, or MOST beautiful.” Ibid.

Before piecing the argument together in syllogistic form, Woodbury draws one final piece from the argument by providing evidential facts for the degrees by which being participates with the transcendental perfections. The evidence is pooled by what the senses gather from the world of existing substances and the immediacy by which the intellect judges and predicates different degrees of transcendental perfection to those very substances. It becomes much more than one thing being merely hotter than another. As Woodbury illustrates, “the truth that is in a contingent and particular truth is less than the truth in a necessary and universal truth” or “the beauty that is in a tiny flower is less than the beauty of noble heroicity, or of thought or of a noble soul.”²⁰⁹

In summary, Woodbury is able to articulate the argument in one of two ways. First: a) There are many things that participate with and therefore are united with those transcendental perfections; b) There must be something that causes this participation outside of the very thing that is in participation, an ultimate source of perfection; c) This source of ultimate perfection cannot itself be participating with any one perfection (i.e., participated being) or else it would require an efficient cause for its participation with any perfection, which leads to an infinite regress of participation that will never yield any participation (here and now) at all; d) This “process must be terminated at a SOVERIEGN GOOD, which is the PRIME CAUSE of the union of all other goods in being good, and whose own goodness is UNCAUSED.”²¹⁰ Second: a) Beings that are considered good (or any of the transcendental perfections) in some way are not the paradigm of goodness itself but fall short to various degrees; b) These beings that participate

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 104. These examples may come across as too simplistic, but they can be drawn out some making for their stronger defense. For example, the truth behind the mathematical proposition $2 + 2 = 4$ as opposed to $2 + 2 = 5$.²³ is only possible if both mathematical propositions are under the governance of the metaphysical principle of non-contradiction, which in this case would pose as the deeper more fundamental truth, and thus serve as a higher truth because $2 + 2 = 4$ is dependent on the principle of non-contradiction.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 105.

with goodness and therefore fall short of that exemplar of goodness do not have goodness through their essence; c) What would enable all being to participate with goodness is a being that must be goodness and all the other perfections through its essence; d) “Therefore if there are things more and less good, there is a MOST GOOD, which is the PRIME CAUSE of the goodness of whatever is less good.”²¹¹ As with previous commentators, Woodbury’s study of the argument depends upon the principles of identity and participation including the henological principal serving as the overarching theme.

3.9 Frederick C. Copleston²¹²

In his assessment of Aquinas’ Five Ways, Copleston remarks that the various starting points of the first three Ways are much easier to apprehend making the argument, or demonstration for the existence of God much more accessible.²¹³ The Fourth and Fifth ways not so much. They require extra work to be clearly understood. Nonetheless, Copleston does acknowledge a certain intuitive quality to the Fourth Way:

At the same time there is not very much difficulty in understanding the sort of thing which was meant. We are all accustomed to think and speak as though, for example, there were different degrees of intelligence and intellectual capacity. In order to estimate the different degrees we need, it is true, standards or fixed points of reference; but, given these points of reference, we are all accustomed to make statements which imply different grades of perfections. And though these statements stand in need of close analysis, they refer to something which falls within ordinary experience and finds expression in ordinary language.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Fredrick C. Copleston (1907-1994), Jesuit priest and eminent historian of philosophy most noted for his multi-volume work on the history of philosophy, was a strong adherent of Thomisitic philosophy, the *philosophia perennis* as it is sometimes referred. See *A History of Philosophy, Vol. I, 7*.

²¹³ “For nobody really doubts that some things are acted upon and changed or ‘moved’, that some things act on others, and that some things are perishable. Each of us is aware, for example, that he is acted upon and changed, that he sometimes acts as an efficient cause, and that he is perishable. Even if anyone were to cavil at the assertion that he is aware that he himself was born and will die, he knows very well that some other people were born and have died. *Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 115.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 116.

Copleston notes that it may be this intuitive quality to the argument that makes some “feel a marked attraction” toward the Fourth Way, “arguing that in the recognition of objective values we implicitly recognize God as the supreme value.”²¹⁵ Despite any phenomenological appeal to an aesthetic of value contained within the argument, much is still presupposed and assumed requiring deeper analysis. Copleston recognizes that the perfections being spoken of by Aquinas are those *transcendentals* simultaneously predicable and convertible with all being. Given that all finite being participates with these pure perfections, and their convertibility with being, making them all in some manner one in the same received under different aspects, one is left to conclude that “the ultimate cause of perfection must itself be perfect: it cannot receive its perfection from another, but must be its own perfection: it is self-existing being and perfection.”²¹⁶ In formulating Aquinas’ argument, Copleston observes that the comparative judgements where one claims that such and such a being is more and less beautiful or truthful than another must have some objective foundation. But, is it really the case that these judgements hold any objective weight in reality? Can such judgements be justified in any objective sense rather than falling prey to pure convention? These questions seem to be at the center of Copleston’s closing remark on the Fourth Way: “one of the main difficulties about it, however, is, as already indicated, to show that there actually are objective degrees of being and perfection before one has shown that there actually exists a Being which is absolute and self-existing Perfections.”²¹⁷ These remarks seem to be somewhat at odds with his opening comments about the intuitive nature of such predications of perfection in being. Perhaps an intuitive or common sense acknowledgment of a gradation in being, something which seemed obvious enough to the

²¹⁵ Ibid., 126.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. 2: Medieval Philosophy From Augustine to Duns Scotus* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 344.

point of being taken for granted by other commentators possibly proves a little too hasty a move for Copleston? To what degree this proved a difficulty is not conclusive. With this final point, Copleston leaves the discussion open ended.

In summary, the more and less of transcendental perfections in the objects of reality triggers within the human person an awe inspired ascent to some maximum of transcendental perfection as the source of all perfection itself. But before this conclusion of transcendence can be reached, it must be proven that there are actual gradations of perfections in being before it can be further argued that these gradations lead, necessarily, to God as their source and summit. Of all the commentators thus far, Copleston is the first to interpret the argument without reaching its end. The argument depends upon there being an actual gradation of perfections in being given that this is the opening premise. How this can be demonstrated as true of reality Copleston does not furnish an answer.

3.10 Peter Geach²¹⁸

In his opening comment on the Fourth Way, Geach admits that for modern readers the argument can sound “odd and obscure.”²¹⁹ The gradation of truth, goodness, and nobility put forward in the opening premise seems to trouble Geach to the point of abandoning the entire notion all together. Specifically, the idea behind something being more and less true seems to puzzle Geach.²²⁰ Geach argues in the following fashion: if person A were to lie to a greater extent than person B, then person B possesses a higher degree of truth than person A, but how

²¹⁸ The analytic philosopher Peter Geach (1916-2013) is most well-known for his contributions in the areas of logic, philosophy of mind, religion, language and ethics. As someone trained in the analytic tradition of philosophy (a tradition that stems from the works of thinkers such as Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell) Geach engaged with Thomism in both its defense and critique of certain Thomistic doctrines. In this vein, he is attached with an analytic brand of Thomism.

²¹⁹ G.E.M. Anscombe and Peter Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1961), 116.

²²⁰ “I can make no use of this idea...” Ibid.

this displays degrees of truth is uncertain.²²¹ The difficulty in this case in identifying a gradation or variance of truth between both claims seems unwarranted. If person A lies about the bus schedule to an unsuspecting bystander claiming that the bus will arrive at 1pm, and person B just five minutes after the bystander walks away from person A tells the same bystander that the bus will actually arrive at 4pm when in fact the bus is due to arrive at 5pm, it is clear to see that both person A and B were telling lies, yet person A was telling a greater lie than person B, and in doing so person B is closer to the truth of the matter despite his maleficent intentions. In this basic way, one can come to understand that there are degrees of truth. Nonetheless, Geach's intention is to develop Aquinas' argument from degrees of being and goodness however, along with other commentators he will interpret Aquinas as defending indefensible Platonic themes.²²²

Geach comments that any perfection found to a limited degree displays a real distinction between “the individual instance of the perfection and the degree to which the perfection is found.”²²³ The limitation of such a perfection requires a cause for its limitation because anything that would be a perfect instance of that perfection would not be limited in anyway, but would simply be that perfection to the fullest. From here it can be argued that all limited perfections are derived from a being whose perfections are underived as the ultimate perfection itself. With that said Geach thinks that this last premise is “unjustified,” but it is not made very clear by Geach as to why this would be the case. Nowhere does Geach engage with the doctrines of participation, identity, or the transcendentals. But, for whatever it is worth, he does offer an alternative route for the argument, not as a proof for God's existence, “but as telling us something further about God – that the source of all process in the world, and of all beings in it, ‘necessary’ or

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

‘contingent’, is also the source of all perfections in the world, and possesses every perfection illimitably.”²²⁴

In summary, the more or less of perfections seem rather difficult to square for Geach, but for Aquinas, any perfection discoverable as limited, points to the perfection as it is in itself, in an unlimited way. And these limited and unlimited instances of perfections lead to the conclusion of a maximum source of perfection.

3.11 James F. Anderson²²⁵

James F. Anderson titles the Fourth Way as “The Argument From Gradation in Things.”²²⁶ As the argument specifies, the gradations and degrees of “value” or perfections in things is something commonplace to “ordinary experience.”²²⁷ But, given that the argument specifically addresses the perfections of goodness, truth, and nobility, it is concerned specifically with the transcendentals.²²⁸ In similar fashion to other commentators, Anderson provides a useful instruction on the difference a transcendental perfection makes: “a perfection...is said to be purely transcendental if, surpassing every genus or category, it expresses a value that is

²²⁴ Ibid., 117.

²²⁵ James F. Anderson was a distinguished American Thomist, author, and former professor of philosophy at Villanova University. He wrote several works on Thomistic philosophy et al.: *The Cause of Being: The Philosophy of Creation in St. Thomas* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1952); *Treatise on God* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963); *St. Augustine and Being: A Metaphysical Essay* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1965); *The Bond of Being: An Essay on Analogy and Existence* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969); *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 1997).

²²⁶ James F. Anderson, *Natural Theology: The Metaphysics of God* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 40.

²²⁷ “Who denies the presence of gradation, not only in regard to particular and limited characteristics which fall under one or another of the categories like quality, but also as concerns factors found universally in all things, like goodness, truth and beauty?” Ibid.

²²⁸ “It takes its point of departure from this datum: the existence of degrees of purely transcendental (as distinguished from categorical or generic) perfections in things.” Ibid.

intrinsically unlimited and therefore apt of its very nature to be realized in an infinite mode.”²²⁹

To illustrate this, the concept of love (i.e., love through itself) can be understood as being unlimited under this aspect, but when considered as a “passion” it is “necessarily limited or finite: to say ‘passion’ is to say ‘passivity,’ in a word, passive potency or potentiality.”²³⁰ In other words, *love* when found in human beings, is found to various degrees (in potency to those degrees), but love qua essence admits of no metaphysical variation (*love – simpliciter*). The former description defines a mixed perfection, the latter a pure perfection. From here Anderson goes on to provide a list of all the transcendentals in order to distinguish them from those perfections that are only *suprageneric*.²³¹ For instance, *being, thing, one, something, true, good,* and *beautiful* are truly convertible with each other and predicable of everything, but others such as *love, justice, and knowledge* are not convertible with being, however they are devoid of potency in themselves and are directed toward being, and therefore can fall under the terms of *simply* or *absolutely transcendental*.²³² What Anderson sets in place is a real distinction between what he labels as first, second, and third order metaphysical terms and he does this in order to clarify the perfections at use in the argument and their proper function.²³³ Before piecing the argument together, one final and important note needs to be kept in mind. The predication taking place in the argument is one that necessarily involves analogy and proportion. Various things

²²⁹ “...they go beyond, i.e., ‘transcend’ the limitations proper to any given class or category of being.” *Ibid.*, 41.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 42

²³² “The first are indicative of perfections that are ‘pure’ by virtue of their convertibility with being as being; the second, of perfections that are ‘pure’ by virtue of their capacity for infinite realization, despite their nonconvertibility with being as being.” *Ibid.*, 43-4.

²³³ The first order metaphysicals are the transcendentals; the second are love, justice, knowledge, etc.; the third, such as heat, color, etc., “are transcendental only with respect to materiality; they do not indicate pure, or infinitely realizable perfections.” *Ibid.*, 44.

share in being, truth, goodness, love, wisdom, knowledge, and the categories of substance, analogically, and not univocally.²³⁴

The argument itself begins with an identifiable gradation of transcendental perfections in things. Digging deeper, one can infer that no one thing is in possession of any of those transcendental perfections to its fullest. Things are good, true, and the rest, only by participation and not through their essence.²³⁵ This may seem easy enough to say, but the question remains; can anything possess a transcendental perfection to a certain degree without there being something which has it perfectly, and therefore, their ultimate cause? The question is asking if there is an ultimate cause of these transcendentals, i.e., “a simply transcendent ‘most.’”²³⁶ Anderson answers the question by pointing to being. Since all things have being, they cannot fail to be, and if things “have” being, and in all or some of its “perfections and modes,” then they must receive it from that which simply is being itself, or else, one would never arrive at the existence of being at all.

In summary, Anderson goes into great depth to distinguish and define the kind of perfections at use in the argument. His discussion on this matter culminates in establishing three orders of metaphysical terms, with the transcendentals being of the first order (convertible with being) and those specified in the argument. The argument itself is straightforward. If there are things that participate with the transcendental perfection of being to various degrees, given that they exclude being from their essence as such and only receive being by participation, then there must be an ultimate cause of all being (and all transcendental perfections, again, given their

²³⁴ “For instance, there is a potential infinity, as in mathematics, and an actual infinity in God, and therefore ‘infinity’ is predicated analogically; there are rational modes of knowledge, and therefore ‘knowledge’ is predicated analogically. As to third order metaphysicals, there are material qualities, like hardness, and immaterial qualities, like virtue, and therefore ‘quality’ is predicated analogically.” Ibid., 45.

²³⁵ “In other words, *to be finitely is to exist by participation and not by essence*. That which exists “by participation” exists by virtue of something else; that which exists ‘by essence’ exists by virtue of itself.” Ibid., 46.

²³⁶ Ibid., 47.

convertibility). Whether the form of causation Anderson had in mind was exemplar or efficient is not made explicit, but it would seem that any exemplar causality must terminate in efficient causality. The familiar themes of participation, analogy and hierarchy of being, principle of identity are all involved to various extents.

3.12 Fernand Van Steenberghen²³⁷

It is fair to say that Van Steenberghen's stance on the Fourth Way is all but positive.²³⁸ Aside from its failure to produce what it sets out to accomplish, it puts on display a certain yielding to "Platonic dialectic" from which Aquinas falls prey "to the mirage lying behind this seductive dialectic."²³⁹ Whether Aquinas truly fell "prey" to such dialectic via Platonism is not very likely. What does seem more likely is his use and amendment of both Plato and Aristotle, assimilating the best of both worlds into a cohesive synthesis of ontology. In any event, Van Steenberghen employs strong language in order to surface the problematic he saw within the Fourth Way.

There are, indeed, various degrees of perfection found in the finite things of this world. In particular is the perfection of *being*. One can come to grasp that all beings share *being* or have this perfection in common because they *are* beings themselves. This linkage from being-to-being in being all takes place within the "real order," that is, in the real phenomena of things that make

²³⁷ Fernand Van Steenberghen (1904-1993), was significant and productive both as a philosopher and historian of medieval philosophy: *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1955); *The Philosophical Movement in The Thirteenth Century*, (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1955). *Ontology*, (New York: J.F. Wagner, 1970); *Epistemology*, (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1970). He went on to succeed the well-known Belgian Thomist Maurice De Wulf in becoming a long standing professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of Louvain.

²³⁸ Fernand Van Steenberghen, *The Hidden God: How Do We Know That God Exists?* (Saint Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1966), 68-70; 150-153.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 150; 70.

up the world independent and irrespective of the mind's conceptual grasp of that very reality.²⁴⁰ On the conceptual level, being can be connected analogically to all the various and diverse beings that exist, forming a reciprocal relationship that interconnects all being as one and yet many, as well as providing a varied scale upon which 'more and less' can be judged and articulated. Yet this application of gradation only appears as a conceptual one and not to be grounded in the real order.²⁴¹ For instance, how does any gradation among finite things necessarily lead to an exemplar in reality?²⁴² And even if you grant the existence of that exemplar, it is beyond necessity that it should be the cause of all its kind.²⁴³ Only the Platonist will acknowledge the existence of a *real form* of being from which all participants can be judged as being more and less in their participation. Van Steenberghen sees in Aquinas' argument a hasty rush to an exemplar of being: "but can it exist otherwise than in an order of finite beings which are opposed to one another while, at the same time, they resemble one another? Is not 'infinite being' a contradiction in terms?"²⁴⁴

In summary, what Van Steenberghen seems to be arguing are two points. First, the perfections that are accounted for in varying degrees cannot be denied. Nonetheless, it is only in

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 151.

²⁴¹ "At the conceptual level, there is a parallel situation constituted by the fundamental properties of the idea of being, which is transcendental and analogical, and by the resulting *logical participation*. The idea of being is limited by 'differences' which are intrinsic to it and which serve to bring out the inexhaustible riches it contains implicitly. Generic and specific concepts 'participate' in the concept of being, therefore, and are diversified in the conceptual order as they recede from this transcendental unity. *In the conceptual order*, therefore, the more and the less are predicated by reference to a maximum, which is the transcendental concept. Is there a unity in the real order corresponding to the unity of the concept of being in the logical order? Platonism, because it reifies the concept of being, answers 'Yes'; it regards being as an Idea, an entity *sui generis* belonging to the intelligible world." Ibid., 151-2. Apparently, for Van Steenberghen, any *real* 'more and less' can only exist in light of a real exemplar vis-à-vis Platonic exemplar to ground the approximation.

²⁴² "On the one hand, *the more and the less do not necessarily imply reference to a maximum*, but, in most cases, imply a unit measure: a person is more or less rich according to his sterling or dollar holding; a person is more or less tall in proportion to his inches or centimeters...even in the domain of spiritual values, intelligence, memory, will, a child's docility, are measured, not by reference to maxima, but by using tests which can be reduced to unit measures." Ibid., 69-70.

²⁴³ "The richest man is obviously not the cause of the wealth of others." Ibid., 70.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 152.

the mind that one can attribute any analogical connection between *being* and *beings* and to their varying instances (i.e., a purely logical analogy and not an actual one). For example, it is only in the mind where beauty can reach different levels of approximation to an exemplar, but this does not literally transfer over into the realm of real substances without advancing Platonic abstracta or forms as the measuring rod for objective approximations. Additionally, granting any real gradation of perfection will lead to the existence of material exemplars and how these exemplars lead to the maximum of all being is curious to say the least. Second, any real existence of an infinite being must be proved first and foremost before it can be demonstrated that “finite beings are participations in an infinite being and that, therefore, more and less, when predicated of transcendental perfections, refer to a *real maximum*.”²⁴⁵

3.13 Gerard Smith²⁴⁶

Smith observes that the “data of the fourth way” is composed of those transcendental perfections, “(1) predicable of everything which is or can be, (2) according to the proportion or measure by which each subject of predication possesses the transcendental perfection.”²⁴⁷ These transcendental perfections are found in things to various degrees, for example, the transcendental of being is greater in a *man* than in a *stone*, yet not as great as that of an *angel*.²⁴⁸ What Smith is

²⁴⁵ Ibid. This would be an appropriate critique if one were trying to argue from a priori premises (say ontologism), but how this is extracted from Aquinas’ argument is hardly from conclusive. The transcendentals are realities pointing to God as the ultimate in being, goodness, truth, etc. And they, in turn, are discovered, taken from outside observation (a posteriori) and not presupposed (a priori). That is why we can acknowledge different levels of goodness and truth in things (something which VanSteenBerghen does not deny) and from these facts, argue back to the existence of the transcendentals, participation, analogy, ect., all leading to a necessary efficient cause for their existence.

²⁴⁶ Gerard Smith (1896-1975), one time chair of philosophy at Marquette University and president of the American Catholic Philosophical Association.

²⁴⁷ “Thus, *being* (that which is or can be) is predicable of everything, according to the measure by which each and every thing is a being. For example, *man is a being, this paper is a being*, etc., according as it is *man, paper*, etc., which are being.” *Natural Theology: Metaphysics II* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 129-30.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

alluding to here is the doctrine of the hierarchy of being. This doctrine calls attention to an overall hierarchical structure of being where one level of being is subsumed by another through the addition of certain perfections. The hierarchy necessarily leads to an ultimate source of being. The more and less of transcendental perfection is an a posteriori reflection of the hierarchy of being.

Smith, following suit with many other commentators, denotes the ontological distinction between a thing in possession of any given transcendental (*per accidens*) from its being that transcendental through its essence (*per se*). In other words, things *participate* with the transcendentals they are not the transcendentals themselves.²⁴⁹ From this it follows that whatever participates with the transcendental, albeit to a certain approximation or grade, must be caused to have it to that degree, but if it is caused, how is it caused? Smith argues for exemplar causality as primary in the argument, but ultimately functioning through “the medium of efficient causality.”²⁵⁰ Taking the transcendental of being into account, it acts as the exemplar or the model by which all things could possibly have being and in this manner, *being*, qua transcendental, serves as the exemplar cause. This obviously raises a certain Platonic scent in the air with talk of exemplar causes and their effects, and Smith acknowledges this, but he is also quick to make clear where the argument actually diverges from a strict Platonic rendering. To reiterate, the *per accidens/per se* distinction makes clear how things participate in being without exhausting being itself. All of this makes sense in light of the grades of being that exist in things (all existing things participate with being without equalling being itself). But, any gradation of being requires something which is being itself, devoid of any grade or participation with

²⁴⁹ “If to-be-a-man were to be fully a being, there would be no being except man. Now, to say that no given being is fully the transcendental perfection which is found in it, is to say that the transcendental perfection found in a given being approximates, but does not exhaust, that perfection.” Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 131;134.

being.²⁵¹ What makes this argument non-Platonic in light of Smith's initial drive for exemplar causality is the following, all particulars do possess their exemplar at least conceptually, but considering being itself, this is not some idea/Platonic form, for if it were, it too would require further participation with being *ad infinitum*. Exemplar causality is primary in the sense that without the exemplar or idea acting as a sort of blue print there would not be the effect or particular that exemplifies it:

So in the fourth way, let there be a transcendental perfection. Because it came into existence, there must have been something which made it come into existence, an efficient cause of being. Because it was a gradated transcendental perfection which came into existence, there must have preceded the limited being one which is absolutely perfect. The existence of the exemplar is thus already acquired from the existence of the exemplified. It is not however impertinent to notice, as St. Thomas does, that the exemplar of being is also an efficient cause of being.²⁵²

In summary, Smith's analysis is no different from other commentators in that he recognizes an actual gradation of transcendental perfections in the things that make-up the world. He also highlights the *per accidens/per se* distinction in things and their participation with those transcendental perfections making the ontological distinction between something that is given its essence from what it is by participation.²⁵³ In terms of causality, Smith argues that any gradation of a certain transcendental perfection, for example, being, presupposes the existence of being as the exemplar cause. Unlike Platonic abstracta, the existence of *being* cannot be left existing simply or solely as an idea or concept for if that were the case, it too would presuppose the participation of a higher source of being for its existence and that higher source would also be in need of a higher source and so on. By way of initial intention, the exemplar is recognized first as cause of all particular being, but by way of execution, the exemplar is recognized as efficiently

²⁵¹ "Now that which beings share must exist if they do; and that in which things share cannot itself be a participant, else it would not be that in which things share; rather, it would be that which shares being, just as any other participant does. This nonparticipant being is God." *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁵³ This theme of the *per accidens* necessarily implying the *per se* is normally brought up by commentators, as we have seen, in terms of a thing's identity, i.e., principle of identity.

caused by that which is being itself. In other words, the transcendental perfection itself acts as the exemplar cause of all particulars predicated as having that transcendental, but only because it is put into actuality by a First Cause as the source of all transcendental perfections.

3.14 Anthony Kenny²⁵⁴

In commenting on the Fourth Way, Kenny begins briefly with a review of Plato's doctrine of forms and its connection with the perennial philosophical problem of universals. Since the Fourth Way involves the Platonic doctrine of participation and its application to goodness, truth, nobility, and so forth, it is clear to see a direct linkage to Plato's thought on forms and its corresponding dialogue with how they interact with particulars.²⁵⁵ It is still unsure what Plato fully had in mind when speaking on the ontological status of forms and their relationship with particulars but, for Aquinas, he understood these forms or universals to be "unindividualized" or un-instantiated, as Kenny concludes.²⁵⁶ With this background in mind, the argument begins by noting a gradation in being, for example, some things are better or contain more goodness than others. But a gradation of goodness is too wide and subjective of a criterion to make sense of given the variance of things considered good and the nature of their relationship to one another.²⁵⁷ Another issue at stake is the approximation to a particular exemplar. In one case, if there is an exemplar or *maximum* ideal such that there is ultimately a "best possible thing" it seems that a gradation in goodness fails at proving this any more than "degrees of size

²⁵⁴ Anthony Kenny (1931 -), former president of the British Academy, Royal Institute of Philosophy and lecturer at Oxford, is a contemporary analytic Thomist. As an agnostic writing extensively on the work of Aquinas, he engaged both Thomistic and Scholastic thought with a critical eye. Case in point, in his book, *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), Kenny strategically sets out to argue how Aquinas' proofs all fall short of the mark in proving God's existence.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 70-95.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 80: "Is a good hippopotamus better or worse than a good sunset?"

show that there exists a largest possible thing.”²⁵⁸ In another case, if there is an *actual* exemplar or maximum of goodness why, then, must it culminate in God, “rather than, say, a good man?”²⁵⁹ It would seem that Aquinas is investing too much on a Platonic rendering of ontology.

The next major part of Kenny’s critique ensues with an extensive and elaborate review of Aquinas’ understanding of the real distinction between essence and existence, maintaining in one place that in light of modern logic, existence understood properly as the *existential quantifier* makes the notion of God as “something which is uttermost being,” or existence itself, untenable.²⁶⁰ For *existence* to be predicated of God, given Aquinas’ understanding of God as *ipsum esse subsistens*, is to undermine that very predicate of any real significance: “when we say of God that he is, we mean the same except that no predicate may be substituted for the F which occurs in the formula. God isn’t anything of any kind, he just is. But this is surely completely nonsense.”²⁶¹ In other words, the existential quantifier takes existence to be predicated of a concept of something rather than the thing itself. In this case, to say that God is existence itself becomes vacuous since God is only understood as a concept leaving the question of God’s *actual* existence unanswered.

In summary, Kenny takes issue with a number of points: gradations of any transcendental perfection found in being have no objective basis in reality as truly being more and less, leaving null and void any approximation to some exemplar. Even granting any gradation in being, it fails to conclude to an exemplar of that particular perfection, yet alone, as the source of all being, i.e.,

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 81.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 82-95. The issues attributed with the quantifier view of existence along with a more detailed understanding of what the existential quantifier is will be dealt with in chapter 6.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 94. The *formula* Kenny is referring to is the following: **God IS F** or **God IS IS**. Given the existential quantifier, one is led to the following equivalent statement: “Some object, God, is such that, God exists.”

God. In addition to this, the notion of existence as an existential quantifier makes the idea of God as subsistent being nonsensical.

3.15 Dennis Bonnette²⁶²

In his book *Aquinas's Proofs For God's Existence*, Bonnette presents and argues persuasively for an interpretation of the Fourth Way defined within the confines of the principle, "The *per accidens* necessarily implies the *per se*," as it is found in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas."²⁶³ For Bonnette, each of Thomas' Five Ways utilizes this principle, albeit in different approaches. This principle will become more manifest and evident as the analysis of Bonnette's commentary ensues.

In the Fourth Way, the "series of effects" identified with the *per accidens* aspects of the principle are the "gradations of being and its modes as given in experience."²⁶⁴ This is the first premise that is raised by Aquinas. In his defense of this principle, Bonnette utilizes the commentaries of Maritain, Gilson, and Lagrange wherein he identifies their collective use of the principle at hand, but from different points of view. That said, Bonnette agrees with all three in that "the point of departure of the *quarta via* is being and its transcendental modes...it is this gradation of being among things which constitutes the *per accidens* in the *quarta via*."²⁶⁵

Proceeding on, Bonnette stops to clarify a controversial point made in the argument; the meaning behind Aquinas' statement that the maximum in a genus is the cause of everything

²⁶² Dennis Bonnette (1939 -), is a retired professor of philosophy and former chair of the philosophy department at Niagara University.

²⁶³ Dennis Bonnette, *Aquinas's Proofs For God's Existence. St. Thomas Aquinas On: "The Per Accidens Necessarily Implies the Per Se"* (Netherlands: Martinus Hijhoff, 1972), iii.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 140, 142. By "modes" Bonnette is referring to the transcendentals.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

under that genus.²⁶⁶ As others have also indicated on this particular passage, as a mere illustration, it was meant to point to the real heart of the argument, which is the gradation of transcendental modes of being, themselves culminating in some absolute being, and “hence, it is best to terminate discussion of this example, taken from an outmoded physics, and return to the properly metaphysical principles of the argument.”²⁶⁷

In arriving at the principle of the “*per accidens* necessarily implying the *per se*,” Bonnette sees in the commentaries of Lagrange, Maritain and Gilson, three different approaches to the principle at large. For Lagrange, “being in which essence and existence are distinct necessarily imply something in which essence is one with existence – something in which existence and its transcendental modes are not found *per accidens*, but *per se*.”²⁶⁸ For Maritain, the argument is more in resemblance to the second way; “the reduction from beings composed of essence and existence to a being in which essence is one with existence is a reduction which is made according to efficient causality.”²⁶⁹ For Gilson, participation is of emphasis; “Hence we see that Gilson interprets the *quarta via* according to the doctrine of participation. And we see that participation is applied by Gilson here in such fashion that the relative perfections found in the varied beings of experience are reduced to a first efficient cause of being and its transcendental modes.”²⁷⁰ But, along with the *per accidens/per se* division, and not unlike other

²⁶⁶ “As Maritain suggests, this maxim would seem to lead logically to what would be, in modern eyes, the physical absurdity of a supreme solid, the cause of solidity in all other things, a supremely hot element, the cause of heat in all other things, etc. And while, doubtless, *something* is the hottest, the most solid, etc., in the physical universe, modern physics does not allow that these would be the *cause* of heat and solidity in others. Hence, it appears that either the principle that the “...greatest in any genus is the cause of all those things which are of that genus...” fails by contradictory instance, or else, that it was never more than a mistaken generalization from the ancient physics.” *Ibid.*, 144.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 146-7.

²⁷⁰ “For each writer has taken being and its transcendental modes as the *per accidens* point of departure for the proof. And each has insisted that this existence which is found varied in the limited beings of our experience requires, ultimately, a first efficient cause.” *Ibid.*, 148-9.

commentators, these three also introduce an interpretation of the Fourth Way that makes use of the doctrines of analogy and participation. Bonnette points out that these doctrines are not without their own controversial and extensive interpretations and opts to leave these two heavy themes aside in preference for a more literal use of Aquinas' argument.²⁷¹ It is not so much that Aquinas never intended to explicitly rely upon these separate principles, but as Bonnette will argue, a strict adherence to the text makes their use unnecessary to reach a maximum in being.

In utilizing the contemporary interpretations of Lagrange, Maritain, and Gilson, Bonnette proposes "to show that the point of departure of the proof, the *per accidens*, does, in fact, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, demand the existence of an efficient cause or causes. Once this has been done it is simply to see the need for a first efficient cause..."²⁷² From the reality of transcendental gradations in things, things that are more or less good, true, noble and the like, Aquinas "demands that some *efficient* cause must be operative here, since he insists that a *single* cause which is *not* the distinct natures of the multiple things must be *productive* of the effect for a cause which 'produces' is an efficient cause."²⁷³ From the bare point of view of essence and existence (the distinction of which will be made clearer in a subsequent section), their real distinction in finite being is a true indication that some causal relation is needed for their very union. This division between essence and existence is the ground for the *per accidens/per se* distinction:

St. Thomas holds that *above* such things whose existence differs from their natures there is required an efficient cause which is entirely *extrinsic* to such beings. Hence, existence and its transcendentals are genuinely *per accidens* to the things of experience, since they are found in them, not by reason of those things own nature, but by reason of an exterior *efficient* cause. Existence and its transcendentals

²⁷¹ "Rather, we prefer to work with the texts of St. Thomas himself, since, we believe, these will quickly enough reveal the need for a first efficient cause of the relative perfections found in things...without unneeded proliferation of formal doctrinal exposition." *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

are found in the things of experience by reason of an efficient cause... we are led back to a First Cause in which existence is *per se*, - since it is caused by no other.²⁷⁴

In other words, since finite things only ever have being *per accidens*, it follows, necessarily, that something that is being *per se* is the cause of being in all other things.²⁷⁵ Going back briefly to Aquinas' adage that the maximum of a genus is the cause of everything falling under that genus, Bonnette explains that the genus as *per se*, will be the cause of something having it *per accidens* which "in the case of being and its transcendental modes, this means that the 'maximum' has being by its very own nature."²⁷⁶ And since the argument is only concerned with those transcendental aspects of being, something that is goodness, truth, etc. *per se*, will be the cause of things having goodness, truth, etc. *per accidens*.²⁷⁷

In summary, Bonnette follows the lead of Lagrange, Maritain and Gilson to bolster his contention that "the *per accidens* necessarily implies the *per se*." Various commentators other than these mentioned have also brought forward this particular point, but to various extents and without explicit reference to the principle as Bonnette articulates it (this is what makes his commentary original). In general, Bonnette understands the argument to be saying that given the reality of things having to various degrees transcendental perfections or modes, some deeper analysis will reveal that none of the things that are predicated of these modes can be identified to be identical with them. Only that which contains or simply has a given perfection through its essence (*per se*) is capable of causing it in others (*per accidens*) and with the convertibility of the transcendentals, making goodness, truth, nobility and the rest all the same metaphysical reality

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 152-53.

²⁷⁵ "Thus, without any explicit recourse to the doctrines of analogy or participation, it is evident that St. Thomas has reasons for judging that being and its transcendental modes as found in the varied, multiple, and graded things of experience exist through another, and that the other must be, ultimately, something '...of which nothing is a cause of being,' i.e., something existing *per se*." Ibid., 154.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 154-55.

²⁷⁷ Then again, it seems to me that the *cause* of something being made true or good needs some explanation in terms of participation without taking the causal relationship for granted.

yet from different aspects, it follows that those things which *only have* these transcendental modes possess them accidentally (*per accidens*) and not essentially (*per se*). That which is *per se* is the maximum of being and thus, the First Cause of all being.

3.16 John F. Wippel²⁷⁸

In the first part of Aquinas' argument what is found is an appeal to the common experience of the world of existents and what appears to be their natural participation with degrees of goodness, truth, nobility, and so forth; this interaction takes place on the ontological level, since goodness, truth, nobility, etc., are "found wherever being itself is realized and which are convertible with being."²⁷⁹ How is it actually the case that things are more and less good, true or noble? Wippel maintains that a thing is more and less good due to its desirability as a good of some sort.²⁸⁰ What is more and less true is true on the ontological level by which the acknowledgement of a beings existence makes it *true* that it exists, and second, "to say that one thing enjoys greater truth than another is to make the point that, viewed in itself, it is more intelligible than the other."²⁸¹ By nobility, Wippel follows Lagrange's interpretation, identifying it as synonymous with perfection, meaning, a being is more and less perfect in so far as it lacks nothing according to its mode of being or essence.²⁸²

Wippel and others have indicated that positing more and less of a certain perfection does not of itself produce or lead to an exemplar of that kind, thus making the argument invalid.

²⁷⁸ John F. Wippel (1933 -), distinguished author and professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C., is a leading contemporary authority on the metaphysical thought of Thomas Aquinas.

²⁷⁹ *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 471.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.* This is goodness on the ontological level. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1, 1094a1.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² "Just as some share more fully in ontological goodness and truth than do others, so too they may be regarded as being more perfect or more excellent, ontologically speaking, than others." *Ibid.*, 472.

Instead what they conclude is that Aquinas is only making use of a simple example easily understood as an analogous reference into something much more complex.²⁸³ What part of this complexity encompasses is the type of causality at work in the argument, either exemplar causality or efficient causality. Some commentators have argued that Aquinas is solely concerned with efficient causality. Things that participate with truth, goodness, nobility receive these “from some distinct efficient cause” concluding “to the existence of an uncaused cause of goodness, truth, and nobility, which itself is such perfection of its essence.”²⁸⁴ But as Wippel highlights, there is no mention of an efficient cause until the second part of the argument, while the first part clearly indicates an appeal to exemplar causality, leaving no justification for an implicit application of efficient causality.²⁸⁵ So, where does causality stand in the face of the argument?

At this junction, an appeal to Thomas’ doctrine of participation helps alleviate the problem, or so it seems, for Wippel points out that here too efficient causality still plays a component in the argument on two different levels. On the first level, any ontology of participation involves a causal relation between the source of participation and those that participate with it – the former as the efficient cause of participation in the latter. Anything that is good but not good through its essence must be good only by its participation with *the* good, which *is* goodness itself through its essence and terminates in its essence and not through participation with any further good. On the second level, the same principle of participation will be applied to being itself; “since a given thing cannot be the efficient cause of its own *esse*, the *esse* of any such thing cannot be caused by its intrinsic and essential principles. Therefore, its

²⁸³ “It is unnecessary for us to assume that something enjoys a maximum degree of heat in order to be aware that one kettle is hotter than another.” *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 473.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

esse must be caused by something else.”²⁸⁶ This something else will have being through its essence making it the efficient cause of all being. With the use and role of participation and causality in Aquinas’ argument, there remains a certain unsettlement expressed by Wippel as to the authentic intention of Aquinas in light of these particular metaphysical motifs.²⁸⁷

In summary, real beings do enjoy various degrees of truth, goodness, nobility and the like. But whether these degrees necessarily point to an exemplar of that perfection constituting exemplar causal agency cannot be the case. There must be some efficient cause at work which makes it the case that finite being participates with truth, goodness and so on. Then again, if the argument is viewed in two distinct parts, the first seems to indicate exemplar causality alone. It would seem, then, that in order to make sense of the argument, a plea for the doctrine of participation and the role of efficient causality must be advanced.

3.17 Brian Davies²⁸⁸

Davies begins his brief exposition on the Fourth Way by stating the argument in a casual manner: “If things are more and less good, something must be best, and this something is

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 477.

²⁸⁷ “In doing this, however, I must acknowledge that we will have reinterpreted the fourth way seriously, and even in its substance. It will no longer be based solely on exemplar causality in its first stage, as its text indicates that it was originally intended to be...But unless some such reinterpretation or substitution is introduced, it seems unlikely that the argument’s first stage can be regarded as successful in its attempt to prove that a maximum actually exists.” *Ibid.*, 478. Given the truncated nature of all Five Ways coupled with Thomas’ intended audience and the brevity by which he wished to explicate all things philosophical and theological, I would argue that the Fourth Way, as presented, naturally presupposes the doctrine of participation in conjunction with its use of efficient causality. It was left for the student of his time to bring out all of the implications and subtleties that future commentators including Wippel himself, would bring out of the argument. In one sense, Wippel is not reinterpreting the argument contrary to Thomas’ wishes, but is doing exactly what Thomas would have wanted him to do by bringing out and elaborating upon the themes of participation and causality that Thomas explicitly left out. Again, see the notes on the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae* found in chapter 2.

²⁸⁸ Brian Davies (1951 -), professor of philosophy at Fordham University in New York City is a leading contemporary scholar on the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the philosophy of religion.

God...since there is a good and a better, there must be a best, and this 'best' is God."²⁸⁹ As with the other proofs, it is clear that Aquinas is working from the material things of the world, tracing them back – metaphysically speaking, in a *posteriori* method – to arrive at the existence of God. The effects, in this case, are those degrees of transcendental perfections that are observable in all being. Yet Davies is careful to identify that in so far as Aquinas highlights the varying degrees of being to a maximum perfection, he is not suggesting that this hierarchy itself necessarily leads to an ultimate superlative of a particular kind.²⁹⁰ In other words, there is nothing in any variation of heat that necessitates an ultimate exemplar of heat. There may not very well be a supreme source of heat that "is the cause of all hot things," but only such and such variations or degrees. Pushing ahead, "the core" of Aquinas' argument is found in his last remarks wherein he concludes that the possession of some common perfection will be caused in those that have it by something that has it to the fullest.²⁹¹ With that said, Davies proceeds to understand two points: first, the role that causality plays in the argument; second, a deeper analyses of the terms true, being, and good.²⁹²

First, how is the causal relation at play between the things that contain those perfections and the source of those perfections being their cause of having them? It is generally true that effects resemble their cause in some manner or another. This, however, should not be taken in a literalist understanding, interpreting effects to be identical with their cause.²⁹³ What Davies conveys is Aquinas' general understanding of efficient causality, which "according to him,

²⁸⁹ Brian Davies, *Aquinas* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002), 58.

²⁹⁰ "But does Aquinas want to suggest that, if X is good and if Y is better than X, then there must be something comparable to X and Y which is, simply speaking, good beyond improvement? It would be odd if he did, if only because there is plainly no reason to believe that, given a number of things which are good in varying degrees, there is something else of the same kind with respect to which there could be nothing better of that kind."

²⁹¹ Davis, 59.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ "Suppose that someone's cause of death is given as 'lung cancer.' Should we conclude that the person's corpse must *look* like a lung infected by cancer?" Ibid.

efficient causes explain their effects and do so precisely because of what they are.”²⁹⁴ In so far as an effect or a host of effects are observable, reaching the conclusion of its cause or causes is a matter of connecting the dots, sort of speak, leaving one to see the cause in plain view. One can say A is the efficient cause of B and this according to Aquinas is the path to proper scientific knowledge, to know the exact cause or causes, the specific *why* of a certain effect or series of effects. This is how, “causes are *like their effects*,” “seeing how the nature of the causes explains their effects and renders them necessary and, therefore, unsurprising.”²⁹⁵ These effects point to something intrinsic to their causes, something that is a very real part of the causes nature and the way the cause actually is, necessarily and *dynamic* or *actual* as capable of producing the effects that it does.

Second, Davies again formulates this particular aspect of the argument casually; “Truth, being, and Goodness basically amount to the same thing.”²⁹⁶ How are these uniquely different concepts all the same? Davies begins by giving some simple yet effective examples of how easily and intuitively the connection can be made between these perfections. For example, when a person speaks the truth in regard to something, anything for that matter, there is a correspondence taking place between truth and what is being conveyed as true, which could involve a wide spectrum of circumstances and variables, but whatever specific truth or truths are being indicated ultimately terminate in being, that is, the truth is pointing to what actually is the case, to what is real and what is real consequently points to some being, which amounts to them being one in the same.²⁹⁷ Take another example, a good singer, generally speaking, is someone who has a lovely timbre, great pitch, an amazing ability to blend in chorus, fantastic sight-

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 60.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 60-61.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 61.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

reading skills, and so forth. These are all qualities that make it *true* that some person (who is, metaphysically speaking, a being) is a *good* singer. The connection between goodness and the vocalist is obvious. What one can identify in this example as with the previous example is the intricate connection between being, truth, and goodness amounting to their convertibility with one another.²⁹⁸ Taking both points into account along with the existential questions surrounding essence and existence, mainly, why things exist at all, Davies reformulates the argument:

1. We discover things which have degrees of perfection.
2. Such things raise the question ‘How come?’
3. There must be an answer to this question.
4. Whatever it is must somehow contain in itself all the perfections we encounter in the world.
5. In fact, we can think of it as the source of all perfections and as the source of all that is good and true.²⁹⁹

In summary, from what can be gathered, Davies argues that the deeper question implied in the connection between perfections and being is the question of existence. In pointing out the participation of things with truth, goodness, being, etc., one will ultimately arrive at the “why” behind their existence.³⁰⁰ Davies might be alluding to the reality that these perfections, including finite being itself, lacks the causal warrant for its own existence, bringing in to play the question of efficient causality from a source that simply is existence itself. Much is left unsaid, but Davies admits as much and was only concerned with a bare presentation of the Fourth Way.

3.18 Christopher F. J. Martin³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 62.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 63.

³⁰¹ Christopher F. J. Martin, is professor of philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas.

After a candid admission of a deficient understanding concerning Aquinas' argument and despite what appears to be a lack of hope in producing a convincing analysis of it, Martin trudges ahead and begins by structuring the argument in the following manner:

1. In things we find that some things are more or less good, or true, or noble, and other such things.
2. There is, then, something which is most true, and best, and most noble, and which therefore most exists: for those things which are most true are most existent.
3. That which is said to be greatest in any kind causes everything of that kind.
4. Therefore there is something that is the cause of the existence and the goodness and of all perfections in everything: and this, we say is God.³⁰²

Martin is very careful yet sceptical of his formulation of the argument and its validity in general. Derelict of doubt and confidence, the attempt is made to piece together a coherent analysis. The *qualities* which are specifically referred to by Aquinas identified as “good, true, noble and the like,” are those transcendental notions that “apply indifferently to anything in any of the categories of the existent” and of which have a real ontological grounding in real being and not a mere conceptual one.³⁰³ A crucial aspect to the ontology of the transcendentals is their convertibility with one another. What this convertibility demonstrates is a reciprocal relationship between each of the transcendentals so that, for example, *being* and *goodness* can truly be said to be one in the same or convertible with one another – whatever exists, is *being*, and is also *good* and vice versa. In bringing out this aspect of the ontology at play in the argument, Martin indicates without further analysis that this doctrine of convertibility is bizarre.³⁰⁴

³⁰² C. F. J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas: God and Explanations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 172.

