

THEOSOPHY

The Problem of Ontology
Being-as-One

ANTONIO ROSMINI

THEOSOPHY

Volume 1

The Problem of Ontology Being-as-One

Translated by
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Note

The many and long quotations given by the author in their original language have been translated. An *asterisk* indicates that the original language can be found in the section entitled *Original Language References* after the *Appendix*.

Square brackets [] indicate notes or additions by the translators or editor of the Critical Edition.

References to this and other works of Rosmini are given by paragraph number unless otherwise stated.

For the works quoted by Rosmini that have been translated into English, the following abbreviations are used:

AMS: Anthropology as an Aid to Moral Science
IP: Introduction to Philosophy
NE: A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas
PE: Principles of Ethics
PSY: Psychology
SP: Society and its Purpose
TCY: Theodicy

Foreword

For Rosmini *theosophy* is a philosophical science consisting of the three disciplines of *ontology*, *natural theology* and *cosmology*. The study of ontology is a philosophical discipline which must, by definition, include all being and therefore supreme Being, but Rosmini's theosophy is far removed from any philosophical and quasi-religious system seeking direct experience or intuition of God. The term 'theosophy' (meaning wisdom concerning God and divine things) was used in a philosophical sense long before the late 19th century when 'theosophical' societies and movements were founded. In the *Preface to the Metaphysical Works*, he writes:

Teaching about the supreme Being is presented in three treatises or three distinct, but intimately connected parts. The first part is a kind of very broad introduction which reasons about being in general as the human mind conceives it by way of abstraction. This is the science commonly called *ontology*. The second part deals with absolute being by way of ideal-negative reasoning and corresponds to *natural theology*, and the third part is a kind of very broad appendix which deals with the things produced by the absolute Being, and corresponds to *cosmology*. The complex of all this teaching I call *theosophy*.

(*Psychology*, vol. 1, *Essence of the Human Soul*, p. 13)

Right from his youth, Rosmini had been attracted by ontological investigation. Above all he had an unbounded love of truth and constantly strove to obtain it. It was this lively thirst and interest that spurred him on to deep and arduous philosophical reflection and meditation. The result was a tremendous output of philosophical writing. For him, truth was one, and philosophy and all its branches investigated this one, same truth in all its richness. Because of this unity, it was possible, according to him, to speak of a *System of*

Truth. It was therefore only later in his life, after publishing his treatises on anthropology, psychology, political theory, the theory of rights, and the theory of knowledge that he began work on his *opus maius*. It was his opinion that *Theosophy* would complete the *System of Truth* and that anyone reading it with an open and intelligent mind would find mental satisfaction, that is, would find the satisfaction that can be reasonably sought, and which some people despair of ever finding.

We can obtain an idea of how massive a task he was giving himself from the plan he laid out before commencing. Under the heading 'Theosophy' he listed the three above-mentioned *Parts*. The first *Part*, ontology, which he considered as 'simply an immense preface to the treatise on God to which we intend to join it, and from which alone it receives its fullness and attains its purpose' (*ibid.*, p. 12), was subdivided into three 'books': 1. the Categories, 2. Being-as-one (*Essere uno*) and 3. trine Being (*Essere trino*). These three were preceded by 'a single book' dealing with the problem of ontology.

The second *Part*, natural theology, was subdivided into 1. the subjective Absolute, 2. the objective Absolute, 3. the perfective, moral Absolute, and 4. the Unity of the Absolute in the three forms.

The third *Part*, cosmology, had the following sections: 1. the metaphysical World — objective, finite Ens; 2. the conditions of finite Ens — finite One; 3. finite trine Ens — Creation; 4. the Universe — Ens-as-principle — Angels; 5. the first created intelligence; 6. the Soul of the World; 7. Man; 8. Time; 9. Space; 10. Matter; 11. Numbers; 12. Forms; 13. Laws — ultimate Reasons — Harmony — Beauty; 14. the End (purpose); 15. Realisation of the End.

Clearly, each of all the subjects listed would require lengthy treatment.

He put pen to paper in 1848 but soon had to interrupt his writing due to other engagements. He did not return to the task until August 1852, at which time he wrote the *Preface*. Again, however, he broke off from the undertaking for a year, returning to it towards the end of 1853. This time he worked at it intensely throughout 1854, so that in the course of a year he wrote almost two thousand pages. Unfortunately, deteriorating health limited his application, so much so that he never completed even *Part One* before his untimely death at the age of 58 in July 1855. Nevertheless, little was missing from his treatise on ontology; he had also written something on other sections: dialectics, the idea, the real. The whole manuscript was

therefore left unpublished. But one of his companions, Francesco Paoli, considered the work so important that he set about almost immediately to prepare it for publication. He managed to publish the first volume before other duties prevented him from continuing. However, another close friend, Paolo Perez, took up the task and prepared and published the second volume.

THE FIRST EDITION

Volume 1 was published in 1859, volume 2 in 1863; the remainder following, up till the last volume (no. 5) in 1874. Paoli found the manuscript in good order, with revisions and corrections made by Rosmini himself. Where the author had used parentheses but had not inserted the references that he intended, Paoli supplied the references. Sometimes he found it helpful or even necessary (if the text was to be understood) to make amendments, but always indicated these changes by asterisks. Where he found something missing or some notes made by Rosmini in the margin he indicated this by an asterisk in the text and placed the information in a footnote. When the punctuation made understanding very difficult or virtually impossible, Paoli altered it to give what seemed the obvious and necessary sense.

THE CRITICAL EDITION, 1998

This edition, for the first time, keeps strictly faithful to the author's manuscript, including the punctuation. It also adds, at the foot of the page, those parts and passages, some rather long, that Rosmini had deleted and replaced, or intended to replace.

This faithful adherence to the original manuscript, which is the criterion for the critical edition of all Rosmini's works, produced difficulties for the translators. The punctuation is sometimes obviously incorrect; on other occasions a word has been inadvertently written in place of another word, or others are clearly incorrect (a singular for a plural, or vice versa); on occasion the sense requires a negative which is not present. Frequently the 1859 edition spells 'being' with an upper case 'b' while the critical edition spells it with lower case, and vice versa. Both editions have retained passages that Rosmini had crossed out, because the editors were satisfied he had intended simply to re-write them. If the editors had omitted them, the text preceding these passages would not have had any

connection whatsoever with the text following them. In other cases, Paoli re-inserted some passages because he was convinced they strengthened and made clearer the teaching Rosmini was giving.

THE TRANSLATION

As a result of the above problems in the critical edition, the translators encountered so many difficulties in determining the sense, that they kept the first edition permanently at their side and referred to it for help and clarification. And because the work was to be published in the English-speaking world that knows so little or nothing of Rosmini, they decided to make use of the editing by Paoli and Perez wherever necessary in order to give meaning to the text. Because ontology is a demanding science, it was felt better to have the text read with meaning than cause the reader irremediable frustration. The present translation therefore varies slightly in some places from the critical edition.

Translation of some particular Italian words

Rosmini sometimes uses words whose English equivalent is now obsolete or very rare in contemporary English, or they have changed their meaning. Their translation has been dealt with at length in the Forewords to vol. 1 of *A New Essay* and vol. 1 of *Psychology*. However, the reader may be satisfied with the following explanations.

Essere and *ente*: both these can be *being* in English, but are translated respectively as *being* and *ens*. Rosmini himself expressly stated that he gave a particular meaning to each and wished this difference to be kept. In this first volume he defines *being* as ‘the act of every ens and entity’, and says that ‘*ens* has two definitions: a) a subject that has being; b) being, with some of its terms’ (cf. 211).

Intestino is translated by the rarely used adjective *intestine*. It means *internal*, and is used by Rosmini instead of the simple *interno* when relating in some way to elements connected with sensation. For example, *intestine movement* is movement of internal parts of a body.

Organato is translated *organated*, rather than *organised*, because the author means an entity composed of organs, where ‘organ’ has

a much more general meaning than the contemporary English ‘organ’.

Organismo, translated as *organism*, is *any* organised living unit in general, including the human being. It can also mean any multiplicity discernible in the unity of an ens.

Sensitivo and *sensibile* are translated by the English equivalents: *sensitive* and *sensible*, the former meaning ‘that which feels’, the latter ‘feelable’.

The English *passion* is retained for the Italian *passione* which Rosmini uses to name simply that which is experienced in general and is the opposite of *action*.

Ideologia (and its forms) is translated *ideology* and means that branch of philosophy which investigates *knowledge* and *ideas*. It does not mean some political system, or any system guiding people’s behaviour.

Other words that might cause difficulty at first can be understood from the context or are explained by the author himself.

A fitting conclusion to this short description of Antonio Rosmini’s *Theosophy* may be the opening words of Francesco Paoli’s introduction to the first edition, which he wrote under the title ‘To the friends of truth’:

Truth is being, knowable and known through itself. Hence, those who examine the nature of Being and investigate its intrinsic order, are lovers of truth. And those who, once Being is known, remain in loving contemplation of this Being, lovingly adhering to it and making it the measure of their judgments, affections and actions, are the friends of truth. The beloved truth of their love rewards them by revealing to them new and more wonderful secrets of Being, thus raising them to a much better state of life, in the order of morality and happiness. Indeed, if Being, knowable *per se*, is truth, then being, known through truth, is that which is true; and loved truth is good itself; and possessed good produces joy and perfection.

It was Paoli’s opinion that with *Theosophy* Rosmini had attained the term of his desires for the good of knowledge and humanity.

If it is true that ‘things are not always what they seem’, if immutable truth lies behind changeable and changing phenomena, Rosmini has endeavoured to lead the ‘lover of truth’ to it, to see and rejoice in unchanging, eternal truth.

TERENCE WATSON

*Durham,
May, 2007*

Contents

PREFACE. Self-evident ideological principles receive, in theosophy, further explanation when seen founded in subsistent Being	1
I. Two parts of metaphysics: psychology and theosophy	2
II. Theosophy is pure science, not practical science	3
III. Immoderate speculation	6
IV. Theosophical philosophy stands on its own, takes nothing from other sciences and excludes every hypothesis	8
V. How theosophy differs from other sciences	9
VI. How theosophy differs from other philosophical sciences. Regressive and progressive philosophy	10
VII. Three principles of what is humanly knowable: the ideal, the material, and the absolute principles	11
VIII. Hegel's error in method was to begin from the material principle, which he gratuitously made the absolute principle	13
IX. Philosophy and the system of what is knowable must begin from the ideal principle	14
X. Before we begin to philosophise, our state is one of <i>ordinary knowledge</i> and <i>methodical ignorance</i> , not of doubt	16
XI. Philosophy does not begin with reasoning, but with <i>observational reflection</i> , that is, with totally <i>direct</i> knowledge without any supposition	17
XII. Ideology is the science which establishes the starting point; psychology and logic furnish the material and formal conditions of theosophy	18
XIII. Philosophical sciences prior to theosophy use direct reasoning; theosophy uses circular but not viciously circular reasoning	19
XIV. Continuation — The three parts of theosophy: ontology, theology, cosmology	20
XV. Prior sciences can be called <i>common sciences</i> ; theosophy, <i>arcane science</i>	23

Part One

ONTOLOGY

THE PROBLEM OF ONTOLOGY

A Single Book, serving as Introduction to Ontology

Preamble	33
 CHAPTER 1. The relationship between ontology and rational theology, cosmology and ideology	
Article 1. Ontology precedes and must be distinguished from rational theology	34
Article 2. Ontology must precede cosmology because it is necessary for the perfect knowledge of finite ens	35
Article 3. The characteristic difference between ideology and ontology relative to the matter of these two sciences	37
Article 4. The characteristic difference between ontology and rational theology relative to the matter of these two sciences	38
 CHAPTER 2. The first form of the ontological problem: ‘How to reconcile the apparent modes of ens with the concept of being’. At what stage of human development does this problem present itself to the mind?	
42	
 CHAPTER 3. The second form of the ontological problem is: ‘to find the sufficient reason for the various manifestations of ens’	
Article 1. Why the understanding requires a sufficient reason for the different manifestations of ens	46
Article 2. The sufficient reason for the manifestations of ens must, if it is to satisfy our understanding, be one, necessary and objective	47
 CHAPTER 4. The third form of the ontological problem: ‘to find an equation between intuitive knowledge and knowledge by predication’	
52	
 CHAPTER 5. The fourth form of the ontological problem is: ‘How to reconcile the antinomies apparent in human thought’	
Article 1. Whenever intuitive and predicative knowledge are	

<i>Contents</i>	xv
not seen to form an equation, an antinomy remains in ontology	54
Article 2. We find the ontological problem in the real world, the ideal world and the moral world	58
CHAPTER 6. The fifth form of the ontological problem: ‘What is ens and what is non-ens?’	61
CHAPTER 7. Summary of the formulae in which the ontological problem is presented	63
CHAPTER 8. The possibility of providing ontology with a logical start	65
CHAPTER 9. The structure of reasoning used by the student of ontology	68
CHAPTER 10. Ontological reasoning proceeds in a circle, but not a vicious circle	73
CHAPTER 11. Division of ontology	77
ONTOLOGY	79

Book One The Categories

CHAPTER 1. The difficulty of finding a classification which includes all the varieties of being	86
CHAPTER 2. The ancients were in part familiar with the above difficulty, which they encountered in the course of their speculations	
Article 1. The first form in which the difficulty appeared to the ancients: the distinction between what is real and what is ideal has no place in the genera of entia	92
Article 2. The second form of the same difficulty for the ancients: did the categories classify the principles of entia or the entia themselves?	93
Article 3. The third and more direct form in which the difficulty was seen: ens is outside every genus	97

CHAPTER 3. The name ‘categories’	100
CHAPTER 4. Some relevant questions insufficiently distinguished by the ancient philosophers	104
CHAPTER 5. The question concerning principles or causes of entities	106
CHAPTER 6. Question concerning elements	109
CHAPTER 7. Question concerning the genera of entia	111
CHAPTER 8. Question concerning the classes of entia	114
CHAPTER 9. Question concerning the primal forms of being	117
CHAPTER 10. How the first classes of ens, that is, the first principles, first elements and first genera, are reduced to the three forms	119
CHAPTER 11. The three forms of being truly provide the categories of being	121
CHAPTER 12. Refutation of the Unitarians; confirmation of what has been said	123
CHAPTER 12 (continued). Refutation of the Unitarians; confirmation of what has been said	128
CHAPTER 13. The false road taken by some philosophers to solve the problem of ontology	138
CHAPTER 14. The sufficient reason for the three categories and forms of being	140
CHAPTER 15. Objections	
Article 1. First Objection: distinctions can be found only in the being we know	145
Article 2. Second objection: rational entia do not seem to be included in the three categories	148
Article 3. Third objection: it would seem that the three forms of being cannot be categories of being itself	149
CHAPTER 16. The error of philosophers who rank space and time among the categories	151

Contents

xvii

CHAPTER 17. How one form of being is distinguished from the other. The reciprocal insession of the three forms	153
CHAPTER 18. The teaching about container and content, universally speaking	156
CHAPTER 19. Why the trinity of supreme forms does not remove the unity of being	160
CHAPTER 20. The connection between this book and those that follow: the Trinity is the basis and mysterious foundation of theosophy	
Article 1. Connection with the books that follow	161
Article 2. The three forms of being are not the divine Trinity but something which is analogically referred to it	161
Article 3. The teaching about the divine Trinity can and must be accepted in philosophy	163
Article 4. Postulates necessary for the philosophical investigations of the books that follow	165

Book Two

Being-as-One

Preamble	169
----------	-----

Section One

The Language of Ontology

CHAPTER 1. The need to distinguish accurately the meaning of some words used in ontology	173
CHAPTER 2. The dialectical causes of the multiple meanings of 'being', and of other words referring to being	175
CHAPTER 3. The meanings of 'being' and of other words used in ontology	
Article 1. Definitions	179
Article 2. Being of intuition, virtual being, initial, abstract and ideal being	179
Article 3. The meanings of 'ens'	182
Article 4. The meaning of 'entity' and 'thing'	185
Article 5. The meaning of 'essence'	186
Article 6. The meaning of 'subject' and 'predicate'	192

Section Two

The System of Dialectical Unity

CHAPTER 1. The need which human intelligence has to reduce all that is knowable to one principle, and how the failure to define sufficiently the meaning of words has resulted in many erroneous systems	
Article 1. The antinomy between the unity and plurality of being is solved only by a dialectical distinction of concepts	194
Article 2. The ancient philosophers and the problem of the unity and plurality of being	195
Article 3. Why Fichte was unable to solve the problem of the unity and plurality of being	196
Article 4. Schelling's treatment of the problem of the unity and plurality of being	
§1. <i>Schelling posits the problem incorrectly</i>	197
§2. <i>Schelling posits incorrectly the conditions for the solution of the problem</i>	201
§3. <i>Fichte's and Schelling's solution to the problem is not satisfactory</i>	208
Article 5. How to satisfy the mind's need for unity	214
Article 6. Explanation of the errors of Schelling and his disciple, Hegel	218
CHAPTER 2. System of dialectical identity	
Article 1. Brief exposition of the system	223
Article 2. How being is the <i>first determinable</i> , the <i>common determinant</i> and the ultimate <i>determination</i> of every entity	228
Article 3. Initial being is the principle of what is knowable, and the dialectical beginning of all things	231
Article 4. The part of ens which corresponds with <i>initial being</i>	236
§1. <i>The question is resolved relative to contingent ens</i>	237
§2. <i>The question is resolved relative to necessary ens</i>	240
Article 5. Important corollaries. Three important corollaries from what has been said	
§1. <i>First corollary, the a priori demonstration of the existence of God (NE, 3: 1456–1460; Sistema, 178)</i>	244
§2. <i>Second corollary: the a priori demonstration of creation</i>	248
§3. <i>Third corollary: the imperfect grasp of the creative act on the occasion of intellectual perception</i>	253
Article 6. Plato's dialectic	256

Section Three

**The Relationship between Being-As-One
and its Terms in General**

CHAPTER 1. The investigation to be carried out in this book and the next about the multiplicity of being	
Article 1. Definition of being in itself as opposed to dialectical being	259
Article 2. The principle of the theory of being-as-one	260
Article 3. The principle of the theory of trine being	261
Article 4. What remains to be done to complete the investiga- tions carried out in this book	262
Article 5. A comment on ontological method	263
CHAPTER 2. An investigation about that which being confers on its terms from the point of view of absolute, infinite ens	265
CHAPTER 3. The investigation about that which being con- fers on its terms from the point of view of finite entia. The analysis of this investigation	270
CHAPTER 4. That which in being is incommunicable to finite real things	
Article 1. The origin of the incommunicability of certain properties of being to finite real things	271
Article 2. Six first incommunicable properties of being	271
Article 6. Six other properties of being, incommunicable to finite real things: 1. universality; 2. necessity; 3. immutability; 4. eternity; 5. absolute simplicity; 6. absolute primality	274
Article 4. The twofold relationship of being to contingent things: one relationship arises from the communicable properties, the other from the incommunicable properties of being	277
Article 5. The incommunicable and communicable properties of being relative to the essences of finite things	277
CHAPTER 5. The nature of the communication and conjunc- tion of being with real things	
Article 1. Triple relationship of being with the real	279
Article 2. The relationship of identity	279
Article 3. The direct and indirect relationship of act-cause	281
Article 4. The direct relationship of act-cause, or entification	283
Article 5. The antinomies found by Plato in his meditation on entification. A critique of them	284

Article 6. The indirect relationship of <i>act-cause</i> or <i>action</i>	295
Article 7. The relationship of subject-cause	297
CHAPTER 6. Does being receive nothing from its conjunction with finite real things?	298
CHAPTER 7. The properties of being, communicable to finite real things, and predicable of them	303

Section Four

What Subjective Being Communicates to Finite Real Things

CHAPTER 1. The first property communicated to finite real things by initial, actuating being is existence	
Article 1. Existence	312
Article 2. Duration	313
CHAPTER 2. The second property: initial, actuating being communicates to finite real things the act of their acts	314
Article 1. Concept of potency and act	314
Article 2. Concept of virtuality	315
Article 3. Classification of potencies — potencies in the proper sense of the word, and in the dialectical sense	343
Article 4. Being considered as dialectical potency	343
§1. <i>If and how being, considered as the first determinable, is dialectical potency — Teaching about the possible</i>	344
§2. <i>If and how being, considered as determinant cause, is potency</i>	348
§3. <i>Whether being, considered as ultimate determination, is potency — The question concluded</i>	351
Article 5. Is the virtuality of initial being a limitation?	353
CHAPTER 3. Continuation — Teaching about possible being	
Article 1. The state of the question: 'How can being, as first determinable, be potency?'	354
Article 2. General solution of the question	354
Article 3. Possibility of ens — Ten genera of potencies	355
Article 4. The possible predicate of undetermined being relative to its proper and improper terms	356

Article 5. The possible, predicated of the terms of being — Are possible finite things something positive? Logical possibility and metaphysical possibility of these finite things: the two-fold necessity of absolute being and of possible finite things	359
CHAPTER 4. Continuation. — Act considered in undetermined being	
Article 1. A summary of what has been said, and its connection with what follows	368
Article 2. How opiniative dialectical potency is reconciled with the actuality proper to being	369
Article 3. How ideal dialectical potency is reconciled with the actuality of being	372
Article 4. The sense in which we have called being ‘universal matter’, that is, ‘the first determinable’	380
CHAPTER 5. Important corollaries from the previous teaching	396
Article 1. First corollary: the ontological reason for the principle: ‘Only what is conceivable can exist’	396
Article 2. Second corollary: only that can really exist which is not only conceivable, but conceived by some mind	397
Article 3. Third corollary: creation cannot be carried out except by God	398
Article 4. Fourth corollary: the concept and necessary existence of divine freedom	399
Article 5. Fifth corollary: emanatism is an erroneous system	400
Article 6. Sixth corollary: pantheism is an erroneous system	400
Article 7. Seventh corollary: description of creation	401
Article 8. Eighth corollary: the Exemplar of the World is not the divine Word, although the Exemplar is found in two modes in the Word: 1. eminently, 2. consequently	412
Article 9. Ninth corollary: the created real is not the divine real	426
Article 10. The tenth corollary: the real of finite entia, as proper to them and pertaining to their subjective (or extrasubjective) existence, is outside God; but it exists eminently in absolute, objective being as object of the creating, intellectual act	427
Article 11. Eleventh corollary: ideal being, the light of the human mind, is not the divine Word, nor the divine essence, but an appurtenance of the divine essence	440
Article 12. Twelfth corollary — difference between initial being and the real, the two elements of the world	443

CHAPTER 6. The third property which being communicates to finite real things: the intelligibility of affirmation	452
--	-----

Section Five

What Objective Being Communicates to Finite Real Things

CHAPTER 1. The <i>finite form</i> which being communicates to the real in the mind, before finite ens can exist with an existence of its own	
Article 1. The finite real cannot receive existence unless it is fully determined	456
Article 2. How ideal being contains the principle of determination of the finite real	461
Article 3. In the universe there is something which pertains to the Creator's choice, and something which is a necessary consequence	471
Article 4. The supreme genera of matter, that is, of reality, which make up the world	471
Article 5. How the divine mind was able to find in the unlimited real the supreme genera of the realities which make up the world	473
Article 6. The number of elements making up the form of the finite real	474
Article 7. Determinations common and not common to every finite ens	476
CHAPTER 2. Continuation — The first element of the finite form common to every finite ens: supreme generic quality	478
CHAPTER 3. Continuation — The second element of the <i>finite form</i> common to every finite ens: objective intelligibility	479
CHAPTER 4. Continuation — The third element of the <i>finite form</i> common to every finite ens: determined quantity	
Article 1. Origin of the infinity and universality of ideas	482
Article 2. Definition of quantity	483
Article 3. Ontological quantity	484
Article 4. Abstract ontological quantity	487

Article 5. Continuation — Discrete quantity — Abstract one is absolutely measure; it is not measured; all other measures are measurable and receive being-measures from abstract one	488
Article 6. Cosmological quantity	490
Article 7. Continuation — The concept of ‘quality’	505
Article 8. Physical quantity, that is, the finite real in itself	
§1. <i>Quantity of the determined finite real, considered in the full species</i>	511
§2. <i>Quantity of finite real considered in different finite real things compared with each other</i>	515
CHAPTER 5. Continuation — unity, the fourth element of the finite form common to every finite ens	532
Article 1. Universal definition of unity and one	532
Article 2. Various meanings of ‘one’, all of which admit of the above definition	532
Article 3. Are one and ens interchangeable?	534
Article 4. Origin of the concept of <i>common one</i>	534
Article 5. ‘One’ predicated of a single subject and predicated as common to many subjects — The concept of plurality and number	536
Article 6. Is ideal being one?	539
Article 7. The concepts ‘individual’ and ‘common’	541
CHAPTER 6. [The concepts ‘whole’, ‘division’ and ‘parts’]	545
Article 1. The concept ‘whole’	545
Article 2. The concepts ‘division’ and ‘parts’	547
CHAPTER 7. The concept ‘simple’	
Article 1. The antinomy between ens-as-one and composite ens	550
Article 2. A certain kind of simplicity is essential to every ens	550
Article 3. The concepts ‘composition’ and ‘composite’	551
Article 4. The difference between <i>objective composites, dialectical composites</i> and <i>real composites</i>	552
Article 5. To know whether an ens is simple or composite, and in what sense, we need to consider if many entities compose the <i>subject</i> of the ens, that is, the subjective ens	554
Article 6. Simplicity and multiplicity considered in objects as objects, that is, in ideas	556
Article 7. Simplicity and dialectical composition	566
Article 8. Dianoetical composition	568
Article 9. Simplicity and composition in real things	570

Article 10. Continuation: the teaching about the base and appendices of entia	576
CHAPTER 8. Theory of Identity	
Article 1. The formation of the concept of identity. Identity as the opposite of the concept of dialectical difference, and as the opposite of the concept of objective difference	582
Article 2. The difficulty encountered in judgments about the identity of entia; the seat of identity; double kind of these judgments	584
Article 3. Identity relative to extrinsic variation	586
Article 4. Identity relative to intrinsic variation	595
Article 5. The concept 'becoming'	600
Article 6. The richness and dignity of entia	634
Article 7. The simplicity of absolute being and of undetermined being.	635
Article 8. The concept 'other'	637
Article 9. Recapitulation of the doctrine of 'one'	639
CHAPTER 9. The doctrine of limits	
Article 1. Introduction to the discussion	641
Article 2. The difference between 'limited' and 'unlimited' is a difference between entia	641
Article 3. The ontological origin of limitation	642
Article 4. Infinite reality is limitable only as known; its imitability	644
Article 5. Concepts similar to the concept of limitation	645
Article 6. The definition of limitation: its double meaning explained	646
Article 7. Absolute and relative limit; their measurement	647
Article 8. Analysis of the definition of limit; deduction of the different genera of limits	648
Article 9. The first class of genera of limits, arising from the diversity of subjects of the limitations	
§1. <i>There are six supreme genera of the first class</i>	649
§2. <i>The limitation of being</i>	649
§3. <i>The limitation of categorical forms and of mental entities</i>	650
§4. <i>The limitation of entia</i>	651
Article 10. Continuation: real finite entia; entitative limit, transcendent limit and essential limit	652
Article 11. Continuation: subjective transcendent limit and objective transcendent limit; secondary limits	653

Contents

xxv

Article 12. The second class of genera of limits, arising from the different nature of the limits themselves	655
Article 13. The third class of genera of limits have their foundation in the different conjunction between the limit and the entity which is the subject of the conjunction	656
§1. <i>The limits whose subject is a previously conceived, real, individual ens</i>	657
§2. <i>Continuation: the source of the indefinite, and why certain limits can always be diminished without being annihilated</i>	659
§3. <i>Continuation: the inherence of secondary limit</i>	665
§4. <i>The limits prior to which some entities, but no real ens, are conceived</i>	667
§5. <i>Limits prior to which no ens is conceived nor any entity which can be subject of limitation</i>	673
§6. <i>Continuation: unity, or vague one, is present in the first, undetermined finite reality in the divine mind</i>	683
§7. <i>Continuation: 'Is the number of possible finite entia finite or infinite?'</i>	684
§8. <i>Continuation: the composite of possible finite entia is as such ordered</i>	686
Article 14. The quiddity of finite ens is constituted by its limits, not by what it has positively	688
Article 15. Does the primal finite reality, before receiving existence in itself, need to be determined by a constant series of generic and specific determinations, or can it obtain a full determination with a number (sometimes greater, sometimes smaller) of successive differences?	690
CHAPTER 10. Recapitulation and Conclusion	692
Appendix	
1. The Neoplatonists' teaching about images	694
2. Subsistent being in St. Thomas and Cajetan	695
3. Aristotle's definition of potency	697
4. Ideas and real entia in Aristotle and Plato	698
5. Aristotle: the mind is in some way all things	699
6. St. Thomas on ideas in God	701
7. St. Thomas on God's understanding in creation	702
8. The generation of the divine Word	704
9. Act and relationships in the Blessed Trinity	706
10. St. Thomas on division and unity	707

Original Language References	709
Index of Persons	725
General Index	727

PREFACE

Self-evident ideological principles receive, in theosophy, further explanation when seen founded in subsistent Being

1. In the midst of his civic duties Gaspare Contarini, one of those great, outstanding Italians forgotten by their countrymen, found time and repose to write seven books *Della prima Filosofia*, and concluded this work by exhorting others to complete what he had generously begun.¹ His highly authoritative words were borne away on the wind but, please God, the wisdom of our fellow-countrymen will now at last come to grips with the outline which this Cardinal of Venice conceived and published three centuries ago as a prologue to development in his own time and in the future.

Although not the noblest motive, sorrow alone — or perhaps indignation at the sight of such long-lasting indifference and apathy in Italy to those wise people who point out its true road to glory — should be sufficient to make us appreciate and further the exhortation of this great man. His diligence and prudence in the highest affairs of his country were combined with Christian virtue and indefatigable zeal in the most important business of the Church, yet he still found sufficient time and serenity of mind to devote himself to the most abstract, arduous, philosophical speculations. I want, therefore, to continue in my old age what I began many years ago and, if it please the One in whose hands our destiny lies and from whom we have all that we are, to add in God's honour another treatise to my previous philosophical works. This book will deal more

¹ He concludes the work with the following words: 'People more learned than myself and less involved in civil affairs can perfect the matter. My intention was to show why philosophy (or wisdom, if you prefer), by far and away the principal discipline, should be treated first. I myself feel unequal to the task, which requires more time than I have available in the midst of so many raging wars, public duties and travels entailed by my office as legate'.*

distinctly with subjects attributed to *First Philosophy* by both Contarini and Aristotle, and by me to what I would prefer to call *Theosophy*.

I

Two parts of metaphysics: psychology and theosophy

2. I have explained this title in my *Preface to the Metaphysical Works* ([*PSY*, 1:] 21–29). I showed that metaphysics, which deals with ens considered in its entirety (*ibid.*, 8–13), can be fittingly reduced to two sciences: psychology and theosophy. This division, which differs little from that of the ancients, harmonises with St. Augustine's way of thinking. He reduces all philosophical investigations ultimately to two: study of the soul and study of God.

The first gives us knowledge of ourselves, the second, knowledge of our origin. The first, which is sweeter, makes us *worthy* of beatitude and is for learners; the second, which is more valuable, makes us truly blessed and is for those who have already been instructed. This order, proper to the study of wisdom, enables us to understand the order of things, that is, to acknowledge two worlds (the sensible and the intelligible)² and the father himself of the universe, of whom the soul knows only one thing: that it does not know him.³

² *Retract.*, 1: 3.

³ *De Ord.*, 2: 18. — Cf. *Sol.*, 2: 1; *De C. D.*, 8: 4; *De V. R.*, 29: 35. — When St. Augustine says, 'Knowledge of ourselves makes us *worthy* of beatitude, and knowledge of God makes us blessed', he means complete, supernatural knowledge, not purely philosophical speculation. These two kinds of knowledge are not understood in an exclusive sense, as if one could be totally separate from the other.

II

Theosophy is pure science, not practical science

3. I must not promise however, or seem to promise, more than I can give. I have already published the first part of metaphysics (psychology). I now begin the second for which I have not found a more appropriate title than 'theosophy', which perhaps is too majestic. I would not like my readers to consider me arrogant, as if I thought that with this vast philosophical discipline I could give to my neighbour what science cannot give, even allowing for the fact that science will be restricted and impoverished by my own inadequacy. I take this opportunity therefore to remove this prejudice using the words I have quoted from Augustine.

When he says, 'Knowledge of ourselves makes us *worthy* of beatitude, and knowledge of God makes us blessed', he is clearly speaking about 1. *practical knowledge*, the only knowledge that is total and final; 2. knowledge of ourselves from which we derive humble submission to the supreme, final cause, the ultimate end of things; 3. knowledge of God. In this third kind of knowledge, the mind speculates, but the spirit, together with the whole human being, fully adheres to the cause and end. Outside and beyond this end, there is no other good in which we can rest satisfied.

4. In this knowledge, we must distinguish two principal levels. The first was taught before Christ, when the author of the book of Wisdom wrote, 'For to know you is complete justice.'⁴ The second was revealed by Christ himself in a much more sublime concept when he said, 'And this is eternal life, to know you the only true God and JESUS Christ whom you have sent.'⁵ Here there is not only science but total wisdom: the human being, simple and one, created by God 'with a certain blessed instinct towards him' (to use a phrase of a Christian heroine⁶), aspires and tends to what is total. No part, therefore, separated from this totality, can find rest.

⁴ Wis 15: 3.

⁵ Jn 17: 3.

⁶ St. Catherine Fieschi, in her *Trattato del Purgatorio*.

5. But what are these parts of the total corpus of wisdom? — There is *supernatural, practical knowledge*, which is a gratuitous, direct gift of the infinite maker of the human race but always total wisdom, never a part. There is *natural, practical knowledge*, which we form for ourselves through our own activity which we receive together with nature from our maker. This is also a kind of totality, although of an order infinitely inferior to the first. Consequently, this knowledge, considered in itself and leaving aside for the moment the question whether we can of ourselves acquire it or not, is understood as a whole, not as a part. It would, however, be difficult to distinguish all the characteristics which make this totality of wisdom (according to nature) differ from the first totality, and deficient in its regard. But I need not enter into this investigation here; it belongs to a higher discipline.⁷ All we need to know at present are the parts of wisdom.

Wisdom, therefore, has *speculative* and *practical* parts, both equally distinguishable in supernatural and natural wisdom. ‘Speculative’ is usually limited to meaning scientific knowledge, but I understand it as meaning everything concerning pure understanding, including direct, spontaneous knowledge. We must now consider the bond between these two parts of wisdom, as I have called them.

No *practical* part ever lacks a speculative part on which it depends for support. It seems therefore that in considering what is factually the case, we cannot say that the practical part is only a part of wisdom. The practical part is the totality of wisdom; it is not separate from, but rooted in the speculative part. We can call it ‘part’ only by abstraction, when we consider it independently of the speculative part to which it is joined.

The *speculative* part, however, truly stands on its own; it alone has the concept of part. This can be better understood if we note that all human sciences and philosophical theories are composed of it alone. The practical part, on the other hand, is never written down but only carried out. It is not found in libraries, no matter how large and well cared for, but is forever present in the spirit of human beings and of every other intelligent being; no cause whatsoever can make it depart from its

⁷ *Antropologia soprannaturale.*

natural dwelling. Hence, the end of human beings is one, the intimate fusion of science and virtue so that these are no longer two but a single good, fully satisfying intelligent nature. If knowledge is separated from this totality by the action not of the whole human being but of a particular potency, it becomes speculative, is considered solely in itself and written down. It is no longer the *end* and the good which we desire, but something other, and has the nature of *means*.

6. The satisfaction proper to human nature is found therefore in its better part, outside anything written or to be written by experts. However, we need to clarify the matter further because we may ask, 'In ethics can we not write about virtue, and in theology about God?' The answer is in fact 'No' because only the *idea* of virtue and of God is written about in these sciences. These *ideas* are neither virtue nor God and pertain to the speculative, not the practical part. This reason is not easy to understand fully, so I will try to explain it.

The *practical* part pertains to the order of *what is real*, the *speculative* to the order of *what is ideal*. All *signs* (and words are a class of signs) refer by their nature solely to what is ideal. When we use words to make us think of something real, they do so only by means of the idea of the real thing. Hence, the quality of *sign* pertains purely to the intelligible order, not to the sensible, real order, although the thing we take as sign is something sensible. A sign as such is simply a relationship, and relationships exist in and by means of the understanding. The fact that something is real does not mean it acquires the quality and condition of sign. What is real does not, as real, indicate anything; it expresses itself alone, without as it were leaving itself. It is the understanding which assumes what is real to indicate something else, although it could not do so without first *conceiving* both the sign and the thing indicated by the sign. The sign and the thing indicated are two terms, not two pure realities, conceived by the mind. Hence, we learn from ideology that real things can be compared with each other only by means of an idea to which they relate (*NE*, 1: 182–187). We must say the same about the sign and the thing indicated. All this explains why the invention of signs is founded solely in ideas and pertains to the world of knowledge. Signs, words and writing are used merely to present our minds with *information* about

things; we do not give ourselves the *things* themselves. Virtue, affection, action and everything practical — in a word, everything real — exceeds the efficacy of natural signs, and is totally outside anything spoken, no matter how eloquently, and outside anything written, no matter how learned, elegant and sublime.

7. We can now understand some essential limits to what I intend to teach. In brief, I must leave aside anything unattainable by natural reasoning, including anything known through divine revelation and used by reasoning to strengthen and extend itself. Furthermore, as pure knowledge, it does not and cannot presume to be practical activity.

III

Immoderate speculation

8. From what has been said, we can see the nature of immoderate speculation. By that, I mean absolute immoderation, not immoderation relative to the individual, of which I spoke in *Logica*, ([1179–]1184). Whenever we try to reduce the whole human being to speculation, and substitute the part for the whole, we presume that all human good must lie solely in speculation. As result, we make every effort to turn what is real into an idea; we try to derive from the idea the matter which constitutes the sensible world, together with the Spirit and finally God himself. This is clearly immoderate speculation, and an example of the kind of sophism called ‘of the part’ (*Logica* [727–730]). If all this could be found in the idea, human good would without doubt be contained whole and complete in knowledge, and we could all abstract everything we needed from what we heard and read. Nothing would be lacking, even the slightest thing such as our daily bread. But although Schelling and Hegel claimed that they had reached such total knowledge, they still needed to teach it publicly not only for the sake of attaining the practice of virtue (which would make it worthwhile), but even to draw a salary. This proves without doubt that their absolute idea did not contain everything. If the

[7–8]

world were present in it, as they said it was, wheat, bread and wine would have been there also.

9. My theosophy certainly cannot give the public such magnificent and wonderful promises, but it will explain how the speculative human mind is inclined to find everything in itself. In other words, it will demonstrate that there must be an *object* which contains effectively within itself the universality of things, and that this object is not the idea in our mind. Nevertheless, the idea which shines in the human mind draws its form as object from that object. Hence, because the idea also is *per se* object, we easily confuse it, in our speculation, with the complete, subsistent object. A strong desire then arises in us of attributing to the idea which we intuit the attributes of the subsistent object which we know must exist although we do not intuit it. The tendency to unity, an essential element of every intellect, causes this error and forces us towards an abyss of unseen absurdities in the hope that these will satisfy our desperate purpose.

10. We should acknowledge (and this theosophy will demonstrate) that if being itself has an objective existence, it is *per se* intelligible, and that if it contains everything (that which is not being is nothing), everything must also be contained in that which is intelligible. Theosophy will also clearly show that, although being must actually have this primal form, human nature cannot intuit THE INTELLIGIBLE WHICH CONTAINS ALL. Human nature arrives at this solely by reasoning, which can provide only a formal, negative concept of it. We cannot therefore have either the *absolute knowledge* which Schelling attributes to us through *direct intuition*, or the *absolute idea* which his disciple, Georg Hegel (who was opposed to all immediacy), promised us by *mediate reasoning*. Like a hard working spider, Hegel laboured at spinning and re-spinning a web which enmeshed only himself. On his deathbed he confessed that only one person had understood him, and even he had not understood him fully. Thus, according to his own words, he left neither heritage nor disciples, although some now call themselves Hegelians. But if good sense has removed this very intricate web from philosophy, theosophy will not be wasting time by demonstrating that behind this well-conceived and ingenious error lies a great truth which those courageous, speculative minds tried in

vain to grasp. This truth is precisely the necessity I spoke of: there must be ‘something intelligible and eternal which contains everything’. Those thinkers arbitrarily and falsely called it ‘idea’, a word which really means the light, devoid of content, in human nature. But ‘that which is intelligible, eternal and contains everything’ has always been called and can only be called ‘WORD OF GOD’, a name given to it by Christianity which made it known to human beings who by nature do not know it.

IV

Theosophical philosophy stands on its own, takes nothing from other sciences and excludes every hypothesis

11. Nevertheless, although *absolute knowledge* is proper to God but not to us, we do have an *absolute knowledge* relative to form, but not to matter (*NE*, 1: 325, 474–476). This kind of absoluteness of human knowledge caused errors in the German school, which I have already discussed. Theosophy must speak at length about absolute human knowledge, indeed it must use it and more importantly be it. Theosophy is simply the Theory of Ens (this definition is not to be despised, despite its being only two words). Because ens is first of all infinite and absolute, and only later enclosed and existing within limits as finite, no thought could attain it unless thought itself somehow became absolute. A thought informed by an object which is in some way absolute, is itself in some way made absolute. Plato therefore rightly called the treatise on *what is greatest* the treatise about ens (περὶ δὲ τοῦ μεγίστου τε καὶ ἀρχηγού πρώτου).⁸

12. There is nothing in the universe or in our mind antecedent to ens or being. When, in the order of things, we remove being, nothing remains except darkness in the order of cognitions. For this reason the doctrine of ens, which I call ‘theosophy’, corresponds to the concept of philosophy in the ancients. According to them, philosophy differs from other sciences in that all other sciences suppose undemonstrated principles. Philosophy, however, which borrows nothing from anywhere, uses its own

⁸ *Soph.*, p. 243.

materials to construct itself. It starts from no gratuitous hypothesis or supposition — on the contrary, it seeks and establishes τὸ ἀνυπόθετον [that which is not supposed]⁹ which gives it an unshakeable basis and admits only what is necessary.¹⁰

V

How theosophy differs from other sciences

13. If there is nothing outside being, theosophy, which deals with this object, would seem to absorb and contain within itself all other sciences. If so, theosophy would be proposing something impossible and rash, as though it intended to rid the world of all other disciplines. We must see therefore how it differs from other sciences and has its own definite limits. Certainly all sciences deal with things pertaining to ens, but dealing with particular entia and their appurtenances differs from dealing with Ens and Being as Ens and Being. Theosophy is concerned with the latter, other sciences with the former. The following considerations will help us understand this fully.

14. Our intimate activity of thought and attention divides ens by concentrating on one part or aspect of it, while ignoring the rest and treating it as if it did not exist. We use words to indicate the part or aspect to which we direct our attention; we reason and enuntiate many things about it. Later, we rouse ourselves from this kind of dream and acknowledge that we have been dealing with only a part or aspect of ens. We now turn our attention to the whole within which we consider the part or particular aspect. I have used two expressions for this double mode of action of the mind: *partial thought* for the first kind of attention, *total thought* for the second kind (PSY, [2: 1319–1320, 1407–1412]). The first mode of thought and knowledge is the source of the different sciences; the second,

⁹ Seneca, *Ep.*, 1: 18. — Cf. Van Heusde, *Initia Philos. plat.*, 2: 12.

¹⁰ Does philosophy exclude arguments ending in probability? They are not proper to philosophy and demonstrate the imperfection of science. They can be called philosophical only in so far as they have a necessary element, that is, the argument must end in probability.

the source of *theosophy*, which considers ens as ens and therefore in its *totality*. All sciences certainly deal with (and must deal with) something pertaining to ens, but because they deal with ens only in so far as it is divided by natural limitations or by the mind's view of it, they prescind and abstract from its total nature which, forgotten and excluded by them, is taken up by theosophy as its matter and argument.

15. We see here not only the difference between theosophy and other sciences, but how theosophy pre-eminently excels them all, unifying and completing them in itself. Although human thought is indeed exercised in the partial, unilateral mode, intelligence does not find peace in the knowledge of parts and aspects. Our mind journeys on, either stopping temporarily here and there (or even dying on the journey, as travellers do) or pressing on at varying speed. Our mind is naturally and continually intent on attaining *ultimate reasons*; only in the whole and in the subject can the parts and different aspects be explained; and whatever pertains in any way to ens is through ens and has its reason for existing in ens. Hence, the only discipline which considers ens as such, neither more nor less, and thus solely in its entirety and fullness, is the term of the desire of that science which continually stimulates and moves all finite intelligences.

VI

How theosophy differs from other philosophical sciences. Regressive and progressive philosophy

16. Although theosophy does not absorb into itself other sciences, it seems to appropriate and claim for itself the quality of scientific philosophy. If its task is to determine the supreme reasons present in the totality of ens, and philosophy is simply 'the science of ultimate reasons', then all philosophy can apparently be reduced to this single science of theosophy. No other science, it would seem, is worthy to be called philosophy. However although the purpose of philosophy is indeed ultimate reasons, they cannot be discovered, assembled, defined,

[15–16]

ordered and unified by those who love and search for true science, unless they undertake a long journey of thought and reason and carry out many investigations. Some ultimate reasons are intuited first by the human mind, but reflection reveals them only after all the others — and every science is of its nature reflective knowledge (*NE*, 3: 1472; *Logica*, 69–71). All the labour of the philosopher’s mind, therefore, to find the ultimate ‘why(s)’, the object of his attention, is philosophical. This work, however, is so abundant and complicated that when expressed in an orderly way in words or writing, it divides into many sciences, like stopping places on a long journey. The last science and completion of all the others is theosophy.