³⁰³ Ibid. Martin accepts the reality of the transcendentals for the sake of argument, but seems to imply a certain reticence in their regard: “so perhaps we can just take this notion on trust tentatively for the time being, and see whether it helps us make progress with the Fourth Way.” Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 173.

Further along, Martin points out another troublesome theme; Aquinas' idea of a gradation of perfections to be found in being itself, specifically, the notion of truth and how one being can contain more truth than another.³⁰⁵ *Truth*, to use a classical formula, is defined as the mind's correspondence with reality, in other words, the mind discovers and verifies what is already set in place as existing independent of the mind – there is a real objective world and the mind is left to discover all of its contents. But the world of being ultimately lies as a creative act of God which originates in the divine intellect. Here, the truth of the mind corresponding to an objective world is understood in reverse order, under the light of divine perspective. The world must correspond to God's mind, "that is, the onus of match is on the world: it is up to the world to match up to God's mind, and in so far as it does so, it will be true, in this sense."³⁰⁶ In so far as some defect or privation is present, *being* will vary in truth and therefore, "the doctrine is beginning to look a little less odd."³⁰⁷

Yet positing various degrees of existence is also puzzling. How can something exist to a 'more and less' degree? Here, Martin uses sound as an example of a being that can be said to exist less when at a lesser volume and more when at a greater volume.³⁰⁸ That aside, the next big hurdle to overcome is to explain why any perfection found to be more and less, must lead to an ultimate exemplar.³⁰⁹ Martin believes that the *idea* of an exemplar is causally inert (given that it is only an idea and how an idea can directly cause anything is somewhat elusive, to say the least), something which he assumes is only the case (exemplar qua conceptual entity) as opposed to an *actual* exemplar or principle of being, not an *idea of an actual* exemplar. With that having

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 174.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ "The existence of a *de facto* most, which is required by the existence of a more and a less, will not get us where we want to go: particularly as I can see no reason whatsoever why the existence of the *de facto* most should *cause* or *explain* the existence of the more and the less." Ibid., 176.

been said, Martin rounds out his discussion with one last grasp of an illustration to help understand the notion of an ultimate exemplar. If there are five *Inuit* standing on a street corner, one can argue for a gradation of presence on the street corner given that all five Inuit are standing side by side, one will be further away or closer to the street corner, and it is the “perfect and unlimited presence...of the street corner itself, which does something to explain the presence, to a greater or lesser extent, of the Inuit at the street corner. If there is no perfect and unlimited presence of the street corner, there will be no limited and varying degree of presence of the Inuit.”³¹⁰ With that finish, Martin goes no further in trying to piece together the argument, but concludes with a glib adieu to the next philosopher who attempts to tackle the Fourth Way.

In summary, there are a number of metaphysical principles that Martin finds troublesome to the point of being somewhat indefensible. That aside, it seems, given Martin’s Inuit analogy, that the existence of limitation in things, the more and less of transcendental perfections, can only make sense in reference to something that is unlimited and without limit. The *presence* of the five Inuit is more and less only in light of the street corner, which is unlimited and perfect.

3.19 D.Q. McInerny³¹¹

McInerny begins his understanding of the Fourth Way by way of comparison to the other ways of Aquinas. The first three Ways focus on one of three metaphysical principles, either potency and act, contingency, efficient causality, and that within the context of “single beings,” whereas the Fourth Way focuses the audience’s attention on the plurality of being through its degrees of perfections.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

³¹¹ D. Q. McInerny, is professor of philosophy at Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary in Denton, Nebraska.

The argument begins with a general and prevalent feature of the world, namely, that things come in degrees, they exist in variation, they illustrate how thinking happens “in comparative terms” when considering the objects of the world and their goodness, truth, nobility and the like.³¹² The question arises as to what makes one give a comparative judgement to begin with? Why compare at all?³¹³ McInerny argues that it is the implicit idea of a maximum that is always being referred to in such judgements.³¹⁴ With that said, McInerny sounds two cautionary calls to the reader. First, when considering something as more or less noble, its *accidental* existence is not what is being considered here, that is, *nobility* only exists in things and not instantiated apart from them; this centers the argument on the things themselves and not their qualities.³¹⁵ Second, the exemplar or maximum in reference to the argument is an actual entity, as opposed to some mere subjective ideal. Comparative judgements on music are based on the individuals ideal or standard of what they perceive as sounding best to them.³¹⁶ But, the argument is identifying an actual maximum of being as the source of all being, something entirely objective and unconditional, not prone to personal estimations. The example Aquinas utilizes of heat in things reaching some maximum of heat is meant to illustrate this very point. But as noted before, this particular example has vexed some commentators to suppose that a maximum in reality cannot really exist. McInerny finds no real contention in this claim since there is nothing “inherently contradictory in the idea of there existing right now in the universe

³¹² “That world is not simply a huge blob of homogeneous being. There are degrees of being, and this is explained by the fact that, metaphysically considered, some beings have more being than others.” D.Q. McInerny, *Natural Theology* (Elmhurst, Pennsylvania: The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 2005), 105.

³¹³ “What provides the rationale for our saying, for example, ‘X₁ is better than X₂?’” Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 106.

³¹⁶ “This is a perfectly legitimate way to make comparative judgments, and we are doing it all the time, our heads being full of ideal maximums which serve the very practical, and indeed necessary, service of providing us with the rationale for the countless comparative judgments we make on a daily basis, be they about sermons, or sunsets, or symphonies.” Ibid., 107.

an actual physical object that is hotter than any other object now existing in the universe.”³¹⁷

Besides, this example is only an illustration pointing to something much more grand i.e., something that is the maximum of truth, goodness, being, and so on. With this point, McInerny implies the convertibility of the transcendentals when he states that this maximum will be the maximum of all these perfections.³¹⁸ Taking into account the convertibility of the transcendentals, how exactly are things more and less in being? All things that actually exist, simply exist. How then, can they vary in degree in terms of their existence? The answer lies in the principle of proper proportionality as found in the use of analogical predication.³¹⁹ What this principle demonstrates is a reality where all things share in being, but are by no means the same being. There is an obvious unity and diversity that is native to all things, and this is where, as McInerny explains, “on the level of sheer existence, some beings have more being than others. And that means that any given being that can be said to have more being than any other given being is simply closer, in its substantial way of existing, to maximum being.”³²⁰ Before providing a final overview of the argument, McInerny brings attention to one last point. The closing part of the argument states that the maximum of any genus is the cause of everything falling under that genus, just like fire is the cause of all things hot, so there is something which is the maximum in being as the cause of being in all things. According to McInerny, “fire, was intended to represent the maximum of being” since “immediately after citing the example of fire, Aristotle writes: ‘Therefore that is also true in the highest degree which is the cause of all

³¹⁷ Ibid., 108.

³¹⁸ “In other words, every being, simply insofar as it is being, is good; and every being, simply insofar as it is being, is true. From this we can conclude that the maximum in question is not the maximum with respect to being of this or that quality, but with respect to being just as being.” Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 109.

³²⁰ Ibid. For example, *color* only exists with *substance*, and not the other way around. What this indicates is a dependence on the part of color on substance. This makes substance a higher category of being than color.

subsequent things being true.”³²¹ Given the convertibility of truth and being, to say that “the highest being, the maximum being without qualification – is ‘the cause of all subsequent things being true’ is to claim that the maximum being is the cause of the *being* of all subsequent things, for truth and being are one.”³²² Finally, then, the argument can be rounded up into four points: 1) ‘more and less’ is predicated of the things of the world; “we immediately see that they are distinguishable in terms of ‘more’ and ‘less’...”³²³ 2) This predication only makes sense (ontologically speaking) in light of some exemplar; “the maximum can be said to cause the comparative judgments we make, because such judgments would not be possible without the maximum.”³²⁴ 3) The most primitive thing that is predicated of all things is being, i.e., existence. Everything that exists has being, but not to the same extent; “a single cell bacterium is not less an existent than is a bald eagle, but they do not exist on the same level; the bald eagle represents a higher level of being than does the bacterium.”³²⁵ As with the second point above, any more or less of being only makes sense in view of an exemplar of being. 4) This being will be the First Cause of all being and its various degrees.

In summary, McInerny makes use of a number of principles in his explanation of the argument (the principle of transcendental convertibility, analogy of being/proportionality, hierarchy of being). The hierarchy of being gives the basis for degrees of being, the analogy of proportionality explains how things share in a perfection such as being without literally being

³²¹ “Given a particular category of things that are marked by the quality of heat (things possessing heat to one degree or another), there is an ultimate explanation for this state of affairs, and that is fire. For Aristotle, fire would be an excellent example of maximum being; in his understanding, it is the hottest element (recall that in ancient cosmology fire was one of the four basic elements, the fundamental building blocks of all physical being), and therefore, as an ultimate, it is the cause of all heat, in whatever degree it may appear, in all things.” *Ibid.*, 110.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ *Ibid.*, 111.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

that perfection itself, and transcendental convertibility makes sense of how being, goodness, truth, etc., are all the same reality, yet considered under different aspects.

3.2 Patrick Masterson³²⁶

Upon entering the argument, Aquinas makes it clear that there are degrees of perfections found predicable of all finite being. There are, of course, various kinds of perfections; one kind are limited to the material realm such as heat, cold, etc.; another are abstract, such as humanity and triangularity; the third kind are exactly what Aquinas is concerned with in his argument, these are the transcendental perfections, which “are not confined to a particular category or level of reality” and “unlike intrinsically limited perfections these perfections are apprehended as co-extensive with whatever exists, even a reality of which we may have no direct experience.”³²⁷

An aspect of the argument that raises a number of eyebrows is its insistence that degrees of perfection point to a maximum. It may be objected that in order to know degrees of more and less, one must have knowledge of the maximum from which they approximate.³²⁸ This, of course, is not Aquinas’ position. First of all, more and less is being spoken of the transcendental perfections only, so that things are more and less true, noble, good, and not more and less of material perfections such as heat or cold, etc. Second, it is not a self-evident principle that the grades of transcendental perfection lead to God’s existence, rather “Aquinas means that if we wish to establish the existence of God from degrees of perfection *we must prove that*” and the principle of more and less is a “principle which is constitutive of the proof and which must be

³²⁶ Patrick Masterson, is former president of the University College Dublin and the European University Institute.

³²⁷ Patrick Masterson, *The Sense of Creation: Experience and the God Beyond* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 88-89.

³²⁸ “For if this were so some knowledge of God as the absolute measure of being would be required in order to know degrees of being. This position would render a proof for God from degrees of being impossible.” Ibid.

established in the particular context of the proof.”³²⁹ These are preliminaries that must be established first before the argument can proceed. But a further objection arises. The exemplar of being may only be supreme in a relative sense, filed as a finite entity itself, albeit, the paradigm of all finite being. And, since “causality of the maximum is not obviously true in all particular cases, *a fortiori* it cannot be assumed to be true in the case of degrees of being.”³³⁰

With some of the grievances against the Fourth Way set in place, Masterson begins his resolution of the problems by noting that the central theme and problem that relates the issues at stake is the analogy of being.³³¹ When one confronts existing things, only after a certain amount of philosophical reflection does a recognition of the metaphysical concept of being and its univocal dimension appear. For example, insofar as someone encounters a herd of elephants, there is an encounter with a group of beings all sharing in that singular characteristic that unites them as existing, which is being. But upon deeper reflection, this fount of unity through being simultaneously becomes a fount of division given that no one being, in this case, no one elephant is the same or numerically identical as the other. And not only that, elephants are not the only kind of beings that exist. The diversity of being is manifest in all of the variance that the objects of reality afford, both in their existence, since no one being exists in the same manner and yet they all share existence (being), and in their essence, since no one being has the same essence and yet they each have essence.³³² But what this unity and diversity fails to demonstrate is the

³²⁹ Ibid., 91.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ “The problem posed by the datum of the Fourth Way is essentially the fundamental problem posed by the analogy of being. It is the problem of determining whether the various degrees or levels of being, which are formally diverse and irreducible – for example, a human being, a flower, a stone – are metaphysically unintelligible unless they necessarily imply the existence of Infinite Being as their First Cause upon whom they totally depend for their being...is it necessary that this unity and diversity, this similarity and dissimilarity, should have an ultimate basis outside the whole range of finite being?” Ibid., 93-94.

³³² Ibid., 101

ontological basis for its very unity and diversity and this leads to some serious consequences if left at that.³³³

The solution to this apparent contradiction lies in a transcendental and infinite source of being from which the proportional analogical facets of all finite being are derived from. This is not some fanciful inference or push for probability, but a metaphysical necessity given the existence of being as unified and diverse and the apparent contradiction it sets in place from its existential implications. The relation between the oneness and manyness of being can only be accounted for through a unitary source:

In this manner, while taking due account of diversity, we render the unity of being intelligible in terms of its origin from a principle which is perfectly one and which pre-contains in its infinite unified perfection whatever finite perfections find expression in creation. We see also that being is primarily one and secondarily diverse, that its unity is metaphysically prior to its diversity, for diversity too derives from the perfect unity of one First Cause. This First Cause could exist in the absence of diversity, but diversity can only exist in total dependence on the perfect unity of a First Cause.³³⁴

The comprehension of the concept of being itself does not establish the existence of God in a brand of a priori ontologism, but with further investigation, the ontological implications lead to one of two conclusions, either utter contradiction or a transcendent source of being. The degrees of perfection in finite being bring to the forefront deeper relational problems of unity and diversity. Being is real and an account needs to be given for its origin and relations upon pain of contradiction and complete negation. The wealth of causal relations in being presuppose the very existence of being given that all finite being lacks any power to bring about the most radical

³³³ “We are drawn to the conclusion, therefore, that in themselves the objects of our experience contain no fundamental principle of unity in being, and provide no objective basis for the unity of our primary concept of being. From this it would seem to follow that reality and our knowledge of it are unintelligible and even contradictory. For while we affirm the unity of what our concept of being discloses we find no fundamental basis in individual beings for this affirmation. Thus the unity signified by this concept, which is the first principle of objective knowledge, itself appears to lack objective foundation. An analysis of the objects of experience fails to reveal a principle either of their unity in being, or of the unity of our concept. Such considerations would tend to suggest that reality is ultimately unintelligible and even contradictory – that it has not the fundamental unity which we affirm it to have in claiming objective knowledge of it.” *Ibid.*, 102.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

form of causation, i.e. creation from nothing.³³⁵ Because finite being itself lacks that power of creation *ex nihilo*, it cannot provide a satisfactory explanation for its actuality as being, and its unity, and diversity through being. There has to be a source of being that is infinite being itself not bound by the restrictions of finitude; an infinite being as the First Cause of all being out of nothing. This Infinite being gives all finite being its univocity and diversity in being; univocal in its existential dependence on the one infinite being and diverse by the many beings that exists as a result of the creative power of that same one infinite being.

From these considerations we can conclude that in his Fourth Way when Aquinas proposes that we can argue to the existence of God as Supreme Being from the degrees of finite being he is not substituting a version of Platonic exemplarism for the appeal to the principle of efficient causation which characterizes his other arguments. On the contrary, he is proposing that by indirect argument from the paradoxical character of the analogy or degrees of finite being we can achieve an affirmation of the existence of God as the unique non-finite creative cause of this analogical order of being.³³⁶

In summary, the observation of being as expressed in its assorted degrees of truth, goodness, unity, etc., is set to reveal the deeper problematic of how, on the one hand, all things are at once unified and diverse in being, and on the other, are without any reason for their actual existence, yet alone their paradoxical existence as one and many. From these considerations, as a metaphysical and logical conclusion, a unitary self-subsisting source of being is revealed as the maximum of all being, truth, goodness, unity, in its unity and diversity in the real.

It is clear from the interpretations above that there are various approaches that one can take in understanding the Fourth Way. Whether the focus is on participation, analogy

³³⁵ "In finite causality it is the object acted upon which is the proximate principle of individuality or otherness in the being of the effect. For a finite agent cannot produce an effect *ex nihilo*, i.e. cannot produce an effect *as other*." *Ibid.*, 104.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

and hierarchy of being, exemplar causality, the contingency of being as made manifest in the real distinction between essence and existence, the henological principle, or the principle of identity as identified in the per se/per accidens division, the Fourth Way is much more complicated than outward appearances would indicate. The complications can be seen in the numerous questions that arise from the argument. For example, can the predication of more and less be anything other than a purely subjective matter relegated to the epistemological level rather than the metaphysical? If there is a more and less of any given perfection, does that require a most of that perfection in actual existence? If exemplars do exist, why must they culminate in an ultimate exemplar? What are *truth*, *goodness*, *nobility*, etc. qua exemplars and how exactly do they *participate* with the things of reality? Are the use of participation, analogy and hierarchy of being in the argument justified given that Aquinas is literally silent on these themes in his articulation of the Fourth Way? Are there two independent parts to the argument each utilizing a different form of causality?

These are only a few questions that certainly come to mind. But in order to properly address these questions and others it is necessary to dive deep into the metaphysical context supporting the Fourth Way and the other Ways of Aquinas. The apparent difficulties can only be cleared away when the metaphysics is grasped.

The investigation of the metaphysical principles sustaining the Fourth Way begins with one of the more important and fundamental of Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrines, the doctrine of *potency* and *act*. The existence and distinction between *potentiality* and *actuality* or *potency* and *act* is what Aristotle recognized as a necessary metaphysical component sustaining the structure of reality. Among one thing that potency and act explicate and make sense of is the phenomenon of *change* and *persistence* in the world. Change and persistence are undeniable facts about reality and the occurrence thereof raised the minds of philosophers such as Aristotle to ask the how and why behind such phenomena.³³⁷ The discovery of potential being or being-in-*potency* and actual being or being-in-*act* as objective and necessary principles governing the reality of what there is provided Aristotle with the answer behind the occurrence of change in reality. This discovery is derived from the encounter with things and the myriad ways those things change yet persist over the course of time.³³⁸ A rock rolling down a hill and landing in a puddle of water; a piece of paper torn into pieces; candles melting; leaves turning color; water freezing into ice only to diffuse in someone's cocktail; a human zygote growing from the moment of conception into adulthood; being set on pizza for dinner, but shortly thereafter, a change of mind to Chinese.

³³⁷ *Physics* 8.3, 253a21-35: "Our enquiry will resolve itself at the outset into a consideration of the above-mentioned problem – what can be the reason why some things in the world at one time are in motion and at another are at rest again? Now one of three things must be true: either all things are always at rest, or all things are always in motion, or some things are in motion and others at rest; and in this last case again either the always at rest, or they are all naturally capable alike of motion and of rest; or there is yet a third possibility remaining – it may be that some things in the world are always motionless, others always in motion, while others again admit of both conditions. This last is the account of the matter that we must give; for herein lies the solution of all the difficulties raised and the conclusion of the investigation upon which we are engaged.

To maintain that all things are at rest, and to disregard sense-perception and attempt to show the theory to be reasonable, would be an instance of intellectual weakness: it would call in question a whole system, not a particular detail; moreover, it would be an attack not only on the physicist but on almost all sciences and all opinions, since motion plays a part in all of them."

³³⁸ "We indubitably know the reality of actual being, but we also know that any actual being can be in ways other than it is being right now." D.Q. McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 200.

These are but a few common place instances of real change. What at one point in time was is now altered. But notice too that the subtle and not so subtle transformation of such phenomena is not the only consideration at work. In conjunction throughout any change is permanence or persistence – there is still the same rock at the bottom of the hill lying in the puddle of water; the once green leaf is now brown; the existing piece of paper albeit in pieces; it is the same substance of water formerly ice, now dissolved in a drink; presumably it is the same human being at one point in time a zygote, now a fully-grown adult; the change of mind from pizza to Chinese take-out still leaves the mind intact. The datum of change and continuity contained in reality is plain and readily observable.

Yet if ever the question arises as to “why things change,” it almost never fails to engender a sense of bewilderment; the experience of change is so commonplace that it rarely occurs to ask such a question – change just is! Change is an unassailable feature of reality difficult to deny outright or by claiming ignorance. In the philosophical milieu of the Presocratic philosophers, the concepts of change and permanence were a topic of great debate circling around the question, “why is there change,” or its inverse, “is there change?”

But what implications do the answers to these questions, if any, induce? Why bother about change and permanence at all? Their significance may not capture the mind at first, but upon patient and deeper reflection the answers to the questions surrounding change and persistence bare a direct and significant impact on how one will perceive and understand the world. Take for instance the diachronic development or the spatio-temporal continuity of the human zygote from the moment of conception onward. Does the two year old child possess or maintain the same identity it had when it was a zygote at the moment of its conception? Does the *right to life* of a human being correspond with its identity as such? If so, could there be a point in

time when a person does not possess the right to life? Is there ever an interruption in the persistence or continuity of the human person's identity thus calling into question its right to life? This is only one example highlighting the metaphysical ramifications lurking behind the question of change and persistence. Nonetheless, answers were developed to resolve and explain the phenomena. Aristotle's exploration of change and motion sought to pave the way through the murky metaphysical waters that his philosophical predecessors sought bravely to navigate.³³⁹ Before engaging Aristotle's answer, a backdrop into the question via the Pre-Socratic Heraclitus (c. 535-475 B.C.) and Parmenides (c. 515-450 B.C.) will be of great benefit in understanding this peculiar issue and the resolutions given by Aristotle and their use by Aquinas.

4.1 Heraclitus and Parmenides

The ancient Greek philosophers prior to Socrates had an array of motley interests and inquiries some of which specifically concerned the origins of the universe. One can generally depict from their monographs a tremendous amount of intellectual effort set on attaining knowledge of the first principle or principles that held the physical universe together through its constant variation and complexity.³⁴⁰ Their intellectual endeavors no less sparked by a genuine wonder and admiration for the cosmos and its phenomena provoked a simple question about the

³³⁹ "Nature is a principle of motion and change, and it is the subject of our inquiry. We must therefore see that we understand what motion is; for if it were unknown, nature too would be unknown. When we have determined the nature of motion, our task will be to attack in the same way the terms which come next in order. Now motion is supposed to belong to the class of things which are continuous; and the infinite presents itself first in the continuous – that is how it comes about that the account of the infinite is often used in definitions of the continuous; for what is infinitely divisible is continuous. Besides these, place, void, and time are thought to be necessary conditions of motion. Clearly, then, for these reasons and also because the attributes mentioned are common to everything and universal, we must first take each of them in hand and discuss it. For the investigation of special attributes comes after that of the common attributes." *Physics* 3.1, 200b12-25.

³⁴⁰ "...for these wise men saw that, in spite of all the change and transition, there must be something permanent." Frederic Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Vol. I*, 20.

existence and meaning of change in the world. The question in debate regarding change would bring about two diametrically opposed answers.

4.2 Heraclitus

Beginning with Heraclitus, very little is known biographically of his life and tenure as a philosopher and what remnants there are of his writings are discoverable only through fragments.³⁴¹ Whatever philosophical hermeneutic that can be salvaged from his writings, Heraclitus is painted as a “philosophical maverick” whose metaphysical theory is “confused and incoherent” according to Plato, Aristotle, and later ancients.³⁴² In contrast to such notoriety, contemporary scholarship grants a much more lucid apprehension of Heraclitus’ philosophical work.³⁴³ Regardless of the contemporary dispute over his arguments and ideas, Heraclitus is most traditionally known for his attempt at solving the problem of change by way of his *theory of flux*. Heraclitus posited that the world was in a constant state of flux, that is to say, a constant state of becoming or change. This supposed Heraclitean doctrine is elucidated by the writings of ancient commentators in attributing to Heraclitus one of his famously known statements, “Into the same rivers you could not step twice...for other waters flow on ...” And as one ancient author comments, “Heraclitus, I believe, says that all things pass and nothing stays, and

³⁴¹ Cf., Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), 24-33; Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1982), 43-62; Daniel W. Graham, trans. and ed. *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 135-200.

³⁴² Daniel W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, 135.; Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.3, 984a6-8; *On the Heavens* 1.10, 279b14-16; *Physics* 3.2, 205a1-3; Plato, *Cratylus* 402a8-10; *Theaetetus* 160d6-8.

³⁴³ Graham, 136. Some contemporary scholarship contra mainstream interpretations stemming from long standing traditional interpretations, have read Heraclitus as anything but a cosmologist but, rather, as a dialectician concerned with the unravelling of supposed metaphysical/epistemological contradictions found in reality. For a contemporary re-interpretation of Heraclitus’ views, see Mary Margaret MacKenzie in “MM McCabe on Heraclitus” *History of Philosophy Without Gaps Podcast*: <http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/mccabe-on-heraclitus>, accessed 12 November 2013. Whether it was Heraclitus’ true intention to posit an ontological theory is beside the point. What matters for present purposes are the implications brought forth from an ontology of pure change or, rather, as will be identified further along, an ontology of pure potency devoid of actuality.

comparing existing things to the flow of a river, he says you could not step twice into the same river.”³⁴⁴ Heraclitus understands change itself, ironically enough, as a sort of universal constant, an undeniable governing law of how reality must be.

What he presents is a type of *dynamic monism*.³⁴⁵ Change or becoming, is the real backdrop of reality and any permanence in the world is nothing more than a mere illusion. It may seem a strange position to hold but, the reality that Heraclitus is clearly aware of, the reality of change, is a hard and serious fact and it might not be too difficult to understand his theory on change or accept it as a sort of metaphysical primitive or brute fact given the sheer volume of actual changes that materialize on a daily basis. Of course this view runs into difficulties when considering the nature of *what* changes, alluding to the fact that in order for the possibility of any change to occur the need of stout objective permanence is unavoidable; there must be something stable and integral present that undergoes change or else change would be derived from nothing, and as Parmenides would advert to, from nothing, nothing comes.³⁴⁶ The need for permanence is unavoidable, and for Parmenides, permanence is the true fundamental principle.

³⁴⁴ Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, 159. Cf., “(It is impossible to touch the same mortal substance twice, but through the rapidity of change) they scatter and again combine (or rather, not even ‘again’ and ‘later,’ but the combination and separation are simultaneous) and approach and separate.” Heraclitus, Frag. 91. quoted in Austen Woodbury’s *Metaphysics – Ontology*, 72.; “all things flow and nothing remains (*panta rei kai ouden menei*)” as quoted in Martin O. Vaske, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963), 45.

³⁴⁵ Henry J. Koren, *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*, (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1955.), 106. Cf., Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 34-5: “The Heraclitean position, by contrast, when pushed to the extreme would entail the there is only multiplicity and not unity in the world, nothing to tie together the diverse objects of our experience. There is this particular thing we call ‘round,’ that one, and a third one, but no one thing, *roundness*, that they all instantiate; there is this perceptual experience of what we call a “ball,” that one, and a third perceptual experience of what we call a ‘ball,’ that one, and a third one, but no one thing, that ball itself, that these experiences are all experiences of, and no one subject, the perceiving self, which has the various perceptual experiences. (To be sure, Heraclitus himself adopted a kind of monism on which there is one thing, the world itself, which is the subject of endless change – a *dynamic monism* rather than the *static monism* of the Eleatics.”

³⁴⁶ “Therefore, to say that everything becomes...is together to assert that everything is NOT ACTUALLY and yet something IS ACTUALLY; which is self-contradictory.” Woodbridge, *Metaphysics – Ontology*, 79. The idea of change is intelligible exactly because there are actual beings that undergo change making it an observable and predictable occurrence in reality.

4.3 Parmenides

On the opposite side of the spectrum and considered to be the most important of the Presocratic philosophers is Parmenides.³⁴⁷ Though his writings along with Heraclitus' are subject to interpretation and debate regarding their respective ontologies, or lack thereof, Parmenides is still generally recognized for positing *permanence* rather than change as the primordial brute fact of nature.³⁴⁸ Nonetheless the thrust of his argument proceeds as follows: it is obviously the case that being cannot be derived from nothing; there is no possible transition from nothing to something; to be sure, nothing arrives from nothing.³⁴⁹ But it most certainly is the case that there is being, i.e., a real world composed of real things. If there is being in the world, then it could not have originated from nothing. In order for any change to occur, one being must act upon another, but since there can only be either being or non-being, and the existence of non-being is not possible, then being is incapable of doing anything other than just be. Therefore, all change is an illusion. Moreover, destitute of any possibility of change, all that remains is being itself, forging all reality collectively into a single unit or whole, or as one entire simple entity of being. The diversity and complexity of being experienced in the world is part of that very illusion that

³⁴⁷ Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, 203.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 204. The following are some relevant passages from Parmenides: "the one that it is, and it is not possible for it not to be, is the way of credibility, for it follows Truth"; "For it is the same thing to think and to be."; "One should both say and think that Being Is; for To Be is possible, and Nothingness is not possible."; "For this (view) can never predominate, that That Which Is Not Exist."; "To this way there are very many sign-posts: that Being has no coming –into – being and no destruction, for it is whole of limb, without motion, and without end. And it never Was, nor Will Be, because it Is now, a Whole all together, One, continuous; for what creation of it will you look for?" Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), pp. 41-43. Aristotle also provides a report on Parmenides' doctrine. See *Physics* 1.2, 185a5-12; 1.8, 191b36-192a2; *On Generation and Corruption* 1.3, 318b2-7.

³⁴⁹ In light of Parmenides' level-headed and metaphysically astute observance, certain contemporary physicists have argued for the origins of the universe arising from nothing. See, Lawrence Krauss, *A Universe From Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing* (New York: Free Press, 2012); Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010).

excludes the possibility of change and, thus, Parmenides leads the world into a “*static monism*.”³⁵⁰

Heraclitus and Parmenides each have an answer to the problem of change and each solution appears extreme when compared to a common sense understanding of how the world actually is. Aristotle, in turn, will provide a resolution that will bridge the chasm between his predecessors and create sense in the midst a world of both permanence and change.

4.4 Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) is in accord with Heraclitus and will admit that change is an unavoidable fact of reality. He is also in accord with Parmenides in upholding the existence of being – the world indeed is real and made up of real existing things. However, Aristotle deviates from them both by making the distinction between being-in-*act* and being-in-*potency*.³⁵¹ For Aristotle there are the various ways a thing simply *is*, in *actuality*, in the real world, given the nature or essence of what the thing is. For example, it is part of the nature or essence of an orange to possess a certain constitution characteristic of oranges. Oranges are essentially of a certain color, and possess a certain outer and inner texture, taste, and numerous other characteristic features. There are also the ways a thing cannot be given that very same nature or essence. For example, an orange is not an apple, it cannot peel itself nor squeeze the juice out of itself, it cannot burst into flames, etc. Then there are the ways a thing could potentially be, for

³⁵⁰ Koren, *An Introduction*, p. 106. All reality is *one* without the possibility of change.

³⁵¹ Aristotle argues against Parmenides via his doctrine of *privation* (*Physics* 1.8) before alluding to his argument via potency and act: “This then is one way of solving the difficulty. Another consists in pointing out that the same things can be spoken of in terms of potentiality and actuality. But this has been done with greater precision elsewhere.” *Physics* 1.8, 191b27-29; Cf., *Metaphysics* 9.1, 1045b32-34: “And since ‘being’ is in one way divided into ‘what’, quality, and quantity, and is in another way distinguished in respect of potentiality and fulfilment, and of function, let us discuss potentiality and fulfilment.” For Aristotle there is a true middle ground between *actual* being and non-being.

example, an orange can potentially be cut into pieces, its skin can potentially be peeled, it can potentially be squeezed thus producing orange juice.³⁵² What this mundane observance describes is a transition from being-in-potency to being-in-act. What is potential in something becoming actual and therefore arriving at the existence of change or motion.³⁵³ On this account of reality, Aristotle was able to expound upon certain metaphysical principles that are indirectly perceptible and evident as acting upon being simultaneously acknowledging both the existence of being as actuality and the potentialities enmeshed therein.³⁵⁴

Contra Parmenides, potency and act grant the real possibility of change as common sense ascertains from the actual phenomena of change discoverable in this world – albeit indirectly through the senses; potency and act truly engage and imbibe the multitude of cause and effect relationships among things.³⁵⁵ Contra Heraclitus, potency is not mutually exclusive from act; they each represent two sides of reality. Without something in act – in existence – there can be no potency – no change. Keeping in mind Aquinas’ Fourth Way, if Parmenides is afforded his

³⁵² “For any material body, there are some things it just is and some things it is not, and there are some things it cannot do and some ways it cannot be, but also things it can do and ways it can be.” Oderberg, *Real*, 62. A further distinction could be made about *potential* or *possible* being (*possible*, being another form of referring to what is potential). In so far as something is actual (i.e., a real existing thing), it is obviously the case that it itself is possible (i.e., its existence and identity is possible); “this stands to reason, for it is obviously the case that if a thing actually exists, then it is possible for it to exist.” D.Q. McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 196. “Possible” is not meant to denote any relation with *modal possible world* accounts of establishing the objectivity of essences. The potencies being referred to here are contingent upon something objective that has them exactly because of the kind of thing it is. “Potentialities are grounded in real facts and in the actual features of the entities which manifest them.” Christopher Shields, *Aristotle* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 60.

³⁵³ *Physics* 3.1, 201a9-11: “We have distinguished with respect of each class between what is in fulfilment and what is potentially; thus the fulfilment of what is potentially, as such, is motion...”

³⁵⁴ *Physics* 1.7, 190a32-33: “Things are said to come to be in different ways. In some cases we do not use the expression ‘come to be’, but ‘come to be so-and-so’.” Cf., “For Aristotle, potentialities are real features of things alongside the ways in which they are actual, and that is why things are capable of changing. Potentialities constitute a middle ground between the two options Parmenides affords us in his false dichotomy between fully actualized being and sheer non-being or nothingness.” Edward Feser, “Natural Theology Must Be Founded in Philosophy” in *Neo-Scholastic Essays* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2015), 63.

³⁵⁵ Both the principles of sufficient reason and efficient causality mutually convey the necessity of a cause to explain an effect. Given that no effect is the source of its own actualization or existence (i.e., no potency can actualize itself) a cause must explain the effect. Thus effects can be viewed as analogous to potencies but only within something already in act which can be viewed analogously as a cause.

conclusion that change is illusory, hence, all being is one, then any gradation of perfections among being would fall prey as a metaphysical mirage with no forthcoming distinction among truth, goodness, nobility, and the like, given that everything is “one,” not to mention that the epistemology and metaphysics that grounds one’s predication of reality as more and less would be mute in the face of a homogeneous univocal whole. It seems to fare worse for Heraclitus, since his constant flux cannot give a coherent account of its very own origins as flux, leaving no other alternative than non-being in its path. Without potency and act, the consequences are clear, either one is left with non-existence (via Heraclitus) or no real identity or distinction of particulars and kinds (via Parmenides).³⁵⁶ It might be tempting to think that such consequences cannot possibly affect every aspect of reality. Surely the empirical sciences are immune from such repercussions. However hopeful one might be, the results are abundantly clear and follow necessarily from the metaphysics. Feser is unreserved in articulating the ramifications that potency and act play in modern science:

Science would be impossible if either the Eleatic position or its Heraclitean opposite were true. If Parmenides and Zeno were correct, there would be no world of distinct, changing things and events for the physicist, chemist, or biologist to study; and perceptual experience, which forms the evidential basis for modern science but which consists precisely in a series of distinct and changing perceptual episodes, would be entirely illusory. If the opposite, Heraclitean position were correct, there would be not stable, repeatable patterns for the scientist to uncover – no laws of physics, no periodic table of elements, no biological species – and thus no way to infer from the observed to the unobserved. On either of these views, the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of science would be undermined. Yet there is no way to avoid the Eleatic and Heraclitean extremes without affirming the distinction between act and potency. So we must affirm it given the success of science.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Aristotle was aware of the consequences of such positions in commenting on Parmenides and his school: “It was through failure to make this distinction that those thinkers gave the matter up, and through this error that they went so much farther astray as to suppose that nothing else comes to be or exists apart from what is itself, thus doing away with all becoming.” *Physics* 1.8, 191b10-13. Cf., *Metaphysics*, 1046b29-1047b2: “There are some who say, as the Megaric school does, that a thing can act only when it is acting, and when it is not acting it cannot act, e.g. he who is not building cannot build, but only he who is building, when he is building; and so in all other cases. It is not hard to see the absurdities that attend to this view.”

³⁵⁷ Feser, *Scholastic*, 36.

The principles of potency and act carry serious weight. Their importance cannot be ignored or brushed aside, for to acknowledge the principle of non-contradiction, or substance, or causality, or the transcendentals, or anything else as existing in reality will necessarily presupposes at the most fundamental level a real potency and possibility for its very existence. And this only goes to show the contingency and finitude of all being given that existence is something that cannot be causally attained from within the objects that have it.³⁵⁸ Thus potency sets the metaphysical condition for the existence of what there is by allowing for the real possibility of existence. Not from potency alone since potency itself has no causal agency, but neither from pure actuality devoid of potency in the world, since there is no monistic pure act, although all potencies necessarily presuppose something in act. In order to clarify these niceties more needs to be said on some of the more important and specific implications of potency and act.

4.5 Potency

The existence of potency as a metaphysical principle is evidenced through the encounter with actuality – whatever potencies discoverable there may be in the objects that manifest them they present themselves through actualized beings (being-in-act), actual existing things, objects in the world that fall under both macroscopic and microscopic description. Anything actual or that comes to be actualized does not derive its actualization through itself, and as accurately as Parmenides concluded, neither does actuality come from nothing. Any actuality fundamentally “requires actual agents and causes but is educed from the *potentiality* in reality to take on new

³⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, IV: “Whatever belongs to something is either caused by the principles of its nature, like risibility in man, or accrues to it from some extrinsic principle, like the light in the air, which is caused by the sun. It is impossible that the act of existing itself be caused by the form or quiddity – and by ‘caused’ I mean as by an efficient cause – for then something would be the cause of itself and produce itself in existence, which is impossible.” Cf., *Summa Theologiae* I. 3. 4.

existences.”³⁵⁹ Potency has several facets worth examining which will help to fully clarify its correlative relationship with act.

First is the distinction between *active* and *passive* potency. To borrow an example from Martin O. Vaske, a college sophomore is potentially a philosopher.³⁶⁰ The student has the capacity, power, or potency to study and learn philosophy by diving head first into the expansive literature of Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics along with the rest of his peers. Though in his first year of college he may not have even taken any impassioned interest in the subject of philosophy and, therefore, never bothered to glance upon any of Aristotle’s or Thomas’ corpus of writings – yet alone any book on the subject of philosophy – nevertheless, he contains within himself the ability and possibility of someday becoming the philosopher that he currently enjoys being. It took many hours of careful reading and study, but in so doing, the once potency for becoming a philosopher has now been actualized, thus his becoming an *actual* philosopher from what he was in the past, but a mere *potential* philosopher.

In this case, the student had the power or a real potency that enabled him to become a philosopher. This potency, grounded in his nature or essence, is an *active* potency.³⁶¹ It is active in the sense that it is a real immanent power that inheres in the subject allowing him or her capable of producing a certain effect, in this case, the ability to philosophize.³⁶² It would be the opposite case with a dog. Dogs do not possess the real or active potency to engage in philosophy and never will due to their essence which defines the active potencies it is capable of realizing. Moreover, active potencies go hand-in-hand with *passive potencies*. These potencies allow for

³⁵⁹ Oderberg, *Real*, 63.

³⁶⁰ Vaske, *Intro.*, 48.

³⁶¹ These potencies are *derived* from a beings essence making them “grounded in the ontology of their bearers...” and therefore, “causally efficacious.” Edmund Runggaldier, *Potentiality in Scholasticism and the Contemporary Debate on “Powers,”* in Edward Feser and Edmund Runggaldier, *Metaphysics: Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic*, (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012), 187.

³⁶² Cf., Feser, *Scholastic*, 39: “... the capacity to bring about an effect...”

the capacity of the agent or thing to be affected.³⁶³ Thus the same student has the passive potency to receive philosophic knowledge from his professors, which allows him to grow in his knowledge of philosophy.³⁶⁴ Active potencies inhere in beings which are truly able to have them fulfilled or, at the very least, the possibility of them being fulfilled is present even if they never actually become fulfilled. The sophomore may not have ever become a philosopher, nonetheless, it does not change the fact that he *could* have become a philosopher exactly because he had the active potency to do so. If that sophomore never rises to the level of becoming a philosopher, regardless, that active potency remains, as it were, un-actualized.³⁶⁵ These distinctions help in identifying determinate inherent powers of real beings communicating the potencies capable of being actualized from those which in principle cannot be.³⁶⁶

Second, what can also be inferred via the active and passive distinction in potency is a certain hierarchical structure fashioned within a being's potentialities and actualities. To continue with the sophomore philosopher, he is now in possession of philosophical knowledge *qua* philosopher and is able to exercise this knowledge as he pleases. This ability to philosophize comes as a *secondary* actuality something relative to his nature or essence as a human being, which is a *first* or *primary* actuality (it is first because all potencies issue from it, for example, the powers for abstract thought, reasoning, language, volition).³⁶⁷ Consequently, the secondary actuality, or second act of philosophizing also becomes a primary actuality, or first act, in that the sophomore can choose when to and when not to philosophize (for example, it becomes a

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Scholastics also referred to active potency as *subjective* potency and passive potency as *objective* potency; subjective meaning, actual properties inhering in a real being or subject; objective meaning, mere possibility. Runggaldier, *Potentiality*, 187-8.

³⁶⁵ "If something has the capacity to change another thing, this other thing has the capacity to be changed. If it is impossible to alter it, it lacks the necessary *potential passive*." Runggaldier, 188.

³⁶⁶ Runggaldier captures the point, "the scholastic assumption that dispositions and powers are real properties is grounded in the firm belief that we are able to do certain things and that it is the disposition which makes all the difference between being able and not being able to do these things." 186.

³⁶⁷ Feser, *Scholastic*, 41.

primary actuality when in use, and a secondary actuality when not in use). This secondary actuality is completely contingent upon the first, and in this manner, potency and act are principles of being distinguishable in layers. What this demonstrates is a hierarchy of potency and act exhibiting the primacy of certain potencies to acts and acts to potencies.

Third, persistence is present in the midst of potency and act. The sophomore, now turned philosopher, is still the *same* subject prior to his conversion in academic work and knowledge as a philosopher. The now student philosopher did not sprout up out of the ground *ex nihilo*, with the annihilation of the former student.³⁶⁸ The change was intrinsic to that specific sophomore and no one or anything else. What remains is a substance prior to and after any potency is actualized. As was concluded from the critique of Heraclitus, it is *something* that changes, not non-being or change itself.

Fourth, no potency can actualize itself.³⁶⁹ Water cannot freeze without the temperature dipping to 32° F or below; neither can it boil without the temperature rising to 212° F or more. Gold cannot melt unless heated by some exterior cause. The sophomore philosopher did not spontaneously combust into a philosopher. If it were somehow possible that any potency could actualize itself, there would be no way of knowing or predicting any transition from potency to act. Water would be able to freeze or boil at will, or even more absurdly, it could do both at the

³⁶⁸ Oderberg explains the distinction well. "The sorts of phenomena we speak of when we speak of creation and annihilation are ones in which prior material is turned into something else (where we do not assume by 'turned into' that the prior material survives the change). Hence the creation of a human being by reproduction is properly called *procreation* rather than creation pure and simple, since the previously existing gametes are the material out of which the child is formed. *Real Essentialism*, 74.

³⁶⁹ "...whatever is reduced to act – that is, moved from a state of potency to a state of act – must be so reduced by something already in act." McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 202. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *The Principles of Nature*, 3.18: "For what is in potency cannot reduce itself to act. Bronze, which is in potency to being a statue, does not make itself be a statue, but needs an agent which draws out the form of statue from potency to act. For form cannot draw itself out from potency to act."

same time.³⁷⁰ Or, further yet, as Oderberg concludes “if there were only pure passive potentiality in the universe, nothing could come into existence...” (not even passive potency itself).³⁷¹ Again, potency is the potential for something to undergo change or motion.³⁷² However, because potency can never actualize itself this does not mean that an infinite regress of potency and act ensues (one potency actualized by another, which in turn is actualized by another, and another, etc.). What this ultimately necessitates is the existence of a being that is pure actuality (that which is the source of all actualities and potencies), initiating all actuality and therefore simultaneously allowing for potency in the universe.³⁷³ This is one key metaphysical point that will lead Aquinas to posit the existence of an unmoved mover in the first of his famous Five Ways.³⁷⁴

Fifth, actuality is metaphysically prior to potency. The existence of potency alone results in nothing. A potential is exactly that, a potential for something, but this assumes some host that

³⁷⁰ A plastic ball “melts and becomes gooey when you heat it. Why did this potential gooeyness become actual at precisely that point? The obvious answer is that the heat was needed to actualize it. If the potency for gooeyness could have actualized itself, it would have happened already, since the potential was there already... The principle is true, incidentally, even of animals, which seem at first glance to move or change themselves; for what this always amounts to is really just one part of the animal being changed by another part. A dog ‘moves itself’ across a room, but only insofar as the potential for motion in the dog’s legs is actualized by the flexing of the leg muscles, and their potential for being flexed is actualized by the firing of the motor neurons, and the potential for the motor neurons to fire is actualized by other neurons, and so on.” Feser, *Aquinas*, 11-12.

³⁷¹ *Real*, 63.

³⁷² Motion is defined in the Aristotelian sense conveying more than mere locomotion, but canvassing a much broader understanding. “We have already pointed out that there is no necessity that what originates movement should itself be moved. There are two senses in which anything may be moved – either indirectly, owing to something other than itself, or directly, owing to itself. Things are indirectly moved which are moved as being contained in something which is moved, e.g. sailors, for they are moved in a different sense from that in which the ship is moved; the ship is directly moved, they are indirectly moved, because they are in a moving vessel. This is clear if we consider their limbs; the movement proper to the legs (and so to man) is walking, and in this case the sailors are not walking. Recognizing the double sense of ‘being moved’, what we have to consider now is whether the soul is directly moved and participates in such direct movement. There are four species of movement – locomotion, alteration, diminution, growth; consequently if the soul is moved, it must be moved with one or several or all of these species of movement.” *On the Soul* 1.3, 406a11-13; Cf. *Physics* 5.1, 225a26-32; *Metaphysics* 6.12, 1068a10.

³⁷³ “This is the foundation of the famous Aristotelian-Thomistic principle that ‘whatever is moved is moved by another’” Edward Feser, *Aquinas*, 11.

³⁷⁴ *Summa Theologiae* I.2.3.

carries the potential. It makes no sense to speak of potential freezing or potential boiling if there were no actual substance such as water to undergo those changes to begin with.³⁷⁵ The actualization of any potency only happens within something already in actuality.

4.6 Act

Act or actuality serves a twofold function: 1) something in act is “the realization of something possible” as was the case with the sophomore in potency to becoming a philosopher; 2) “it is the realization or manifestation of a real capacity or a power” again, the sophomore had the real power to become a philosopher.³⁷⁶ Actuality, then, dissents from Parmenides’ view of being by its clear manifestation in reality through things and their essential and accidental properties, differences, modes, powers, characteristics, relations, etc., all of which shape the universe into an array of distinction and qualification advancing against a “pasted together” univocal whole of pure actuality. Oderberg adds: “the world is not populated by *potential* trees, but *actual* trees; not by potential electrons, but actual electrons. If the whole universe, implausibly, were just the excitation of a quantum field, the excitation would be actual, not potential...”³⁷⁷ In making these observations the concreteness of actuality paves the way for a

³⁷⁵ D.Q. McInerney elaborates on this observation: “No actually existing being can be in potency with respect to first act, for that would involve a contradiction; the thing would both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect. Because potency is always related to act, would it be correct to say that, although no actually existing being is in potency to its existence, it is in potency to its non-existence?” *Metaphysics*, 199. By *first act*, McInerney is referring to the act of existing as the first act of a real existing being; the first act of any actual existing thing is to actually exist as it is.

³⁷⁶ Runggaldier, 188.

³⁷⁷ Oderberg, *Real*, 64.

description of reality itself that is far more than mere potential, but actual. The perfections³⁷⁸ that arise from actuality delineate a world of real existing things.³⁷⁹

4.7 Aquinas

Aquinas is very clear on the reality of potency and act and its application to “every kind of being.”³⁸⁰ For Aquinas there is a general distinction to be made between that which exists (being-in-act) from that which can exist (being-in-potency); “those which can be are said to exist *in potency*, whereas those which are, are said to exist *in act*.”³⁸¹ For example, Bob exists *essentially* as a man (that is, Bob exists qua man by reason of his nature or essence which determines Bob’s existence as a male human being), but Bob can also exist *accidentally* as when Bob spends too much time poolside and his skin turns from a pale white to a glistening bronze (although pale white at one moment the potency for his skin to turn a glistening bronze – albeit indirectly observable until its actualization – is a real feature in Bob).³⁸² Moreover, those things in act, either essentially or accidentally, are themselves in potency to existing as such. Bob could not exist unless the potency or possibility for his existence was real and neither could he exist with a tan unless the potency or possibility for his skin to change color was real.³⁸³

Speaking on material things in general, for a thing to come into *generation*, that is, for it to come into existence, any material being will exist only through the antecedent existence of

³⁷⁸ “Any attribute, property, action, change, passion, or relation that belongs to a thing and can be predicated of it or that is thought of as belonging to and predicable of a thing.” Bernard Wuellner, *A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy, second edition*, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), 24.

³⁷⁹ “What it means is that potency is *completed* by actuality such as to constitute reality as it is, and that each thing that exists has its own characteristics that give it a definite place in reality as something with distinctive properties and accidents enabling it to be marked off from everything that is different from it either individually or essentially.” Oderberg, *Real*, 64. Scholastic philosophers traditionally refer to these properties and accidents as *perfections* of being.

³⁸⁰ *Summa Theologiae*, I.77.1: “... power and act divide being and every kind of being...”

³⁸¹ *The Principles of Nature*, 1.1

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1.2

something prior (i.e., something already in act), thus there is a movement from potency (what existed as a possibility) to act (what comes into actual existence or *generation*): “Now a thing can be said to go from potency to actuality only by reason of some actual being, which is the agent by which the process of generation is brought about. Now potency pertains to the matter from which something is generated: and actuality pertains to the thing generated.”³⁸⁴ Following Aristotle, for Aquinas potencies are derived from the possible and not the impossible, “for example, if one were to say that it is possible for someone to sit if nothing impossible follows when he is assumed to sit. And the same holds true of being moved and of moving something, and other cases of this kind.”³⁸⁵ Actualities, in turn, exist in a different way from potencies: “He says that a thing is actual when it exists but not in the way in which it exists when it is potential. For we say that the image of Mercury is in the wood potentially and not actually before the wood is carved; but once it has been carved the image of Mercury is then said to be in the wood actually.”³⁸⁶

Commenting further on Aristotle, Aquinas articulates the overall roles of potency and act within metaphysics, first with material being since that is the more obvious medium where one identifies motion and thus the existence of potency and act, but then proceeding on to immaterial being from which it can be inferred that Aquinas believes there to be a division of all being by potency and act:

It is first necessary to speak of potency in its most proper sense, although not the one which is most useful for our present purpose. For potency and actuality are referred in most cases to things in motion, because motion is the actuality of a being in potency. But the principal aim of this branch of science is to consider

³⁸⁴ *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, VII, lesson 6, no. 1384. Cf. *The Principles of Nature*, 1.6: “Therefore, three things are required for generation: namely, a being in potency, which is matter; a state of not-existing in act, which is privation; and that through which something comes to be actually, which is form. Thus when a stature is made from bronze, the bronze, which is in potency to the form *statue*, is the matter. The lack of configuration or arrangement is the privation.”

³⁸⁵ *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, IX, lesson 3, no. 1804.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 1825.

potency and actuality, not insofar as they are found in mobile beings, but insofar as they accompany being in general. Hence potency and actuality are also found in immobile beings, for example, in intellectual ones.

And when we shall have spoken about the potency found in mobile things, and about its corresponding actuality, we will also be able to explain potency and actuality insofar as they are found in the intelligible things classed as separate substances, which are treated later on. This order is a fitting one, since sensible things, which are in motion, are more evident to us, and therefore by means of them we may attain a knowledge of the substances of immobile things.³⁸⁷

... Power and act divide being and every kind of being...³⁸⁸

In conclusion, the ontological principles of potency and act are indispensable insofar as they allow for motion to take place in reality. The existence of change and the consequences that stem from Heraclitus and Parmenides are answered by the existence of actualities and their potencies. Actuality is never some anonymous entity; it is the nature or essence of a thing which brings forth an actual existing being determining its potencies, whatever they may be, with the capacity for their actualization. Essence establishes all the perfections of an individual being, bestowing its identity and determining the changes it is and is not capable of undergoing. The Fourth Way describes a reality made up of things that are more and less true, good, noble and the like, but the actualization of these perfections will involve a movement from potency to act. On the one hand, there is no Heraclitean flux, making things incapable of being true, good or noble due to absolute change or potency and, on the other, there is no Parmenidean monism, making things incapable of being true, good or noble due to absolute oneness or act. But just as the investigation with potency and act begins with what is observable to the senses, the existence of material objects presuppose more than potency and act.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., no. 1770-1.

³⁸⁸ *Summa Theologiae* I.77.1; Feser highlights the importance of this principle as it is articulated in the first of the Twenty Four Thomistic Thesis: "Potency and Act divide being in such a way that whatever is, is either pure act, or of necessity it is composed of potency and act as primary and intrinsic principles." *Aquinas*, 12; *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 31.

The doctrine of *hylemorphism* states that any material being is a composition of *prime matter* and *substantial form*.³⁸⁹ The principles of potency and act provide the fundamental explanation for the existence of change and persistence in the world – the actualization of some potency within something already in act. But *what* exactly is in act and how it changes and persists are the questions that hylemorphism address more specifically. In the world objects constantly undergo *substantial* and *accidental* changes; potencies are actualized modifying the things they inhere in in both substantial and accidental ways. For example, fences are painted white and so are the trunks of trees. These can be considered as examples of accidental change given that the fence and tree remain in substance as what they are. But a substantial change alters the thing undergoing the transformation completely so that it can no longer be identified as the thing it was simply because it has changed into something entirely different. For example, a fire

³⁸⁹ “The theory of the natural constitution of matter and a definite form in all bodies; the theory that every natural body is composed of two substantial principles related to each other as potency and act and called prime matter and substantial form.” Weullner, *Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*, 55.

This doctrine has its genesis in Aristotle: “But now let us resume the discussion of the generally recognized substances. These are the sensible substances, and sensible substances all have matter. The substratum is substance, and this is in one sense the matter (and by matter I mean that which, not being a ‘this’ actually, is potentially a ‘this’), and in another sense the formula or form (which being a ‘this’ can be separately formulated), and thirdly the complex of matter and form, which alone is generated and destroyed, and is without qualification, capable of separate existence; for of substances in the sense of formulae some are separable and some or not.” *Metaphysics* 8.1, 1042a24-32.

Aquinas further clarifies the distinctions between matter, form, and substance: “For matter is called substance, not as though it were a being considered to have actual existence in itself, but as something capable of being actual (and this is said to be a particular thing). And form, which is also termed the intelligible structure because the intelligible structure of the species is derived from it, is called substance inasmuch as it is something actual, and inasmuch as it is separable from matter in thought but not in reality. And the thing composed of these is called substance inasmuch as it is something ‘separable in an absolute sense,’ i.e., capable of existing separately by itself in reality; and it alone is subject to generation and corruption. For form and matter are generated and corrupted only by reason of something else. And although the composite is separable in an absolute sense, yet some of the other things which are called substances are separable in thought and some are not. For a form is separable in thought because it can be understood without understanding individuating sensible matter; but matter cannot be understood without understanding form, since it is apprehended only inasmuch as it is in potentiality to form.” *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, VIII, lesson 1, no. 1687.

leaves in its wake the remnants of what used to be a forest causing a massive substantial change (i.e., what use to be trees are now piles of ash). But in any change whether substantial or accidental there still remains some material substratum or parcel of matter that carries over or continues to exist between those changes; after the forest fire the tree has changed into ash, but the ash comes to exist directly from what use to be the tree thus maintaining a line of ontological continuity between the matter that makes up the tree and the matter that makes up the ash.³⁹⁰ It is matter that both the tree and ash have in common and it is matter that continues to exist after the substantial change from tree to ash has taken place. But the numerical differences between the tree and ash are very much in place; the tree is not literally the ash and vice versa. What seems to be at play, then, during such a transformation is the matter that constituted the tree taking on a different substantial form.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Aristotle takes note of this phenomena in his definition of matter: "For my definition of matter is just this – the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be, and which persists in the result, not accidentally." *Physics* 1.9, 192a 31-33. This substratum, as it will be argued, is prime matter or the potency to take on substantial form. *Metaphysics* 9.8, 1050a15-16: "Further, matter exists in a potential state, just because it may attain to its form; and when it exists *actually*, then it is in its form."

³⁹¹ "Things are said to come in different ways. In some cases we do not use the expression 'come to be', but 'come to be so-and-so'. Only substances are said to come to be without qualification. Now in all cases other than substance it is plain that there must be something underlying, namely, that which becomes. For when a thing comes to be of such a quantity or quality or in such a relation, time, or place, a subject is always presupposed, since substance alone is not predicated of another subject, but everything else of substance. But that substances too, and anything that can be said to be without qualification, come to be from some underlying thing, will appear on examination. For we find in every case something that underlies from which proceeds that which comes to be; for instance, animals and plants from seed." *Physics* 1.7, 190a32-b5. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, 1.7, lecture 12, 107: "He says, therefore, first that since 'to come to be' is used in many ways, 'to come to be simply' is said only of the coming to be of substances, whereas other things are said to come to be accidentally. This is so because 'to come to be' implies the beginning of existing. Therefore, in order for something to come to be simply, it is required that it previously will not have been simply, which happens in those things which come to be substantially. For when a man comes to be, he not only previously was not a man, but it is true to say that he simply was not. When, however, a man becomes white, it is not true to say that he previously was not, but that he previously was not such.

Those things, however, which come to be accidentally clearly depend upon a subject. For quantity and quality and the other accidents, whose coming to be is accidental, cannot be without a subject. For only substance does not exist in a subject.

Further, it is clear, if one considers the point, that even substances come to be from a subject. For we see that plants and animals come to be from seed." Cf., Aristotle, *Physics* 1.8, 191b13-15.

Now the existence of matter is a feature of the world that is quite easily taken for granted due to its simple and intuitive assimilation by the senses and intellect. Mountains, trees, birds, rocks, clouds, insects, rain, rods of steel, protons, electrons, these are all real objects and perceptible as such because they are all instances of particular and individual material things. But this cognizance is far from complete. Notice too that the specific examples just given are identifiable as what they are *only* because of a specific structure or specific arrangement of matter that allows each particular to be defined and delineated as a distinct material substance diverse from the other substances on the list. Indeed, mountains, trees, birds, and the rest are all material compositions and therefore real material substances, but it does not take much to identify obvious differences between each. What makes each different, unique, and individual, what makes a bird a bird and not a lion or a lake is accredited to some unifying principle responsible for the structure of things. This is what Aquinas referred to as *substantial form*.³⁹² A thing's substantial form is to be understood as "those specific aspects of its organizational structure that make it the *kind* of substance it is."³⁹³ By recognizing something's substantial form, for example, by recognizing a dog one identifies a dog *qua* dog; indirectly apprehending

³⁹² Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *The Principles of Nature*, 1.1: "Now there are two ways of existing in act: to exist *essentially* or *substantially* (as when man exists), and to exist *accidentally* (as when a man exists as white); 1.2: "What makes something exist substantially is called *substantial form*, and what makes something exist accidentally is called *accidental form*."

³⁹³ Edward Feser, *Locke*, 12. Cf., *The Last Superstition*, 58: "Those features that are essential to a thing comprise what Aristotelians call its *substantial form* – the form that makes a thing the kind of substance or thing that it is, its *essence*."; Aquinas, 13-14, 16; *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 162: "Form is that intrinsic principle by which a thing exhibits whatever permanence, perfection, and identity that it does."; David Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, 66: "Now substantial form is *intrinsic* since it is a constituent solely of the substance. It is a *constituent* because it is a real part or element of it, though not on the same level as a substance's natural parts such as the branch of a tree or the leg of a dog. Rather, substantial form (or 'form' for short) is a radical or fundamental part of the substance in the sense of constituting it as the kind of substance it is. It is a *principle* in the sense of being that from which the identity of the substance is derived – that *by virtue of which* the substance is what it is. It is *incomplete* in the sense that it does not and cannot, contra Platonism, exist apart from instantiation by a particular individual. In the specific case of material substances, i.e. substances that have a material element even though they may not be wholly material, this means the form cannot exist without correlative *matter* to individuate it. And form *actualizes the potencies of matter* in the sense of being the principle that unites with matter to produce a finite individual with limited powers and an existence circumscribed by space and time. Together with matter, it composes the distinct individual substance. Hence all substances in the material world are true *compounds* of matter and form."

the substantial form of the dog or its *dogness* – to put it casually – and, therefore, dogs can be defined and determined as what they are juxtaposed against what they are not, for instance, cats, bears, or bars of gold. In the apprehension of substantial form, one is assimilating the existence of a being’s nature or essence (its principle of identity and therefore what makes item A numerically distinct from item B) and from this metaphysical and epistemological vantage point, the arrival at basic definitions can begin to take place since one knows what a thing is (i.e., recognizes and distinguishes a particular and its aspects from other individuals) only when one knows the kind of thing it is, and when one recognizes a kind one recognizes essence.³⁹⁴ In association with substantial form are a thing’s *accidental forms*. Aquinas distinguishes between the two kinds of form by highlighting the difference between *man qua substance or existing without qualification* (i.e., man existing simply as man) from *man qua substance existing in a qualified way* (i.e., *as when a man exists as white*).³⁹⁵ Thus two blue discs are blue in virtue of the essence *blue* but they can easily be painted red, or white, or any number of other colors without altering the substantial existence of the discs as what they are. The two discs contain potencies to take on different accidental forms. However, accidental forms are metaphysically dependent on substantial form and in the case of material substances, substantial form is in union with matter so as to provide the platform for the simultaneous actualization of both substantial and accidental form.

³⁹⁴ A search for definitions is a search for essences and the various causes surrounding their being. “E.g. why does it thunder? – why is sound produced in the clouds? Thus the inquiry is about the predication of one thing of another. And why are certain things, i.e. stones and bricks, a house? Plainly we are seeking the cause. And this is the essence (to speak abstractly), which in some cases is that for the sake of which, e.g. perhaps in the case of a house or a bed, and in some cases is the first mover; for this also is a cause. But while the efficient cause is sought in the case of genesis and destruction, the final cause is sought in the case of being also.” Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.17, 1041a26-32.

³⁹⁵ *The Principles of Nature*, 1.1; Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.7, 1017a7-31; 4.2, 1003a-b19.

Oderberg notes that “there is no explanation for the unity of any material substance without the postulation of substantial form.”³⁹⁶ Reason being, substantial form is an *intrinsic* metaphysical principle that all substances *must* have in order to exist. Things simply cannot be identified without some cause as principle for their being identifiable as what they are and this cause must mean that whatever is identifiable actually exists and it exists exactly because it is a something or other.³⁹⁷ If substantial form is what informs matter initiating the existence of a dog, from a cat, or a whale, what this implies is that matter and substantial form cannot be separated from each other once matter is informed by substantial form in actual material substances. There can be no *real* separation of the two as opposed to a *logical* separation or distinction without eliminating the substance itself given that matter without substantial form is devoid of any identity and substantial form without matter would presumably exist only at the immaterial level.³⁹⁸ Only as abstracted mental concepts via a logical distinction can they be cut apart from one another existing conceptually in the intellect, but devoid of any *real* existence as separate entities in the world.

It is accurate to say that matter is never directly engaged apart from substantial form; mountains, trees, birds, rocks, clouds, insects, rain, steel, protons, and electrons are all hylemorphic compositions. It is never happenstance that upon entering a redwood forest one encounters not the majestic redwood growing to heights that exceed three hundred feet, but

³⁹⁶ *Real*, 66.

³⁹⁷ It is true that a dog is composed of a number of features and properties that identify dogs as what they are from what they are not. However, there must be a reason why the parts and properties of a dog align exactly so as to bring about the existence a dog rather than a cat or an owl.

³⁹⁸ Feser uses the example of a rubber ball to bring out this distinction: “... the rubber ball of our example is composed of a certain kind of matter (namely rubber) and a certain kind of form (namely the form of a red, round, bouncy object). The matter by itself isn’t the ball, for the rubber could take on the form of a doorstop, an eraser, or any number of other things. The form by itself isn’t the ball either, for you can’t bounce redness, roundness, or even bounciness down the hallway, these being mere abstractions. It is only the form and matter together that constitute the ball.” *Aquinas*, 13. As accidental forms, redness, roundness, and bounciness can only exist in the actual ball itself, but they can be considered individually only insofar as those forms can be abstracted from the ball via a logical or conceptual distinction taking place within the intellect.

anonymous individual pieces of matter or some *bare particular* with its characters.³⁹⁹ The organic constituents of any particular tree can be broken-down chemical bit by chemical bit, extracting the biological substructures and processes at the atomic level of configuration, but those will only be further descriptions of the matter-form compound and not anonymous descriptions of “pure matter” somehow devoid from substantial form. Substantial form simply is the nature or essence of a substance. As will be explained in a further discussion on *realism* and its assent to the real existence of universals, forms (substantial and accidental) are comprehended and grasped by the intellect via a process of abstraction; it is this very process that accounts for the discovery of substantial form in the first place; substantial form or essence being abstracted from the thing itself by the mind where it rests as a concept.⁴⁰⁰ But it is never the case that the substantial form of a tree is discoverable outside the physical instantiation of a tree by way of Platonic form. Substantial form, on this account, is very real in as much as it is conjoined with matter making for an irreducible union culminating in the creation of a substance but, it does not have an independent existence apart from the prime matter it informs.

Matter and substantial form are also to be distinguished from the specific functions and powers that a substance may procure for only in light of substantial form can sense be made of where and how those functions and powers ever arise. As argued above, these functions and powers are nothing more than the potencies that inhere in a substance and that they inhere in a substance is due to its substantial form corresponding to its *being-in-act*. Insofar as some material substance is in act its existence will only be identified through its substantial form in union with matter. In this manner, actuality or existence has an asymmetrical relation with

³⁹⁹ Edwin B. Allaire, “Bare Particulars” in *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, Second Edition, ed. Michael J. Loux, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 119. The bare particular provides the seat for the numerical difference of things.

⁴⁰⁰ Once abstracted from the substance within the intellect it is understood as a universal, by which all particulars of that kind of substance it was first abstracted from are referenced to.

substantial form; thus for a substance to have substantial form is for a substance to be in act with its potencies and accidental forms.

5.1 Prime Matter: Part 1

It was mentioned above that given any substantial change there still remains some material substratum that seems to carry over between what was prior to any substantial change and what comes afterward. The tree, after the fire, changes from one kind of material substance into another. How then can matter undergo the change or transference from one substantial form into another? Arguably this can only occur if matter *tout court* functions as a principle of pure potentiality; a metaphysical datum that allows for the persistence and numerical distinctness of substantial form. In this capacity it will serve as the “material substratum” that underlies every substantial change in material substances. This principle of pure potentiality is what Aquinas refers to as *prime matter*: “Likewise, properly speaking, what is in potency to exist substantially is called *prime matter*...”⁴⁰¹ Whereas any accidental change remains within the substance, it is in substantial change where matter takes on a new substantial form not the same substantial form changing into another.⁴⁰² Given that matter and substantial form are never separate in material substances, and substantial form is what determines matter to be a particular tree, mountain, piece of steel, and so forth, prime matter allows for persistence and change (since matter is still present between any substantial or accidental change). In the case of a *substantial* change, there

⁴⁰¹ *The Principles of Nature*, 1.2; Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 7.3 1029a20-27.

⁴⁰² The seat for substantial form remains ontologically constant, it is the form that changes. If either substantial form or accidental form itself could change into any other given form, then there could be no telling as to how and why this would happen. Forms could fluctuate at random, e.g., the substantial form of a dog could turn into a cat and then back into a dog and then into a ball of yarn and possibly never change again after that. This is obviously absurd. Change is the transition from potentiality to actuality, the actualization of one form (substantial or accidental) to another with some material substratum holding the change together.

is a complete ontological transformation from one substance to an entirely new substance; a real material change with the taking on of a completely new substantial form.

5.2 Against Hylemorphism

At this stage one may argue that the hylemorphic composition of all material being can only go so far down the metaphysical well of being. What about the existence of elementary particles or *simples*, that is, actual substances that have no *proper parts*.⁴⁰³ In other words, non-composite objects exist which are generally identified to be elementary particles, or quarks, or some other fundamental from physics.⁴⁰⁴ A reductionist account of material substances may argue that such a hylomorphic ontology of material things is untenable, reason being, that any given substance can be wholly accounted for on the atomic level of physical reality relying on the atomic and sub-atomic features of substances (e.g., quarks) represented metaphysically by simples, all in conjunction with the laws of physics and so forth. As a matter of fact, hylemorphism can be explained entirely in materialistic terms without the positing of so-called forms. This thesis has a long and ancient tradition originating with the Atomists of Ancient Greece. They were the first to push forward an “explanation of all qualitative differences by a mechanical juxtaposition of material particles in various patterns.”⁴⁰⁵

This type of general reductionism is less than satisfying at providing a faultless commentary on the structure of things. Material substances are never understood *prima facie* as coteries of atomic particles or any derivative thereof. Only through deeper and methodical analysis can the specialist arrive at the elemental sub-structures of any particular object,

⁴⁰³ Beebe, *Metaphysics*, 231. ‘Parts’ or *proper parts* refer to anything and everything that goes into the physical make-up of an object, from individual atoms, to ever larger constituents such as the legs of a chair.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 73.

providing ever more advanced and intricate descriptions and formulations of its atomic structure. But this comes *after* the fact of what the senses initially grasp – the form of an object, not its atomic number. Anything open to the senses clearly illustrates this. Finer niceties of the inner structure of things aside, it is a metaphysical fact that the intellect first apprehends any particular object in its holistic make-up as a particular substance of some kind. What one encounters are lumps of coal, trees, cheetahs, this man Bob and that woman Lucy. The reductionist will have to provide an adequate explanation as to *why* substances are first and foremost understood in this manner. This is not to confuse argument with description or that “the claim merely springs from the dialectical needs it satisfies and is not borne out by careful inspection of what is in fact presented.”⁴⁰⁶ The deeper analysis that science provides only aids in the understanding of what already is captured *au natural* in the thing itself. Any further information gives more precise detail of what is already identifiable as a certain kind and in no way contradicts the existence of substantial form and prime matter but only makes it more manifest. Even if the existence of quarks or simples is granted, this will only lead to their *virtual* existence in the substance and not as the definitive principle of the thing.⁴⁰⁷ Without substantial form what does exist at the atomic level (whatever that may be) would be indiscernible with no explanatory force accounting for its existence yet alone description. Any material arrangement of particles or sub-particles used to explain the originating holistic dimensions of a material substance are in need of explicating why anyone particular arrangement or bundle of particles leads to a certain structure over another not to mention identifying the exact quantity of such groups or bundles that comprise a substance?

⁴⁰⁶ Allaire, “Bare Particulars,” 117.

⁴⁰⁷ “Here, the virtual existence of a part in a whole logically presupposes the whole of which the part is a constituent... when something is related virtually to something else it is in some sense contained in, and dependent upon, that other thing. Fido’s being an animal is contained in, and dependent upon, Fido’s being a dog. The quark’s nature within the living body is contained in, and dependent upon, the nature of that body.” Oderberg, *Real*, 269.

For a reductionist to argue that a dog, for instance, can be explained in principle by some arrangement of atomic or sub-atomic particles is simply begging the question. The study of anatomy and physiology demonstrates, for example, the fine details of the cellular structures behind certain muscle contractions providing a blue print as to how proteins are broken down into amino acids and used to establish new proteins that will go on to serve specific muscle functions. But this bit of information will only help to understand the overall process behind muscle fiber tension during concentric and eccentric contraction or of protein synthesis in beings such as dogs as a whole, providing organic-chemical details of a substance that is *already* grasped as a particular type of thing, in this case, a dog. And this only happens via the apprehension of some principal of structure or substantial form.⁴⁰⁸

Reductionism aside, more on the unicity of substantial form and matter must be said. Are material substances wholly explicable in terms of having only one substantial form? There may be the substantial form of *dog* but any dog in question will have within its atomic structure further hylemorphic compositions, such as, those that constitute its vital organs, nervous system, etc. Are these also not in need of substantial forms? Is it not more accurate to say that there is a plurality of substantial forms in a single being? This would make material substances explicable not in terms of a single unifying substantial form but as a bundle of forms or some other grouping.

When taking into account the unifying principle that is substantial form, it should first and foremost be understood as an immaterial principle, or more specifically, a *principle of being*

⁴⁰⁸ If quarks were discovered to be the most bottom level constituent of material being (i.e., quarks are the most fundamental building block of any material substance), it too would have to be a compound of matter and substantial form, given that any material substance cannot exist even in principle without some form (no form, no identity) and the fact that a quark can only be defined yet alone discoverable as such only because it is capable of actually being identified to begin with. At that point, one can say that the chain of hylemorphic compounds has reached rock bottom. However, this in no way denies the reality of hylemorphism; it would only testify to an epistemological finitude of all material being.

responsible for part of the ontology of material substances. As a principle of being its role and function is to organize the potentiality of matter into unified and identifiable structures or particulars, something which is not determined in isolation or independent of prime matter.⁴⁰⁹ It is through substantial form where any given material substance exists as what it is and can be classified as a certain particular thing, making it count as an individual with numerical difference against all others of the same kind and different kinds. If substantial form and prime matter are responsible for the unification of a material substance then how would a composite of two or more substantial forms (two or more unifying principles) inhering in a substance work?

Take for example a dog with the substantial forms *dog* and *living creature*.⁴¹⁰ Both substantial forms would be metaphysically impossible to separate and still maintain a coherent substance. Given the inevitable fact of nature that all living things eventually die, when a dog ceases to live and thus ceases to be an actual dog, it falls as habit to speak of a “dead dog,” rather than a piece of matter that used to be a dog. But “a dead dog is not a kind of dog,” and this is obvious despite the human habit of identifying dead things as what they once were when living.⁴¹¹ Why this is so obvious goes back to the definition behind substantial form; what truly pertains to a dog’s nature or essence (e.g., being *animate* and an *animal*) as such has ceased and, therefore, the dog simply no longer exists qua dog.⁴¹² This negates against the idea of separate substantial forms since neither *dog* nor *animate animal* can stand alone as independent substantial forms from one another and still maintain an actual living dog.

⁴⁰⁹ See John Goyette, “St. Thomas on the Unity of Substantial Form,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 7, no. 4 (2009): 783.

⁴¹⁰ Here I rely on David Oderberg’s example to help spell out the impossibility of a pluriformist or multiplicity theory of substantial forms; *Real*, 69-70. See also, John Goyette as referenced above.

⁴¹¹ Oderberg, *Real*, 69.

⁴¹² “A substantial form supplies the proper functions and operations of its instances. Since no such functions and operations take place in a dead dog – indeed the processes undergone by and taking place in a corpse are in general the very *reverse* of those undergone by and taking place in a functioning dog – clearly a dead dog does not fall under the substantial kind *dog*.” *Ibid*.

What *multiplicity* the dog *is* in possession of are *accidental* forms; as addressed above, these forms flow from substantial form yet are non-essential to it.⁴¹³ For a dog to have its hair shaved off or dyed the color blue results in an accidental change, a taking on of a new accidental form allowing for the dog to be altered in some way but, the dog itself still remains substantially intact – there is no less of a dog present than there was before any accidental change. But on the other hand, if the dog were cremated, this would lead to a true substantial change and not a mere accidental one since the dog would lose its substantial form (it no longer exists as a dog) and the matter that was once in union with that particular substantial form has taken on a new form (ash).

5.3 Prime Matter: Part 2

Prime matter serves as the principal of pure potentiality or, as Aquinas states, “what is in potency to exist substantially.”⁴¹⁴ Hylemorphism puts forward substantial form and prime matter as two acting principles of being, conjoined to form a single solitary material substance complete with substantial existence and diachronic identity. But the question arises as to what *matter* is substantial form informing to create a material substance? That is, what does substantial form bond with if matter cannot be identified without substantial form? The answer is matter, completely devoid of form – a *tabula rasa* if you will – as a principle of being carrying with it the capacity to take on any substantial form.⁴¹⁵ This is the foundation for the construction of any

⁴¹³ These accidental forms function as potencies that can be actualised given what the substantial form allows for.

⁴¹⁴ *The Principles of Nature*, 1.2. The following is a more comprehensive definition of prime matter: “The pure passive potency in bodily substances, having no form, species or privation, and receptive of any forms or subsequent privations; the completely differentiated (indeterminate; unformed; common) basic material of all bodies in the physical universe, subject to all changes, formations, and privations.” Weullner, *A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*, 183.

⁴¹⁵ Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.8, 1050a15-16: “Further, matter exists in a potential state, just because it may attain to its form; and when it exists actually, then it is in its form.” In commenting on the passage above, Aquinas notes that the natural end of prime matter is toward actuality, that is, prime matter as the principle of being it is, is directed toward the actualization of things: “He says that matter is in potency until it receives a form

material substance; for any object is already an identifiable thing exactly because it is a compound of prime matter and substantial form, the creation of a specific substance of some kind. Mountains, trees, birds, rocks, clouds, insects, rain, steel, protons, and electrons are not amorphous instances of prime matter. They each have already taken on some substantial form and therefore can be identified as what they are in their state of existence.⁴¹⁶ Prime matter provides the cornerstone and agency for the persistence of any material substance through substantial change. Otherwise, how is the real occurrence of substantial change and the continuum of some material substratum that persists through that change to be explained?

One alternative might be to suggest that substantial change results in the complete annihilation of one substance and the creation of another or, rather, something coming from nothing and proceeding into nothing.⁴¹⁷ But this is a metaphysical impossibility as Oderberg points out: “in physics it is a fundamental truth that energy can neither be created nor destroyed (the first law of thermodynamics), and this simply reflects the metaphysical truth that since all changes in nature require natural causes, and since those causes are finite, and since finite causes cannot create something out of nothing or turn something into nothing, a natural substantial

or specifying principle, but then it is first in a state of actuality when it receives its form. And this is what occurs in the case of all other things which are moved for the sake of a goal. Hence, just as those who are teaching think they have attained their goal when they exhibit their pupil whom they have instructed performing those activities which belong to his art, in a similar fashion nature attains its goal when it attains actuality. Hence it is made evident in the case of natural motion that actuality is the goal of potency.” *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, IX, lesson 8, no. 1860.

⁴¹⁶ Scholastic philosophers distinguished between prime matter or *first* matter and *second* matter: “matter determined and organized by form; a natural body; a sensible body quantified and constituted as a particular substance by the union of prime matter with a substantial form; matter as it is when actuated by substantial form...” Weullner, *Dictionary*, 183. Cf., Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 171: “Secondary matter is matter having some substantial form or other. It is matter that is already water, or stone, or a liana vine, or a dog, or a human being. Its status as a substance is already determined, and what it awaits, as it were, is the reception of various accidental forms... Secondary matter accounts for the ways in which accidental forms are limited in the ways they are – that is, limited to a particular time and place, and limited in the degree of perfection to which a thing instantiates them...”

⁴¹⁷ Oderberg, *Real*, 74.

change is not a series of creations and annihilations.”⁴¹⁸ As is the case with any substantial change, take for instance a dog being cremated. What is taking place is the actualization of a passive potency inherent in the dog due to its substantial form in respect to its becoming a new substance, in this case, a pile of ash. Despite atomic and sub-atomic fractures in the structure of a material substance that undergoes substantial or accidental change, the persistence of matter still remains and can only do so if matter of its very nature is the potentiality to take on new forms.

If prime matter has no essence in the strict sense of possessing a form due to its principled origin as pure potency, how can this *persistent substratum* have any metaphysical tangibility? Or put more directly, what is prime matter “in virtue of itself?”⁴¹⁹ The problem of this ontological identity only arises when trying to conceive principles of being such as prime matter, form, potency, and act as actual material substances somehow capable of direct observation. In defining prime matter as a principle of pure potentiality, what is set in place is a description of a metaphysical verity that is indirectly observable given the processes already addressed above. This is no different than providing a general description of the law of gravity, or more specifically, the gravitational forces interacting between objects as they are indirectly scouted in reality albeit with no *literal* direct embodiment of the law or forces themselves to be directly witnessed.⁴²⁰ In other words, gravity is never discovered independent of material things and neither is prime matter discovered independent of substantial form.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Anne Siebels Peterson, *Elemental Transformation in Aristotle: Three Dilemmas For The Traditional Account*, in Edward Feser and Edmund Runggaldier, *Metaphysics: Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic*, (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2012), 61.

⁴²⁰ The physics of gravitational force cannot be reduced to some observable substance that provides us with a type of *a priori* knowledge; the observable interactive behavior that real objects exhibit serve as the medium for the discovery of such a law of nature.

⁴²¹ Feser provides a very useful account of how prime matter should be understood: “Prime matter, like potency more generally, is a real feature of the world, and must be if it is to do its job of accounting for the possibility of change and limitation. However, that does not entail that it can exist separately from form, any more than potency can exist separately from act. As the pure potency for taking on form, prime matter existing all by

It also will not follow to predicate any *numerical* identity, yet alone *qualitative* identity of prime matter either.⁴²² Conceding the point made earlier of prime matter having only immaterial being over material being, Peterson asks the following, “what is the criterion for the persistence of prime matter...if not that of numerical identity throughout the transformation?”⁴²³ The criterion for persistence of prime matter is substantial form, as has already been clarified. Only through a complex of prime matter and substantial form does the inception of a substance take place. At this point, an actual substance is present and can be predicated with numerical and qualitative identity – *contraries*⁴²⁴ and anything else – and only then at that composition of prime matter and substantial form is this predication possible. This is, in a manner of speaking, the birth of identity, where substances become individual and distinct from one another despite their common bond via prime matter. In view of substantial form limiting prime matter into distinct substances, it will not hold to speak of two separate substances as having numerical identity

itself would be in no way actual and thus nonexistent. In extra-mental reality, then, prime matter can only exist together with substantial form. Our knowledge of it is accordingly indirect, based on inference from what must be the case for substantial change to be possible. To a first approximation we can appeal to analogies, like clay or molten plastic, which are in the ordinary sense amorphous or without determinate shape. Prime matter is like that insofar as it is literally amorphous or without any form whatsoever but, like the clay or plastic, ready to take on some form. Clay and plastic are not *strictly* formless in the relevant sense, however. On the contrary, they each have a number of forms – those associated with the chemical properties of clay or plastic, along with accidental forms such as a certain color and temperature. When a bit of clay takes on the form of pottery or a bit of plastic takes on the form of a child’s toy, this is merely accidental change, the acquisition of an accidental form rather than the generation of a new substance. By contrast, prime matter *as such* lacks not only any shape, but also any color, temperature, weight, chemical properties, or any other feature we commonly attribute to a purportedly amorphous ‘stuff’ of everyday experience.” *Scholastic*, 172.

⁴²² To illustrate the difference, imagine yourself holding a red plastic cup in your hand, which you just purchased at a particular store A. Then imagine your friend walking into the same room you happen to be in, also holding the same brand of red plastic cup, which he too procured at that same store A. In this particular case what corresponds to both red cups is a *qualitative* identity i.e., they are both the same size, color, from the same store, etc. On the other hand, if they were both *literally* the same cup, then they would share *numerical* identity (they are one and the same cup). Given this difference, it is understandable why prime matter would not count as having any numerical identity, but as John F. Wippel points out, Aquinas does speak of prime matter having numerical identity in one sense: “as that which in itself lacks those dispositions which make things numerically distinct. It is only in the second way that prime matter may be regarded as numerically one. And if when considered in itself prime matter does not include any form or privation, it never exists in the real order without some form and privation. Of itself it is only potency.” *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 299.

⁴²³ Peterson, *Elemental Transformation*, 63.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

because of their common binding through prime matter and, therefore, bringing forward the charge that this leads to one and the same substance having opposites predicated of it.⁴²⁵ Because prime matter does not exist as an independent substance of its own but, rather, as a principle of being, what results is a general unity that *virtually* binds all material substances via prime matter as a principle of being, but only formally when united to substantial form. There is prime matter parceled out by substantial form and only parceled out when in union with substantial form, allowing for the multiplicity of substances to be unified through prime matter, but individually distinct as *designated matter*.⁴²⁶

Forms come and go as is made clear in the observance of accidental change and especially in substantial change where one substance undergoes transformation into a completely new one. Prime matter carries through these changes, but never independent of form. The process of prime matter taking on a new substantial form, *à la* substantial change, is not directly observable, but can only be appreciated indirectly. When one is in the presence of watching a piece of paper aflame, undergoing a significant alteration that eventually leaves a pile of ash in its wake, it becomes very difficult to deny that a significant change has occurred based on a lack of some direct observance of the under-line prime matter taking on the various forms that would endure such a reconstruction. Then again, neither are the laws of nature constituting the reality of gravitational force *directly* observable but, no one will deny the existence of gravitational force at work or the conservation of energy in force with the first law of thermodynamics. The imperceptible process behind the hylemorphic relation is not enough to deny that such realities take place. On the contrary, it would be impossible to make any coherent sense of a world of

⁴²⁵ Since two substances are composed of prime matter this actually makes them numerically identical. But this will lead to a violation of the principle of non-contradiction, since contraries could be predicated of the same substance, or so the argument goes.

⁴²⁶ Cf., Feser, *Aquinas*, 28.; Oderberg, *Real*, 112.

substances without positing hylemorphism for its metaphysical explanation, an explanation that would naturally extend to all material being found in the universe.

Taking into account the Fourth Way, Aquinas wants the reader to understand that truth, goodness, nobility and the like are real metaphysical aspects of things. In considering the hylemorphic composition of material substances those perfections listed by Aquinas cannot pertain to prime matter alone since the predication of those transcendental perfections presuppose some material substance in which they inhere, that is, substances independent of, and separate from, truth, goodness, and nobility, predicated instead *as* being true, good, and noble. In other words, the transcendental is a perfection that will correspond with the substantial form of a substance without entailing pluriformist consequences. Material substances will have a relation with the transcendentals without negating their own identities as what they are given their substantial form. For something to be *good* or instantiate *goodness*, it must already be in possession of substantial form establishing its existence as a something or other, marking a direct distinction between, for example, Fido qua dog, from Fido qua *good* dog. This brings one a step closer to an understanding of how things participate with the transcendentals. If things are already in possession of some principle of identity through hylemorphism, then the relationship with the transcendentals must entail a relationship through a things substantial form, again, given that things are in possession of only one substantial form. The transcendental implies a further relation on top of the relation between prime matter and substantial form, a relation that presents a real unification of all hylemorphic compositions under the perfections of being, good, true, one, thing, and something.

Another integral piece of metaphysics intrinsically related to potency/act and hylemorphism is the real distinction that divides *essence* from *existence*. The nature or essence of a thing is its substantial form. Essence determines identity; the determination of something as a particular kind; whether a quark, or an elephant. This is vital to understand because it is essentialism that puts forward the existence of essences as the *maximum* or *exemplar* of any given kind and the particulars that fall under it, which is to say, if there is no essence corresponding to the existence of, say, quarks or elephants, then both quarks and elephants will simply not exist. In hylemorphism, essence informs prime matter in the creation of a material substance however, there is nothing in the metaphysics of essence alone or in prime matter alone that necessarily entails *their* existence. Both prime matter and essence *presuppose* existence, given that any material substance already presupposes the existence of both prime matter and essence. Where then does existence stand in relation to prime matter and essence? Could essences and prime matter exist as independent entities; as existential brute facts? This is hardly an answer given that one cannot be coherently understood without the other. If neither prime matter nor essence can account for their existence through themselves, then the only other alternative would mean that their existence must be *extrinsic* to them rather than *intrinsic*. This entails, in regard to both, but in particular to essence, that existence has its own separate function apart from essence despite the role of essence in establishing the identity of things.

In relation to the Fourth Way *being* or existence, is one of the transcendentals, and Aquinas holds that all things not only have being but, can have it to a more and less degree. Therefore, to formulate and demonstrate how things have being in the first place will make the

transition to all things having being qua transcendental that much more concrete if it is already found really distinct from essence. In addition, the relation between essence and existence demonstrates a contingency in all things where the two are really distinct. But this has an epistemological and metaphysical limit given that all things cannot be contingent upon pain of an infinite regress of contingency. All contingency must terminate in that which is pure being or pure act. This point is one that some commentators of the Fourth Way believed was an inevitable outcome from the observance of the more and less of being. Thus to understand how essence is really distinct from existence is a key to understanding how the transcendental relates to essence as an aspect of essence.

6.1 The Role of Essence

At this point it has been argued that the axioms of potency and act along with hylemorphism capture what it is for a material substance to be instantiated as a real material being carved specifically out of prime matter and delineated by substantial form actualizing a real substance; once a being-in-potency, now a being-in-act, endowed with certain active and passive powers. It is by way of such principles of being but, in particular, that of essence, where knowledge of the world begins.⁴²⁷ It is hard to deny that things are what they are; that they exist with a specific identity which distinguishes one particular or kind from another. A latent aspect of identity is definition. When a scientist or child points to some object and asks, “what is it” they are both, whether fully aware of it or not, implicitly acknowledging the existence of identity – since they both identify something as existing – in tandem with the requisite need to establish a definition – considering that they both want to know exactly what it is that they each identify.

⁴²⁷ “If there is no knowledge of essences, there is no genuine scientific knowledge. The unchanging natural laws which are the quest of the scientist are based not on changing phenomena but on immutable essences.” John K. Ryan, *Basic Principles and Problems of Philosophy* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1954), 11.

What they both grasp and seek to understand more deeply is essence. To pursue knowledge is to pursue the essences of things. And in pursuing the essence of something one is pursuing the *deeper* definitions that provide the most comprehensive facts about a thing. Shields captures the point well in sharing Aristotle's preference for *deeper* rather than *shallow* definitions:

... when we seek definitions in philosophical or scientific contexts, we are not satisfied with the merely lexical. If we are scientists, and we are wondering what gravity is, we do not simply consult the entry under 'gravity' in a recent edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and then suppose that we have finished with our work when we put the volume back on its shelf. On the contrary, it is the vigilant group of lexicographers on the staff of *OED* who consult scientific and popular publications in an effort to keep abreast of scientific developments so that they may record resultant shifts in lexical meaning as they trickle into common discourse. In science and philosophy, we want not lexical definitions but rather *essence-specifying* definition. This is the sort of definition Aristotle has in mind when he says, 'A definition is an account (logos) which signifies the essence'⁴²⁸

These deeper definitions pave the way for knowledge of the most comprehensive kind. On the other hand, without something as *existing*, as real, and metaphysically tangible, yet alone, physically tangible, there will be nothing to discover, wonder about, or investigate. There is no definition and no search for a definition if there is nothing in existence that can be investigated. As Aquinas noted about the initial apprehension of things, "being and essence are what the intellect first conceives."⁴²⁹ But the question remains, "what is *being*," that is to say, "what is existence?"