Moreover, granted that theosophy must be so ordered that it has a start and principle from which all its other members and consequences derive (scientific knowledge requires this if our noblest reflection is to be satisfied), how is it possible to arrive immediately at the summit from which all science descends? I have therefore accepted the distinction between *regressive* and *progressive philosophy*. The former, by means of reflection, leads the mind back to the start or principle from which the science of ens is derived; the latter is the science of Ens developed from its principle (*NE*, 1, *App.*, no. 35: (5), (31)–(34)), that is, theosophy. There is also a *middle philosophy* which provides both the formal conditions (logic) and material conditions (psychology) by which the speculative mind can pass from regress-I’ve philosophy (ideology) to progressive, theosophical philosophy. Theosophy, although alone meriting the title ‘theory’, is not therefore the only philosophical science; there are others that necessarily precede it.

VII

Three principles of what is humanly knowable: the ideal, the material, and the absolute principles

17. Philosophical thought and the whole system of human knowledge has three principles: the formal, objective principle (*idea*), the subjective principle (*soul*), and the essential, objective

[17]

principle (*ens*). All that is knowable by human beings can therefore be ordered in three ways:

1. By beginning from the idea which is the light by which everything knowable is known. This idea is *something known first*, prior to all other known things.

2. By beginning from the intelligent soul. Although everything we think and speculate about has the nature of object, it takes on the form of subjective knowledge in this sense: the acts of the intelligent subject give us cognitions which presuppose the intelligent subject as *some first thing* prior to them from which they are derived in the form of *human cognitions*.

3. Finally, by beginning from *ens*, which is everything we think. The intelligent subject itself is, but only by participating in *ens*. *Ens* is therefore presupposed as prior to the intelligent subject. It is also something *first* from which, as from a starting point, we can begin and order all its members, that is, all the entities to which everything knowable is referred.

In the *order of cognitions considered absolutely*, the idea is first; in the *order of the relationship between cognitions and the human subject* to whom cognitions are communicated, the *intelligent subject* is first; in the *absolute order of knowable objects*, *ens* is first. Three sciences therefore: ideology, psychology and theosophy, which can be considered as three centres around which different schools grouped philosophy in three different ways and thus gave philosophy a different character.

18. But are these three methods equally logical? Do they all satisfy the essential law of philosophy which requires them not to take their object from elsewhere, nor to begin from a hypothesis nor to found their arguments on something gratuitously supposed? Before I can reply to these questions, I must examine more diligently the very serious and difficult question, 'What is the starting point of philosophy?'

VIII

**Hegel's error in method was to begin from
the material principle, which he gratuitously made
the absolute principle**

19. Hegel, aware of the importance of the question, replied: 'The starting point, whatever it is, is always a supposition, because all *direct* knowledge is purely hypothetical.' This opinion was suggested to him by *sensism*, from which the German school could never be purged, despite its name 'transcendental idealism'. In fact, he acknowledges nothing but direct, sensible experience, and makes it the starting point of philosophy.¹¹ He accepts Aristotle's dictum: *nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu* [nothing is in the intellect that was not previously in sense], but in *his* system, he adds: *nihil est in sensu quod prius non fuerit in intellectu* [nothing is in sense which was not previously in the intellect]. In other words, his system admits both opinions as reciprocally true and sums them up as: 'What is reasonable is real, and what is real is reasonable.'¹² Now it is perfectly clear that if philosophy has as its starting point only the experience of external and internal sense, both pure sense (which is not knowledge) and the knowledge of sensible things (present to the mind of the philosopher as subjective cognitions) must be viewed as suppositions, that is, as still not fully justified data. But is it true that the starting point of philosophy is experience, as Hegel gratuitously asserted? This is a *supposition* he makes, while at the same time he refuses to admit anything not demonstrated, and denies philosophical value to all direct knowledge. It is therefore amazing to see the surety with which he begins from the supposedly infallible assertion that the starting point of philosophy is experience. Not only does he not prove this assertion, he dispenses himself from subjecting it to any examination whatsoever. Philosophers who consider sensible experience as the starting point of philosophy belong to that class of philosophers who begin from the subject, that is, from the soul. If Hegel admits that

¹¹ *Enzyklopädie*, §1–2.

¹² [*Philosoph. des Rechts*, Vorrede *Enzyklop.* *Einleitung*, §6].

starting from experience means starting from a pure supposition, he also admits that philosophy does not truly begin there. But philosophy is not a supposition; on the contrary it is, as I have said, necessary teaching and as such the only starting point of philosophical theory.

20. Hegel, because of his belief that the starting point of philosophy is experience, declared universally that ‘the starting point of philosophy is always a supposition’. This, however, is simply a jump from the particular to the universal, one of those illogical conclusions so frequently found in our philosopher. He is persuaded that only what is presented to his imagination exists, and that is very little. He should have considered that external and internal sense (the sources of experience), the other faculties and the human subject itself are simply *material conditions* which are not necessary for the existence of truth. On the contrary, they exist so that truth can be communicated to human beings — if no subject existed or had power to receive the communication, no truth could be communicated. Hegel did not consider these facts; if he had, he would have understood that these material conditions could not constitute the principle of the theory of truth for which he was looking. The search for truth presupposes them, just as scaffolding, although necessary for constructing a building, is neither the principle of the building nor an important part of it. Later on, we shall see, from the theory itself, how experience, and the subject that exercises it, enters into the theory of the whole which absorbs experience in itself, although experience cannot be the principle, or starting point, of the whole.

IX

Philosophy and the system of what is knowable must begin from the ideal principle

21. It is clear therefore that those who claim to make the soul the starting point of the system of what is humanly knowable, begin from the material condition of the knowable, a principle which is certainly not the starting point. The principle,

[20–21]

therefore, must be chosen from two other starting points present to the mind — the *idea*, and *ens* which is known through the idea — which lay claim to being the principle. But if *ens* is known through the idea, the idea logically precedes *ens*. In this case, *ens* as the starting point would not account for the idea, which would be taken as understood and presupposed. The principle (*ens*) now becomes a supposition, and as such cannot provide a starting point. The system must have necessity as its essential characteristic; it cannot be *system* without being necessary. But can the system begin from the idea?

22. Is there anything in the mind that could have priority over the idea? Is there something known antecedent to the idea, through which the idea itself is known? If there were something better known than the idea from which the idea borrowed its intellectual light, would the principle we are seeking have to be found in what is first known?

To answer this problem, we must consider all the different classes of ideas. These can be reduced to two: 'more comprehensive ideas' and 'less comprehensive ideas'. When these two classes are compared, we find that more comprehensive ideas cannot be known, that is, received by the human mind unless preceded by less comprehensive ideas, which have greater extension. Consequently every more comprehensive idea presupposes all less comprehensive ideas. Hence, whenever we wish to begin the system from an idea which is in some way comprehensive, the starting point involves a *supposition*; there must be ideas, taken as understood and presupposed, which have priority over the idea from which we start and, as I said, are endowed with greater comprehensiveness. But if we move from more comprehensive to less comprehensive ideas, we can come to one which includes and presupposes no other. This idea will be the most extensive of all, what is first known, and we will have found the true principle of the whole system, a principle known through itself, devoid of every supposition and of itself present to the mind. Ideology demonstrates precisely that there is before the human mind an idea which possesses the greatest extension and is devoid of all comprehensiveness. In fact, if it were not present to the mind, other, more or less comprehensive ideas could not be present, although in fact they are. This is the *idea of totally undetermined being*. This is why I said

[22]

(*NE*, 1, *App.*, no. 35: (31)) that ideology is the science which constitutes regressive philosophy, whose purpose is to lead us back by means of reflection to the principle of everything we know. Once we have found this most simple principle, which requires only itself in order to be thought, we can begin from it and produce the system of truth, that is, theosophy, progressive philosophy.

23. This principle is not a supposition. When the idea is reduced to a judgment, nothing more is said than 'being is being', which is true even if there were no human subject to intuit and pronounce being.

X

Before we begin to philosophise, our state is one of *ordinary knowledge and methodical ignorance*, not of doubt

24. It may be objected that when we begin to direct our reflection to finding this being, but have not yet found it, our state must be one of doubt. We begin at least by presupposing that we can find it.

I reply that this supposition is not the principle of philosophy; the principle is present only when it is found. Furthermore, the supposition that we can find the solid point of human cognitions is not a logical supposition involving doubt, but a spontaneous persuasion, equivalent to the certainty that we must find it. Before philosophising, we feel ourselves made for the truth and know that we possess it in some way or other. Hence, the supposition (if we wish to call it that) is unhesitating. Doubt arises later in the mind and human spirit. Scepticism, the last of the systems, always makes its appearance in the world when philosophy has already lost its way and become corrupt. Properly speaking, it is not doubt which precedes philosophy but a state of direct, spontaneous knowledge which is accompanied by total persuasion and anchored in certainty. My regressive philosophy therefore does not begin from *methodical doubt* but from *methodical ignorance* (*NE*, 1: *App.*, no. 35 (11)). 'Methodical' tells us what kind of ignorance is under

[23–24]

discussion, but does not mean *de facto* ignorance in the philosopher who undertakes to explain 'progressive philosophy'; he can be, and indeed must already be, learned. 'Methodical' means ignorance relative to the order and explanation of truths, which are not present in any explanation prior to the explanation of their order. And even after the philosopher has explained one or more truths, others (still undeduced and unexplained) are absent from the explanation. It is assumed that he does not yet know them because he does not know them as someone who has learned them, although he may have known them from some other source. This hypothetical absence of truths which we set out to explain is what we call 'methodical ignorance'.

Methodical ignorance therefore is clearly relative to the ordered, philosophical explanation of truths. It is an ignorance relative to reflection, not to direct or popular knowledge, which remains along with that ignorance. Direct knowledge and popular knowledge enable us to know (although we may know many things in a more or less implicit form), and have certainty: the uneducated do not doubt, or doubt less than the learned. However, because these cognitions are not reflective, or at least not sufficiently reflective to be philosophical, their absence in a systematic, philosophical form is methodical ignorance, from which philosophy begins. This is taken for granted by the Scholastics.

XI

**Philosophy does not begin with reasoning, but with
observational reflection, that is, with totally *direct*
knowledge without any supposition**

25. Philosophy does not begin from any presupposed proposition but from a luminous point containing its own necessity and recognised by *observational reflection*, not *reasoning reflection*. Every observation, including reflective observation, is direct, immediate knowledge and begins from *direct* information for two reasons: 1. this information is present to intuition without any intermediary; and 2. reflection recognises it

[25]

by a direct observation without reasoning of any sort, or the necessity of a middle term.

26. We cannot object, '*Intuition* and *reflective observation* are faculties with which our spirit takes hold of what is evident. But the truthfulness of these faculties has not been demonstrated. Therefore we *suppose* that they do not deceive.' This objection would be valid if what is evident (objective being) were reached by *arguing* from the truth of the human potencies which apprehend it. But this is not and cannot be the foundation of the evidence. Ideology does not say, 'Being is essentially objective because intuition and observation, which are endowed with truth, present it in that way.' On the contrary, ideology says, 'Being is essentially objective because it cannot be otherwise.' The necessity of being is found in its nature; it is not argued from the truthfulness of the potencies. This truthfulness is determined later by the intrinsic necessity of being which excludes any contrary possibility. Consequently, potencies remain excluded from anything known as evident and necessary which stands and conquers through its own light. As I said, potencies are simply the *material conditions* of knowledge.

XII

**Ideology is the science which establishes the starting point;
psychology and logic furnish the material and formal
conditions of theosophy**

27. *Being* therefore is that alone which needs nothing besides itself to be thought and admitted as evident and necessary. Once philosophical reflection has acknowledged this, it possesses the instrument or means for acknowledging other things: the truth of perceptions, of ideas (by explaining their origin), of principles and of reasoning, tasks which ideology and logic perform. As an inevitable consequence of this, philosophical reflection acknowledges the truthfulness of the intellectual faculties. It always argues to the faculties particularly from reflection and from the evidence of cognitions, and comes to know the nature of the potencies by their acts and not

[26–27]

vice versa, as sensists and all subjectivists illogically claim. Finally, philosophical reflection arrives at teachings about the human subject, which is the field of psychology, a science in need only of ideology and logic and, granted these sciences, can stand by itself because founded on perception (*Sistema filos.*, 75–76). Perception itself is certain and marks out for us a cognitive whole from which it does not impel us to move. Thus, reflection, when it has found the evident element in what is necessary, has discovered the doctrine of the *formal conditions* of reasoning (the principal purpose of logic) and the doctrine of the *material conditions* (the subject of psychology) (*NE*, 1: *App.*, no. 35: (32)).

XIII

Philosophical sciences prior to theosophy use direct reasoning; theosophy uses circular but not viciously circular reasoning

28. So far, the speculative mind is moving forward correctly to the point where reflection takes it beyond the limits of perception, to ens *in se*, in all its universality and totality. It then sees that ens is one and identical in three forms, and goes on to ask how these forms are present in what is infinite and then share in what is finite. At this point, the mind begins to move in a circle because it sees that these three forms cannot in any way be discussed separately; each simultaneously supposes the other two. They invoke and interpenetrate each other reciprocally, while remaining inconfusable.

No thinker can, by means of successive thoughts and words, grasp this triple doctrine in a single, instantaneous act. He finds himself compelled to divide what is indivisible and, wishing to discuss only one of them, is forced to use defective reasoning precisely because he has abstracted from the other two. I have explained in *Logica* (and will demonstrate in ‘The Problem of Ontology’) how and to what extent this inevitable defect of reasoning can be corrected, and how a non-vicious circle is present. The ‘solid’ circle, as I have called it, is the mode of

reasoning proper to ontology and the whole of theosophy. It also contains the argument which the Scholastics called 'regressive' (*Logica*, [701–702]).

29. This circle, in which thought and theosophical knowledge are not viciously involved but continuously caught, results from the synthesis of the three forms of being and from many other syntheses, everywhere contained in the intrinsic order of being. It provides another reason why I considered as a single science that teaching which, until now, has usually been divided into three sciences, and why I called this complex 'theosophy'.

XIV

Continuation — The three parts of theosophy: ontology, theology, cosmology

30. Ontology, (rational) theology and cosmology are three parts of a single science, each of which lacks totality and its own existence. Because they continually compenetrates each other, their waters mingle, as it were, in the ocean of being. It is not possible to speak of being in its universal essence and in all its possibility (ontology) without regard for infinity and absoluteness (theology), nor is it possible to give a philosophical doctrine of the World (the purpose of cosmology) without considering both the cause that gave the world existence and the cause's mode of operation, which in turn sends reasoning back to the theological field. The centre and substance of the whole treatise therefore is always the doctrine about God, without whom the doctrine of being cannot be fully known nor the world explained. 'Theosophy' is the title given to a single science, which when divided into the above-mentioned three parts becomes one and three.

31. As I have said, theosophy deals with ens in its full extension and comprehensiveness (as far as human reason will go), under all forms, in its organic order and in all its deepest connections which, from the immense multiplicity into which it diffuses and spreads, wonderfully restore it to the most simple, absolute unity.

[29–31]

If the reasoning of the ideological and psychological sciences is naturally analytical, and if division and analysis are said to be the function and characteristic operation proper to the ideologist and psychologist, the reasoning of the philosophical sciences is on the contrary naturally synthetical. These sciences meditate on and explore the great synthesis or unity of all thinkable things, and divide ens into parts only to demonstrate the wonderful way in which all these parts are joined and unified. Consequently, the theosophical sciences cannot in any way be multiple — they must be a single science embracing everything. Hence, the characteristic proper to theosophy is to be supremely organic. Just as the limbs and organs of living animals work together to form a single ens, and a limb separated from the whole cannot reveal the indivisible ens resulting from all the limbs, so, if theosophy is broken down into its members, the living science we are seeking itself slips from our grasp immediately and disappears from view. The case is similar to that of an anatomist who cuts out the nerves from a corpse to examine them separately: he is never faced with the living organism, which consists in the harmonious, animate union of all the nerves. This is why the theosopher, although obliged by the imperfection of human thoughts and words to deal with the individual parts of ens and its particular structures, is constrained to consider them in their continuity with the whole and in the whole, and as deriving their being from the whole itself. If he did otherwise, he would cease to be a theosopher — he might be dealing with another science but not with theosophy. I marvel at those who apply themselves to philosophy unaware of this, and shatter into parts a science whose very purpose and intent is to unify those parts.

32. The explanation for their action lies, of course, in the very great difficulty and dangers of theosophy. Because it deals with being in its magnificent and immense complexity, it risks foundering on one of two opposite hazards: either it fragments being in such a way that the unity of being perishes — this robs theosophy of its proper purpose of demonstrating the true, hidden nature of the unity of being — or it monstrously amalgamates and identifies being in a way foreign to the truth, and thus turns the theosopher into a teacher of pantheism. Thinkers who

dabble in theosophical teachings can therefore be divided into two great classes:

1. Those who fail to attribute to being the unity due to it. These err through defect because they reject the bonds and connections which bind and absolutely unite relatively different entia in a very beautiful, organic whole.

2. Those who attribute an undue unity to being. These err through excess. Defeated by the immense difficulty of discovering the nature of the connections, their imagination substitutes false for true connections. Furthermore, to make things easier, they deny outright the truth of connections which are everywhere visible and presuppose both unity and difference. They imagine a kind of uniform being subsuming everything into itself like a deep whirlpool where every difference disappears.

These errors teach us the need to proceed cautiously and moderately in our pronouncements. In my opinion, disaster is inevitable for any one who undertakes theosophical research without first realising that he is applying his mind to a science beyond human intelligence. All that the wise student can hope or intend to do is raise just a little the veil which covers such an immense corpus of truth. Hence, the first and necessary endowment of the theosopher is, I believe, readiness to admit that the things he does not know are vastly more than those he knows and teaches, and that he must acknowledge the limit which human beings are not permitted to pass. Here he must halt as before a sacred altar where he must adore and sacrifice with all purity to the omniscient God.

As for myself, I have laboured at this work for many years and I offer it to the reader, not as a complete or nearly perfect science, but as an extremely imperfect and impoverished essay. I have in the past experienced great kindness towards my works; I now ask the learned to show even greater indulgence and forbearance to this work.

XV

**Prior sciences can be called *common sciences*;
theosophy, *arcane science***

33. These difficulties, intrinsic to theosophy, made me ask whether it would be better to publish my philosophical speculations or discuss them privately with a few chosen friends. The uncertainty arose from various considerations: 1. the difficulty of expressing such thorny concepts clearly; 2. the nature of certain questions which, even when truthfully resolved and correctly expressed, are accessible to only a few intellects; 3. the danger that mediocre intellects (normally the most rash) might lose their bearings and wander about in a fatal labyrinth of subtleties and empty talk; 4. the lack of moral and religious feeling which makes our age both prone to error and, through its lack of skill in logic, very liable to sophistry; 5. the awareness that other, less difficult but more important teachings have hardly been touched or thought about. All these considerations made me afraid that what I had so carefully composed for the sake of benefiting my neighbour would be useless or even harmful. I realised also why all the sages of antiquity, the priest-philosophers from Sakyamuni [Buddha] to the Druids,¹³ possessed two kinds of esoteric science: one common and the other arcane. The same was true for Christianity in the first centuries.

33a. Furthermore, everyone from Pythagoras to Francis Bacon was convinced that certain very profound truths should not be imparted to the uneducated. Bacon still speaks of a veil to be held before the eyes of the people. Cicero wrote that philosophy, happy to be judged by few, shunned the multitude;¹⁴ Seneca was satisfied with only one friend;¹⁵ Plato was ready to exclude the profane because, in his opinion, they thought there

¹³ For the arcane science of the Druids, cf. Caesar, [*De bel. Gal.*] 6: 14 — Pomponius Mela, 3: 2.

¹⁴ 'Philosophy is content with few judges. Suspicious and distrustful of the multitude, it flies it'* (*Tuscul*, 2: 1).

¹⁵ 'I am these things to you, not to many. We are a sufficient sounding board for each other'* (Seneca).

was nothing except that which can be touched materially¹⁶ — and it is indeed true that philosophy is only of help when shared by sound intellects and correctly disposed minds. Systematic knowledge helps a society if the society to which it is communicated is also in possession of a practical, efficacious moral feeling which science does not have and cannot give. Philosophy, in bonding with this feeling, becomes fertile and produces a wonderfully tempered new whole — wisdom living and operating according to a life of virtue. All ancient wisdom proclaims this great truth, although weak, frigid minds have persistently denied it because vice cunningly and proudly covers its own deformity with the cloak of philosophy. In a letter attributed to Lysis, a disciple of Pythagoras, we read:

Just as dyers impregnate cloth with a permanent, ineradicable colour, so that divine man (Pythagoras) trained those captivated by love of philosophy, and never failed to make them good and honest. He did not propound a spurious learning or set the kind of traps used by the basest sophists to ensnare the young and teach them nothing good and true. He possessed the science of things human and divine. But the sophists abused his teaching and worked wonders with the young, whom they wrongly and rashly entrapped. The young, awkward and imprudent, imbued with liberal theories and arguments in the midst of confused, disorderly behaviour, brought forth their theorems and free reasoning. It was as if someone had poured pure, clear water into a deep well full of filth and mud, only to stir up the filth and mud. This is what happens to those who teach and are taught in this way. Many weeds take firm root in the hearts and minds of those who do not set out with purity of intention; all modesty and gentleness is prevented; reasoning is darkened and presents only the appearance of external growth. Evils of every kind are introduced into this tangled mass, which completely smothers reasoning.¹⁷

¹⁶ 'Be on the watch that no profane people hear. Profane people are those who think that the only things which exist are those we can touch with our hands. Actions, generation and anything invisible can never be numbered among things which are' (*Theaet.*, p. 155).

¹⁷ *Ep. ad Hipparch.*

33b. But then I thought that if theosophical meditation could be abused, it could also be of assistance, and that I should pay more attention to the few who could be helped than to those who might be harmed. The benefit could flow from the few to the many. I also thought that no part of natural truth could be hidden from a world to which the Gospel had already been preached. We can no longer say of our age what Plato said in his time, 'It is difficult to find the Maker and Father of the world. And having found him, we cannot lawfully preach him to the uneducated.'¹⁸ Light has come from heaven now and revealed the hidden things of faith; the time proper to the hidden things of science has passed; divine mysteries have completely replaced human mysteries. If the fullness of Christian wisdom has ennobled human minds and set them on the road to more sublime speculation, it is fitting to trust that such light makes speculation not only harmless but advantageous to the human race. Nevertheless, many arcane things remain and appear to human minds surrounded by an impenetrable, majestic covering of cloud. Finally, there are also some deep, hidden things proper to the deity which by nature are accessible only through grace and in the measure communicated by God. Those possessing them experience no desire to propagate them, and others — the good, I mean — feel no curiosity of any kind to know them. Indeed, they are uncomfortable when these things are mentioned, and complain. In such circumstance they feel themselves assailed by reverential fear and mysterious disturbance. The unusual, troublesome light has to be avoided, and they turn in on themselves; their love is fully satisfied with the truth they possess, proportionate to their gaze. Mysteries necessarily envelop that nature which inhabits inaccessible light. The character and essence of the truth, by their very majesty, hold the different classes of human beings at a suitable, varying distance from themselves, and ensure that whatever the philosopher investigates and writes, one part of the truth will always be totally inaccessible, and another will remain hidden of its very nature from the multitude. This alone is the arcane mystery suitable for our Christian age.

¹⁸ *Tim.*, p. 28 D.

PART ONE

ONTOLOGY

Ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη τις, ἣ θεωρεῖ τὸ ὄν ἢ
ὄν, καὶ τὰ τοῦτο ὑπάρχοντα καθ' αὐτό.
Αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν οὐδεμιᾶ τῶν ἐν μέρει
λεγομένων ἡ αὕτη

[There is a science which investi-
gates being as being, and the attrib-
utes which belong to being in virtue
of its own nature. Now this is not
the same as any of the so-called
special sciences]

ARISTOTLE, *Metaph.*, 4: 1

THE PROBLEM OF
ONTOLOGY

A Single Book,
serving as
Introduction to Ontology

Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὸ διαπορῆσαι τῷ λόγῳ ῥᾶδιον
καλῶς [But it is not easy even to state
the difficulties adequately]

ARISTOTLE, *Metaph.*, 3: 1

PREAMBLE

34. Nature, in providing us with ideal being — which is what informs us — gives us a first taste of truth, a first captivating sampling of that divine food. This is the first source of the love of wisdom, which is desired for itself, and of the ardent longing for knowledge, which impels us to feed ever more abundantly on the life-giving food that we tasted from the beginning. Indeed, although our natural experience of the sweetness of truth gives us a lively taste and, as it were, an appetite for truth, it does not satisfy us. As soon as we develop through knowledge and become conscious of ourselves, we not only acknowledge truth as the exquisite, substantial food proper to our nature, but also recognise our deficiency in its regard and our extreme need for it. At the same time, we feel we are a potency for knowledge and a capacity for knowing everything which falls within the form of truth which we actually intuit, although as yet it embraces nothing while extending to everything.

35. But knowledge is not our sole aspiration: we want to love what we know. Complete knowledge of anything always arouses affection in us. Love perfects knowledge, and we, who know, love because we know. In the ens we love we find good, the full term of the act of which we are the potency. Hence, we can appropriately define the human being as ‘a potency whose ultimate act is to be united to limitless Being through loving knowledge’. This tendency or moral, rational instinct (which St. Augustine calls the weight of the human being)¹⁹ moves and

¹⁹ ‘Wherever I am borne, I am borne by my weight, by my love’* (*Conf.*, 13: 9). — ‘Wherever the spirit is borne, it is borne by the weight of love’* (*Ep.*, 157: 9).

guides all our development. It explains why, in our first attempt to acquire scientific knowledge, we do not turn to abstract speculations and are unsatisfied with those of others. They are seen as useless investigations, a kind of spider's web of knowledge. We may be happy to accept abstractions for the light they throw on reality, but they are not lovable on their own and cannot satisfy our human desire — we are real beings and want to increase our reality; abstractions alone will not do this.

We should note, therefore, that all the first philosophies, that is, the first questions asked in all nations when people began to philosophise, were always directed to the discovery and knowledge of the nature of real entia, which principally and ultimately are reduced to two: God and man. This explains why philosophy was always defined as 'the science of human and divine realities' (Θείων τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ἐπιστήμην).²⁰ Even the 'science of human realities' was insufficient. We are accidental and, in a sense, ephemeral and cannot be understood without recourse to another ens that explains us. Hence, according to Aristotle, wisdom is 'knowledge of the first and highest causes'.²¹

35a. Eventually, however, philosophers abandoned realities for a short time and, desiring apparently to attain the heavens, espoused pure ideas and took to the ambiguous, tortuous paths of abstraction. There was a necessary reason for this. The questions and investigations they proposed were all closely connected with the human being, the soul, and the universe in which people appear and disappear. They first wanted to investigate the origin, cause and nature of all these things, and how the vast number of secondary, well-ordered causes were linked with the first cause. They examined the ultimate purpose of this great scene and the purpose of the human ens endowed with intellect and love; they wanted to know whether death impeded and negated this purpose or led to it. All these were questions close to reality. But because they were ignorant of the difficulties involved in their investigations, and confident that their meditation would necessarily lead them to the light, they found themselves in the dark. A complete change of direction into a

²⁰ Lysis., *Ep. ad Hipp.* — Cf. Cicero, *Tuscul.*, qq.

²¹ *Metaph.*, 1: 2–3.

path far longer than they had first thought was required to solve these very important questions. They then hit upon dialectics and ontology as instruments which, they hoped, would be powerful enough to extract the truth of every part encased, as it were, in rock. They had recourse to many abstractions of different orders as powerful aids. Joining these together and formulating them into principles and theories, they extracted from them a new kind of knowledge, a knowledge which in itself was formal, empty and generally despised because lacking any evident utility and necessity.

Such contempt however was mistaken. The only path to be followed, even if a long one, is that of very abstract principles. Only this path leads human reason to the deepest possible knowledge of real natures, particularly of God and man, which, from the point of view of importance, are the two natures to which all others are reduced.

I had to say all this not only to justify philosophers from the accusations of the uneducated, as if philosophers took delight in wandering about unreasonably and ambitiously in the realm of abstracts, but also to justify myself. Before I undertook the treatise on metaphysics (the science of supreme realities), I spent a great deal of time in ideological and logical investigations. But because this treatise concerns God and the World, I must preface it with ontology, another science full of abstractions and formal concepts.

CHAPTER 1

The relationship between ontology and rational theology, cosmology and ideology

Article 1

Ontology precedes and must be distinguished from rational theology

36. Although ontology and theology deal with being, ontology must be distinguished from and precede both theology and cosmology. The reason for the distinction is founded in ontology itself and cannot be fully understood before and in total separation from ontology. It is precisely ontology which teaches and demonstrates that this distinction is required by the nature of the human mind and the limitation of human thought. Ontology shows that while absolute Being is beyond finite nature, we pertain to finite nature. Our sole means of communication with, and direct knowledge of real things is *perception* which, unable to go beyond nature, cannot apprehend divine being. Because we are restricted to this weak means of apprehending what is real, we cannot come to a direct, positive knowledge of God in whom alone all being is contained, and in knowledge of whom all knowledge of being is contained.

We cannot therefore directly speculate about infinite being and discover what it truly is. We have to infer it by ascending from one logical, empty concept to another. We must always proceed in this way whenever perception does not give us knowledge of a real thing; we must help ourselves with deductions, inductions and analogies, to reach the imperfect information provided by this indirect means.

To obtain any scientific teaching about subsistent, infinite Being, we must, by means of abstraction and other actions pertaining to formal, negative thinking, observe separately and assemble all the characteristics, properties and internal, necessary relationships of being by extracting them from the finite

real entia we *perceive*. These multiple principles and abstract notions must then be applied to the concept, itself ideal, of one, most simple, subsistent and infinite being.

If, however, this infinite ens fell within our human perception, we would know it directly in itself, and no longer need to obtain beforehand these notions and abstract principles. In this case, we could forget the 'Theory of Being in all its universality' (ontology) and come to a sufficiently complete knowledge of Being by restricting our study solely and directly to theology, that is, to Being in its absoluteness and fullness. But, as I said, infinite subsistence is imperceptible to finite nature, such as ours. Therefore, those who reject ontology, claiming that theology stands on its own, are obliged to substitute the dreams of their fanatical imagination for the perceptive cognitions they lack, and thus fall into *false mysticism*. Similarly, those who do not accept theology as a separate science, claiming to reduce it to ontology, fall into *rationalism*.²² In fact, these two groups discover that they arrive at the same point, pantheism, by opposite paths. Ontology, theology and cosmology cannot be fully investigated as sciences independent of each other: the teachings of one must help the teachings of the other two, and present to our mind inferences pertaining to the teachings of the other two. Nevertheless, each of these three sciences has a different aim, and the teachings common to all of them become, under a different title and with a different intention, proper to each.

Article 2

Ontology must precede cosmology because it is necessary
for the perfect knowledge of finite ens

37. Ontology is not only a great preface to rational theology. It is also necessary if we are to know something about the

²² Victor Cousin divides philosophy into 1. Doctrine of Method, 2. Psychology, and 3. Ontology (*Fragments — Introduct. à l'histoire de la Philosophie — histoire de la Philosophie du XIII.me siècle*). This distribution of the philosophical sciences, which reduces theology to ontology, reveals Cousin's rationalism. Conceived in this way, his God can only be an abstraction or a complex of abstractions.

intimate nature of finite ens (although finite ens is partly perceptible). I have already shown the necessity of ontology if human thought is to attain some scientific information about infinite ens, but the reasons for the necessity relative to finite ens are greatly different: 1. finite ens is only partly perceptible because we perceive nothing beyond our soul and matter; 2. the perception of matter is not pure but subject to the conditions of matter — we do not perceive external bodies with our mind alone but through both sense and living instruments organised in their own determinate way, for example, through the sense organs of the human body; finally 3. the finite real cannot be known in itself as the infinite real is. We have therefore three reasons why the universal theory of Being is necessary for our knowledge of subsistent, finite ens:

1. We may want to know not simply the bare phenomena but the essential conditions of subsistent, finite ens; in other words, the conditions common to all finite entia. We may also want to know the fecundity of finite ens, that is, the multiplicity of its modes, and of the limits within which it can be found. But our perception and experience, limited to very few, finite, individual entia, soon abandon us along the way and compel us to turn to formal, universal principles, from which we reason to what is missing in experience.

2. External bodies and perceptions have a fixed form and composition which determine the composition and form of the phenomena they present. Consequently, if we want to know the nature itself of finite ens, not as it is given us relative to external bodies from the perceptions received through our sense organs (which as a result of their composition and form mould external bodies according to their own form), we are obliged to use reasoning to strip it of the phenomenal covering posited around it by the same sense instruments of sense-perception. But to do this we need once again universal principles and notions.

3. Because finite ens is not *per se* intelligible, it does not have, relative to the mind thinking it, the same condition as infinite ens. If infinite ens were perceived, it would be perceived of itself without need of any other light. This is not the case with the intellective perception of something sensible and finite which is not possible without the help of a light other

than finite ens itself. In other words, the idea is required. This light, when joined to finite ens, renders it intelligible through participation. Consequently, because the perception of the finite real is mixed with something else, we need principles, notions and reasoning to separate from it what does not belong to it. In this way we finally come to know it indirectly as distinct, if not separate, from all the rest.

Ontology, therefore, the abstract theory of ens, is necessary to and precedes theology (which deals with what is infinite and subsistent) and cosmology (which deals with what is finite and subsistent). This must obviously result with complete clarity from ontology itself, which provides its own defence and foundation. Theosophical science by its very nature stands on its own feet and is its own justification.

Article 3

The characteristic difference between ideology and ontology
relative to the matter of these two sciences

38. Anyone who undertakes to explain or study ontology must have very clearly in his mind the concept of the science and the determinations and limits restricting it. I must therefore discuss the difference between the matter of ontology and ideology, because ideology also is totally concerned with *being* as its principle and universal light.

Ideology deals with the origin and nature of ideas, that is, with *being* as the *first, absolute idea* which contains all other ideas. But every idea is twofold because in every idea we can consider container and content. The *container* gives us knowledge, and properly speaking is called *idea* or *concept*; the *content* of the idea is what is known, and is called *essence*. Hence, I have defined essence as 'that which is contained in the idea' (NE, 2: 646). The difference between the matter of ideology and ontology therefore is that ideology concerns *ideas*; ontology the *essences* contained in ideas. Ideology leads all ideas back to being as to their common meeting-point and formal principle; ontology leads all essences back to being as to the first essence in which all essences are, and from which they continually derive.

Ideology describes the origin and nature of cognitions precisely as cognitions; ontology describes the origin and nature of things known.

The twofold aspect of the idea therefore is clearly reduced to the two forms of being: the objective, ideal form and the subjective, real form. The undetermined essence, contained in the empty, universal idea, is not truly and simply called real because what is simply real is not contained in the act of the essence; it is called the *virtual-real* because the real is contained virtually in the essence. The virtual-real pertains to the real not in itself, but only in so far as it is contained in the idea.

Furthermore, when I say that ontology deals with *essences* known in ideas, I do not mean that it deals with being solely in its real form. Ontology itself demonstrates that being, as real, is the principle of the other two forms of being, that is, these two forms are through the act of reality. The theory of real being therefore extends necessarily to all three forms. Consequently, *essences*, which are the content of ideas, extend to being and to all forms, so that the essences themselves include the containing idea which, as contained, now becomes an essence itself. Moreover, the theory of real being could not be fully understood unless we considered how real being is virtualised before our minds, and how from being virtual, as it first appears, it becomes actualised. But, as I said, none of this can be fully explained except in the very course of explaining the science of ontology itself. All we need to note for the moment is the characteristic difference between ideology and ontology: ideology deals with *ideas*, ontology with *essences* contained in and known through ideas.

Article 4

The characteristic difference between ontology and rational theology relative to the matter of these two sciences

39. The matter common to ontology and theology is being. Both, therefore, can be defined as the 'theory of being'. But

[39]

what is their characteristic difference? Does their matter differ in any way?

The characteristic difference is that ontology is the 'theory of common being', theology the 'theory of proper being', that is, God himself.

In the order of the human mind, the 'theory of common being' comes first because our mind cannot think what is individual except by means of the universal.²³ From ideology the student of ontology receives undetermined being as light of the mind, and sees in its essence a kind of emptiness, that is, virtuality. This is like a dark point which the student wants to illuminate because he sees that the theory of being, when limited to the concept of being, is not complete; the concept is totally empty, like a spot on the moon or sun caused by an immense valley lying in shadow, without light. Initially, even the viewer does not know whether he will be able to remove this shadow. The only instrument he has for attempting the task is finite entia, and it is to these he turns in order to find the fullness of the reality which is not present in the being he naturally intuites. He begins by abstracting from finite entia the most universal concepts and essences discoverable. He examines these essences and their connections and then, by combining them, tries to attain unity, that is, a first essence in which all of them must be found and unified. He sees that this is being itself, which is now enriched and whose emptiness is filled. By mean of this long process the student of ontology comes to see how being can be revealed in two ways, either dispersed and linked in some way to the finite, or united and unified in the infinite. But this possibility of appearing at one moment bound to and distributed throughout the multiplicity of the finite, and at another undivided in the infinite and one with itself, seems a contradiction and throws him into confusion. He now tries to solve this conflict (as we can call it) which being reveals within itself, but to do so, he must go beyond the order of possible things. He

²³ That common being is prior to individual, proper being is generally acknowledged by Scholastic philosophers. St. Thomas writes: 'In the order of our intellect, things that are common in an absolute sense are prior to proper things because they are included in the understanding of proper things, but not vice versa' (**S.T.*, I, q. 33, art 3, ad. 1).

acknowledges that while finite essences are mere possibilities of reality, the first essence in which all the others are unified must be subsistent. In this way he discovers God, the source and container of all essences.

39a. But if he does not wish to leave his argument incomplete, he must now meditate on the relationship between possible essences and subsistent essence, and show how the former proceed from the latter. At this point theology begins, which, as I said, cannot be divided so rigidly and precisely from a complete ontology. Hence, although the purpose proper to the student of ontology is to present the theory of universal being in so far as being is common to both finite and infinite ens, that is, he considers ens in its possibility, he ultimately sees that the theory of common being depends upon another theory, that of subsistent, absolute Being. He deals therefore with this second theory as well, usurping and taking to himself a part of theology, but does so in the service of *common being* which cannot be explained or fully presented in any other way.

Theology's purpose and sole object, however, is to offer to the human mind, as far as this is possible, the theory of absolute, proper being, that is, God. To do this, theology must use the same concepts and essences presented in ontology and avail itself of the theory of common, universal being in order to understand the nature of full, proper, complete and subsistent Being in its three forms.

When it has been seen that infinite, absolute Being *MUST* subsist, although unperceived as such by human beings, the theologian is called upon to investigate how all the concepts and most universal essences discovered and presented by the student of ontology meet in God. These essences, contemplated by the theologian in God where they have their foundation and life, change before him, as it were, and become totally one single essence, with a wonderful, reciprocal identification. This one essence, now ceasing to be common, universal and abstract, is proper, individual and subsistent. Nevertheless, by a theological kind of abstraction the human mind can retrieve from this single essence the separate essences as they were beforehand. Thus separated, these essences represent the possibilities of finite things. In the supreme essence, these possibilities are divided only virtually, and relative to the mind and to the finite

[39a]

things where they are considered. It is this subsistent Being, therefore, which is the proper and sole purpose of the theologian. To this Being the student of ontology turns for the explanation of being in its universality as common to all possible entia. I repeat however: clear and full information regarding these differences between ontology and relative sciences can be found only in the treatise itself of ontology. Part of ontology's purpose is to establish the difference between its own object, being, and being as the object of both ideology and theology.

40. The field in which the student of ontology labours is indeed vast but his sole purpose is, as I have said, to offer a theory of being in its universality without distinguishing whether it is finite or infinite; in other words, to present the properties and laws of being applicable to every ens whether finite or infinite. This is the problem, stated in an abstract way, and we cannot prudently undertake its solution without considering the different forms it assumes in our mind. When we consider it from different angles, we soon become aware that we are faced with many different problems which, however, are only partial problems contained in one, much larger problem. Before I undertake such a complicated task, therefore, I must examine these different forms, compare them and reduce them to a single form. In this way I will establish with the greatest possible clarity the state of the question and simultaneously explore its intimate nature and difficulty.

CHAPTER 2

**The first form of the ontological problem:
'How to reconcile the apparent modes of ens with the
concept of being'. At what stage of human development
does this problem present itself to the mind?**

41. We already know, although imperfectly and implicitly, that ontology is defined as 'the theory of ens in its possibility'. We can and should investigate therefore 'how and at what stage in its intellectual progress does the human spirit become aware of the problem of ontology?' The problem will then spontaneously present itself in its primal form.

Moreover, if we know the intellectual need that gives rise to the problem, the importance of the problem will become known through the demands for satisfaction which our understanding subsequently makes (*Sistema filos.*, 2–8). We shall also see why, in the different ages of the human race, the state of the question changed and took on various forms and expressions which seemed to turn it into another problem, although it was substantially the same.

42. With the aid of the information provided by ideology and psychology, I must first list the various states of human intelligence as it progressively develops.

I. Before any development, we possess all the seeds of our future development. These seeds are:

A. Information about being, by which we habitually know what being is (*NE*, 1: 398–472).

B. The felt term of unbounded space (first element of the fundamental feeling) (*AMS*, [161–174; *PSY*, 1: 554–559]).

C. The felt term of the matter of our own body — matter situated in space — (second element of the fundamental feeling) (*PSY*, [1: 534–535]).

D. The felt term of excitation by means of intestine movements in the matter (third element of the fundamental feeling) (*PSY*, [1: 536–540]).

E. The felt term of the organic harmony of the

excitation (fourth element of the fundamental feeling) (*PSY*, [1: 541–553]).

F. Our own feeling joined to the five terms mentioned above, that is, to the first ideal element and the other four real elements (*PSY*, [1: 636–646]), which receive subjective unity from this feeling.

G. The fundamental, intellectual perception of animal feeling. This perception is the connection between the intellectual soul and the animate body, through which the *human being* is constituted as a ‘rational ens’ (*PSY*, [1: 264–265]).

II. First stage of development: the acquired perception of entia which differ from ourselves.

This perception is an operation of the spirit limited to an external ens of varying complexity. Perceptions distinguish their objects in such a way that the object of one perception cannot be confused with the object of another.

III. Second stage of development: the first order of reflection, which is directed to the objects of perception and by comparing them establishes their differences. The nature of this first reflection is therefore analytic.

This differentiating reflection leads us to the perception of ourselves also, but not to a stage of development higher than that of perceptions and of the first order of reflections.

The separation of ideas from perceptions can also be referred to this stage.

IV. Third stage of development: the second order of reflection. After distinguishing the objects we have perceived and intuited, we feel the need to explain their existence because we cannot find in them their *sufficient reason*. By integration therefore we arrive at the first cause. *Popular knowledge* reaches this point, the nature of which I have already described and which the reader should keep in mind.²⁴

The formation of many mental beings also belongs to this stage.

V. Fourth stage of development: the third order of reflection.

Only when we have known and differentiated finite entia,

²⁴ *NE*, 3: 1264–1273.

and known the existence of the first cause, do we begin to philosophise by means of new reflections. We use these to consider what we already know in its relationship with ens known through nature. By this means we identify the limitations of things, and their likenesses and analogies. We then classify the known objects and, because we use signs (that is, language) to do this — signs become for us stand-ins for the things themselves — we easily confuse what is real with what is in our mind, and beings produced by our mind and imagination with subsistent beings, etc.

VI. Fifth stage of development: the fourth level of reflection and the higher orders.

When we have known and classified entia in some way, the need develops in our mind to discover a *sufficient reason* for everything we know. As long as we knew only what is finite and contingent (for this we needed what is infinite and necessary, both of which we had in the idea of being), we felt the need for a reason to explain their real existence. We thus reached a first real cause. But we were still looking only for an *efficient cause* on which the external universe depended and which would explain its *subsistence*. Now, however, we are no longer content with a reason which explains *subsistence*; we need a reason which explains all the different modes in which ens appears. In other words, how 'are these modes reconciled with the concept of being'? This is precisely the ontological problem confronted by our mind — to use an expression of Manzoni, we are like someone who, while walking, comes to a large stone and has to lift his foot to get past it.

43. 'The reconciliation of the concept of being with the various modes²⁵ in which ens appears to human beings' is therefore the first form of the ontological problem.

²⁵ 'Modes' is understood here in the widest sense. It does not mean exclusively *limitations*, because ens presents itself sometimes as unlimited, sometimes as limited to the mind, and both have to be reconciled with the concept of ens. Nor do I take 'modes' to mean subjective modes because there are both subjective modes, relative to the limited nature of man, and objective modes. Much less should we believe that the concept of 'modes that are visible to us' necessarily involves something false, because ens can present itself to us in truthful modes. Every error comes from ourselves, not from nature, as *Logica* shows ([244 ss.]).