6.2 Existence Part I

The concern here is not about identifying whether or not things actually exist but, presuming the real existence of a world and the things it contains, the question becomes, what is the actual nature or essence of existence? What is it for something to exist is a fundamental

⁴²⁸ Shields, *Aristotle*, 117. See Aristotle's *Topics* 1.5, 101b38: "A definition is a phrase signifying a thing's essence." Cf., *Topics* 4.4, 141b26

⁴²⁹ *On Being and Essence*, Preface.

metaphysical question. Is existence intrinsic to a thing constituting part of its essence so that a substance is its very own existence? Or, is existence a mere property or accident of a thing?

There is a theme in contemporary philosophy that has brought forth two age-old answers to the question of existence by placing it under the lens of grammatical-logical hermeneutics, that is to say, grammar and logic can get to the bottom of understanding the nature of existence.⁴³⁰ Take the following sentence, “Bob exists.” The grammatical structure of the sentence (subject-predicate) gives a certain asymmetric logical structure that is reflexive of reality. What the grammar of the sentence conveys has a logical correspondence in reality insofar as the proposition “Bob exists” is actually the case, that is, the real existence of Bob is what makes the proposition true. According to the *property view*, existence is predicated of the subject Bob and, therefore, existence comes to be understood as a property of Bob (i.e., Bob has the property of existence).⁴³¹ The property of existence is lumped together with Bob’s other properties such as his weight, skin color, the coarseness of his hair, foot size, and so forth. On this account, properties are interpreted as the general characteristics or features of something, for example, properties would be akin to the color and texture of a banana, its size, taste, etc.⁴³² In this case, the grammar (subject-predicate) and logic of the sentence do not come apart. That Bob exists follows from what the sentence or proposition conveys.

Opposed to the property view of existence is the *quantifier view*. The quantifier thesis seeks a certain divorce between the grammatical designs of sentences in favor of a precise logical structure that caters more definitively to an accurate correspondence with the real

⁴³⁰ Brian Garrett, *What Is This Thing Called Metaphysics*, 2nd Edition, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 27.

⁴³¹ Garrett, *What is This Thing*, 27.

⁴³² Helen BeeBee, *Metaphysics*, 195.

world.⁴³³ It also introduces a meaning of existence much more radical than the property view. Continuing with the example above, existence, on the quantifier view, is no longer operating as a predicate of Bob but, as a *quantifier*, that is, “words which tell us what proportion or quantity of things have a certain property.”⁴³⁴ Consider the sentence “someone exists.” *Someone* is functioning as a quantifier rather than a simple subject, thus the logical structure of the sentence will be altered from a straightforward subject-predicate structure. The logical structure of the quantified sentence “someone exists” is re-translated as “there is some object, x, such that x exists.”⁴³⁵ With that in place, the quantifier view argues that in the case of sentences that make existential claims such as “Bob exists” the word “exists” is operating as a quantifier. The grammatical structure of “Bob exists” is one thing, but its logical structure is another. Under this conception, “Bob exists,” is translated viz. the existential quantifier as “there is some object, Bob, such that Bob exists” or “there is some object, x, such that x is or identical to Bob.”⁴³⁶ In other words, “Bob exists” as logically tailored, does not yield any new information about existence, its nature, or essence. What makes Bob exist or what gives Bob his existence is Bob himself, as Garrett explains: “in general, to say ‘A exists’ is to say that there is an object identical

⁴³³ This implies that the subject-predicate grammatical structure of sentences does not always correspond accurately to what actually is the case in reality.

⁴³⁴ Garrett, 156.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28. Cf., Graham Priest, *Logic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 20.

⁴³⁶ Some of the roots for this modern apparatus of logic originate from the work of logician and philosopher Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) and further developments by Bertrand Russell (1872-1970). For a contemporary critique of such, see David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2013), 123-130; Cf., James F. Ross, *The Fate of the Analyst's: Aristotle's Revenge*. Available on-line: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jross/aristotlesrevenge.htm>, accessed on 21 November 2013; Edward Feser, *Aquinas*, 55-61. For a more classical and realist approach to logic (in the Aristotelian sense), see Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic: A Logic Text Using Socratic Method, Platonic Questions & Aristotelian Principles*, Edition 3.1, (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2010); D. Q. McInerney, *An Introduction to Foundational Logic* (Elmhurst, Pennsylvania: The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 2012). In contrast to Kreeft and McInerney, see Graham Priest as cited above.

to A; it is not to attribute any property to A. On this view, existence has no essence or nature.”⁴³⁷ Existence is not a property because, presumably, Bob simply *is* his existence leaving no formal distinction between his essence and existence. Or the existential qualifier can be understood as a “second level property,” that is, “a property of concepts rather than objects.”⁴³⁸ As Garrett explains, “to say ‘tigers exist’ is to say that the concept *tiger* is instantiated.”⁴³⁹ Thus existence becomes about concepts of things rather than the things themselves.

According to Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, these two renderings of existence are inaccurate. Before demonstrating why they are inaccurate, some key facets of existence need to be flushed out.

6.3 Existence Part II

Existence is, first and foremost, the principle that makes something exist whether real or conceptual. To use a more popular term, existence is what makes for the real and *dynamic* presence of a being. As McInerny indicates, “existence is not static; it is dynamic, indeed it is dynamism itself, the very act that accounts for something being rather than not-being.”⁴⁴⁰ Existence is a real motion or actualization taking place at all times where there are real existents. In contrast to existence is non-existence or nothingness; the non-existence of any actuality. On a very basic and rudimentary level, one comes to gain knowledge of existence through the senses. Here, one experiences things as they are, as existing, allowing for the concrete distinction to be

⁴³⁷ Garrett, 28. Existence is viewed as something proportional or quantifiable *within* the thing itself and not something separable or extrinsic in relation.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid*, 29.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴⁰ McInerny, *Metaphysics*, 225. There is a certain air of confidence in this statement but, only because of the evidential nature of existence. In encountering the world, one discovers that the world *is* and, it *is* exactly because it exists; moreover, that existence is discoverable not only through the world but, also in one’s own self-reflection, which brings with it the realization of one’s own unique individuality as independent of the world. It is in this way where existence becomes part of a philosopher’s grammatical discourse and thus its “essence” or “nature” can be the subject of investigation.

made between *what* something is from *that* it is and, further, distinguishing the existing from the non-existing.⁴⁴¹ But to be more precise, existence is “the actualization of an essence.”⁴⁴²

Oderberg elaborates on this point: “a substance comes into existence when form is united to matter, resulting in a compound of both with its own real essence...all existence, even the existence of privations, ontologically dependent entities, fictional entities, and so on, requires that something be actualized.”⁴⁴³ The encounter with reality, the consequence of which leads to the embrace of a tangible universe felt both materially and conceptually, is the deeper underlying encounter with the actualization of essence. It was noted above in the discussion on potency and act that finite beings are comprised of perfections. These perfections correspond to the attributes that can be predicated of a particular being. Existence, as a perfection of things that exist, falls in line as the most fundamental of perfections. It is no enigma that existence plays an ontological priority for any real existing being since existence is the source of what makes anything actually be; what is in a state of actuality is something that is already in possession of existence along with essence. Without existence, there is no potency for existence, and without potentiality for

⁴⁴¹ McInerney notes that inquiries about existence and non-existence also bring to mind inquiries about possibility, i.e., what can exist from what actually does exist. Are there any limits in the realm of possibility? Whatever does actually exist at the present moment was once a possible being – it did not exist at one point in time but, now it does. As the discussion on potency and act argued, what now exists went from what was once in potency to exist, to actually existing as act. Potency and possibility are mostly synonymous interrelated realities with possibility being considered from a more general perspective to potency but, with a couple of key distinctions. Whatever maybe considered possible, will fall under one of two distinct forms of possibility, either the *intrinsically* possible or *extrinsically* possible. Anything that is *intrinsically* possible will be devoid of positing any contradictions as actually possible. To bring in a stock example, a “square circle” is not an intrinsic possibility. Despite the fact that the words “square” and “circle” do indeed signify independent realities, in combination they reference no actual being. Outside of that limit, whatever *is possible in theory, but not necessarily in reality*, will fall under *intrinsic possibility*. Anything that is *not only possible in theory but also in reality* will be *extrinsically* possible. So, for example, if one were to go back into the past one hundred years, it would have been theoretically possible for the government to devise plans for the construction of an aircraft that would be able to transport a man to the moon. Yet, as grandiose of an idea that would have been, given the state of affairs of aeronautic technology at the time, the feasibility of such a task was not possible. *Metaphysics*, 197-98.

⁴⁴² Oderberg, *Real*, 124.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

existence, there are no essences, nor matter to be instantiated. This presents existence as the foundational perfection from which all other perfections follow.

This, no matter how precise, does not necessarily make the notion of existence any easier to understand. Existence is “arguably incapable of being defined, not because, like *being*, it is too general and so analogous, but because it is a simple notion not susceptible of analysis into constituents (this also applies as well to the concept of identity).”⁴⁴⁴ Existence is such a fundamental notion, its application and description is so general, that explaining its niceties can become a very elusive endeavor. Nonetheless, its simplicity does not negate its real presence and what it undoubtedly accomplishes in actualizing essence.

6.4 Property View

In response to the property view of existence, an important distinction needs to be made between the *proper accidents* or properties of a thing from its *contingent accidents* or properties.⁴⁴⁵ The property view seems to lump together all of a thing's properties, that is, all attributes, characteristics, or qualities without distinction. From the metaphysics presented thus far, accidents run in a similar vein and distinction to substantial and accidental changes, and substantial and accidental forms, insofar as accidental changes and accidental forms (i.e., contingent accidents) do not hinder the substantial existence of a thing but merely qualify it; whereas any tinkering with substantial changes and substantial forms (i.e., proper accidents) do. Thus they are not merely or trivially basic features or characteristics of things. A proper accident or property is something necessary to a thing, so much so, that if a particular thing were to lose a

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 191. *Propia* (a Latin transliteration of the Greek *idia*) is the technical term used by Aristotle to denote essential properties (proper accidents) from accidental or non-essential ones (contingent accidents). See Shields, *Aristotle*, 122. Cf., *Categories* 3a21, 4a10; *Topics* 1.5, 102a18-30; 5.5, 134a5-135b6.

proper accident, the thing itself would cease to be.⁴⁴⁶ This distinction, based on Aristotle's understanding of it, marks proper accidents as those features that do not comprise the essence itself but flow "from a thing's nature or substantial form" and in so doing, they are necessary to a thing "rather than merely contingent."⁴⁴⁷ Again, proper accidents are necessary properties because the object at hand must have them in order to maintain its substantial existence. From this distinction, one can recognize proper accidents or properties as those crucial aspects of a being that are much more than simplistic appendages of some sort: "having a capacity for humor is essential to Fred, but his *essence* is to be a rational animal and it is *this* that explains why he has the capacity for humor."⁴⁴⁸

It was pointed out above that there is a significant difference between something undergoing a substantial change as opposed to an accidental one. The former type of change was substantial because it resulted in the complete demise of the thing itself, for example, the family dog that is accidentally cremated and thus undergoes a radical transformation from a dog to a pile of ash. The latter type of change was accidental because it resulted only in a less than radical alteration leaving the thing itself substantially present. For instance, the family dog getting its

⁴⁴⁶ "For example, the capacities for humor and free choice follow from a human being's nature as a rational animal, and are thus properties of human beings as such." Feser, *Scholastic*, 192. Cf., Shields, *Aristotle*, 121: "Let us agree provisionally that it is an accidental feature of Socrates that he has his hand upon his forehead and an essential feature that he is rational. What should we say about his ability to learn languages? Let us call this ability Socrates' *grammaticality*. Could he lose his grammaticality without ceasing to exist? Evidently, he could lose that property only if he ceased to be a rational being. Hence, it follows that he could lose his grammaticality only if he failed to exist."

⁴⁴⁷ Shields, *Aristotle*, 120-1; Feser, *Scholastic*, 192. Cf., *Topics* 1.5, 102a18-30: "A property is something which does not indicate the essence of a thing, but yet belongs to that thing alone, and is predicated convertibly of it. Thus it is a property of man to be capable of learning grammar; for if he is a man, then he is capable of learning grammar, and if he is capable of learning grammar, he is a man. For no one calls anything a property which may possibly belong to something else, e.g. sleep in the case of man, even though at a certain time it may happen to belong to him alone. That is to say, if any such thing were actually to be called a property, it will be called not a property absolutely, but a temporary or a relative property; for being on the right hand side is a temporary property, while two-footed is a relative property; e.g. it is a property of man relatively to a horse and a dog. That nothing which may belong to anything else is a convertible predicate is clear; for it does not necessarily follow that if something is asleep it is a man." See also, *Categories* 3, a21; 4, a10; *Topics* 5.5, 134a5-135b6.

⁴⁴⁸ Oderberg, *Real*, 47.

toenails clipped at the pet salon instead of being cremated at the pet funeral home (in the former case, the family can still rejoice in fifi's presence). These accidental changes represent the contingent accidents of a thing. The family dog's hair color or length, toenail thickness, the timbre of its bark, these are all contingent or non-essential accidents insofar as they are characteristics that can either come and go without the dog ceasing to be.

Identifying the distinction between proper and contingent accidents is crucial in arriving at the real distinction between essence and existence. The property view of existence makes existence out as a general property of a thing without the necessary distinction between contingent and proper accidents. Contingent accidents are not properties that are necessary to a thing given the instability of their nature, but existence does not function this way. The existence of contingent accidents comes and goes but, the existence of the thing in which the contingent accidents are found does not. Contingent or proper accidents only hold in something that exists, thus *their* dependence on something already in existence. This can only mean that existence is not some contingent accident or general property as the property view of existence holds. If existence were present on the merely contingent level, then the existence of objects would be as fragile and as easily displaced as the color of a fence would be.

6.5 Quantifier View

With the distinction among accidents in place, one might then conclude through process of elimination that existence must instead function as a proper accident. This position comes closer to the quantifier view insofar as existence, properly understood as a quantifier, is anything but a contingent accident, implying a thing's essence and existence as either almost synonymous or identical realities. In responding to the quantifier view one question that naturally comes to

mind is why the quantifier? What is the justification for the statement, “Bob exists” that it must fit a quantified description as opposed to taking the grammatical and logical structure at face value? Is the common day-to-day grammar illogical? Must existential statements only find true meaning as quantified descriptions? One reason for proponents of this view to insist on the quantifier stems from the metaphysical puzzle that are true negative existentials.⁴⁴⁹ Take for example the sentence “Poseidon does not exist.” The existence and non-existence of Poseidon is both acknowledged at the same time and in the same respect as it is denied; since in order to deny the existence of Poseidon one has to acknowledge that Poseidon *is* somehow, this sentence seems to entail the existence of contradictions given Poseidon lacks *actual* existence in the first place. In order to avoid such contradictory conclusions that day-to-day grammar apparently manifests, existence must serve as a *second-level* predicate (a predicate of concepts) as opposed to a *first-level* predicate (a predicate of real objects).⁴⁵⁰ Under this fixture, what one is really saying is that the *concept* of Poseidon exists, rather than Poseidon himself. This way one can acknowledge the existence of Poseidon the concept without acknowledging the existence of Poseidon as a real object rather than a fictional object.

There are a few replies that can be levelled against the quantifier understanding of existence. First, returning to two previous examples – with one slight alteration to the statement concerning Poseidon – “Poseidon exists” and “Bob exists” there is an important distinction to be made. Existence need not be predicated or advanced in solely univocal terms. It can be said of in an *analogous* way. Bob is a real person, who really exists, here-and-now and Poseidon is a fictional character who does not exist here-and-now in the same way that Bob exists here-and-now. Nevertheless, they both do exist here-and-now but the existence of Poseidon is only like or

⁴⁴⁹ Garrett, *What is This Thing*, 30.

⁴⁵⁰ Feser, *Aquinas*, 55.

analogous to that of Bob's. The analogy of being is what allows for Poseidon to exist as a fictional character and Bob to exist as a real person without existing in a univocal or equivocal manner. This provides the common sense account for the validity of such statements concerning the existence of Poseidon, Zeus, the tooth fairy, all comic book characters, and many other things without having to move existence to the realm of a second-level predicate.⁴⁵¹

Second, before the existential quantifier and its use of "there is a subject, x, such that..." can even get off the ground, it presupposes the *very existence* of the subject whose existence it is trying to confirm via second-level predication. Without Bob already in existence there would be no need for a quantifier (there is *a subject, Bob*, such that...). The same goes with any concept of Bob since that concept of Bob can only be derived from Bob as an actually existing thing. What some modern logicians are trying to establish is a type of metaphysical priority via the quantifier so that anything that really exists has to pass the test of second-level predication but, this cannot work given its presupposition and reliance on the very principle (existence) it is trying to confirm. Therefore, existence is neither a general property of a thing nor can it be labelled as a quantifier since both views already presuppose the existence of something which has properties and which can be analyzed via a quantifier.

6.6 The Real Distinction

The arguments against the property and quantifier views of existence are meant to demonstrate that existence is not something that is intrinsic to the essence of things but, rather, existence is a principal that is given and received in whatever has being and because the origins of existence lie on the outside, as it were, then essence and existence are two separate principles.

⁴⁵¹ Cf., Gyula Klima, "On Kenny on Aquinas on Being," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 44, Issue 4 (2004): 570-1.

One argument for the real distinction argues that the comprehension of essence does not necessarily entail the actual existence of what is comprehended. Take, for example, the Marvel comic character Wolverine. Anyone acquainted with the Marvel comic universe will have certainly come across this popular superhero character. They will know that Wolverine has superhuman strength and healing powers. That his entire skeletal system is coated with adamantium (the strongest metal known to mankind). In addition, he can make a triad of blades protrude from the top of his hands at will (this being his most famous and fantastic characteristic). These are all part and parcel of Wolverine's essence. Nonetheless, Wolverine exists only as a fictional character and only in the mind of his fans and despite having knowledge of Wolverine's essence – albeit as a mere fictional character – this in no way entails that Wolverine exists in reality as a real person.⁴⁵² The bottom line is this, “if it is possible to understand the essence of a thing without knowing whether it exists, its act of existing (if it has one) must be distinct from its essence, as a metaphysically separate component of the thing.”⁴⁵³ The comprehension of Wolverine's essence as a fictional character does not entail his *actual* existence or else one would know that Wolverine exists just by knowing what Wolverine is. But it is obvious that this is not the case and, thus, his existence must be something separate from his essence. One can exclude Wolverine's superhuman strength and adamantium which would alter

⁴⁵² The approach of *non-existing objects* (i.e., a being such as Wolverine, since it is conceivable, it has real existence and therefore becomes classified as a *real non-existing object*) in the philosophy of language and mind seems to confuse what actually exists in the real world from what exists only in the mind as a mere concept (aside from its tangled use of *non-existing* as a predicate of something that has *actual* existence). It is true that Wolverine exists in the mind of all Marvel Comic fans as a fictional character, but this does not transfer over into Wolverine *actually* existing in the real world – this is a case of a logical distinction between essence and existence. Wolverine is the product of imagination and the raw materials used by the imagination to create such a character are certainly gathered from a real world of real concrete substances e.g., an actual species of mammal (wolverines), actual steel blades, and so forth. Fictional Wolverine does have conceptual existence, but no real existence as *actual* wolverines do in the animal kingdom.

⁴⁵³ Feser, *Aquinas*, 29; *Scholastic*, 243. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 4: “On the other hand, every essence or quiddity can be understood without its act of existing being understood. I can understand what a man or phoenix is, and yet not know whether or not it exists in the nature of things.”

his essence as who, and what he is, but excluding existence would not touch upon and therefore not alter a thing about his essence exactly because of their separation.⁴⁵⁴ Since essence determines a being's properties and there is nothing in a being's essence that necessitates its existence, it follows that existence cannot be either a proper or contingent accident of a thing.

In so far as the quantifier view undertakes existence as being of the essence of a thing, that is, what makes something exist lies within itself, this allusion to the idea that a being's essence entails its existence caters yet another argument for the distinction between the two. First, knowledge of particulars and kinds is made possible only because of a real distinction between essence and existence. In order to gain knowledge of material being an individual must first make contact with "concrete particulars" which then leads to "judgements based on the abstraction of the universal from the particular."⁴⁵⁵ What this entails is a grasping of the essence or substantial form of a thing. However, if essence and existence were one in the same then, presumably, one's knowledge of the world would only consist of a single thing, a being whose very essence is to exist – being itself. If the metaphysical division between essence and existence is not real then there is no other option for the existence of anything outside of this being, for any other being whose essence and existence were not distinct would be identical to the first being leaving no real distinction between either being (since the only distinction apart from being itself would require some other form other than being); in reality, it would be the same being. Then again, even knowledge of the existence of such a being would not be possible since nothing else would or could exist outside of its very own existence. Only *it* would know of its existence. But this is obviously not the case. There are particulars and kinds, and the existence of potency and act provides the metaphysical assurance that not all is one.

⁴⁵⁴ Oderberg, *Real*, 123.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

The critic might still show some reluctance and continue to ask with a stronger emphasis, why must there be an exclusion of multiple beings whose essence and existence are one in the same? It must first be understood that the reality of existence cannot be comprehended yet alone discoverable apart from the actualization of things. One could never arrive at actual knowledge of existence nor the concept of existence unless there were actual existents that could be discoverable as such. Of course the discovery of existence presupposes human existence, given that it is only through the intellect that existence receives any admission of description. From that first person perspective, the dynamic presence of existence can be had not only through self-reflection upon one's own existence but, also through the immediate contact shared between the senses and actual things.

Yet, existence as a metaphysical principle is not directly observable through itself but, only indirectly through the medium of form. What this entails is that direct knowledge of existence is discoverable through the actualization of essence, without which, existence would be unknowable. Essences therefore provide a certain epistemological gateway for the discovery of existence. It is by means of the hylomorphic union of substantial form and prime matter that one converges upon the existence of actual material beings and, by extension, at the arrival of existence. The real distinction also implies a real contingency in all being. Because existence is something extrinsic to the existing, they need not exist at all. The distinction between essence and existence characterizes all being outside of existence itself as finite and contingent, and because of this, all finite being is capable of and undergoes corruption and generation, transformation and change, which is nothing more than identifying within finite being its metaphysical composition of potency/act and prime matter/substantial form. However, any single being or plurality of beings whose existence is intrinsic to its essence would have to be

immaterial in nature and thus lack any correspondence with matter for the following reason. If one were to take into account any lack of separation between a being's essence and existence, so the source of its own existence is its very own essence, it would lack the principle to stand as a material being due to the contingent nature of matter. Something that is pure existence is something that is pure actuality and therefore incapable of change, it must have always existed without any other possibility; there was never a metaphysical or logical moment when this being was only a possible being since it has always existed as pure act – infinitely actual.⁴⁵⁶ Insofar as anything, either material or immaterial, real or conceptual, goes from possible existence to actual existence, it is going from potency to act (what potentially exists to what actually exists) and thus undergoes change. Because of this very reason, for another being whose essence is its existence to be created outside of a being that already possesses such a nature would entail a contradiction. If being A is pure act (it has always existed), how then could it create another being B that is pure act or has always existed? This is equivalent to saying that being B has always existed, yet it was created. Any creation of multiple beings whose essence is to exist would be akin to something going from potential existence to actual existence, which contradicts the very nature of a being whose essence is to exist. And, as argued above, there would only be one such being in existence; a being whose essence is to exist; a being that is pure actuality and necessarily immaterial.

The essence existence division signifies, as already noted, contingency in all finite being. If there truly is a separation between a substance's essence and its existence (the deeper implication being that no finite being is the source of its own existence given that there is

⁴⁵⁶ Feser makes this point clear: "If essence and existence were not distinct, they would be identical" making for a being dependent on nothing other than itself, "that is to say, something whose essence is its existence would depend on nothing else (e.g. matter) for its existence, since it would just *be* existence or being." *Aquinas*, 30.

nothing in its essence that necessitates the actualization of its existence as described above) then it is a contingent being, with a metaphysical dependency for its existence.⁴⁵⁷ But all being cannot fall to the level of contingency or else this would lead to a vicious regress with the metaphysical consequence of a negation of all being.⁴⁵⁸

In one respect, it can be argued that the distinction between essence and existence is “the most radical” of distinctions because in so identifying essence and existence as two independent metaphysical principles, the deep divide between finite being and infinite being and what follows from such a chasm becomes ever more prevalent.⁴⁵⁹ The bifurcation of contingency in being will either lead to an infinite regress of contingency that leads to the metaphysical conclusion of the non-existence of reality (if everything is contingent, then there really is nothing at all), or as Aquinas argued for the existence of a being whose essence is to exist: a being that is existence itself, pure actuality devoid potency, pure form devoid matter as the primary cause of all being, capable of creating beings outside of itself composed of both essence and existence.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ “A finite being most definitely exists, but there is not necessity in the existence of a finite being. It is not the very nature of such a being that it should exist.” D.Q. McInerny, *Metaphysics*, 215.

⁴⁵⁸ Aquinas draws out this consequence in the Third Way – *Summa Theologiae* I. 2. 3.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Aquinas’ third way tackles this angle from contingency: “We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence – which is absurd. Therefore, not all begins are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.” *Summa Theologiae*, I, 2, 3. This is exactly why the essence/existence distinction is so radical, as it showcases the real contingency of all being except for the one being whose essence is to exist; as McInerny emphasizes, “the distinction between creatures and Creator.” *Metaphysics*, 215.

It is clear from the commentary discussed earlier that the Fourth Way incorporates and relies upon a number of highly complex and dense metaphysical principles. Whether or not some of these principles are as absolutely necessary as others in the arguments defense is debatable. Nevertheless, one thing is basically certain, the metaphysics of the Fourth Way is entirely grounded in a realist account of universals.⁴⁶¹ This is definite given the opening premise of the argument which begins with an invocation of a particular set of universals, vis-à-vis the *transcendentals*.

The acceptance of universals in philosophy has a long and heated dispute as indicated by its emblematic title as “the problem of universals.” The following chapter will provide a cursory breakdown of the actual problem by presenting some standard and traditional views on *realism* (Platonism and Aristotelianism) and *anti-realism* (Conceptualism and Nominalism) and a defense of Aquinas’ realist position.

Demonstrating the existence of universals is crucial for several reasons. First, the Fourth Way relies exclusively on their existence. If universals do not exist, then the transcendentals, far from being a real metaphysical feature of the world, cease to exist, negating the Fourth Way of its opening premise among other things. Accordingly, the metaphysics that underlie the existence of universals needs to be articulated and argued for against other philosophical frameworks which sought to deny their existence in some way shape or form.

Second, intrinsically linked with all talk of universals is that of *essence* since all universals spring from essences. The essence or form of something, as Plato and Aristotle would

⁴⁶¹ *Realism*, in general, is the view that holds to the existence of abstract objects such as essences, universals, numbers, and/or propositions. They are considered to exist independent of space, time, and the human mind. Hence their nature and existence is thoroughly immaterial or abstract, as opposed to material or concrete.

have it (respectively), serves as an objects principle of identity and the discovery of essence leads one down the path toward real knowledge of particulars/kinds and the world that encompasses them. Therefore, to defend the existence of universals is by extension to defend the existence of essences, and to defend the existence of essences is to defend the objectivity of knowledge of the world.

7.1 Knowledge versus Opinion

What underlies part, if not, the entire problem over the existence of universals is the tension that arises between the senses and the intellect in the overall discursive movement of the intellect toward knowledge. On the one hand, whatever comes to be in the mind in the form of images, concepts, and all other such abstractions, originates outside the mind as it were. Principles of logic and mathematical propositions, rocks and trees, love and beauty, these realities are all experienced, incorporated, assimilated and, abstracted by the mind through the senses in some way shape or form, either with direct or indirect awareness. The ideas of the mind presuppose the objects (both material and immaterial), properties, modes and relations that correspond to them in reality (even the products of the imagination are essentially garnered from real concrete objects). Contact *with* the world, on a very basic level, ushers in knowledge *of* the world. On the other hand, as Plato would argue, real knowledge comes when the actual nature, essence, or form of a thing is grasped. To know the principles of logic *per se* or to know love *per se* (or anything for that matter) is to have real knowledge as opposed to mere *opinion* or acquaintance with these realities.⁴⁶² And if one can grasp the forms of things, then one grasps the universal – why all particulars of a certain kind are referenced by that kind.

⁴⁶² Plato, *Republic* Bk V, 474b-483e. Cf., *Timaeus*, 27d-28a.

One problematic that arises involves the underlining explanation of how the universal and the particular, that is, how forms or essences interact with the multitude of individual things that seem to inhere in them. How do particulars share, participate, or instantiate essence and vice versa? Do these universals exist independently in some *Platonic heaven* as is traditionally ascribed to Plato's thought on the subject? Do they exist *in* the things themselves and as abstractions *in* the intellect, as Aristotle held? Maybe they merely exist in the intellect alone, as the conceptualist would dispute. Or, do they not exist at all, as the nominalist would claim? The historical problem over universals has a myriad of implications but, the deepest is its connection with essences, that is, everything that exists must have a principle of identity that makes it the concrete identifiable thing that it is and thus capable of being defined and classified (this applies to both real and conceptual things and accidents alike). This is the role of the forms for Plato and substantial and accidental forms for Aristotle and for Aquinas who further enhanced Aristotle's ontology. If universals exist and the implications necessarily tied to essences, then all the objects of reality have a foundational ontology that explains their objective claim as real existents. As universals, they become the reference point for all particulars under their kind.

7.2 Plato on Universals⁴⁶³

⁴⁶³ The meaning and articulation behind Plato's theory is still a matter of debate and interpretation among philosophers. For some traditional and contemporary discussion on the matter, see the following: Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 1, Greece and Rome* (New York, New York: Doubleday, 1993), 163-206; Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Julia Annas, *Plato: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 83-7; Lloyd P. Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013); Richard Kraut, "Plato," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/plato/>>. Accessed 10 July 2014; Silverman, Allan, "Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/plato-metaphysics/>>. Accessed July 7 2014

In the *Republic*, Plato (429-347 B.C.), via Socrates, states that to love something is to “love all of it” not just in part, alluding to the fact that it is the *thing itself*, not any one of its parts or particular features, but *it* as it is known through its form that is being loved exactly for what it is.⁴⁶⁴ Socrates goes on to point out by way of distinction between opposites such as “the beautiful” and “the ugly” or “the just” and “the unjust” that they each compose a numerically distinct entity or *form* (“each of them is itself one”), yet “because they manifest themselves everywhere in association with actions, bodies, and one another, each of them appears to be many.”⁴⁶⁵ In this example, the recognition of the *one* against the *many* is meant to illustrate, among other things, that a person who comes into contact with the many individual beautiful things, things that “participate” with beauty and not the exemplar of beauty (i.e., beauty *per se*) are merely in possession of opinion rather than knowledge.⁴⁶⁶ The philosopher, the lover of wisdom, attains wisdom by attaining knowledge, that is, by studying or grasping the forms themselves.⁴⁶⁷ What these forms amount to are mind-independent (because they are *discovered* to exist outside of the mind), eternal and unchanging (because they are immaterial and therefore not confined to space or time), abstract objects separate from the world of particulars, as the metaphysical constant for all particulars. This branch of realism is what in contemporary metaphysics is denoted as *Platonism*.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁴ Bk V 474c.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Bk V 475e-476a.

⁴⁶⁶ “But someone who, to take the opposite case, believes in the beautiful itself, can see both it and the things that participate in it and doesn’t believe that the participants are it or that it itself is the participants...so we’d be right to call his thought knowledge, since he knows but we should call the other person’s thought opinion, since he opines?” *Ibid.*, Bk V 476c-476d.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Bk V 479e.

⁴⁶⁸ Beebe, *Metaphysics*, 165-7.

7.3 Aristotle on Universals⁴⁶⁹

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), not unlike Plato, was an essentialist, holding to the existence of forms or essences and their universality as an aspect immanent to them: “And when we have the whole, such and such a form in this flesh and in these bones, this is Callias or Socrates; and they are different in virtue of their matter (for that is different), but the same in form; for their form is indivisible.”⁴⁷⁰ Both Socrates and Callias constitute two numerically distinct individuals, yet united by the same essence or universal, presumably, *humanity* or *man*. Still, contra Plato, these universals do not exist un-instantiated in some separate realm. If they did, the problem then arises as to the exact nature of the relationship between the form and the particular: “Again it must be held to be impossible that the substance and that of which it is the substance should exist apart; how, therefore, can the Ideas, being the substances of things, exist apart?”⁴⁷¹ Instead, Aristotle held that the universal exists in the thing itself and is grasped as universal by the power of the intellect.⁴⁷² Aristotle’s realism is much more grounded in the objects themselves as they

⁴⁶⁹ Aristotle’s own understanding of universals also comes with its share of interpretations: Cf., Cohen, S. Marc, “Aristotle’s Metaphysics”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>. Accessed on 9 September 2014; Riin Sirkel, *The Problem of Katholou (Universals) In Aristotle* (Canada, Ontario: The University of Western Ontario, 2010), unpublished dissertation.

⁴⁷⁰ *Metaphysics*, 7.8, 1034a5-8. Cf., *Posterior Analytics* 1.11, 77a5-9: “Now of actual things some are universal, others particular (I call universal that which is by its nature predicated of a number of things, and particular that which is not; man, for instance, is a universal, Callias a particular).” *De Interpretatione*, 7, 37a; “For there to be forms or some one thing apart from the many is not necessary if there is to be demonstration; however, for it to be true to say that one thing holds of many is necessary. For there will be no universal if this is not the case; and if there is no universal, there will be no middle term, and so no demonstration either. There must, therefore, be some one and the same thing, non-homonymous, holding to several cases.”

⁴⁷¹ *Metaphysics*, 1.9, 991b1-3.

⁴⁷² “So from perception there comes memory, as we call it, and from memory (when it occurs often in connection with the same thing), experience; for memories that are many in number from a single experience. And from experience, or from the whole universal that has come to rest in the soul (the one apart from the many, whatever is one and the same in all those things)...What we have just said but not said clearly, let us say again: when one of the undifferentiated things makes a stand, there is a primitive universal in the mind (for though one perceives the particular, perception is of the universal – e.g. of man but not of Callias the man); again a stand is made in these, until what has no parts and is universal stands – e.g. such and such an animal stands, until animal does, and in this a stand is made in the same way. Thus it is clear that it is necessary for us to become familiar with

are experienced in the world and not as pure ideals in the mind or as existing independently in some separate realm.

7.4 Conceptualism

The conceptualist framework on universals (also associated with *phenomenalism* and *idealism*⁴⁷³) agrees that universals exist but, contrary to Plato and Aristotle, they neither exist in a separate realm, nor do they exist in the things themselves but, rather, they exist only as ideas in the mind of a perceiver. A classical proponent of such a view was the Irish philosopher, George Berkeley (1685-1753). In Berkeley's view, all of the ideas in the mind, which make-up the contents of one's knowledge of the world, are attained through the senses. But, more fundamental to the senses is the mind itself, as Berkeley notes: "it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose) cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them."⁴⁷⁴ What Berkeley is trying to emphasize is a certain foundational *a priori* dependence that is to be attributed to the mind, so much so, that whatever *is* cannot exist at all without its being perceived.⁴⁷⁵ In order to know anything, it must first be perceived or verified by the mind; this equates to an idea. This makes the existence of all the furnishings of the world dependent on the mind's perception of it. If this were not the case, then one would simply be arriving at empty

the primitives by induction; for perception too instills the universals in this way." *Posterior Analytics* 2.19, 100a4-9; 100a15-100b5.

⁴⁷³ Beebe, *Metaphysics*, 162-165.

⁴⁷⁴ *Philosophical Works: Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Edited by Michael R. Ayers (London: Everyman's Library, 1975), Part 1 par. 3

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, "Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them." Part I, par. 5: "Hence as it is impossible for me to see or feel anything without an actual sensation of that thing, so is it impossible for me to conceive in my thoughts any sensible thing or object distinct from the sensation or perception of it."

conclusions by asserting the existence of things that lack any prior acceptance by the mind.⁴⁷⁶ In other words, because one has to think (this involves an act of cognition or perception) of the things that exist (the acknowledgment or reception of the concept is second to the act of perception), then the ideas of things are what confirm their existence. Therefore, only ideas exist. What in the final analysis does give a final perceptive hold on all of reality? It is the world's being perceived continually by God, as the "Eternal Spirit" perceiving all there is from eternity.⁴⁷⁷ In the end, for the conceptualist, there is no outer realm that holds universals, nor are there any actual material things for universals to inhere in. They can only exist in the mind as ideas or perceptions.

7.5 Nominalism

The nominalist position, generally speaking, denies the existence of universals altogether. Although sometimes a distinction is made between two different camps of nominalism, either those that are nominalists in regard to the existence of Platonic forms but accept the existence of *properties* in things, such as *redness*, *beauty* and *sphericity*; *texture*, *shape*, etc., or those

⁴⁷⁶ "But say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call *books* and *trees*, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of anyone that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose. It only shows that you can conceive it possible that the objects of your thought may exist without the mind. To make out this, it is necessary that you conceive them existing unconceived or unthought of – which is a manifest repugnancy. When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas. But the mind, taking no notice of itself, is deluded to think it can and does conceive bodies existing unthought of or without the mind; though at the same time they are apprehended by, or exist in, itself. A little attention will discover to anyone the truth and evidence of what is here said, and make it unnecessary to insist on any other proofs against the existence of material substance." Ibid., par. 3.

⁴⁷⁷ "Such I take this important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind; that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit; it being perfectly unintelligible, and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit." Ibid., par. 6.

nominalists that accept the former but deny the latter.⁴⁷⁸ Despite these differences, it seems implausible how one can deny either the existence of universals in either a Platonic or Aristotelian sense (i.e., instantiated or un-instantiated), or understood in terms of properties, without undermining the metaphysical framework of universals altogether, given that both theories acknowledge the existence of some real existing entity identified as universally applicable to all particulars that relate to them. The denial of one seems to necessarily entail the other.

Conflicting camps aside, nominalism is traditionally associated with the Scholastic philosopher and logician, William of Ockham (c. 1287-1347). In actuality, Ockham was a conceptualist given some of his explicit statements on the matter: “I maintain that a universal is not something real that exists in a subject [of inherence], either inside or outside the mind, but that it has being only as a thought-object in the mind.”⁴⁷⁹ His position on the subject did go through some alterations over time but, according to contemporary scholarship it finally settled on the following conclusion: “a universal concept is just the act of thinking about several objects at once; metaphysically such an ‘act’ is a singular quality of an individual mind, and is

⁴⁷⁸ Beebe, *Metaphysics*, 145-7.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ordinatio*, D. II, Q. viii, prima redaction, translated in, *Ockham: Philosophical Writings*, trans. Philotheus Boehner, revised Stephen F. Brown (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1990), 41. There are passages in Ockham’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics* where he makes very similar, if not, identical claims: “Now the fact is that the propositions known by natural science are composed not of sensible things or substances, but of mental contents or concepts that are common to such things”; “A real science is not about things, but about mental contents standing for things; for the terms of scientifically known propositions stand for things. Hence in the following scientifically known proposition, ‘All fire is warming’, the subject is a mental content common to every fire, and stands for every fire. This is the reason why the proposition is called real knowledge [that is knowledge concerning real things]”; “The real sciences are about mental contents, since they are about contents which stand for things; for even though they are mental contents, they still stand for things. Logic, on the other hand, is about mental contents that stand for mental contents. For instance, in this proposition, ‘A species is predicated of numerically distinct things’, the subject is a mental content which stands for mental contents only and not for things outside the mind, for nothing outside the mind is predicated of many things, except, by convention, a spoken or written sign.” *Ibid.*, 11-13. Cf., *Summa totius logicae*, I, c. xiv: “Hence we have to say that every universal is one singular thing. Therefore nothing is universal except by signification, by being a sign of several things.” *Ibid.*, 33; *Summa* I, c. xv-i.

‘universal’ only in the sense of being a mental sign of several things at once and being predicable of them in mental propositions.”⁴⁸⁰

Nominalism in modern times has spawned into a variety of contentious stances.⁴⁸¹ Fundamentally, each nominalist take is anti-realist in so far as it tries to defer of objects the existence of any metaphysical unity in terms of essences, forms, or natures; leaving individuals with shared characteristics, properties, relations, dispositions, etc., but nothing intrinsic to them that necessarily makes it the case that they have these in a unified way via some principal of being such as essence. What then is presented is a mechanistic explanation of things via tropes, classes, predicates, names and so forth. Things soon become metaphysically malleable if there is no objective and necessary principle to ground them in their identity as what they are. The critique of nominalism along with conceptualism will be addressed further below after Aquinas’ treatment of universals.

7.6 Aquinas on Universals

Aquinas is a realist about the existence of universals. They do exist concretely in the things themselves and as abstractions in the mind but, with a final grounding as ideas in the

⁴⁸⁰ Spade, Vincent Paul and Pannacio, Claude, “William of Ockham”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Online at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/ockham> Accessed on August 29, 2014. Cf., Joshua P. Hochschild, “What’s Wrong With Ockham? Reassessing the Role of Nominalism in the Dissolution of the West,” *Anamnesis Journal*. Online at: <http://anamnesisjournal.com/2014/12/whats-wrong-ockham-reassessing-role-nominalism-dissolution-west/> Accessed on December 28, 2014.

⁴⁸¹ For instance, *Predicate nominalism*: all commonalities are merely predicates that apply to things; e.g., *red* tables and *red* chairs, share the same predicate; *Concept nominalism*: all commonalities are merely *concepts* that apply to things (this may be more in line with Ockham’s position); *Class nominalism*: all commonalities represent a *class* that is in relation to the individual particular; *Resemblance nominalism*: all commonalities are such by virtue of their resemblance to one another; *Trope theory*: all commonalities are simply individual properties or *tropes* of things. See BeeBee, *Metaphysics*, 147.

divine intellect and not in some Platonic heaven.⁴⁸² Aquinas' realism is also a key component to his *essentialism* (or vice versa) i.e., essences serve as the principal of identity for all things.⁴⁸³ Identifying *redness*, *beauty*, and *sphericity* is equivalent to recognizing their universality in relation to any particular *red* thing, *beautiful* thing, or *spherically* shaped thing. This recognition takes place in the mind but, unlike the conceptualist view, "such conceptions have an immediate basis in reality" given that "the nature is said to be in the thing inasmuch as there is something in the thing outside the soul that corresponds to the conception of the soul."⁴⁸⁴ Aquinas understands the universal as having a twofold manner of existing: not entirely as *one*, since it could never have any relation of commonality with any particular (there would only be *this one thing* and not many others with a shared commonality), and not entirely as *many*, since it would lack any

⁴⁸² See especially, *Summa Theologiae*, 1.15.1-3; 44.3. This position is also termed *Scholastic Realism*. See John Peterson, *Introduction to Scholastic Realism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999).

⁴⁸³ "Moreover, that through which something is constituted in its proper genus and species is what is signified by the definition that declares what a thing is. Hence, philosophers have substituted the name 'quiddity' for that of 'essence.' It is what the Philosopher frequently calls 'the *what* a thing was to be,' that is, that through which something is a certain kind of being. It is called *form*, moreover, inasmuch as 'form' signifies the certitude of anything... It is also called by the name 'nature,'... that is, when *nature* is said of anything that can be grasped intellectually in some way. For a thing is intelligible only through its definition and essence. Accordingly, the Philosopher, in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*, states that every substance is a nature. Yet the term *nature*, taken in this sense, seems to signify the essence of a thing inasmuch as it possess an ordering to its proper operations, since no thing is devoid of its proper operation. The term 'quiddity,' however, is used to signify the definition. But 'essence' is used inasmuch as it designates that through which and in which a being has the act of existing." *On Being and Essence*, 1.