This reconciliation is required by the human mind because the concept of ens, although clear, implies two things:

1. there is nothing intelligible outside being;
2. everything is found in being.

Being is one and most simple but the modes in which it appears are many. We have difficulty therefore in explaining how these many different modes can all be present in being, one and most simple, and identified with it.

If we can solve the difficulty by showing how these apparent modes, although many and different, are being itself, all hesitation on the part of our understanding is removed; we rest satisfied in the truth, because the apparent modes of being have become *evident*, and our understanding cannot go further or desire more. Hence, the student of ontology must show that all the modes have their *reason* in the concept of being itself, a concept which needs no other reason because of its evident necessity.

The task and aim of philosophy therefore is to find the *ultimate reason* for the modes of being by reducing them all to being itself.

CHAPTER 3

The second form of the ontological problem is: ‘to find the sufficient reason for the various manifestations of ens’

Article 1

Why the understanding requires a sufficient reason for the different manifestations of ens

44. Why does the understanding feel the need to ‘reconcile the apparent, different modes or different manifestations of ens with the concept of being’? In other words: why does it feel the need to ‘find an ultimate and evident sufficient reason to explain the different manifestations of ens’?

Human understanding requires two things: 1. knowledge and 2. absence of contradiction in what it knows. These two requirements necessitate a sufficient reason for everything we know.

45. In the case of the first requirement (knowledge), the human understanding clearly tends to know — this is its act and its perfection. Every potency tends to the act proper to itself which perfects it.

46. The second requirement (knowledge free of contradiction) arises from the nature of the object proper to the understanding. This object is being (principle of cognition) which, because of its essence, is immune from contradiction. Consequently, everything that contains a contradiction would not be being and could not therefore be an object of the intelligence; it would not constitute knowledge because knowledge is the essential desire of intellectual being and as such is its absolute requirement.

47. When an object presents itself which does not contain its own sufficient reason, only one of the following three dispositions of the understanding is possible:

1. The understanding is satisfied to say to itself that the sufficient reason does not exist. In this case, its object becomes distorted by contradiction, because to exist without a reason

for existing is a contradiction. This is contrary to the second of the primary requirements mentioned above.

2. The understanding is satisfied to say to itself that there is indeed a reason in which, however, it has no interest. This is contrary to the first of the requirements.

3. Finally, the understanding is keen and anxious to discover the reason which it firmly believes exists. By this very fact it has posited the problem of ontology.

48. Experience shows that human understanding always manifests this third disposition: it needs a sufficient reason for everything it knows which does not have the reason within itself. This unending need to have a sufficient reason to explain the things we know results therefore from the two requirements mentioned above.

Article 2

The sufficient reason for the manifestations of ens must, if it is to satisfy our understanding, be one, necessary and objective

49. I have already pointed out that the sufficient reason for the different manifestations of ens can only be the concept of being, the seat of necessity and of evidence ([cf. 43]). For the moment, I wish to prescind from this fact and consider in the abstract the fittingness of a sufficient reason if the understanding's need is to be fully satisfied. The investigation will further clarify the problem because it will reveal the conditions for the sufficient reason sought by ontology. I pose two questions therefore:

50. *First Question*: can the sufficient reason be contingent or must it be necessary?

Different sufficient reasons can be distinguished, ranging from the lowest to the highest. The higher reason explains the lower, and the ultimate is the sole reason for all.

The question cannot refer to any other reason than the highest, because the ultimate reason of all has no other above it; it is the only reason sufficient for and in itself. Clearly then, reasons that are not ultimate can be contingent, in the way that the proximate reason for a contingent effect lies in a contingent cause. But the ultimate, absolute reason, in which the

understanding finds rest, must be necessary, not contingent. If it were contingent, that is, it could be and not be, it would require another reason to explain its existence. Otherwise it would be an undetermined entity between existing and non-existing. But nothing undetermined can exist because indetermination is excluded from the concept of subsistent ens.

If the reasons are many, and the first, proximate reason is contingent, the understanding has recourse to the second. If it finds this also contingent, it excludes it by the same argument and looks for another. Hence, it either loses itself in an infinite progression of reasons without finding the ultimate reason, or stops at a necessary, ultimate reason.

51. This seems to show clearly that the ultimate reason for things is necessary. However, a serious difficulty presents itself: 'The ultimate reason for the world cannot be the divine essence. If it were, the world would be eternal and necessary like the divine essence. Therefore the ultimate, sufficient reason for things can only be the free act of the divine will. And if this act is free, it must be contingent, that is, it can be done or not done.'

I reply. The act of the divine will, although free, is not distinct in reality from the divine essence which is a single, most simple act. Even if the act which creates the world is eternal, it does not follow that the world itself must be eternal. The world does not have the nature of the divine act but receives the temporary nature determined for it by the act of the divine will.

Moreover the free, divine act cannot be called contingent. Its freedom does not have to consist in perfect indifference and thus be bilateral, as the act of the human will must be in our present condition if we are to merit or be blameworthy. The creative act does not belong to the class of meritorious acts, and is free in the sense of the freedom defined by St. John Damascene: *cuius principium et causam continet is qui agit* [the agent has within himself the principle and cause of freedom].²⁶ Hence, the creative act has no cause, reason or motive outside God who determines himself with utmost freedom. I say 'determines

²⁶ Bk. 2, *De Orthodoxa Fide*, ch. 24. The whole passage reads: 'That is said to become spontaneously whose principle and cause the agent has within himself,'* but the context shows that St. John means to define what is free, which is the sense given to the passage by theologians.

himself' to express his immanent activity, not to indicate any transient act that God may have begun in order to pass from not being determined to create to being determined to create. This explains why theologians say that God wills his own goodness and loves himself with an act of free will. According to them, this act has neither cause nor reason outside God.²⁷ But the freedom of the creative act differs from the freedom with which God wills and loves himself, even though they are similar and both pertain to the moral order. The object of the act with which God loves himself is his own essential loveliness. This loveliness would not exist unless it were the act of love which is its co-relative. Hence we cannot understand God without understanding that he loves himself. In the case of creatures, however, there is no reason why they have to be loved and willed by God, because they do not pertain to the divine nature. When he wills them, therefore, the immediate object of his will is not the cause or motive determining him; the concept of creature presents no necessity for existence nor any necessity which determines God to make the creature exist. But God does have a reason which determines him to create. Once more, this reason is love of himself who loves himself also in creatures. Hence, divine wisdom, as I shall explain more fully elsewhere, finds creation fitting, and this simple fittingness is sufficient to make the most perfect Being determine himself. But we must not confuse this necessity of fittingness with 'physical necessity' (as it is usually called) which originates from the real form of Being. Fittingness is a moral necessity, that is, it comes from Being under its moral form. Moral necessity does not always have the effect it requires; its effect is induced solely in the most perfect Being, not in imperfect beings (many of whom therefore retain bilateral freedom) because the most perfect Being is also the most moral, that is, this Being has satisfied every moral requirement in itself.

52. *Second Question*: Must the sufficient reason be something ideal or something real?

²⁷ St. Thomas, *De Potentia*, q. 10, art. 2, ad 5: 'God, with his will, freely loves himself, although he necessarily loves himself.'* — Scotus, *Quodlibetales*, 6: 'The divine will necessarily wants its own goodness, but in wanting it is free.'*

First of all, it cannot be something merely real because the word 'reason' indicates something pertaining to the understanding. Purely real things cannot pertain to the understanding unless associated with the ideas which make them known.

We can say therefore that the sufficient reason is always some information. But must this information be merely ideal, or can it also be about something real? Could the information itself be real — granted that any discussion about the ultimate reason (which alone can be called reason *per se*) must include information about something necessary and real (God)?

At first sight, the ultimate reason would seem sometimes to be an idea, at other times the information about something necessary and real. In fact, the ultimate reason can be sought of what is known both in the ideal and the real orders. In the former, it is certainly an idea; in the latter, it apparently cannot be a simple idea but has to be information about something necessary and real.

I solve the problem as follows.

52a. There is an order of ideas and an order of real things, whose ultimate reason can be sought.

Ideas whose reason can be sought certainly exist. For example, although ideas are basically necessary and eternal, we need to explain the limitation of specific and generic ideas. Careful consideration shows that this limitation always arises from the relationships ideas have with a contingent real thing.²⁸ Consequently, the reason for the possibility of an idea's limitation is not contained in the concept of the idea; we need to look elsewhere for this possibility. Clearly then, the reason for the possible limitation of ideas must be found in the nature of the first, universal idea, which is limited relative to the spirit intuiting it. Hence, the ultimate, sufficient reason in the ideal order is always the first idea.

On the other hand, real things clearly have the reason for their reality in the real cause that produced them. Hence information about a real thing (about God as creating) is their sufficient cause. But is this the ultimate cause? If we say that God is the sufficient cause of the world, we are certainly naming the ultimate cause — naming the supreme Being means naming the

²⁸ Cf. *Rinnovamento*, bk. 3, cc. 42–43.

absolute Ens who is at one and the same time totally real, ideal and moral. But this does not stop us asking what is the sufficient reason in the divine Being. This reason, which certainly cannot be outside God, can in fact be found in divine objectivity because, as the intelligibility of God himself, it reveals his necessity to our understanding. And if we investigate further, it also shows us how he must be constituted one and three. In this sense, the idea (in its perfection in God) becomes again the first universal reason for every real thing, no less than for everything ideal and equally for everything moral.

Clearly, therefore, 1. the principle of sufficient reason is revealed in the human being, and 2. one of the supreme requirements of human understanding is to find a sufficient reason for everything known by means of predication. In other words, we come to intuit with our mind some essence which contains within itself everything we predicate of entia. For humans this essence can only be ideal being.

CHAPTER 4

The third form of the ontological problem: 'to find an equation between intuitive knowledge and knowledge by predication'

53. But what does 'to have or not have a sufficient reason' mean? Although anyone at the relevant stage of development can feel the need for a sufficient reason, only few have sufficient reflective knowledge of it to define it.

Human knowledge of things is twofold: it is both information about *essence* and knowledge obtained by *predication*. The two forms of being, ideal (or objective) and real, correspond to these two kinds of knowledge. In the idea, or objectivity, we know entia in their essence. On the other hand, knowledge by predication gives us knowledge of entia in their real form and in their limitations and properties. Predicative knowledge of an ens, however, can never stand by itself; it requires what is ideal and essential because, in order to assert that an ens is in its real form and to predicate something about it, we must in some way know what kind of ens it is or know what is the predicate attributed to it. In other words, if we have no idea of it or of its predicate, we do not have information about its essence or the essence of its predicate.

54. Is real ens and everything predicated of any ens whatsoever always known totally in its essence? I mean: does the ideal type of ens include the whole intelligibility of real ens? If everything found in ens itself is not contained in its essence, its essence is not sufficient to make it fully known. But very often there are more things known through predication in an ens than in its essence known in the idea. After a time, the understanding becomes aware of this by reflection and, conscious that its essential knowledge of an ens is defective and not equal to both the ens itself and to everything predicated of it, senses the need to perfect its knowledge. It needs to know *fully*, as I said above. But predicative knowledge is subjective and relative to us; only ideal or essential knowledge is objective and absolute. Subject-I've knowledge consists in a kind of disposition on our part (as

persons affirming or denying) which does not however illuminate the object affirmed or denied. The light that the object has from the idea is present in equal quantity in both our affirmation and denial of it. As a result, predication gives us knowledge over and above the knowledge contained in the essence of the thing known in the idea; and we note the imperfection of our ideal or essential knowledge because it is not equal to our knowledge of predication.

Clearly, therefore, the understanding's ideal and essential knowledge must be completed and made equal to the knowledge of predication, so that it can find in known essences everything predicated of an ens. Without this, everything predicated remains obscure; we are simply predicating an unknown *quid*. This is precisely what causes the need we feel to find a sufficient reason for everything.²⁹

²⁹ The different forms of the problem of ontology have always presented themselves to the minds of philosophers, but not clearly. For example, Schelling said that 'human thought must give new birth to nature and follow it from its origin in all its development', and defined philosophy as 'the art of conforming all our representations to an absolute Idea and of producing *a priori* the universal system from the depths of our spirit' (Michelet, *Geschichte der letzten Systeme*, vol. 1, p. 119). In saying this, he glimpsed the problem of ontology under the form of an equation between the science of intuition and that of affirmation, but did not clearly express it.

CHAPTER 5

The fourth form of the ontological problem is: 'How to reconcile the antinomies apparent in human thought'

Article 1

Whenever intuitive and predicative knowledge are not seen to form an equation, an antinomy remains in ontology

55. As I have said, we need a sufficient reason for the apparent modes of ens. Without this reason, an imbalance remains between intuitive knowledge of essences and predicative knowledge. The imbalance is naturally disagreeable to intelligence, because intelligence and contradiction are mutually repugnant. Intelligence is at peace when it finds no antinomy in its act of knowledge. The presence of an antinomy in this imbalance can be understood by considering the matter from different angles.

First, an antinomy exists when we suppose that a thing subsists without a sufficient reason, because sufficient reason is the principle of every existence. Hence where there is no principle, there is no existence; if the principle, which is the condition of existence, is denied, existence itself is denied. To admit an existence without a sufficient reason therefore is the same as simultaneously affirming and denying existence. Moreover, if the reason for the existence is to be sufficient, the reason must, as I said, be necessary or at least eternal, and what is necessary or eternal can pertain only to an essence; only essences are necessary or eternal.

Secondly, essence and subsistence (the latter is simply the realisation of essence) are primal forms of ens. But because ens is identical and the forms different, there would be an antinomy between the concept of being and the supposition that a reality exists which lacks essence. In fact, the concept of being implies precisely that that form (reality) is not and cannot be without its essence. But there are many other antinomies between being and its manifestations. Ontology must carefully assemble them

all and show that they are only apparent and can all be reconciled. This is the object of ontological speculation.

56. One of these apparent antinomies is found, for example, in number: the concept of ens is of one thing only but the appearances of ens are many. How do we reconcile the unity of ens with its many appearances, which proffer to the mind not only accidental actualities but innumerable, distinct entia?

This antinomy between ens-as-one and many entia is seen more clearly when we consider what I call 'dialectical passions' of ens.

57. The ancients spoke about the 'passions of ens', but the expression contains a harmful equivocation: ens, it would seem, can suffer, or is the sole, real subject of all its manifestations or appearances. To avoid this equivocation I will use the expression 'dialectical passions'. It means that ens, although seen and taken as the subject of all the entia presented in different modes to our understanding, is purely what the mind conceives as the beginning or reason of all things. This concept precedes the things themselves and never changes into particular subjects whether these are contingent real things or are themselves dialectical.

58. We need to know therefore what the dialectical passions of ens are and how their explanation re-states the problem of ontology.

Six centuries ago, the greatest philosopher of our nation wrote: 'In the proofs and investigations of the quiddity of anything, we must descend to principles known *per se* to the intellect. Otherwise, both processes would go on to infinity; all science and knowledge of things would perish because we would never find the ultimate term on which all the others depended. That which is FIRST conceived by the intellect AS MOST KNOWN and to which ALL CONCEPTS are reduced is ENS, as Avicenna says at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*.³⁰ Therefore, all the other concepts of our understanding must be obtained by adding something to ens.'³¹

³⁰ It would seem that this great truth, so resplendent in the most barbarous century of mediaeval times (Avicenna died in 1036), is obscure to some modern minds.

³¹ St. Th., *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1.

According to this very clear teaching of St. Thomas, all concepts of the human mind are simply the concept of pure ens with something added. Consequently, it is clear that nothing can occur within our mind if it does not first have the information provided by ens. Every other information is this same information with some addition; we cannot add anything to what is not. The reason for this is the nature of the objects themselves of our mind: the only objects possible are ens and the additions it can receive.

Ens is presented to the human mind therefore either in its simplicity and purity or with various additions and appendices.

These different additions and appendices by which ens becomes the object of intelligence are precisely those which I call 'dialectical passions of ens'.

59. But in order to give a clear concept of the meaning of this expression, I must first distinguish between what is understood and not understood in the essence of ens.³²

'Passion' cannot be used to mean that which enters into the essence of ens, because all that enters into this essence is ens itself and not one of its passions. But our mind, by means of reflection, can distinguish and separate out many elements in the essence, in two ways:

1. Naturally, relative to the natural, intuited element.

³² Here I exclude something from the essence of ens, which seems directly contrary to what St. Thomas says: 'There is nothing in nature which is outside the essence of universal ens'* (QQ. *De Veritate*, q. 21, a. 1). The opposition is only apparent. St. Thomas does not mean that everything is in the essence of ens but that everything shares in the essence; otherwise it would not be ens. He explains this in another place: 'Nothing can be added to ens, from outside nature as it were, in the way that difference is added to genus, or accident to subject, because EVERY NATURE IS ESSENTIALLY ENS'* (*De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1). *The fact that every nature is essentially ens means that the essence of every nature is ens. Essence is that which is intuited in the idea, and therefore pertains to ens, the object intuited in the idea. But the essence of contingent things is one thing, their reality or subsistence another. Because the latter is not their essence, it is outside essential ens, and is called ens only by participation, in so far as the mind, by conceiving reality or subsistence, unites them with their essence and thus renders them completely entia. Hence in the objects conceived by the human mind, nothing is outside the essence of ens; if it were, they could not be conceived. But contingent things in themselves, not as conceived, are outside the essence of ens.*

This element is limited to the essence of ens under the single, ideal, undetermined form — the other two forms of the essence (the real and the moral forms) remain separate.

2. By means of acts of reasoning, when for example the mind considers ens under certain special, individual relationships such as truth or as goodness. These distinctions and separations arise solely by means of our mental consideration and are not found in ens itself as true separations. We must, therefore, distinguish their positive part, which is the same as ens and is not its passion, from the *negative* part, that is, from the limitations placed on ens as seen by the mind. These limitations are *negative, dialectical passions* of ens.

Everything which does not enter into the *essence of ens*, for example all contingent, real things, can be called *positive dialectical passions* of ens, because the mind considers these additions as acts, or terms of acts of ens itself and truly separable from it.

But I repeat: when I call *contingent, real things* ‘passions of ens’, I do not in any way mean that ens in itself suffers. On the contrary, essential ens, in its own being, is not subject to passion or change of any kind. I am speaking about ens as conceived in the mind and united with it through its additions, that is, contingent entia. Later, I will explain how this comes about.

Both *negative* and *positive dialectical passions* take place in virtue of the action of the mind. Relative to negative passions, our mind considers as separate what in fact is not separate in ens. In the case of positive passions it considers as inherent to the essence of ens what in reality is not inherent. I will shortly explain how this happens and can happen without deception.

60. I must make another observation. Investigating the passions of ens can be understood in two ways. Some thinkers have understood it to mean investigating what is required in every determined ens if it is to have the nature of ens. For example, they said that *unity* is a passion of ens (by *passion* they understood *property*), because no ens can exist unless it is one. This is not the sense in which I investigate the passions of ens. I am concerned with the passions of essential ens, that is, of ens conceived initially by the mind. As St. Thomas says in the text quoted above: all concepts are always 1. ens, and 2. ens with some additions. In other words, in all our concepts there is an

equal element, which is ens. But because this ens receives different additions, it changes into all things by being determined in different ways. These determinations of the first concept of ens (a concept which, strictly speaking I call 'IDEA') are what I call 'dialectical passions of ens'.

61. Both kinds of passions (negative dialectical and much more the positive dialectical passions, as I have called them) appear to contradict the concept of ens itself.

If ens is so simple in its essence that no distinctions can be admitted in it, how do negative passions arise, that is, distinctions which the human mind makes in ens?

Furthermore, if positive, dialectical passions, which I said are all contingent realities, do not enter into the essence of ens, what are they? Either we must deny them or if we grant them, we must call them entia; but if they are entia, they have the essence of entia and are not outside this essence.

The problem remains always the same: how to remove the contradiction between the concept of ens and its appearances.

Article 2

We find the ontological problem in the real world,
the ideal world and the moral world

62. The concept of ens is everywhere engulfed in antinomies.

In fact ens seems to be subject to the most contrary dialectical passions: it is one but also many, necessary but also contingent, infinite and finite, immutable yet mutable, eternal and temporary, simple but composite, the greatest and also the smallest, etc. How can all these things, which are so contrary to each other, also be passions of ens? If ens contains no contradiction, how do we explain the antagonism found everywhere in the sphere of the real world? What is the origin of the antinomies which human thought and all concepts seem to obey?

63. I will limit myself to a brief discussion of how the ontological problem is found equally in the ideal world, the real world and the moral world.

We perceive different entia which compose the universe. Our perception comes about by predication. What then in us is the

ideal, essential knowledge corresponding to this knowledge by predication obtained by our perception of sensible entia? It is the knowledge contained entirely in the essence of these entia. However, we certainly do not find in this essence everything we know by predication, as if this essential knowledge adequately contained all we predicated of the entia. First of all, we do not find the subsistence of entia in their simple essences: ideas alone would never let us know whether entia subsisted or not — the essence we intuit is the same, whether entia subsist or not. We therefore feel the need that this shortfall in our knowledge of essences be brought to completion by means of some other knowledge, also of essences, which is capable of making us know the subsistence of subsistent entia and the non-subsistence of non-subsistent entia. In other words, the objects we know are contingent, that is, their essence is such that it can be intuited by the mind without subsistence on the part of the objects themselves. Consequently, our mind, gazing upon the essence, sees that entia may or may not subsist. But because the mind needs absolute knowledge, it tends to procure the knowledge of some other essence, through the intuition of which it determines whether entia subsist or not. This second essence is called the sufficient reason of entia. We see therefore that a sufficient reason is ‘a given essence in which we intuit the knowledge acquired by predication’.

64. All I have said about the subsistence of visible entia has to be said equally about everything that we come to know together with subsistence; for example, the quantity of matter, the number of entia, their situation in space and time, their accidental qualities and mutual relationships. But nothing of this is contained in the simple idea of these entia. The idea of a horse (and the same applies to every other ens) contains neither the number of existing horses, nor the place and time where they are located, nor their accidental qualities and mutual relationships — the idea of a horse does not make us know anything about these things. Hence all these appurtenances and relationships of the horse are said to be contingent. Our understanding therefore feels the need of a sufficient reason to explain all these things which it encounters in its knowledge by predication but are absent from its ideal knowledge of essences.

65. The same problem is found in the world of ideas.

Ideas, or rather concepts of the human mind, are numerous and very different, yet the idea of being is itself one. We do not see how so many other essences can be presented to us when the essence of being is one. Where does this multiplicity come from? What is the principle which multiplies and differentiates essences?

Furthermore, reflection works continually on the full, specific ideas of things, drawing from them many mental entia which in turn stimulate our intelligence to ask how can we find a sufficient reason for them in the concept of ens.

66. The same antinomies are encountered, but under a different aspect, in the moral world, where being takes the form of good; here intelligence requires absolutely a reconciliation. We find in fact the following antinomies: there is one absolute good and simultaneously many finite goods; one good principle of all things (a supremely good principle), yet evil exists alongside it; a principle of good which, despite its omnipotence, is everywhere in constant struggle with evil; finally, the essence of moral good is one but its forms and appearances, etc., are innumerable. Thus, even in the moral world our reason feels the need to find in the very essence of being the reason for and reconciliation of these apparent contradictions.

CHAPTER 6

The fifth form of the ontological problem: 'What is ens and what is non-ens?'

67. It would seem from historical sources that the ontological problem first exercised the mind scientifically in Italy amongst the Eleatic school. The greatest monument to this school is Plato's *Parmenides*. We even know, to some extent, how this school solved the problem. However, my intention here is to indicate the supreme philosophical merit present in proposing both the problem and the formula in which the problem is expressed.

This formula can be stated as follows:

'What is it that can be truly called ens?' or 'What are the characteristics and indispensable conditions of ens?'

68. This very difficult question, proposed by Parmenides, was unsuccessfully dealt with by all ancient philosophy.

If we classify all ancient philosophy according to the solution of this great problem, we have three exclusive systems, which unite into a fourth. The four systems contain all possible solutions, although expressed in a general way.

First Class: those philosophers who, unable to find a way of reconciling the *unity* of entia with their *multiplicity*, excluded the latter and admitted ens-as-one, the τὸ ἓν of Parmenides.

Second Class: those who, also unable to find a reconciliation, excluded the one and posited the many, πολλὰ, for example, Leucippus and Democritus.

Third Class: those who tried to reconcile the one with the many but, in my opinion, without success. They admitted the ἓν καὶ πολλὰ [the one and the many]. I consider Anaxagoras one of these.

Fourth Class: Finally, those who admitted at one and the same time, but under different aspects, the ἓν καὶ πᾶν [the one and all], the ἓν πολλὰ [the many-one], and the ἓν καὶ πολλὰ [the one and the many]. Among these, I think, we can place Plato and Aristotle, the greatest philosophers.

69. The Alexandrians, using the language of Christianity,

formed three hypotheses, as it were three persons, from these three things. They claimed they had ‘found a basis for this teaching in many ancient thinkers’. Thus, Plotinus claimed to have found in Plato’s dialogue, *Parmenides*, traces of the three unequal principles to be acknowledged in God.³³ Some modern philosophers, like Ralph Cudworth, accepted this as the key to the dialogue.³⁴

³³ ‘According to Plato, Parmenides distinguishes more precisely the *first one*, which is principally one, the second which he calls *one-many* and finally the third, *one and many*’* (Plot., *Ennead* 5, 460, a.).

³⁴ ‘I would not in any way reject this observation of Plotinus. On the contrary I think there is nothing more suitable for unlocking Plato’s obscure and difficult Dialogue, *Parmenides*’* (R. Cudworth, *Systema intellectuale*, vol. 1, c. 4, §21).

CHAPTER 7

Summary of the formulae in which the ontological problem is presented

70. The different formulae by which I expressed the ontological problem can be summed up under the five following heads:

1. How to reconcile the *manifestations of ens* with the concept of ens.
2. How to find a sufficient reason for the different manifestations of ens.
3. How to find the equation between intuitive knowledge and knowledge by predication.
4. How to reconcile the antinomies apparent in human thought.
5. What ens is and what non-ens is.

71. These five different forms express the same problem from different aspects, and one implies the other. The first seeks to reconcile the manifestations of ens with the concept of ens, that is, to demonstrate that the manifestations do not contradict the simple concept of ens. This concept is universal and must therefore include all that is. Hence, in order to demonstrate that the manifestations of ens do not contradict the simple, universal concept of ens, we must first demonstrate that the different modes manifested by ens are contained in the sole concept of ens itself. But this demonstration will itself also show that the manifestations are necessarily possible because the concept itself, as well as everything in it, is obviously necessary. And if, in the concept of ens, we find this necessary possibility of the modes, we will also have found their reason, that is, their ultimate, necessary, evident reason by which they are possible. Our effort to find this reason, the second form of the problem, is the same as that of reconciling the modes of ens with its concept, the first form of the problem. The second form, however, is more advanced because it indicates what the result of the problem must be.

Furthermore, the different modes manifested by ens have as

[70–71]

their foundation feeling and the perception of real things, that is, some knowledge by predication. But the concept itself of ens constitutes intuitive knowledge. If we demonstrate therefore that the different modes of ens manifested by the realities which we perceive have the reason of their possibility in the concept of ens itself, we are subjecting what is known by predication to theory, uniting it to the idea and to the object of intuition. This means that there is no longer any division between what is real and what is ideal, between knowledge by predication (which refers to what is real) and intuitive knowledge (which refers to what is ideal). These two kinds of knowledge are now equal, and balance each other; and our understanding is at peace because it has found that everything that is, has its necessary reason in that which can be. The third form of the ontological problem is therefore basically the first, but in its expression is more advanced than the first two because it indicates a final result of the problem, that is, peace in the understanding where harmony and order have been found between the two ways of knowledge now reduced to one, necessary principle. The fourth formula soon follows, if we consider that the whole difficulty of reconciliation lies in certain, apparent contradictions or antinomies between the modes of ens and ens itself, between what is contingent (which does not have its reason in itself) and what is necessary, and between knowledge by predication and knowledge by intuition. The problem, without changing its nature, is now reduced to reconciling the apparent antinomies in human thought. The first three formulae express the problem by defining and determining it according to its purpose, and the fourth according to the difficulty in the problem which must be overcome in order to attain the purpose.

The fifth formula, which asks 'What is ens?', 'What are its essential conditions?', expresses the same problem according to the means necessary for its solution. If the nature of ens and consequently of non-ens is known, the fourfold disharmony is easily removed.

72. Investigating the nature and essential characteristics of ens, therefore, means investigating the universal theory of ens, which is precisely the definition of ontology.

CHAPTER 8

The possibility of providing ontology with a logical start

73. I have already noted that the philosophers who reduced the whole of philosophy to ontology found themselves in difficulty with their very first words: they were forced to say that the beginning could never be more than an hypothesis. They evidently believed that anything founded on a hypothesis could gradually become a truth without the need for a previous, necessary and logical principle which would justify this transition. In such a case this implicit, logical, principle would have to be the true beginning. Their mistake was to consider the principle as implicit, rather than explicit, even when they denied it.

Unable, therefore, to find a way to begin ontology from a certainty, they said that no *direct* information was true and strongly opposed what they called 'direct',³⁵ as if what is indirect (which depends logically on what is direct) could itself be certain while what is direct is uncertain, or as if the union of many uncertainties could give one whole certainty.

74. I myself however am not held back by this kind of impediment. I did not start philosophy from *ontological* sciences, but from *ideological* sciences which showed that all human knowledge depends on two primal, direct elements: 1. *ideal being* intuited naturally by human intelligence and 2. *feeling*.³⁶

Ideal being is self-evident and direct. This self-evidence is not that taught by Descartes in his 'clear idea', but consists in *logical necessity* where the intuiting mind sees that this ideal being cannot differ in any way from what it appears to be.³⁷

Feeling is not known through itself, but through the act of perception which admits no error.³⁸

75. It is true that perception gives only a limited knowledge, but this does not mean that within its limitation it cannot be

³⁵ Cf. *IP*, 1: [84].

³⁶ Cf. *AMS*, 10–17; *Logica*, [1045; 1092–1097].

³⁷ Cf. *Rinascimento*, bk. 3, c. 47.

³⁸ Cf. *NE*, 3: [1158–1244].

true. Not recognising this, the German philosophers, from Fichte to Hegel, fell into a serious error: they confused the *limitation* of knowledge with the *falsehood* of knowledge. In their opinion, perception was false because they did not find in it what they were looking for (it could not in fact be found there). These philosophers sought absolute being everywhere because, as I said, they plunged into ontology insufficiently prepared without dealing with the ideological sciences. They wanted to find immediately the complete doctrine of being and considered perception false because it did not provide them with this complete doctrine. Indeed they were unable to form a correct concept of perception, to which they arbitrarily gave an extension it did not have and then condemned it as false because it lacks this extension.³⁹

76. Reflection is directed to the two primal elements of knowledge and, after a long and exhausting effort, finds and removes their limits. Finally it arrives at a satisfying theory of being, that is, at the knowledge and solution of the problem of ontology, by demonstrating the necessary limits of this human solution.

77. But how does reflection direct itself to these two elements, that is, to ideal being and feeling, and how does it come to know and remove their limits?

The first means is *being* itself, which is the form of all knowledge, the universal, necessary means of the acts of intelligence. In ideology we can clearly see how this being is applied both to itself and to what is perceived.

78. It is true that the human mind progresses through stages and attains the full theory of being by many acts of reflection, not simply by one act. Before it arrives at what I call *absolute thought* (the apex of ontology), it must break thought down into a series of a great number of universal and particular propositions, each connected with the other. Here too Hegel's error, similar to the error mentioned above, must be excluded. He declared all propositions and all judgments false for the sole reason that each of them does not include 'the whole', where alone, he claims, truth is to be found. He call this totality 'absolute idea' in which, according to him, the human subject

³⁹ *Sistema filos.*, 75–77.

(that is, both the real subject and the material world) is totally lost. The result of all this is the very strange teaching that ‘if the truth were found in this way, man, who should enjoy it, would no longer be’. But such darkness has already been partly dispelled in my *Logica*.⁴⁰

79. Our conclusion must be that there is a *stable point* (the idea of being, and feeling) from which we can begin ontology, and a *means* by which we can move forward from this point to new cognitions (ideal being, the essence of being). Finally we know that we can validly proceed by means of interconnected propositions from one cognition to another, and do so with the certainty that each proposition, when it corresponds to the laws of ancient and eternal logic, is true. All these propositions together can give us, through their connections, the system of truth we are looking for.

I would simply add, in praise of ontological science, that all judgments and particular propositions contain something negative because none of them makes being totally known. Ontology, which joins together a series of propositions to obtain the theory of being, perfects human knowledge and can therefore be called ‘the theory of knowledge’.

⁴⁰ Bk.[2], c. 15, [41–53, 1181–1184].

CHAPTER 9

The structure of reasoning used by the student of ontology

80. It will be helpful if from the start we know the structure which the student of ontology uses in his reasoning to solve the difficult problem he faces. I present the structure stripped of everything accessory.

81. 1. Our mind intuits undetermined being. Undetermined being is the first object presented to the student of ontology and is his starting point.

82. 2. Perceptions and ideas are formed by applying this being to what is felt. This gives the mind knowledge of finite entia.

83. 3. Knowledge of any finite ens whatsoever makes it known in both its *reality* and its *possibility*. Indeed the former is known through the latter which logically precedes. To know an finite ens in its possibility means 'to know it in so far as it is necessarily in being'. From this formula, which I will deal with more fully later on, we see that knowledge of a finite ens reveals something new in the undetermined ens we first saw. We still see the undetermined ens but something else in addition, because we learn that it can be actuated and terminated in the finite ens we know. Before we knew the finite ens, we saw a potentiality in undetermined being without knowing the thing to which the potentiality referred. We now know however at least one of the terms to which it referred. Our knowledge of being has therefore been increased because we have one of the points to which its indetermination extends. We consider the term as possible, and with this knowledge we know how being can be terminated. If we considered the term as real, being would be determined in this way, and would be the knowledge of a subsistent finite ens. This reasoning we make about any ens whatsoever can be extended to every ens we perceive; we know them all not only as real but as possible. For the moment let us leave aside knowledge of what is real as real, and consider knowledge of it as possible. Possible finite entia before our mind increase our knowledge in two ways, depending on how the mind considers them. We can consider them by

[80–83]

concentrating on each individually; this is knowledge of individuals. We can consider them in relation to *undetermined being*, that is, as possible terms of undetermined being. This increases our knowledge of undetermined being by making known to us the terms to which it can be determined.

84. This explains why many people have great difficulty in admitting that the human spirit intuitively being prior to the perception of a finite ens. Being, which stands before our mind, not only lacks every determination and term; it is also in an initial state. In this state it gives our mind no information about its possible determinations; it simply shows that it can be determined without our knowing how and to what it is determined. No wonder it seems to be nothing! Nevertheless, when our reflection turns to and analyses a finite ens, it distinguishes the act by which the finite ens is, from the finite ens itself. We conclude from this distinction that the act by which the ens is, is common to all other finite entia. And if we go further with our philosophical thinking, we come to this very important conclusion: the act of being common to all finite entia is intelligible in itself, and through it all finite entia are made intelligible. Consequently, the pure act of being can be intuited in the absence of finite entia and prior to their perception. However, because it is totally on its own, and such perfect isolation admits of no mental or verbal discourse, it cannot be uttered.

Moreover, reflection on the finite entia we have already perceived tells us that the intuition of being contains information on *possibility* in such a way that being, taken on its own, presents possibility alone, a possibility which cannot be referred to any determined thing. If our mind has already perceived a finite ens, undetermined being presents it not only with possibility in all its universality, but with the possibility of that particular perceived ens: light is added to the indetermination and possibility, because they have a point of reference.

85. Here we must carefully note that everything which involves no contradiction is thought as possible and cannot be thought otherwise. This *logical possibility* certainly cannot involve any contradiction, but it also consists in understanding that the thing is *absolutely possible*. This means that there must be an unknown potency through which the thing could exist, a potency virtually contained in the very concept of being.

86. *Being*, therefore, is *per se*, and *possibility* is simply a relationship to *reality*, that is, to its terms, the nature of which remains unknown as long as the terms themselves are not perceived. We begin to perceive the terms however by means of finite entia. Hence, through our perception of *reality*, that is, of finite real things, our knowledge is increased in two ways: first, through our grasp of this reality; second, through our increased knowledge of *possibility* as we begin to know the nature of the term of this possibility. Our knowledge of undetermined being is therefore greater than before because we know to some extent the nature of its determinations.

As we see, the perception of finite entia imparts a first clarification of undetermined being, which is naturally present to the human mind. Only now is it possible for mental discourse, which requires much information, to begin. We no longer know being alone together with the possibility of its determinations and its terms in all their universality. We now know some of these terms and something of the nature of the thing to which the possibility refers, that is, the nature of some determination of being.

87. 4. We have described the first step taken by the student of ontology towards the full knowledge of being. The second step consists in new reflections on the finite realities he knows. He first compares the realities known as possible terms of being with the *universal possibility* of being presented by being itself. This comparison tells him the following:

a) Finite realities, considered as possible terms of being, do not exhaust the universal possibility of being, which admits no limit at all.

b) Moreover, even if these realities did not exist, being with all its infinite possibility would nevertheless be. The realities therefore do not constitute the essence of being, they are not necessary to it; hence their name, 'contingent'.

c) Their possibility is included in the universal possibility which pertains to the essence of being.

88. 5. Ontological reflection now ascends to the full knowledge of being by a third step. In the reality of the finite entia supplied by perception, ontological knowledge has a sample, although a very poor one, of the determinations and terms of being. It deduces from this that the terms and determinations of

being which it does not yet know must have some likeness or analogy with those terms, that is, with those finite realities it has already perceived and knows. All the terms of being have being equally as their principle and depend on its nature; they must therefore have something in common, at least by analogy. Reflection deduces the same by analysing the finite terms it knows. It finds that some elements of the finite terms must also be found in all the other possible terms of being; if they were not there, being could not have them without destroying itself. By means of these and similar reflections, ontological reflection forms some doctrine about determinations and terms in the whole of being. For example, reflection finds activity, feeling, intelligence, morality, etc., in finite entia, and understands that being could not have terms which totally lacked these properties or at least were deprived totally of any relationship with them. This is an important result for the universal teaching concerning the determinations and terms of which being is susceptible.

89. 6. This teaching then gives us a fourth step, of the greatest importance. When the student of ontology meditates on undetermined being, he finds the following:

a) Being, intuited by the mind and undetermined, cannot in itself not be.

b) Being, in itself, cannot be, unless it is fully determined. It must therefore have some proper, necessary determinations and terms, to which the student of ontology applies the universal teaching about the nature of terms which he had obtained by analogy from finite terms.

c) The proper, necessary terms of being cannot have any limitation because being itself has no limitation. They also must enter into the constitution of the essence of being. If not, contradiction would be present; being would be denied, although its nature requires that it cannot not be. This gives us a *fifth* step of ontological reflection, which establishes the necessity of the proper terms of being. There is also a *sixth* step which removes from all these terms everything inappropriate to them, such as *limitation*. The mind now comes to the theory of absolute being, a theory which has the characteristics of divinity that undetermined being lacks.

90. This is the structure used by the student of ontology in his

reasoning. It consists entirely of a continual comparison, which reflection makes, between perceived finite entia and being present to the mind in an undetermined way. This task tends *to determine being*, words which express a sixth form of the ontological problem.

It is very important that this logical structure be understood. By it, human thought progresses to the ultimate investigations granted to the human mind, and arrives at a theory which gives the mind the total rest to which it aspires. Human thought attains this end with a sure step because, in its progress forward, it always and necessarily uses the principles of contradiction, identity and knowledge (the first two depending on the last).

This is the path I will follow in the whole of this work.

CHAPTER 10

Ontological reasoning proceeds in a circle, but not a vicious circle

91. What has been said confirms that ontological reason necessarily proceeds in a circle.

The object of ontology is the whole of ens, and reasoning cannot rise to the knowledge of this whole without recourse to the teachings about the parts which compose the whole. But in order to know these, reasoning must have recourse to knowledge of the whole. The whole and the parts are co-relatives which the mind understands with a single act. But our reasoning, which must examine the terms of the relationship, cannot do this at one and the same time. Anyone wishing to speak about the whole without analysing it would complete his discourse in a single word. After saying the word 'whole', he could say nothing more.

92. In the preceding chapter we saw that the ontological reflection proper to the human mind begins from the perception of finite entia and comes to know

1. the fecundity of undetermined ens;
2. the necessity and richness of absolute ens.

The supposition is that finite ens is known, but cannot be investigated and known in any depth without the theory of being in all its universality and the theory of absolute being. This means that the philosopher must place the theory of finite ens (cosmology) in the last place. This order of reasoning follows therefore an inevitable circle: the theory of finite ens is necessary in order to establish the theory of being in all its universality and the theory of absolute being; these two theories are necessary in order to establish the theory of finite ens.

93. The same circle is involved when we consider the form, that is, the means of reasoning thought instead of the matter, that is, the objects of thought. The form of thought is undetermined being together with 1. the universal principles derived from it (*NE*, 1: 556–572), 2. the elementary ideas of being (*ibid.*, 573–580) and 3. all abstractions without exception. These

[91–93]

formal notions, necessary for every reasoning, are present in all of them, or are presupposed. But they themselves are derived from being, of which they are applications, or are obtained by the mind through abstraction or dialectical fiction when these actions are performed on perceived entia. Hence, we cannot on the one hand reason about being and about perceived entia without these notions, and on the other have the notions in scientific form without instituting some reasoning about being and entia. I have already observed that being is applied by our mind to itself, and simultaneously performs the double function of object and means of knowledge (*PSY*, 1: 570); the same applies to all notions and formal propositions. Once again we have a circle, and must conclude that all reasoning in ontology and ontoosophy necessarily proceed in a circle.

94. But this circle is not in any way a vicious circle. When we reason about parts in order to know the whole, the whole is present to our mind and is already known in an imperfect, complex way. Our study of the parts does not produce knowledge of the whole, it simply makes the knowledge more perfect, clarifies it and makes it more reflective and exact, like a science. Note, this is not the defect the Greeks called ὑπερον τροπή [turning of the pestle], and the Scholastics *pistilli versatio* [the circular movement of the pestle]. Our first knowledge of the whole which guides us in our study of the parts does not form a *science*. Consequently, scientific knowledge, no matter where it begins, needs some presupposed, non-scientific knowledge. Strictly speaking this is not a defect of human knowledge but of scientific knowledge. The defect seems to proceed in a circle. We intend to state everything in an ordered, proven way. We begin by saying things which presuppose other things which we intend to demonstrate later — this is the circle. But human knowledge does not proceed in a circle because it needs no succession or parts; the whole is present to it without its presupposing anything else.

Thus, relative to its matter, the mind already has being present to it when it considers finite entia in order to extract from them information which increases its knowledge and the teaching about being. Although it does not know as much about being as it will know later, it does know sufficient for being to act as a light and norm for the study of the parts. This is why the

Scholastics, following Aristotle, acknowledged that some *confused knowledge* must precede scientific and *distinct knowledge* (*PSY*, 2: 1314).

We must say the same about the *formality* of thought. Although science could not pursue any reasoning without the use of formal principles, nor reason about these principles without using the principles themselves, nevertheless prior to any reasoning, intelligence has before it ideal being which virtually and indivisibly contains them all. We can separate these principles from ideal being and reduce them to individual propositions. We can then use them to reason about being itself (from which they are derived) so that we can know being better, or use them to reason about the formal principles themselves for the same purpose. In all this, however, we certainly follow an apparent but not vicious circle because the principles are used not to acquire but increase the knowledge we already possess (this is presupposed), and make it clearly explicit, distinct and conscious.

95. This is a long way from being a vicious circle. The very necessity of applying being to itself and the formal principles to themselves shows the certainty and necessary truth of the knowledge under discussion. A proof of its *evidence* is precisely the fact that such knowledge cannot be explained and intimately known except through itself. Every demonstration terminates at this evidence, because evidence of the intuited element on which the strength of the demonstration depends precedes the demonstration (*Logica*, [596]). Consequently the formal principles to which we must assent because of the evidence of being seen in them, are a certain means for knowing the truth and can be applied to being itself. If they make known things we did not previously know, or knew in a different way, we must conclude that our new information is true, because we already know enough of being to give us certainty when true information is presented to us. Logicians called this way of reasoning a *regress*, not a *circle*.⁴¹

⁴¹ By *regress* I mean 'two demonstrations or, more generally, two cognitive operations connected in such a way that with the first we start from something known and come to the knowledge of something unknown. With the second, we begin from what we have come to know and, as we meditate on it, discover new things which in turn help us to learn more than that from

96. The reasoning I use in theosophy will therefore be like people sailing on a stretch of water. Although their boat cuts only one path, nevertheless, whatever direction they take, in a straight line or zigzag, they never leave the water. If on the other hand, there was only some of the water, not all of it, they could always make some tracks through it, even if these were much reduced and they could not sail the whole of it in different directions. In the same way, whatever my reasoning in the different parts of this work, and no matter how limited the path I follow, I must always keep the whole of being present, not indeed in what I say, but to my mind. This presupposition is necessary so that every word, every partial investigation can be expressed by me or understood by others.

which we had started'. This definition of regress is more general than that given by logicians. By regress they mean two demonstrations in the first of which one moves from effect to knowledge of the *existence* of the cause (*demonstratio quod*). When existence is known and its nature has eventually been identified, the second demonstration begins. By it we know the effect better than before (*demonstratio propter quid*). But in my opinion this demonstration does not extend to all the modes and cases of regress. Giacopo Zabarella, a fine Italian philosopher and as usual forgotten by us Italians, excellently observes that in regress it is not sufficient to have found the *existence* of the cause from the effect, but after finding the existence, we must also find its nature or something new which is more than its existence. We then use this new thing to return to the effect and explain it. Cf. Zabarella's *De Regressu*, and also my *Logica* [701–708].

[96]

CHAPTER 11

Division of ontology

97. It follows that the object assigned to metaphysics, and to ontology, by those who restricted the object to 'most common being', was incomplete.⁴² 'Most common being', understood in a composite sense, is preceded by 'ideal being', of which *common* being is simply a relationship with contingent things.⁴³ The mind discovers the relationship when by reflection it abstracts being from known, perceived real things. But prior to this reflection and abstraction, the mind has 'undetermined being' before it, and it is here that the necessary reason for other entia must be sought. Hence, undetermined being is more accurately the object of ontology. But this is still not enough.

98. Theosophy deals with the whole of being. Because being can be thought in its *possibility* and in its *subsistence*, we can divide theosophy primarily into two parts: 'Theory of being considered in its possibility' (ontology) and 'Theory of being considered in its subsistence'.

99. Being in its subsistence is either Infinite (God) or finite (the World). Hence the 'Theory of being considered in its subsistence' divides into the two sciences, or parts, of theology and cosmology.

100. But ontology, although it considers being in its possibility, that is, without reference to what is subsistent, also deals with the totality of being. Hence, it considers not only being in its determination by abstracting either from its forms or from infinite and finite being, but considers also undetermined being in itself, and in the possibility and necessity of its forms and conditions, among which is the ability 1. to be

⁴² Suarez writes: 'Ens taken at its most common, that is, as transcendent and the object of metaphysics or of the intellect, takes no account of complete and incomplete'* (*Disputationes Metaphysicae.*, D. 2, S. 5, 14).

⁴³ Although 'being' is the only quality we can say is common to both God and finite entia (cf. *IP*, 3: VII, 5), we could not call it common unless a multiplicity of finite entia existed. Thus the term expresses a relationship to contingent things.

infinite and finite and 2. as finite, to receive various limitations.

101. If ontology considers the totality of being in its possibility, then clearly possibility does not exclude necessity. In fact it includes it, because everything possible is, as possible, necessary. Moreover, the demonstration that infinite being is possible, that is, that it can exist, simultaneously demonstrates that infinite being necessarily exists. Investigation of its possibility — that is, whether it can exist — results in an extraordinary conclusion: ‘Infinite being cannot be possible, unless it is necessary. But it is necessary that it is possible. Therefore it is necessary that it exists’.

102. Ontology, therefore, although it begins from undetermined being, does not deal exclusively with it, nor prescind from complete or incomplete being. It reasons about these conditions of being in relationship to being.

103. When the student of ontology begins his study with a view to forming a ‘Theory of being in all the fullness of its possibility’, he discovers that being has essentially three acts: objectivity, subjectivity and morality. He calls them forms and categories, noting that being is identical in each of them. He must therefore divide his work into two parts: he must investigate first the nature of being-as-one, and then the nature of being-as-three.

104. The first object of human thought is the multiplicity of sensible entia. Hence, reasoning must begin by investigating an order in this multitude of sensible things. This investigation brings us to find the ultimate classification of the differences between the multiple entia and entities. When classified, these differences take us to the three categories which then lead us to the three supreme forms of being. Finally these forms lead to being itself.

We can therefore suitably divide the whole work into the three following books:

Book 1, The Categories.

Book 2, Being-as-One.

Book 3, Trine Being.

ONTOLOGY^[†]

104a. Universal ontology is the science which deals with being in all its possibility. It can be defined as ‘the theory of being in so far as being is humanly knowable in the idea’. This definition needs careful consideration.

First, ‘the theory of being in the idea’ must not be confused with the ‘theory of being-as-idea’. The latter pertains to special ontology which deals with each of the supreme forms of being individually, one of which is precisely being-as-idea. On the other hand, universal ontology deals with being itself, whatever its forms. But being, whatever form it has, must be considered in the way it is revealed to us in the idea, although the idea itself must not become an exclusive, special object of the science.

Second, the *idea*, although our universal means of knowledge, is imperfect (*NE*, 2: 480–486, 566, 570; 3: 1061). With it we can indeed think being even in its reality, but the idea is not sufficient for us to think of the reality as subsistent; the reality is thought only as possible to exist (*NE*, 1: *App.*, no. 8; 2: *App.*, no. 41). If we know being only as possible (even in all its forms), we do not fully know it, because it also subsists. Nevertheless, being, contemplated in the idea, is called *theory* because the object contemplated in the idea is always necessary, eternal truth. We should more modestly call it *human theory*, because our contemplation is the initial, imperfect contemplation granted to human nature in this life. When I speak later in special ontology about the *objective* form of being, I shall distinguish a double objective form: the *ideal* form (the imperfect form granted to humans) and the *absolute* form, proper to God, which is required for an absolute, complete science of being. In this divine science, the theory of being is not distinct from the theory of the supreme forms of being; there is only one single theory of what is subsistent and knowable, the theory of *objective being* itself.

[† This unnumbered section was added by Rosmini to his original manuscript.]

104b. We see here the great distance between ontology, whether universal or special, and theology.

Both kinds of ontology deal with the whole of being but only in so far as we can meditate on it in our idea, where every ens has a certain sociality. This is the origin of the universal theory of being. However, whenever we reason about being, not as we conceive it but as it *must* subsist *in se* (although we do not conceive it in this way), the science of supreme, absolute Being, the Ens of Entia, begins. This is theology.

Ontology therefore is a path, a kind of noble preface, to theology.

The separation of *universal* from *special ontology* follows necessarily from the law governing the way our intellect conceives. But the separation indicates another limitation in our intellect and some imperfection in what is knowable and proper to it. Nevertheless, our nature desires above all to meditate on the *theory of being*. But even beyond that, we want to know *how* our intellect is limited and how we can escape from this limitation by the other course of meditation which leads our thought to God himself.

The object of universal ontology therefore is not the idea but *being* made known to us solely in the idea.

Now it is only by degrees that our mind attains 'the theory of being in the idea'. It must first consider the multitude of things presented to it in a confused way and as it were in some kind of chaos. This impels the mind to find their order and to discover how to distribute all the entities into certain ultimate classes. Then, aware that unity is necessarily present in order, despite the presence of multiplicity, the mind meditates on the intimate relationship between this unity and multiplicity. Finally, seeing that ens 1. underpins multiplicity in this way, 2. alone constitutes its foundation and 3. is, as it were, its subject, the mind examines the nature of ens as such, a single nature equal to itself. This gives us the division of universal ontology which I presented above. Consequently, the first book is called 'The Categories', to which I must now apply myself.

Book One

THE CATEGORIES

[INTRODUCTION]

105. If our thought is limited to considering pure being-as-one, the whole of our systematic knowledge about it can be expressed in a single word: being. If therefore we wish to set our thought in motion and speculate, we need to find some variety and multiplicity in being itself. This variety and multiplicity manifest themselves to us only when we contemplate the universe in all its variety and different entia. Hence, we need to have reached a certain stage of development and to have obtained through experience the common notions of sensible things, as ideology explains at length. Unless we have done this, we cannot ask ourselves, ‘What is the nature of being?’ nor, after endeavouring to reply, can we find the means which allows us to conceive and work out a theory of being (ontology).

106. Our speculative thought, impressed by the multiplicity of finite entia we see before us, in all of which we see an act of being, cannot but ascend from this mysterious multiplicity to the even more mysterious unity of being. As we begin to speculate, the multiplicity in our minds is, as I said, confused and chaotic. Innumerable objects and entities are in our thoughts, and we can find others of every kind and nature: real, complete and incomplete, ideal, abstract, rational, relative and absolute, all of which we call *entities*. If our speculative thought, however, is to ascend from such a multitude of disparate, contrary and opposite entities to the unity of being, we must above all strive to give some order to this mass of disunited and unconnected entities.

To do this, we must consider their differences and varieties, which must be reduced to the ultimate classes. If we begin by reducing them to classes, we easily see how these first classes can, by further generalisation, be reduced to a smaller number

of classes, and so on until we come, by abstraction and generalisation, to the ultimate classes, the most universal of all which cannot be reduced any further. These ultimate classes of varieties which reveal innumerable entities to our mind are called CATEGORIES, and their study is 'the problem of the categories'.

107. Whenever the mind solves this problem, it clearly possesses the principle of *order* for all the entities in which being is shown to the intellect as transfused. All other varieties depend on these first, categorical varieties (as I will call them) in a way analogous but not equal to the way species depend on genera. Just as genera virtually contain species, so the categorical varieties contain the lower classes of varieties in such a way that these categorical varieties are the principles from which the lower classes derive. On the other hand, if the speculative mind of the philosopher were to find certain classes of variety of being but not the ultimate classes — which cannot be reduced to a smaller number because there is nothing beyond them except unity of being — his mind would still lack the principle which imparts order to the whole chaos of entities present to his mind. Although the classes which are not the ultimate or supreme classes impart some order to the lower classes, they themselves (and all others derived from them) lack order and, relative to the mind, remain confused. Moreover, without the higher classes, non-ultimate classes have no meaning because this, and the explanation of their distinction, lies in the higher classes. Supreme classes are therefore the *ultimate reasons* for all others; their reason is not in other classes antecedent to them but in being itself which alone precedes them in concept.

108. The difficulty of the problem of the categories is witnessed to by the very history of philosophy. The problem presented itself in various ways to philosophers. But although they tried painstakingly to solve it and discovered many valuable truths while doing so, I would not dare to say that any of them had completely succeeded. In fact, the examination I make in this book of some of the systems, and more particularly the critical history I give, will demonstrate the contrary.

The conditions required by the problem are indeed difficult to fulfil. They are:

1. Certain varieties of being are posited.

[107–108]

2. These cannot be reduced to a smaller number.

3. All other possible varieties are rooted in one of them, that is, not only the varieties experienced and actually known by the philosopher, but those he does not know. This must be demonstrated *a priori* in such a way that it would be absurd to think the opposite.

The great difficulty of these conditions is clear, but there are others extrinsic to the problem. They arise from the equivocal ways in which the problem was often presented and because the problem is easily confused with related questions. In short, there is the difficulty of clearly determining the problem and understanding its meaning. I will therefore begin by removing the difficulties which could slow progress.

CHAPTER 1

The difficulty of finding a classification which includes all the varieties of being

109. If we consider the laws prescribed by logic for the common classifications of things (*Logica*, 979–982), we immediately see that they can be applied only with difficulty to the classification of all entities. One of these laws states that 1. all classes must have *one sole subject* and a *common quality* which serves as foundation for the classification and division; and 2. the one sole subject which is divided, and the quality according to which it is divided and classified, bestow the general and specific name on the individuals of each class. For example, if human beings were classified into educated and uneducated, the one sole subject which is divided and classified would be *man*,⁴⁴ who would hold the place of genus; *education* would be the quality according to which he is divided, to constitute the species or classes of the *educated* and the *uneducated*.

110. To prevent the classification from offending against this rule, the *subject* which is divided must be really, not apparently the only one. This will be the case when the name which expresses the subject and is applied to all the classified individuals, always retains the same meaning relative to the individuals. Moreover, the quality or concept according to which the subject is divided must be common and divisible, that is, the subject must be able to share in it in various ways; otherwise, the subject could not furnish any division and classification. Hence, the classification of human beings into *true* and *depicted* human beings would offend against the law. In fact, strictly speaking, this classification would not effect any classification at all because on the one hand human beings would not be distributed into classes, and on the other there would be paintings,

⁴⁴ Strictly speaking, the classification concerns individual *human beings* rather than *man*. In this case ‘man’ is the species common to human beings and the *foundation of the classification*. It is taken as the subject of the division because individual human beings are virtually understood in the species *man*.

which are not human beings — the name is applied to paintings in a totally different sense. The quality of being *real* and *painted* are two qualities, not one; nor is the second quality a privation of the first in the sense that it can be reduced to the first. In fact, the only concept brought to our mind by privation is that of the concept we are lacking. This concept, participated in different ways or completely denied, is therefore sufficient for us to make a classification. On the other hand, the lack of what is true is non-true, and lack of what is depicted is non-painting: true human beings could still be depicted or not depicted. Furthermore, the first of these two qualities (*what is true*) cannot be divided into many, that is, it cannot be participated in different ways because every human being without exception is a real human being, granted that he is a human being. The first quality therefore is not one of the qualities on which a classification of human beings can be founded.

111. Taking being as the subject of classification increases the difficulty because no individual quality for making a division exists: being itself is both the *subject* which is divided and the *quality* according to which it must be divided. We are dealing, however, with the division of being into a complete, supreme classification. Now ens admits of many different, contrary qualities, none of which can serve as foundation of the classification because none of them includes the whole of being and is shared by every ens. A correct classification must have as foundation one sole quality of the subject which is divided, and the only unique quality common to every entity is being itself, or something which pertains essentially to it. If therefore we take being as both the subject of the classification and the quality according to which the division and classification must be made, the problem becomes extremely difficult because it presents an internal contradiction: the subject which is divided must remain identical and receive a name that has the same meaning for all parts of the division, while the quality according to which the classification is made must vary and be shared in different ways. This is necessary if there is to be division and classification. On the one hand, being must, as the *subject* which is divided, be one and identical; on the other, it must change and be multiplied as the *quality* according to which the division is made. To be one and to be many are mutually exclusive

contradictories. Claiming, therefore, to have a classification of being, means claiming the impossible. Being would have to be at one and the same time the one sole subject which is divided, and the multiple quality according to which the division is made. It would be like dividing man according to man, that is, according to humanity, the constitutive quality of every human being.

112. As we see, being cannot in itself become the *subject* of a division which reduces it to classes: in itself it is *one* and equal to itself.

We have to say therefore that the problem we are dealing with, if it has a solution, must be understood in some other way. This will become clear if we remember that our mind attributes different values to the same word, *being*. But I must investigate more deeply the difficulty of our task.

We set out, as the reader will remember, to classify all the entities presentable to human thought. In order to reduce these entities to classes, the classes must have 1. some *difference* between them, and 2. something *common*. This common element is the whole which is divided or, as I have just said, the subject of the division. Now, if these classes differ in some way from each other, the difference itself must 1. be an *entity*, 2. be present in the division and 3. be classified. But how can the difference which distinguishes one class from another be in the classes themselves? Here we have another difficulty.

The same can be said about the subject of the division and the resulting classification. If the classes must have something common, this common element, whatever it is, must also be an entity present to human thought. Hence, it also must be allotted to one of the classes. And if it belongs to one of the classes, how can it be common? Anything common to the division and classification is excluded from them and is prior to them. Difficulties abound!

But surely different entities have something common? The very fact that we call them by the same name demonstrates that they have precisely 'entity' in common. And what does 'entity' signify? We cannot conceive any entity without conceiving it as an act of being, which is common to all entities. If by reflection we abstract this common act of being from all entities, whatever their nature, we have the first meaning of *being*: *initial* being, as I call it. *Initial* being is most common and the beginning of all

entities without distinction; it is their first condition, without which they neither are nor are understood. In this sense and separated from all entities, of which it is the common beginning, being is one and alone so that it admits of no companionship or plurality, and consequently of no division or classification.

112a. The fact that initial being does not accept companionship, and is one and alone, divides and separates it from all other entities; it is, therefore, an entity which can be classified. Consequently, in this abstract sense, *being* is mentally considered under two different aspects, either as common to all entities, or in itself without any relationship to them. As common to all, it is not part of their classification but constitutes the subject of their division and classification. As considered separate from entities and as an entity itself, it can easily be admitted that it is present in one or other of the classes formed by entities.

Being therefore becomes double, when considered in the first sense I have given it, that is, as the mind sees it from different points of view. In the order of human thought, it takes on two distinct characteristics: either our thought sees it as most common in *relationship* to all entities and therefore as the subject or foundation of their division and classification, or our thought sees it in *itself*, in so far as it is one and separate from all other entities. In this case, it is an entity which can be classed like all the others. In fact we must consider that any *classification* is an operation of the mind and cannot be found outside the mind or independent of its operation.

If on the one hand we consider *being* as most common to all *entities*, it is clear that the two words 'being' and 'entity' have a different meaning: *being* signifies the common act of *entities*.

If on the other we consider this *initial being* as an *entity* itself, separate from other entities, it is an entity, but not entity *as such*. The difference between this *entity* which is called *pure being* and other entities is that while being is the condition common to all entities, it is, considered in itself, an entity whose only content is itself. In other entities there is, besides being, something else which is not being but different from it — although it is not without but with being. In this organic fact, proper to being, lies the law of synthesis between *pure being* and entities which are not pure being.

The concepts therefore of *being* and of *entity* become one and

[112a]

the same when we speak about the pure act of being separate from everything else; when we speak about anything else, they are distinguished.

113. The difficulty therefore which at first seemed to make the problem of the categories insoluble can be overcome by distinguishing the double meaning of 'being', that is, when understood on the one hand as pure act of existence, and on the other as most common to all entities. As we have seen, being as 'most common' supplies the *one sole* subject for the classification of entities and virtually contains within itself this subject, just as a genus contains its species, or a more extended idea contains less extended ideas. When considered in itself, after abstraction has separated it from other entities, it can be classified as one of them.⁴⁵

114. But where do we find the *common quality* which is both capable of variation and supplies the difference of the classes? This is not impossible to discover granted our distinction between the concept of *pure being* and that of *entity*. This move away from sterile, absolute unity has brought us to a *duality* of principles. The common, variable quality must be found in *entity* itself, for if we can separate *being* from *entities* which are not being, we can also think entities separate from being; better, we can distinguish all the various entities by means of what they

⁴⁵ This explains why Parmenides could not get beyond the unity of ens. He considered it as pure act separate from any of its terms. This obstacle caused Plato to show that the very nature of being involved a multiplicity in unity. On the other hand Aristotle did not stop here, but went to the other extreme. He did indeed recognise being as a common nature which, as such, could be present in the division into categories, but denied that it could be something complete in itself, beyond all limited entities. He says, 'But if something (τι) is both ens itself and one, we are faced with the difficult problem of how there can be anything beyond these, that is, how entia are more than one. Anything which is not ens, is not. Hence according to Parmenides' reasoning, all entia must be one, and this being is ens' (*Metaphysics*, 2 (3): 4). Parmenides' reasoning was correct if by ens we understand *initial being*, mentally separated from all its terms, as one sole entity or simply *pure being*. But it was not valid if ens meant *initial being* capable of union with its terms which finish and complete it, that is, most common being. Aristotle, instead of acknowledging both meanings of 'ens' (or better, of 'being'), accepted only the second meaning, just as Parmenides had accepted only the first. He considered being as the act of each thing, not as an initial act or an act complete in itself.

have identical with and different from being. In this way the addition — larger or smaller, or nothing, or different in any way whatsoever — to *initial being*, can be the *variable quality* which supplies the differences of the classes.

115. If we wish therefore to indicate with one word all that we mentally add to *most common being*, we can call it ‘term’ of being. The varying nature of these terms of being will supply the constitutive differences of the classes of entities. Hence, the supreme classes of the terms of most common being will be the categories we are seeking.

CHAPTER 2

The ancients were in part familiar with the above difficulty, which they encountered in the course of their speculations

Article 1

The first form in which the difficulty appeared to the ancients:
the distinction between what is real and what is ideal has no
place in the genera of entia

116. The ancients who first tried to classify ens and discovered the categories sensed the difficulty. They confessed that ens is not *univocal* in the different genera into which they distinguished it, that is, it does not have the same meaning.⁴⁶ In other words, their classification broke the first law of logic which prescribes that both the subject classified and the quality determining the classification must be one only, that is, understood in the same sense. Plotinus acutely makes the same accusation; according to him the ancients understood the word 'ens' equivocally in the ten genera:

We must first ask whether the ten things are in both what is intelligible and what is sensible or rather are all in what is sensible. And in things relating to the intelligence, are some present but others not?⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Plotinus, *Ennead* 6, bk. 1: 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* — Aristotle himself noted that here there was a problem to be dealt with. Among the questions he proposes in the third book of the *Metaphysics* (c. 1), he remarks, 'Granted that *genera* are principles, are those genera principles that are predicated *last* of individuals, or first? In other words, is animal or man a principle, and more a principle than the individuals? Here, he clearly means real genera when speaking about those predicated as last genera, and ideal genera in the case of genera predicated first. But Aristotle did not admit ideas or species separate from things. He did not in fact attain to the objectivity of ideas, and thought that by separating them, he would only uselessly increase the number of entia (*Metaph.*, 1: 9). As a result he thought that ideas were pure forms, whether extrasubjective or subjective, of the intelligent principle, and was unable to make them genera on their own, as Plotinus wanted.

We see here that Plotinus is aware of the immense difference between ideal and real being. According to him, the ancients did indeed discover the categories but entirely forgot ideal being. Consequently, they failed to divide all entia (οὐ πάντα τὰ ὄντα), and omitted those which are supremely entia (τὰ μέγιστα ὄντα), that is, ideal entia.

117. But Plotinus himself did not see the common element in what is ideal and in what is real, and thus did not admit that the genera themselves of entia can be found in both (οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἀνάπαλιν). It was absurd, he thought, for essence to mean the same in ideas (which are anterior), and in sensible things (which are posterior); essence constituted not the same genus but different genera, some of which were in intelligible things and some in sensible things. He had not seen the intimate union established in the human mind between what is intelligible and what is sensible, and how the former gives essence to the latter, without the essence losing its identity; nor had he seen how this individual union between what is real and what is intelligible exists from eternity, even before it exists in the human mind. We see therefore that essence and what is real cannot be made into two genera.

Article 2

The second form of the same difficulty for the ancients:
did the categories classify the principles of entia or
the entia themselves?

118. The first thinkers confidently approached the task of classifying entia without being aware of the difficulty of the problem. This is always the case with first thinkers in meta-physical questions; they consider problems less difficult than they actually are. But difficulties there are, and we have seen how Parmenides was trapped in the unity of ens, which in turn caused Plato and Aristotle to look for a way out. However, because they did not face the difficulties head on, as it were, but always from an angle, they thought some dialectical distinction would suffice to overcome them. Instead of returning to the beginning, they converted the difficulty they had met into

[117–118]

secondary problems which, they hoped, would not affect their already finalised classification. The question was whether ens, which had to be divided into classes, should be understood univocally, or equivocally? They were content to admit that it should be understood equivocally without realising the great damage this did to their classification.⁴⁸

119. Another problem arising from the intrinsic difficulty I have discussed is mentioned by Aristotle: 'Are the genera of entia the principles of entia, or are they divisions of the entia themselves?'⁴⁹ Opinions were divided over the answer.⁵⁰ But it should have been totally clear that to divide entia into classes is one thing, to divide the principles of entia into classes another. The question was asked, however, and deemed important because philosophers, in their attempt to classify entia, were aware that they were not in fact classifying entia but the principles from which entia derived. Thus Aristotle, instead of classifying entia, reduced their classification to *substance* and *accident* and, in doing so, split finite ens into two principles: substance and accident which, when united, compose the majority of finite entia. I say the majority because, as Plotinus observed, those who had unsuccessfully tried to determine the supreme genera of entia, confessed that their classification included only some genera, not all.⁵¹

Why did these philosophers find that the problem had changed even as they grappled with it? Why had they tried to do one thing, thought they had done it, but in the end saw that they had done another? Because they failed to see that ens as ens was not subject to the classification they wanted and, if it were

⁴⁸ Aristotle denies that *substance* and *accident* are entia in a univocal sense; only substance is true ens, its accidents simply appurtenances: 'While "being" has all these senses, obviously that which "is", is primarily the "what", which indicates the substance of the thing. — All other things are said to be because some of them are quantities of that which is in this primary sense, others are qualities of it, others affections, and others some other determination'* (*Metaph.*, 7: 1). This clearly means that the Aristotelian categories are not a classification of entities but modes in which we can speak about or predicate ens.

⁴⁹ Arist., *Metaph.*, 3 (2): 1.

⁵⁰ Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, bk. 1: 1.

⁵¹ 'They indicate only a generic classification'* (Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, bk. 1: 1).

divided, would simply split into elements or principles, each of which would remain a separate non-ens. Instead of asking 'whether genera were principles of ens', they should have acknowledged that ens as ens does not admit of genera and that the question, understood in this way, was absurd. It was absurd to look for true genera into which to divide ens. On the contrary, they should have been content with the simple question, (the Pythagoreans' first question): 'What are the elements of ens?' or 'What are its principles?'. But even this question would, with the advance of ontology, have lost its relevance for the following reason: a study of the union of the elements or principles of ens would finally come to acknowledge that if some entia were composed of elements in such a way that a distinction between the elements remained in the composite ens, then principles are no longer present in a supreme, totally absolute ens. Moreover, the elements themselves disappear in completely perfect simplicity and unity, so that they change their nature and cease entirely to be elements. Consequently, this is not a classification of the elements of all entia but of the elements of some. The supreme ens, ens lacking elements, is not included. Plato had in some way been aware of this. He ignored complete *per se* ens and spoke of elements or passions of limited ens. Plotinus was also aware of this, although imperfectly, when he said that the genera of the intelligible, eternal world and those of the sensible world must be sought separately.⁵²

120. The question then whether supreme genera are principles of entia is proposed and discussed by Aristotle, whose opinion seems to be the following. If by principles we mean elementary principles present in entia and constituting existing things (ἐξ ὧν ἐστὶ τὰ ὄντα ἐνυπαρχόντων),⁵³ they are principles or elements but not genera. On the other hand, if entia are classified by form rather than by matter, we have genera which are rational, not physical principles, that is, principles of definitions and consequently of reasoning. 'Individual things are known through definitions but the *principles of definitions* are genera. Genera therefore must also be principles of defined things. So,

⁵² The first two books of *Ennead* 6 deal with the genera of the intelligible world, the third with the genera of the sensible world.

⁵³ *Metaph.*, 3: 3.

too, having a knowledge of entia means having a knowledge of species; but the principles of species are genera.⁵⁴

121. This double classification of entia (by matter and form), proposed by Aristotle, points in some way to Plotinus' question: Are the genera of real entia the same as the genera of ideal entia, or should what is real and what is ideal be distinguished as different genera unable to be fused into a higher, common genus?⁵⁵ But although Plotinus acknowledged ideas as separate and therefore as eternal entia *per se*, Aristotle did not. For him, ideas were only a means of knowledge; they were forms which, as principles of knowledge, governed the classification of entia, but could not be classed among them.

Both philosophers erred — the truth must be found between the two extremes. Plotinus erred in his opinion that the genera of ideal entia differed totally from the genera of real entia. He did not notice that ens was identical in both, and that the generic qualities appertaining to ens were also identical. Aristotle erred by excluding ideas or species from entia and from their classification. He believed that genera referred solely to real entia, and that any classification was founded solely in real entia in which, according to him, ideas were present as formal qualities. He clearly saw that things could not be named and defined except from their ideas, and therefore that what is universal (the idea) cannot be *equivocal* (μὴ ὁμώνυον)⁵⁶ relative to the thing. But he did not see that *what is universal* cannot be found in individuals and consequently has to be separate from them. He was mistakenly convinced that what is one and

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Plato too says (*Timaeus*, p. 52) that *real* entia and species are homonymous, that is, are called entia in a totally different sense. Nevertheless, considering his constant way of speculating, we see that entia separated from ideas do not merit the name *entia*. If he had consistently maintained this second way of speaking he would have avoided Aristotle's accusation that his separate ideas had uselessly more than doubled the number of entia to be explained. With this observation we can perhaps explain and reconcile the passage of Alexander Aphrodisius where he says, according to Sepulveda's translation: 'According to Plato, forms are not equivocal to those made according to their exemplar'* (Ap. Trendelenburg. *Plat. De ideis et numeris doctrina*, etc., p. 34).

⁵⁶ *Poster.*, 1: 2.

universal was in many individuals, which is absurd in the extreme (*NE*, 1: 234–274).

Article 3

The third and more direct form in which the difficulty was seen: ens is outside every genus

122. Aristotle became more directly aware of the difficulty when he examined Plato's opinion that the *one* and *essence*, that is, the great and the small, the undetermined and the determined, were elements of ens (this opinion perfected the Pythagoreans' teaching). Aristotle says, 'Those who say that the one and ens (essence), or the great and the small are elements of entia, evidently use them as genera.'⁵⁷ He notes however that the principles of entia cannot be understood as *genera* and at the same time as *elements* which, like ingredients, make up entia. He does say, 'The concept of ens, that is, of essence is one (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας εἷς)', but accepts two definitions of ens, one obtained by means of genera, the other by means of the elements in ens, that is, the ingredients which make up ens (ὁ λέγων ἐξ ὧν ἐστὶν ἐνυπαρχόντων). Hence, essence or ens is understood as element, and can no longer be defined as genus; it cannot be simultaneously *element* and *genus*.

He next shows that genera cannot be elements. He says: let us assume that genera are in fact elements, as is claimed. Does this mean that they are supreme genera or the ultimate genera predicated of individuals? An element, we are told, is attributed rather to genera because these are universal. This principle would mean that the elements of entia would be as many as the

⁵⁷ It seems certain to me that the passage in the *Metaphysics* (3: 3) where it says, 'Those who say that the one or ens, or the great and the small, are elements of things, seem to treat them as genera,'* refers to Plato, to the Pythagoreans and to the Platonists. 'Ens' (τὸ ὄν) is certainly essence, which Plato also calls sometimes 'ens' (τὸ ὄν), sometimes 'the great and the small' (τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρόν) and sometimes 'essence' (οὐσία), as I have shown [in *Aristotele*]. We note Aristotle's habit of refuting systems by basing himself on his own interpretations, and on inferences about which he himself is not entirely certain; here, too, he says, for example: 'appear' (φαίνονται).

supreme, first genera (the principles of genera) predicated of all things. In this case, the one and ens would be themselves elements and substances. But the one and ens cannot be in any way genera of entia because being and the one are predicated also of differences, when we say that difference is, and is one. In this case genus would be predicated of differences, which is impossible. If, however, being and the one were not predicated of differences, differences would not be, and each would not be one. But if there were no differences, no genera would contain any species, which result from genera and differences. Hence, ens and the one cannot be genera, to which it is proper to contain species formed from differences. Moreover, if the principles of entia are to be considered genera, ens and the one, which cannot be genus, cannot be principles either.⁵⁸ He goes on to show the absurdities involved if ens and the one were accepted as both principles and *genera* simultaneously: species and differences, individuals, and all things that are and are one, would be genera and principles. The whole order in which the universality of things is distinguished and shines out would be shaken.

This acknowledgement by Aristotle that ens is outside all genera and that no differences distinguishing entia into genera can be drawn from its concept, indicates that he had seen the difficulty in the 'problem of the categories', as I have called it. But how can he then call the categories genera of ens? Precisely because he grants only an *analogical* unity to *ens*, and does not truly admit that outside finite things there is pure, essential ens. But analogy must be founded on a most common concept of ens, which obliges us to take as subject of the division the very thing I have proposed and called initial being.

⁵⁸ *Metaph.* 3: 3. Nevertheless, in many places Aristotle calls ens and the one 'most universal genera' (*Metaph.*, 10 (11): 1). What is the origin of this kind of antilogy? Aristotle does not accept that ens and the one, nor any other universals, have their own existence. According to him, they exist only in things. Based on this method of conceiving things, we cannot claim that ens and the one are separate genera; they are in fact predicated of everything including differences. However, Aristotle is obliged to agree that ens and the one, separated from everything else and therefore prior to their relationship as predicates, are seen by the mind as something. He has to admit therefore that they are *scientific genera*, the object of the first kind of philosophy, and in doing so, he slips unwillingly but inevitably towards Plato's system.

If instead of ‘ens’, therefore, we use ‘being’ in its first meaning of *act* without any determined term, being, understood in this sense, can provide the subject of division because the differences required for distinguishing the various classes can be taken from its term.

CHAPTER 3

The name 'categories'

123. 'Category', *κατηγορία*, in its philosophical sense means predication, from *κατηγορέω*, *I accuse, I predicate*.

124. This ancient word can, it seems to me, be retained, but restricted to mean the ultimate differences observable within being,⁵⁹ that is, to the ultimate classes of entities. The need for a suitable word to express this concept induced me to apply the restriction and, I think, not without reason.

In fact, we have seen that any classification requires two things:

1. a single subject, divided and classified;
2. a *quality*, as foundation of the division and classification.

A *quality*, understood in its most universal sense, as we understand it here, is always something *predicable*, that is, attributed in some way and in varying degree to the single subject of the division and classification, or totally denied about this subject. Hence, the ancients, and strictly speaking Aristotle, who after Socrates applied themselves particularly to dialectics, found that the word 'category' or predication fitted the supreme genera into which, as they said, they divided ens.

125. The word does indeed split ens into two parts: a subject, and the predicates attributed to the subject. It classifies the predicates and, as we have seen, by their means divides the subject which, as single and most common, cannot become different and many unless considered as united to its *terms*. These, when predicated of the subject, receive the name and being of 'predicates'.

⁵⁹ Aristotle himself restricted the meaning of category. The word originally meant any predication which indicated what he called the supreme genera of entia (more appropriately, the supreme predicates). However, as we shall see, I do not think that supreme predicates or predicables are, strictly speaking, the supreme genera of entia, and much less the genera of Aristotle's and Porphyry's classification. They are in fact the original, primal forms of being, in so far as they serve first as foundation for the supreme classes and then as the genera of entia. I will explain this later.

126. If, however, *predication* is understood as the *mode of predicating* (*Logica*, [402 ss.]), ‘predications’ means the different modes of predicating. But when we predicate actually and in accordance with the truth, these modes depend on the nature of the predicables and become predicables themselves. For example, if we say that ‘human being’ is predicated of a statue in an *analogical mode*, this mode is contained in and modifies the predicate because the only thing predicated of the statue is ‘that which is analogous to human beings’. All classifications of entities therefore can always be reduced to *predicables* (to those which are truly such, not the predicables of Porphyry).

127. Hence, the classification of *most common being* must be founded in *something different* (that is, in that which is dialectically *something different*), in its term or in something attributable as *predicate*. Later I will examine the nature of this ‘something different’, the *term* on which the division or distinction of being is founded. Here, it is sufficient to understand how the word ‘category’ can receive an extension large enough to include every possible distinction or division or classification of entities.

128. The word ‘category’ may indeed seem dialectical rather than ontological, but dialectics is the sole source of ontological language, as Plato taught. As a science, ontology can speak about being only in so far as being is made known and according to the way in which it is made known. The very power of making itself known pertains to the nature of being, as we shall see.

129. The word, ‘category’, has therefore precisely this advantage, that it is derived from the way in which we know, and does not compromise the different relevant questions which were insufficiently distinguished by antiquity: for example, the question whether ideas have an existence separate from things, and other questions which I will deal with later. We must first give some order to all objects which can occur to our mind and then see which of them has or does not have its own existence outside our mind. If we classified or ordered only the first, having excluded the second from the classification, we would hinder knowledge.

130. ‘Category’ does indeed stand for things known analytically, because it divides subject and predicate, but it has within

itself the power to correct this defect. Although *knowledge by predication* (PSY, [2: 1485–1501]) presupposes *per se* and with its first act divided entia, it is precisely this knowledge that subsequently denies the division and, by *predicating* perfect unity, knits together the rent it had first made in ens.

131. But above all, we must bear in mind, in this examination of the categories, that the subject of the division (*initial, most common being*) is a purely *dialectical subject*, the first and most remote of dialectical subjects. To confuse it with a real subject would be an error. It is totally abstract, and takes on the nature of first, universal subject solely from our mind's way of conceiving.

Even more must we bear in mind that the lack of such advertence resulted in the pantheism which damaged philosophy, particularly in Germany, and finally destroyed it. Anyone who exchanged the most common, *initial being* of all entities for *being complete in its nature*, that is, absolute, most real being, in other words, God himself, would be committing the crude and enormous error of making all entities predicates and hence qualities of God. The result would be the monster called pantheism.

But when we consider all entities as terms and predicates of being, we are talking about a being which does not have its own existence *in se* but exists solely present to the mind, as a kind of rational ens. This is precisely why I distinguish three things: *initial being*, *entity* and *ens*. I call *initial being* the act of existence common to all conceivable entities; *entity* is every object which the human mind thinks in any mode whatsoever as a single thing; finally, I call *ens* those entities which have all that is necessary for them to exist not only in our mind but in themselves, or can be thought as existing in themselves. *Ens* therefore has a term complete in some way and stands on its own; *entity* has a term whether complete or not; *initial being* has no term at all but is purely initial act of every existent thing.

Seen in this abstract way by our mind, *being* is very imperfect because separated by the mind from every term and completion; it is what I also call *undetermined ideal being*.

132. Summarising the problem of the categories, we see that

1. *Initial being*, stripped of all its terms in such a way that we no longer consider its possible union with them, is a pure

[131–132]

dialectical object. As such, it is one and most simple, and admits of no *variety* of any kind within itself, and hence no division or classification. Rather it is itself one of the *classifiable entities*.

2. If we consider this initial being in its relationship and union with its terms, it receives the most universal name 'entity'.

When a term is united with initial being, it becomes one thing with the latter, that is, a single entity. We can conclude therefore that initial being has the following property: in our mind it can become all the *entities* we can mentally conceive.

When I say that *initial being* can become [entities] (and thus ceases to be initial, that is, purely initial being), I am also saying that it is potentially all entities, or that it virtually contains all entities within itself. It can therefore be called *possible being*.

These entities which are virtually present within initial being can be fittingly called *varieties* existing virtually in being.

3. United with these different terms (its ultimate actuations), initial being, which is *per se* one and indivisible, becomes different and admits some *division* and plurality. Joined with one term it becomes something very different from what is when joined to and reaching out to another term.

4. These terms can always be predicated of the same being because they have being as their common beginning; we can always say that 'being is endowed with this or that term'. Hence, the variety and division of being corresponds to the variety and division of its conceivable predicates.

5. If these predicates are arranged in classes, and these classes into narrower classes until we arrive at the *first, fundamental* classes, the result is the first, fundamental classification of entities. These ultimate classes are called *categories*, which I must now examine.

CHAPTER 4

Some relevant questions insufficiently distinguished by the ancient philosophers

133. Our task then is to classify the terms of initial being. They can be classified in many ways but, as I said, we need to identify the first, fundamental classification which will include all the others.

Entities are bound to each other in many ways, and clearly these bonds must determine their classification. Because the bonds vary, different classifications were posited and gave rise to questions relevant to that of the categories, which I have just discussed. The relevant questions are principally five:

I. What are the principles or causes of entities? This is the first way of classifying entities, by grouping them according to their principles or causes.

II. What are the constitutive elements of entities? The second way of classifying them, according to the elements which compose them.

III. What are the genera of entities? The third way of classifying entities, according to the most universal or common ideas.⁶⁰

IV. What are the forms of being? The fourth way of classifying entities, according to which they pertain to one primal form rather than another.

V. What are the supreme classes of *entia*? Here, we are no longer dealing with entity, a word which, as we have seen, embraces everything distinguished by thought. *Entia* on the other hand are complete entities, able to subsist by themselves and not through a relationship with our mind.

134. It is not difficult to see that all these five concepts (principles, elements, genera, forms of being and supreme classes of *entia*) can assume the condition of predicates because they can

⁶⁰ Plotinus noted that the question of *principles* and that of *supreme genera* were different. He criticised the cynics because in their categories 'they do not list *entia*, although they seek their origins' * (*Enn.* 6, 1: 25. Cf. *Enn.* 6, 1: 1).

all be predicated of being. Principles and causes are predicated of entities when we say, 'These entities are caused by such and such principles'. Elements are predicated of an entity when we say, 'This entity is composed of such and such elements'. Genera are predicated of an entity when we say, 'This entity has such and such a generic quality', or 'is included in this genus'. Forms are predicated of entities when we say, 'This entity has such and such a form' or 'is under this form'. Supreme classes are predicated of an ens in the same way as genera, but I will explain later how they are distinguished from genera.

Five species of predicate can therefore be distinguished, in each of which we can look for the supreme or ultimate predicates, that is to say, five species of category. We should not be surprised therefore that the ancients, in searching for the categories, confused the five questions; even modern philosophers have not thought of distinguishing them.

CHAPTER 5

The question concerning principles or causes of entities

135. The affinity between the five questions results precisely from the fact that each of the five concepts to which they refer includes a species of predicables, and the supreme predicables in this species can be called *categories* relative to the species.

But if, as I have said, *category* is taken to mean a predicate which is first and fundamental relative to all the species of entities, we still have to ask which of the five species is prior and primal relative to the others; in other words, which supreme predicates are not limited to a species? This would suppose a prior classification relative to all entities.

First of all, it is clear that these categories cannot be deduced from the principles or causes of entia,⁶¹ because not all entities have causes or principles. The first cause, and generally all causes as causes, would be excluded from this classification because they simply distinguish what is caused. Nor would it be valid to say that the first cause could be classified precisely by its lack of cause, as if by the opposite of the quality with which it is classified, primarily because the cause *as cause* would always be excluded from the classification, and moreover because a first classification cannot be founded on a negative quality. A classification founded on a positive quality is always prior to a classification founded on a negative quality.

Secondly, what is caused should be referred to several causes because different genera of causes (exemplary, efficient and final) concur to produce a single ens. Causes therefore could not give a sufficient foundation for the classification of different entities.

Thirdly, the classification of entities by means of their cause

⁶¹ *Principle* is more general than *cause* (cf. St. Th., *S.T.*, I, q. 33, art. 1, ad 1um) although Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, bk. 4 [5]: 1) and the Greeks take one word for the other. The distinction was introduced by Greek theologians, as St. Thomas notes (although there are perhaps a few examples among the Latins, who call the Father 'cause' relative to the Son, as St. Augustine does (*De Trin.*, 8: 4)), and should be maintained because the two concepts are different and require different words.

would not be founded on any determinate quality existing in or inherent to classified entities but on a relationship with something else, that is, with their causes.

These new reasons show that the *Aristotelian categories* cannot supply for those we are seeking. Aristotle's categories simply divide the *formal cause*; they are simply ten genera of forms: the first category is the genus of *essential forms*, the other nine, *accidental forms*. The other causes (*material, moving and final*) distinguished by Aristotle are entities which as causes are excluded from the classification.

135a. Fourthly, the division of the categories should follow the division of causes, and therefore would no longer be the first classification of being.

Fifthly, if causes are to be classified first, and because they are distributed in series (some are nearer to the effect, others more distant), it would be necessary to investigate which are first. When a philosopher is obliged to undertake this investigation of the very first causes, he will learn that there are no such causes, nor can there be any except one, God.⁶² In this way we would be led back to the perfect unity of being which would deprive us of every possibility of classification because what is reduced to a perfect unity is no longer divided or classified. Just as *pure being*, in so far as *initial*, that is, as a unity mentally separated from everything else, cannot be made a *subject* of any classification, so *pure and absolute being*, which *per se* is entirely and naturally separate from every other ens, is much less capable of being such a subject.

⁶² Aristotle never managed to discover the unity of cause. Although he reduces (imperfectly, however) the three causes (formal, final and moving) to one ultimate principle, he fails to see the *material* cause which is the fourth of the causes he grants. He did not deal with creation and thus found himself with that *eternal matter* which bedevilled him on all sides. Hence, although he posits wisdom in the knowledge of ultimate causes (*Metaphysics*, bk. 1: 1-2) and therefore in the knowledge of God: 'God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle'* (cf. *Metaphysics*, bk. 11 (12), 4 [bk. 1: 2]; *De Caelo*, 1: 9), matter always remains as another principle, and God is not absolutely the principle but 'a first principle' (*ἀρχὴ πρώτη*). However, in the order of knowledge there is, even for Aristotle, a sole ultimate cause, and this is God who unites within himself the triple concept of formal, final and moving cause, although incompletely because he is inactive outside himself.

However, although the philosopher is reduced for the second time to this restraint of being-as-one, he finds a point from which to proceed. He can ask himself whether being is in several forms or only in one, and when he has discovered that it is necessarily identical in several forms (according to its very nature), he has solved the problem: the forms are principles in each of which the whole of being is contained. Consequently, because the principles include everything, and all entities can therefore be referred to them, they do not divide being, which is indivisible and one.

CHAPTER 6

Question concerning elements

136. If no classification of entities can be drawn from the diversity of causes, much less can it be drawn from the diversity of elements composing entities.

Firstly, 'element' means something less universal than cause.⁶³ It refers to what is inexistent in an entity and composes it.

Secondly, not all entities are composed; pure being itself is most simple, without any elements.

Thirdly, if the classification of entities is to be based on elements, the elements themselves have first to be classified. This would lead the mind to discover a first, single element which, although not proper to each entity (hence some philosophers denied it the name 'element'), is a most common element. This is precisely the initial act of being, without which no entity can be conceived. But the initial act of being is distinct from its term and therefore is not a whole entity unless considered by itself, separated from every term. In this case it is no longer an element but entity itself. If therefore the ultimate elements of entities are reduced to one, it is clear that the supreme classifications cannot be drawn from the ultimate classes of elements because these, having dissolved into the one, no longer exist. What remains is the subject of the classification, and this one thing is considered as initial being, susceptible of various terms.