⁴⁸⁴ *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, 2.1.3, as quoted in Edward Feser, *Aquinas*, 26-27. "In another sense of 'conceptualism', the view of *scholastic realism* may be counted as a form of conceptualism, even though, as a type of moderate realist, no scholastic realist is a conceptualist in the usual sense of that term. For 'conceptualism' may be defined not as the view that universals exist only in a mind but rather as the view that universals exist *primordially* in a mind. For unlike Aristotelian moderate realists, scholastic moderate realists believe that any universal feature of a thing in this world is patterned after and cannot exist apart from its eternal archetype or Idea in the mind of God. The *universal in re* is entirely the creation of the *universale ante rem*. God for the scholastic realist is not only the cause of a thing's continued existence but He is also the cause of its essence. Following St. Augustine, Aquinas, for example, holds that while ordinary particular things are the ground of the universal concepts which we form of those things, (the latter being abstracted from the former), those same particular things *in rerum natura* are in turn grounded in the divine Ideas in God's mind. Any ordinary natural thing such as the tree in my garden is, just to the extent that it is a tree, grounded in the Idea of Treeness in God's mind. But if this is true and if it is also true that effects cannot exist without their causes, then it follows that any universal feature of a thing in this world depends from moment to moment on its archetype in God's mind. But this means that universals exist *primordially* in God's mind. Therefore, to the extent that the scholastic realist holds that the *universal in re* depends on the *universale ante rem* as its formal cause and cannot exist without the latter he is a conceptualist." Peterson, *Introduction to Scholastic Realism*, 5-6.

unified recognition under a specific commonality (one would encounter many *things* that are red, rather than many *red* things). The *unity* of the universal (what distinguishes *this* universal “redness” from *that* universal “greenness”) is abstracted and grasped by the intellect, and the *manyness* of the universal (X amount of *red* things and X amount of *green* things) exists in the individual things:

... note that the term ‘universal’ can be taken in two senses. It can refer to the nature itself, common to several things, in so far as this common nature is regarded in relation to those several things; or it can refer to the nature taken simply in itself. Similarly, in a ‘white thing’ we can consider either the thing that happens to be white or the thing precisely as white. Now a nature – say, human nature – which can be thought of universally, has two modes of existence: one, material, in the matter supplied by nature; the other, immaterial, in the intellect. As in the material mode of existence it cannot be represented in a universal notion, for in that mode it is individuated by its matter; this notion only applies to it, therefore, as abstracted from individuating matter. But it cannot, as so abstracted, have a real existence, as the Platonists thought; man in reality only exists (as is proved in the *Metaphysics*, Book VII Chap. 11, 1036a25ff.) in this flesh and these bones. Therefore it is only in the intellect that human nature has any being apart from the principles which individuate it.⁴⁸⁵

Aquinas is pushing forward an ontological explanation for what underlies a common yet explicit truth that permeates the world of things, properties, relations, etc., that is to say, individual numerically distinct things are objectively and necessarily classifiable only by reason of some feature or other that they each share or have in common. The epistemological process of how vis-à-vis abstraction the intellect comes to identify universals from particulars is outside the

⁴⁸⁵ *Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima*, 2.5, lecture 12, 378. Cf., lecture 12, 380; *On Spiritual Creatures*, 9.6: “For there is no difference between Aristotle and Plato, except in this: that Plato asserted that the thing which is understood has actual being outside the soul in exactly the same way as the intellect understands it, that is, as something abstract and universal; but Aristotle asserted that the thing which is understood is outside the soul, but in another way, because it is understood in the abstract and has actual being in the concrete. And just as, according to Plato, the thing itself which is understood is outside the soul itself, so it is according to Aristotle: and this is clear from the fact that neither of them asserted that the sciences have to do with those things which are in our intellect, as with substances; but whereas Plato said that the sciences have to do with separated forms, Aristotle said that they have to do with the quiddities of things that exist in those things. But the character of universality, which consists in commonness and abstractness, is merely the result of the mode of understanding, inasmuch as we understand things abstractly and universally; but according to Plato it is also the result of the mode of existence of the abstract forms: and consequently Plato asserted that universals subsist, whereas Aristotle did not.”

scope of this project.⁴⁸⁶ But the question regarding the actual existence of universals themselves is an entirely different matter.

7.7 In Defense of Universals

Edward Feser has provided one of the most useful, concise and direct lists of arguments for realism that are well worth expounding upon.⁴⁸⁷ In addition to Feser's work, some other lines of argument for realism will also be put forward.

In the first of his arguments, “*the one over many argument*,” Feser argues that things such as “triangularity,” “redness,” “humanness,” etc., as already identified above with Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas, really do exist and they unify all particulars under a certain kind, although they “are not reducible” to any one particular or individual thing that instantiates the universal.⁴⁸⁸ The existence of triangularity qua universal is not dependent on any material triangle simply because universals are immaterial beings. This can be demonstrated from the fact that any “material triangle,” “red thing” or “human” can simply cease to be, yet, the universal of that particular (*triangularity*) continues in existence.⁴⁸⁹ This is only possible because the universal, qua immaterial being, lies outside the confines of space and time, having no necessary dependence on any material particular. These universals *are* immaterial because of the nature of the universal itself as it comes to be known through abstraction. What is being abstracted or taken away from the particular cannot be something material due to the fact that the universal is

⁴⁸⁶ There are, however, treatments on the issue. Just to name two, see James B. Reichmann, *Philosophy of the Human Person* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1985), especially ch. 7; and D.Q. McInerney, *Philosophical Psychology* (Elmhurst, Pennsylvania: The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 1999).

⁴⁸⁷ *The Last Superstition*, 42-49. Cf., *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 223-5.

⁴⁸⁸ *The Last Superstition*, 42.

⁴⁸⁹ To recognize, discover, or acknowledge the existence of something, is not the same as being the cause of whatever it is we come in contact with. Even if there were no human minds available to acknowledge the existence of any universal, it does not follow that the universal would not exist without a human mind to apprehend it.

collected by the intellect entirely as a mental abstraction, and these universals, qua mental abstractions, only make sense in terms of their immateriality, for the only other option available to consider is that they are somehow material in composition, and at that stage one would have to posit that the mind takes in some literal physical instantiation of the universal, for example, *triangularity* qua some sort of material being would make-up part of the physical composition of the mind (or the mind would serve as a kind of receptive collection plate of physical objects). But this seems rather absurd given that every possible universal taken in by the mind would equate to actual physical instantiations somehow held within the mind or, rather, given the infinite volume of things and their corresponding universals (such as numbers), it seems that the mind would have to have a capacity to hold an actual infinite number of physical things despite the fact that the mind, if understood solely from a materialist stand point as being purely material, would be finite in nature.

“*The argument from geometry.*”⁴⁹⁰ Geometry can be generally defined as “the branch of mathematics concerned with the properties and relations of points, lines, surfaces, and solids...”⁴⁹¹ The existence of points, lines, surfaces, etc., is something no one will deny (not to mention their relations). For instance, a circle is necessarily composed of a center point, radius, and a circumference; a polygon is a closed plane figure, and a quadrilateral is a polygon with four sides and corners. The list can go on and on. The point is this: all the facts about geometry and their intrinsic relations were not invented by any human mind. Euclidian geometry, for example, was discovered and articulated in its formal context by Euclid; he gradually became

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁹¹ “Geometry,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, on-line edition: www.oed.com.proxy1.acu.edu.au/view/Entry/77794?redirectedFrom=Geometry#eid Accessed 8 September 2014.

aware of geometrical figures already at work in reality because he was able to observe them to begin with. Hence, the objects of geometry are universal, abstract and mind independent.

The third argument entitled, “*the argument from mathematics in general*” is intrinsically related to what was said above about geometry.⁴⁹² Simple mathematical equations such as $2+2 = 4$ or $3 \times 3 = 9$ are necessarily true irrespective of any mind or opinion.⁴⁹³ To deny something as simple as $2+2 = 4$, or to argue for a sum of five instead of four, would send one into a realm of complete incoherence and contradiction; if two things plus two other things did not equal a total of four things in total then there is no reason why this calculation should ever equal four rather than fifty or one-million or zero. If this were truly the case, how would something as simple as quantity in the world actually be measured? Even more consequential, how would anyone make sense of quantity itself? These absurdities are unavoidable if one denies the existence of universals.

“*The argument from the nature of propositions,*” takes into account “statements about the world, whether true or false, which are distinct from the sentences that express them.”⁴⁹⁴ For example, “Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on April 15, 1865” is a true proposition; this event is a historical fact. The contents of this proposition are indeed complicated, as they presuppose a

⁴⁹² Ibid., *The Last Superstition*, 43.

⁴⁹³ Noson S. Yanofsky presents a simple, yet effective example of how certain mathematical realities and their relations are necessarily objective and independent of any human tinkering: “Take a normal 8-by-8 chessboard and some dominoes that are of size 2-by-1. Try to cover the chessboard with the dominoes. There are 64 squares on the chessboard and each domino covers two squares, so thirty-two dominos will be needed... Now let’s try something a little more challenging. Put two queens on the opposite corners of the chessboard. Try to cover all the squares except the ones with queens... There are sixty-two squares that need to be covered, which means that thirty-one dominoes will be required... The reason why this simple problem of placing thirty-one dominos on a chessboard seems so hard is because *it cannot be done*. It is not a hard problem; it is an *impossible* problem... Every domino is 2-by-1 and hence must cover a black-and-white square on the chessboard. The original board... had thirty-two black squares and thirty-two white squares that needed to be covered. There was total symmetry on the board. By contrast...” the second board with queens positioned in opposite corners “...the symmetry has been broken. There is no way anyone is going to be able to cover these sixty-two squares with dominoes where each covers one black square and one white square.” *The Outer Limits of Reason: What Science, Mathematics, and Logic Cannot Tell Us* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT University Press, 2013), 2-3.

⁴⁹⁴ *The Last Superstition*, 41; 43-4.

host of circumstances identifiable as separate events all leading to the assassination of Lincoln. And the proposition itself can be expressed in any number of different languages but, irrespective of that, the *proposition* as opposed to the written or spoken language in which the proposition is formulated, is what conveys the truth of the matter. Articulated in a different way, propositions are able to be identified by the mind apart from the *expression* (i.e., written/oral language) of the proposition, making them different in kind. Strictly speaking, what propositions capture are the playing out of events and the essences there involved. Insofar as any sentence serves as the *signifier*, and the essences/events act as that which is *signified*, they should not be confused as being one in the same thing. Despite the fact that without what is *signified* (e.g., the event that is Lincoln's assassination) there could be no *signifier* (e.g., any expression of the fact of Lincoln's assassination) nonetheless, what is signified (the event that is Lincoln's assassination) will continue to be true regardless of the signifier, however expressed, and the one doing the signifying (although Abraham Lincoln has long been deceased, the truth of that proposition has not ceased being true and never will). What is signified by the proposition, then, is something separate, universal, and independent from the *signifier* expressing it and simultaneously independent from the individual expressing the proposition.

“*The argument from science,*” considers the unambiguous and integral use of universals by science.⁴⁹⁵ For instance, laws of conservation are universal in scope inasmuch as *laws* by their very nature have a universal application, and necessarily so. The discursive inspection of gravity would yield little fruit without something universal to ground Newton's law on Gravity and further still, without Einstein's theory of relativity. What sense would it make to speak of *this* particular with gravitational attraction and that particular with gravitational attraction without the one and same phenomena of gravitational attraction via law of gravitational attraction? Such

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

theoretical formulations presuppose the existence of universals as applicable to all particulars, not only physically but also conceptually.

The sixth argument is taken from Bertrand Russell's "*vicious regress problem*."⁴⁹⁶ This argument is a critique of *resemblance* nominalism, which argues that all commonalities between particulars are such simply by virtue of the fact of their resemblance toward one another.⁴⁹⁷

According to the resemblance nominalist, what allows one to attribute "triangularity" to all triangles is the clean fact that they *resemble* each other in the very same aspect of their triangularity, but as Russel pointed out about resemblances in whiteness and triangularity:

If we wish to avoid the universals *whiteness* and *triangularity*, we shall choose some particular patch of white or some particular triangle, and say that anything is white or a triangle if it has the right sort of resemblance to our chosen particular. But then the resemblance required will have to be a universal. Since there are many white things, the resemblance must hold between many pairs of particular white things; and this is the characteristic of a universal.⁴⁹⁸

The "resemblance" described between individual things is unavoidably a universal in that it is in virtue of that *one* resemblance that *many* individuals are recognized to resemble each other in regard to that specific feature. Furthermore, it will not do for the resemblance theorist to conclude that those items *only* resemble each other and nothing more on the basis of some brute fact. Asserting that something is the case is far from giving a satisfactory answer as to why and how it is the case. Nevertheless, any resemblance will be prone to a further resemblance and that to another and to another, *ad infinitum*. Thus, a vicious regress ensues.

The seventh argument, the "*words are universals too problem*," entails the use of language.⁴⁹⁹ It simply is in the nature of language to convey meaning universally. Language, expressed either through physical gesture or orally, is the primordial platform that allows one to

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ BeeBee, *Metaphysics*, 225-6.

⁴⁹⁸ *The Problems of Philosophy*, 66-7.

⁴⁹⁹ Feser, *Last*, 45.

intelligibly communicate and transmit feelings, thoughts, actions, etc. Take for example the word “stop.” This word signifies a specific action, namely, to *cease* what could be any number of motions. The fact that thousands upon thousands of people on a daily basis follow through with what the word signifies is due to the fact that the word “stop” can be understood to mean what it signifies. However, if universals do not exist, then in this case the word “stop” would be a completely new particular with a new meaning every time it was encountered, and that would mean no one would actually *stop* upon seeing the word “stop” because its meaning would not hold to any particular instance of the word. But this is obviously not how language or the mind works. Once the meaning of a word is perceived it becomes attached instantly to all utterances of that word. This is how the universal qua “stop” functions. If all instances of the action are incapable of being associated with any one word, then meaning and communication become impossible.⁵⁰⁰

“*The argument from the objectivity of concepts and knowledge,*” is specifically directed toward conceptualism. Remember that conceptualism does not outright deny the existence of universals, instead, universals become entirely contingent on the mind insofar as they are fabrications of the mind. Of course if this were true, then all concepts entertained by one person would be radically independent from anyone else’s. In one sense this seems intuitively correct, Tom’s thoughts are truly his own and not Barbara’s, who has her own set of thoughts independent of Tom’s. However, at some point in time when Tom and Barbara began to learn about the application of the mathematical concept *multiplication*, it is true that both Tom and Barbara could entertain the concept of multiplication independently from the other in a

⁵⁰⁰ “... the nominalist might say that when you, me, and Socrates each say ‘red,’ we are *not* in fact uttering the same word at all, but only words that resemble each other... it would entail that communication is impossible, since we would never be using the same words (indeed, you would never be using the same word more than once even when talking to *yourself*, but only words that resemble each other) – in which case, why is the nominalist talking to us?” Ibid.

subjective manner, but it is not that each is creating in their mind an independent concept; they both *recognize the same concept* and if this is the case (which it is) then that concept cannot be something so entirely private or subjective to one individual as to the exclusion of the other. What ties them both having the same concept is the concept (universal) itself, not Tom or Barbara.

The argument from the unity and order of things, argues that the unity found in the world can only make sense in light of the existence of *essences* and, thus, universals.⁵⁰¹ It is undeniable that things differ in kind from one another through their own unity. For example, there is a reason why all coastal redwoods are recognizable or catalogued as coastal red woods and not Burmese cats or Japanese Coy fish. Not only that, all coastal redwoods are unified through a certain set of properties and powers that undeniably set them apart from Burmese cats, Japanese Coy fish, etc. Flowing from those particular sets of properties and powers will be predictable behavior, yet another unifying and differentiating characteristic. All of this goes to show that “the unity and order of things would be mystifying if essence were not a pervasive feature of mind-independent reality.”⁵⁰² And if the universal flows from essences, then universals exist.

By extension of the previous argument, James Franklin argues for the existence of universals based on the matter-of-fact perception of them in objects by means of their *repeatable* properties.⁵⁰³ The properties that things exhibit e.g., color, size, shape, texture, etc. are what one first encounters when coming across an object; it is through them that the existence of the object is confirmed: “I know the table exists because I see its color and see and feel its shape; I see and feel its color and shape because the color and shape affect my sensory organs in a particular way...” therefore “anything that has causal power, such as to affect my senses, must be a

⁵⁰¹ *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 212.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 213.

⁵⁰³ *What Science Knows*, 63.

reality.”⁵⁰⁴ Going further, the existence of *relations* between properties directly involves the reality of universals rather than the objects that inhere in them:

‘Orange is between red and yellow’ is about *colors*, not about colored things. Much of science is an effort to understand the relations between universals, and much of experiment on objects is an attempt to find how they act in virtue of the properties and relations they have. Thus science is committed to the reality of properties.⁵⁰⁵

The following argument, *why is there talk of universals at all argument*, is direct and intuitive. If universals do not exist, then why are there arguments attempting to either affirm or deny their existence? Meaning, why are universals *recognized as actually existing and operative in the composite things of this world* (a process both natural, direct and intuitive to one’s cognitive faculties)? Under this observation universals exist or they do not – there is no middle ground. A nominalist might reply that sometimes one is fooled into thinking that something exists when in reality, it simply does not. Consider a mirage. A mirage may prove to be very real to the weary traveler on a desolate dusty road somewhere but, in reality, what was thought to be a rest-stop with shade and fresh water off in the distance ends up becoming nothing more than an expansive collection of rocks and dried up trees (or whatever). Analogously, the critic concludes, one may think that universals exist, but they are a mere mirage – what we think is there, is not. The problem with this argument is that the mirage eventually goes away. The traveller will indubitably come to the realization that her perception of things was incorrect, but this is not the case with universals, they simply do not “go away” with further investigation. Indeed, they are inescapable from the reality of observable things. Further still, the mirage argument fails to answer exactly how it is the case that universals are *like* a mirage. A mirage is simply a visual distortion of an *actual* environment that *is* present, but is perceived as something different by the

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

perceiver. Universals, as already noted, are not directly apprehended by the senses, but indirectly via abstraction by the intellect. How can one be deceived, in the sense of a mirage, by an abstract concept? Then again, how can all those who claim that universals truly exist be “taken-in” by an abstraction qua mirage?

Or perhaps universals are merely a by-product of the imagination, so that the conversation revolves around the imaginary concept of “universals” without admitting any actual reality to them. In the same way that one could argue over the existence of the Greek god Poseidon without positing any real existence to him (the conversation circles around a mere hypothetical, nothing actual). But this is begging the question on universals having a mere hypothetical existence. Whereas in the case of Poseidon it is an objective fact that he was a literary creation, a true figment of the imagination. As for universals, their reality is something that is acknowledged as being immanent in all things that really are. It is not that the existence of Poseidon is inferred through any one object, but universals are so inferred from all objects, even Poseidon qua imaginary concept would fall prey to such an inference (as indicated above). Therefore, in order to deny the existence of universals, the nominalist will have to accept that the common sense and intuitive acknowledgement of their existence is somehow the by-product of a mass psychological defect affecting the majority of people around the world, except for those few erudite philosophers who somehow were able to avoid such deception.

The why and how does classification exist argument, appeals directly to a very basic logical and metaphysical truth, mainly, if universals do not exist, then why and how are things generally classified into kinds and particulars? It would seem that in the absence of universals the world would unavoidably become incomprehensible in so far as it would lack any

metaphysical grounding for the classification of its contents, the world included. David Kelley paints a clear picture of what a world devoid of classification would look like:

Imagine trying to shop in a supermarket where the food was arranged in random order on the shelves: tomato soup next to the white bread in one aisle, chicken soup in the back next to the 60-watt light bulbs, one brand of cream cheese in front and another in aisle 8 near the Oreos. Or imagine trying to research a term paper in a library that had no card catalog, no Dewey decimal or Library of Congress numbers, just shelf after shelf of books in random order. In either case, the task of finding what you want would be time consuming and extremely difficult, if not impossible. In the case of a supermarket or a library, someone had to design the system of classification. But there is also a ready-made system of classification embodied in our language. The word “dog,” for example, groups together a certain class of animals and distinguishes them from other animals. Such a grouping may seem too obvious to be called a classification, but this is only because you have already mastered the word. As a child learning to speak, you had to work hard to learn the system of classification your parents were trying to teach you. Before you got the hang of it, you probably made mistakes, like calling the cat a dog, or failing to realize that trees are plants. And if you hadn’t learned to speak, the whole world would seem like the unorganized library, you would be in the position of an infant, for whom every object is new and unfamiliar⁵⁰⁶

Truly, every object encountered would be new and unfamiliar, but this is simply absurd and definitely not the case.

The following arguments are meant primarily to demonstrate the existence of universals, but in defending universals, essentialism is also corroborated. The host of absurdities that follow from a denial of universals and essences are too numerous to brush aside. However, thus far the relations that bind the different principles or aspects of being have yet to be investigated. How does the relation between different aspects or principles of being happen. For instance, a hylemorphic compound is one of prime matter, essence, and an act of existence. How, exactly, do these three principles hold together, and why? Answering these questions introduces the use of *participation* or *instantiation*, which express the unitive and relational metaphysics connecting all principles of being.

⁵⁰⁶ *The Art of Reasoning*, Second Expanded Edition, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 11-12.

Plato held that all the inventory of the world receives its principle of identity and by extension its being by means of a participatory relation with a relevant *form*. Reiterating what was said before *form* is not something confined to the spatio-temporal world. It exists outside of space and time while the relation between the form and any particular is imparted independently and irrespective of the particular. *Form* then, is responsible for the existence of the particular, so that, for example, dogs are what they are by their *participation* with the *form* or *essence* of *dogness*. It is in virtue of such a participatory relation that the dog's principal of identity is imparted.⁵⁰⁷ In Plato's thought participation served as the underline ontological principle connecting the realm of forms with the realm of shadowy imitations or the realm of particulars experienced on earth. Through participation with the forms, the advent of knowledge could be ushered in given that contact with the imitation begins one on the path toward contact or remembrance with the truly real, that is, with the forms.

Aristotle, in contention, believed that the form or essence was instantiated *in* the particular rather than existing un-instantiated in some outer realm. Furthermore Aristotle took the universal aspect of the form to exist only as an abstraction in the mind. It is upon examining the existing thing itself where essence is discovered (contra conceptualism) as immanent to the thing and not existing autonomously in some foreign space or Platonic heaven. For Aristotle, scientific knowledge begins by contact with existing things, from which the universal is to be understood as an aspect immanent to essence and only discoverable through abstraction. Aquinas was in

⁵⁰⁷ "For Plato, to say that beautiful things participate in Beauty itself is to say that Beauty alone is real, and that the reality of Beauty in beautiful things *is* nothing but Beauty itself as present to them. Theirs is a wholly derived beauty." David C. Schindler, "What's the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context." *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3.1 (Fall 2005), 21. For a helpful summary of Platonic texts on the topic, see 6-7.

agreement with Aristotle although he did utilize Platonic jargon vis-à-vis participation to augment both Plato's and Aristotle's ontology by describing the relational interplay between the most central modes of participation and bringing out their necessary consequences culminating in their ultimate dependence on God's efficient causality.

With that said, participation plays an important role in this discussion on two fronts. First, as numerous commentators on the Fourth Way have indicated, the principal of participation seems to have a significant, if not, essential function in the Fourth Way. If things are more and less true, noble and the like as the argument claims, then the relation that binds the particular with the transcendental, if there is such a relation, needs to be explained and defended. Second, examining the nature of this relation necessarily entails a reintroduction to essentialism and the role of universals since any so-called participation relation or *instantiation relation* (as it is understood in contemporary analytic philosophy) that links any transcendental property (or any property for that matter) with a particular, by the same token, will also be responsible for the metaphysical connective behind the structure of essences and their instances, among other things.⁵⁰⁸ For instance, how it is that essences come to instantiate particulars? In this case, mapping the *how* of instantiation will provide the "metaphysical glue" not only for how essences actually work, or how they become manifest in principle, but in addition, how other metaphysical principles come to be instantiated, such as prime matter and existence. This investigation into the instantiation of metaphysical principles will also yield the fundamental importance that existence plays in any relation given that all relations can only be identified in principle between actually existing things which, of course, presupposes their existence or, rather, their relation with existence. But as it was argued above, nothing can provide this relation for itself except by that which simply is *subsistent existence*. This last point is flushed out as a

⁵⁰⁸ Beebe, *Metaphysics*, 108.

direct outcome from the exercise of participation and the limitation that necessarily results from instantiated being. Aquinas will make this clear by bringing to mind a foundational distinction between that which is *per se* from that which is *per accidens*.

A good amount of work corroborating the instantiation relation (IR) has been implicitly conducted in defending the existence of universals; if universals exist, then it necessarily follows that there must be some link operational between it and the particular (it must be the case that the particular is understood via essence and classifiable via universal; and that both aspects are discoverable from the same object; and this can only take place if there is in fact a real relation that binds them together).

This elaboration will also supply a necessary precursor to the discussion on the existence and defense of the *transcendentals*, which presuppose a real, if not a much more drastic showcase of an (IR) between them and all particulars. After all, how are things more and less “true, good, noble and the like,” if not through some relation tying them together?

8.1 Aquinas on Instantiation

In discussing instantiation a real existing convergence is affirmed as being actively communicated between two things or *relata*. To have an (IR) is for one object to have a part in another and vice versa. Aquinas says the following about the meaning of participation: “To participate is as it were to take a part, and therefore when something receives in a particular way what pertains to another, it is generally said to participate in it ...”⁵⁰⁹ Aquinas, in one of his most explicit treatments on the matter, specifies three modes of (IR):

⁵⁰⁹ *Exposition on the Hebdomads of Boethius*, 2. Cf., Beebee, *Metaphysics*, 108: “‘Instantiation’ and ‘exemplification’ are equivalent names for the relationship which holds between an object and its properties (or ‘features’ – such as redness and roundness).” The contemporary sense of instantiation, in essence, is no different

... as man is said to participate in animal, because he does not have the notion of animal according to its full extension; for the same reason, Socrates participates in man. So too the subject participates in its accident, and matter in form, because the substantial and accidental form, which of its own notion is common, is determined to this or that subject, and similarly the effect is said to participate in its cause, especially when it is not equal to the power of its cause, for example when we say that air participates in the light of the sun because it does not receive it with the brightness the sun has.⁵¹⁰

Aquinas' treatment of instantiation falls within the context of Boethius' *Hebdomads* in which Boethius raises the question, "can substances be good in virtue of existence without being absolute goods?"⁵¹¹ In other words, how do things instantiate goodness? Are things good *substantially* as through their essence or are they good *accidentally* as the inherence of a contingent accident would be? For example, if object A is good through its essence or *per se* then any distinction between object A and *goodness* would disappear since they would both count as being numerically the same thing. But if object A is good *per accidens*, that is, not essentially but predicated of as some accidental property, then object A will not be numerically identical with *goodness*. Answering Boethius' question provides Aquinas with a platform for explaining how instantiation works on different metaphysical levels all of which will lead to the most important relation discoverable, that is, the relation between existence itself (*to be*) and substance (*that which is*).⁵¹²

The first mode of (IR) identifies the basic relation shared between species and genus or the particular and universal. For instance, Tom is a kind of animal thus instantiating *animality*;

in meaning from Aquinas'. The metaphysical relation between particulars, perfections, and principles of being are the issue at hand.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 1; 3, "Now the problem is this. Things which are, are good. For all the learned are agreed that every existing thing tends to good and everything tends to its like. Therefore things which tend to good are good. We must, however, inquire how they are good – by participation or by substance."

⁵¹² Ibid.

and a certain tricycle is red thus instantiating *redness*. The second mode is identified in two examples: a) between substance and accident; b) matter and form. For instance, a portion of the trunk of an oak tree (substance) has been painted white (accident) and the oak tree exists in the first place because the oak tree qua essence instantiates a parcel of prime matter. The third mode is identified between an effect and its cause. For instance, the glass of water is made cold by the ice cube but the effect is not the cause although it is made actual on account of the cause. What one can identify in this outline of participation is what seems to be a progression in the order of being going from the more universal and easily comprehensible to the more fundamental and abstract. In considering the first mode, there is the individual or particular thing and then there is its universal counterpart. As Aquinas illustrates, this relation is not univocal in a *formal* sense as when *heat* emanating from the *sun* and the *sun itself* are not identified as being numerically identical, that is, the *sun* and *heat* are recognizable as constituting a *real distinction* between each other and not just a *logical distinction* or a *relation of speech*. As was identified with the existence of universals, they truly are distinct entities despite the real relation found between them – a *relation of being*.⁵¹³ For example, one can understand the idea of a painting as originating in the mind of the painter is not the same as the actual painting that she may produce. There is a *real* distinction between the two. If they were to have a univocal predication in the

⁵¹³ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.32: "An effect that does not receive a form specifically the same as that through which the agent acts cannot receive according to a univocal predication the name arising from that form. Thus, the heat generated by the sun and the sun itself are not called univocally hot." Cf. *Exposition on the Hebdomads of Boethius*, 4: "There are many things which can be separated by a mental process which cannot be separated in fact. No one, for instance, can actually separate a triangle or other mathematical figure from the underlying matter; but mentally one can consider a triangle and its properties apart from matter." This distinction supplies a corollary distinction between relations *according to speech* from those *according to being*. Cf., *Summa Theologiae*, 1.13.7.1: "Some relative names are imposed to signify the relative habitudes themselves, as 'master' and 'servant,' 'father' and 'son,' and the like, and these relatives are predicamental *secundum esse*. But others are imposed to signify the things from which ensue certain habitudes, as the mover and the thing moved, the head and the thing that has a head, and the like: and these relatives are called transcendental *secundum dici*."

formal sense, then they would both literally be the exact same thing in every aspect including relations.⁵¹⁴

Consider, also, when many things share a commonality (universal), that commonality which is being predicated univocally of those particulars albeit *virtually* (the particulars share in that commonality but are not the commonality *itself*) and not *formally* can embody one of several categories, “a genus, a species, a difference, an accident or a property.”⁵¹⁵ Since all particulars are classifiable in virtue of the universal (by reason of an [IR]), it follows that all particulars will fall into one of the categories listed. This univocal predication, for Aquinas, is that of the particular participating in the universal: “for the species is said to participate in the genus and the individual in the species.”⁵¹⁶ The same train of thought continues with the second mode of relation; substances have a real relation with their accidents and prime matter with that of substantial form. Here, the relation deepens in respect to the nature of the relata. The (IR) is not merely established on the surface level of particulars and universals, it goes deeper into their connective structure.⁵¹⁷ The third mode of the (IR), the relation between an effect and its cause

⁵¹⁴ “Thus, as Aquinas says at one point in his *Sentences* commentary, in response to the question whether it is possible for ‘numerically one and the same relation’ to belong to two subjects at a time: ‘No, this cannot be, for one accident cannot belong to two subjects’ (*In Sent.* I. d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2).” Jeffrey Brower, “Medieval Theories of Relations”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N Zalta, (ed.), URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/reasons-medieval/>.

⁵¹⁵ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.32; Cf., 1.29: “Effects that fall short of their causes do not agree with them in name and nature. Yet, some likeness must be found between them, since it belongs to the nature of action that an agent produce its like, since each thing acts according as it is in act. The form of an effect, therefore, is certainly found in some measure in a transcending cause, but according to another mode and another way. For this reason the cause is called an equivocal cause. Thus, the sun causes heat among these sublunary bodies by acting according as it is in act. Hence, the heat generated by the sun must bear some likeness to the active power of the sun, through which heat is caused in this sublunary world; and because of this heat the sun is said to be hot, even though not one in the same way. And so the sun is said to be somewhat like those things in which it produces its effects as an efficient cause. Yet the sun is also unlike all these things in so far as such effects do not possess heat and the like in the same way as they are found in the sun.” There is *heat* and there is the *sun* which *contains* heat, but the sun is not identifiable as heat itself but only *virtually*, i.e. heat has some real presence *in* the sun and not vice versa.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought*, 98: “In each of these cases the result is a real or ontological composition of a receiving subject and the perfection which is received in that same subject, that is, of substance

“especially when it is not equal to the power of its cause” (already implicit in the former modes) will help to highlight the ontological limitation present in things by distinguishing that which is essential to a subject as opposed to accidental.

Aquinas states that “whatever is participated is determined to the mode of that which is participated and is thus possessed in a partial way and not according to every mode of perfection.”⁵¹⁸ For example, a square drawn on a piece of paper is only ever a particular square and not the metaphysical paradigm or exemplar of all squares, something only representative of by essence. It is in light of the latter that the former has its principle of identity via its (IR) in that which is squareness *per se* or through its very essence.⁵¹⁹ Any predication says Aquinas, “is made by participation, as Socrates is said to be a man, not because he is humanity itself, but because he possesses humanity.”⁵²⁰ In arguing his case for a universal cause of all things, Aquinas spells out the *per se/per accidens* distinction in a three-fold manner: First, when one takes into consideration a certain property shared by three objects, the cause of this property cannot originate from anyone of the objects, since each one merely possesses the property rather than being the property itself.⁵²¹ Three red apples does not explain the existence of redness itself. In this case, epistemology must not be confused with ontology. Second, if some property is

and its given accident, or of matter and its given substantial form. Hence we may describe this kind of participation as real or as ontological.”

⁵¹⁸ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.32. Cf., *Summa Theologiae* 1.44.1: “For whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially...”

⁵¹⁹ This difference was already anticipated by Plato, as Schindler identifies: “the presence of identifiable qualities in sensible things presupposes the reality of that quality in its own right.” “What’s the Difference?”, 5.

⁵²⁰ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.32. Cf., *Exposition on the Hebdomads of Boethius*, 3: “Something can be predicated of a thing in two ways, in one way, substantially, in another way, by participation. Hence the question arises whether beings are good in essence or by participation. To understand the question, it should be noted that the question presupposes that to be in essence and to be by participation are opposed. And in one of the modes of participation distinguished earlier this is manifestly true, that is, according to the mode whereby the subject participates in an accident, or matter in form. For an accident is outside the nature of the subject and form is outside the very substance of matter.”

⁵²¹ *Disputed Questions On The Power Of God*, 3.5. Taking into consideration the possession of *being* by all things, Aquinas concludes that “it follows of necessity that they must come into being not by themselves, but by the action of some cause.”

recognized as inhering (participating/instantiating) among objects by “various degrees,” as when something is predicated of as being more and less of a certain property, this is conceptually possible only because those objects are more and less in reference to the property considered through itself: “for if each one were of itself competent to have it, there would be no reason why one should have it more than another.”⁵²² In the third argument, Aquinas explicitly states the principal at hand: “... whatsoever is through another is to be reduced to that which is of itself. Wherefore if there were a *per se* heat, it would be the cause of all hot things, that have heat by way of participation.”⁵²³ It is *heat* through its essence (*per se*) that is the source of things merely having heat (*per accidens* or “by way of participation”). By means of the distinction parceling out that which is *per se* from that which is *per accidens*, the contrast between the *un-limited* and *limited* or the *one* and the *many* is made even more stark in so far as that which is *many* or *ontologically limited* (“by way of participation”) is accounted for by recourse to that which is *per accidens* and what is *one* or *un-limited*, through its essence, is accounted for by recourse to that which is *per se*.

In light of these distinctions, what the (IR) or participation furnishes is a real metaphysical account of the union between principles of being, in particular between essences and their instances and the limitation that springs from such instantiation. In so doing, the causal relation found between the one and the many can be understood in terms of an (IR) discernable in the things of this world. All individual rocks, humans, birds, etc. are what they are, *per accidens*, by order of some connective causal (IR) to an essence that serves as the *per se* of the

⁵²² Ibid. Again, Aquinas concludes: “Now there is one being most perfect and most true: which follows from the fact that there is a mover altogether immovable and absolutely perfect, as philosophers have proved. Consequently all other less perfect beings must needs derive being therefrom.”

⁵²³ “Now there is a being that is its own being: and this follows from the fact that there must needs be a being that is pure act and wherein there is no composition. Hence from that one being all other beings that are not their own being, but have being by participation, must needs proceed.” Ibid.

relation. For Aquinas, “whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially...”⁵²⁴

It is also important to recognize, as Feser and others have that (IR) is intrinsically linked with the principles of potency and act.⁵²⁵ Anything that *participates in another* will be *in potency* to that specific (IR).⁵²⁶ For instance, all individual dogs are in potency to their being actualized vis-à-vis an (IR) between substantial form, prime matter, and an act of existence. First, existence is metaphysically prior to essence despite its being the principle of existence in things (things exist only by having some essence). Second, essence instantiates prime matter before some material being is realized.⁵²⁷ Viewed within the parameters of potency and act, it would seem, then, that any (IR) that were to occur presupposes a potency for such.⁵²⁸ And only what is metaphysically possible to exist can ever be instantiated to exist. That is to say, a “square circle” could never be instantiated to exist, but a “square” or a “circle” can be.

⁵²⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, 1.44.1.

⁵²⁵ *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 106. Cf., Vaske, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 74: “Thus, in the philosophy of Aquinas, *any perfection*, or act – whether the basic act of existing, essential act (form), or accidental act – which is found *participated*, multiple, and hence *limited*, forms a *composition* with *limiting potency*; and the act and the potency are *distinct* as real *principles* (components) of the unitary, total existent.”

⁵²⁶ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2.53.4: “... whatever participates in a thing is compared to the thing participated in as act to potentiality, since by that which is participated the participator is actualized in such and such a way.” The *comparison* between what is *participated* and the *participator* should be understood equivocally and not univocally as when *lion* applies (participates) to both *animal* and *constellation*. In the specific case of the transcendentals, their comparison will be analogical in nature.

⁵²⁷ This applies to immaterial substances as well. Although devoid of matter, any essence alone is in potency to an act of existence. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions On The Soul*, 6: “For we observe three things in substances composed of matter and form: namely, matter, form, and the act of existing itself, the principle of which is the form; for matter receives an act of existing because it receives a form. Therefore a thing’s act of existing is the natural effect of the form itself of that thing. However, the form is not identical with its own act of existing, because the form is the principle of that act of existing. And although matter receives its act of existing only through some form, yet a form as such does not stand in need of matter in order to exist, because the act of existing is the natural effect of the form itself. However, a form requires matter in order to exist when it is a form of that specific type which does not subsist of itself. Consequently a form having its act of existing in itself is not prevented in any way from existing apart from matter and the act of existing is found in a form of this kind. For the very essence of a form is related to its act of existing as a potency is to its proper act.”

⁵²⁸ Potency works hand-in-hand with essence in determining what (IR) is really and thus logically possible.

The most fundamental (IR) in the order of things is that with an act of existence.⁵²⁹ Principles such as potency, prime matter, essence, etc. do not exist in a vacuum. They exist as principles by reason of an (IR) with an act of existence, meaning, they do not presuppose their own existence, but *existence itself*. This is made even more concretely considering that potency, prime matter, essence (or any other principle) can never actualize itself. Therefore, the first (IR) to take place will take effect only after the fact of existence considered in one of two respects, as metaphysically primitive (non-reductive), and metaphysically primary, that is, as that which is *subsistent existence itself or pure act*.⁵³⁰ Any (IR) presupposes an act of existence that will be exhibited via potency, essence, prime matter, etc. Keep in mind that these principles *cannot* instantiate themselves, only through the efficient causality of that which *is existence itself* can any (IR) first occur.⁵³¹

It is important to understand that any (IR) is only ever observed indirectly; the temptation to explain such processes in material terms stands outside the realm of sensation. Only by *a posteriori* investigation of concrete particulars and what the intellect is capable of abstracting from them can the deeper reality of instantiation take hold with explanatory force without any

⁵²⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Soul*, 6 ad.2: "The act of existing itself is the highest act in which all things are capable of participating, but the act of existing itself does not participate in anything. Therefore, if there is a being which is itself a subsisting act of existing (*ipsum esse subsistens*), just as we speak of God, we say that it does not participate in anything. However, this is not true of other subsisting forms which necessarily participate in the act of existing itself, and which are related to it as potency is to act; and thus, since these forms are in potentiality in some measure, they can participate in something else."

⁵³⁰ *Existence*, as primitive, clarifies its fundamentality in the metaphysical order as the principal that all other metaphysical principles presuppose. *Existence*, as understood in the second respect, must ultimately originate in something that simply *is* existence itself (any *act of existence* flows from that which simply *is* existence). Because existence is not a substance, since all substances, relations, principles, etc. presuppose an act of existence, existence cannot be dependent on a further (IR) – as all of the former do with an act of existence. If it were somehow necessary for a further relation, then an undermining infinite regress would ensue. Furthermore, that which is subsistent existence itself would also have the perfections of intellect and will given that existence, in the first respect as *primitive*, does not explain why anything would or should exist in the first place. Existence, in this first respect, becomes merely descriptive and devoid of any causal agency (but even that fact could never be known in principal without some real existent to investigate).

⁵³¹ *Summa Theologiae*, 1.79.4: "For what is such by participation and what is mobile, and what is imperfect always requires the pre-existence of something essentially such, immovable and perfect."

accusatory fear of question-begging. Another point to consider is the lack of any human-like cognitive awareness to instantiation itself. It can be tempting to accept all talk of one thing participating or instantiating another, such as individual dogs instantiating *dogness* in terms of teleological awareness on the part of essence, that is, the essence is literally *conscious* of its instantiation. But any teleology present is immanent to essence as it is not only to natural or biological objects but to inanimate objects as well. It seems apparent from the nature of things that some teleology is at work.⁵³² Lastly, although Aquinas uses Platonic verbiage vis-à-vis participation there is nothing in his metaphysics that would make him a strict Platonist in the relevant sense. Aquinas is utilizing the language of participation to explain the reality of the (IR), a reality he takes as something obvious given his realist commitments. But as this investigation has shown thus far, the exploration of the (IR) reveals the necessary connections between fundamental metaphysical principles that converge in the metaphysical formation of beings. This, in turn, places the role of instantiation on an indispensable level on both the semantic level but, more fundamentally, on the metaphysical level as it is on this level where the means of communicating God's efficient causality as the first cause of any (IR) is established. In other words, as *subsistent existence itself*, God is the initial animus behind the first and most fundamental (IR) in creation, that is, with an act of existence. That this is a necessary conclusion only follows from the reality of participatory relations and their derived actualization through participation or instantiation.

8.2 Against Instantiation

⁵³² See the following: Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, ch. 2; "Teleology: A Shopper's Guide" in *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 28-49.

The role of (IR) within objects and their properties is a contentious subject in contemporary analytic philosophy due mainly to its corollary relationship with universals. The relation is meant to justify a real ontological connection between the basic facets of what it is to be something. It was argued that potency, act, matter, form, existence, etc., all must converge somehow in different modes in order to justify why and how concrete things exist in the first place. The contention circles around whether or not there is such a relation in the first place or whether it becomes merely reductive, as the class nominalist would reduce the relation as nothing more than one particular object M belonging to the class of M objects. But here again, the existence of essences and universals is very real and what follows necessarily from their existence is a real relation amidst the various metaphysical principles that unite them to create the objects of this world. To outright deny or reduce any (IR) to the point of denial is to undermine the existence of essences and universals. The consequences of such as already spelled out are incoherent, absurd, and unacceptable. Nevertheless its detractors exist.

A contemporary critique levelled against the existence of any (IR) posits that the relation itself necessarily leads to an infinite regress of relations undermining its very existence. Any relation must instantiate a further relation, and that relation yet a further relation, and another, and another, *ad infinitum*. To spell out the argument, consider the following proposition; there is a possible world where “Aquinas is white.” *Aquinas* represents the particular or subject and *white* represents the predicate or universal. What makes it actually the case that “Aquinas is white” will be an (IR) between *Aquinas* and *whiteness* given that the mere existence of *Aquinas* and *whiteness* (in isolation from each other in a certain possible world) does not itself guarantee any necessary connection between the two. But this will be the case for anything and its properties; there will always be some (IR) at work as the connective that brings together the

object as is, or so it seems. The (IR) will itself be a universal since it applies universally to all objects in some capacity. In this regard, it too will be separate from *Aquinas* and *whiteness*. With those facts in mind, there could be a possible world where all three stay separated (Aquinas-[IR]-Whiteness), in which case a further (IR) would be needed to connect *Aquinas*, *whiteness*, and the first relation. But the second relation too will be in need of a further third relation that will direct the second relation to connect the first relation with *Aquinas* and *whiteness*. But, once more, that third relation will be in need of a fourth relation and so on and so forth. In the end, it appears that there is no satisfactory end to the amount of relations needed.⁵³³

In an attempt at avoiding such a consequence some philosophers will deny that there is any relation at all. The reality that “Aquinas is white” or that “a ball is red” just is the basic reality of things; it simply is a brute or primitive fact and no further explanation can be given. It is true that one can render *Aquinas* and *whiteness* or a *ball* and *redness* as separate entities conceptually, but in reality their connection is necessary via a “non-relational tie” so that in the final analysis, in the face of concrete objects, one comprehends an irreducibility best described as “*particular-things-having-universals*.”⁵³⁴ If that were not straightforward enough, philosophers will also express this same answer with reference to *states of affairs*, such as, “*that Aquinas is white*” and “*that a ball is red*” is an irreducible fact of the world manifested in *states of affairs* that could not be otherwise.⁵³⁵ However nice and neat these answers may seem, the question still

⁵³³ “It seems to be a vicious regress that threatens the attempt to explain property possession in terms of the instantiation of universals, because at each stage of the explanation, the explanation seems incomplete; we have not postulated enough universals to explain the fact that the object has the relevant property.” Beebe, *Metaphysics*, 18-19. This is *Bradley’s Regress*, accredited to F. H. Bradley (1846-1924).

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 19; 237-8. Armstrong sets the stage: “Why do we need to recognize states of affairs? Why not recognize simply particulars, universals (divided into properties and relations), and, perhaps, instantiation? The answer appears by considering the following point. If *a* is F, then it is entailed that *a* exists and the universal F exists. However, *a* could exist, and F could exist, and yet it fails to be the case that *a* is F (F is instantiated, but instantiated elsewhere only). *a*’s being F involves something more than *a* and F. The existence of *a*, of instantiation, and of F does not amount to *a*’s being F. The something more must be *a*’s being F – and this is a state

remains *why it is the case* that the particular and universal are connected in the way they are or in any way at all? To assert a relation or a particular state of affairs leaves much unsaid especially in light of the fact that instantiation can be articulated and defended by investigating the nature of the actually existing particular and its relation with essence, prime matter, etc., as already articulated.