It is clear that at the beginning of philosophy, and generally speaking in ancient philosophy, many distinctions could not be made. The supreme genera of *entia* rather than all *entities* were sought, which meant that ens had to be split into its elements.⁶⁴

⁶³ 'Principle is more common than cause, just as cause is more common than element'* (St. Th., *S.T.*, I, q. 33, art. 1, ad 1m). Hence Aristotle, who assigns four causes (matter, form, privation and mover) to sensible substances, says that the first three are *elements* inexistent and composing sensible substance, while the last is a cause, not an element (*Metaphysics*, bk. 11 (12): 4).

⁶⁴ In the first part of *Parmenides*, Plato considered ens without its terms (I call this 'initial being mentally separated from its terms') and annihilated it, that is, he showed that on its own it could not exist. In the second part, he

137. This was the very road followed by Plato himself, imitating the Pythagoreans. He analysed very acutely the nature of ens and saw that it could not be ens independently of some of its elements. But he was speaking about *ens* which could possibly subsist, not about *initial being* which the mind can consider isolated from its terms. Having found the elementary concepts of ens, concepts forming its essence, he also saw that he could assume it had accidental concepts, and consequently deduced that the concept of ens changed into the concept of many entia in so far as it included one or other group of these entia. In this way he found he could escape from the sterile unity of ens. His reasoning revealed to him a foundation for classifying the resulting multitude of entia (which however did not include all entities) into genera. When Aristotle refuted Plato and the Platonists by saying that elements could not be genera, as we have seen (cf. 56 ss.; 149 ss.), he was right, but his refutation was ineffective because he took Plato's opinion in a material and partial way. It is certainly true that elements *per se* are not genera, although they become indications and characteristics of genus when understood as predicates of ens. But they certainly cannot do this if they are materialised, that is, considered as real, which is precisely what Aristotle seems to do. Plato certainly grants elements to both real things and ideas. Aristotle, a little incoherent with himself, sees this and does the same.⁶⁵ But if ideas multiply through the different composition of elements, what prevents different ideas from being the foundation of different genera? All we need to see is whether the division is supreme and includes every entity. However, Aristotle does not and cannot treat his categories in any other way, because substance and accidents are elements. In fact he admits that genera are universals by means of which we name, classify and demonstrate all things known through universals.⁶⁶

clothed ens with its terms and showed that in the unity of being there was plurality. He concluded that without unitary being, being could not stand on its own. He thus solved Parmenides' difficulty by means of Parmenides himself.

⁶⁵ *Metaphysics*, bk. 1: 6. Cf. *Metaphysics*, bks. 1: 5; 13: 7; 5: 3; *De Anima*, bk. 1: 3.

⁶⁶ In *Poster.*, bk. 1: 11, Aristotle says, 'We must accept as true that the one is in the many, otherwise there would be no *universal*, and if there were no

CHAPTER 7

Question concerning the genera of entia

138. After the question concerning elements, we should deal with that of genera. But here we immediately encounter difficulties because initially elements had not been classified with sufficient attention and insight. If this had occurred, it would have been seen that elements, as I have said, could never have led to the first division and distinction of being. There is in fact another impediment: elements have two forms, ideal and real. Those composing real things are naturally individual and single. Hence, they can never constitute genera. Aristotle censured thinkers who, understanding elements as ingredients of real things, called them genera, or vice versa.

139. This gave rise to another difficulty. Elements are partly essential, partly accidental to an ens. Essential elements, which are necessarily present in every ens, cannot act as a foundation for the distinction of genera because they cannot admit the necessary differences by which ens can multiply into several genera. This is why Aristotle constantly denied that being is an element of entia. But in denying this, he took *being* in its fullest sense and failed to see that the word has another meaning, that is, 'initial being'. The human mind has a faculty for considering each of the essential elements of an ens, separate from the other elements. If we take the essential elements of an ens as the basis for classification, the accidental elements are excluded. If we take the accidental as the basis, the essential elements are

universal, there would be no middle term and consequently no demonstration of any kind. There must be some kind of one and it must not be homonymous (μὴ ὁμώνυμον) in the many.' 'Homonymous' indicates the characteristic difference made by Aristotle between his system and that of Plato who had said that species are homonymous with things (*Timaeus*, p. 52, A.). Aristotle concluded from this that species could not be a foundation for the knowledge of things and of demonstrations about them. But he forgot that Plato considers ideas under two relationships: as separate from things (that is, he sees them as homonymous), and as shared by things (that is, he makes them synonymous), because things are named and known by them. I will discuss this at greater length later.

[138–139]

excluded. And if we take both as the basis, the classification is defective because its base changes: it now has two foundations, not one.

140. This new argument indicates the defect in Aristotle's list of categories. If they are all reduced to substance and accident, they have two foundations, not one and the same foundation.

141. Moreover, the subject of this classification is most common being, which however is not divided into substance and accident prior to everything else. Before everything else, most common being virtually contains within itself entia into which it is divided. Only these entia, indeed only some of these, can be divided into the two elementary entities of substance and accident. Hence, strictly speaking, substance and accident pertain neither to the essential nor to the accidental elements of being — they are posterior to both. The Platonic distinction, based on the elements proper to being ([*Aristotele*, 155 ss.]), is therefore closer to the truth we are seeking than the Aristotelian distinction drawn from the elements proper to an *indistinct individual* (*ibid.*, [63 ss.]) which, in the order of ideas, is posterior to being.

142. We must also show that *genera*, of any kind, can never constitute the first distinction found in being.

First, it is clear that none of the genera into which being may be divided, contains by itself total being, whether this is understood as virtual or actual. Total being is therefore excluded from the distinction and classification of entities; the classification is incomplete, because it lacks the most principal of all entities.

Furthermore, both virtual and actual being differ from every genus. The difference is anterior to the distinction and to the difference between genera themselves, which can never present the first differences and varieties of being itself. Someone may perhaps claim that universal and generic being, that is, being equipped with its first determinations, form the first two genera. But I say that universal being cannot *per se* constitute a genus because it is one and devoid of species or lesser genera. Universal and generic being cannot therefore constitute two genera.

Thirdly, genera have two elements: one common (initial being), the other proper. Genera differ through the proper element. These differences of genera, their exclusivity by which each, as one, denies all the others, are themselves entities which

cannot be contained in the genera. If someone were to retort that they could be contained in another genus, this genus would be inferior to the primal genera, which never include the whole of being.

Fourthly, genera, through the characteristic proper to them, virtually contain species or lesser genera which, as soon as they actually appear, are said to divide being. In the same way genera themselves must be virtually contained in universal, initial, determined being. But if we think about this universal being, we find that it virtually contains (from the mind's point of view) an absolute, most simple being, that is, God, and God admits no distinction in himself, whether generic or specific. We see therefore that most abstract, *universal being* is not exhausted solely by the genera distinguished in it, and contains absolute being, which is much more than the genera. Consequently, genera do not exhaust being and are not the first distinction found by the mind in being. Our mind finds as virtually understood in being 1. most actual being, insusceptible of division, and 2. some other term of its own which permits division into genera.

143. These reasons, particularly the first and fourth, show that:

1. the partition into genera cannot give the first variety and partition which our mind finds in being, and
2. this first partition can be only that of the primal forms in which being is. In this case the whole of being, present in each form, is totally included in each and is therefore distinguished without need of division and destruction.

CHAPTER 8

Question concerning the classes of entia

144. We have seen that:

1. In initial being there is no difference; it is perfectly one. The sole difference and variety that can indicate some partition or distinction in being, therefore, must be taken from its union with its terms ([cf. 115, 122, 127, 132]).

2. Initial being admits a term that can undergo generic partition, and another term that cannot ([cf. 138–143]).

3. Finally, this partition into *absolute* and *relative being* (in so far as the term of initial being is absolute or relative) does not in any way constitute genera. It is proper to a genus to have below itself species and lesser genera which absolute being does not admit.

Consequently, not all the distinctions and partitions of being are generic because prior to the breakdown into genera, we find a partition which, to use a name with wider meaning, I have called ‘classes of ens’. Every genus is certainly a class, or can be understood as such, because it constitutes the foundation of a class, but not all classes of entia are generic. For example, the class of absolute being, as I have called it, is not generic nor is the class of relative being, that is, being receptive of genera. Classification into ultimate species is also of this kind. Because species do not have the nature of genera, they lack other lesser species below them.

145. The following reasons show how the first two classes of entia, *absolute Ens* and *limited, relative ens*, are not two genera.

Genera necessarily have as their common subject limitable being, which is the subject of the division. Indeed every genus presupposes a limitation of the subject common to all genera, and therefore excludes all other genera. But limitable being is not absolute Being because absolute Being cannot undergo limitations without ceasing to be absolute. Absolute Being therefore is not a genus, nor the subject of genera.

Secondly, limitable being, as the common subject of genera, is

[144–145]

initial being susceptible of limited terms. On the contrary, Absolute Being is initial being already finalised, having an unlimited and fully finalised term.

Thirdly, genus is an incomplete entity which lacks the further act of species and reality. Absolute being, however, as totally actuated, finalised and complete Being, can go no further. Incapable of being finalised in any species or other individual, it is therefore totally other than a genus.

Fourthly, the number of genera indicate actualities of their common subject which they divide. Consequently, because all qualities are contained virtually in the subject, every genus is constituted by a positive *quality*. But this division, obtained by means of *different qualities*, is not the only division: *contrary qualities* also produce a division. On the one hand the division posits the *positive quality*, on the other, the *denial of this quality*. But this kind of partition does not constitute genera. The first classification of ens, however, into Absolute and relative Ens is precisely this kind of partition. The quality of Absolute Ens, absoluteness, is the positive quality, and the quality of relative Ens, the limitation contrary to absoluteness, is the negative quality.⁶⁷

146. Nevertheless, this classification prior to genera is not the first distinction or variety of being we are looking for:

1. It does not satisfy the requirements of the problem because, although the classification includes all ens, it does not include all *entities*. For example, the generic and specific idea is not a complete ens. It cannot be reduced to absolute ens, to which in a sense it pertains, nor to relative ens because it is neither contingent nor subject to time.

2. Absolute Ens and relative, limited Ens are united by

⁶⁷ Aristotle, imitating the Pythagoreans, made twofold categories by reducing *form* and *privation* to the same genus. This shows his recognition that *contrariness* could not be the foundation of genera. However, he did not see that what is contrary, that is, what is negative, could be referred to something prior to genera, such as *absoluteness* in our case. Here, the resulting classification is prior to genera. Either 1. the negative could be referred to *some genus*, in which case it is posterior to genera because it divides genus itself, or 2. it could be referred to some quality of species or of inferior genera. In this case the classification is posterior to the genus or species which it divides.

bonds which are also entities excluded from those first two classes.

3. Relative Ens is considered either in its possibility or as real. As possibility, it is contemporary with absolute Ens; as real, posterior to it. Thus, a part of the second class is posterior to and independent of the first classification. But if the first classification does not include real, finite ens, it does not include all ens, that is, all entia that are real and finite. Consequently, the classification is not a complete, first classification of ens.

4. If the first class, absolute Ens, is prior to real, finite ens, any distinction to be made in absolute ens will be prior to the distinction between unlimited Ens and what is limited. But there *is* a distinction in absolute Ens, the distinction of the *primal forms* of being. These forms therefore are prior not only to the distinction into genera, but also to the distinction which produces the first classification prior to genera. Hence, if these forms are such that they can be predicates, these predicates will be the first predicates and constitute the categories of being we are looking for.

CHAPTER 9

Question concerning the primal forms of being

147. Everything said so far shows that the distinction of being into principles or causes and effects, into elements or genera or classes, cannot be the first, fundamental distinction observable in being by our mind.

Moreover, the first distinction observable in ens cannot be that which in any way whatsoever divides ens into principles or elements or genera. Such a distinction destroys ens, that is, destroys what ens was previously to leave only some entities which, even when taken together, do not include the first ens different from them all.

Furthermore, although the first classes of ens do not divide ens and are therefore free of this objection, this distinction cannot be the first because it includes real, contingent ens which is posterior to absolute Ens. Hence, the distinctions to be found in absolute Ens, which itself cannot be reduced to classes, are prior to classes. In addition, these classes cannot include and order all entities.

Consequently, if several forms or modalities are found in unlimited Being, they must certainly construct the first, fundamental distinctions of ens as well as the categories, in so far as the categories are predicated of being. Moreover, these distinctions must provide the origin of the first classification of all entities in so far as all entities are reduced to them.

148. Let us see therefore whether these primal forms or modalities actually are. First, what are they?

I call forms of being 'being itself which, in all its totality, is in different modes essential to it'.

Do these forms exist? Is being, by its very nature as being, in one single mode, or in several? And if in several, is the whole of being in each mode? This is the question, and only contemplation on the part of our mind can solve it — only our mind can know how ens is made and intimately constituted.

It is my conviction that these forms actually are and that they are three; in other words, being, as such, is identical in different

modes essential to it. I call the forms 'subjective', 'objective' and 'moral'. The first two are shown from ideology ([NE, 3: 1166, 1178–1179, 1460]) and from the observations I have just made about elements. Clearly, some elements can be conceived both as really existing in themselves, and as in their essence without their having any real existence. This *essence* is the objective form just as subsistence is the subjective form, to which can be reduced what I call the 'extrasubjective' form, as we shall see. But if *being* is identical in both objective and subjective forms, the two forms are united in the *identity of being*. If united, there is a bond between them. But because this bond does not result from the consideration of each form independently of the other, it constitutes a third form in which *being* is. The bond is not nothing; it is at least *being*. Moreover, because there is total *being* in each of the two forms, their union must include the whole of being under one form, together with the whole of being under the other form. The whole of being, therefore, is present under the form of union; no particle of being is exempt, and there is no distinction between the subject which admits the union and that which remains united. All is united and all is union. This will be seen more clearly from what I shall say in the next book. Here it is sufficient to have demonstrated the existence of the three forms.

149. The three forms are neither purely principles, nor elements nor genera. As I have said, the totality of being is in each of them and, if there is totality, the totality is not divided into principles or elements or genera. On the contrary, the principles, elements and genera will themselves be found in the three forms and be subject to them.

CHAPTER 10

How the first classes of ens, that is, the first principles, first elements and first genera, are reduced to the three forms

150. If we consider being in its intimate constitution, without any limitation, we see 1. that it is, 2. that it essentially and necessarily is, and 3. that it is total in the three forms. Nothing could be if being were not constituted in this way.

But granted it is constituted in this way, we still have to ask if *limited* being can exist? It is not contradictory to think it can exist; in fact experience shows it does exist in ourselves and in all entia of the universe.

Moreover, as I have shown in *Psychology* (2: 1372–1395), it is certain that *unlimited* and *limited being* can never be one ens. They must be two entia. Nevertheless, if the three forms are distinguished in unlimited being, limited being, because in some way ens, must also share in them and, because posterior to them, must share posterior to the forms. Hence, the partition of being into two entia, one unlimited, the other limited, is the first variety to be seen in being, but posterior to the variety of the forms.

This partition or classification of being is prior to all genera because, as we have seen, most simple, unlimited Being does not admit genera of any kind. On the other hand, limited being is a concept which includes within itself all genera virtually, yet still indistinctly.

151. Clearly therefore, the first division and classification of ens will be precisely that which divides it into two, that is:

1. unlimited Ens, which resides essentially in its three forms;
2. limited Ens, which shares in different modes and levels of the forms.

152. It is precisely from this classification that theosophy derives its division.

153. But if we ask what is the relationship of the supreme forms of being with principles and causes, we find that these forms, in unlimited, absolute being, take on the concept of

1. principles in their mutual relationships, and 2. first causes in their relationship with limited being. Hence, if principles and ultimate causes are to be determined, we must first distinguish the original forms of being.⁶⁸

154. In the case of *elements* and *genera*, it is clear from what I have already said that these can be found solely in limited ens. They are therefore posterior to principles and to the supreme classes of being, as well as to the forms.

⁶⁸ St. Thomas establishes the above-mentioned distinction between *principles* and *causes*: 'Principle simply means that from which something proceeds. We call "principle" anything from which something proceeds in any way whatsoever'* (S.T., I, q. 33, art. 1). Also: 'Principle is more general than cause, just as cause is more general than element. The first term or part of something is called principle, not cause — "Cause" therefore seems to imply difference of substance and dependence of one thing on another, a meaning not implied by 'principle'. In every genus of cause there is always a distance between the cause and what is caused, relative to some perfection or virtue. On the other hand, "principle" is also used to indicate things in which there is no difference of this kind but only a certain order, just as we say that a point is the principle of a line, or the head of the line is its principle'* (*ad primum*).

CHAPTER 11

The three forms of being truly provide the categories of being

155. The qualities which must characterise the categories are as follows. Categories must be:

1. *First* predicates of being, prior to which no other predicates can be supposed.

2. *Fundamental* predicates, more general than and prior to all other predicates, which are reduced to them.

3. *Complete* predicates which include all entities thinkable by the human mind.

4. Finally, entirely *separate* predicates, such that the entity of one does not constitute the entity of another.

These four characteristics are found precisely in the three original forms of being that I have indicated. Because nothing precedes being, nothing can precede the forms in which being is, and therefore no other distinction can precede them. Consequently, the forms are clearly predicated *first*.

These distinctions are also fundamental in the sense that without them no other distinction can be conceived. Every other distinction must come within the sphere of the subject or object or the force which unites subject and object. Any distinction outside these three spheres would be equivocal, not a determinate distinction. Every distinction outside that of the forms would result in two entities, each of which could be either ideal or real, that is, could pertain to either of the first two forms. Such a distinction would be undetermined and not a true distinction, unless the distinction of the forms were presupposed and applied to it.

The forms are therefore complete predicates, not only because each includes ens in its totality but because there is no entity which is not subordinate to them: every entity must be something ideal (objective), or real, or finally something pertaining to the union between these two. Note that the forms I posit cannot be subject to the objection valid for entities distinguished in other ways. The objection claims that the relationships between

the forms are entities not included in the forms. On the contrary, the relationships are either 1. ideal entities, in which case they are reduced to the objective form, or 2. subsistent relationships, in which case they are reduced either to the real form (subjective and extrasubjective), or to the moral form. The mind can reflect and abstract, but any entity extracted by reflection or abstraction is reduced always to one or other of the three forms. Thus, any ideal entities we see, followed by others, and others again indefinitely, all pertain to the ideal form, which has the power to be applied continually to itself in a kind of unending circle.

Finally, the three forms are perfectly divided because what is ideal, as such, cannot in any way become one of the other two forms; each form is absolutely unable to be one of the others. The three forms therefore cannot be reduced to a smaller number. Nevertheless they are all consumed in the unity of being which subsists identically in each.

CHAPTER 12

Refutation of the Unitarians; confirmation of what has been said

156. The doctrine explained so far about the one establishes a truth which destroys the errors of the Unitarians, those philosophers who see nothing beyond unity in being. In fact, thought, at the highest level of philosophical reflection, is oblivious to the three forms of being which all people see and use in their reasoning. At this high level, the philosopher is usually so entranced by the unity of being that he rejects its plurality of forms, although these forms insert themselves almost automatically in ordinary speech. This rejection renders philosophical teaching in some way paradoxical: it takes pride in itself, considering itself far superior to the common sense of mankind. We can see this clearly in the *One* of Plotinus, Proclus,⁶⁹ Damascius of Damascus⁷⁰ and other neoplatonists.

157. Plotinus considers the One superior to ens because, according to him, there is always some multiplicity in ens, which in fact is an indirect confession that he rejects the unitarian system.⁷¹ But his one either is or is not. If it is not, it must be

⁶⁹ This philosopher, in his *Theologia Platonis* (1: 25), attempts to demonstrate that there is only one real principle of things: the one, which produces everything through triads (παράγειν, πρόοδος). Wilhelm Tennemann correctly observes that Proclus' proof 'rests on the confusion between abstract, logical principles and active, real principles' (*Manuale*, §220). This observation derives from the two forms of ideal and real being.

⁷⁰ In his *Anecdota graeci* (vol. 3), Wolf published fragments of a tract of Damascius under the title, Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις περὶ ἀρχῶν.

⁷¹ 'If the ens of each thing is a certain multitude, and the one cannot be multitude, there is certainly a difference between them. Man is both animal and rational and consists of many parts; many things in him are joined together in some kind of unity. So man is something, the one is something else; man is in fact divided, the one is certainly undivided. Total ens, containing within itself all things whatsoever, exists more as many and different from the one, although it possesses the one, in which it shares. Moreover, ens has life and mind. It is incorrect to consider life a vacuum. Ens therefore is many as well*' (*Enn.* 6: 1, 2 — translated by M. Ficinus).

nothing, but if it is, it is obviously ens, because ens is that which is. The one therefore cannot be admitted prior to ens.

We also see here the difference between the one seen as a simple abstraction from ens, and as the principle of all things and of ens itself (as the Unitarians see it). In the first case, the one as an abstraction is posterior to ens. When our mind thinks the one in this way, ens is not destroyed but remains present to the mind and is the means through which we know the one; the one, as an abstraction, is known in ens, which is the principle of knowledge, as I said above. Hence, in order to think the one as an abstraction separate from ens, not only must ens be, it must also be present to the mind. The mind considers both ens and the one individually, as mentally separate but relative, as if the one were a reflection of ens. On the other hand the Unitarians, who make the one the principle from which ens and all entia come, suppose that the one also precedes ens present to the mind. But, as I have shown, this involves a contradiction.

If they had proceeded logically, they could never have shown how their One produced anything. That which is perfectly one, as they claim, cannot produce anything; it cannot produce itself without being two, nor can it be produced by something else without admitting some duality. Even if there is no production of any kind, we cannot think that it contains within itself the germ of something different from itself, unless we simultaneously acknowledge some plurality in it. But what do the Unitarians do? Plotinus does what Hegel does. Instead of deducing things from the One (from which by abstraction they have stripped everything) and truly showing that all entia could issue from it, they add to it, with the greatest of ease in the world (in other words, entirely of their own free will), all they have removed, and even more. They then tell us that everything issues from the One, and congratulate themselves for making us see before our very eyes the birth of the universe.

158. Their line of thought is the following:

1. They start from a true principle, namely, that relative things find their explanation only in something absolute, and their multiplicity in something perfectly one. This is a logical necessity, arising directly from the nature of being, which is always present to the mind and serves as a supreme rule for all judgments. This unity of being is so obvious that to think the

[158]

contrary is absurd; two beings would no longer be being, which is a simple essence. Thus, when the mind sees many entia, it does not see in any of them being which is one and simple. Nevertheless, it sees that one and simple being is their explanation, so that without this being they would not be. This explains the mind's need to seek pure, essential and absolute being, that is, to seek the solution to the problem of ontology.

2. Next, they take the concept of ens from particular, finite entia, each of which, according to them, is multiple and in some way composite. This is what Plotinus did when, by analysing human beings and showing them to be composed of many parts, he tried to show that the one cannot be ens, that is, not one.⁷² Although this is indeed true for every human being and every finite ens, it does not mean that there is no absolute, perfectly one ens. Hence, we do not need to look beyond being for what is perfectly one in order to satisfy our mind's dialectical need to find the dialectical explanation of things in a first unity.

3. Because they lack a sound ideology, they do not see that we cannot think the one without thinking ens at the same time. They therefore imagine that the one can exist without ens.

4. Furthermore, through lack of analysis, they did not see that the word 'one' either is substantive, in which case one ens is understood, or means simply a quality of relationship which by itself, in the absence of any subject, cannot exist at all. If there is one, there must be something that is one, and if there is something, there is ens which is that which is one. But the neuter use of the word 'one' in Latin and Greek (*unum*, ἓν) may have caused the illusion of these authors that, because ens was not expressed, it was judged not to be understood as present.

5. Finally, they failed to notice that ens, essentially one, could certainly be in several primal modes, identical in each and without harming in any way the most perfect unity. In fact, all human beings suppose this in their conversation without their being directly aware of it. But I will discuss this later.

159. Let us see where thought, Plotinus', for example, leads

⁷² Cf. the passage quoted in the preceding footnote.

when it has to deal with that abstraction of pure unity from which, he says, all things originate. He is obliged, we note, to grant to unity the characteristics of undetermined being. This is precisely the one which, he says, is prior to ens, because by ens he means a finite ens. However, he cannot understand this finite ens, because in being the proper terms are hidden, and for this reason the subject, understood in the word 'ens', is also hidden.

Indeed Plotinus clearly states that the one is entirely *without any form*, and that this explains why the one is not understood.⁷³ Because the one is entirely without any form, he deduces that it is not ens. Ens, he says, has at least the form of ens, that is, a *quid*, a *qualis* and a *quantum*,⁷⁴ all of which agrees excellently with what I call initial or undetermined being.

He also says that the one 'is the greatest of all things, not in size but in power'.⁷⁵ If this means a power in act, the one would of course be already determined. Plotinus wants to assign the characteristic of an infinite potentiality to his One. Once again, this corresponds to being in potency or possible being, which is totally undetermined being.

He adds: 'We do not know it in the way we know the other things we call intelligible, that is, through some knowledge or intelligence. We know it through a kind of presence (*παρουσία*) which is better than knowledge.'⁷⁶ This is precisely the

⁷³ 'When the spirit is borne to something without any form, and cannot understand because it is not determined nor, as it were, shaped by anything, it immediately moves away, afraid that nothing will be found there' (*Enn. 6, bk. 9, c. 3).

⁷⁴ 'For this reason, what is superior to the intellect is not the intellect but exists before the intellect. The intellect is found amongst entia, but it (the one) is not something amongst entia but superior to every ens. Nor is it ens, because ens has, as it were, the very form of ens. It is entirely without form and hidden from intelligible form. Because the nature of the one is the origin of all things, it is fittingly none of them. Hence it exists, but is not something, not nature, not quantity. Moreover, it is neither intellect nor soul, nor is it moved nor does it rest; it is not in place or time. But in itself, it is of one form, indeed WITHOUT FORM, above every existing form, above movement and condition. All these are things involved in ens and make it many things' (*Enn. 6, bk. 9, c. 3).

⁷⁵ *Enn.* 6, bk. 9, c. 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4. Cf. *Enn.* 5, bk. 3, c. 8; bk. 5, c. 7 ss.

presentness of undetermined being. For the same reason I myself say that it is known through pure intuition.⁷⁷

Moreover, Plotinus says about his One exactly what I say about pure being; it is present to our mind. I say that all finite entia are, and are known, because they have the act of being, knowable *per se*. Plotinus' words are: 'All entia are entia THROUGH THE ONE, both those which in themselves are entia, and those which in some way are numbered in the order of things.'⁷⁸

160. After assigning these attributes to the One, Plotinus says that this One is God himself. He thus places himself among those I call 'ideological realists', who transform undetermined being, which is without any form and naturally manifest to the human subject, into God. In the same way rationalism has been divinised, and divinised rationalism is pseudo-mysticism, which is the direct consequence of ideological realism.

⁷⁷ Again Plotinus says: 'If you apprehend it after removing being from it, you will be greatly amazed. If you direct yourself to it, grasp it and take rest on its couch, you will be gazing WITH ONE, MOST SIMPLE INTUITION'* (*Enn.* 3, bk. 8, c. 9).

⁷⁸ *Ennead* 6, bk. 9, c. 1. Jules Simon, in his *Histoire de l'école d'Alexandrie*, says that the absolute unity of Plotinus is nothing more than the Being of the Eleatics. I have shown that the Eleatics' being is precisely undetermined being (*Psychology* [2: 1337–1371]). He also says that it is the Good of Platonic dialectics. This is true when Plotinus is trying to make his pure unity productive, but not when he is simply talking about it. To make it productive, he has to change its concept. These two occasions, when he leads his reader to the concept of the one and then attempts to derive other things from it, must be kept in mind by anyone reading this philosopher. Cf. *Enn.* 4, bk. 1, c. 8, where Plotinus himself quotes Parmenides.

CHAPTER 12 (continued)
Refutation of the Unitarians;
confirmation of what has been said

161. Plotinus next applies himself to making his one prolific. But at this point he ceases to reason and, like Hegel, turns to narrative, as if he were relating a myth, while all the time claiming that he is rigorously engaged in philosophical speculation. He seems at least aware that he cannot give reasons for what he is saying, and so turns to prayer and a supernatural light (*Ennead* 5, bk. 1, c. 6). He does not tell us, nor can he, how that which is essentially unity becomes two or more. He is content to state simply that that is the case, without explaining how what is one but not ens (Hegel's nothingness) bestows being on itself. With Hegel, he says that it gives itself being, it wants to be, it loves to be. It becomes subsistent because it loves to be subsistent; it is intellect, because it wishes to be intellect; it is love because it loves to be love. It results from its own action, and forms itself not by chance but because it wishes this. This will, as the will of what is excellent, is not temerarious or futile.⁷⁹ He says that its very actuality is an action upon itself; it gives itself its own subsistence. This action is not performed but always exists as if it were a kind of vigilance superior to the essence of the intellect and to the life of wisdom; and all this is itself. He concludes that its being is produced by and out of it, not by chance but by its pure, entirely free will.⁸⁰ This perfect freedom gives rise to the

⁷⁹ 'He, however, is borne, so to speak, within himself, and borne equally throughout the whole of himself as one who loves himself, pure light. Thus, EXISTING AS THIS VERY THING HE LOVES, he produces himself substantially. This act is lasting, and what is most lovable within it exists as understanding. But understanding himself is the accomplished work. He himself therefore is the accomplished work. Since, however, he is not the work of another, IT FOLLOWS THAT HE IS HIS OWN WORK. So he is not something fortuitous, but rather he is as he himself acts'* (*Enn.* 6, bk. 8, c. 16). But in the next sentence, he is unsure: 'as if he caused himself' (*quasi efficit semetipsum*).

⁸⁰ 'Thus he is not as he happens to be, but as he wills to be. Nor is this will rash or vain or fortuitous but, as a will for what is best, is neither useless nor by chance... He is, therefore, that which exists; he is action in his own regard; he is this 'one'. He exhibits subsistence to himself; it is conferred upon

first principle of all,⁸¹ which is an opinion seized upon by some modern philosophers.⁸² We can let pass for the moment that all this is more or less found in the one taken as substantive, that is, in most simple being in whose essence there is no real distinction whatsoever. But in this case the one is no longer abstract and cut off from everything else outside unity; it is no longer the one that prescinds from being and from ens; it is in fact unitary ens. Hence, although the one can be considered in the order of our abstraction, that is, of our *partial thought*, as prior to ens, in the order of our *thought as a whole* (which includes all that is

himself by his action. If, therefore, his action is not brought about, but always stands out as some kind of watching, there is no distinction between 'watch' and 'that which watches'. Whatever is above, is some kind of eternally watchful understanding, watching even now as it always has been. Watching stands over essence and understanding and the wise life; it is himself. That act, therefore, is above understanding and wisdom and life because they come from him and not from anything else. By him, therefore, and out of him, his being is produced. He exists, therefore, not fortuitously, but as he himself willed'* (*Enn.* 6, bk. 8, c. 16).

⁸¹ 'Because this is so, it is clear once more that God brings himself about, and is lord of his own existence. Nor is he made as something willed by another, BUT AS HE HIMSELF WILL. Hence, when we say that God neither receives something in himself, nor receives it from another, we also affirm, for the same reason, that he is even more distant from the condition through which someone is said to have come about by chance. We say this not only because he acts or renders himself unique and as it were solitary, and keeps himself pure from all things, but also because we ourselves experience FREEDOM when we look at some nature of this kind in ourselves and see that it has none of those things adhering to us through which events occur and we live by chance. Other than freedom, everything else said to be ours is at the service of chance, to which it is exposed, and happens to us fortuitously. DOMINIUM AND FREEDOM OVER ONESELF EXIST solely through an act of light conforming us to what is good, an act excelling the mind, an act, I say, having no element of chance in itself; an act exceeding all understanding.' Plotinus concludes: 'He is by his nature a kind of root of reason, and before him all things are deficient. He is also the *in se* lasting principle and foundation, as it were, of some huge tree living by reason, a tree on which the principle bestows being through reason received by the tree'* (*Enn.* 6, bk. 8, c. 15). In the one therefore he admits a root of reason where all things terminate; this root is freedom. He thus places again in the one the multiplicity he had removed. Indeed he makes freedom come from the love of love itself, and this love from reason, in a perpetual contradiction.

⁸² Cf. Charles Secrétan's work, *La Philosophie de la liberté*, Genève, 1849.

actually present to the mind), being and ens is prior to the one, because the one is abstracted from ens. The one, understood precisely as one, is simply the form of unity and therefore perfectly empty. No action can be ascribed to it, because action either is itself being or follows being. Nor can we ascribe to it will or freedom or love, or all the many things which Plotinus attributes to it, after he had already excluded all multiplicity and mental distinction and even went so far as to deny that ens was one because ens contains some multiplicity of this kind. These philosophers therefore fall into innumerable contradictions by exaggerating the concept of unity to the point that it is the first concept and origin of all things.

162. Granted then that some productivity must be attributed to being and that this productivity is impossible without some kind of multiplicity, we can state the problem concerning first being as: 'How can the perfect unity of first being be reconciled with the kind of multiplicity being must have if it is to be total, active and the cause of things?'

163. I certainly do not intend to attempt to solve this problem here before ascertaining whether it is in fact soluble by human reason. Even if soluble in some way, it would pertain to theology and cosmology. My intention is to exclude any opinions which would hamper the solution and end in absurdity. These opinions, when examined by reason, will be revealed as gratuitous and erroneous. An example is the way Plotinus made all things emanate from his one, and we can say more or less the same about the other Unitarians.

Plotinus began by saying that good is simply one.⁸³ He thus confused the pure concept of one with the concept of good. He then claimed that the one knows itself and thus sends forth the intellect (νοῦς) without any act of will. Here again he contradicts what he had said elsewhere, namely, that freedom is the first principle by which the one acted and provided being for itself because it wanted to. But now he excludes the will and every

⁸³ In Book 9, c. 1 of *Ennead* 2, Plotinus continues: 'We know from other arguments that the nature of good is simple and first. If it were not first, it could not be simple. Clearly, IT CONTAINS NOTHING; IT IS PURELY ONE. It also has the same nature as that which is called the one. Even this is not previously something else and subsequently one. Nor is good itself something else and subsequently good.'*

movement of the one: if the one were to generate the intellect by means of some movement, this movement, he says, would come second; the intellect, then, would be third.⁸⁴ Finally, reason or the intellectual soul of the world (ψυχὴ τοῦ παντός, τῶν ὅλων), which is the principle of movement, issues from the intellect. He calls the mind or intellect ‘word of God’, that is, the word of his one; similarly he calls the soul ‘the word, or act of the mind’, that is, of intellect.⁸⁵

The only way to explain these Plotinian emanations is that the one, necessarily perfect, must be productive because productivity is contained in the concept of perfection [*App.*, no. 1]. But granted even what he gratuitously affirms, that the one (as he describes it) can be something perfect — although he excludes being from it — we can see the weakness of his argument. The argument, beginning strictly from that principle, must be: ‘That which is perfect must be productive and produce in a perfect way. It must therefore produce what is perfect.’ Hence, we must conclude that, because the concept of a perfect production is necessary to a perfect producer, the product must also be as perfect in its nature as the producer, and not necessarily inferior to it.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ ‘That which is generated is said to be generated without action on the part of something higher. Otherwise, if something were generated by movement, the thing generated will certainly not be second after the motion but third. Consequently, because the higher thing is fully immobile, anything generated second after it must subsist without any approval or discernment of the will or any movement on the part of what is higher. — Does nothing come forth from it? Or rather do not those things come forth which are the greatest after it? Intellect is the greatest thing after and second to it. Intellect gazes on what is most perfect and needs nothing more. On the other hand, what is most perfect and first does not need intellect; it is better than mind and the mind must come from it. However, intellect is better than anything made, because all other things come after it’* (*Enn.* 5, bk. 1, c. 6).

⁸⁵ ‘Indeed the soul is the word and a certain act of the mind, just as the mind is the word of God’* (*Enn.* 5, bk. 1, c. 6) — ‘Like the intellect, it is always in constant act. Motion however towards or concerning it is the task of the soul. Reason, proceeding from the intellect into the soul, makes the soul intellectual, but does not bring forth any other nature halfway between intellect and soul’* (*Enn.* 2, bk. 9, c. 1).

⁸⁶ Others have already made the same observation. Monsieur Secrétan says: ‘If it is true that being means producing its image, the perfection of being rests in perfect production. The image of perfect being is a perfect

Clearly, there is an antimony here. To have two natures that are perfect is a contradiction. The notion of what is perfect requires that the perfect thing be a single being and that nothing perfect be found outside it. But this antimony has found its reconciliation precisely in the mystery of the Christian religion which upheld simultaneously the most perfect unity of the divine nature and also three opposite relationships. Hence the divine nature subsists in three relative, really distinct ways, called persons.

164. Unitarian thought, from Plotinus to Hegel, performs two functions: it proceeds from the many to the one, and then returns from the one to the many. The first procedure is carried out *by means of abstraction* until the concept of pure unity is reached. This concept, Plotinus tells us, contains nothing except unitary being⁸⁷ (it is Hegel's 'nothingness'). The return procedure, from the one to the many, is carried out *by addition*. Both ways are powerless to destroy and create; they are simply capable of reducing or destroying the objects present to the philosopher's mind.

165. Whichever we follow, the mind must presuppose a certain duality annexed to being.

1. I have in fact already noted that nothing can be *abstracted* from being, not even unity, unless being is present from which we can abstract it. Hence, the mind always presupposes a duality ([cf. 157, 161]). Moreover, how do we think the one which we claim to abstract from being? Some act of being must be attributed to it. If every act of being were excluded from it, it would not be one but nothing. In fact, when Plotinus, as well as Hegel and every other unitarian, says that the one is superior to ens, or consists only of being one (*unum ESSE dumtaxat*), he grants it being. Once again we see that the thought of these unitarian philosophers always contains a certain duality, despite their efforts to the contrary.

2. The same is true when we consider the other way, image, an image equal to the model. This leads us to the trinity of Athanasius, not to the decreasing series of Plotinus' emanations'* (*La Philosophie de la Liberté*, lesson 4).

⁸⁷ *Enn.* 2, bk. 9, c. 1.

addition, by which, according to them, everything emanates from the one.

First of all, if things are to emanate, a potency must be granted to this one. Such a totally arbitrary addition removes the concept of one from the one and changes it into the concept of potency, an infinite potency, although pure unity does not as such include any potency either great or small. They say that the one is not even *ens* because, if it were, it would be many (this is tantamount to admitting a multiplicity in the concept of *ens*). Instead, they say it is a universal potency. Plotinus says: 'What is it then? Clearly, the potency of all things. If it were not, other things would not be either.'⁸⁸

Again, if the One is the principle of all life and all things,⁸⁹ like the spring from which the river issues, or the root from which the tree springs,⁹⁰ or the fire from which heat issues,⁹¹ it is clearly no longer One in the sense that nothing is distinguished in it, even by the mind. *Essence*, *life*, and *being* itself must therefore be excluded from it, as Plotinus himself maintained,⁹² for fear of

⁸⁸ *Enn.* 3, bk. 8, c. 9. The expression *potestas omnium* is equivocal, because there are two kinds of potencies, receptive and active. An example of the first is undetermined being which can receive all real things as its terms. An example of the second is real, absolute being which can produce all things. The Unitarians confuse these two. After speaking about undetermined being without any form, they say it is the potency of all things. This is true if a potency is understood as receptive of all terms. But using 'potency' in an active sense is an abuse because this sense gives it a very powerful reality. As a result, one falls into the system of the *ideological realists*, as Plotinus and all that school did.

⁸⁹ *Multiplicis vitae principium* (*Enn.* 3, bk. 8, 9).

⁹⁰ Plotinus often uses these likenesses (*Enn.* 3, bk. 8, 9).

⁹¹ 'Light shining all around, dependent on that which, I say, is deeply at rest, like the brilliant light encircling the sun from which it is generated by emanating ceaselessly. All things, in so far as they naturally persist, necessarily produce their nature externally around them. This nature comes from their own essence and energy, and is dependent on them; it is an image or an exemplar of the energy from which nature emanated. Fire produces heat externally from itself; snow not only retains cold internally but imparts it to other things. Odorous things are a particularly good example. As long as they exist, something is effused from and around them and what is near shares in it' (*Enn.* 5, bk. 1, c. 6).

⁹² 'Certainly (One) is none of the things whose principle it is. Nothing can be predicated of it, neither *ens* nor essence nor life; it is superior to all of

introducing a mental multiplicity. But the concept of principle (different from that of one) includes a real relationship with the multiple things whose principle it is.

165a. We must also bear in mind that Plotinus sees himself obliged to endow his One with the properties of goodness and perfection. These are not part of the concept of simple unity, but presuppose the being he excludes from the One. Only being is the subject of goodness and perfection. He is also obliged to grant to his One the property of principle, making it produce its own being and subsistence. He has, therefore, to admit that the concept of the One is so unstable that it cannot stand by itself, because it would be lost in nothingness if left on its own. But this was still not enough: he made the One produce not only its own being but the first intellect, which then produced the first reason or soul. In other words, he maintained that these three things remained inseparable from the One and indeed formed the perfect One.⁹³ In his system, therefore, this intellect and soul

these. If, however, we apprehended it after removing being, we would have an immediate surprise, and direct our attention to it, assenting and resting peacefully in it. We would gaze on it with one, entirely simple intuition, and having gazed on it, we would note its greatness by means of the things that come after it and are by means of it" (*Enn.* 3, bk. 8, c. 9).

In this passage, we must note: 1. Plotinus is not claiming in any way that his One must be seen as *nothing*; on the contrary, it is something infinitely great; 2. he says that nothing can be predicated of it, neither ens, nor essence nor life; 3 the one is found by removing being (*ipsum esse inde auferens*), which indicates abstraction as the means of removing being from the one. But if 1. being must be removed from the one in order to form its concept, the One has being (otherwise we could not mentally remove it) and 2. being must be removed to form the pure concept of the one, it follows that this concept is found not only in our mind but is present with the being from which we take it and in which we see it. Hence, Plotinus' One, as such, neither is, nor is thinkable. It is not therefore the first principle independent of the things emanating from it.

⁹³ '(The soul), as the image of the mind, must be seen in the mind. Similarly, the mind, as the image of God, receives God so that it may be intellect. But the soul does not see God as though IT WERE IN ANY WAY SEPARATE FROM HIM. Although it comes after him, there is nothing in between them, just as there is nothing between the soul and the mind. Everything begotten desires the begetter and is content in the possession of the begetter, particularly when they alone are begetter and begotten. But when the begetter is the best of all, he necessarily joins the begotten to himself so that he is seen separate from the begotten only through a certain OTHERNESS, so to

[165a]

seem to be precisely the being which the One gives to itself. In one place he says that the One gives being to itself, and in another that the first thing that emanates is the intellect, from which in turn the soul emanates, but nothing prior to these two things. But if the intellect and the first soul constitute the being of the One which *per se* does not have them, and if they form the most simple One, we can no longer understand how they are less than the One from which they emanate.⁹⁴ Furthermore, all this shows us how Plotinus' mind was unable to leave the One on its own; he has to add something to it to make it productive. Truly, a rigorously unitarian system is incapable of explaining anything.

166. Although we can exclude the system of the Unitarians as impossible, there is nevertheless some multiplicity co-eternal with being. But this multiplicity must not remove the perfect unity and simplicity of being, nor the difficulty of the antimony already mentioned which, throughout the centuries, has in a way driven philosophy mad. Christ resolved the problem by revealing the mystery. From this mystery came a light to strengthen human intelligence which, more enlightened and cautious in dealing with errors, sought to answer the problem. The following are the investigations that intelligence can successfully carry out.

Careful meditation on the nature of pure being, in the way it is essentially present to intelligence, gives the result I have mentioned above, that is, it has an essential relationship with a mind ([cf. cc. 3–4]). This relationship is objectivity, which has the nature of image, granted that we are content to use 'image' in a transferred sense. (This explains Plotinus' errors. He spoke about the image as if he were talking about a sensible image inferior to the thing of which it is the image.) But the objectivity of being (whether image or not) is being itself, neither more nor less, as known *per se* — I have said that this is the essential relationship with the mind. This being is object, that is, known *per se*, and therefore complete being, neither more nor less, although in the form of being known *per se*. But if being is of its nature known *per se*, the knowing principle must be in it. This is

speak'* (*Enn.* 5, bk. 1, c. 6).

⁹⁴ *Enn.* 5, bk. 1, c. 6.

precisely the mind, which is not distinct from being known *per se* because the knowing subject is essentially contained in the very concept of being known *per se*. If the knowing subject were outside being or differed from it, being would not be known *per se* but through something else. Because all knowledge is knowledge in so far as it makes being known as absolutely being, two relationships are distinguished in being, known *per se*: 1. being that absolutely is, and 2. the knowability, that is, the objectivity of this being. But being is the same and loses nothing of its essential unity and simplicity. Nevertheless, this unitary being is fully identical in these two forms, that is, it fully has absolute being, and is fully absolutely known. Thus, we see that some duality is necessary to being, duality which does not multiply it or affect the most perfect unity of its essence.