Returning to Bradley's regress, the first problem is its insistence that any (IR) exists as an independent universal. Following this command, if the (IR) is a universal, then by the same token it is an essence (it has a principal of identity allowing for its recognition as what it is, in this case [IR] qua essence), but this assumes that universals exist and any essence (universal as an abstraction in the mind) can only ever exist by its association or (IR) with an act of existence, as defended above. That being the case, there would be no way to make sense of the existence of essences or universals, of *Aquinas*, *whiteness*, or anything for that matter, neither *existence* itself, without an (IR). It truly is in virtue *of* a relation with an act of existence that anything could exist in principle. In other words, an (IR) is not a universal because all universals and essences are merely contingent realities and necessarily presuppose a relation with an act of existence. Therefore the (IR) admits of something more fundamental and metaphysically prior (or simultaneous in the order of operation) to essence. In order to deny the existence of any (IR) vis-à-vis Plato's *third man argument*, the argument must suppose the existence of things and unless

of affairs." David Armstrong, "Universals as Attributes" in Michael J. Loux (ed.), *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, 2nd Edition, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 74. The only way the particular (*a*) could exist without the universal (F) existing is if the universal is understood as an abstraction, in which case, the absence of anyone to do the abstracting would entail a lack of knowledge of the universal, but this *only* amounts to a mere lack of knowledge of the universal given there is no one present to *discover* it, rather than *create* it as the conceptualist would claim. Therefore it only makes sense to say that F is not always instantiated wherever one finds *a* when there is no one present to do the abstracting. And *that* abstraction could take place at all must be a direct feature of *a* since F is only ever identified whenever *a* is identified. Thus F is a necessary ontological aspect of *a*.

things can account for their own existence as *per se* (which they cannot), then they necessarily entail a relation as *per accidens* with an act of existence.

In a different approach, the critic might insist that any explanation of the propositions “Aquinas *is* white” and “Aquinas *instantiates* whiteness” are truly separate. The realist may rattle his critics for an explanation as to why it is that “Aquinas *is* white” but in positing that “Aquinas *instantiates* whiteness” the realist must explain herself in return without falling under the same accusation of putting forward a brute fact under the guise of instantiation. This presents a problem for the realist only if the proposition “Aquinas *is* white” is taken as a brute fact and if the two statements are understood as representing separate realities, but this is simply not the case. To claim that “Aquinas *is* white” *is the same as* claiming “Aquinas *instantiates* whiteness.” It becomes incoherent if either statement is analyzed as meaning two separate realities. For Aquinas to be white *is* for Aquinas to have an (IR) with whiteness. The proposition is not some primitive fact (at least at this stage); there are such realities as Aquinas and whiteness and these can be investigated independently of each other not only on the conceptual realm as when one conceives of *Aquinas* and *whiteness* as two separate concepts in the mind, but in the things themselves: *Aquinas* as a composite of prime matter and substantial form and *whiteness* as a property (contingent accident) of real things.⁵³⁶

A different problem with (IR) raises concerns over spatio-temporal location. If “this ball is red” and “that ball is red” and “that ball over there is red” then one is faced with three different items that instantiate the one same universal. The question then becomes, “how can the universal be in two places at once?”⁵³⁷ Re-articulated in terms of (IR), how can the same reality that is (IR) be actively operating within the confines of space and time in more than one location at the same

⁵³⁶ As a contingent accident it has no independent existence of its own apart from some substance in which it inheres.

⁵³⁷ Armstrong, “Universals as Attributes,” 67.

time and respect? Would this not be an obvious violation of the principal of contradiction? The answer is no. Essences are *immanent* to, or *in* the things they instantiate – the entire discussion about (IR) circles exclusively around this point. The immanence of essence is what allows for multiple instances of (IR) to take place without violating the principle of non-contradiction (multiple individuals corresponding to one or more universal). Taking into consideration material substances, Oderberg states that essences

are in their possessors in the very way in which form is in matter. Once there is a union of matter and form there is an individual, and the essence is in the individual immediately and with no further ontological step to be taken. Hence the way in which essence is in substance is distinct from any sort of physical containment, since the relation between form and matter is one of *union*, not containment. But it is also distinct from particular spatio-temporal location, if this is understood as the location of a particular... Essences do not coincide with their possessors – they *constitute* their possessors. Substantial forms do not coincide with prime matter – they *determine* it. Hence essences, and the substantial forms that are their primary constituents, do not have a spatial location akin to that of particulars. A given essence is located wherever its possessors are, and has no location – and does not exist – if it has no possessor. To this extent it is... wherever and whenever it is instantiated... they are not parts of anything *except* in the sense that substantial form is one of the two constituent parts of substance... nor do they lack a kind of spatio-temporal existence – not the kind that particulars have, to be sure, but the kind proper to themselves. What kind of spatio-temporal existence? It is an existence that requires them to operate only in and through their instances. This is because universals in general, and essences in particular, do not exist *as* universal in mind-independent reality – they only exist as multiplied in particulars.⁵³⁸

Once more, the (IR) is not a universal seeing as all universals presuppose a connective participatory relation with an act of existence. Thus any (IR) can only ever be immanent to whatever principles are conjoined to create a particular instance. With material substances they reach a spatio-temporal location once the pieces of a metaphysical chain consisting of essence-prime matter are held together. And that they are held together is due to an (IR) with an act of existence. Therefore any material substance has quantity and thus *is* spatio-temporal on account of the (IR) that conjoins its principles of being determining its structure and properties, in this

⁵³⁸ Oderberg, *Real*, 82-3.

case, as spatio-temporal. The problems revolving around instantiation could be the result of an excessive emphasis on a definite necessary break between concrete and abstract objects. This, as Oderberg makes plain, is a failure to acknowledge the real nuance and subtlety of the matter:

Everything in the spatio-temporal world is spatio-temporal. Nothing that exists in the spatio-temporal world exists as anything but particular. But what exist in the spatio-temporal world are more than particulars. There are universals, but these only exist as particularized – except in the mind, where they exist as universal and hence as abstract. Thus the simple question of whether an object is abstract or concrete becomes an oversimplification requiring a more complicated answer than simply attaching the label ‘concrete’ or ‘abstract’ to the object in question.⁵³⁹

The foundational metaphysical constituents of all the material and immaterial items of reality are connected together in some way shape or form by an (IR). With the particular and the universal or with substantial form and prime matter, potency and act, and most fundamental of all, with an act of existence, a relation is always present. It is through this relation first perceived by Plato and described by Aquinas as participatory that one gets to the nuts-and-bolts of metaphysical connectivity between the constitutive principles that underlie the structure of things most especially their limitation in being as identified through the *per accidens* relation with existence in contrast to that which is existence *per se* or subsistent existence itself.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 84.

Certain commentators have argued that the Fourth Way operating within a Platonic framework relies solely upon exemplar causality rather than efficient causality as the main causal component of the argument. Indeed, to say that exemplar causality alone suffices is to say that the transcendentals act independently of God's causality, allowing for a function that is more in line with a traditional rendering of Plato's theory of forms. This, it will be argued, is highly implausible because of the deficiency found in Plato's theory and Aquinas' own realist commitments about universals as argued above.

In essence, the question of causality revolves around how any gradation in the transcendental perfections of the Fourth Way necessarily leads to a maximum in being?⁵⁴⁰ The answer hinges upon the type of causality that is exclusively being employed by Aquinas. In order for the Fourth Way to accomplish what it sets out to argue, it must rely ultimately upon efficient causality despite direct appeals to exemplar causality alone by past interpreters.⁵⁴¹ This is not to deny one notion of causality in place of the other, instead, the aim is to provide a clearer understanding of the metaphysical priority within the different streams of causality. In this particular case, any appeal to exemplar causality necessarily implies efficient causality.

9.1 The Four Causes

⁵⁴⁰ Wipple, *The Metaphysical Thought Of Thomas Aquinas*, 472-3: "Is it immediately evident that the more and less are said of different things only insofar as they approach something which is such to a maximum degree? Even if we restrict this principle to transcendental perfections...it is difficult to see how he can move so quickly from our recognition of greater and lesser degrees of these perfections to the existence of something which is such perfection to the maximum degree."

⁵⁴¹ Cf., Arthur Little, *The Platonic Heritage of Thomism*, 62-118; Maurice R. Halloway, *An Introduction to Natural Theology*, 130-33.

Aristotle was astutely aware that the structure of reality necessarily consisted of the existence of certain causal relations truly present and functioning in the world. The reality of these causal relations is confirmed not only by one's natural desire for seeking explanations, but as well as the capacity to recognize those explanations as valid and true, providing actual knowledge of how reality is and how the world actually functions.⁵⁴² In short, to know the causes of things is to attain knowledge of the world and the desire to know and understand those causes is a natural function of the intellect. Aristotle, then, reflecting upon the reality of causality, discovered four distinct and separate streams of causality actively present in the world: material, formal, efficient and final.⁵⁴³ To give just a brief summary, the material cause explains the *matter* or *substratum* that make things material, for example, the shirt Bob is wearing is made out of cotton and the desk Bob is seated at is made out of plastic. The formal cause is the structure that something simply has which identifies it as the thing it is, for example, the formal cause or essence of a square is to have four equal sides (a composite of four 90-degree angles). The efficient cause, to use Aristotle's precise language, is that which actualizes a potency, for example, the kettlebell's potency to be swung in the air is actualized by the athlete and the potency for a painting to be painted is actualized by the artist. The final cause provides the end or purpose of a thing where cause and effect relationships are evident, for example, the final cause of a barbell is to be used for lifting exercises (or exercise in general) and the final cause of a heart is to pump blood. In short, Aristotle's causal ontology is meant to furnish a fundamental

⁵⁴² *Physics* 1.3, 194b16-20: "Knowledge is the object of our inquiry, and men do not think they know a thing till they have grasped the 'why' of it (which is to grasp its primary cause)."

⁵⁴³ "In one way, then, that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists, is called a cause, e.g. the bronze of the statue, the silver of the bowl, and the genera of which the bronze and the silver are species. In another way, the form or the archetype, i.e. the definition of the essence, and its genera, are called causes (e.g. of the octave the relation of 2:1, and generally number), and the parts in the definition. Again, the primary source of the change or rest; e.g. the man who deliberated is a cause, the father is a cause of the child, and generally what makes of what is made and what changes of what is changed. Again, in the sense of end or that for the sake of which a thing is done, e.g. health is the cause of walking about. ('Why is he walking about?' We say: 'To be healthy', and, having said that, we think we have assigned the cause.)" *Physics* 1.3, 194b23-35.

grasp of how the things in this world actually exist and function. Aquinas, going a step further though not unlike Aristotle, makes it a point to demonstrate how the nature of causality necessarily leads to an ultimate cause as the source of all causality. All four causes have either a general or specific significance in each of Aquinas' Five Ways. Take for instance the Second Way which addresses efficient causality exclusively or the Fifth Way which argues from final causality.⁵⁴⁴ But as suggested above, in the Fourth Way, it is efficient causality that is under investigation.

When it comes to a general comprehension of cause and effect relationships, the efficient cause is taken to represent the cause, *agent* or *actualizer* that actualizes a certain effect or potency culminating in a specific change. For example, the painter acts as the efficient cause of her painting; a change takes place from what was a blank piece of canvas to an actual work of art, and if it were not already obvious, without her functioning as the efficient cause of that painting, there would be no painting as a direct effect of her causal agency.⁵⁴⁵ Then again, as Vaske elucidates, "when an intellectual agent acts, it produces an effect which imitates more or less perfectly what the agent had in mind."⁵⁴⁶ Before the process of painting ensued, the painter may have foraged the world around her along with the creative aid of her imagination in search of inspiration that would inevitably become the model *image* or *idea* of what would later transpire as her painting. Once the idea for a painting is had, the artist then proceeds to paint according to that very idea. Of course, the actual painting itself can never be a perfect representation of the idea, but insofar as it *imitates* the idea, it is in some fashion dependent for its existence on the idea. The idea of the painting serves as a kind of cause of the painting given

⁵⁴⁴ *Summa Theologiae*, 1, 2, 3.

⁵⁴⁵ To be more specific, anything that transitions from potency to act must do so by something already in act. Cf., Aristotle, *Physics* 6.1, 241b34.

⁵⁴⁶ *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 148.

that without the idea of the painting in the first place, the artist would lack the actual creative source material for her painting, and thus there would be no painting as a direct effect from her efforts. This kind of causality emanating from the idea of something has traditionally been described as the *exemplar* form or cause.⁵⁴⁷ From this simple example it is easy to identify the causal relationship between the exemplar and the painting (the painter paints in accordance to the exemplar in her mind). This raises a question. If the painter paints according to the exemplar, does that make the exemplar a final cause? Generally speaking yes, it does.

As stated above, the final cause is what directs the agent to a certain end or purpose. In the specific case of the painter, without her knowledge of the exemplar, she will not paint a thing since she will lack the very object of her desire or intention to paint. More specifically, the exemplar is what drives her to paint, it is the motive for painting, and the reason why the painting was produced in the first place.

This may all seem relatively straightforward as a matter of common sense, and it is. The general principle of exemplar causality is not too difficult to follow and not unlike the other four causes, it is always at work in reality whenever anyone acts in accordance to an idea, image, form, model, a paradigm, or exemplar. With that having been said, there is a very important qualification that needs to be introduced. Notice that *it is not literally the exemplar itself* that is doing the painting. Once again, there is the painter, the exemplar or idea of the painting, and the painting itself. Granted, without the exemplar in the mind of the painter, she will lack the very form by which the painting will actually be painted from, compared and imitated and, therefore, the actualization of it coming into existence. Nevertheless, the painting will only ever become actualized or come into existence by the artistry of the actual painter. Until that moment in time

⁵⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions of Truth*, q. 3, a. 1: "...the form of a thing can mean that *according* to which a thing is informed. This is the exemplary form in imitation of which a thing is made. It is in this meaning that *idea* is ordinarily used. Hence, the idea of a thing is the form which a thing imitates."

arrives, the painting is merely *potential* and, again, it is not until the causal agency of the painter herself that the painting ever becomes actualized.

What this goes to show is that the exemplar cause and the efficient cause are truly separate tributaries of causality each operating in its own distinct way. The exemplar cause, one could say, is the “spark” behind the painters’ *intention* to paint, so that on the level of intentionality, it is the primary cause functioning within the agent.⁵⁴⁸ But nevertheless, when it comes to the literal actualization of the painting itself, on the level of *execution* the exemplar is mute. The painter actually paints, not the exemplar.⁵⁴⁹ Only by positing Platonic *abstracta* or *forms* could any exemplar truly cause something to be in the relevant sense, outside the order of intention. Past commentators have argued for a robust Platonic interpretation of the Fourth Way with an exclusive emphasis on exemplar causality, but it was argued that Aquinas’ realism is all but Platonic as Feser notes:

...there is one glaring problem with a Platonic interpretation of the Fourth Way, which is that Aquinas was not a Platonist, but rather an Aristotelian or moderate realist. That is to say, he did not believe in a realm of Forms or abstract objects existing altogether outside the world of concrete objects...he took the forms of things to exist instead in the things themselves, and to exist in a universal and abstract way only in the intellect.⁵⁵⁰

This is exactly why exemplar causality can only ever exist where there are intellectual agents given that, 1) it is only in the mind of the agent where the conception of the actual idea or

⁵⁴⁸ “The exemplary cause is *not an efficient cause* because of itself it is not the first principle of movement in the order of execution, but merely the form in imitation of which something comes to be. It belongs to the order of intention rather than to the order of execution.” Henry J. Koren, *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), 266.

⁵⁴⁹ “The causal influence of the exemplar, therefore, is had not directly, but through the *mediation* of the *efficient* cause. Unless the intellectual being acts (efficiently causes), even the most lofty artistic conception, or idea, will not have a shred of influence on the production of an effect.” Vaske, *Metaphysics*, 149. Cf., “For we say that the form of art in the artist is the plan or idea of the artistic product, and we also say that a form outside the artist is a plan if he imitates it when he makes a thing. This, therefore, seems to constitute the character of an idea: It must be a form which something imitates because of the intention of an agent who antecedently determines the end itself.” *De Veritate*, op. cit.

⁵⁵⁰ Aquinas, 103.

exemplar is had and, 2) with the exemplar being causally inert on the level of execution, the effect that imitates the exemplar is produced only by the agent and not the exemplar itself. For these reasons, the painter can indeed paint according to the exemplar, because the exemplar originates and exists only in the mind of the painter, eliciting a certain and true causal influence upon her to paint, culminating in the actual production of a painting, and all of this *necessarily* implies the painter as efficient cause to actualize the painting. No painter, no painting.

What then is the relationship between final causality and exemplar causality? In one sense the exemplar cause and the final cause are one in the same, in that, the final cause, generally speaking, is what directs something to a particular end or purpose, and as is the case with the painter, the exemplar in the painter's mind is directing or influencing her toward the production of the painting, therefore serving as a final cause. In another sense, if considered from the viewpoint of the painter, the exemplar cause serves more in accord with a formal cause given that the painting is a direct imitation of the exemplar while the final cause can simply be understood as the general driving factor behind her intention to paint. In this latter sense, the exemplar has traditionally been described as the *extrinsic* formal cause.⁵⁵¹ In the end, exemplar causality does not necessarily equate to a particular kind of causality separate from the four that Aristotle outlines but, rather, depending from which aspect it is approached, it will serve as a platform for both final and formal causality.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ "Hence it is clear why the exemplar cause is called a *formal extrinsic* cause. It is formal because it specifies the effect, and it is extrinsic because it specifies the effect not from within but from without." Koren, 266. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 5.2, lecture 2, 764; *Summa Theologiae* I, 44, 3.; Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Houston, Texas: Center For Thomistic Studies, 1985), 228, footnote 14.

⁵⁵² "Objectively the exemplar is the same as the final cause, or end, since it is that form which is known and desired, thus moving the agent into action. However, from the standpoint of the agent, the mode of influence varies: the final cause has its influence by being intended; the exemplary cause has its influence *by being imitated*; that is to say, the exemplar specifies the action of the agent so that this action (in external matter) terminates in a form which imitates more or less perfectly the form, or idea, in the mind of the intellectual efficient cause." Vaske, 150.

9.2 Causality in the Fourth Way

Returning to the Fourth Way, if one is to understand Aquinas as utilizing a strict form of exemplar causality, meaning, that on the level of execution, devoid of any reliance on efficient causality, each transcendental that Aquinas references (i.e., truth, goodness, nobility, etc.) is somehow the literal cause or the efficient cause of those things which have them to various degrees or approximations, then it would appear that Aquinas is some sort of strict Platonist.⁵⁵³ Objects are more and less good because *goodness*, qua transcendental, makes it so. How this ends up being the case either through participation or some other means is hard to say, especially given the notion that any transcendental acting as an efficient cause acts toward an end, hence why it acts for such an end will be in need of further explanation.⁵⁵⁴ This problematic has a long history and its share of ancient frustration.⁵⁵⁵ Nonetheless, this manner of understanding exemplar causality as the main causal component of the argument does not hold weight in light of Aquinas' realism. Therefore, the validity of the Fourth Way from this more Platonic stream becomes highly questionable at best.⁵⁵⁶ Despite Aquinas' metaphysical commitments, he nevertheless states that the gradation of transcendental perfections found in things "resemble in

⁵⁵³ See, Edward Feser op. cit. and as cited below; James Franklin, *An Aristotelian Realist Philosophy of Mathematics*, 2; 13. Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.9.

⁵⁵⁴ "But the final cause is the cause of the efficient cause, not in the sense that it makes it be, but inasmuch as it is the reason for the causality of the efficient cause. For an efficient cause is a cause inasmuch as it acts, and it acts only because of the final cause. Hence the efficient cause derives its causality from the final cause." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* 5.2, lecture 2, 775.

⁵⁵⁵ Aristotle definitely had some contentious things to say about Plato's theory of forms: "Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things, either to those that are eternal or to those that come into being and cease to be. For they cause neither movement nor any change in them." *Metaphysics* 1.9, 991a8-11. Cf., 991a20-22; 991b1-2. For a more contemporary critique, see Feser, *The Last Superstition*, 60-1.

⁵⁵⁶ "It remains, therefore, that the character *species* accrues to human nature as it exists in the intellect. For human nature itself exists in the intellect in abstraction from all individuating conditions. Thus it has a uniform relation to all individuals outside of the soul, inasmuch as it is equally the similitude of all and leads to the cognition of all inasmuch as they are men. And since the nature has such a relationship to all individuals, the intellect forms the notion of species and attributes it to the nature. Hence the commentator ways in the first book of the *De Anima* that it is the intellect which makes universality in things." *On Being and Essence*, III.

their different ways something which is the maximum...so that there is something which is uttermost being...⁵⁵⁷ Does this not appeal in some way solely to exemplar causality? Concerned with a literal understanding of the text, it is in this first stage of the argument where Fr. Wipple questions whether or not Aquinas admits of a strict adherence to exemplar causality.⁵⁵⁸

In order to circumvent this apparent problem, Fr. Wipple highlights the fact that past commentators have maintained implicit appeals to efficient causality in addition with the doctrine of participation in an attempt to justify the argument as written.⁵⁵⁹ Taken from a literal standpoint, there is no explicit appeal to efficient causality in the first part of the Fourth Way and before reaching the second part of the argument where efficient causality is invoked upon, Aquinas has apparently reached the conclusion of a maximum in being. In light of these considerations, are the use of efficient causality and participation truly intended by Aquinas?⁵⁶⁰

9.3 Justifying Efficient Causality in the Fourth Way

⁵⁵⁷ *Summa Theologiae* 1, 2, 3.

⁵⁵⁸ "The first stage of the argument concludes to the existence of something which is truest and best and noblest and hence being to the maximum degree. The final point – that it is also being to the maximum degree – is based on the convertibility of ontological truth and being, and is supported by an appeal to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, as we have noted. But until this point in the argument no reference has been made to efficient causality. It is only in the second step, after the existence of a maximum has been established, that Thomas attempts to show that this maximum is also the cause of being, goodness, etc., for all other things. Hence there seems to be no justification in Thomas' text for the claim that his proof for the existence of a maximum rests on or presupposes reasoning from efficient causation. It follows, therefore, that if we wish to present the argument as it appears in his text, it can only be based on extrinsic formal causality, i.e., on exemplar causality." *Metaphysical Thought*, 473-4.

⁵⁵⁹ "...some commentators have maintained that it should not be interpreted as resting solely on exemplar causality. Instead, they suggest, there is an implicit appeal to efficient causality in this first stage...One way of supplying the missing justification is to appeal to Thomas's metaphysics of participation and to regard the fourth way as an argument based on participation." *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ This question will be revisited in the final chapter.

Aquinas is anything but congenial to a Platonic ontology of universals.⁵⁶¹ Aquinas is not relying *solely* on exemplar causality. His belief is not that universals are causally active through themselves.

To begin with, the argument arises in similar method as Aquinas' other proofs, his *modus operandi* is *a posteriori* gathering evidence from the world of concrete objects and drawing epistemological and metaphysical conclusions from their varied modes of existence; in this case, the more and less of transcendental perfections. It is true that Aquinas never specifically mentions the notion of participation in the Fourth Way, but it is obvious from his other writings that he did in fact hold to a doctrine of participation.⁵⁶² Not to mention that a vast majority of commentators on the Fourth Way have read Aquinas as utilizing this very doctrine.⁵⁶³ It becomes very difficult in light of this evidence to claim that Aquinas was not implying participation only because of a lack of explicit reference to the term itself.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶¹ "It is clear, then, that universality can be predicated of a common nature only in so far as it exists in the mind: for a unity to be predicable of many things it must first be conceived apart from the principles by which it is divided into many things. Universals as such exist only in the soul; but the natures themselves, which are conceivable universally, exist in things. That is why the common names that denote these natures are predicated of individuals; but not the names that denote abstract ideas. Socrates is a 'man', not a 'species' – although 'man' is a 'species'." *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* 2.5, lecture 12, 380.

⁵⁶² *Disputed Questions On The Power of God*, 3.5: "...whenever something is found to be in several things by participation in various degrees, it must be derived by those in which it exists imperfectly from that one in which it exists most perfectly..."; *Summa Theologiae*, 1.44.1.: "For whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially...therefore it must be that all things which are diversified by the diverse participation of being, so as to be more or less perfect, are caused by one First Being, who possesses being most perfectly."; Cf., *Expositio in librum Boethii De hebdomadibus*, 2.

⁵⁶³ Just to name a few: George Hayward Joyce, *Principles of Natural Theology*; Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies Vol. 1*, 311; Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God*, 45; Charles A. Hart, *Thomistic Metaphysics*, 104; James F. Anderson, *Natural Theology*, 46; Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 75; *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 91. The same criteria would also apply toward the convertibility of the transcendentals which, again, Aquinas does not explicitly reference or elaborate upon. This theme will also be revisited in the final chapter.

⁵⁶⁴ Even though participation is not worded directly, if we are to properly understand the relationship between the transcendentals and the things they are in a predicative relation to, then the argument must already take into consideration a realist understanding of universals and particulars. Obviously, Aquinas does not elaborate upon this within the argument, but to deny that his realism is at work in the argument is hard to fathom. And given that any conversation on the role of universals will inevitably touch upon the role of participation, or at the very

Perhaps the premise of ultimate concern in the argument is the more and less good, true, noble, and so forth, necessarily leading to a maximum in being, as Fr. Wipple suggested. But there is nothing in this premise that should be of great concern, as Leo J. Elders indicates, the principle at work behind this premise understands all limited perfections, in this case the transcendentals, as necessarily implying something which has that perfection *per se*:

If a being is or has of itself a certain perfection, this perfection will fully unfold itself. If the perfection appears to be limited, it is because it has been received by the subject which possesses it and sets a limit to it by its potentiality.⁵⁶⁵

In this regard, all limited beings are limited by their participation with that transcendental which, given their convertibility, leads to an unlimited being as the source of all goodness, truth, nobility, and the rest. At this point the argument is not making any explicit conclusions from exemplar causality but, rather, Aquinas has paved the way to demonstrate that an ultimate being must exist given the limitation placed upon beings, but the exact causal function between that ultimate being and all limited being is saved for the second part of the argument. It becomes obvious that some causal relation must be at play in order to differentiate the limited from that which is unlimited. With that said, Elders highlights three points: 1) Aquinas does not see formal causes (i.e., transcendentals) acting without an efficient cause; 2) Aquinas' "fire example" is meant to stress the efficient causality "of the maximum"; 3) "God can in no way be a formal cause of created things."⁵⁶⁶ In this vein, Elders' conclusion seems appropriate given Aquinas' realism:

least, the exact nature of their relationship with particulars, it is safe to say that Aquinas definitely intended to utilize the doctrine of participation in the argument.

⁵⁶⁵ *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1990), 113. Dennis Bonnette also defends this principle as a crucial aspect to Aquinas' overall ontology operating in the five ways. See, *Aquinas's Proofs For God's Existence*, 140-56.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

After the first part of the Fourth Way has proposed an ascending dialectic, St. Thomas now completes it by passing from the maximum as such to its causality, thereby finishing his transposition of Plato's metaphysics. A first transposition was from a plurality of forms to unity and from transcendental concepts to being. The second transposition is that this participation is brought about by the exercise of *efficient* causality by the maximum. It is understood that this efficient causality is not a blind influence but that it is determined by form. The being, then which is most being, is the source and cause of being and perfection to all things and this we call God.⁵⁶⁷

In the final analysis, given Aquinas' metaphysical commitments, exemplar causality alone only provides us with a bare blueprint as to how the transcendentals function as ideas via formal and final causality, respectively. Only with the second and necessary part of the Fourth Way, invoking upon efficient causality, is the proof rounded out to its full completion.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The transcendentals are without a doubt the key distinguishing feature of Aquinas' Fourth Way. As Aquinas specifies in his argument, "among beings there are some more and some less, good, true, noble and the like." These transcendentals make-up the opening premise of the argument and thus are in need of explication and defense.

Exploring the metaphysics behind the formation of material and immaterial being has given a certain complex yet clear panorama of how both kinds of being are formally structured and the relations that ensue from those structures. For instance, the exploration of relations via instantiation highlighted the dependency of all individual beings to an act of existence for their actuality but, since no potency can ever actualize itself, all contingent being is dependent upon the efficient causality of that which simply is pure actuality or subsistent existence itself. Of course these metaphysical investigations all begin with the a posteriori acceptance of being.⁵⁶⁸ As this study has shown, the day-to-day objects of the world, objects ranging from bars of gold to fictional characters are composed of both accidental and proper accidents. Of these, there is a particular set of proper accident known as the *transcendentals* that extend to all things. For example, the universal is present wherever essence is present, since the universal is a metaphysical feature immanent and proper to essence, thus there is no *real* separation of the universal from essence. It is the same with the transcendentals. Each transcendental accident,

⁵⁶⁸ Weullner, *Dictionary*, 13; "... that which in any way is (whether in the state of existence, in potency, in the power of its cause, in the mind, in the imagination, or in mere statement." Weullner goes on to give a number of more specific metaphysical definitions: "the real; that to which existence belongs; that whose act is existence; an existing thing or some real principle or state, such as subjective potency, in an existing thing. Some scholastics prefer to describe being as the same as essence or thing. Some describe it as that which is or can be at any time. Some restrict being to the existent and occasionally to the act of existence. This last is referred to as the participial sense of being." The immediate context surrounding the word *being* should indicate whether it is being used as expressing an actual existent or the very act of existence.

property, aspect, or mode is found in every essence, however the transcendentals are unique in that all express the same reality by way of six conceptually distinct aspects. What this means is that *one, thing, something, being, true, and good* can be predicated of every essence and as real aspects of their ontology.⁵⁶⁹ These are what scholastic philosophers have traditionally referred to as the transcendental properties or modes of being and are taken by Aquinas to furnish the opening a posteriori observation in the Fourth Way.

The doctrine of the transcendentals has its genesis in ancient Greek thought. For instance, one can look upon Aristotle's discussion on the relationship between *being* and *one* (or *unity*) in his *Metaphysics* or, elsewhere, in Plato's *Republic* where Socrates makes a passing reference to *truth* as that which is "most noble" in things.⁵⁷⁰ But their full development took place in the era of the scholastics.⁵⁷¹ Case in point, Aquinas provides a classic and concise treatment of the transcendentals.⁵⁷² He begins with the observation that being is such a comprehensive concept that it cannot be divided into any further category as in the manner of a species or genus since

⁵⁶⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, 1.1

⁵⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003b23-33. "If, now, being and unity are the same and are one thing in the sense that they are implied in one another as principle and cause are, not in the sense that they are explained by the same formula (though it makes no difference even if we interpret them similarly – in fact this would strengthen our case); for one man and a man are the same thing and existent man and a man are the same thing, and the doubling of the words in 'one man' and 'one existent man' does not give any new meaning (it is clear that they are not separated either in coming to be or in ceasing to be); and similarly with 'one', so that it is obvious that the addition in these cases means the same thing, and unity is nothing apart from being; and if, further, the essence of each thing is one in no merely accidental way, and similarly is from its very nature something that *is*: - all this being so, there must be exactly as many species of being as of unity." It is easy to infer the *convertibility* found between *being* and *unity* given Aristotle's explanation of the relation between them. For instance, in the proposition "Fido is a *being*" Fido qua being is convertible (metaphysically speaking) with *unity* seeing that both *being* and *unity* refer to the same subject i.e., Fido (in one respect Fido is a *being* because Fido exists and in another respect Fido is *one* or a *unity* since there is only Fido qua undivided being). Josef Pieper notes that references to transcendental truth precede even Plato's writings. For the Platonic citation and those prior to Plato see Pieper, *The Truth of All Things: An Inquiry into the Anthropology of the High Middle Ages*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 14.

⁵⁷¹ For the medieval roots of the transcendentals, see the following: Wouter Goris and Jan Aertsen, "Medieval Theories of Transcendentals," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/transcendentals-medieval/>. Accessed 20 October 2014.

⁵⁷² *Disputed Questions on Truth*, 1.1

anything subsumed under a species or genus would itself presuppose the basic facet of being.⁵⁷³ Devoid of this generic categorization and despite the vast comprehensiveness of being, this does not limit being to be understood solely in terms of being. There are, what Aquinas argues, diverse “modes” of being that can be expressed in one of two ways.⁵⁷⁴ First, given the infinite kinds of beings (i.e., bars of gold, dogs, humans, Sherlock Holmes, and such), which of themselves do not add anything metaphysically to being, since anything *that is* or exists presupposes being, nevertheless each can be expressed as representing a certain mode or “a special manner of existing” considered through its essence. Under this mode of being the qualification is merely conceptual-semantic, that is, being is *discovered* through the instantiation of essence alone or in composition with prime matter so that one can identify conceptually and classify semantically the diversity of being as presented in the bars of gold and fictional characters that the world contains.

In the second mode, Aquinas takes notice of the transcendental modes of being that are common to all beings. These transcendental modes of being can be perceived in one of two ways, either *in reference to itself* or *in reference to another*. Considered *in reference to itself*, it can undergo a positive or negative reference. A being is referenced positively in the sense that it can be identified *as* existing and what allows it to be identified as existing in the first place is its principle of identity, that is, its essence. And insofar as essence allows for the acknowledgement

⁵⁷³ Ibid., “But nothing can be added to being as though it were something not included in being – in the way a difference is added to a genus or an accident to a subject – for every reality is essentially a being.” Cf., Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 92b12-14: “Next, we say it is necessary that everything that a thing is should be proved through demonstration, unless it is its substance. But being is not the substance of anything; for what is is not a genus.” See also, *Topics* 4.1, 121a10-19; 121b7-9.

⁵⁷⁴ *Disputed Questions on Truth*, 1.1. “... some predicates may be said to add to being inasmuch as they express a mode of being not expressed by the term *being*.” I take Aquinas to mean that being can be “added to” in such a way that goes beyond the purely semantic, yet it does not add anything literal to being on the metaphysical plane but, rather, it unearths different aspects of being that are part of the very structure or nature of being.

of a being's existence, it can be considered a *thing*.⁵⁷⁵ In this case, being qua act of existence expresses the plain act of existence, therefore from this bare and isolated perspective that is being, it becomes impossible to identify anything as actually existing. It is only through the relation between essence and being that any-*thing* is identifiable. So, a being (existent) is a *thing* due to essence and essence is capable of identification due to being (act of existence). In considering the negation of the mode, inasmuch as any being is *undivided* or inasmuch as any being *cannot* be divided through its essence, it is *one*.⁵⁷⁶

Turning to those transcendental modes common to all being *in reference to another* or as Aquinas specifies, "the relation of one being to another," here again, there lies a double distinction or division. Aquinas identifies that any being is a *thing* and considered through its own principle of identity, it is also *one*, but one being among other beings brings in the transcendental mode *something*. Everything is a *something*: "for, just as being is said to be *one* in so far as it is without division in itself, so it is said to be *something* in so far as it is divided from others."⁵⁷⁷ This "division from others" is a direct consequence of a being's essence; for it is essence that distinguishes one thing from another and it is being that allows for the manifestation of such distinctions. The second division considers being in relation to the cognitive and appetitive powers of the intellect: "*good* expresses the correspondence of being to the appetitive

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., "We can, however, find nothing that can be predicated of every being affirmatively and, at the same time, absolutely, with the exception of its essence by which the being is said to be. To express this, the term *thing* is used; for, according to Avicenna, thing differs from being because being gets its name from to-be, but thing expresses the quiddity or essence of the being."

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.; Owens, *An Elementary*, 118: "There is, however, a negation consequent upon every being considered absolutely: its undividedness, and this is expressed by *one*. For the *one* is simply undivided being." Cf., *Summa Theologiae*, 1.11.1: "'One does not add any reality to 'being'; but is only a negation of division; for 'one' means undivided 'being.' This is the very reason why 'one' is the same as 'being.'" Cf., "Undividedness, however, is a negative consideration added in the mind to the positive notion of being. It provides the basis for a new concept in the mind, without requiring the addition of anything at all outside the mind to the existential act. Unity is therefore conceptually and not really distinct from being. To say that a thing exists and to say that a thing is one, is to express the same actuality first from a positive and then from a negative viewpoint, in two different concepts."

⁵⁷⁷ *On Truth*, 1.1.

power, for, and so we note in the *Ethics*, the good is ‘that which all desire.’ *True* expresses the correspondence of being to the knowing power, for all knowing is produced by an assimilation of the knower to the thing known ...”⁵⁷⁸ Therefore, *being, thing, one, something, truth, goodness* transcend across all being as inhering and predicable of all that exists. With that said, one may still ask how, exactly, are the transcendentals modes or properties of being? And how are they convertible? There is essence and being, matter and form, potency and act, etc., but where and how, metaphysically speaking, do the transcendentals fit in this schema?

The transcendentals as with all other metaphysical principles are apprehended and inferred from the observation of a world of being. Taking into account any existent, either imaginary or real, a relation is discovered between essence and being which permits any essence to be instantiated – without essence there can be no discovery of being. And it is not until the introduction of essence where the transcendentals take hold; for it is only through essence instantiated where being is first experienced, and in so far as it is experienced via essence it will simultaneously present a further relation with those transcendental modes of being as immanent and proper to essence – just as the universal is immanent to essence and discovered through the cognitive process of abstraction, the transcendental is also abstracted from essence. Only that which has being and essence can it be identified as *being, thing, something, one, true, and good*. The convertibility of the transcendentals follows from two points: first, from a true metaphysical difference found in all beings that differentiates between what can be predicated of them logically (or conceptually) from what can be predicated of them as they exist in reality.⁵⁷⁹ As proper to essences, the transcendentals are all one in nature, despite the conceptual or logical

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ For example, one can contemplate an apple and its color separately from each other. Although in reality their separation is not possible since the removal of any one color, in this case red, will be replaced with another.

distinction that separates *one* from *something* from *truth* etc. With only a logical distinction in place, all of the transcendentals can be predicated of the same object without them falling into either a univocal or equivocal category.

The second point of convertibility dovetails nicely with the first; being is an *analogical* term in contrast to *equivocal* or *univocal* terms. An equivocal term can have more than one meaning and interpretation, but it is impossible for being to convey anything other than what it does, especially given the fact that all equivocal terms and what they signify are themselves beings, thus presupposing the very term, that is, *being* unequivocally.⁵⁸⁰ When it comes to univocal terms, they can only convey one meaning or possible interpretation, but despite the fact that all beings have being in common (dogs, cats, bars of gold, dreams and such) they are not all the same being vis-à-vis univocal term.⁵⁸¹ This only leaves being to be understood as an *analogous* term. The *analogous* term, as Aquinas contends, is a *midway* point between equivocity and univocity:

In the case of univocity, one term is predicated of different things with absolutely one and the same meaning; for example, the term *animal*, which is predicated of a horse and of an ox, signifies a living, sensory substance. In the case of equivocity, the same term is predicated of various things with an entirely different meaning. This is much as it is predicated both of a constellation and of a certain species of animal. But in the case of those things which are spoken of in the way mentioned previously, the same term is predicated of various things with a meaning that is partly the same and partly different – different regarding the different modes of relation, and the same regarding that to which it is related; for to be a sign of something and to be a cause of something are different, but health is one. Terms of this kind, then, are predicated analogously,

⁵⁸⁰ Equivocation presupposes the terms by which different meanings are gathered from. But all terms cannot be understood apart from *being*, since they are beings, thus the equivocation of terms is dependent on being functioning univocally.

⁵⁸¹ Aristotle discusses this point in considering being as an analogous term: "The term seems to be used in the way we have mentioned, like 'medical' and 'healthy'. For each of those also we use in many senses; and each is used in this way because the former refers somehow to medical science and the later to health. Other terms refer to other things, but each term refers to some one thing. For a prescription and a knife are called medical because the former proceeds from medical science, and the latter is useful to it. And a thing is called healthy in the same way; one thing because it is indicative of health, another because it is productive of it. And the same is true in the other cases. Everything that is, then, is said to be in this same way; each thing is said to be because it is a modification of being *qua* being or a permanent or a transient state or a movement of it, or something else of the sort." *Metaphysics* 11.3, 1060b31-1061a10.

because they have a proportion to one thing. The same holds true also of the many ways in which the term *being* is used; for being in an unqualified sense means what exists of itself, namely, substance; but other things are called beings because they belong to what exists of itself, namely, modifications or states or anything else of this kind. For a quality is called a being, not because it has an act of existence, but because a substance is said to be disposed by it. It is the same with other accidents.⁵⁸²

For Aristotle and Aquinas in suit, in as much as a whole host of things can be referenced in terms of “medical” or “healthy” making them *like, similar* or *analogous* to “medical” and “healthy” without necessarily falling into the realms of univocity or equivocity so, too, does it occur for *being*.⁵⁸³

The critic might retort that the predication of any so-called transcendental is merely semantic. It is obviously the case that one uses words such as *being, one, thing, something, true,* and *good* when describing the reality of things. But these are mere linguistic conventions that offer nothing of deeper import. They certainly do not offer any sort of metaphysical knowledge about actual things.

On the one hand, it is true that words such as being, one, thing, etc. are used to describe the world. That cannot be denied. On the other hand, unless those very words point to some metaphysical reality that they actually correspond to, then they become empty in of themselves. But how can this be considering this particular set of words, which, one can argue, are universally recognized as primitive to one’s vocabulary and to the infinity of objects they reference? Then again, if words are universals, as argued above, and the universal is an aspect of essence as immanent to essence, then the transcendentals will also fall into accord as immanent to essence, and as something truly metaphysically present to essence and not arbitrary or

⁵⁸² *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics* 11.3, lecture 3, 2197.

⁵⁸³ Feser, *Aquinas*, 33: “The being of an accident is *analogous* to that of a substance, that of a material thing is *analogous* to that of an angel, and that of a created thing is *analogous* to that of God; that is to say, it is neither completely identical nor absolutely incomparable.”

conventional. There is still more that can be said in defense of each transcendental, especially in regards to truth and goodness, but their analysis will proceed *one, thing, and something*.

10.1 One – Thing – Something

Aristotle saw an intrinsic relationship between being and unity. In this relationship he noted that the difference between *being* and *unity* was only conceptual or logical and not in reality, that is, in the nature of things. This, as noted above, serves as one side of the coin of their convertibility: the transcendentals are separate aspects of the same reality. Aquinas' commentary on Aristotle's two arguments on the matter makes the apologetic case for the transcendentals *being, one* and *thing* all constituting the same reality. In commenting on Aristotle's first argument, when considering how "things can be one," Aquinas makes two points: first, the things themselves are numerically the same, "interchangeable" or "in subject" such as "principle" and "cause;" second, the terms used to signify the things are synonymous, or conceptually the same, "like garment and clothing."⁵⁸⁴ Now *being* and *one* (unity) are truly one in nature although they signify two different concepts, so that they are not one in the sense that a garment and clothing are one, which are one only synonymously (in concept). Arguing this last point, when the addition of something, say C & B, to something else, say A, causes no difference in A, then all three must be the same.⁵⁸⁵ In Aristotle's example, "one man," "human being," and "man" all express the same thing.⁵⁸⁶ This also follows when considering the acts of corruption and generation in relation to man, since it will be "the thing that is man" that undergoes either

⁵⁸⁴ *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* 4.2, lecture 2, 548.

⁵⁸⁵ By "difference" is meant any substantial, accidental or relational difference on the metaphysical level. The addition of C & B to A does not amount to any real distinction in A except for a logical one which allows for one to understand C & B apart from each other and from A.

⁵⁸⁶ *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* 4.2, lecture 2, 550.

generation or corruption and the same is to be said of *one*, “for when man is generated, one man is generated, and when a man is corrupted, one man is also corrupted”.⁵⁸⁷ In another argument, Aquinas notes that *being* and *one* must be numerically the same if statements such as “a human being” and “one man” are to make any sense, since if they were entirely synonymous then said statements would not be able to be distinguished from one another, but they obviously are, albeit, conceptually.⁵⁸⁸ Elaborating on this last point, one derives the term *man* from the actual encounter with the essence of man as abstracted from actual men and the same follows for the term *thing*, which acknowledges the existence of something as encountered through its essence. The term *being* is taken from existence and *one* from the wholeness or undividedness of being.⁵⁸⁹ Therefore, unless *thing*, *being*, and *one* “signify the same thing but according to different concepts” the entire system of linguistic predication would face serious epistemological absurdities, since “a human being” and “one man” would have to literally function as the same phrase, that is, the notions of “a human being” and “one man” could not exist in principal as separate expressions given that *being* and *one* could not be differentiated via different words and thus never equaling two different concepts.

In commenting on Aristotle’s second argument, Aquinas argues that *being* and *one* are truly one in nature or essential of a subject and not accidental since any given thing is a *being* and it is what it is through itself (*one*) and not divided as already described above.⁵⁹⁰ Aquinas contends that if anything at all, say object T, had *being* and *one* as a matter of accident rather than essence, as accidents of object T they too would be in need of *being* and *one* as accidents *ad infinitum*. This conclusion follows given that in the case of being, anything which exists is

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 551-2.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 553.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 554.

understood as a *being*, keeping in mind that the conventionality of the term is irrelevant since it is the act of existence or something presently existing that is being conveyed by the term *being*. If that is the case, being qua accident of object T, would itself be in need of the accident of being to explain its existence as an accident, but that accident too will be in need of the accident of *being*, and this will go *ad infinitum*, since, on the one hand, *being* is here conceived of as accidental to a thing, yet on the other hand, *being is existence*, and therefore it becomes tantamount to saying, “existence qua accidental A to object T” will be in need of existence qua accidental B for its existence and “existence qua accidental B to accidental A” will be in need of existence qua accidental C and so on.⁵⁹¹

Aquinas does bring up some counter arguments, in particular those of Avicenna (c. 980-1037) who argued that a) the existence or being of some effect B is efficiently caused by A, therefore, A provides B with being in the manner of an accident since it receives being from A apart from its essence as B; b) the *unity* of being and numerical *oneness* are both the same. Therefore numerical one is something added to being since numerical one is used to measure quantity and quantity is found in all substances, but if numerical one and being are the same, then there is no possible manner of understanding number or quantity unless, numerical one is accidental to being, something predicated of being so as allowing for it to be counted numerically.⁵⁹² In reply to the former argument, Aquinas acknowledges a real distinction between essence and existence, but it would seem that Avicenna is positing the being of essence apart from an act of existence so that some efficient cause is responsible for adding being in the form of an accident, but this is impossible since essence can only ever exist because of being. In other words, essence cannot exist independently from an act of existence, thus being is not an

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 555.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 556-7.

accident. In reply to the latter argument, numerical one is not something that can be predicated of all being in the way unity is predicable of being (for example, an elephant is a unit considered undivided in itself, but it is not essentially equivalent or univocal to the number one). In this case, the analogical quality of unity is manifest and this is one of the signature marks of the transcendental. All being has both elements of sameness via the transcendentals and difference since no particular being forms a univocal relationship with any other being (contra monism). In contrast, numerical one or the mathematical concept of one, is a univocal term and cannot apply to all being in the same way as the analogical term *unity* does. In addition to Aquinas' reply, it must also be kept in mind that there is a proper order of metaphysical priority, in this instance, metaphysical unity is prior to numerical one:

... before we can count 'one' (i.e., form the mathematical concept of unity), there has to be a metaphysical 'one' in place, that is, an actually existing being, that can be counted. That, we may say, is where it all starts. The science of mathematics, like every other science, begins with the confrontation with real being. So, then, mathematical unity and metaphysical unity are different from one another, but at the same time they are very closely associated with one another.⁵⁹³

From such considerations it becomes clear how the transcendental *something* is formulated. Once it is understood that any being is undivided through itself, marking its independence as an individual or a *unity*, and once it is understood that any being, identifiable as it is through its essence allows for its categorization as a *thing*, then it becomes apparent that any *unit* or *thing* must also be a *something*, that is, "connotes either a being among other beings, or being opposed to non-being or nothing."⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 85.

⁵⁹⁴ Feser, *Aquinas*, 33. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, 1.1.: "...some are said to add to being because the mode they express is one that is common, and consequent upon every being. This mode can be taken in two ways: first, in so far as it follows upon every being considered absolutely; second, in so far as it follows upon every being considered in relation to another...If the mode of being is taken in the second way – according to the relation of one to another – we find a twofold use. The first is based on the distinction of one being from another, and this distinctness is expressed by the word *something*, which implies, as it were, *some other thing*. For,

10.2 Truth

As stated above, truth is the relation between the intellect and being. The power of the intellect to take-in and acknowledge the reality of being in all of its facets provides the initial basis for the acknowledgment of logical and metaphysical truth. That is, to have real knowledge that things are what they are, or more fundamentally, *that* they are is to have truth of the most fundamental kind. If ‘some object F exists’ as an objective fact in and about the world, it is true to state that object F exists and it would be false or untrue to say that it does not. The proposition, ‘object F exists,’ points to the conclusion that something is real and therefore true because it is real, thus accentuating the intrinsic relation between truth and being. This correspondence between the mind and reality and the reception of knowledge can be labeled as *logical truth*.⁵⁹⁵ The mind makes the necessary connections and distinctions to verify what is true from what is false. But to say that things are true is to say something more than a mere proposition about them despite its verity. That *being is true* qua transcendental is to say that they are one in the same thing, that truth is being and being is truth; a relation discovered *in* being and not imposed by the mind. Again, truth as such is only ever discoverable through the existence of being, since to know any truth whatsoever is to grasp the conclusion that a certain state of affairs holds and any state of affairs presupposes something that is the subject of any state of affairs or, rather, for anything to be true, something must first exist so as to be identified as true. Accordingly, given that truth is only had through being, being is truth and truth is being.

just as a being is said to be *one* in so far as it is without division in itself, so it is said to be *something* in so far as it is divided from others.”

⁵⁹⁵ “Truth is the relation of correspondence between what a proposition states to be the case and what is in fact the case. If the proposition accurately reflects the ideas that are being held in mind, which would be so if the person enunciating the proposition is speaking truthfully, then there is established the condition upon which all logical truth depends, the correspondence between the subjective and objective orders, between the mind and the world. Logical truth, then, the truth of thought, creates a bond of order and amity between the human subject and the external world.” McNerny, *Metaphysics*, 101. Cf., “... truth is reached in a judgment, when the judgment reflects the actual being of a thing.” Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, 118-19.

Moreover, something is true insofar as it conforms to its essence.⁵⁹⁶ To borrow an example from Feser, a hastily and sloppily drawn triangle will not be as true as one drawn out patiently and carefully, “it will less perfectly instantiate the essence of triangularity” or a squirrel without a tail and without a taste for nuts and seeds will also be less true or less perfectly instantiate the essence of what it is to be a squirrel.⁵⁹⁷ When the intellect conforms to being it recognizes *that* being is, followed by, *what* it is.⁵⁹⁸ So, for the intellect to understand being as truth is for the intellect to grasp the essence of any being and in doing so it acquires knowledge of being, that is, logical truth but, again, what makes being true is not manufactured by the intellect. The intellect simply receives what is already the case, what is already being and thus true.⁵⁹⁹ Truth thus conceived, resides in the mind formally or logically as mentioned above, and in no way does the truth of being (or essence) depend on the human mind, but as will be elaborated further below, dependence is based on the creativity of the divine intellect:

Thus, in a sense, ‘the word true ... expresses the conformity of a being to intellect’ ... whether a human intellect which grasps a universal, or (ultimately) the divine intellect in which the universal exists eternally. Hence something *has being* as the kind of thing it is precisely to the extent that it is a *true instance* of that kind, as defined by the universal essence existing in the intellect; and in that sense being is convertible with truth.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁶ *Summa Theologiae*, 1.16.1: “For a stone is called true, which possesses the nature proper to a stone...”

⁵⁹⁷ *Aquinas*, 33-4.

⁵⁹⁸ McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 111: “The objective order is the proper measure of the human intellect. That order is of course nothing else than the sum total of actually existing being, or, in other words, ontological truth, for ontological truth is simply the truth of being. It is ontological truth that provides the foundation for logical truth, and therefore it is prior to it. Obviously, no relation can be established between the human mind and things if there are not first real things in the extra-mental world to which the mind can be related. Logical truth follows upon ontological truth, then, and is dependent upon it.”

⁵⁹⁹ “Hence, everything is said to be true absolutely, in so far as it is related to the intellect from which it depends; and thus it is that artificial things are said to be true a being related to our intellect. For a house is said to be true that expresses the likeness of the form in the architect’s mind; and words are said to be true so far as they are the signs of truth in the intellect.” But, as Aquinas goes on to conclude, the truth of being itself is something not fabricated by us, but utterly objective as originating from the divine intellect: “In the same way natural things are said to be true in so far as they express the likeness of the species that are in the divine mind. For a stone is called true, which possesses the nature proper to a stone, according to the preconception in the divine intellect. Thus, then, truth resides primarily in the intellect, and secondarily in things according as they are related to the intellect as their principle.” *Summa Theologiae*, 1.16.1.

⁶⁰⁰ *Aquinas*, 34. Cf., Edward Feser, “Being, the Good, and the Guise of the Good” in *Scholastic Essays*, 305.

10.3 Good

In getting to the bottom of the convertibility between being and goodness, it should first be noted that goodness, in this context, is not to be understood as *moral* goodness, but as *ontological* goodness. It is one thing to say that Johnny has been behaving himself and thus has been a good little boy and another to say that Johnny *is* good insofar as Johnny *exists* and *fulfills* certain ends. It is the goodness of being as being that is the subject of investigation. In the ontological sense, goodness should be understood in one of two ways: first, in terms of essence where something is good in as much as it realizes its essence.⁶⁰¹ This is not as peculiar sounding as it may first seem. It is completely intelligible to speak of goodness in non-moral terms. For example, it is easy to describe an infinite number of objects as being more or less good in any number of ways, such as, for example, the hastily drawn triangle from above which is a less good representation of *triangularity* than one carefully drawn out; or the squirrel that lacks a tail and an appetite for nuts and seeds is less perfect and thus less good than one which does have a tail and does realize its natural appetite for nuts and seeds. In such cases goodness is understood as a comparison between the particular and its essence or exemplar, but it is important to keep in mind that this predication of goodness is objective and not subjective or relative. As argued, because of the realist objectivity of essences and universals, the standard by which, in this case, any particular triangle or any particular squirrel is measured and thus predicated of as more or less good has an objective metaphysical basis vis-à-vis essence, thus it can necessarily satisfy the criteria for being a “good” triangle or a “good” squirrel.⁶⁰² This goes for any object. Anything can be judged as more and less good by reason of its essence. In this manner, being is

⁶⁰¹ See, David Oderberg, “Being and Goodness,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 51, No. 4 (October 2014): 345-6. Cf., Feser, *Aquinas*, 34-5; McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 120-21; Owens, *An Elementary*, 120-1.

⁶⁰² Oderberg, “Being and Goodness,” 348.

recognizable through essence and in identifying essence the goodness or perfection of being becomes identifiable in the thing itself by means of an evaluative judgment. Thus the good is convertible with being, since goodness is only ever predicated of being in the first place.

Second, all things are good by the mere fact of their existence.⁶⁰³ In this way, goodness not only entails goodness in the first sense (i.e., triangle A has a higher level of goodness than triangle B; or squirrel L has a higher level of goodness than squirrel M in accordance to their respective essence), it also involves the notion of *desirability* or *end*, which is to say, goodness also entails final causality or teleology. Something is good insofar as it is recognized as attractive or desirable as an end, which is only possible if there is being. As Aristotle claimed, any act undertaken is done so only because the object that is being chosen is desired as some good. Anything from sunsets to warm showers, there is something in those instances of being that impels or draws in the intellect. What is perceived as good is the end of any conscious decision. This is exactly what makes the entire notion of goodness coherent not only semantically but metaphysically, otherwise, any desire or motion, which is a motion toward an end, would simply cease to exist, leaving without explanation why, for instance, spouses convey their love for one another. However, the good is not merely restricted to human beings with their intellectual powers, nor is the good restricted to mere sensation as it would be to both human and animal life in general. Inanimate beings too “desire” the good insofar as they fulfill certain ends. This was described above in regard to essence. What one finds in the good is a direction or movement toward something whether intellectual (as in the choices humans make), sensual (as the senses

⁶⁰³ *Summa Theologiae*, 1.5.1: “The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable. Hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. I): ‘Goodness is what all desire.’ Now it is clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection. But everything is perfect so far as it is actual. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual... Hence it is clear that goodness and being are the same really. But goodness presents the aspect of desirableness, which being does not present.”

are directed toward the good, for instance, via pleasure) or intrinsic (the ends are established by a thing's essence). Here, desirability and ends are something metaphysically deeper and more robust than Bob's individual tastes and preferences.

At this point the skeptic might concede the point that some things are desirable or good, but this in no way entails that all things are desirable or good. Tom may find black widow spiders good, but Charlie may not. If "being is good" then everyone should find everything good, no? And what about those beings that, presumably, will never be encountered by anyone, for instance, some rock lying at the bottom of the Mariana Trench? How exactly is that rock good? Is this even coherent to say? In reply, yes, it is. First, any being will have an essence and it is in conformity to its essence that determines its perfection or goodness, and its ends. The rock at the bottom of the Mariana Trench is good by reason of its existence as the kind of rock that it is, and it can be objectively determined as being more or less good by acquiring knowledge of the specific powers and properties belonging to that species of rock, and that it has these specifications is independent of human observation. Second, what one individual may find as good does not entail that all being outside of those individual preferences are excluded from the good. It is possible that any being whatsoever can be held as good even though it is only attributed to some being, albeit, that which is observable. Then again, something is good first and foremost because it exists, it has being, and not because anyone determines it as good. Given that essence determines the good in both respects as desirable and through its ends, and only what is actual is capable of being predicated as good, and only what is actual is desirable and follows certain ends, then without being there is no good and there are no ends to realize. This last point will help to clarify the reality of convertibility. In conscious beings the good is chosen either through the intellect, senses, or a mixture of both. In inanimate beings, the good is chosen by

way of the immanent structure and operations that flow necessarily from its essence. What makes things ontologically good insofar as they exist if goodness is not something imposed from without but as ontologically immanent to them? Could the answer lie in beings themselves? No, it could not. After all, any being is such only through its essence, which determines its principle of identity, and in virtue of this set identity one finds that goodness is something that any being *has* rather than instantiates essentially, that is, no being is *goodness itself*. This leaves one other option. If being is good not by convention, nor through itself, it must be created or given its goodness by something else. For example, in the way that fire A creates fire B so that the effect that is fire B is found to be *formally* in fire A, that is to say, “the effect exists in the cause in just the same way it exists in the effect.”⁶⁰⁴ The effect that is being and convertible with the good must be caused by something that is being and goodness itself. Remember, in regards to the intellect, any motion toward action entails the perception of an end, and the end, in turn, is perceived and understood as such because it is perceived and understood as good. But in order for the good to be a transcendental aspect proper to all things it would have to originate from something which is *goodness itself* not vis-à-vis some Platonic form, but from that which is goodness and being itself. In recalling the discussion on instantiation, it was argued that existence has such a primitive status that any being merely participates or is instantiated by way of an act of existence. This necessarily leads to the conclusion of a necessary being with intellect and will as the source of all being, as existence itself, and thus the primary and efficient cause of the most fundamental instantiation relation (an act of existence). This directly implies that the origins of goodness and being reside in that same being. How exactly? Given the immaterial

⁶⁰⁴ Feser, *Aquinas*, 22. Although, the effect does not exist in its cause in literally the same way, since any created being is distinct from its creator. Cf., *Summa Theologiae*, 1.4.2: “... whatever perfection exists in an effect must be found in the effective cause: either in the same formality, if it is a univocal agent – as when man reproduces man; or in a more eminent degree, if it is an equivocal agent – thus in the sun is the likeness of whatever is generated by the sun’s power.”

nature of such a being, and the attributes of intellect and will, being and goodness exist in reality as effects from a cause. As with the artist who creates a work of art, the idea resides in her mind as the exemplar of her creation. In the case of this necessary being, being and goodness originate as exemplars or ideas in its mind and from here they can be willed into existence, but there is no formal distinction between these ideas in such a being; this is why to speak of goodness and being as ideas in the mind of God is to speak of them as attributes of what God is, viz. God's simplicity. To draw this out some, any movement of the will (albeit human or divine) presupposes the good, which is responsible for the initial movement of the will toward action. Thus in the particular case of essence, any essence is perceived by the intellect of this necessary being as good so as to move its will to create being, but any essence originates within its intellect, which is already apprehended as good, thus the notion of good already resides within its intellect as well, and so without the good already existing as a formal attribute of this necessary being, there would be no attraction to the idea of being and thus no creation of being as such nor as good.⁶⁰⁵ The good and being necessarily reside formally in the mind of this necessary being, and because creation results as an effect from the deliberate choice of this being to create, what is created is ontologically good because it was perceived as good, which is not formally distinct in that which is subsistent existence itself. Therefore, there is no real distinction between goodness and being in the things of reality, but only a conceptual one.

Unlike Platonic forms which exist independently of the particulars they instantiate in a separate realm, goodness, being, and the rest of the transcendentals including all essences find their genesis in the intellect of that which is subsistent existence itself.⁶⁰⁶ How so? Once more, essences are immanent to their particulars and universal as abstractions in the mind, thus their

⁶⁰⁵ Within the mind of such a being, essence and existence will not be formally distinct. Only in actual creation are the two principles formally distinct.

⁶⁰⁶ *Summa Theologiae*, 1.15.

actuation in the world, but given the immateriality of essence and their existential independence from the mind, essences must have some origin. Can it be some brute fact that *essences just are*? Then again, if *they just are*, why would they instantiate the particulars that exist, yet alone any particulars at all? Unless it is both a brute fact that *essences just are* and *just instantiate particulars*, there must be something else at work. Following Feser and Oderberg, the contingency of beings, the fact that essence and existence are separable in beings, makes it “possible that no contingent being exist, since again the possibility of non-existence is just what it is to be contingent.”⁶⁰⁷ If this is the case, what happens to those beings deemed as necessarily existing, such as numbers and logical principles? These too are essences, and thus abstract and not confined to space nor time.⁶⁰⁸ Since all essences are universals and are discovered and not created through abstraction by means of the intellect, essences could hardly be abstractions of themselves, yet alone be responsible for instantiation of any particulars. In light of these facts and concerns, essences and the transcendentals must have their metaphysical ground in the intellect of that which is subsistent existence:

As with the abstraction of universals, this does not mean (contra Lockean conceptualism) that what is abstracted has no foundation in mind-independent reality. Yet that will seem an insufficient ground for mathematical and logical necessity given that the material world is contingent. If mathematical and logical truths essentially depend on an intellect and yet are necessary truths, then, it is hard to escape the conclusion that they must be grounded in a necessarily existing intellect, viz. the divine intellect... Similarly, pure or logical possibilities, though (since they are not grounded in actually existing things) they can exist only in a mind, cannot plausibly depend on finite minds (since they concern what might have been actual even if no finite mind had existed).

⁶⁰⁷ Oderberg, *Real*, 128.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, “We are faced, it seems, with the position that either there might be nothing at all – nothing contingent and nothing necessary – or, if there are necessary things such as numbers (and other logical or mathematical objects), there must be things *other* than numbers from which numbers are abstracted. But since non contingent thing might exist, there must be something else.” Cf., Feser, *Scholastic*, 237: “Logical and mathematical necessity too, then, are in the Scholastic view not properly thought of in Platonic terms. Like universals, logical and mathematical objects are abstractions, where abstraction presupposes an intellect which does the abstracting.”

Hence they too, Scholastics have argued, must depend on a necessarily existing divine intellect.⁶⁰⁹

The transcendentals are not as mysterious as they may first sound and neither are they a group of “kooky” objects lacking any rational justification. Indeed, they are a necessary consequence flowing from the existence of essence and their cause is ultimately traced back to the creative power of the divine intellect.

⁶⁰⁹ *Scholastic*, 237. Cf., “The only plausible candidate for such a being, as far as I can see – one whose essence is its existence – is God. Hence either there might be nothing whatsoever or if the numbers must exist, then so must God. And if God exists, the numbers exist and will be abstractions from Him (provided that He is of a kind, say *divine being*, even if the kind necessarily has only one member) Hence anyone committed to the necessary existence of numbers, or other logical or mathematical objects, must countenance the existence of God, moreover the necessary biconditional that God exists if and only if the numbers exist.” Oderberg, *Real*, 130.

The discussion on the transcendentals introduced the role of analogy as the proper way of interpreting their convertibility with being. To say, for example, that *truth is being* and *being is truth* is to express the same reality under different terms, not in any univocal fashion, since there is a conceptual difference between *being* and *truth* and neither in any equivocal fashion since despite a difference in terms and concepts they are still one in the same thing albeit analogously. Rather, the transcendentals are analogous to one another, each is interchangeable with being because each depicts a property or mode that is intrinsic to the very nature of being that relates or connects them together in such a way that is neither univocal nor equivocal. The transcendentals offer a prime example of what is known as the *analogy of being*: every existent has being, yet no being is the same with any other being. Bars of gold are beings of a certain kind and so are chimpanzees, but despite their metaphysical common ground through being, they are not the same being. Once the claim about the existence of transcendental modes of being is parceled out, it necessarily follows that being is, through analogy *one, thing, something, true, and good*. Therefore, the only way to understand these relations within being is to understand them in analogical terms. Naturally, more needs to be said in order to fully appreciate the role of analogy presented in relation to the transcendentals and its role in the Fourth Way.

11.1 Analogy

Analogical terms find their place in between univocal and equivocal terms. Analogy, in general, functions as a basic relation or comparison between one thing or group of things to

another or many others where a similarity is discovered between them.⁶¹⁰ Analogy itself is something primitive to the structure of language and predication and by extension to human cognition and reasoning. That analogy can be conveyed at all, that it is a metaphysical reality really present and accessible to the intellect and expressed through linguistic signification is due to the actual existence of being.⁶¹¹ But *being* understood as an analogous term is very different from *being* understood under univocal or equivocal terms.⁶¹² Call to mind that univocal terms operate in such a manner that militates against multiple meanings. To use a basic example, the term “man” or “woman” signifies and conveys the same meaning, that is, a human person, and it will always do so when it is predicated of any number of persons whether it be Lisbeth or Joe. Functioning as it does, the univocal term identifies a specific thing or essence that cannot be confused for anything else. It makes no sense to call a bear, or a bar of gold “man” since bears and bars of gold each have their own specific essence denoted by their own specific terms that

⁶¹⁰ Aristotle *Metaphysics* 4.2, 1003a32-1003b10: “There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’, but they are related to one central point, one definite kind of thing, and are not homonymous. Everything which is healthy is related to health, one thing in the sense that it preserves health, another in the sense that it produces it, another in the sense that it is a symptom of health, another because it is capable of it. And that which is medical is relative to the medical art, one thing in the sense that it possesses it, another in the sense that it is naturally adapted to it, another in the sense that it is a function of the medical art. And we shall find other words used similarly to these. So, too, there are many sense in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting-point; some things are said to be because they are substances, other because they are affections of substance, others because they are a process towards substance, or destructions or privations or qualities of substance, or productive or generative of substance, or of things which are relative to substance, or negations of some of these things or of substance itself.” Cf., *Metaphysics* 9.6, 1048a25-1048b9; 11.3, 1060b31-1061a17; 12.5, 1071a4-17.

⁶¹¹ Analogy exists because actual being exists; without being or beings there is no similarity or relation between one thing to another or many, or from one group to another, or several groups, and so forth. In other words, there would be no analogy. The existence of analogy presupposes its inherent foundation in being, enabling us to *discover* analogous relationships as well as those univocal or equivocal within being. This also implies that the analogy of being is not strictly limited to the realm of logic unlike what some scholars would believe - see John R. Mortensen, *Understanding St. Thomas On Analogy* (Rome: The Aquinas Institute For The Study Of Sacred Doctrine, 2006), Introduction. Any principle or law of logic, like any law of nature, merely describes and puts forward the coherent (logical) structure of what already *is*; meaning, if there is no metaphysical basis for the analogy of being, then there is no basis for the logical principle of analogy – the laws of logic presuppose what already exists in reality e.g., essences.

⁶¹² Thomas Aquinas, *The Principles of Nature*, 6.37: “... one should understand that something can be predicated of many things in three ways: *univocally*, *equivocally*, and *analogically*.” Cf., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.32-4.

may or may not be univocal themselves, meaning one could replace one term with any number of others, but the point is that they cannot be understood by any application of the term “man” (or whatever term one may think of) once the reality that is *man* is understood.⁶¹³ In contrast, equivocal terms can signify or denote more than one thing or essence. For example, the term *bat* could refer to a flying mammal or to a specific piece of baseball equipment.⁶¹⁴ Here the term is not attached to any one specific thing; it is in the very nature of such a term that it can signify various things or convey different meanings although the thing that is being signified, in this case a bat, cannot denote anything other than what it is through itself. (It is the term that can carry various meanings, but *bat qua mammal* cannot vary *essentially*, that is, through its essence). Analogical terms, on the other hand, establish a fundamental and exclusive middle ground between the univocal and the equivocal, setting place a relation or comparison between different things that is not wholly unrelated despite any shared term that would link them together. Borrowing from Aristotle’s surplus of examples, to say that “medicine is healthy” and “Bob’s toe is healthy” is not to use the term “healthy” in a completely different sense nor is it being used in exactly the same sense either.⁶¹⁵ In the former case, medicine is the cause of health where as in the latter case Bob’s toe already has health as an effect from the reception of medicine. Health, as it is predicated of two different things, is neither completely univocal nor equivocal. With a

⁶¹³ Vaske, *An Introduction*, 239: “The individual differences (height, weight, color, size, etc.) have been ‘dropped out’ by *abstraction* in forming the common, or universal, concept. Hence, this ‘meaning,’ or intelligibility, can be predicated of all the individuals that participate, or share, in that nature. The knowledge expressed by a univocal term is a *common knowledge*, a knowledge common to all the individuals of which the term is predicated.” Univocal terms underscore the identity of things without ambiguity or confusion.

⁶¹⁴ Feser, *Scholastic*, 256.

⁶¹⁵ Cf., *Summa Theologiae*, I.13.6

general understanding of analogy in place, there are two main species of analogy that can be considered: the *analogy of attribution* and the *analogy of proportionality*.⁶¹⁶

The first type of analogy, the *analogy of attribution*, is one of the most basic forms of analogy functioning as a relation (proportion) or comparison between one thing to another or between one thing to many, that is, some particular feature, property, function, etc., found in one thing is then attributed to another or several others such as when health is attributed to a person (“George is healthy”), their complexion (“George’s complexion is healthy”) and food (“This is healthy food”).⁶¹⁷ In this illustration, George is considered to be the *primary analogate*, he is the starting reference point or the basis for the analogy, and *health* is considered to be the *analogon* or what amounts to the specific perfection (attribute, feature, property, etc.) of the analogy. An important aspect of the analogon is its relationship with the primary analogate. In this example, health is something that George *literally* has, it is *intrinsic* to George to have health. In contrast, *complexion* and *food* are considered as *secondary analogates* since they *receive* predication based on the primary analogate and because their predication of health is *extrinsic* to them, that is, it is not intrinsic or literal to their essence to have health, whereas it is intrinsic and necessary in George. Thus the analogon found as intrinsic to the primary analogate is *attributed* to all secondary analogates as extrinsic to them making the attribution *conceptual* in nature rather than

⁶¹⁶ McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 50-8; Vaske, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 244-59; Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 257-63; Gerard Smith and Lottie H. Kendzierski, *The Philosophy of Being* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1990), 203-17.

⁶¹⁷ Feser, *Scholastic*, 257. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *The Principles of Nature*, 6.38: “Sometimes things which are similar analogously – that is, through a proportion, a comparison, or an agreement – are such by being related to one end. The example above is an instance of this. At other times things are analogous by being related to one agent. For example, *physician* is predicated of one who heals through his training; of one who heals without training, like a midwife; and even of the instruments used. But it is predicated of all of them in relation to one agency, which in this case is the healing art. At still other time many things are similar analogously by attribution to one subject, as *being*, is said of substance, quantity, quality, and the other predicaments. Quantity and the others are called being, but not for the same reason that substance is. All the others are called being inasmuch as they are related to substance, which indeed is their subject. Therefore, *being* is said first of substance and only secondarily of the others.” See also, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1.34.2.

real insofar as health belongs literally or actually to George alone.⁶¹⁸ It is also worth keeping in mind that the primary analogate is in some sense dependent upon a secondary analogate for the analogy to hold. In this case, considering George's health in isolation from anything else is not to establish an analogy of any sort since there would be no comparison between beings. There is a reciprocal relation with a secondary analogate in any analogy although the relation is only necessary to establish the analogy and the primary analogate remains unaffected in the absence of a secondary analogate.

The *analogy of proportionality* is typically divided between *proper proportionality* and *metaphorical or improper proportionality*.⁶¹⁹ In the latter kind of analogy, to say that "Tom is cold as ice" is not to say that Tom is literally cold as ice, but to use metaphorical (improper) language in comparing some aspect or quality of Tom's personality (e.g., Tom may be callous, harsh, soulless, etc.) to those aspects or qualities of ice that would make an appropriate comparison, resemblance, or similarity (e.g., hard, frigid, burns upon contact with skin, etc.).⁶²⁰ In the *analogy of proper proportionality* the analogon is found not only *intrinsically but also formally* to each and every analogate of the analogy (as *formal* to the analogate the analogon would constitute a *proper accident*, whereas the analogon as *intrinsic* to the analogate would constitute a *contingent accident*, either way, each analogate would contain both) as opposed to

⁶¹⁸ Complexions and food are predicated of having health only because it is first recognized in something that has it intrinsically. Any analogon must have a basis in some primary analogate or else all support for attribution is lost.

⁶¹⁹ There is also an *analogy of proportion*, which, as Steven A. Long notes, "implies determined relations: e.g., the proportion of nickel to dime implies the determined relation of five to ten, because the distance from the nickel to the dime is the same as the distance from the dime to the nickel." *Analogia Entis: On the analogy of being, metaphysics, and the act of faith* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 3.

⁶²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.13.9: "A name is communicable in two ways: properly, and by similitude. It is properly communicable in the sense that its whole signification can be given to many; by similitude it is communicable according to some part of the signification of the name. For instance this name 'lion' is properly communicable to all things of the same nature as 'lion'; by similitude it is communicable to those who participate in the nature of a lion, as for instance by courage, or strength, and those who thus participate are called lions metaphorically." See also *Summa Theologiae*, I.13.6.

the *analogy of attribution*, where the analogon is only intrinsic to the primary analogate.⁶²¹ To borrow another example, life is predicated to plants, animals, human beings, and angels because all plants, animals, human beings and angels have life intrinsically and formally.⁶²² The analogy of metaphorical proportionality is not of great importance here since it deals strictly with metaphor, which does not yield the strongest metaphysical knowledge of being, although the use of metaphor can be very helpful at times. What is of utmost importance is the analogy of proper proportionality since it is this type of analogy that highlights the significance of the term *being* as applied to all things intrinsically *and* formally.⁶²³

⁶²¹ In the example above, health is not something intrinsic to food or complexions per se. Food is only healthy in a causal sense and complexions are only ever healthy in association with the persons they belong to, which, in that case, will be intrinsic and formal since complexions only belong to human beings. Health is attributed conceptually to George's complexion and to food, but is discovered intrinsically and formally only in George himself. Cf., Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* I, d. 19, q. 5, art. 2, ad 1, as quoted in Long, *Analogia Entis*, 40-1: "... it is said that something is said according to analogy in three ways [aliquid dicitur secundum analogiam tripliciter]: either according to notion only and not according to being [secundum intentionem tantum et non secundum esse]: and this is when one notion [una intentio] is referred to several [things] through priority and posteriority, which nevertheless has being only in one; for example, the notion of health [intention sanitatis] is referred to the animal, the urine, and the diet in diverse measures [diversimode], according to priority and posteriority; not nevertheless according to diverse being, because the being of health is only in the animal.

Or else, [something is said according to analogy] according to being and not according to notion [secundum esse et non secundum intentionem]; and this occurs when many things are taken as equal [parificantur] in the notion [in intentione] of something common, but that common item does not have being of one intelligible character [esse unius rationis] in all: as for example, all bodies are taken as equal in the notion of corporeity [in intentione corporeitatis]; hence, the logician [logicus], who considers only notions [intentiones tantum], says that this name 'body' is predicated of all bodies univocally; however, the being of this nature [esse hujus naturae] is not of the same intelligible character [ejusdem rationis] in corruptible and incorruptible bodies; hence, for the metaphysician and the physicist, who consider things according to their being, neither this name, 'body,' nor any other [name] is said univocally of corruptibles and incorruptibles, as is clear from *Metaph.* 10, text 5, from [both] the Philosopher and the Commentator.

Or else, [something is said according to analogy] according to notion and according to being [secundum intentionem et secundum esse], and this is when they are not taken as equal either in the common notion [in intentione communi] or in being; the way, for example, 'a being' is said of substance and accident; and in such [cases] it is necessary that the common nature [natura communis] have some being in each of those things of which it is said, but differing according to the [measure] intelligible character [rationem] of greater or lesser perfection."

⁶²² Ibid. Just to note, they would all have life intrinsically in the first place because they would have it formally. The former is dependent upon the latter as in the case with accidents and their dependence on substance.

⁶²³ The emphasis is on the analogy of proper proportionality and not the analogy of attribution because the latter falls deficient of providing a proper understanding of being and for two reasons. In the analogy of

To reiterate, being cannot be understood in strict univocal terms. The common ground shared by all existents is being but it is also diverse in the way of its instantiation as made apparent by the vast sum of different beings. In this manner, being cannot be tagged strictly as a genus of some sort since both genus and any difference presuppose being themselves:

Being cannot be a specific difference of anything, nor a property, nor an accident. If it were a specific difference it would differentiate things of different kinds. But being does the very opposite: it *unites* things of different kinds, all of which are beings, whether real, logical, actual, potential, necessary, possible, substantial, accidental, and so on. So being cannot be a specific difference, or indeed a differentiator of any sort. Nor is it a property of anything, since properties are what follow from a thing's nature, i.e. because of its nature. But being doesn't *follow* from the nature of anything, it is *part* of the nature of everything: not a part distinct from matter or form, but of the nature of matter and form themselves, since they are beings. (Since being is not a property, neither is existence, which is actual being. It is consistent to hold (1) that I do not have the property of existing, since existence is not a property of an accident of anything... (2) that it is true of *me* that I exist, since I consist of the actualization of matter by a substantial form; and that is what it is for me to exist.) Nor is being an accident of anything, as though it were present in a thing but could be absent. Every being is necessarily a being.⁶²⁴

When being is predicated of things it is done so by identifying a proportion (i.e., analogical relation) that calls attention to a *similarity* already existing in place between the analogates. It is this *proportional similarity* that enables one to understand the analogon in all analogates not through any univocal or equivocal relation but as analogous. For example, as when “*seeing* the light of day” is analogous to “*seeing* the truth of the matter” or “*seeing* beyond

attribution it is the analogon belonging to the primary analogate that is being predicated to any secondary analogate. But, because of the comprehensiveness of being, all of the analogates are beings by reason of their very existence. As such, it would be incoherent for being qua analogon to be intrinsic to the primary analogate while at the same time being extrinsic qua secondary analogate. If this were somehow the case, then any secondary analogate would be deprived of existence leaving no secondary analogates and no analogy of being. Any analogate presupposes existence and thus cannot be predicated of as having existence vis-à-vis analogous predication. Second, the analogon is univocal with the primary analogate in the sense that it is intrinsic to the analogate. Although, strictly speaking, being is not a univocal reality or else it would simply be *the* primary analogate and this would entail the dissolution of any analogous predication between analogates to a univocal predication which leads to monism. See McInerney, *Metaphysics*, 52-53.

⁶²⁴ Oderberg, *Real*, 106. Cf., Feser, *Scholastic*, 258: “By contrast, we *cannot* grasp what it is to be a substance or an accident without grasping them as having being. In that sense they are *not* extrinsic to being. There is nothing that *can* serve as a specific difference to mark out something as a species within being considered as a purported genus, because the only thing extrinsic to being is non-being or nothing, and non-being or nothing cannot differentiate anything, precisely *because* it is nothing”

the stars.”⁶²⁵ (“Because the relations are not absolutely identical the predication is not univocal; but because there is nevertheless a *similarity* between the relations, the predications are not equivocal. They are predications of a sort intermediate between equivocal and univocal predications – in particular, predications by an analogy of proper proportionality”).⁶²⁶

The analogy of proper proportionality can also be further verified when considering the principles of potency and act. Something that is in *act* is something that exists – it has *being*. Something in *potency*, for example, the power or disposition for a bar of gold to melt, is something truly inherent in the bar of gold and so it is a sort of being that can be actualized. It could not be a non-being or else gold would not have the potency for melting, but this is obviously not the case. If there is an actual bar of gold and it has the inherent power or potency for melting, then potency and act are metaphysically distinct from one another. If potency and act were univocal beings there would be no way of making sense out of “a bar of gold” (as act) and “melting” (as potency) since the two would somehow be one. How could there be a bar of gold and melted gold without a transition from one state to another? Change, it would seem, would really be an illusion. What about potency and act as equivocal beings? Again, a bar of gold *is* a being and the potency for melting *is also* a being given the incoherent conclusions that realize from a univocal predication. Therefore, if they are beings then they cannot be unrelated in any way, “for what could it mean to have ‘being’ only in a sense that is *totally unrelated* to the sense in which act has it unless it is just to be utterly unreal?”⁶²⁷ Without univocal predication or equivocal predication, it falls necessarily on analogous predication, specifically, by analogy of proper proportionality where the analogy connects all things properly as having being

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.

intrinsically and formally albeit in the midst of a diversity of being.⁶²⁸ Feser makes a clear connection between potency and act and the analogy of being:

... when applied to various specific metaphysical issues the theory of act and potency yields distinctive accounts of causal powers, substances and their accidents, essence and existence, etc. Hence a causal power is a kind of potency, matter is a kind of potency and form that which actualizes it, a substance is in a sense in potency relative to its accidents, essence is a kind of potency relative to existence, and so forth. That being is predicated of act and potency in an analogous sense thus entails that it is also predicated of form and matter, of a substance and powers and other accidents, of the essence of a thing and its existence, etc., in an analogous sense.⁶²⁹

The analogy of being has been a topic of great controversy and dispute among scholars in both philosophical and theological circles. Fr. Thomas Joseph White summarizes the quarrels over analogy into three main themes: “(1) the relationship between Christianity and the metaphysics of being; (2) the relationship between Christological grace and our understanding of the meaning and purpose of human nature, and (3) the relationship between Christian Faith and modern human reason.”⁶³⁰ More specifically, among Thomists and others, the problematic surfaces over the kind of analogy that is at play in the analogy of being. Is the analogy of being solely logical, free-floating, attributive (attribution), proportion, or of proper proportionality?⁶³¹ But, given that any logical principle of analogy is based in a real world that itself is necessarily dependent on metaphysical principles, and all metaphysical principles are abstracted from actual

⁶²⁸ This is how the transcendentals are to be understood: In the same way that a dog is analogous to a man qua being, so too, the transcendentals are analogous with being, but they are analogous via the analogy of proper proportionality given that the analogon (e.g., *truth, thing, something, one, good*) is found intrinsically and formally (properly) in every being or analogate.

⁶²⁹ *Scholastic*, 262.

⁶³⁰ Thomas Joseph White (ed.), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 4.

⁶³¹ Cf., Long, *Analogia Entis*; Mortensen, *Understanding St. Thomas On Analogy*; Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language*; Bernard Montagnes, Andrew Tallon (ed.) *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas* (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 2004).

being, then the analogy of being must by necessity be a metaphysical principle of being that is instantiated in things as intrinsic to them.⁶³²

11.2 Hierarchy of Being

As the arguments for the analogical status of being have demonstrated, the very nature of being necessarily entails an analogical character to its structure that is not congenial to a strict univocal or equivocal form. This analogical aspect of being precludes the existence of *only one*, contra Parmenides, or *only many*, contra Heraclitus. In reality, being is much more complex and this complexity is uncovered through its determination and application to everything that exists (everything *is a being*), yet it is also through that same application that allows for the great diversity or manyness found in the categories of goods both real and conceptual that reality holds (everything *is some kind of being*). Apart from the existence of being as analogical, the analogy of being also provides a further positive aspect and insight into the order of things. This distinct aspect is a real *hierarchy of being*, that is to say, being in both its material and immaterial facets is understood to have an overall organization highlighting a certain bottom-up or top-down structure of metaphysical priority.⁶³³ This hierarchy is intimated by Aquinas when he states in the Fourth Way that there is a more and less of transcendental perfection that can be detected in

⁶³² Cf., Long, *Analogia Entis*, 42-3: "If for a creature to be is for it to be a subject of being with an essential nature, and to receive the act of being, and to stand in relation to that act as potency, then the analogy of being is the likeness in difference of varying modes of being. Further, inasmuch as finite things are beings, being is said of them by intrinsic and not extrinsic predication: indeed, if finite being does not exist, there can be no proof for the existence of God. But the analogy of proper proportionality is an analogy of intrinsic attribution: being is said of each analogate intrinsically, for each exists (unlike the case, say, of medicine in *pros hen* analogy, which is said to be healthy owing to its relation to the body, which is the proper subject of health, rather than by intrinsic attribution)."

⁶³³ Fundamentally, any hierarchy by its very definition involves a classification of some being that separates and organizes it against other kinds. That being can be structured hierarchically naturally follows from its analogical character. Because there are a plethora of beings, they can all be catalogued into various kinds and other specific differences. What makes the hierarchy of being more than a mere categorization of principles is the actual orientation of those principles toward certain ends. This will be argued below.

objects. This gradation or approximation of transcendental perfection discoverable in being is only one aspect of the hierarchy of being, which when drawn out, ascends to the most fundamental reaches of being or, rather, *the* principle level of being as *the* origin and *first* cause of all being, and thus the foundation and starting point of being and its hierarchy. The hierarchy of being is meant to demonstrate the organizational structure of being as ascending necessarily to the source of all being.

The identification of any hierarchy itself first begins in nature with the intellects grasp of some sort of being. Arguably the type of being that the mind initially grasps is material being, since all knowledge begins with the abstraction and assimilation of being in its hylemorphic composition and not from some innate concept of being or being as concept (i.e., un-instantiated form). Once material substances are observed, the epistemological and almost instinctual necessity *for order* and *to order* becomes evident in the incessant need to classify the things that stand around them and this only to make coherent sense out of the world – a world one enters and discovers as *already* coherent and ordered. But a natural exigency for order and classification presupposes a basis for those operations that allow for such activity. It is the intellect and its function to abstract the universal from the particular that allows for the identification and classification of things. It is precisely because the intellect *can grasp and assimilate any hierarchy at all* that being must already be fashioned hierarchically; *the ability to identify hierarchy is made possible only by a reality of being that is already in hierarchy in the first place*. It is not the mind fabricating or imagining hierarchy as some make-believe project, rather, the mind discovers that being, for instance, that chemical elements *can* be arranged in a hierarchy according to their atomic number exactly because of their natural design or, that *life* can be organized into various schemas ranging from molecules to ecosystems, again, because of

the objective metaphysical structure of life that allows for it to be identified and arranged. This goes to show that to identify being is, as it were, to identify being *as* hierarchically structured. If this were not the case then the orderliness of the world that one finds themselves in and the capacity to classify and parcel it into its macroscopic and microscopic bits and pieces becomes a vacuous endeavor.

To be sure, there are hierarchies that are merely conventional arrangements of human design such as certain sociopolitical hierarchies where presidents and governing bodies are established by fiat or elected by majority vote. These and other variations of such hierarchies come and go but, the hierarchy of being is not prone to any arbitrary convention exactly because it deals with what is already set in place active in nature and taken for granted. For instance, the hylemorphic composition of material substances makes a clear distinction between a substance and its accidents. Although substances and accidents are each a distinct kind of being, the latter inhere in the former so as to be dependent on the former for their existence as such.⁶³⁴ The relation between substances and accidents puts forward a hierarchy of ontological dependence or finality of the latter upon the former such that if there were no substance, then by necessity, there would be no accident. Here is a metaphysical structure where one level of being is *higher* or *possesses more being* than another. How exactly, one may ask, does one level possess more being than another? Again, because accidents have a metaphysical dependence on substances for their actual manifestation, they inevitably lack the relative independence of being that substances possess. It is in the accident's dependence on substance where the argument is made for the latter's deficiency in being. For example, as will be articulated below, a certain level B of being

⁶³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *On Seperate Substances*, 8.41: "For, since being is not predicated of all things univocally, the same mode of 'to be' is not required in all things that are said to be; rather, some share in 'to be' more perfectly, and some less perfectly. For Accidents are called beings, not because they have 'to be' in themselves but because their 'to be' lies in the fact that they are in a substance." The converse would also be true, if there were no accidents, there would be no substances.

may contain the perfections of level A while adding its own specific perfections not found in the latter level, thus literally adding more to being.

Another example of such metaphysical hierarchy would be the relation between potency and act. For any potency to become actual, say, for a chocolate bar to melt, that potency for melting necessarily depends on something that is already in act to undergo the transition from potency to act. In this case, it is the chocolate bar which contains the inherent potency for melting and once acted upon by some outside cause say, the heat of the sun, then the potency for melting will be actualized. There is no pure potency or change (in the Heraclitean sense) without something to undergo change and there would be no way of understanding the notion of potency or change in principle without act. Yet another example falls within the realm of causality where *nonproximate causes* lead naturally toward *proximate causes* because the former lists a more general or remote cause whereas the latter provides a more precise or informative cause.⁶³⁵ Going further on the issue of causality, when considering material being qua material cause, the chain of causality will bottom out with prime matter since it is at this metaphysical level where all material objects are able to exist upon the instantiation of some substantial form, hence providing the only adequate explanation for the persistence of material being through any substantial change.⁶³⁶ Reflecting on this last point, one can directly comprehend the serious implications that the immaterial realm of substances poses upon the material realm. Prime matter

⁶³⁵ Robert Pasnau and Christopher shields provide some helpful examples: "... the efficient cause of a fence's being painted white is, remotely, the painter, but proximately the painter painting, or the painter applying white paint. Here too the result is produced at precisely the same moment as the activity that is the proximate cause of the result. It may be, depending on the context, perfectly appropriate to cite only a remote cause of some event; even then, however, there will be a proximate cause available to cite in more demanding explanatory contexts. It is enough for a layperson to know, for instance, that a car is made to stop by applying the brakes. A forensic engineer investigating liability issues in an accident will need to know a good deal more about the precise kinds of brakes employed, their condition, and a host of other details relevant to their exact performance on the day of the accident. The forensic engineer needs to specify the proximate cause." Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields, *The Philosophy of Aquinas* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), 40.