166a. But there is more. If we investigate further we see that being must have a third form which also does not multiply it. Being, which presents itself to the human mind as undetermined, presents itself in two ways: on the one hand, it shows that it cannot have being absolutely, separate from the human mind, unless it has those determinations and terms which do not appear to the human mind; on the other, it shows that it can have being absolutely and can therefore be *in se* and must have those terms. Thirdly, we also see that its proper terms must be fitting to an infinite being because being is of its nature universal, necessary and infinite. If therefore we are dealing with an infinite being, it must be infinite under any form whatsoever, otherwise it would no longer be identical, no longer be that being. To be infinite, it must have all that is conceived in the concept of being, that is, life and intelligence. Being, therefore, in the form of having being absolutely, is life and intelligence, and the same in the form of absolutely known *per se*. Being would not be perfect if in the two forms it could not, under one form, communicate with itself under the other form. On the contrary, it must communicate with the other form to the greatest degree because, without this communication, it would not in fact be identical. The two forms, one of which is not the other, although each is total being, must communicate with each other without any confusion. Such communication supposes that being is *loved per se*, that is, that being which has

[166a]

being absolutely and is also known *per se*, is also loved *per se*. But as loved *per se*, it is neither absolutely being *per se*, nor known *per se*. *Being, loved per se*, is therefore a third form in which being is. And precisely because being loved *per se* is the same being as that in the first two forms, this third form does not exclude the most perfect unity of being.

In being, therefore, there is necessarily a most perfect unity of essence and a trinity of forms.

CHAPTER 13

The false road taken by some philosophers to solve the problem of ontology

167. The three Categories we have mentioned are therefore perfectly divided from each other. In fact, the words 'ideal', 'real' and 'moral' express a reciprocal opposition, by which these entities reciprocally exclude one another.

It would certainly be an obvious absurdity to assert, as one of my eloquent adversaries did not long ago, that what is ideal is real, and what is real is ideal. The only thing revealed by this strange way of speaking is an effort to confuse very opposite concepts. We can appeal confidently to common sense to decide: when I am speaking about an ideal being, for example, an ideal jasmine, am I saying exactly the same thing as when speaking about the jasmine I am holding in my hand and whose sweet scent I am sampling? Vice versa, no great intelligence is needed for us to be persuaded that the real jasmine whose scent I am smelling is not the pure idea of jasmine which, even after I have ground the real jasmine into powder, remains immutable in my mind.

We see here the false road taken by modern students of ontology in Germany. For love of extreme unity, they tried in vain to destroy and confuse the immutable, incommunicable forms of Being which constitute the categories I have indicated. Some of them, such as those who think they can force everything into the Ego, reduced everything, including what is ideal, to what is real. Others, such as the Hegelians, are persuaded that they can reduce everything, including what is real, to the idea. Thus, they have totally ruined philosophy, or rather destroyed it, in Germany.

168. It is worth observing here, I think, that no philosopher known to me has tried to reduce everything to what is moral. This attempt could not be made without recourse to the trinity of forms, that is, without restoring the very distinction they wanted to abolish. No moral entity can be, except by virtue of the harmony between the two forms, the real and the ideal, and

[167–168]

this harmony is impossible unless the two forms are distinguished.⁹⁵ Hence, we have another tragic consequence: the abolition of what is moral, caused by the effort to reduce the three forms to a single form. We must not be surprised therefore if Hegelianism ended up in total impiety, rejecting both God and the immortality of the soul and every obligation and dignity.

169. These observations enable us to take a step closer to solving the problem of ontology as I have proposed it. I am fully convinced that Being, one and most simple in itself, cannot be reduced to unity of forms, and that the effort to do so destroys it. The greatest simplicity of forms to which being can and must be reduced is and must ultimately and solely be the trinity I have noted, that is, under the objective form, under the real form and under the moral form, nor can it be any other which does not reduce to these.

⁹⁵ In fact, C. Secrétan wants to reduce everything to freedom, as to a supreme principle of being. But freedom posited in a first, solitary act, to which all other acts are posterior, is not the *moral form*, nor even *moral freedom*, as he seems to be convinced. Cf. *La Philosophie de la Liberté, Cours de Philosophie morale etc*, Geneva, 1849, vol. 2.

CHAPTER 14

The sufficient reason for the three categories and forms of being

170. The three categories are also called forms of Being because Being must be conceived in one or other of them, if we are to have a complete thought. But the three forms cannot be called *passions* of Being in the sense that in the three forms or through them being undergoes some modification; the forms are superior to these passions. The concept of being in the human mind, a concept which is presupposed by the passions, takes modes not necessary to it. The forms of being, however, do not presuppose that being is already conceived but that it is conceived in them and through them. *Passions* present a concept posterior to that of being, whereas the supreme forms present a concept which, in the human mind and for each of the forms, can be posterior in time, but not logically, to the concept of being; each form is Being but in another mode. It is true that identical Being is distinguished in all three forms, but this Being is an abstract which, as seen by the mind, can neither stand alone nor be conceived alone with a complete, whole thought. Hence the mind does not conceive being separate from its forms, except posteriorly in time; it presupposes its presence in its forms without however distinguishing them. In fact, if I think being and nothing more and do not distinguish the forms, as happens in the primal intuition, all I am thinking is ideal being, although I do not consider the ideality separate from being. In our mind, Being is never without its forms except by a posterior abstraction; if the forms are not considered, Being is not distinguished from them. On the contrary, when by abstraction we distinguish the forms from each other, we think we are also distinguishing being from them, but in fact the ideal form always remains with being stripped of the forms, although the thinker is not aware of this. Without the ideal form, we could not in any way conceive being. The only form we exclude from our calculation, as it were, is the form we have and must have in our mind — although in reality we cannot exclude it from our thought.

[170]

Thus, being must be conceived at least in the ideal form even while, by a kind of hypothesis, we prescind from and do not consider the ideal form. To *conceive* is one thing, but to *consider* what we conceive is another.

171. We must distinguish here what is meant by *being*, the object of our natural intuition. This being is *undetermined, ideal being*. In our first intuition, however, we do not consider the *ideality* or the *undeterminedness* in it. These names are given later to the object of intuition, and are obtained through an analysis made by the philosopher, not by the soul as naturally intuiting. Later still we express another quality when we say *initial being*. This initiality can be understood by considering being as either 1. the beginning of finite realities, or 2. the beginning of the forms, and free from its essential terms. In the first case, the initiality is proper to ideal being and found by analysis in the object of the first intuition, as are the other two properties of ideality and undeterminedness. In the second case, *initial being* is not a complete concept but part of a concept considered, by means of *partial thinking*, within full concepts, such as the forms (I have described *partial thinking* in *Psychology*, 2: 1319–1321).

172. Because being cannot be thought and therefore cannot be being except in the three forms or in one of them, this trinity of forms must clearly be considered as a primal fact co-existent with being. The sole sufficient reason for this trinity is simply: ‘Being is made in this way, is ordered precisely in this way.’ It is impossible to go beyond being because nothing can be in a mode contrary to the laws or nature of being. Being is trine because it is of the nature of being to be trine.

173. This fact has no prior reason. It is the first necessity of all things. We cannot ask why what is necessary is necessary. What is necessary is always the reason for what is contingent, for which alone we seek a reason. Nevertheless it is not absurd to ask the following question: ‘Is the *whole* of this fact the reason for itself, or is the reason, which must be found in and not outside the fact, a part of the fact?’

I reply. The reason why being is in three forms, neither more nor less, lies in the essence of known being. But this essence is ideal being. Therefore, the ideal form of being can fittingly be called the reason for the trinity of forms of being.

[171–173]

This will be better understood by the following consideration:

Being, known in the idea, is necessary (*NE*, 1: 380, 233; 2: 429, 575; 3: 1106, 1158, 1460). This essential being therefore is. But if it is, it cannot be alone, that is, in the pure idea, but must have another being, that is, real being. Hence, ideal being requires real being. We have here necessarily two forms of being, the ideal and the real. The foundation for this reasoning begins from the principle: 'If being were solely intelligible and nothing more, it would not be being because it would involve a contradiction'. When we say 'intelligible being' we mean simply ideal, that is, objective being. I will demonstrate the principle.

A being can be said to be intelligible only when there is something to understand it. 'Intelligible' expresses precisely the possibility of being understood. When I affirm that being is intelligible, I also affirm that there is something capable of understanding it. When I say that 'there is necessarily an intelligible being but nothing capable of understanding it', I affirm and deny the same thing at the same time, that is, I pronounce a contradictory proposition. But if in addition to what is intelligible there is someone who can understand it, then in addition to ideal being there is real being, because the one who can understand is an intelligent subject, and subjective being is real, by definition. Hence, the ideal form of being requires the real form. The ultimate reason for this requirement is the necessity of the principle of contradiction. But this principle is simply ideal being applied (*NE*, 2: 559–566, 604–605; 3: 330). Consequently, the *reason* for these two forms is in the first of them, that is, ideal being.

174. The same proposition can also be demonstrated by starting from another proposition: 'Purely ideal being cannot subsist by itself because what is known supposes a reality prior to knowability; knowability is always of something, not of nothing.' I have used this reasoning in *A New Essay* (2: 608–611; 3: 1457–1460). Here, I will make only the following observation. We could not determine that ideal being has this aptitude to be used as a principle for letting us know that being must also be real, unless we already had, through experience, the concept of reality, that is, of reality in general. Ideal being therefore contains the reason for the necessity that being is also real.

[174]

Although this reason is not manifested to us in our first intuition of ideal being, but only after we already possess the concept of reality in general, we need it in order to ask and decipher what is written in ideal being, as if it were some shorthand, coded script.

If, however, we have come to know that reality means both feeling and intelligence, because thought cannot stop at a purely extrasubjective entity, we soon learn that the ultimate, perfect-I've act of being is the moral act. We can see that the concept of reality is incomplete if it lacks feeling, because all that we know outside feeling (understanding is also feeling) are the terms of feeling. These cannot exist by themselves, and their concept perishes if they are mentally divided from feeling because the concept of something felt, or of term to feeling, involves a relationship with feeling itself. But feeling, in itself, without intelligence, is not a complete, possible concept. Not one thing is ens unless it participates in the essence of ens. But this essence is primarily objective and therefore supposes that its seat is in intelligence. Moreover, things which are not the essence of ens but participate in it can do so only in virtue of the intelligence in which the objective essence of ens has its seat. This intelligence unites to feeling the essence of ens which feeling lacks. Feeling, therefore, by itself, would be non-ens, which means it would not be, unless there were some intelligence.⁹⁶ Granted that the essence of being requires a feeling which is also intelligent, the result is that subjective being, together with feeling (affection) and intelligence, can love real being (itself or another) in so far as it is known, that is, perceived in ideal or objective being. This is the moral act. Hence, moral relationship is essential to ens. The objective essence means that ens is real and moral as well as ideal, so that if one of these three forms is lacking, ens would become absurd.

175. The following are three theses with which we can rigorously demonstrate what has been said:

⁹⁶ Granted intelligence which conceives blind feeling as ens, this feeling is considered, by means of abstraction, as non-ens. In this case, 'non-ens' means something different from nothing. But if feeling were not divided by means of abstraction but in itself from the objective essence of ens, it would be nothing, an absurdity.

Thesis I: if we supposed ideal being, but excluded everything real in the universality of things, our supposition would be absurd (that is, the concept would be contradictory).

Thesis II: if we supposed real ens, but excluded ideal being in the universality of things, the supposition would also be absurd.

Thesis III: if we supposed both ideal and real ens without the relationship between them which constitutes the moral form, the supposition would again be absurd.

These three theses also give us a more general but equally demonstrable thesis: 'The essence of being supposes the three forms, neither more nor less, none of which can stand without the other two, nor two without the third.'

176. Let me repeat the question, however: how can the ideal essence of being, which contains neither the real nor the moral form, give us a foundation for arguing to the necessity of these two forms? This time I reply as follows: 'In the ideal essence of being, the other two forms are present in the ideal mode, not in the mode proper to them. The ideal essence of being includes all being but always in its own proper mode, which consists in making being known *ideally*, not by communicating it *really* or *morally*.' We will understand this better when I discuss the reciprocal inexistence of one form in the other two. If both real and moral forms are contained ideally in the ideal form, we should expect to be able to deduce from this form, which prevents the necessity of being, the necessity also of the other two forms; their necessity is their reason. However, it must be noted that the real and moral forms are indistinct in ideal being until, through the communication of at least the real form, we form their concept, and by comparing them with the ideal form, distinguish them from it, as I have said. The ideal form now becomes informative for us, revealing new things. Knowledge obtained by perceiving what is real is indeed a necessary condition for our thinking but in no way necessary for the existence of the three forms.

Ideal being therefore contains the reason which explains the three categories and the forms of being.

CHAPTER 15

Objections

Article 1

First Objection: distinctions can be found
only in the being we know

177. Among the many objections that can be brought against my explanation of the categories of ens, there are three to which I think I should reply.

The first is made by those who argue as follows: ‘When we want to reduce Being, considered in all its modes and passions, to the least possible number of classes and supreme distinctions, our intention must be to distinguish or classify the being we recognise, because it is impossible to think about, discuss or classify what is not known. Do we truly know all being, and know it fully? To know all Being and know it fully, we would have to be infinite because Being is infinite and because the pure notion of being manifests no limit of any kind; any limit is simply a diminution or absence of being. Limitation and being are clearly opposites. Human intelligence is like a very tiny mirror before which stands being, certainly a luminous but also an infinite object, and infinitely greater than the size of the mirror which reflects it. This similitude may be very imperfect but it does show that before we attempt to classify Being, we must discover whether in fact it can be classified, and in what way.’

I reply as follows to this specious objection. It is certain that we can know the classes of some things without having to know everything in the classes. For example, we may know that all the matter which composes the world is divided into hundreds of kinds of elements, but there is no absurdity if we do not know the actual number of individual atoms, their shape and their infinite combinations. Moreover, the more extensive the class, the less we need to know what is in it. For example, in order to know specific classes of things I need to know much more than I know about their generic classes. And among generic classes,

[177]

the more generic a class is, the less I need to know. In other words, the most extensive genera are known more easily or require less knowledge than the more restricted genera, closer to species. This explains why it is not difficult to understand that the universe is composed of corporeal and incorporeal entia. If we thought that information about these two broader genera required knowledge of all the spirits and bodies they contained, or knowledge of their nature together with all the laws governing it, we would be a long way from the truth. Clearly then, supreme classes must be much more easily knowable than all other classes and distinctions; these are categories which because of their maximum coverage are found in all knowable things, few or many. But in order to understand better why classes and distinctions of beings require less information in proportion to their broader coverage, we need to note the nature of ideal being, from which this fact takes its origin.

177a. By means of ideal Being, we know the objective essence of Being. This objective essence of Being must, according to its mode, embrace all being, every being; without the essence of being, no being would be. Hence, from the beginning nature gives us all being in so far as it is objective, and ideal. I have already shown, in opposition to what the objection supposes, that our knowledge, relative to the object illuminating our mind, is infinite (*NE*, 2: 428; 3: 1106). I can therefore reply: 'You say that Being is infinite and that, in order to distinguish or classify Being, we must know all Being. Human knowledge, on the contrary, you say is finite. I however distinguish the object from the act of the subject in this finite knowledge, and deny that human knowledge, relative to the object, is finite; on the contrary, it is infinite because the object is infinite.' Because the first category (ideal being) is given us by nature, the difficulty must concern solely the second and third categories. But these two categories are themselves implicitly contained in the ideal category ([cf. 170–176]), and require only experience as the condition of their manifestation to us. What I have said must therefore be firmly held, that ideal being when confronted with what is real reveals a new aptitude: it makes the real known. Furthermore, if the possessor of ideal being did not have some feeling, ideal being would remain entirely empty and unused. As we

[177a]

know, this applies to every abstract idea and to every genus. The possessor of the idea of the genus needs a species if he is to know the productivity of the generic idea. The possessor of the idea of the species needs the perception of an individual to render the idea of the species vivid and informative. But as soon as a subject having the idea of a species perceives some individual of the species, it no longer needs to be able to think other infinite individuals contained virtually in the species. Similarly, the possessor of the generic idea who also knows a subordinate species no longer needs to think the possibility of other species because the generic idea includes virtually within itself all species, even indistinct species. We can observe all this for ourselves. If this fact, which explains and determines the value of universal ideas, is now applied to the most universal idea, of ideal Being, we easily understand 1. that this most universal idea embraces all Being in the ideal mode and thus constitutes a supreme category; 2. that by comparing some feeling with this ideal Being, we find an example of something which is not purely ideal, and call it 'real'. And because this example suffices for us to think all reality, everything that is real (although indistinctly), we can universalise it by means of the universality given us by ideal being itself. Consequently, we can think the real as a supreme category or form of Being.

177b. Thinking the real with this universality is the same as thinking something real which is on a par with and can exhaust all ideal being. Now, just as in the idea we can have all being in one of its modes (the ideal mode), so in this real thing we have all being but in another mode, the real mode. We have therefore a true category. But when we have known these two first categories, the possibility of knowing the third is clearly seen. The third mode is simply the intimate union of the first two categories resulting in the perfection and completion of all being. Real being must have intelligence in such a way that if all intelligence were abolished, real being would be an absurdity. Because of this, real being, as I have said, can know itself in virtue of ideal being, which is the form of intelligence, and can therefore love itself. In this love as the new, ultimate act of being, being ennobles and enraptures itself; in a word, it perfects itself, and for this reason is called 'moral being'. This also embraces all Being because it is simply the union of being in the first two modes.

[177b]

Hence the justification of the name 'category'. As I said, no form can be granted as more extensive than that which includes the whole of being.⁹⁷

Article 2

Second objection: rational entia do not seem to be included in the three categories

178. I reply: rational entia are formed solely by means of abstraction. Because this is exercised upon ideas, these entia all pertain to the ideal form, to the category of ideal entities.

Indeed, another proof of the truth and necessity of the

⁹⁷ I cannot fail to note here how the best minds, influenced by the sensist and subjectivist philosophies in vogue up till now, experience supreme difficulty in understanding both the true teaching about the *object* and the demonstration of something different from us. Respect requires me to mention Conte Mamiani, who in his learned and elegant work writes: 'It is true that in Italy, the ideology of the Abate Rosmini is founded in and, as it were, incarnated in ontology to a greater extent than in all the other ideologies that have appeared so far. But his very long and subtle treatise does not succeed in escaping from the circle of intellectual forms and hypothetical notions' (*Dell'Ontologia e del Metodo, Discorso di Terenzio Mamiani, seconda edizione, ecc.*, c. 1). I have however shown the following:

1. Analysis of sensation indicates that there is something different from us, and a body outside our body.

2. 'Ideal being' is not ourselves nor any modification of ourselves. I have explained why I called ideal being 'form' of our spirit: it informs our spirit without being confused with it. In fact its nature is the opposite of our spirit and infinitely different from it; it is a *true object*. All this clearly results from the analysis of ideal being, of our spirit and of their union (*NE*, 1: 384; 2: 1010).

3. Possible being is not *hypothetical* (*PSY*, 1: *App.*, no. 2). This would mean that it is conditioned, suppositional, etc. It is in fact necessary, unconditioned, always the same, eternal, etc. I certainly acknowledge a *hypothetical possibility* but this is totally different from *ideal being*. Hypothetical possibility corresponds to the *postulates* of mathematicians and to the vague individual of the Scholastics (*Aristotele*, [63–66, 128]). For example, if a philosopher said: 'I suppose that a real column exists here. I now want to see what the consequences of my supposition would be', he would be indicating a hypothetical possibility because it is not the pure idea of the column but a supposition about something real which in fact is not.

categories posited by me is that they are precisely the only ones in which all rational entia are found. These entia are infinite, spawn others in an infinite succession, follow one another and intertwine. If ideality were excluded from the supreme categories, where else could we classify these rational entia?

Article 3

Third objection: it would seem that the three forms of being cannot be categories of being itself

179. Finally someone might pose the following difficulty: 'Ideal, real and moral being are simply a single being. These three may indeed be forms or modes⁹⁸ of being, but not categories of entities. You affirm (insists the objector) that the three forms are bound together in a wonderful synthesisism, such that neither one nor two can stand by themselves, but each can stand when the other two are not absent.'

There is some truth in this objection, namely, that the *forms* and *categories* of being are different concepts. For this reason I have already said above that the *forms* are the basis of the categories because they furnish the common qualities according to which all entities can be distinguished.

But affirming that there are no entities which do not have all three forms within themselves, does not follow from the teaching about the synthesisism of the forms.

The three theses mentioned above ([cf. 175]) certainly follow from this teaching, but nothing further. The teaching says that ideal beings could not stand in the universality of things unless there were also real and moral beings. But this does not mean that every entity must simultaneously have the three forms. This is even more true if we consider that by entities we mean every object whatsoever thought by the human mind, among

⁹⁸ St. Thomas himself calls ideal and real being *modes of being*, as can be seen in *Contra Gentiles*, I, 32 where the Saint says that the house on the drawing board and the built house are the same in species but *non secundum EUNDEM MODEM ESSENDI eandem speciem vel formam suscipiunt* [do not receive the same species or form according to the SAME MODE OF BEING].

which are certainly purely ideal entities and purely dialectical entities.

Indeed, the contrary is true if we apply to the nature of entia the teaching about the synthesisism of forms. In this case we find that absolute Being alone is in the three forms. Consequently, finite entia are solely in the real form, and participate in a totally different way in the ideal and moral forms. In fact a stone or a brute animal is a real ens, but cannot in any way be said to be a moral or an ideal ens. The human being is a real ens but not an ideal ens, although this may be present to him, and is indeed a condition for his being a moral ens. The ideal human being in fact is none of the real human beings which compose the human race but its antecedent subject (*Logica*, [419–425]).

CHAPTER 16

The error of philosophers who rank space and time among the categories

180. From time to time nearly all philosophers note that ens, as such, is independent of space and time. But soon this truth, enlightening their minds for only a fleeting moment, is completely forgotten, and their thought depends again so much on the limitation of space and time that they are no longer conscious of conceiving anything not subject to these two modes and modifications. They persuade themselves easily that there has to be an eternal space, and that God himself needs space as a kind of sensory constituting his immensity.⁹⁹ These philosophers, despite their intelligence, cannot free themselves from this illusion, because they use imagination instead of pure thought in their philosophical speculations, and imagine things as shaped instead of being content to know them. This is caused by the prevalence of the impression made by corporeal things in the spirit. Continually involved with corporeal things, we have great difficulty in detaching our spirit from them. People who cannot contemplate ens in its very nature free from the conditions of space and time are unsuitable for the study of ontology. Whenever we dedicate ourselves to ontological speculations with a mind, even a very powerful mind, obscured by this prejudice,

⁹⁹ In the debate between Mamiani and Galluppi about the nature of space, I side with Mamiani in recognising space as *real* and *infinite*. But I do not call it something objective except in relationship to the mind contemplating it. On the contrary I call it something extrasubjective. I take the word 'infinite' in its true meaning, not in the sense of 'indefinite', as Mamiani would have it. And although I understand space as infinite extension, it is not superior to the nobility of intelligent beings; on the contrary, because it lacks intelligence, it has an incomplete nature far inferior to the nature of all intelligent and sensitive beings. Much less must we confuse infinity of extension with the infinity of God, which is an infinity of complete, *per se* subsistent nature. Hence, St. Thomas correctly teaches that 'there is nothing to prevent a creature from being in a way infinite'* (S.T., I, q. 50, art. 2, ad 4m). Cf. *Dell'Ontologia e del Metodo — Discorso di Terenzio Mamiani*, Florence, 1843, pp. 283 ss.

we fail to profit from the speculation and become engulfed in darkness and errors.

One of the signs which reveals an imperfect division of categories is the presence in them of time, space, place, etc. Aristotle thought in this way, but is coherent, at least here, in positing time, motion and matter as eternal. It is clear to me that particular entities of this kind, some of which, like space and place, concern the material universal alone, cannot be included among the supreme distinctions of being itself.

The philosopher must therefore guard himself from falling into a material ontology which, instead of investigating the qualities and conditions of being (understood in its fullest sense), is restricted and reduced to considering bodies alone, and corporeal laws and qualities. Material ontology soon thinks that all entia must be made in this way and be subject to these conditions. Accordingly, everything that happens must find its example among bodies, so that the universalised, abstracted being and function of bodies is precisely the being and function of every ens.

I have shown however (and will show again) that space and time, and the notions dependent on them, are totally particular and proper to the lower classes of entia, that is, to extended, material and contingent entia. These could not be classified among ontological notions because they pertain to the created world and are therefore purely cosmological notions.

CHAPTER 17

How one form of being is distinguished from the other. The reciprocal insession of the three forms

181. Finally, we must note that the three forms of being, residing reciprocally in each other, could easily be confused by anyone without a rule for discerning them. The rule is: 'The containing form, although different from the form of what it contains, names what it contains.'

For this rule to be understood, I must say something about the reciprocal insession of the three forms. I will take an example from finite, intelligent ens, that is, from the only intelligent ens known to us: the human being, from whom we must argue to the universal theory of being (*PSY*, 2: 741–744).

Man knows himself. *Myself* is involved twice in this fact: as knowing and as known. *Myself* as knowing is the ens, *myself*, in the subjective form; *myself* as known is the same ens in the objective form.¹⁰⁰ In the case of *myself* as knowing, that is, ens in the subjective form, it is clear that *myself* as known, ens in the objective form, inexists in the first. Hence, *myself* as knowing, ens in the subjective form, embraces in itself *myself* as known, ens in the objective form; it embraces the known *myself* in such a way that if it did not embrace it, it could not be *myself* as knowing, ens in the subjective form. Thus, there are two forms, one in the other. But in the case of *myself* knowing itself, the ens is in the subjective, not the objective form because this is the form which contains.

Let us now consider *myself* as known, that is, in itself, not as contained in *myself* as knowing. What is *myself* as known? *Myself* is a subject which acts, feels, understands and wills. But this *myself*, which by its very nature as subject is ens in the subjective form, is known, and as known is object of *myself* as knowing. In this case it is ens in the objective form. This ens, in the objective form, contains itself in the subjective form. But

¹⁰⁰ We will see later that this *myself* is not strictly speaking *objective*, but *objectivised*. However, what I have said here is sufficient for understanding what I wish to explain.

this object which contains the subject, is ens in that form which contains the other, and is therefore ens in the objective form, although it embraces deep within itself the subjective ens itself.

181a. The same argument applies to ens in its moral form. Although human beings are not this form but share in it, that is, in the object, this is sufficient to let us know the reciprocal in session of the three forms.

We begin to be actually moral when we adhere with our own voluntary activity to being in the full extension of its order. A new, most excellent act originates in us from this adhesion, an act which must in our present discussion hold the place of ens in its moral form.

Because *myself* sees being, both finite and (initial) infinite, *myself* (ens in the subjective form) has within itself both other entia and being in the objective form. But this *myself* adheres with its will to this object within itself in the full extension of its order and thus acquires the moral act. This new, moral act is, as I said, ens (or, if preferred, an entity) in the moral form. Ens in the moral form, therefore, is ens in the subjective form where ens is also present in the objective form. In which of the three forms is this ens, called *myself*? It is in the form which contains other forms contained within *myself*. *Myself*, therefore, which understands and wills in an ordered way, is ens in the subjective form, although it contains within itself ens in both the objective and moral forms.

This intelligent and moral subject, *myself*, can be considered as known, and as such is object of intelligence. But in this object there is simultaneously present the intelligent *myself* and the moral *myself*, that is, ens in its subjective form and ens in its moral form is contained in ens in the objective form.

181b. Finally, let us consider the *act* with which *myself*, as subject, voluntarily adheres to its total object. This act, which is the perfect union between ens in the subjective form and ens in the objective form, is ens (or entity) in the moral form. But in the intimate union between ens in the subjective form and ens in the objective form, these two intimately united forms are necessarily present, and everything that is in one form adheres to everything in the other form. Hence, in ens in the moral form are contained the other two forms, that is, ens in both subjective and objective forms. But to which form does this actual entity

[181a–181b]

of intimate union and adhesion pertain? Once again, according to the rule I have given, it pertains to the form which contains, not to the forms contained. Thus our conclusion must be that here we have ens in the *moral form*.

It is most important therefore that we are aware of this property by which the three forms reside in one another. Without this awareness we would confuse them and fail to distinguish between the form which contains and constitutes ens under its form, and the forms contained. From this we deduce that all three forms of being have the following quality: they are the *supreme containers* of being. If not, they are not forms of being.

CHAPTER 18
The teaching about container and content,
universally speaking

182. What we have said shows how speculation about being always presents to our thought something which *contains* and something which *is contained*.

Plato and all the ancient thinkers spoke about these two intrinsic relationships of being, particularly when discussing matter and the form containing matter, but without explaining them. The teaching about the three forms does explain them.

Furthermore, reciprocal inhesion of the three forms is the *principle* of all containability and every containership. Whenever these present themselves to thought in various modes, they always and ultimately reduce to the nature of the three forms, whose essence it is to contain being and reciprocally to contain themselves. As I proceed, I will frequently apply this most productive teaching.

The teaching also offers some advantage to systematic knowledge by destroying the prejudice of sensists and materialists that an entity cannot inexist in another. My refutation of this ignoble, pernicious prejudice (*Rinnovamento*, [4, c. 8, *Dialogo*]) has its ontological foundation and perfection in the teaching about the three forms.

183. We must therefore define the two notions accurately. What is the meaning of ‘a containing entity’ and ‘a contained entity’, universally speaking?

‘Containing’ expresses an active habit; ‘contained’, a passive habit. Conceptually, that which is active is prior to what is passive. Hence, the *first note* of a container is that it is logically prior to its content.

If the concept of container is prior, then the contained entity, as such, cannot be known without previous knowledge of the *containing* entity. This function of the containing entity to make known the contained entity is the *second note* of containing entities.

If the containing entity is such that it logically precedes the

contained entity, the containing entity must be determined before the contained entity. In fact we can know an *entity* which contains without knowing in a determined way what it contains, provided that the content is known with a certain indetermination. This is the *third note* which distinguishes container from content. The fact that the containing entity can be known in a determined way, while the content can remain undetermined, means that the content can be known *virtually* through the container. On the other hand, the containing entity cannot be virtually known in the contained entity because the contained entity would in this case contain the containing entity; in other words, it would cease to be the contained entity and become the container.

Whenever therefore the mind conceives two entities joined together in such a way that one of them 1. logically precedes the other, 2. is necessary for knowledge of the other, and 3. can be determined without the other being determined (in which case it is virtually known through knowledge of the first), then the first of these two entities is called the *containing entity*, the second, the *contained entity*.

184. Therefore:

1. That which constitutes the *subject* in a real ens is the container of everything else conceived in the ens, because the first thing known in a real ens is the subject or what is considered subject. Knowledge of this subject brings us to know virtually or actually everything thinkable in the ens.

As we shall see in the following books, this subjective containership is the final reduction of 1. the containership of the *foundation* of the ens which contains the appendages (Book 1...), 2. the containership of the potency which contains the acts, 3. the containership of the first act which contains the later acts, 4. the containership of the ens-principle which contains the entia-terms, etc.

185. 2. All that is known in an object of the mind, that is, being in itself together with all its determinations, is contained in the object. The object, therefore, is the container because it is the means of knowing all the entities and consequently is logically prior to them in so far as they are known, and known actually or only virtually by means of it.

An objection might be made here: in that which is intuited we

do not see the object, but being in itself, and only later, by reflection, we discover that being in itself is known as object of the mind; so, *being in itself*, that is, the content, seems to be prior to the concept of *object*.

I reply. In what is intuited, being in itself is not known as *contained* but purely in itself. We know it as contained only later, when we reflect, because we see that it is known and that it must therefore be object. Entities, I said, are called *containers* and *content* only when they are presented to the mind joined together, not when considered individually and separately.

I could also reply that in what is intuited we know being in itself undivided from the object. Reflection is needed to abstract the object, or objectivity. In other words, in what is intuited, being is in itself, but absolutely object. However, because the condition of object is double (one condition is *absolute*, and as such is the condition of being, and the other is *relative* to the human mind), the second condition is revealed by reflection, while the first condition constitutes being in itself, present to human intuition.

This containership of the *object* includes 1. the absolute containership of being, actual or virtual, 2. the containership of the most general ideas of which the less general are actual or virtual content, 3. the containership of the principles which actually or virtually contain the consequences, etc.

186. 3. The *moral bond* between the complete subject and the object [is what contains] because this bond essentially establishes agreement between the *whole subject* and the *whole object*, not between one part and another. But the *bond* between many things is a concept prior to the things bonded, as bonded; it causes their bond, through which they are understood as bonded either actually or virtually. Therefore the *bond* has the nature of *container*, and the things bonded, as bonded, have the condition of contents.

This third category of containership is the final reduction of all the containerships found in any bond uniting many things. We see here the etymological force of the word 'contain'; it means 'hold together'.

Thus, even the material containership of any vase which holds together the liquids or solids put into it pertains to this kind of containership.

187. These three ways of containership are clearly reciprocal because we can see that 1. the subject can contain both the object with all its content and the moral bond with its content; 2. the complete object can contain both the subject with all its content and the moral connection with its content; and 3. the moral bond holds together and hence contains all the subject and all the object with their contents. And this is precisely the reciprocal containership of the three forms of being. It explains why I said that Being in each of its three forms is a *supreme container* containing all things.

CHAPTER 19

Why the trinity of supreme forms does not remove the unity of being

188. The most important corollary resulting from this reciprocal insession of the three forms is the reconciliation of the antinomy between the three and the one present in being.

If each of the three forms did not reciprocally contain the other two, they could be conceived only as three entia. But because each inexists reciprocally in the others they are seen as inseparable. All three always constitute the same being and same ens.

This reciprocal insession of the three forms explains why the trinity of the three forms does not in any way prejudice the perfect unity of being, which in its absolute perfection is always and exactly three forms, organated, so to speak, in a trine order.

189. Other numerous and most important corollaries come from the same teaching, for example, the equal dignity and fullness of the three forms. But I will deduce them when their connection with my argument requires it.

CHAPTER 20

The connection between this book and those that follow: the Trinity is the basis and mysterious foundation of theosophy

Article 1

Connection with the books that follow

190. We have found the supreme varieties of being, the Categories. I have shown that they cannot be reduced to less than three: subjectivity, objectivity and holiness, or, in human terms: reality, ideality and morality.

I have shown that these are the three supreme forms of being and that they cannot be reduced to a smaller number.

I have also shown that it would be absurd to conceive an entity without its place in one of the three most general varieties as in its proper class, and that outside these three only abstract being can be thought as their initiation: there is nothing beyond this. Thus, I think I have dealt satisfactorily with the problem of the Categories and have found the *ordering principle* of being in all its extension. Moreover, the multiplicity of entities, which presents itself as an indistinct chaos to the mind of the person who begins to speculate on the nature of being, already receives some clarification and light. I must continue this ordered work in the next book, where I will deal with *unitary being* relative to the categories, and begin to illustrate the relationship and concord between multiplicity and the unity of being. I will continue in the subsequent books.

Article 2

The three forms of being are not the divine Trinity
but something which is analogically referred to it

191. But before entering into this vast field, I must point out two things to the reader.

[190–191]

First, the mystery of the most August Trinity, which has been revealed by God to the human race and which we Christians profess to believe on the word of God as revealer, is something infinitely different from my three forms of being, although they radiate a certain analogy with the sublime dogma.

Second, the mystery of the Triad would never have been discovered by human intelligence if God had not revealed it positively to the human race. Indeed even after revelation it remains incomprehensible in its nature (and God himself is incomprehensible; we can have only an initial, negative knowledge of him, as I will show more clearly in theology). Nevertheless, we can not only prove the existence of God by reasoning, but also know the existence of a Trinity in God in at least a conjectural way with positive, direct reasons, and demonstratively with indirect, negative reasons. Through these purely speculative proofs of the existence of a most August Triad, the mysterious doctrine re-enters the field of philosophy. By 'philosophy' I mean everything which through a process of reasoning leads to the discovery and knowledge of the ultimate reasons of things.

192. The teaching concerning the three forms of being differs infinitely from that of the divine Trinity. This is obvious, because in the doctrine of the Trinity we profess the existence in God of three *perfect, absolute and full* persons.¹⁰¹ The three forms I have posited are not persons. To be convinced of this, it is sufficient to consider the *objective form*. This form, void of any living *subjectivity* in itself, cannot be a person; it is solely impersonal being, present simply to our mind as *object*.

Secondly, I distinguish between *being*, without the three forms, and the three forms themselves. This is not the case with the Trinity, where divine being subsists in each of the divine persons, indistinct from its personal term. It is true that by abstraction we can mentally divide the divine nature from the persons, but if this abstraction were not emended by a further thought, we could not claim to know this great dogma. Accurate knowledge tells us that there is no real difference between the divine nature and the persons.

Thirdly, the first form is subjective; indeed it is the form of

¹⁰¹ Athanasius, *ad verba D. Pauli*: 'No one knows the Father except the Son.'*

subjectivity itself. It is not therefore *per se* a determined subject; on the contrary it is a universal form under which all determined created and uncreated subjects are classified. The same is true of the other two forms. The three forms do not constitute three divine persons but three concepts, three universal forms, pertaining to the universal teaching about being, that is, to ontology — as St. Thomas says: *universalia non subsistunt per se, sed solum in singularibus* [universals do not subsist *per se*, but only in individuals].¹⁰² The three forms cannot therefore be three divine persons.

Article 3

The teaching about the divine Trinity can and must be
accepted in philosophy

193. I could illustrate the same truth much more amply but the differences I have indicated are sufficient for us to understand that the ontological teaching about the three forms of being cannot be confused with the infinitely August and sublime teaching about God, one and three.

However, as I said, now that this great truth of the unity of the divine nature subsistent in three persons has been announced to us by God, it is not impossible to find a proof of it by reasoning; and this is what I must do in theology. But because all theosophical investigations are linked and synthesised in such a way that they form a circle — not a vicious circle but a perfect circle — we could not penetrate freely into these investigations and attain knowledge which, in so far as given to human beings, is complete, without frequent recourse to the absolute being subsistent in three persons, as we will see in the next book which deals with *unitary being*. Our venture into the theological sphere with our investigations into being and its heights must therefore be justified. Some people may see this as contrary to the philosophical method, which must always follow the path of reasoning. Authority, they would maintain, has no say in the matter except in a purely accidental way, that is, it

¹⁰² *Contra Gentiles*, III, 75, 9.

can confirm and make more convincing the accuracy of reasoning which, it sees, has either been formed or confirmed in its results by many minds.

There is no need, of course, to introduce the authority of revelation into philosophical science if its weight is not required to demonstrate the propositions we are demonstrating. No matter where the propositions come from, philosophical science does not concern itself with the history of their origin, that is, of the way they appeared to the mind; if we undertook this investigation, philosophy would no longer be science but history. Moreover, the whole of rational science is concerned only to compose and knit together propositions proved by reasoning. Whenever the existence of a trinity in God can be rationally proved, therefore, this existence becomes a scientific proposition like the others, even though the science historically owes this increase and perfection to a source different from itself. In our case, God reveals himself to human beings as an authoritative master.

194. The demonstration I will give of the proposition, 'God subsists in a Trinity of persons', will be this (here I can only indicate it): 'If at any time this trinity were denied, the consequences would everywhere be patently absurd; the teaching about being, carried to its ultimate results, would become a chaos of manifest contradictions.' This proof will be clarified little by little by the whole theory of being which I will develop, and receive its complete form in theology. All I will need to do then, is recapitulate what has already been said and show that the only result is: either admit the divine triad or leave the theosophical teaching of pure reason not only incomplete but everywhere in contradiction with itself, torn apart by inevitable absurdities and totally annihilated.

This is certainly an indirect proof, like the proofs from absurdity of the mathematicians, but no less effective despite this (*Logica* [526]). It is a deontological proof: it does not prove simply that the case is so, but that it must be so and cannot be otherwise. It is a proof which, if it follows the rules, gives an unassailable certainty.

Article 4

Postulates necessary for the philosophical investigations
of the books that follow

195. If we are to undertake the remaining investigations about the nature of being and confidently bring the teaching to the perfection it can receive (a perfection limited solely by the limit of our individual faculties), we must take for granted two postulates whose complete proof is derived from the teachings discovered by their means. The two postulates are:

1. Absolute Being, called God, subsists.
2. Absolute Being subsists identical in three distinct persons, each of whom is absolute and infinite.

196. I said that these postulates will be proved from the evidence of the teachings themselves which, granted the postulates, can then be deduced. On this basis, we will see that contrary to these teachings, there could be no other teachings immune from intrinsic disharmony and contradiction.

In fact the forms themselves of being lead our thought through an analogical reasoning to the very propositions which at the beginning I called 'postulates' necessary for the science we wish to deal with. Being, in the three forms, is identical. If this being is conceived infinite and absolute, we have the concept of God as one, and we can certainly prove that where this subsistent, intelligent, infinite and absolute being is lacking, there could be no *universal being*, which is the truth enlightening human minds. I presented this proof of the divine existence in *A New Essay* (*NE*, 2: *App.*, no. 45; 3: 1457–1460). This first proposition (or 'postulate', as I call it) relative to ontology, is proved in such a way that it cannot be denied; particularly if we note that my ideology must not be separated from ontology but on the contrary considered as a part of the science itself of philosophy.

The three forms of being, when applied to absolute Being, cannot be conceived in any other mode than as subsistent and living persons. On the one hand the forms, having a kind of relationship of opposition between them, are inconfusable; on the other hand, absolute being cannot undergo any real division or distinction. Consequently, the subsistence of Being in the

[195–196]

three forms cannot be understood without supposing that Being subsists totally in each form. But if it subsists totally in each, it must subsist in each as living, intelligent and first, pure act; in other words, it subsists precisely with these essentially distinctive characteristics of personship. This is already a form of deontological proof which spontaneously manifests itself to us. We also see here how those excellent and very true words of Gregory concerning the Triad apply fittingly to philosophers who want to reach this summit: 'I strive to understand unity, and at once threefold rays shine around me. I try to distinguish them and already they have thrown me back into unity.'¹⁰³

This sublime mystery is therefore the deep, unshakeable foundation on which can be raised not only the structure of supernatural doctrine but of rational theosophy. It is τῆς Κριστιανῶν ἔφορε Θεοσοφίας [the theosophy of Christians], as a Father of the Church called it.¹⁰⁴ Once this has been shown, we have the important consequence that philosophy owes its perfection, its solid foundation and inaccessible summit to divine revelation.

¹⁰³ Ap. Henric. Steph. in φθάνω.

¹⁰⁴ From the author of περὶ μυστικῆς Θεολογίας, c. 1.

Book Two

BEING-AS-ONE

PREAMBLE

197. Being, conceived as the act of existence, is simple and one. If we stopped at this concept, our thought could not be carried any further forward and all knowledge would finish in the one word, *being*. To move forward, both our thought and the abundance of teaching arising from it need multiplicity. This is found in being when it is not held back by our thought at the beginning of its activity, but allowed to go through to its term. Being-as-one, therefore, cannot be the object of knowledge unless considered in relationship to multiplicity, and ontology cannot deal with being-as-one except in this relationship.

198. Philosophically, we arrive at multiplicity by means of our natural development, that is, through a farrago of different feelings and concepts with which we are equipped as adults and which come to mind as soon as we start to philosophise. But the great quantity of feelings and concepts oppress and, as it were, numb us, or, to apply a phrase used with a much more sublime meaning by Plato, we are struck senseless, as if stung by a sting-ray. We want to understand philosophically, but are suddenly faced with so many different entities that we no longer know what to say, and convince ourselves that we understand nothing. Our speculative mind appears not to comprehend unless it understands the *reason* for things or does not understand, right from the start, any reason for the multitude of things which is a mystery for it and like some black chaos. But when it recovers from its stupor and valiantly tries to discover the reason which will give it light, it wants to return from multitude to the unity which contains and gives order to the multitude. Our mind shows how this order harmonises with the nature of being (as I

[197–198]

have demonstrated in book 1 on the problem of ontology, cc. 1–3).

Our need and desire for knowledge therefore does not allow us to be content with being-as-one but drives us towards multiplicity and back from multiplicity to being-as-one in which we see the multiplicity already contained.

This shows that, in order to satisfy the double need of our mind, or constitute some knowledge, it is not sufficient for us to consider the one separately from the many or the many separately from the one. However, we are able to pass smoothly from the one to the many, because in the one we find the reason and cause for this movement. Similarly we can ascend from the many to the one, which contains and explains the many. Once our mind has done this, it is satisfied and content, believing that it knows. Hence, the intellectual life of the philosopher consists in this double movement or in this double action of thought, as we may prefer to call it. Here the mind is constantly passing from the many to the one, and back again, not arbitrarily but impelled by a continual necessity of reason. Knowledge consists therefore in seeing the many in the one and the one in the many, without contradiction, confusion or destruction of the two terms.

199. This is *synthesism of knowledge* (PSY, 1: 34–44; 2: 1337–1339) to which *ontological synthesism* necessarily corresponds. If we grant the *principle of knowledge*, which is the most evident of all principles (NE, 2: 559–574; PSY, 2: 1294–1302), in other words, if we grant that being is the object of thought, how and why is the mind not content either with the one or with the many? A potency, when fully united with its object, needs to perform no other action; it finds rest and complete satisfaction (NE, 2: 515). If our mind, whose object is being, does not find satisfaction in the one, then being, as one, cannot be fully being. If we find no satisfaction in the many without the one, the many without the one is not fully being. But if we find satisfaction in the one-many after seeing no contradiction in this antinomy, we must conclude that being is one-many, that is, that both unity and multiplicity are essential to being and co-exist harmoniously in it. Hence, the one and the many form an *ontological synthesism* in being; both are necessary conditions for being, the object of every intelligence.

[199]

This argument is irrefutably confirmed by the previous book where I examined the Categories. I began with the multitude of entities which are first encountered as a nebulous mass. After struggling to reduce this multitude to the least number possible, I finally saw that the smallest number of classes into which the entities could be gathered was three, whose foundation were the three concepts of objectivity, subjectivity and holiness. Next, after examining their contents, I saw that these three concepts, constituted three primal forms of being, not three parts of being. Each of these forms contains all being in such a way that being cannot reside fully in one without residing fully in the other two. Thus, I discovered the first, essential *synthesisism of being*.

200. Next, the reduction of endless multiplicity to the three forms revealed to me a first principle of reconciliation between the unity and multiplicity of being. Any other division of being or classification of the many would break up being into many parts and thus irreparably destroy its unity. But because all being resides in each of the three forms, it maintains its unity and integrity in the three forms, although it is simultaneously multiple in them. On the one hand, therefore, the multiplicity which concerns the forms alone does not remove the essential unity of being; on the other, the essential unity does not remove the trinity of the forms, in each of which being subsists one and identical. Thus, in my search for the ultimate classes of entities, I found something better than simple classes because I had come upon the forms whose concepts give us an unshakeable foundation for the ultimate classes themselves.¹⁰⁵

Ontology now had its first solution: I had found an explanation for the antinomy of the one and the many by showing that no contradiction was involved — which was one of the ways I had posed the problems ([cf. 55–66]).

201. Although this solution is too general and cannot solve the whole theory of being, it can lead us out of the labyrinth. To achieve this, we have to investigate all the lower multiplicities encountered in being and reduce them to the unicity of being

¹⁰⁵ I have already distinguished the ultimate *classes of entities* and the ultimate *classes of entia*. The former are three, the latter two: infinite Ens and finite ens.

and trinity of forms. We have to plumb the depths of being and, as best we can, carefully examine everything concealed there. This is the only way to obtain the information and theory we seek concerning the intimate constitution and primordial order of being itself.

After distinguishing being and its *forms*, we must first analyse being and then the forms. In doing this, we will find a multiplicity which can be reduced to being, when this is considered abstractly and mentally separate from the forms. We will also find a multiplicity which depends directly on the forms and is subordinate to each of them. Here, the reader might object that if being, abstracted from the forms, has its own proper multiplicity, this multiplicity is prior to the forms which consequently are not the ultimate varieties of being. This objection however will disappear of itself as our investigation progresses.

202. I will therefore investigate both the multiplicity issuing directly from the nature of being and the multiplicity issuing from the nature of the forms. Both investigations will be reduced to a theory in two different books. The first is this present book, presented under the title *Being-as-one* because in it I consider and reduce the multiplicity [to unity]. In the second book, under the title *Multiple Being*, I will deal with the multiplicity which issues from the forms and then returns to and is unified in the *single order* in which the forms are reciprocally bound.

It must be noted however that in dealing with being-as-one, I cannot prescind entirely from its forms, and when speaking about the three forms, I cannot prescind entirely from being-as-one. This is impossible because of the above-mentioned synthesisism between being and the forms. It is this synthesisism which makes ontology revolve in the circle I spoke about in the Preface. Hence in this present book, I will consider *being-as-one*, not without reference to its forms, and in the second book I will deal with the forms but not without reference to and comparison with being-as-one.

SECTION ONE

THE LANGUAGE OF ONTOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

The need to distinguish accurately the meaning of some words used in ontology

203. If we note carefully the arguments of the most serious ontologists, we see that they are hampered by the language they use, and we would be inclined to think that the imperfection, poverty and often the error of their teaching arises from the imperfection and poverty of their language. Certainly, when the first thinkers emerged from ordinary people, they had only the common language of ordinary people. Furthermore, because language is not only the means of communicating one's thoughts to others, but also the instrument of thought (*NE*, 2: 15; *PSY*, 1: 521–527), they undertook ontological speculations badly equipped. The language was unsuitable for philosophical speculation. Initially unaware of this (because human beings naturally believe they can use their native language to express all they think unless experience tells them otherwise), they tried in vain to formulate clear opinions. Their ontological thought was hindered by their words. Thought, to be free of obstacles, had to move forward alone without the usual accompaniment of language, and gradually express itself in a new language proportionate to its greatness. I am not speaking of an entirely new language — a completely new language would have been impossible and useless — but of one which filled the gaps in the language offered by society. This, however, would have been impossible to thought without many attempts and unsuccessful experiments with ordinary language. In fact we see that the

[203]

most mature philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle, began to act in this way, and others have continued to do so little by little, and with varying success, up to the present. I also was obliged to follow this route and introduced a few new words, as few as possible, compelled by the need to make my thought understood and avoid equivocations (*Logica*, 372).

To avoid ambiguity, it may sometimes be necessary to presume public approval for introducing some new, unusual words. It can also be generally helpful to make use of extremely accurate definitions to establish the precise meaning of certain common words without having to abandon the propriety of language; indeed, propriety of language should be strictly maintained. If the meaning is or seems to be multiple, it should be made clear which of the different meanings is applied to each word every time it occurs. Nevertheless, not every branch of knowledge requires this very subtle task of distinction of meanings in the same measure. I undertook this in ideology and in other disciplines only in so far as it was necessary; my purpose was to avoid unnecessary difficulty for the reader. Ontology, however, is a science which absolutely requires much greater care and subtlety in distinguishing and noting the differences of meanings of some outstanding words which contain the object of the science.

CHAPTER 2

The dialectical causes of the multiple meanings of 'being', and of other words referring to being

204. Ontology must make these subtle distinctions because, in dealing with being in all its possibility, it includes all the different aspects in which being presents itself to the human mind. If the discussion does not deal with being under these different aspects but simply with being, irrespective of the aspect under which it is considered, they need not be distinguished. However, they cannot be omitted whenever they are the point at issue in the argument (*Logica*, 394).

Obviously, words as mere signs do not have *per se* the power to be applied in different ways to the entities which we wish to indicate with words according to the different natures of the entities. Whatever their nature, entities are all indicated by the same means, that is, by attaching to them a sound which we call a word or name. All entities, whether real, ideal, mental or of any other nature, if there are any, are equally indicated by sounds. Consequently, although *multiplicity* in being is represented by the words we use in reasoning, we do not see the different origins of the multiplicity, which give rise to the different natures of the entities themselves. Hence, when the philosopher defines the meaning of words with extreme accuracy, he must do this in such a way that we can know the meaning of these different natures of entities. If he fails to do this, he will expose himself to the danger of substituting entities of one nature with entities of another.

205. I must observe straightaway that being, although most simple, is multiplied in the presence of the mind not only through its different categorical forms, of which I spoke in the previous book, but prescinding from these, in the following ways:

1. through the different modes of our mental conception;
2. through the different modes in which being presents itself in our mind;

[204–205]

3. through the different quantity of reflections we make upon being (*Logica*, 350, 402).

206. The differences which being presents through the *different modes in which we conceive* and view it are reduced to the following three classes, when we conceive it under one aspect rather than another:

1. The differences arising from the faculty of abstraction (partial thought). For example, when we consider *abstract being* separate from its relationships with its terms or when we form for ourselves the *concept* of entity.

2. The differences resulting from the faculty of considering being in relationship with its terms. This gives us concepts of, as I call them, *virtual being*, *initial being* and *ens*.

3. The differences arising from the first two causes together. For example, when we form for ourselves the concept of *essence* which on the one hand supposes abstraction, and on the other, the relationship with a *subject* or term, as we shall see.

207. The differences which being presents *through the different mode in which it presents itself* to our mind are reduced to two: *implicit* and *explicit* (*Logica*, 348). But if we consider the causes of these differences, we find we must acknowledge the following three:

1. Either the *nature of being itself*, to which all its three forms, more or less explicitly or implicitly manifested, are reduced.

2. Or the *multiplicity of our faculties* (their first limitation). For example, when by means of *what is intuited* (noun) we conceive being as a visible act and, by means of *judgment* (verb), conceive it as an act which is done.

3. Or the *limitation of each of these primal faculties*. For example when we intuit virtual being or ideal being instead of absolute objective being.

208. The difference of the concepts which being presents as a result of various reflections would seem to be reduced to the difference arising from the *modes of conceiving*, according to which the human spirit chooses to view being. However, we think we distinguish this cause of difference between the concepts although the different orders of reflection are not, strictly speaking, a different mode of conception. Moreover, reflection

itself, with which we view an object, is not completely free. We are in fact obliged to view the object not with any other reflection but with the reflection following upon the previous reflection. There is no doubt that a new relationship is always added in any new reflection but while this addition follows the reflection, it does not constitute the reflection itself (*Logica*, 349).

209. All these different ways of causing variation in our conceptions of an entity which always retains the same name, must be kept before us in ontological discourses, not because there is always a need for them but because the need manifests itself now for one difference, now for another, now for many, according to the distinction involved in the argument under discussion.

At the same time, we must note that these differences in the conceptions of the same entities are so intermingled and interconnected that 1. in two propositions the same entity can appear simultaneously different, due to all or many of the differences, or 2. one difference produces or supposes another. In these cases, analysis may be needed to separate them. Let us suppose that our mind is considering one entity relative to another from which it was divided in the preceding conception. This difference pertains to the first of the four [three] sources of differences indicated above, 'the different mode of conception', and to the second class of this source, 'conceiving the entity with different relationships'. But if the entity in question were *implicit* and the relationship under which it was considered were that of the terms which the entity contains and, if developed, would make the entity *explicit*, this difference of relationship would pertain to the third [second] source of differences, or certainly would suppose this source which I have called, 'a different mode of being relative to the mind'. We would need to know therefore how to refer the difference to both those sources and distinguish how and to what extent the difference pertains to both of them.

If ontology had to proceed all the time with such subtle distinctions, it would indeed become a very difficult science. But it need do no more than use the distinctions with the greatest possible discernment. This discernment is determined solely by what is seen to be indispensably necessary for clarifying the

thoughts to be expressed, and for removing all equivocations which alone, by encouraging sophistry, make knowledge a clump of nettles from which we cannot free ourselves or even take a single step without being hurt.

210. I fully realise that I should explain the dialectical distinctions, that is, explain their origin. But I can do this only in the following book. The distinctions are rooted in the ideal form of being and in its relationship with the human subject. But because I must discuss pure being prior to the forms, I must consider it as it is ed to us. Later, when dealing with the forms, I will explain why it presents itself to our thought in this way. Once again we have a new proof that ontological teaching is circular, that is, the things which follow are necessary for a clear understanding of those that precede, and vice versa. But the circle is not vicious: it simply means that ontological science is perfectly one and is understood only when all its parts can be embraced by a single thought.

CHAPTER 3
The meanings of 'being' and of other words
used in ontology

Article 1
Definitions

211. I will add some more definitions of words to those given in the preceding book and then give the necessary explanations:

1. *Being* is the act of every ens and entity.
2. *Ens* has two definitions:
 - a) a subject that has being;
 - b) being, with some of its terms.
3. *Entity* is any object whatsoever of thought, seen as one.
4. Essence is the being abstracted from a subject possessing it.
5. *Subject in all its universality* is what is first conceived in an ens or group of entities; it contains and causes unity (*PSY*, 2: 836).

212. These definitions show first that the words 'being', 'ens', 'entity' and 'essence' have a broad, undetermined meaning and can be applied to different objects. We need to know therefore the nature of these objects and how each word, while retaining its undetermined meaning, can be qualified to indicate the precise object meant by the word. I will begin with being.

Article 2
Being of intuition, virtual being, initial, abstract and
ideal being

213. Ideology shows that being is present to the human intelligence, which it forms simply through its presence. This being certainly admits the definition I have given: 'the act of every ens

[211–213]

and every entity'. But where are ens and entities in this naturally intuited being? No ens or entity is distinct and visible in this intuition; on the contrary, prior to every experience, we have no thought about these entities, which are in some way undetermined. We intuit being without *affirming* anything and without *denying* anything, without explicitly knowing being's relationship with its terms or with anything else. This is the *being proper to intuition, undetermined being*, the form of the knowing faculty (*Logica*, 334).

But this being has a hidden power which later manifests itself in successive acts of knowledge. Reflection on this power reveals that all the terms of being lie hidden in the *being proper to intuition*. This *being*, when united to these terms, presents us with concepts of *entia*. Hence, if we use 'being' to mean both the natural object of intuition and its power (revealed through reflection), then the words 'ens' and 'entity', which are present in the definition of being, must be understood as virtual entia and virtual entities. In order to determine this meaning of being, I added another word and called it *virtual being*.

214. This is being considered in relationship to its virtuality. If we consider it in relationship to actual entia and entities, it can be defined as 'the act of ens and entities'. But the relationship itself, in which our reflection considers it, is different. Because no ens or entity can exist without the act of being, being acquires the notion of the beginning of every ens and entity. Being, in this relationship, is indicated by adding the word 'initial' to it and calling it *initial being*.

215. Furthermore, by means of abstraction we can sever being from the intuition and the it is still defined as 'the act of ens and entities' but, by means of *partial thought* (*PSY*, 2: 1319–1321), our mind stops at the first word of the definition, 'act', and considers it separately from the other words. Although still initial being, it is no longer considered initial, but something in itself, a pure entity of reason. I indicate it by adding to it and calling it 'separate, abstract being'.

216. *Virtual being*, *initial being* and *separate, abstract being* are three meanings given to 'being'. Because it can be defined undeterminedly, it embraces all three, according to the relationships which the mind sees in it.

These different mental aspects of the different relationships

[214–216]

can be set aside in various branches of knowledge, without opening the way to error. This, however, is impossible in ontology because, as we will see later, these very aspects are part of its object. I must therefore say a few more words about these three aspects and relationships admitted by 'being'.

217. Granted then that the first intuition of being distinguishes nothing in being, not even a relationship, although everything is virtually understood in being, it follows that:

1. Intuition simply intuits and therefore cannot name the being it intuits. The name itself given to the object, *being*, is a function of reflection, which comes after the silent intuition.

2. Much less can intuition be called *virtual being*. 'Virtual being' distinguishes the virtuality in being from being itself, as the two words indicate (*NE*, 1: *App.*, no. 24; 2: 15; 3: 1410). In order to think out this denomination, reflection is necessary, but it must be an analytical reflection which supposes abstraction. Later, the abstraction is reunited with what was first abstracted so that the words 'virtual being' mean two united abstracts. This reunion makes the total meaning no longer *abstract* because the abstractive analysis is immediately destroyed by the synthesis.

3. The three forms of being are also implicit in *virtual being*, object of the intuition. But these also, precisely because entirely implicit, are hidden in the unseen virtuality of being and reveal themselves only later when the soul applies being to feelings. Although *virtual being* pertains to the *ideal* form, in which the other two are implicit, the mind considers neither this *ideality* nor the *virtuality*, although both are qualities of intuited being, in which they inhere without the mind's distinguishing them from being itself or the other forms. Strictly speaking therefore, the intuition terminates simply in being; only later, after we have made a reflection, do we see that this being is *ideal* and virtually contains the other forms (*Logica*, 304).

Nevertheless, I did not give 'ideal being' as a fourth meaning of the word 'being' because the definition, 'the act of entia and entities', does not pertain to the word in the fullest meaning of the definition. Ideal being simply means the act of ideal entia and entities, and this for two reasons: 1. the forms of being rather than its act (I mean initial act, as given by abstraction) are

the first, proper terms of the act called 'being'; 2. *ideality* is not a complete form, as I will explain later, although it is reduced to the complete form of *objectivity*. But it is this form only in the limited part shown us by nature. *Ideal being*, when considered as the beginning of all entia and entities, is already contained in the phrase *initial being*, and that is in fact the way human beings conceive it (*NE*, 3: 1180–1181, 1423).

4. *Initial being* involves an analysis and a synthesis similar to that contained, as I said, in 'virtual being', although it does not pertain to the intuition. The mind cannot consider being as the beginning of all entia and entities except after knowing them (that is, many of them) and finding in all of them the act of existence common to them. Consequently, 'initial being' can fittingly be called 'most common being' precisely because it is seen in this way as common to all objects of thought.

5. Finally, 'separate, abstract being', that is, being considered by the abstracting reason as cut off from every relationship with its terms, comes much later than the other expressions. We need, in some way, prior knowledge of being as initial and virtual so that the two relationships of virtuality and initiality can, by abstraction, be separated from being and set to one side.

Article 3

The meanings of 'ens'

218. I have defined ens as 'being with its term'. But granted that 'terminated being' is found in various entities, how can we discern it wherever it is found? In this case 'ens' has different values because, in practice, it is applied to entities which have the essential characteristics of ens, even if these characteristics are mixed with something else.

We also have another definition found in the very form of the word 'ens': 'Ens is that which is', or 'It is a subject which has being'.

By 'subject' I mean 'that of which something is predicated', or 'that which is considered as something having an act'. The act

may be active or passive or receptive. In other words, the *actuality* is either performed or suffered or in some way possessed by it.

Analysis of the definition, 'that which is', shows that it has two parts: 'that which' and 'is'. The first part is the *subject* of the judgment; the second part, the *predicate*, that is, the act of being ('is') is predicated of the subject ('that which'). We have here a distinguishing characteristic of 'being' and 'ens': 'being' expresses purely the *act* by which ens is, 'ens' expresses the subject which has this act (*Logica*, 334).

219. *Being*, as we see therefore, does not, *per se*, express any subject, but *act* only,¹⁰⁶ while ens expresses the *subject* which has this act. Let us compare the two definitions of ens as I have given them. I said 1. 'ens is being with its term', and 2. 'ens is that which is'. In the second definition I noted that 'that which' expresses a subject; 'is' expresses the act of being, the predicate. In the first definition, when I say that ens is 'being with its term' ('terminated being'), I posit being as *subject* and the *term* as predicate. The first definition therefore is the opposite of the second.

This dialectical antinomy or apparent contradiction is easily resolved when we note that *being* is a concept prior to *ens*: in the order of concepts ens presupposes being and not vice versa. Hence, we can define the nature of *ens* in two modes: either 1. by considering being as its antecedent, and expressing the way by which being (in the mental order) becomes ens, or 2. by considering ens in itself as already become, and totally ignoring both its antecedent and the way by which, in the mind, the antecedent becomes ens.

If I consider ens in the first mode, that is, in its relationship to the concept 'being' (the antecedent of ens), 'being' takes the place of subject in the proposition, as if I were to say: ens is 'being with its term'. The antecedent subject is being (*Logica* [424, 417]) which, by means of the term, becomes ens and ceases to be the undetermined thing it was previously.

If I consider ens in the second mode, that is, as it is in itself, and ignore its antecedent, I can no longer make undetermined being part of the proposition and then determine it by adding

¹⁰⁶ The act is expressed in its objective form. Cf. *Logica*, 320–327.

the term — I must stop at *ens*, saying simply what it already has, as in the definition ‘*Ens* is that which is’.

In the first relationship, *being* takes the place of principal in the proposition, that is, of *subject*, and *term* takes the place of predicate.

In the second relationship, *term* is the subject, and being is no longer considered as antecedent but as predicate of the term, and limited to it (*Logica*, 397).

It is clear that in the first definition being is only a *dialectical subject*, that is, it has the nature of subject in the order of our mental concepts. On the other hand, *term*, which in the second definition is subject, can also be a *real subject*.

220. Note that being which can become a *dialectical subject* is *initial being* because this alone is considered in relationship with its terms. This is not true for *abstract being*, which is mentally divided from its terms. Hence, because of the mental abstractive hypothesis which denies a term to it, we cannot say that as *terminated* it is *ens*.¹⁰⁷

We have seen therefore that *ens*, as a result of its two definitions, is conceived in two dialectical modes: either as containing the antecedent subject, or as being-subject and containing in itself the act of being as predicate. These two purely conceptual, dialectical modes pertain to *ens* in all of its applications, provided it is used with the propriety which distinguishes it from being.¹⁰⁸

221. But *ens* is in fact applied differently and therefore changes its meaning. Because *ens* is ‘terminated being’, being is conceived as more or less terminated. Although I still have to explain the theory of the terms of being, it is sufficient here to point out that these terms can be conceived as finalised in varying degree and distributed in an extensive series determined by the degree of their finalisation. Consequently *ens*, as distinguished from pure, and still termless being, acquires a

¹⁰⁷ *Abstract being*, like any other entity, can replace the subject in other propositions but not in the definition of *ens*. In its own and many other definitions it is subject because any entity whatever, even a negative entity, can be considered a substantive (*Logica*, 396).

¹⁰⁸ In my previous works, where there was no need of such propriety, I too used *being* and *ens* indifferently, as the ancients did. However, we must bear in mind that some things can be said equally of *being* and *ens*. In these cases, the argument does not ignore propriety by using the two words.

correspondingly extensive series of values, and entia thus arrayed receive more fully the notion of ens in proportion to the fullness and completeness of the term.

The first terms of being are the categorical forms, in each of which there can be full ens. But as we are speaking dialectically, purely dialectical ens must be distinguished from ens in itself.

222. Purely dialectical ens is only a *dialectical subject* such that, if ens subsisted, what is expressed would not be a real subject, but something pertaining to the subject.

223. On the other hand, *ens in itself* is a subject, which if it subsisted would be a true, real subject, of which the rest would be predicated.

For example, *quality* is a dialectical ens because being can be dialectically predicated of it, as in the statement, 'This quality of bodies exists.' But granted that the quality in question subsists, it would subsist only in the body, its subject; the quality itself would not subsist as subject of the rest. On the other hand, *body* is an ens *in se*, or is at least thought to be such. A subsistent body, therefore, is subject of its qualities.

Ens in se can be thought either as an *abstract concept of ens*, as *body* can be, or as a *full concept of ens*. This full concept can be thought of in two modes: either as a *vague individual*, in which case we think it as having its full determination but irrespective of its kind of determination, or as a *specific individual*, in which case we think it both as determined and with the kind of determination it has, that is, as the full species. An example would be *a body endowed with all its determinations* (NE, 2: 507, 509, 648–650).

Article 4

The meaning of 'entity' and 'thing'

224. I give 'entity' a more universal meaning than being and ens. This is clear from its definition as 'any object whatsoever which thought sees as one'. Being and ens are entities, but *entity* also includes all dialectical objects and objects of pure reason, presented to the mind by abstraction.

[222–224]

A word with such a wide meaning as 'entity' is indispensable to the language of ontology.

225. The same extensive meaning also applies to 'thing' (Italian *cosa*, Latin *causa*).¹⁰⁹ But *thing*, when used as the opposite of *idea*, is limited to mean an entity with the form of reality. Its meaning is now that of the Latin *res*, of which no derived substantive has remained in Italian [or English].

226. However, we should note that although the words 'entity' and 'thing' have a more universal meaning than being and ens, they are not prior to being and ens either in the order of their formation or in the order of thought.

Relative to the *order of their formation*, our mind cannot make such an extensive abstraction, unless it possesses the concepts of being, ens and some dialectical objects. Abstraction can never be the first operation of the mind, which needs the matter on which it can work (*NE*, 2: 498–499, 520; 3: 1454–1455).

Relative to the *order of thought*, such an extensive abstraction can be made only with *partial thought* (*PSY*, 2: 1318–1321), which cannot act unless the total object of which it chooses a part is present.

Consequently, if we remove from our mind the concept expressed by 'entity', being and ens do not also disappear. But if, vice versa, being and ens are removed, the concept of entity is also annihilated.

Article 5

The meaning of 'essence'

227. In *A New Essay* (2: 646–648), I defined essence as 'that which is contained in the idea' (Def. 1). This definition has the advantage of providing the way to classify essences. Their classification does in fact follow that of ideas, and can be found in *A*

¹⁰⁹ The fact that the Latin *causa* has such a general meaning shows how our mind conceives. We tend to acknowledge as cause what is most universal. We will see later that 'being' understood in all its indetermination and universality is, in the modes I will discuss, *causa* of all contingent things.

New Essay (1: 92, 120–121; 2: 646–656; 3: 1143, 1181, 1221, 1234, 1416, 35).

228. However, this definition is not sufficient for ontology. The meaning of ‘essence’ together with its dialectical relationships must also be considered, and this will allow us to determine the precise, *composite meaning* of the word (*Logica*, 373).

We must therefore consider that essence means ‘that which a thing is’ (Def. 2).¹¹⁰ However, because that which a thing is, is always seen in the idea of the thing, this definition accords with the first.

Let us compare it with the definition of ens.

Ens is that which is.

Essence is that which a thing is.

‘That which is’ means ‘that which has the act of being’. ‘That which a thing is’ means ‘quantity of the act of being which a thing has’ (Def. 3). Hence, in the expression ‘that which is’, the subject is totally undetermined and involves no *concept* of determination. The predicate *being*, or *act of being*, is also totally undetermined. On the other hand, in the expression, ‘that which a thing is’, the subject, ‘a thing’, is also undetermined but involves the *concept* of a determination which, although not stated, is a generic determination, that is, an undetermined determination.

In this respect therefore, one more concept is expressed in the word ‘essence’ than in the word ‘ens’ because essence contains the thought of some determination and limitation, even though it is not specified.

But under another respect there is one concept less in the word ‘essence’ than in the word ‘ens’. Ens expresses a subject which is, as the definition indicates: ‘that which is’, but in the word ‘essence’ the subject is understood as the foundation for the abstraction. When essence is defined as ‘that which a thing is’, the subject ‘thing’ is not introduced as subject of the definition but as the foundation from which by abstraction the definition is extracted. Hence, essence is not the thing itself, but ‘that which the thing is’, because the thing is outside the definition of

¹¹⁰ ‘Just as we use the nouns, ‘wisdom’ and ‘understanding’, for example, because people are wise and understand, so we normally speak of ‘essence’ on the basis of WHAT A THING IS’* (Sidon. *Ep. praefixa carm.* 14 *ad fin.*).

essence. The mind cannot reach the essence unless it thinks first of the thing. But in this case it does not yet have the essence (in the precise meaning of the word). To reach the essence the mind must abstract 'that which is' from the thing, and this 'that which the thing is' is the essence of the thing. *Essence* therefore is that which is given by the abstraction carried out on a thing. The thing is left aside, and 'that which is', the *act of being proper to the thing*, is extracted. This act of being proper to the thing, considered separately from the thing, is *essence*. Hence, essence does not contain the concept of subject or of the act of the subject but has a relationship with a possible subject from which it was extracted and of which it can be predicated.

229. We see here once again the dialectical difference between the meaning of the word 'essence' and that of the word 'being'. The only concept involved in the word 'being' is not the concept of subject but the pure concept of act without relationship to a subject. Hence, when 'being' stands totally alone before the mind, it does not constitute a complete cognition or a judgment (*Logica*, 334, 354). On the other hand, the word 'essence', although not involving in itself the concept of a subject, involves relationship with a subject, from which it has been abstracted. The difference therefore between *being* and *essence* is that 'essence is "being" abstracted from any subject whatever'. This confirms and explains what I said in *A New Essay*, that being is not an abstraction, whereas essence is (*NE*, 1: 43; 3: 1454–1455).

From this difference we can draw another characteristic which distinguishes the meaning of 'essence' from the meanings of 'being' and 'ens'. *Being* does not include a distinction between itself and the subject because it does not imply any relationship with the subject. *Essence* on the other hand implies a distinction between itself and the subject, and thus excludes and removes from itself the subject from which it was extracted. *Ens* clearly includes a subject.

230. Because essence implies a relationship with the subject from which it is distinguished, this relationship can be expressed as 'the essence of that thing'. But we could not say 'the ens of that thing' because the subject, that is, the thing, is already contained in the ens. On the other hand, because 'being' does not contain the subject, as ens does, nor exclude it, as essence

[229–230]

does (because being involves no relationship with the subject), we can certainly add to being the relationship with the subject and say: 'the being of that thing'. This addition makes being synonymous with essence which can also be defined as 'being considered in relationship with the subject which possesses it' (Def. 4).

231. In the definition I have given of essence ('that which *a thing* is'), an undetermined meaning is given to the subject to which the essence refers, that is, to the word 'thing'. Hence, because this word has a meaning as extensive as that of 'entity', it can have different determinations ([cf. 224 ss.]). If, in the definition, we substitute a more determined meaning for the word 'thing', just as mathematicians do when one of the unknown things remains undetermined in a calculation, the result will be a series of essences. This allows us to deduce all the different classes of essences conceivable by the human mind (*NE*, 2: 646, 653–659; 3: 1221, 1234, 1416), which vary according to the subjects to which they refer and from which they are extracted by abstraction.

We can therefore substitute *being* or another *entity* for the word 'thing'. If we substitute another entity different from that expressed by the word 'being', *essence* is distinguished from the subject to which it refers. But if we substitute the word 'being' for 'thing', it is identified with its subject; the undetermined definition, 'that which *a thing* is', now becomes 'that which being is'. But, because being is purely being, 'that which being is' is precisely being. Thus, 'being' expresses its own essence, which can also be called the most universal essence (*NE*, 2: 647).

232. Indeed, if by abstraction we extract essence from the subject and then, taking being as the subject, we extract from it that which it is, we must extract everything because nothing remains, just as nothing remains when we extract from other things what they are. Any abstraction therefore by which we remove that which is from being is the same as removing all being. However a dialectical difference still remains between *being* and *the essence of being*: the latter involves a relationship with the faculty and with the act of abstraction, while this relationship is entirely lacking in the former because any abstraction in this case produces nothing new for the mind which

obtains only the same subject it had before. Nevertheless the very form of the word 'essence' indicates this abstract action of the mind, an action not indicated by the word 'being', which is solely the object of intuition (*Logica*, 320 ss., 304).

Whenever a concept manifests itself as a product of abstraction, it acquires a new expression as *being* which is called *essence of being*. This explains the origin of those forms of concepts and of words which are called *abstract*. In the case of being, therefore, the abstract form adds nothing except the form itself given by conception; the object itself remains identical. This is an example of how the concept can vary solely through different ways of conception ([cf. 205–206]).

233. We see the same result from the third definition, 'Essence is the quantity of act of being which a *thing* has'. If this *thing* is being itself, the definition becomes 'Essence is the quantity of being that being has', where the amount of being expressed in the quantity disappears, that is, it becomes measureless being. This happens in calculus: if the differentials are made to equal nothing, the unknown thing can have a maximum meaning. The quantity of being which the being has is therefore purely being itself. Hence the essence of being, and being itself, are the same, with the exception of the abstract form of the first expression. Being therefore expresses being as object of the *intuition* without the intuition (*Logica*, 304), but the essence of being expresses being itself as object of abstraction and by means of abstraction.

234. But let us look again at the phrase 'essence of being' which is the equivalent of the definition 'that which being is'. In the latter there are two forms: *being* and *is*. In *Logica* we saw that the first form expresses the *act* visible to the mind. The act is considered as pure object, without the concept of its visibility relative to the intuiting mind (*Logica*, 304). The second form, *is*, expresses the act carried out, but not as visible to the mind (*Logica*, 320 ss.). Hence, the concept expressed by the word 'essence' means 'the act carried out', but in abstract form separate from the subject, and at the same time *visible* to the abstracting mind. These two modes of conceiving concur therefore in essence. Consequently, 1. being means the act as it is seen to be carried out, but without thought of how it is seen; 2. 'is' means the act as carried out and not as seen; 3. *essence* means 'the act as

carried out in so far as it is seen by the abstracting vision of the mind' (Def. 5).

I said that 'the being of the thing' and 'the essence of the thing' mean the same. If we substitute *being* for *the thing*, the phrase 'the essence of being' means the same as 'the being of being'. In the second phrase, the same thing is repeated by means of a reflection of being upon itself (*Logica*, 349). Here, the order of reflections is another of the four [three] causes which, as I said, modify the dialectical meaning of concepts and words ([cf. 205, 208]). What then is the dialectical difference between the simple expression 'being' and that of 'being of being'? In the second phrase, the first 'being' expresses the essence, and the second 'being' takes the place of the subject to which the essence refers. In all other essences, the subject is distinct from its essence, but when being itself is taken as subject of the essence, the subject is identified with the essence, as we have seen. The mind however preserves the distinct, logical forms, that is, the form of *subject* and that of *essence* which refers to the subject. What is the difference between these forms?

235. *Subject* means 'that which carries out the act'; essence means the *act* in its form abstracted from, but relative to, the subject. Thus, the mind considers being in two *modes*: as dialectical subject and as act. This duality arises solely from the *modes of conceiving* which in the present case, however, have no corresponding distinction in the object conceived. The object is identical and not even susceptible of the two modes: *being*, standing in all its purity before the mind, is pure act, not subject. We have here, therefore, a *limitation* of the mind which multiplies that which cannot be multiplied. As a result, we easily accept the expression 'the essence of being' because the repetition of being is not immediately evident, but are not happy with the other identical expression, 'the being of being'. It is clear to everyone that here we are dealing only with being.

The expression 'the essence of being' is tolerated, purely because we are accustomed to saying, 'the essence of such and such a thing'. We therefore keep the same verbal form for being. When we hear 'the essence', we expect 'of such and such a thing' to follow. But if we overcome this habit of form, we understand that instead of 'the essence of being' we can say simply 'the essence'. We also understand that 'the essence' without any

further addition expresses better and more simply what is normally said: 'the essence of being'. Plato himself very often used οὐσία with this meaning.

236. The different endings of the words 'essence' and 'being' [*essere*] clearly shows that essence [ess-ence] is being in its abstract form, that is, being [ess-ere] abstracted from any subject whatsoever, and therefore involving a relationship with a subject. Because this subject is undetermined, 'essence' bears within itself the stamp of the greatest universality, whereas 'being' does not *per se* have this universality except in the sense of essence, or with the addition of 'initial' or 'virtual' being.

In fact, if we consider 'essence' etymologically, we shall perhaps find that it is related to its subject. Apparently the word includes being twice, as in the expression 'the being of being' [*l'essere dell'essere*]. Just as *sapiens*, that is, *sapi-ens* is an ens that knows, and *pot-ens* is an ens that is able, etc., so *ess-ente* means an ens that is. In the abstract form, sapi-ence, pot-ence, ess-ence mean the entity of what knows, of what is able, of what is.

Article 6

The meanings of 'subject' and 'predicate'

237. We have met the definition, 'The subject is that which in an ens or group of entities is conceived as first, as container and as cause of unity'. Here, the subject in an ens is distinguished from the subject in a group of entities which constitute something which is one not in itself but relative to the mind. In other words, we are dealing with a subject as such, that is, in the *ens*, and a dialectical subject, that is, relative to the mind.

238. Because ens can be real, ideal and moral, the subject of ens is conceived in each of the three forms.

The subject united to the entities which it contains and of which it is the first (the others therefore, without it, would not be) constitutes complete ens itself. Thus the definition of ens pertains to the subject united with the other entities and not to the entities united with the subject.

The *subject*, which must be in every complete, real ens, is of the same nature as the ens; it is a *principle* in the entia which are

[236–238]

principles, or *term* in the entia which are terms; in mixed entia, it is only principle, otherwise it could not be *first* in the whole ens.

239. If the subject must be in every complete ens, it follows that whenever the mind forms a group of entities, of which one is a complete ens, there are two *subjects* in the group: the subject of the group, which is purely dialectical, and the subject of the ens, which is real.

Similarly undetermined being, considered as subject of complete, real entia, is a dialectical subject, and each of the entia has its real subject.

On the other hand, in term-entia, the mind supposes the real subject as something unknown so that the mind can think it. This kind of subject can be called *cogitative* or *surrogate*.

240. Granted that the subject is first in every unity conceived as ens and that it contains all the other things which the mind can distinguish in the unity, all the other things are predicated of the subject and called 'predicates'.

SECTION TWO

THE SYSTEM OF DIALECTICAL UNITY

CHAPTER 1

**The need which human intelligence has to reduce
all that is knowable to one principle, and how the failure
to define sufficiently the meaning of words
has resulted in many erroneous systems**

Article 1

The antinomy between the unity and plurality of being
is solved only by a dialectical distinction of concepts

241. The distinctions made in the two previous chapters show how the same object of the mind, without losing its primal unicity, is multiplied and becomes many in the four ways I have mentioned. Note again however, that these four ways do not all depend on the limitation of the human mind but in part on each of the following:

1. The nature of being as the trinity of forms.
2. The multiplicity of the human faculties with which being is apprehended (this is a first limitation). Being presents to one faculty an aspect which differs from the aspect presented to another faculty. For example, being presents itself to the faculty of intuition as a visible act; to judgment, as an act which is carried out.
3. The various modes and relationships in which the same faculty conceives being. Abstraction, for example, considers being abstracted to varying degrees.

[241]

4. Finally, the different number of reflections with which being is considered.

This gives the same word different uses and meanings.

We can easily see that these distinctions are necessary for ontology by considering the nature of the ontological problem which I explained in the book dealing with it, and also by considering the unsuccessful attempts to find a satisfactory solution for it. Some philosophers did not even directly propose the problem, or certainly did not take the time to study its nature carefully. Others proposed it more or less correctly, but were overwhelmed by its profundity. Among these are the German thinkers from Kant onwards who nevertheless proposed the problem in the most explicit form and thus obtained a place of honour in the science of knowledge which will never be taken from them.

Article 2

The ancient philosophers and the problem of the unity and plurality of being

242. Human intelligence needs to reduce everything to unity. The origin of this need is clearly the fact that our mind uses *being* to understand everything it understands; in other words, 'that which is not being cannot be understood', is what I have called 'the principle of cognition' (*NE*, 2: 559–560; *Logica*, 540–543; *PSY*, 2: 1294 ss.). *Being* is a nature which is simple and one. Hence the human mind cannot persuade itself that there is something outside being; to do so would be a clear contradiction. The mind ceaselessly tends and aspires to reduce all things to being, as to one, simple nature. It strives for this unity not only in the order of cognitions but in the order of real things, because in these too it ultimately sees only being [cf. 62–66].

243. Perhaps the first time that this need felt by our intelligence became an explicit philosophical problem was due to Parmenides. He seems to have resolved the problem with great speculative courage but without attaining the truth. After declaring that all things are one, he did not show how the plurality of concepts and of real things could be reduced to this one. His

[242–243]

error is however free from the base ignobility of those philosophers who on the one hand saw that the problem exceeded their forces and on the one hand were too loath to admit their inability to solve it. Instead, they ignored the intelligence's obvious need to find a principle of unity for everything, as if the principle did not exist, and settled for the disgregated multiplicity of sensible things and concepts, as if the unity to which human beings aspire could be totally dismissed as something useless and superfluous.

244. The first and only one to attempt to preserve both multiplicity and unity was Plato. Aristotle, the disciple of Plato, partly perfected and partly ruined his master's work (*Aristotele* [129–135; 264]). Plato, seeing that both could not be denied, brought them together and showed that multiplicity was in the very unity of being, and that being could not be conceived to be, except as simultaneously one and multiple. The thought was sublime and could never perish in systematic knowledge. However, one man alone could not bring this thought to perfection because of the unforeseen difficulties it contained. This always happens when difficult problems present themselves for the first time, and a human mind, no matter how robust and acute, tries to solve them. For example, Plato did not know distinctly, nor did he look for, the nature of the first variety in being. In other words, he did not know the distinction and nature of the three forms which alone is essential to being itself, and from which all other varieties and differences start. The defects inherent in Plato's solution to the great problem caused both opposition and doubt about its solution. Consequently, the problem was abandoned by many, who either declared it useless speculation, as insoluble as the squaring of the circle, or simply forgot it and relapsed into ignorance.

Article 3

Why Fichte was unable to solve the problem of
the unity and plurality of being

245. But the problem is one of those that cannot be forgotten forever and, as long as they are not entirely solved, return at

[244–245]

certain determinate times to disturb the tranquillity of the mind. In modern times, the problem returned very forcefully to the spirit of Fichte and his illustrious successors. Unfortunately Fichte, who was inoculated with subjectivism by Kant's philosophy, concentrated his thought on the human Ego, with which (or with another imaginary Ego based on its pattern) he thought he could unify all things. The thinkers who thought they interpreted him most favourably, like Chalybaeus,¹¹¹ say that outside his system he believed in the reality of the world only through faith in the moral law. This distinction between *knowledge* and *faith*, which was introduced by Kant when he distinguished between theoretical and practical reason (TCY, 161), removes the unity that thinkers wanted to establish, and introduces a duality. But Johann Gottlieb Fichte's protest was a cry of nature against sophistry, because his *faith*, as opposed to *systematic knowledge*, is an acknowledgement of the *moral form* of being, although expressed in different words; ultimately it is an *argument of metaphysical convenience* (Logica, [1124–1126]. However, two very important things escaped his attention: 1. the ascendance to being which is prior in concept to the forms, and is their bond and principle of identification — this defect removed *unity*, and 2. the failure to distinguish categorically and irreducibly the ideal or objective form and the real or subjective form. For Fichte the objective form (objective knowledge) is a pure act of thought, a real act of the subject Ego and produced by the Ego. His system therefore is also defective relative to *plurality* in which being is, and which is essential for the intimate constitution of being.

Article 4

Schelling's treatment of the problem of the unity and plurality of being

§1. Schelling posits the problem incorrectly

246. Fichte began the search for unity in the order of

¹¹¹ *Historische Entwicklung* etc., 3rd. ed., p. 178.

systematic knowledge with his programme, *The Concept of the Doctrine of Knowledge*, published at Jena in 1794 [1798].¹¹² His disciple, Schelling, did the same in *The Possibility and Form of Philosophy in General*, published the same year at Tübingen.¹¹³ In these works, the problem of ontology was presented solely under the aspect of what is knowable, to the exclusion of real being. In their desire to solve the problem under this one aspect, these thinkers, particularly Schelling, violated the nature of things; directly or indirectly they reduced the real world solely to what is knowable. Hegel repeated the same distortion and glorified it as a great truth. Schelling, however, was dissatisfied with Fichte's *dualism* and strove assiduously for a system of perfect *unitarism* by reducing Fichte's systematic knowledge and Faith to a single principle. But Hegel viewed the task as still incomplete because Schelling's system continued to posit an act of subjective intuition distinct from the object of the intuition. He boasted that, with his system of the absolute idea, he had discovered the true unitary system¹¹⁴ vainly sought by his predecessors (*Logica*, [45 ss.]). But the boast is the confession which condemns him because a system of pure unitarism is contrary to the nature of being, the concern of ontology. His first error, his total failure to grasp being, plunged him so quickly into the absurd that he found himself obliged to make being equal to nothing and to take refuge in the obscure, base concept of becoming, a concept which is much later than that of being (*Logica*, 51).

247. But a critical examination of any philosophical system must begin from the principles of the system and see whether the steps taken by the thinker correctly follow each other; if they do not, the reader must determine the first point where the reasoning deviates. I will therefore take the first publication of Hegel's master, which contains the seed of his whole system,

¹¹² *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*.

¹¹³ *Ueber die Moeglichkeit und Forme der Philosophie überhaupt*. Fichte was 32 years old, Schelling, 19.

¹¹⁴ By *unitary system* I mean a system (whatever form it takes) which attempts to solve the ontological problem solely with the *unity* of being, and either does not know or abolishes the *multiplicity* proper to that unity, that is, the three categorical forms without which being itself becomes absurd.

and analyse it to discover his reasoning at the very point where he deviates.¹¹⁵

Schelling intended, in this work, to find 'the universal principle of philosophy'.

He begins by saying that two questions must be answered: 'What is the formal principle of all knowledge? What is the material principle?'

248. Note, the two questions, proposed *ex abrupto*, cannot be the first in philosophy. They imply a reflection on philosophy which means they suppose philosophy as already formed.

Furthermore, the questions, taken as the first questions, prejudice many others; for example, they suppose as certain that there is a formal and material principle of everything knowable. But this has not been proved. A proper definition should first have been given of philosophy, of its form and matter, of the meaning of *principle*, and of *formal* and *material principle*. If all this is left as understood, subsequent reasoning must be blind.

249. He then gives a general definition of philosophy: 'Philosophy is a science, that is, a determined *content* under a determined *form*.' The definition simply tells us what philosophy has in common with all the other sciences. In fact, saying a determined *content* under a determined *form*, does not tell us which content or form is being discussed: are the content and form in the order of cognitions or of realities? If the order is that of cognitions, we must be clearly told what its *content* and *form* is in the order of cognitions. In this order, the form itself must be a cognition. If it is not a cognition, what is it, and if it is a cognition, surely there must or can be a content? Furthermore, not every content and every form is systematic knowledge; they are not philosophy. The word 'content' (even if not considered a

¹¹⁵ In his later works, Schelling continued to develop his system but did not change the principles which above all else must be accurately examined. He considered the new philosophy which he began to teach at Berlin as a continuation of his first system or, as he says, as another page of philosophy (*Erste Vorlesung in Berlin, 15 November, 1815*). The difference between him and Fichte is probably more a matter of words than anything else. Both extract the spirit and the external world from the Ego. For Fichte, the exterior world is *idea*; Schelling tried to prove it to be a *reality*. But the world and all things always remain an effect of the Ego, which in turn is an effect of itself. Hence, Hegel's *nothingness*.

metaphor) has a very different meaning when applied to the world of cognitions and when applied to the world of realities. In the latter case, it also has a very different meaning when applied to corporeal things and to spiritual things: a spirit contains what it contains in an entirely different way from that of a vase full of liquid. Schelling should have made all these meanings clear beforehand; he should have shown 1. the difference between *content* and *form*, 2. whether this difference is absolute or relative, or 3. is a difference *in se* or purely dialectical. If he had done this, Hegel would not have come along to deny every difference between *content* and *form*, although he, too, used equivocation. On the contrary, if in the order of knowledge Schelling had first investigated the nature of *content* and *form*, he would probably have discovered the categorical difference of ideal and real being, the source and ultimate foundation of the duality of systematic knowledge, as I will show in the next book.