⁶³⁶ For the deficiency of other alternatives to prime matter see Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 171-175.

and substantial form are two distinct kinds of immaterial being qua immaterial principles that directly shape and uphold the foundation for all material being, a foundation of metaphysical dependence which inevitably ascribes a higher degree of being to prime matter and substantial form given their necessity for the formation of any material being at all. Like the accident that cannot exist without a substance to inhere in, so too does any material substance necessarily depend on matter and form to exist.

Reflecting on the nature of material being will flush out even deeper implications for the hierarchy of being. In examining the kinds of material being one finds that all material being will fall under one of two kinds, the inanimate and animate. It is at this distinction of the material realm where levels of increasing being are most notable.⁶³⁷ The specific perfections that pertain to inanimate material being are generally if not exclusively contained within animate being. For instance, chemical elements such as hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon, are not only essential for the sustainability of both plant and animal life, they are literally composed of such elements. With that in mind, it would seem that animate being has a certain necessary dependence upon inanimate being especially when considering ever more fundamental and microscopic notions of material being, vis-à-vis those typically associated with quantum mechanics. Yet, both plant and animal life are capable of further perfections that are not present within the inanimate level of being itself, namely, metabolism, growth, reproduction, and sensation.⁶³⁸ Quarks and chemical

⁶³⁷ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2. 95. 2: "It must, therefore, be known that the diverse species of things possess the nature of being [*ens*] in graded fashion. Thus, in the first division of being we at once find something perfect, namely being through itself and being in act, and something imperfect, namely, being in another and being in potency. And passing thus from species to species, it becomes quite apparent that one species has an additional grade of perfection over another – animals over plants, and animals that can move about over those that cannot; while in colors one species is found to be more perfect than another the nearer it approaches to whiteness. Wherefore Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* VIII [8] that 'the definitions of things are like number, the species of which is changed by the subtraction or addition of unity' ..."

⁶³⁸ Oderberg, *Real*, 177. Those listed are all instances of *immanent* causation and not *transient* causation, where in the former all causation takes place within the agent as opposed to the latter where causation begins from outside the agent. Cf., *Real*, 180; Feser, *Aquinas*, 135-42.

elements themselves do not function at these levels in the relevant sense despite the fact that they are part of the make-up of material things that metabolize, grow, reproduce, sense, etc. There is indeed a reciprocal relationship between the two, but it is enough to point out that the powers of metabolism, et al. are not to be confused with the former, thus committing a category mistake of some kind – it is one thing to consider hydrogen qua chemical element, it is entirely another to consider hydrogen qua reproduction. In sum, the basic difference between inanimate being and animate being is that the latter has *life*, that is, it is considered to be *alive*, while the former is devoid of it, thus the distinction between the animate and the inanimate.

This point becomes more pronounced when considering the perfections which set apart human beings from other animal life, plant life, and inanimate being all together, specifically the powers of intellect and will. This last point allows for a return to the point made previously concerning those immaterial aspects of being that are necessary for the establishment of any material hierarchy. The perfections only privy to human beings are not themselves grounded in the material realm. Like potency and act, essence and existence, principles of logic, matter and form, etc., they reveal an immaterial level of existence and hierarchy that supplies the true ground for all material reality. The big picture point of view is this, when the real necessity of the metaphysical notions discussed thus far are brought out from an a posteriori reflection and investigation of the world, further implications lead to their falling into place within a certain hierarchical order. For instance, that an act of existence would be the initial ground for anything actual, and with the arrival of anything actual introduces essence and the laws and principles of nature and logic that serve as describing what essences are and do.

Granting the existence of both material and immaterial being, the different notions and implications of each begin to fall into place. With the hierarchy of material being, from

inanimate being to animate being, the progression ascends from the incorporation of one level into another, for example, that the inanimate is incorporated by the animate and within the animate there is an ascendancy of perfection culminating in human beings where the integration of both the inanimate and animate reaches a climax through the addition of the immaterial via intellect and will. The addition of intellect is exactly what makes the human person more in being than the inanimate and all previous levels of animate being (the intellect, as will be pointed out below, is also what makes it stand out within immaterial being as well.). With that said, the question remains, where does the hierarchy of being ascend to or terminate? Or, stated more fundamentally, what is the basis for any hierarchy at all? Once the metaphysical limitations and dependency of all material being is hashed out it becomes evident that the metaphysical origins of hierarchy cannot possibly arise from the material level of being which only presuppose those immaterial aspects of being. That being the case, the question then turns to where the hierarchy of immaterial being terminates? One key to answering this question lies in the nature of the intellect.

With the immateriality of the intellect it should be understood that it is not the same kind of being that prime matter is, nor, more poignantly, existence itself. Real distinctions exist between them as, for example, the real distinction between essence and existence and between the intellect and the body.⁶³⁹ Taking into consideration the role of existence, all of the components that are part of the hierarchy of being, specifically those that comprise immaterial being presuppose an act of existence. In order for any metaphysical principal to function, they all

⁶³⁹ *On Separate Substances*, 8.44: "For the 'to be' of a thing is neither its form nor its matter but something coming to the thing through the form. Consequently, in things composed of matter and form, the matter considered in itself, according to the mode of its essence, has 'to be' in potency, and this it has as a result of a certain participation in the First Being; but, considered in itself, it lacks the form through which it participates actually in 'to be' according to the mode proper to it." The same would apply to immaterial substances since its form would be other than an act of existence, which would be responsible for the actual being of the form i.e., immaterial substance.

presuppose being. It cannot be the case that these ontological principles simply came to be from nothing (especially when the consequences from notions such as potency and act or the distinction between essence and existence are followed through to their conclusions). This is exactly the verdict that the hierarchy of being points to as when the inherent structure and causal orderliness of the different levels of being are brought to light or, in particular, when considering the existence of the human intellect and its apprehension of such metaphysical machinery which is understood as having a certain teleological function. The existence and contingency of the intellect, that is unlike the existence and function of any other metaphysical principle through its capacity to collect abstract concepts and to reason and choose in light of them, is considered to be *more in being because of those perfections*, it would necessarily follow that the intellect itself must be the product not of prime matter alone, or form alone, etc., but of some other non-contingent intelligent being ruling out any non-intelligent principle or some sort of immaterial evolutionary process.⁶⁴⁰ This would apply to the entire hierarchy of immaterial being which of course has not the necessary ties to material being as material being does to immaterial being and, therefore, cannot *evolve* in any relevant sense from anything prior to it.⁶⁴¹ Exactly because, a) the intellect with its specific perfections places it on a higher level of being than any other level of being both material and immaterial – again, potency and act, matter and form, et al. are not in possession of intelligence in the relevant sense so that they do not comprehend anything but are instead themselves comprehended, b) given the contingency (that is, the necessity of existence for the actuality of anything) of any human intellect and the hierarchy of being, c) it

⁶⁴⁰ Aquinas does argue that between the human intellect and the divine intellect there would exist another level of being, those *separated substances* or, more simply put, intellects without a body, i.e., forms with an act of existence devoid of any adherence to matter. As interesting as that investigation would be, it is enough to show that the human intellect clearly illustrates an ascendancy of being that cannot be explained away in terms of any lower level of being.

⁶⁴¹ To put it in perspective, how could potency and act, essence and existence, etc. be understood in any evolutionary terms as the immaterial beings that they are? What could they have possibly evolved from?

necessarily follows that the entire hierarchy of being must be the product of some immaterial, intelligent, self-existing efficient cause.

The point here is not to necessarily provide a proof for the existence of God from the hierarchy of being itself, but one can see the chain of implication unravel from Aquinas' initial consideration of a gradation to be found in things; any gradation in being acts as a mirror to the deeper metaphysical gradation that encompasses all of being both the material and immaterial. And yet this gradation or hierarchy has a structure that is logically coherent and arranged toward certain ends which cannot account for its own being with references to chance or some evolutionary process.

Aquinas notes that where any diversity of gradation exists either in material being or immaterial being, it must necessarily point to "some one principle."⁶⁴² To account for any diversity of gradation or range of perfection there must be some standard or metaphysical basis by which the gradation itself can mean anything or be judged as ascending or descending in any particular manner. Reflecting on material being, its standard will be matter itself, that is, prime matter as the potency to take on any substantial form, amounting as it does to a bare minimum of being or perfection. From prime matter the gradation ascends to the inanimate, carrying over into the animate given the latter's incorporation of the former, finalizing with the human person where the inanimate, animate and immaterial perfections fuse producing a being that contains more perfection or being than any prior metaphysical tier. In accounting for immaterial substances, the possession of more being or perfection can only be judged against that which is

⁶⁴² *Disputed Questions on the Soul, 7*: "For wherever diversity of grades exists, the grades must be considered through their order to some one principle. Therefore in material substances diverse grades are observed to diversify species in relation to the first principle, matter. For this reason first species [i.e., those nearest to matter] are most imperfect, whereas species farther removed [from matter] are more perfect, and related to the first by the addition [of higher perfections]. For instance, mixed bodies have a more perfect species than the elements have, because they possess in themselves the perfections of the elements and higher perfections as well."

being or perfection *per se*.⁶⁴³ Again, in terms of potency, there is either potential immaterial being or actual immaterial being and any actual immaterial being only ever becomes actual through the addition of existence which is something given or caused but, given this note of contingency, it will be being itself that will be the cause of all other being and that being will necessarily have intellect and will as articulated above. Therefore, all contingent being, both material and immaterial, can only be judged as having more and less being in accordance to that which is being itself.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.: "In the case of immaterial substances the order of diverse grades of species is certainly not considered in relationship to matter, which they do not have, but in relationship to the First Agent [i.e., God], who must be most perfect. Consequently in the case of immaterial substances the first species [i.e., the one nearest to God] is more perfect than the second, inasmuch as the former bears greater likeness to the First Agent. The second species has less perfection than the first, and so on successively down to the last of them. Now the entire perfection of the First Agent consists in this, that He has in one simple nature all His goodness and perfection. Therefore the nearer an immaterial substance is to the First Agent, the more does it have its perfection and goodness in one simple nature, and the less does it require inhering forms for its perfection. This continues progressively down to the human soul which occupies the lowest place [among immaterial substances], just as prime matter holds the lowest place in the genus of sensible things."

One of the main points of this dissertation has been to confirm Edward Feser's interpretation of the Fourth Way as the most fruitful among twentieth and twenty first century scholarship. This final chapter now turns specifically to that task by presenting an exposition of Feser's interpretation of the argument in light of what has been discussed thus far. Before engaging Feser's thought, it might do well to restate Aquinas' Fourth Way one final time.

The fourth way is taken from the gradation of things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But "more" and "less" are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph. ii*. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all being the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God⁶⁴⁴

It is important to remember that prior to his analysis of the Fourth Way Feser has already set in place and defended a significant amount of Aquinas' general metaphysics. This procedure of engaging Aquinas' Five Ways, and specifically the Fourth Way allows the reader to approach the argument with all the correct philosophical presuppositions in mind aiding in the overall comprehension of the argument while avoiding taking principles for granted or any possible question begging. Case in point, Feser devotes a section on the transcendentals and, sporadically throughout his text, on the themes of analogy and hierarchy of being all before the discussion on the Fourth Way commences.⁶⁴⁵ Thus one is not left at a loss when Aquinas argues that things are

⁶⁴⁴ *Summa Theologiae* I.2.3.

⁶⁴⁵ For his treatment on the transcendentals see *Aquinas*, 31-6. He also discusses and defends Aquinas' views on potency and act, hylomorphism, Aristotle's four causal ontology (with separate sections on final and efficient causality), essence and existence, and being.

more and less true, good, noble, and the like. This contextual method already places Feser above most commentators on the Fourth Way simply because they neglect to lay down in a systematic and apologetic way the metaphysical principles necessary to do the argument justice either within the same overall work on natural theology or directly within the confines of the Fourth Way. More often than not principles are merely introduced and postulated without engaging its critics and possible objections. This dissertation has gone a step further from all commentators, including Feser, by directing the entire metaphysical context specifically toward the Fourth Way, defending every principle involved and its placement and application to the argument itself. This is very significant not only because the Fourth Way has the reputation of being one of the most misunderstood and troublesome of Aquinas Ways, in addition, its exploration is all but non-existent in contemporary literature on the philosophy of religion.

Feser begins his approach to the Fourth Way by setting the argument within the confines of a general Platonic context as traditionally understood by some interpreters.⁶⁴⁶ He does this in order to clarify and distinguish the Platonic and Aristotelian elements contained therein.⁶⁴⁷ More

⁶⁴⁶ Cf., Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways*, 70-95.

⁶⁴⁷ It is no mistake to apprehend working in the Fourth Way a certain Platonic and Aristotelian flare with its reference to grades of more and less perfection. One can see the original elements of this argument in Plato's *Phaedo* 74d-e: "Well then, he said, do we experience something like this in the case of equal sticks and the other equal objects we just mentioned? Do they seem to us to be equal in the same sense as what is Equal itself? Is there some deficiency in their being such as the Equal, or is there not? ... Whenever someone, on seeing something, realizes that that which he now sees wants to be like some other reality but falls short and cannot be like that other since it is inferior, do we agree that the one who thinks this must have prior knowledge of that to which he says it is like, but deficiently so? ... We must then possess knowledge of the Equal before that time when we first saw the equal objects and realized that all these objects strive to be like the Equal but are deficient in this."

Also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 2.1, 993b24-30: "Now we do not know a truth without its cause and a thing has a quality in a higher degree than other things if in virtue of it the similar quality belongs to the other things (e.g. fire is the hottest of things; for it is the cause of the heat of all other things); so that that which causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Therefore the principles of eternal things must be always most true; for they are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any cause of their being, but they themselves are the cause of the being of other things, so that as each thing is in respect of being, so is it in respect of truth."

And Augustine, *City of God*, 8.6: "For there is no corporeal beauty, whether in the condition of a body, as figure, or in its movement, as in music of which it is not the mind that judges. But this could never have been, had there not existed in the mind itself a superior form of these things, without bulk, without noise of voice, without space and time. But even in respect of these things, had the mind not been mutable, it would not have been

specifically, he develops the argument by “reading it in light of Plato’s theory of forms” in order to shed some light on its method.⁶⁴⁸ According to his ontology, Plato believed that knowledge of particulars is possible only by its *resemblance* or *participation* in or with the exemplar of its kind, that is, a perfect paradigm, archetype, or *form* responsible for the existence of that given particular.⁶⁴⁹ These forms end up being immaterial abstract objects that exist outside of space and time as universal, perfect, and eternal.⁶⁵⁰ To begin with Plato’s theory of forms is a significant move because it both implicitly and explicitly invokes upon and connects the roles that essences, universals, and the transcendentals play into the argument. It has already been argued how transcendentals are a kind of universal, and universals are intrinsic to essences, thus in order to be clear about the existence of the transcendentals and what they are and how they function, one needs to be clear about what universals and essences are and how they function.⁶⁵¹

The opening premise of the Fourth Way establishes a gradation, the more and less of things that are true, good, noble and the like, but those perfections are to be distinguished from what things are via their essence, thus a further relation can be inferred: a relation that

possible for one to judge better than another with regard to sensible forms. He who is clever, judges better than he who is slow, he who is skilled than he who is unskillful, he who is practiced than he who is unpractised; and the same person judges better after he has gained experience than he did before. But that which is capable of more and less is mutable; whence able men, who have thought deeply on these things, have gathered that the first form is not to be found in those things whose form is changeable. Since, therefore, they saw that body and mind might be more or less beautiful in form, and that, if they wanted form, they could have no existence, they saw that there is some existence in which is the first form, unchangeable, and therefore not admitting of degrees of comparison, and in that they most rightly believed was the first principle of things which was not made, and by which all things were made.”

⁶⁴⁸ Aquinas, 100.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ “... *universal* rather than particular (since it is that in virtue of which various individual things count as instances of the same one type), *perfect* rather than imperfect (since it is the pattern or archetype by reference to which we judge something to be more or less perfect), and *eternal* or unchanging (since the truths we know about these essences are necessary truths). For these reasons we also thereby know something that is *more real* than individual particular things, since the latter only have their reality to the extent that they resemble or participate in the former. In short, what we know is what Plato calls a Form.” Ibid., 102.

⁶⁵¹ Many commentators simply neglect to settle these crucial details *within* their treatments of the Fourth Way, if they even acknowledge their importance to the argument at all.

distinguishes between a thing's essence from its goodness, truth, nobility and such.⁶⁵² This additional relation is both universal (the individual is able to recognize the connection of the relation to all things) and transcendental (the relation extends to all things). Because essences, universals, and the transcendentals make or break the argument, they inevitably need to be addressed and clarified individually with their specific place and role within the structure of the Fourth Way. This dissertation has argued that all three are fundamentally united; indeed, they cannot be separated in reality, thus implying one another with real and logical necessity. The use of Plato's ontology provides a great opening discussion on these matters even though Feser has already addressed them to various extents prior to the argument; this only urges the reader to keep what has been said about these themes in mind throughout Feser's running narration.

With that Platonic introduction it starts to become clearer as to why the Fourth Way would be taken as moving along the lines of Platonism. If things are more and less true, good, noble, and so forth, it would seem equivalent to saying that things *participate*, *instantiate*, or *resemble*, to a lesser or greater extent, the *form* of truth, or the *form* of goodness, or the *form* of nobility.⁶⁵³ Even so, it is sometimes objected that the use of participation is nowhere to be read in the argument, and thus must be considered as outside or foreign to Aquinas' true rational in the Fourth Way. Now it is true that neither the terms participation, instantiation, nor resemblance are in fact explicitly used by Aquinas however, it would not be farfetched, contrary to, nor do violence to Aquinas' method in the argument to accept participation as an active component of

⁶⁵² We saw that the *principle of identity* was utilized by numerous commentators to mark this exact distinction, that between what a thing is and the additional predication of some perfection, in this case, with the transcendental.

⁶⁵³ From a pedagogical standpoint, this may be the best approach to take since it places the Fourth Way within a certain context that is already familiar to most philosophers (i.e., Plato's theory of forms and the role of universals and particulars) and one that becomes an essential introductory lesson in philosophy for most beginning students. Feser utilizes this resourceful approach in other contexts as well, for instance, in explaining the origins of *classical realism*. See *The Last Superstition*, 31-8.

the Fourth Way, especially since, as surveyed above, he does in fact accept participation as a real existing metaphysical principle. Therefore arguing that the use of participation runs counter to Aquinas' intentions because it lacks mention does not hold much weight. For if the relation cannot be explained through participation or instantiation, the question then becomes how one is to give a rational explanation for things being more and less true, good, and such without identifying some actual relation binding them together (as, for example, the relation between particulars and universals)? And if it is the case that a relation does exist, then what would or could this relation be other than participation, or instantiation, or resemblance? In fact, there is no way of answering such a question without either positing any such relation as mere brute fact, or by participation-instantiation-resemblance which, as already addressed above on two separate occasions, is metaphysically unavoidable. Therefore, if things are more and less true or good, then they must – albeit indirectly – instantiate or participate with *truth* and *goodness*; there is no unwarranted metaphysical add-on being invoked upon or some novel reinterpretation of Aquinas' thought at play. The use of participation only follows from what Aquinas already holds as true.

Continuing on this Platonic line of reasoning, Feser argues that not only is participation responsible for the argument's apparent Platonic view, it is also Aquinas' use of the *principle of exemplarity*, that is, "Aquinas argues that 'more' and 'less' are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum' (*ST* I.2.3), and this 'principle of exemplarity' (as Henri Renard has labeled it), with its talk of things 'resembling' some maximum more or less perfectly, is certainly reminiscent of Plato."⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid. The principle of exemplarity is attributed to Henri Renard in his *The Philosophy of God* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1951), 42: "Every limited perfection of the existent is a participation of the absolute which must exist." The relevant passages for Aquinas on participation mentioned by Feser are in the *Summa Theologiae* I. 44. 1; I. 79. 4 and in the *Disputed Questions on the Power of God*, 3.5.

Furthermore, if Aquinas is thinking along the lines of Platonism, then truth, goodness, and nobility would give the impression of somehow “explaining the world in terms of formal rather than efficient causality” and thus “the thrust of the argument might therefore seem to be that we can only make sense of the more or less good, true, and noble things of our experience by reference to something like a divine Platonic archetype of goodness, truth, and nobility.”⁶⁵⁵ Feser notes that this Platonic approach has certain benefits as it would mitigate against any relativistic or subjectivist critiques against the existence of objective standards of truth, goodness, nobility, etc. (since, presumably, without the form of truth, there would be no actual truth, and without the form of goodness, there would be no actual goodness, and so on); and it would also make sense of why Aquinas would say that “the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus” (again, since it would be the form of truth that would be responsible for all things being more and less true metaphysically, and thus the basis for any subjective predication).⁶⁵⁶ From what Feser has indicated, it is understandable how one could read Aquinas as relying heavily, if not, exclusively on Plato. The language of more and less; the invocation of *goodness*, *truth*, and *nobility* as concrete realities; things resembling their *maximum*; something “which is uttermost being;” the genus being the cause of that which falls under it; all of these instances can easily give one the impression that Aquinas has made a metaphysical shift from Aristotle to Plato. Although seemingly plausible, such a reading would neglect other aspects of Aquinas’ metaphysics that go completely against such a shift. Feser is very clear on this point. A Platonic interpretation of the Fourth Way fails to recognize Aquinas’ moderate realism (or Scholastic realism) which puts him directly at odds with Plato’s understanding of forms or essences and more in line with Aristotle’s as it was demonstrated before how Aquinas’ realism

⁶⁵⁵ *Aquinas*, 102.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 102-3.

upholds the objectivity of essences and universals against nominalism, conceptualism *and* Platonism.⁶⁵⁷ This is why getting to the bottom of Aquinas' realism resolves the Platonic issues surrounding the argument. With Aquinas' realism in mind, the strict appeal or emphasis on formal causality over efficient causality is somewhat hopeless for, again, as was argued above, any exemplar causality necessarily implies efficient causality: "for being abstract rather than concrete objects, Platonic Forms are causally inert (where efficient causality is concerned); hence if the Fourth Way were really suggesting that we think of God as a kind of Platonic Form, it would be hard to see how the most true, good, and noble being of the Fourth Way could be identical to the First Mover and First Cause of the first two ways."⁶⁵⁸ To reiterate, there are no un-instantiated universals and, thus, any concern over how and why the *form* of goodness, or truth, or being *causes* goodness, truth, and being in the world is simply a non-starter.

Still there are further concerns that arise from a Platonic reading, for according to Plato there is no way to understand how the form of truth, goodness, or nobility could equate to being the same thing via some maximum in being as Aquinas would argue. Plus, for Plato, everything has a form, and thus it would seem to follow that God would be the most of any and every property, for example, "sweetness, filthiness, illness and the like."⁶⁵⁹ However, Feser assures the reader that these problems only occur under a strict Platonism which is not the accurate way of

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., 103. Cf., Edward Feser, "Existential Inertia and the Five Ways," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85, No. 2 (2011), 249: "The argument is often read in Platonic terms, and while this is not an egregious misunderstanding, it is also not quite right. Aquinas is indeed committed to a doctrine of 'participation,' but he does not understand participation in terms of purely formal causation, and he does not regard the being, goodness, unity, and truth in which things participate as abstract objects *a la* Plato's Forms."

⁶⁵⁸ *Aquinas*, 103.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., 104. Cf., "Existential Inertia and the Five Ways," 249: "For example, it is often assumed that Aquinas is arguing that every attribute that comes in degrees must have its fullest exemplar in God; and it is then objected that this entails such absurdities as that God must be the supreme exemplar of smelliness."

reading the Fourth Way.⁶⁶⁰ When Aquinas conveys that something is hotter than another and thus akin to resembling “that which is hottest” this is meant as a pedagogical tool to illustrate “the general principle that things that come in degrees point to a maximum.”⁶⁶¹ Indeed, things do exist in varying degrees not only on a purely physical level but, more importantly, and this is what Aquinas is really after, things exist to varying degrees on a metaphysical level. From an epistemological stand point, any approximation or more and less is predicated of things, whether real or conceptual, but it is a thing’s essence that remains responsible for both the reality of what a thing is and as playing the role of a maximum. Thus the epistemology of approximation, of more and less is grounded in the ontology of the maximum, that is, the ontology of essence, which Aquinas obviously holds to hence alleviating concerns over whether or not Aquinas was somehow attempting to establish concrete scientific empirical claims about maximums. Once again, Aquinas points to a common aspect of the concrete world in order to bring out the deeper metaphysical reality.

Besides Aquinas is referring to the transcendentals and not just any random property; the transcendentals are part and parcel of essences, connecting as they do all individual things vis-à-vis being, truth, goodness, one, thing, and something. Keeping that in mind, it makes much more sense how the transcendentals point to “that which is uttermost in being” since all things are (i.e., convertible with) being, truth, goodness, etc. This is why it was important to set an entire chapter on the transcendentals not only because they serve as the key starting point of Aquinas’ argument, but because an accurate formulation of their existence and role alleviates the

⁶⁶⁰ But, in fact, all perfections do originate in God since all perfections, whether essential or non-essential, are essences of a sort and, therefore, like all essences, they have their origin as divine ideas. This is exactly why Aquinas can end the Fourth Way by saying that God would be the cause of “every other perfection...”

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

accusations heaped upon the terms true, good, and nobility as being subjective in nature, or as entirely conceptual, or logical in origin.⁶⁶²

In conjunction with the issue of convertibility is that of analogy. As the prior discussion on analogy argued, all things share in being albeit without falling prey to a strict univocal or equivocal predication. All beings are not the same being and neither are they so disparate from one another that their communion in being is completely unlike and thus unintelligible. The analogical sense of being not only highlights the interconnectedness of being, it too is structured into a hierarchy:

Again, the way in which each has being is analogous to the way the others do, but not identical. In particular, it should be evident that substances have a higher degree of being than accidents do, angels a higher degree of being than material things do, and God a higher degree of being than any created thing; for substances lack the dependence on (other) substances that accidents have for their being, angels lack the dependence on matter that material things have for their being, and God depends on nothing at all for his existence but is rather that on which everything else depends. We see here a hierarchy in the order of being that dovetails with the hierarchy from prime matter through purely material things, human being, and angels, up to God as Pure Act...⁶⁶³

The analogy and hierarchy of being present the metaphysical case for how things “come in degrees.” Feser provides some helpful examples noting that the “goodness or perfection” of a triangle is greater than another when drawn more carefully, and the “goodness or perfection” of a person is greater when they consistently tell the truth as opposed to habitually lying.⁶⁶⁴ These are both instances of goodness in an analogical sense, permeating both the inanimate and animate levels of material being with the animate representing a higher level of being than the inanimate “because it incorporates the perfections of the lower levels while adding perfections of its

⁶⁶² Although the transcendentals *are not* conceptual or logical in the sense that they are fabrications of the human mind, nevertheless, *they are* conceptual or logical in the sense that they originate as divine exemplars.

⁶⁶³ Feser, *Aquinas*, 105-6.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

own.”⁶⁶⁵ This hierarchy naturally extends to the immaterial realm also where one finds those first principles behind the structure of the material realm as independent of it, and although a discussion on the existence of purely intellectual beings, (what Aquinas refers to as separated substances) is beyond the scope of this dissertation, Feser argues that these too will land on a higher level of being.⁶⁶⁶

Needless to say, the transcendentals and both the analogy and hierarchy of being provide additional groundwork for how the more and less of things lead toward that which is being itself, goodness itself, truth itself, etc. Feser provides a useful summary:

The idea is that if we start by considering the natures of each of the lower levels of reality and then proceed to follow them upward, we find ourselves inexorably led to a highest level. In particular, degrees of goodness, truth, nobility, and so forth each point beyond themselves to a highest degree of each; since these are all convertible with one another, it is the *same* one maximum to which they all point; and since they are all in turn convertible with being, this single maximum is also that which is most fully real. What Aquinas is up to in the Fourth way can therefore be understood when we read the argument in light of his doctrines of the transcendentals, analogy, and the hierarchy of being.⁶⁶⁷

But, here again, just as the alarm was raised against the use of participation, are the use of analogy and hierarchy justified despite no explicit reference by Aquinas? That Aquinas believes there to be an analogy and hierarchy of being is certainly the case as was discussed. If the multitude of things in the world are to “resemble” a “maximum” by “gradation,” then things cannot be predicated of that maximum univocally, or else, any more and less would become impossible to determine (what is there to determine when there is only the maximum?), and neither could things be predicated equivocally of the maximum (for then the more and less

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 107.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., “When we get to the purely immaterial levels of the hierarchy of being, we have entities which, though they lack the perfections of material things ‘formally,’ they nevertheless possess them ‘eminently’ insofar as (unlike purely material things on Aquinas’ view) they can grasp them intellectually (and grasp them intellectually in a way that is superior to our way of grasping them, since though the human intellect is immaterial, it is limited because of its dependence on sense organs).”

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

would not connect either the maximum nor the particular since any comparison would be lost on completely different kinds). The only remaining option is that things resemble or approximate the maximum (i.e., the transcendentals) through a more and less approximation by analogy, that is, neither is the particular like the maximum nor unlike it, but will resemble the maximum to a more and less extent. The hierarchy of being is only a natural extension of analogy. If analogy demonstrates the common bond of being that permeates every existent by differentiating things through analogy then that same differentiation will also bring to the fore a dependency, contingency, and placement of different kinds of being. Since reality is not some monistic entity but, instead, composed of the many, it cannot be that the many simply exist on the same metaphysical plane (a pseudo monism – unity through plurality, but not really). There is an order within the many that marks out the maximums (essences) from things instantiated (particulars); the material from the immaterial; the less in perfection from the more in perfection. In this case, the good, true, and noble, is marked out from that which is “uttermost in being.” The use of analogy and hierarchy, though never explicitly mentioned, cannot be said to run counter to Aquinas’ mind, but presupposed as factual to the Fourth Way.

Feser turns to address some concerns on causality and participation. Aquinas states that the “maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus.” How so? Through participation? How exactly are the higher levels in the hierarchy of being responsible for the lower?⁶⁶⁸ In response, Feser turns to Aquinas. In the commentary on Boethius’ *Hebdomadibus*, Aquinas argues that the participant of any given perfection, “has that perfection only in a partial or limited way,” and in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas is clear that “whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially.”⁶⁶⁹ But the causal

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 108.

⁶⁶⁹ *On the Hebdomads of Boethius, 2; Summa Theologiae* I.44.1; as quoted in Feser, *Aquinas*, 108.

relation found in participation or instantiation by its very nature can only be understood as efficient. In demonstrating this, Feser asks the reader to consider “the case of existence or being, where we have already seen that for Aquinas, ‘from the fact that a thing has being by participation, it follows that it is caused.’”⁶⁷⁰ What Feser is alluding to is the real distinction between essence and existence. The divide between the two highlights the participatory relation between the principles rather than one principal, essence “being identical with pure being or existence.”⁶⁷¹ That being the case, if something only participates with existence, then something else is responsible for the participation of existence to actually take hold or else it would simply be the cause of its own existence, but this cannot be given that no potency can actualize itself except by something already in act.⁶⁷² This leads to the necessary distinction between *participated* being (in this example, that which *has* existence) from *unparticipated* being (that which *is* existence itself) and, hence, that which *has* truth or goodness from that which *is* truth or goodness. Feser observes that the essence existence divide “is the heart of the ‘existential proof’ and thus... the second way.”⁶⁷³ But just as Aquinas utilizes the example from different indexes of heat the use of existence by Feser is meant as an example to help explain the roles of causality and participation.⁶⁷⁴ With efficient causality at the helm, the argument does not collapse into two

⁶⁷⁰ Aquinas, 108.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² “The reason for this was that if a thing’s essence and existence are distinct (so that it only ‘participates’ in being or existence rather than being identical with pure being or existence), only something outside the thing could give it existence or being; for to say that its existence derives from its essence (which is the only other alternative) would entail the absurdity that it causes itself. (Keep in mind that deriving or flowing from an essence is not the same as being identical with an essence; for example, the essence of a human being is to be a rational animal, and having the capacity for language flows or derives from this essence, but having the capacity for language flows or derives from this essence, but having the capacity for language is nevertheless not *identical* with being a rational animal.) We have also seen that, for Aquinas, the cause in question must ultimately be something in which its essence and existence are identical, and which accordingly just *is* being itself, or (we might now say) *unparticipated* being.” Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ *Summa Theologiae* I.3.4: “... because, just as that which has fire, but is not itself fire, is on fire by participation; so that which has existence but is not existence, is a being by participation.”

independent parts with the first part invoking upon formal causality and the second invoking upon efficient; the first part merely proves that there is a “greatest in being” while the second part provides a natural continuation of the arguments development explicating how the “greatest in being” causes things to instantiate the transcendentals. This becomes harmonious when considering Aquinas’ realism.

In a separate work, Feser unpacks another direct consequence of participation working implicitly in the Fourth Way. Anything that is by participation will remain so only as long as that relation holds; that which has existence, will indeed have it, but only through the uninterrupted causal agency (*conservation*) of the one giving it and not of its own power (*existential inertia*):

Keep in mind that for Platonism, things participate in the Forms at every moment in which they exist at all, and otherwise would not exist at all. For instance, a dog is a dog only insofar as it participates in the Form of Dog, and if it were to cease participating in that Form even for an instant, it would cease to exist *qua* dog. And though Aquinas’s notion of participation is not identical to Plato’s, it has that much in common with it. Just as that in which essence and existence are distinct – that is to say, that which has being only in a limited way – could not in Aquinas’s view exist for an instant if it were not sustained in being by that which just is Being Itself, so too he thinks that that which has goodness, unity, etc., only in a limited way could not exist (or at least not exist *qua* good, one, and so forth) even for an instant if it were not sustained by that which just is supreme goodness, unity, etc. So, once again we have an implicit argument against DEI and (given that that which is being itself, goodness itself, unity itself, etc., is God) an implicit argument for DDC.⁶⁷⁵

The implications of efficient causality do not in any way make the Fourth Way collapse into a version of the Second Way (its starting point being efficient causality) or the Fifth Way (its starting point being final causality; the more and less being *directed* or *ordered* toward that which is truth itself, goodness itself, etc.). The Fourth Way does indeed stand on its own two legs as an independent argument from Aquinas’ other Ways, taking its opening premise not from motion, nor efficient causality, nor contingency, nor final causality, but from the gradation of

⁶⁷⁵ *Existential Inertia and The Five Ways*, 250. DEI (Doctrine of Existential Inertia), argues that contingent things will remain in existence until destroyed or acted on by some outside agent. *Ibid.*, 239. DDC (Doctrine of Divine Conservation), argues that God actively holds creation in existence at every instant. *Ibid.*, 237.

transcendental perfections discoverable in things. Although all of the principles addressed in this dissertation are in one way or another entailed in all of the Ways, it is important to note that each of the Five Ways begins with a different reference point thus, on the one hand, each argument can commence from a specific feature observable in the world and, on the other, each argument demonstrates, at least implicitly, an unavoidable interconnected edifice of fundamental principles. This last point, as expressed in this dissertation, is something that *must* be taken into consideration when dealing with any of Aquinas' Ways. To argue that each of Aquinas' demonstrations must have complete metaphysical autonomy from one another is mistaken, but in saying that much, neither are they all the same demonstration even though they all have the same end in mind.

Returning to the transcendentals and their convertibility, the relation between these via participation makes it clear that things which "have being or existence by participation will also be true of things having goodness, truth, and so on only by participation, thus opening the way to a distinct argument for God's existence (namely the Fourth Way)."⁶⁷⁶ The distinction between things having existence as opposed to being existence demonstrates the limitation set in place on those things which merely participate with some perfection from the perfection itself;

That is to say, if it were part of a thing's very *essence* to have the perfection, then there would be no reason for it not to possess it in an *unlimited* way. (Hence any human being is fully human, which follows from humanity being part of his or her essence, but does not have being to the fullest extent – which would be possible only for something whose essence just is being – or goodness to the fullest extent – which would be possible only for something in some sense having within it *every* perfection – and so forth.) So, for a limited thing to have some perfection, it must derive it from something outside it.⁶⁷⁷

That which participates with a certain perfection only has it accidentally (*per accidens*) rather than having it according to its very essence (*per se*). Being, derived from another, will

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

necessarily terminate in that which is being itself, or enter the consequences of an infinite regress of participation in being, which inevitably negates being itself. Accordingly,

... if the ultimate cause is unlimited in goodness, truth, nobility, or whatever other transcendental we are starting with, then (as we have already said) given the convertibility of the transcendentals it will also have to be unlimited in being and therefore just *be* pure being or existence itself. We are led therefore to the existence of the same being arrived at at the end of each of the first three ways – pure act, a being whose essence just is existence and which is the efficient cause of the being or actuality of everything other than itself – via yet another route, a consideration of the degrees of perfection found in the things of our experience.⁶⁷⁸

In summarizing Feser's interpretation there are several general points to take into consideration:

- 1) Prior to the Fourth Way a substantial amount of Aquinas' general metaphysics has been clarified and defended providing a valuable and necessary context from which the Fourth Way is to be undertaken;
- 2) Introducing the Fourth Way by way of Plato's theory of forms delivers an effective starting place for grasping the general direction of the argument;
- 3) Feser lays to rest concerns over whether or not Aquinas succumbs to a strict Platonism by defending Aquinas' moderate realism and his development of participation;
- 4) Feser resolves the issues concerning the form of causality Aquinas specifically had in mind, allowing for both parts of the argument to form a continuous communion rather than a formal separation;
- 5) By underscoring the roles of participation and efficient causality, Feser can introduce the act of Divine Conservation as a necessary consequence from the relationship between creation and being.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

These five points in tandem with the weaving and defense of the argument and its metaphysical components place Feser's interpretation above any current literature. It is certainly the case that past commentators have either explicitly or implicitly called upon one or more of the points that Feser contributes, but none have brought them *all together* in such an unapologetic fashion.⁶⁷⁹ There are, as identified in this dissertation and especially in this last chapter, difficulties that one finds with the interpretations of past commentators. For instance, important principles such as the transcendentals and the function of their convertibility are, more often than not, inferred without further discussion, or if they do receive their own treatment it is done so (generally speaking) within the context of a separate work on general metaphysics, which entails the reader possess familiarity with that work prior to approaching the Fourth Way. This trouble is avoided in Feser's *Aquinas* as he devotes 54 pages to Aquinas' metaphysics prior to engaging his natural theology. Then there is the simple fact that some commentators are plainly mistaken about certain aspects of Aquinas' metaphysics and method, such as the nature of his reliance on Plato's philosophy and the ensuing implications on causality, participation, transcendentals, being and the analogy of being. Another problem that surfaces is a certain reluctance to uphold Aquinas' metaphysics as somehow objective and correct. Such a lack of confidence leaves the reader to believe that the Fourth Way is somehow set to fail before it ever really begins. Some of this is due in part to a lack of investigation and articulation of the key elements in the Fourth Way in addition to the general Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy at play. There is also a certain tendency to believe that in order to stay true to Aquinas' program, one needs to rely on a strict observance of the text. Yet such a position is too good to be true.

⁶⁷⁹ Except for the point on Divine Conservation; to my knowledge, no one has ever introduced such an implication within the context of the Fourth Way. However, I acknowledge that Feser does not make the case for Divine Conservation within his interpretation on the Fourth Way as found in his work *Aquinas*. Nonetheless, inserting this point from Divine Conservation only bolsters Feser's overall interpretation.

Metaphysics is heavy work and Aquinas is clearly aware of this. In the end, this position itself is untenable unless, of course, Aquinas never wrote anything on the transcendentals, analogy, being, causality, etc., which in that case, maybe the strict text is all he really had to show. But this is obviously not the case given the amount of attention he devoted to metaphysical principles.

12.1 Conclusion

This dissertation began by introducing the philosophical thought of Edward Feser as the latest in contemporary analytic Thomism. This brand is a third variety of analytic Thomism that defends and advances traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic principles as an objectively accurate system of philosophical thought against the critiques of contemporary philosophy, both analytic and continental, and those who adhere and argue for a more naturalistic and anti-realist explanation behind the structure of reality adjacent with the idea that the empirical sciences champion all claims on objective knowledge.⁶⁸⁰ It has been a wholesale part of this dissertation to defend and uphold the vitality of such a brand of analytic Thomism as a corrective for contemporary philosophy in both secular and Catholic circles. Undoubtedly, the arguments and conclusions that Feser puts forward in the areas of natural theology, political philosophy, ethics, epistemology, cosmology and philosophical psychology (i.e., philosophy of mind) are representative of a long-standing tradition of Thomistic-Scholastic thought, and clearly meant to

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics*, 9-10: "Of course, not every contemporary analytic philosopher welcomes the revival of old-fashioned metaphysics. There are those who decry it in the name of the scientific or naturalistic position that science alone plausibly gives us objective knowledge, and that any metaphysics worthy of consideration can only be that which is implicit in science... Yet, the glib self-confidence of its advocates notwithstanding, there are in fact no good arguments whatsoever for scientism, and decisive arguments against it."

be a cure for the philosophical ails that stem from the naturalism, scientism, and anti-realism that is common place throughout academia. Defending Feser's interpretation of the Fourth Way and its promotion as the best assessment in the literature has been part of this campaign. The rounding up of numerous commentaries on the Fourth Way (a pedagogical compare and contrast approach that is mostly, if not exclusively, non-existent on the Fourth Way – and not very commonplace for the rest of Aquinas' Ways either) made for a comprehensive analysis of both positive and negative aspects historically attributed to the argument. This gathering was crucial for clearing up difficulties and seeing the argument through, as well as advancing Feser's interpretation.

Getting to more specific metaphysical details, the principles of potency and act, hylomorphism, and the real distinction between essence and existence, play an essential task in the overall structure of the argument. In the Fourth Way, the relation between things and the transcendentals is one that is receptive on the part of things; things are more and less true, good, noble and the like only insofar as they have the potency for their actualization as being, good, true, and so forth. This is not some semantic sleight of hand since things either have the metaphysical potency to exist (the composition of essence and existence can actually take place) or they do not. And if they have being, then they either have the additional potency for truth, goodness, etc., or they do not. Here potency and act become an ontological corner stone.

With hylomorphism, all material substances are determined as compositions of prime matter and substantial form. Given that the Fourth Way takes for its starting observation sensible things, the relation between substantial form (essence) and the transcendentals entails a need to understand how one is distinct from the other, requiring clear inquiries into each. In understanding the function of essence one is in a better position to understand the function of the

transcendental as an immanent aspect of essence. Moreover, the investigation of essence also makes clear a real distinction between itself and existence. Without the potency to actualize its own being, any essence-existence composite must account for its causal union by recourse to that which simply terminates as being itself. A survey and defense of the real distinction between essence and existence helps alleviate concerns over the further distinction and consequences that arise between, truth, goodness, one, thing, and something.

The point of elaborating on such fundamental issues is to identify and make concrete how they lay the foundations for the Fourth Way. Although in reality they are foundational to all of Aquinas' Five Ways and this is something that is not always explicitly acknowledged by Thomists. This sort of pedagogical-metaphysical approach to the Five Ways in general, and the Fourth Way specifically, should have its place in works of natural theology. For instance, rather than putting forward several proofs for the existence of God, it might do well to limit the amount of proofs by implementing the proper background metaphysics along with a detailed defense. Expanding upon such principles, far from becoming redundant or metaphysically overbearing, only helps clarify and defend the realist edifice that is true of reality. This dissertation has been an exercise in such an approach.⁶⁸¹

Once the more basic principles are settled, one can then turn to participation, causality, the transcendentals, and the analogy and hierarchy of being. Aquinas argues that things are more and less "good, true, noble and the like" exactly because things have the potency to instantiate those transcendental perfections, and that only because essence is what manifests the transcendental. To identify a more and less of a transcendental perfection, is to identify a certain

⁶⁸¹ This is not to say that every aspect and principle of metaphysics need be covered in a specific work on natural theology dealing as it may with several or only a single proof for God's existence. Traditionally, an entire course on metaphysics or several would have been the appropriate course of action before moving forward to philosophical theology or natural theology. Nevertheless, I argue that in considering any discussion on Aquinas' Ways, certain fundamental principles need to be addressed fully before justice can be done to the arguments.

contingency, a potency within being that distinguishes the essence from the transcendental, albeit logically and not formally. But the more and less also identifies how beings are not all ontologically equivalent. The analogy of being not only makes its case against equivocal and univocal predication, it also makes evident a hierarchy of being that places certain beings over and above another via ontological dependency and higher levels of perfection. Of course, the potency to receive such perfection can never actualize itself, the essence-universal-transcendental is given, or efficiently caused by that which simply is Pure Act, the “uttermost in being.” Through this approach, Aquinas’ argument is distinctive from the others and Feser’s approach only confirms exactly what Aquinas had in mind when he states that the existence of God could be demonstrated in five ways.

It has been the purpose of this dissertation to defend the Fourth Way as a robust demonstration of God’s existence through the analysis of some of the most prominent Thomists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with the advancement of Edward Feser’s interpretation as the guiding light in its scholarship, along with identifying and providing a way out for the present-day deficiency not only in its scholarship and overall popularity, but in the broader pedagogical approach behind addressing an argument for the existence of God. A central component of this method has been its adherence and defense of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition held by Feser and others as discussed in the opening chapter. The push for such a system of thought is a necessary one, and one that will hopefully inspire more scholarship in its vein with the ultimate goal being the pursuit of wisdom.

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