250. Schelling next asks whether the content and form of philosophy are arbitrary, or necessarily determined in such a way that the content must be clothed with this form, and the form have this content. If so, he says, they are founded upon a common principle. But because there are no definitions, the question is as undetermined as the very terms in which it is asked. Does *form* mean the form which the human mind can give to what is knowable when the mind conceives or expresses it in words? If it does, is there only one *form* or more? Or does form mean what the knowable itself requires? Does what is knowable, as content, require a form different from itself? Indeed, which knowable are we talking about? A knowable which can be present in the human mind, or an infinite knowable inaccessible to the human mind? If it can be present to the human mind, that is, it is a finite, imperfect knowable, how can we prove that it requires one form only? Finally, if we are talking about infinite knowable, as in God, have we proved that it must have a form, or that this form is the form of philosophy? Doesn't the word 'philosophy' mean a human science; if it does not, we are attempting the flight of Icarus. Hence, even if we proved that the complete, infinite knowable, as it is in God, must have one form only, we would not have proved that the imperfect knowable conformed to the

limitations of the human mind, that is, philosophy, was susceptible of that one form. On the contrary, because the imperfection and limitation of such knowledge corresponds to the limitation and imperfection of our human faculties, it would have to be capable of receiving many forms, or if only one form, it would be as imperfect as the content. If however we say that even in the human mind what is knowable contains something infinite and absolute, a distinction would still have to be made when speaking about the whole of the knowable, or about philosophy. Instead the argument should have begun 1. by showing that a part of what is humanly knowable is necessary and absolute; and continued 2. by separating this absolute, necessary part from all the rest, and 3. asking whether this part had the two elements of *content* and *form*, and whether this form could finally be reduced to the *form* of every scientific content of knowledge for all human beings (*TCY*, 151; *NE*, 1: 306–309; 3: 1101–1109).

Consequently, the question, ‘Is the form and content of philosophy arbitrary or necessary?’, remains too undetermined in the way Schelling asks it. Let us see how it can be resolved.

§2. *Schelling posits incorrectly the conditions for the solution of the problem*

251. Schelling begins from an incorrect and unduly general definition of what a science is: ‘A science is a whole under the form of unity.’ But not every whole under the form of unity is a science: for example, the human body is a whole under the form of unity, but it is not a science. Moreover, Schelling does not say what kind of *unity* he is speaking about, as there are many kinds of unity. Again, he investigates whether the *form* of philosophy is necessary, and lays down that the definition of any science must include the *form of unity*. Now, the form of unity is certainly unique, therefore the definition seems to solve the problem. But if *form* is understood here in another way, we should be told — a word that has many meanings confuses human thought. Let us hear his argument.

‘Unity is possible only when all parts of a science depend on

one condition, and when one part, determined by this higher condition, determines another. A science is possible therefore only when founded upon a unique, absolute principle relative to the science.'

'This principle cannot be the condition of the whole science unless it is simultaneously principle of the content and form of the science. Hence, if philosophy is a science of a determined form and content, the one supreme principle must provide not only the foundation of all the content and the total form, but itself have a content necessarily united to a determined form.'

Note that the discussion concerns the unity of a science, which means we are in the world of systematic knowledge, not in the real world. Common sense always distinguishes these two worlds, these two orders of beings. They cannot be combined into one without prior proof that common sense is mistaken. This observation is necessary for what I will say later.

252. When Schelling says that a science cannot have unity unless derived from a single *principle*, which he also calls a condition for all its parts, he does not define exactly what he means by *principle*. He seems to mean a proposition, because sciences, as reflective knowledge, are composed of interconnected propositions, the first of which, as the source of all the others, is called their principle. But note: in this case the principle in question is neither a principle of reality nor of all that is humanly knowable, because what is humanly knowable, as well as the logical order of information, begins from an idea, not from a proposition. And indeed propositions break down into *ideas*, that is, into their elements and the copula of the ideas, which is the *verb*. The verb by itself does not constitute either a judgment or a proposition (*Logica*, 334), and is reduced to the idea from which it originates (*Logica*, 320–327). Elements, which are prior to their whole,¹¹⁶ are the principles of the whole; in other words, ideas are logically the principles of what is knowable, prior to the systematic knowledge which starts from the proposition (*Logica*, 302, [835 ss.]). It can certainly be shown, and I believe I have shown, that prior to every judgment, and more particularly to every proposition, we possess and must possess the light of a first idea. The principle of systematic knowledge

¹¹⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* [5: 3].

therefore is not an absolutely first principle but a principle relative to the branch of systematic knowledge. I make this observation here so that readers can follow and check Schelling's argument.

But the observation greatly helps us to see the huge defects in method of the philosophy under examination. Right from the start, we need to discover how philosophy must be pursued and systematic knowledge disposed. To do this, we must first find what is in the human mind prior to systematic knowledge and to philosophy. In other words, we must begin from ideological investigations and keep the results before us at every step in other questions, particularly in the complex question of the form and content of philosophy (*Logica*, 1–9). To seek the principle of philosophy in a hit-or-miss way therefore is not to begin from principle, but to plunge haphazardly into human knowledge and grasp it where we make contact.

253. German philosophy, beginning with Kant, followed this false path. The German philosophers found themselves immersed in philosophical knowledge. Thinking they were in the whole which makes up the knowable, they were unaware that they were in only one part, that is, systematic knowledge, and did not know the way out of the circle. They persuaded themselves that by looking for the principle proper to this part they were looking for the principle of all knowledge, the principle to which all knowledge was subject. Because *reason* produces philosophy, Kant reversed the order of the faculty and described it as a faculty superior to that of the intellect (*NE* [1: 325–364]). Similarly, Fichte despised the *direct consciousness* of the ordinary human being; according to him, only reason which rises above pure consciousness truly gives philosophy its object.¹¹⁷ However, he granted reason its direct object, which gave rise to Schelling's intuition. But Hegel noted that if the principle of philosophy is accepted as the principle of all that is knowable and is the action of reason, that is, the result of reasoning, no *direct* object can be accepted as principle (*IP*, 84), as if indirect knowledge, which must in any case be derived from direct knowledge, could have truth and certainty in itself without first

¹¹⁷ *Die Staatslehre, oder das Verhaeltniss des Urstaats zum Vernunftreiche*, in the collection of his works, vol. 4, pp. 369 ss.

having that element from which truth and certainty are derived by reasoning (*NE*, 1: *App.*, no. 35: (12) ss.). I myself reconciled philosophy with human intelligence, which exists in the human being before philosophy, by showing that the principle from which the philosopher begins must be the principle from which the ordinary human being begins; the philosopher simply transfers this principle to the order of philosophical reflection.

This error in Schelling's method of investigating the principle of philosophy before knowing what human *knowledge* essentially is, led the philosophers of this school into innumerable errors which, through their subtlety and complexity, were capable of wearing down and exhausting every powerful intelligence.

254. After supposing that philosophy must have not only a form and a content but also a perfect *unity*, Schelling had no choice but to reduce the form and content to one principle. He concluded from this that the necessary principle 'must itself be a content and also be united to a determined form'. We have reached this point therefore: if the duality of the form and content do not affect the sought-for unity of philosophy, it does not affect the unity of the principle of philosophy. But if the duality does not affect the unity of philosophy, because it does not affect the unity of the principle when transferred to the principle, it cannot be the duality which obliges us to look for a principle of philosophy which gives philosophy unity — we can look for the principle for any other reason. The principle of philosophy therefore either has or does not have this duality. If it does not have it, the *form* and the *content* can no longer be in it; if it has it, the duality is preserved and the sought-for principle does not remove it. But if the principle does not remove the duality, it is useless.

255. Schelling continues: if unity is not to vanish, the elements from which it results, form and content, must be joined in such a way that they reciprocally determine each other. Schelling has already taken this for granted about philosophy as a whole. It is the hypothesis, not the demonstration, from which he sets out. His conclusion here, therefore, is not a conclusion, but the same hypothesis transferred from philosophy as a whole to the starting point of philosophy. The hypothesis states that 'if the form and content are necessarily joined in

such a way that one determines the other reciprocally, neither the unity of philosophy nor the unity of its principle are destroyed'. This principle consists of two elements and of their union, which constitutes a third element. However, although all this has been gratuitously asserted, it could have made the thinker aware that, despite all the efforts of thought to attain perfect unity, unity itself forces thought, unawares and subject to an inevitable necessity, towards a mysterious, unavoidable trinity.

Furthermore, if we suppose a principle which has a necessarily joined and determined form and content, these too must also be necessary; otherwise their union would not be necessary. Consequently, we must either deny the existence of contingent things or acknowledge that the desired principle of philosophy cannot be the same as the principle of all that is knowable because what is knowable includes contingent things. For example, we know that the world exists, but could also not exist without involving a contradiction. The desired principle therefore is not even a principle of all the knowable but only of the *knowledge of necessary things*, because the content of the principle is necessary and devoid of anything contingent. In fact, it is possible to understand how the *form* itself of the knowledge of contingent things can be necessary, but it is not possible to understand how the content of this knowledge can be necessary, because the content is the contingent thing itself. This observation gives the following inevitable consequence: 'It is not absurd that a principle of knowledge which concerns only necessary things both embraces form and content and is necessary. But there is not and cannot be a necessary principle having in itself form and content of knowledge in all its universality, that is, knowledge which embraces both necessary and contingent things. Such a principle therefore can only be formal, that is, pure form but not content.' Indeed, the contingent content cannot be bound in a necessary mode with a necessary form.

It is true that *form* always contains content *virtually* within itself. This is what I have called *virtual being*. Schelling, however, excludes this as soon as he distinguishes form from content. Virtual content is not distinguished from form itself. It is essential to it, even on the basis of Schelling's own assertion that it is not sufficient for the desired principle 'to be the foundation

of all form and content, but the principle itself must have a content joined to a determined form’.

256. A further observation. The expression, ‘*have* a content and a determined form’, is extremely inapt. It means that the desired principle is the subject of the content and form, and is therefore none of these. But if something is neither form nor content but only *has* form and content, we can equally say that philosophy is neither its form nor its content but a third thing which *has* these two predicates. This principle, if it is neither form nor content but subject of both, and can be conceived, can only be something *abstract*. There is something which has form and content and is indivisible from these two, without which nothing would be. From this something, reason abstracts a beginning of form and content, a beginning which is neither one nor the other. Two consequences follow:

1. Because *abstracting reason* is a partial thought (*PSY*, 2: 1319–1321), it is always posterior to complete, total thought, present in the mind. Only a deduced result, not one that is logically first, can be obtained from this kind of reason. I can therefore justifiably say again: Fichte¹¹⁸ and Hegel candidly admitted that the principle of their system was not a direct light but indirect knowledge. In other words, they admitted its imperfection, because what is indirect depends on what is direct and is therefore neither first nor unconditioned.

2. An abstract principle is neither being nor an ens but a pure elementary *entity* (*NE* [2: 588]) which exists only in the mind, not in itself. The entity results from a limited view on the part of the mind which considers the ens or being under only one aspect, that is, in some relationship and not as a whole.

From these considerations we can deduce that if there iwhich Schelling sought by these means cannot in any way have the characteristics he assigns to the true principle of philosophy. These characteristics require that the principle be absolute and unconditioned, and itself the condition of every form and content.

¹¹⁸ Fichte was the first to say that absolute being is given to natural man by *direct consciousness*, but to the philosopher by reason which rises above the simple consciousness of fact. Cf. *Die Staatslehre, oder das Verhaeltniss des Urstaats zum Vernunftreiche*, in the collection of his works, vol. 4.

257. Schelling might reply that we take the word 'have' too strictly, and that according to his understanding the principle is simultaneously form and content, not a subject, distinguished by abstraction, of these two elements. Even if he corrects himself in this way, I do not see that he is significantly altering his argument. If the principle is the form, it cannot be the content in the form unless the latter, by means of a reflection, does not make itself become the content of another form or the content of the same form seen reflectively. If on the other hand, the principle itself is the content, it cannot be the form unless, by means of another reflection, it makes itself become the form of another content or of the content itself seen reflectively. Granted both form and content, each excludes the other, although as relative things they require one another, the relationship of two terms always involves a negation by which the mind says, 'One is not the other.' The desired principle therefore must either be firstly form and only afterwards content, or firstly content and afterwards form; it cannot be both with the same priority of relationship. The supposition that it is firstly form involves a relationship with a content; the supposition that it is firstly content involves a relationship with a form. In other words, the concepts of form and content have an interrelationship or, as I have said, they synthesise. Nevertheless they always remain distinct; one is never the other. We are dealing first of all with a duality which cannot be abolished in order to make way for unity.

If on the one hand we are looking for 'a principle of form and content' which is the subject of both but neither one nor the other, we will have such a principle, but only as something entirely abstract dependent on the whole and therefore posterior and conditioned. If on the other hand we seek a principle which is both form and content, we will have such a principle, but as form it will not be content, and as content it will not be form. Hence we cannot say that it is both with the same priority of relationship, nor that the relationship of form and content differs from and is prior to form and content. That the relationship cannot be prior is clear because relationship is never prior to the terms which it unites; on the contrary, both in the logical order and according to the manner of our mental conceiving, it is posterior to the terms.

258. The desired principle of philosophy therefore must be

[257–258]

conceived either as a subject which has essentially a primal form and content, or as simultaneously form and content of this form. In both cases it must always be composed of three distinct elements: 1. form, 2. content, and 3. either the subject or the relationship (whatever this is) which unites form and content into one. All these three elements must synthesise and none of them can be absolutely first. Consequently, we cannot find any absolute unity in the principle of philosophy according to the conditions laid down by Schelling.

§3. *Fichte's and Schelling's solution to the problem
is not satisfactory*

259. Having laid down these conditions and characteristics as necessary for the principle of philosophy, Schelling began his search for it.

We must follow the same path also, to see where it takes us, and whether the principle it reveals to us is the true principle of philosophy which, as I have shown, Schelling mistakenly confuses with the principle of all that is knowable.

We must place ourselves in the time when Schelling began his philosophising in Germany and examine the state of philosophy at that moment.

260. Kant had deduced the pure concepts of understanding from the variety of judgments, but had given no reason to explain this variety which he had taken as a fact. Reinhold thought he had found a single principle to which the forms of judgments might be reduced, and called it *consciousness*.¹¹⁹ He was not aware however that consciousness, although it could indeed embrace all judgments, never supplied a reason for their diversity. He was even less aware that consciousness was something reflective which demanded a previous, direct and unconscious cognition. Nevertheless, Reinhold's consciousness

¹¹⁹ Kant himself had already said, '*I think*, that is, consciousness of my thought, must accompany all my other representations, otherwise something would be represented in me without being able to be thought' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, §16). Reinhold therefore simply gave greater and even exaggerated importance to an opinion of Kant. Cf. *Rinnovamento*, 263 ss.

seemed to be progress, particularly after Fichte had reduced it to the Ego and thus removed from it the vagueness and indetermination contained in the word.

At this point Schelling comes on the scene. On the one hand he accepted Reinhold's and Fichte's opinion as correct and productive, on the other he saw that the Ego and consciousness could not determine and explain the variety of judgments and concepts. According to him there must be a *form* in addition to the Ego, for example the principle of contradiction. But this was a duality, and Kant himself had posited a similar duality when he taught the double form of judgments, analytical and synthetic (*NE*, 1: 342–360). Fichte had recognised this duality and tried to remove it. He had begun from the principle of identity, that is, from *form*, which he expressed as $A = A$. He said this principle can exist absolutely only in consciousness, in the Ego, as a first fact. He said that $A = A$ is a conditioned principle, meaning 'if A is, it is A'. But the principle, 'I am I', is an absolute principle of identity because it expresses the act which posits itself, an act which in the act itself is a fact (*Tathandlung*). The principle of identity is posited absolutely in the Ego because 'the Ego presupposes consciousness of self', which essentially means the repetition of self, that is, 'I am I'. This is perhaps the most persistent and subtle illusion of German philosophy, which I think I have explained as forcefully as possible and completely dissolved in *Psychology* (*PSY*, 1: 61–68). Schelling, Fichte's disciple, thought that this was truly the way to posit a single principle containing *form* and *content*. Consequently, he embraced the Fichtian principle, 'I = I'.

261. Let us see whether this principle corresponds to the conditions of the problem.

The first thing to be looked for is a principle of what is knowable, not of all that is knowable, but of philosophy, that is, of what is knowable under a special form, the reflective, philosophical form ([cf. 247–249, 251–252]).

Does the Ego belong to the order of that which is knowable or to the order of realities? There are three possible replies: it pertains solely 1. to the knowable, 2. to the order of realities, or 3. to both orders equally. Leaving it in doubt is already a great defect.

The first reply would destroy the system because if the Ego

[261]

pertained solely to what is knowable it would be a pure idea, or if preferred, a first form without any content because only ideas pertain purely to what is knowable. The pure idea of the Ego is certainly not the same as the real Ego (*Rinnovamento*, 284–295).

Nevertheless, it seems that Fichte and Schelling understood their Ego as an idea. If we come down to reality and therefore to experience, there are as many Egos as there are real human beings. It seems that the Ego of any real human being, that is, a real Ego, cannot in any way have entered the minds of our philosophers. Their Ego is ideal, separated and abstracted from every real, subsistent Ego. But an abstract Ego is an *idea*, which in the logical order is posterior precisely because abstract. It should have been proved that this was the first of ideas, the idea from which all others proceed. But this is impossible. Because the abstract idea of the Ego is not the first idea nor mother of all the others, it cannot be the principle of philosophy or of what is humanly knowable. Moreover, the idea is not that which says ‘I’ and posits itself.

262. If the Ego pertains solely to the *real order*, even less can it be the desired principle, because it does not even pertain to the order of knowledge. But Fichte and Schelling clearly speak about and describe the Ego as if it pertained to the order of real things. They say that it is an action, a fact, and action is the characteristic proper to the *real* form of being, not to the ideal form. Indeed, these philosophers say that the Ego is the absolute, creative action of itself. Fichte therefore defines it as ‘that whose essence consists purely in this: it is posited by itself as existent, it is the Ego as absolute subject’.^{*120} The fact that this Ego is a *subject* is new proof that a real Ego is in question because the subject as such is not the object, and only the object constitutes what is knowable, that is, in our case, philosophy. In philosophy and generally speaking in systematic knowledge, the *idea of a subject* can certainly be introduced, like every other idea, because it is a knowable *object*. But a real, living subject cannot in any way be brought in because philosophy would be an aggregate of real things, for example of real persons; it would be a person or a people, not a science. In my opinion, Fichte and

¹²⁰ *Grundlage des gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*, 1794, p. 9.

Schelling, in solving the problem they proposed, totally confuse it. While they sought the principle of philosophy, that is, of a science, they wrongly seized upon the principle of the real world — if indeed this is what the Ego is (a problem which I will deal with in its place). No *reality* (itself, and not its idea) can be the principle of a theory, much less of the ‘theory of knowledge’, as Fichte calls his book.

263. The third hypothesis states that the Ego is simultaneously something real and something pertaining to the order of what is knowable. Fichte seems to claim this when he says: ‘The Ego supposes consciousness of self and does not become object except in so far as it is subject.’¹²¹ Schelling, his disciple, also seems to claim the same when he thinks he has found content and form simultaneously in ‘I = I’. However, the impossibility of this third hypothesis is demonstrated by what I have said above. How could the idea of the Ego be also a real, determined, living Ego? The determined, living Ego, whatever it is, excludes from itself every other determined, living Ego. The *idea of the Ego, however, an empty form, contains no determined, living Ego*, although it makes every Ego known. The living, determined Ego and the *idea of the Ego* can never be the same thing because they exclude each other as opposites. The Ego can certainly be a *real principle* of action but as such it cannot be a principle of knowledge. On the other hand, the *idea of the Ego* can be a principle of knowledge, for example, of psychology (*PSY*, 1: 107–114) but never the first principle of philosophy or of what is humanly knowable; it cannot be what our philosophers are looking for. They did not see that the two forms of being, the *subjective* and the *objective*, can never be fused with each other and unified. Furthermore, we cannot assert with Fichte that *consciousness* of self is essential to the Ego. We must make a distinction between the *feeling proper to self*, which is essential to the Ego, and *consciousness* of self. The latter is simply *knowledge of the feeling* proper to self, knowledge which is not essential to the Ego, as I have pointed out and shown in

¹²¹ *Ibid.* — The day when Fichte mounted the cathedra he promised his disciples ‘to create God’ (*NE*, 3: 1389). He certainly meant the Ego, principle of his philosophy, not the divine Ego, because the latter was created by the human Ego speaking from the cathedra.

n *Psychology*. The German philosophers' thought was the opposite of this because they considered not the pure Ego but only the Ego involved in reflection. But even if we supposed that the Ego had essentially consciousness of itself, it would always be either 1. a real Ego, like the Ego reflecting upon itself, and therefore never a principle of knowledge, or 2. the *idea of the Ego* but never the first thing known, that is, the principle of all that is knowable, or even of philosophy alone. The Ego supposes other ideas previous to itself, ideas which must be examined, not supposed, by knowledge. It is not possible to argue that *because* the real Ego enclosed in its own act of reflection is conscious of itself, it must be simultaneously ideal and real; the idea of itself will be present to it, but never confused with it. The real Ego will be purely an Ego, never the *idea of the Ego* as well; this idea will certainly be an object standing before the Ego as intelligible, but it will never be the Ego itself, which is essentially subject. Our philosophers' speculations are therefore nothing more than a development of concepts devoid of analysis; in other words, they are a development of paralogisms and illusions.

264. However, in order to view the question from all sides let us plead their cause and consider the matter under another aspect.

Essence is intuited in the *idea*. In the idea of the Ego the essence of the Ego is intuited. If, from this essence of the Ego, we strip every defect and limitation and add every endowment, we will have a perfect essence of the Ego. Let us accept as demonstrated that the perfect essence of the Ego must subsist. This will be a God-person, the condition for all things and for all that is knowable. We have therefore the principle of what is knowable, which we have been looking for. It is simultaneously real and objective, that is, intelligible. This is precisely what Schelling wanted to lead us to. The problem is therefore solved.

This, I have to say, is the best that can be offered in favour of Fichte and Schelling. But once again I must reply: we have still not found the principle of what is knowable and of philosophy, as I showed in the Preamble to my ideological works [*NE*, 1: *App.*, no. 35]. The explanation is as follows:

1. To be able to think of an absolute Ego, the human mind can start only from the experience of the human Ego. It must first *universalise* and *abstract* this Ego by forming the abstract

idea of it. Next, it must *remove* the human limitations from this idea and *add* all endowments. Once the mind has formed the idea of the absolute Ego in this way, it must *reason* that this absolute Ego intuited in the idea, but not really perceived, must necessarily exist. The persuasion that this absolute Ego subsists is the product of many faculties and operations of the human spirit, involving the following: 1. one's own feeling; 2. the intellective perception of this feeling; 3. universalisation; 4. abstraction; 5. the faculty for knowing what is defective and limited in the abstract human Ego, which supposes both a pre-existent *norm* in thought and an *unlimited norm*; 6. the faculty for adding superhuman endowments, which also supposes a *norm* for finding these; 7. the faculty for arguing, which includes this judgment and reasoning, and supposes the preceding principles of cognition, identity, contradiction, etc., and particularly the *principle of absoluteness*. Hence, if we are to be certain about the existence of an absolute Ego, we must first accept as true that our human faculties, when used correctly, do not lead into error, particularly when they do not precede the universal principles of reasoning. The absolute Ego, which is not perceived, but induced by reasoning, is not therefore the first in the order of what is humanly knowable and of philosophy. Rather it is the final result of philosophy.

2. The absolute Ego, arrived at in this way and not perceived, is still not positively revealed to us but determined by other ideas, like an unknown x whose value cannot yet be calculated in a mathematical formula (*Logica*, [680 ss.]). Clearly, negative information cannot constitute the principle of all that is positively knowable; it would be the same as claiming that the value of the unknown x is the principle of cognition of the formula in which x is and by which it is determined, that is, a formula composed of known values understood individually.

3. In addition, the absolute Ego of these philosophers is simply the *human* Ego understood as absolute. One of the proofs that they did not find even the indicative idea (*Logica*, [476–485]) is the following: after admitting 'I = I' as first principle (which was an attempt to introduce a principle of identity (*NE*, 2: *App.*, no. 1)), they said that another principle came from it, namely, 'The Non-ego differs from the Ego.'

They introduced a Non-ego, claiming that the opposition between the Non-ego and the Ego was essential to the Ego. However, the absolute Ego cannot in any way have any opposition and limitation essential to it because it does not have any limits. The Ego which in experience has opposition and limitation is purely human. Moreover, it has not been proved that the empirical limitation and opposition is in fact essential. On the contrary, our philosophers fail totally here. The Non-ego which they oppose to the absolute Ego is the external world, but this world is clearly something contingent which, with unashamed assertions devoid of all proof, they change into something necessary. If the absolute Ego is necessary (as they say); if it cannot stand without a Non-ego which it posits in opposition to itself; and if this Non-ego is the world, then the world is necessary and the bond of the world with God is necessary. This is Schelling's third principle. Speculation has now become inescapable fatalism and pantheism, the result of gratuitous assertions, confused and tangled concepts, great leaps, paralogisms and contradictions (*NE*, 3: 1388–1407).

If Fichte and Schelling had taken the trouble to keep religiously to the rules of ancient logic, had drawn up definitions and distinctions and, above all, had distinguished concepts according to their relationships and dialectical aspects, they would not have filled philosophy with so many paradoxes and absurdities.

Article 5

How to satisfy the mind's need for unity

265. The mind's need to reduce everything to a certain unity undoubtedly exists. But the difficulty consists in determining:

1. what this unity is (its nature) and
2. what kind of *reduction* is meant (an accurate description of it).

As I said, to do this we need very accurate definitions and dialectical distinctions. I will therefore use those I have already mentioned in order to solve such an important problem.

[265]

266. Everything I have said so far clearly indicates that the desired unity cannot be found in the *terms* of being. The first terms of being are the categorical forms, which are three, not one, and irreducible. Moreover, there are innumerable terms posterior to the categories. *Unity* must therefore be sought in being itself.

267. I also said that being is conceived in many ways which, however, are all reduced to three:

Either 1. being is conceived united to its terms, in which case it is no longer one — all we have are many entia or entities.

Or 2. *abstract being* is conceived separate from every relationship with its terms. The hypothesis of abstraction itself shows that this abstract being is not the principle of anything. Consequently, the multiplicity of things cannot be reduced to it as to unity.

Finally 3. being is conceived separately from but in relationship with its terms. In this respect, our mind can view it in two relationships: either as containing its terms *virtually*, or as the start and first actuality of the terms and antecedent to them. I have called the first, *virtual being*, the second, *initial being*.

268. In the first of these two concepts, we think of the virtue or possibility which the nature of being has to be terminated in any mode which does not involve contradiction; *being* is thought solely relative to its susceptibility to finalise itself in any way whatsoever. In other words, all terms are thought in it but only in potency and without any distinction. Here we have in essence a first *unification* of entities, a unification of all entities, not in act but in their first and only potentiality.

In the second concept, that is, *initial being*, we think *being* as the initiation of all its terms in act. Although it is separated from its terms by abstraction, its relationship with them remains, and it is precisely this relationship of *beginning* and *finalisation* that is considered in the concept. Because the terms of being are innumerable, it can be finalised in all of them but always remains one, simple, the same; it is not its terms but their common principle. This is a second unification or, rather, a second reduction to unity of all the terms in act.

The concepts of *virtual* and *initial being* provide the mind with the means to satisfy its need for unity. Virtual being

provides the mode for reducing to unity all the many terms of being considered in their potentiality. Initial being provides the mode for reducing to unity all the many terms of being in their actuality.

269. *Virtual being* constitutes the *universal matter* of all things; *initial being*, the *universal form* of all things.¹²² All things therefore are *being as matter* in so far as being, through its virtuality, becomes all things to thought. All things are *being as form* in so far as all their acts are being through its initiality. But this opinion must be carefully understood and not taken too loosely. Virtual being and initial being are two dialectical concepts of our mind. Hence, all we need to understand is that *virtual being* is the *dialectical matter* of all things; *initial being*, the *dialectical form*.

Dialectical matter corresponds to a given *dialectical concept* which makes known the matter of things. Dialectical form corresponds to a given *dialectical concept* which makes known the form of things. A dialectical concept does not make known a *complete ens* but something of the ens under some relationship, which abstraction has separated from the rest of the ens. Thus, when I say that *virtual being* is the universal matter of all things, I am simply saying that the concept of virtual being is made known by the matter of all things, not by a complete ens or terminated being and much less by the most terminated of all — which is absolute ens, God. Hence, although virtual being is predicated as the matter of all things, it is not true that God is predicated — God is not virtual being but most actual being. That which is predicated is the nature of being contained in the concept of virtual being. This concept makes known, not God, but being without actual terms which has the power or virtue to actuate itself. It is not a *complete ens* but something pertaining to ens, separated from ens and considered on its own.

We can say the same about *initial being* considered as the

¹²² In *Psychology* (PSY, 2: 776–815) I limited the use of the words ‘matter’ and ‘form’ to corporeal nature. If we add to them the adjectives ‘universal’ and ‘dialectical’, they take on another meaning which, in the case of ‘matter’, has a transferred sense. I would have preferred to avoid these differences in the use of words, but have been unable to do so for the sake of clarity and in order not to depart too abruptly from common use. Later, I will substitute more appropriate words for ‘matter’ and ‘form’.

universal, dialectical form of all things. The dialectical concept of form does not make known a form which is an ens, much less God who is most complete ens; it simply makes known something pertaining to ens but separated from it. In this separate state, that 'something' exists only in the mind, that is, in the dialectical concept itself intuited by the human mind.

When we say therefore that *virtual being* is the dialectical matter of all things, and *initial being* the dialectical form, we are simply saying that the human mind has one *concept* which can be predicated as matter of all things and another concept as form of all things. But this does not mean that this concept represents an ens, and much less God. It represents nothing more than 'something' of ens which, separated from ens, is not an ens and subsists only in the mind. In short, the concept represents being precisely as virtual and as the beginning of all things.

270. The failure to distinguish these dialectical concepts of the mind from the concepts which represent a complete being resulted in pantheism. Being was seen indeed as the matter of all things, but not in any way as representing God or even an ens; it represented an ideal, abstract object which exists only to the mind. This ideal, abstract object, however, was not nothing, and it was not the mind, which is subjective. Nor was it something to which nothing real corresponded, because in reality something of ens, but not ens itself, corresponded to it. To say that everything is being or that being can be predicated of everything is not pantheism; it is not a reduction of all entia to one single ens, even though being is simple and without multiplicity. The statement is true because all multiplicity takes its origin from the terms of being and cannot therefore be found in being in so far as this is conceived by the mind prior to its terms and to everything terminated.

However, we could ask whether the predicate 'one' is appropriate to this abstract entity and whether we should say more accurately that it has neither *multiplicity* nor *unity* and that, in the logical order of abstraction, it is prior to both of these. In fact, if the concept of 'other' is excluded from the concept of 'one', we could not apply the adjective 'one' to virtual and initial being because virtual and initial being excludes nothing, and has nothing to exclude. I will discuss the different concepts of 'one' elsewhere.

271. The two concepts of being, that is, of *virtual* and *initial being*, explain how being can fulfil the office of both subject and predicate (*Logica*, 397). When being fulfils the office of predicate, for example in the statement: 'This flower is being', the subject is constituted by the term of being or of terminated being, granted we are not dealing with a judgment of perfect identity. The predicate *being* is considered as *virtual*, as if we were to say: 'This flower is something virtually contained in being.' When being fulfils the office of subject, and there is no question of a judgment of perfect identity, being is considered as *initial* and one of the subjects which I have called 'antecedent' (*Logica*, 406). Thus, the statement, 'This being here is a flower' means, '*Initial being* terminates in such a way that there is a flower.'

If, finally, we take the formula of perfectly identical judgments, 'Being is being', one 'being' takes the concept of matter (virtual being), the other of form (initial being). However, the subject can be considered either as matter, in which case the predicate is form, or as form, in which case the predicate holds the place of matter.

Article 6

Explanation of the errors of Schelling and his disciple, Hegel

272. The fact that *being* can be considered under the double aspect of universal *matter* and *form* fulfils the condition laid down by Schelling in his search for the principle of philosophy: the principle must be simultaneously *content* and *form* of all that is knowable. In saying this he had glimpsed a truth which he did not express in a precise philosophical manner and was unable to actuate by satisfying the condition laid down for it. As a result, he erred.

He failed to express the condition precisely because he omitted the analyses and dialectical distinctions on which the problem rests. The problem, which concerned the knowable, required ascent to the first idea, to being without terms considered in its virtuality and initiality; failure to keep within these parameters prevented his satisfying the condition. Instead, lacking totally in logical deduction, he seized upon a most

[271–272]

determined ens, the Ego, and without distinguishing the categorical forms, left it ambiguous, taking it sometimes as an ideal Ego, sometimes as a real Ego, with perpetual equivocation. In fact, after saying that the principle of philosophy which he was seeking had to be 'absolute and independent', he adds: 'Its content will be independent of every other content if it POSITS ITSELF by its own potency for action.' He forgot that 'a principle of what is knowable has no potency, no action and cannot posit itself', because the things he is talking about pertain to a real principle or cause. We have therefore left the sphere of ideas and knowledge. He openly adds, without any proof: 'This characteristic pertains solely to the Ego.' But, as I have already noted, if the question concerns a real Ego, real Egos are as numerous as human beings. In other words, there are as many principles of philosophy as there are human beings! If we are talking about an abstract Ego, we are talking about an idea which, like all other ideas, is something knowable but has no action and does not posit itself. Moreover, if we place it at the head of philosophy and of the knowable, we ought to prove that it is the first of all ideas. If on the other hand we are talking about an absolute Ego — the Ego of God — it is futile in the extreme to say that human beings see God directly. If we really saw God, we would see that he is three persons, not one person like the philosophical Ego of our philosophers. But if we do not see this absolute Ego, we have to deduce it by turning to the logical principles prior to it in our mind. Let us suppose, however, that Schelling's one absolute Ego can be seen. The human being that sees it is also an Ego. Because the seeing Ego is not the seen Ego, we have two Egos. Consequently, the principle of philosophy and of the knowable is probably, or rather certainly, the seen Ego: it is said to be seen precisely to provide us with the principle of the knowable. Now, I who see this absolute Ego will definitely have consciousness of myself but not of the absolute Ego I see. Otherwise, I, a human being, would have consciousness of the infinite Ego. If however I do see this absolute Ego, I certainly see that it must have its own consciousness. But because I myself do not in fact have this consciousness, I do not have the Ego which is meant to be the principle of philosophy and of the knowable. The reason is clear: consciousness of self, it is said, is essential to this Ego. An Ego seen by another Ego is not exactly

the same as an Ego which in itself feels and lives; it is only information about that Ego. Schelling therefore does not start his philosophy from the Ego itself, but from some *information* which human beings as philosophers have about the absolute Ego. A pure piece of *information*, however, has no potency and does not posit itself with its own activity. It is not therefore the principle which Schelling requires and from which philosophy begins.

273. Nevertheless, Schelling, Fichte's disciple, attributes consciousness to the Ego which constitutes the principle of philosophy and of the knowable. According to him, the principle of philosophy (he is now copying Descartes) is the first word with which the Ego posits itself when it posits its consciousness and says, 'I am I'. Note, this formula supposes that the Ego exists before it exists. But I leave that aside and observe that if this enunciation of the Ego is the principle of philosophy, there will be as many really different principles of philosophy as Egos. Every Ego essentially says, 'I am I'. This principle cannot be taught because each Ego enunciates it through itself alone; it cannot be enunciated in two or more Egos. Furthermore, the Ego enunciated by one Ego is not the Ego enunciated by another. Even if we claimed that these enunciated Egos could be collected to form a universal enunciated Ego, this would still not be the principle of philosophy. The universal enunciation is not an Ego which enunciates itself but something else enunciated by any number of Egos, each of which, in enunciating the thing, does not enunciate itself because they know that they are a universal enunciation, not individuals.

When an Ego says, 'I am I', it is not simply saying in its thought, 'I' but 'AM'. 'Am' is the first person of the present tense of the verb *to be*. This Ego, if it enunciates the verb *to be*, must know the verb *to be*, and know it before it knows itself, even before it exists; only after saying 'I am' does it posit itself and begin its existence. Fichte's and Schelling's conscious Ego has a cognition, the cognition of *being*, prior to itself. We must accept therefore that because being is prior to and the condition of the Ego, the Ego is neither first nor unconditioned.

Schelling himself unknowingly admits this being as universally known to the Ego. He says that the principle of philosophy is 'I = I', and then immediately adds, 'The *form of every*

absolute position is given in this principle. This form can become the content of a principle which naturally can have only the same form. In other words the principle will be expressed as $A = A$, which is the universal principle of identity. The principle of being which is identical to itself is clearly contained in 'I = I'. This Ego therefore has not only the knowledge of its own *being* but also has the universal form of being. Schelling, however, rushes ahead, not logically, but guided by the flight of his imagination.

274. Hegel was highly satisfied with what his teachers had told him: when the Ego says 'I am I', it *posits* itself. He correctly inferred that if the Ego posits itself when it says 'I am I', it must have existed beforehand: the Ego, in so far as it posited itself, was not, because it had not yet posited itself, and yet it was, because it posited itself. What an amazing discovery! Hegel said that the principle was true because his masters taught it to him; therefore its consequence was true. On this consequence, he would construct a system which would amaze the world. The principle of contradiction would be denied as an old curiosity. His masters regarded the principle of identity, present in the formula 'I = I', as the universal form of knowledge, but he would go further and find in this principle the contradiction that 'being = naught'. He would posit the universal form of true knowledge in this contradiction, which made nothing equal to being. The consequence was true, the consequent, absurd (*Logica*, 773).

However, the human mind, whose essence is to understand, never reasons so wrongly that at the moment of its waywardness it does not see some truth. *Initial being* exists separate from its terms only in a mind which has narrowed its gaze, and instead of looking at the whole of its object, considers only an element. Initial being therefore is not yet an ens; it can be called non-ens. Now, in the language of a philosopher who loves to surprise his audience with paradoxes, 'nothing' could be substituted without scruple for 'non-ens', just as the more simple 'being' could be substituted for 'initial being'. These substitutions and changes effectively produce the formula: 'being equals nothing'.

275. Hegel's masters had also said that the Ego is the opposite of the Non-ego. I noted that if this had any meaning, we must

suppose a finite Ego and a finite Non-ego. Schelling in fact understood the Non-ego as the natural world, with the result that he called a part of his philosophy of absolute identity 'Philosophy of Nature'. So this school, despite its wasteful use of the magnificent word 'absolute', locked itself into the sphere of the finite. From this sphere of human experience and on the basis of such pliable material, it takes ontological notions and moulds them into a theory of the infinite. But in the sphere of the finite, things finish and begin, and each thing is a phenomenal gradation so that one seems to finish where the other begins (although this happens only with specific forms, not corporeal matter itself). Hegel, therefore, drew the base, phenomenal concept of becoming, which appears only in the finite (*Logica*, 51 [*PSY*, 2: 1365]), and transferred it without analysis to ontology, asserting that 'being itself *becomes*'. But, as I have said, neither being, nor corporeal *matter* becomes; only form becomes. Hegel thought he had found the middle point where being is not yet, but begins and therefore is. He had posited the principle of being in becoming, which harmoniously brings together being and nothing! Philosophy was struck dumb!

CHAPTER 2

System of dialectical identity

Article 1

Brief exposition of the system

276. There is, therefore, a system of absolute dialectical unity. But what does ‘absolute dialectical unity’ mean?

It means simply that all things, however they are broken up and divided materially or formally, and indeed all their elements, converge in a certain essence conceived by the mind. This essence can then be predicated of all things; through it, all things can be affirmed with truth. This essence is *being*, but under the two concepts of *virtual* and *initial* being. Because being is present in both concepts, unity is perfect, together with identity relative to this mental form.

277. We can now ask how this manner of unity and identity of all entities (whatever they may be) is reconciled with their multiplicity.

To understand this, we first have to look at the nature of *virtual being* and *initial being* whose very names (*virtual* and *initial*) contain the variability and extensibility of this mental being. ‘Virtual’ means that being has in itself all its terms virtually and indistinctly, but none of them in act; ‘initial’ means that without being the terms are not conceived, that is, being is the subject antecedent to all actual terms whatever they may be. Granted this, it is necessary that being, when predicated of two or more different terms, receives from the predication a different value, although it remains unique in its virtuality. For example, being is predicated of a stone and of a man when we say: ‘This stone is being’, ‘This man is being’. But these predications simply mean: ‘This stone is one of those terms which virtual being contains implicitly within itself; this man is one of those terms which virtual being contains within itself.’ In the first predication, virtual being is taken in its relationship with the term ‘stone’, and in the second with its term ‘man’. The

[276–277]

same virtual being includes all the terms, but is not considered in the same relationship. Virtual being changes its relative value in different predications because it is applied now to one, now to another term. This does not remove but establishes the difference and multiplicity of the terms themselves.

277a. Virtual being is not, however, an ens, but a mental entity, the element of an ens. When I say, therefore: 'This stone is being, this man is being, and so on,' I am not in any way asserting that this stone is the ens which is called being, nor that this man is the ens called being. I am saying only that the ens man and the ens stone contain in themselves the elementary entity called being, and that every part of the stone and of the man and of every other thing contains equally this elementary entity which, however, although it is in every entity, is not the entity itself — unless, of course, we are speaking about that entity which is virtual being itself. We speak, for example, of a body, and of any part whatsoever of a body, as extended. This does not mean that 'extended' indicates a given body, but only an elementary quality common to all bodies. Bodies are identical in extension, but differ in the quantity of their extension. There is, however, a difference between extension or other common qualities and *being*. Qualities are not first entities because they all presuppose being. Being is the first entity to which all other entities are posterior. Consequently, the posterior, elementary entities can be conceived only on condition that the first entity is conceived, and that other entities are added to it. If we now take any complete ens whatsoever and divide it materially, as we can do with bodies, we have the same number of complete entia as the divisions, although they are less extended. In each of the entia the first entity is being. If we then divide the entia formally through abstraction, we find ourselves with mental entities bonded to one another in a certain order. The last of these entities, to which all the others are bound, is being. Without being, therefore, none of the preceding entities is. It follows that being is predicated of them all because all the others would be annihilated without it. In other words, they cannot be conceived as being-less without falling into contradiction. In their very conception, we already suppose that they are in some way; totally removing being, we suppose that they are not. This is a contradiction.

[277a]

It is not absurd, therefore, to say that all entities are being. However, it does not follow in any way from this identification of all entities with being that they are not different among themselves. We are dealing with virtual being which has a different relationship of identity, although it is always one of identity with each of them.

278. The light of this teaching dissolves the antimony presented to thought by the problem of unity and plurality. The teaching can be presented as follows:

Thesis: 'Several things equal to a third are equal amongst themselves.'

Antithesis: 'Several things equal to a third are different amongst themselves' — because all things are equal to being, but nevertheless different amongst themselves.

The antinomy vanishes as soon as we consider that different things and entities are equal to being, but that this equality or identity arises through a different relationship which each of them has with being. This relationship is determined by the nature of the thing itself. The stone is equal to *being* in so far as being virtually contains the stone, but not in so far as it virtually contains other things. Man is equal to being in so far as being virtually contains man, and so on with regard to other entities. This *identity*, therefore, arises from the *virtuality* of being which is the power that being has in itself of receiving different terms, and through them different relationships under which it comes to be considered in a limited way.

279. We can now ask if this identity is perfect. To answer the query, we have to understand carefully the value of the word 'virtuality' when it is applied to being. This word means simply that *being* is susceptible of different terms. But this susceptibility or power does not imply any actual term; it is pure potency. As *potency* (allow me this word, which I will clarify later), but still without any act, it is not multiple, but one and indivisible. Moreover, this universal potentiality cannot be separated from being; if it were, it would be annulled. *Virtual being*, therefore, can be considered in relationship with any of its terms, while remaining simple and indivisible. In this case, it is predicated *whole* of each of its terms, but not *wholly*. The mind must see it as a whole (it could not be seen otherwise thanks to its simplicity and indivisibility) in order to know any entity whatsoever,

but this does not mean that being is bound and limited to this single entity. It still remains what it first was, simple and one, but with its virtuality towards all the different terms.

If, therefore, we understand by perfect equality or identity that being, predicated of some other entity, is the whole of virtual being, we have to say that there is perfect identity between being and each of the other entities. If, on the other hand, we mean that virtual being is predicated of everything both whole and wholly, there is not perfect identity. Virtual being which has no term is not predicated wholly of every entity, but in the way in which it is determined by the term itself of the entity of which it is predicated.

280. Why, then, do I say absolutely, 'The stone is being, the man is being, and so on'? Because I cannot in any way find something in the stone and in the man which is not being, however long or in whatever way I divide them up in thought. All the differences are also being. This is why we say that things are being. This means only that, virtual being, without terms, is the first and most simple entity, and in such a way that every other entity is composite, with virtual being always as one of its necessary components.

Let us suppose that one of these other entities is composed of two elements, one of which is virtual being. The other element will have the nature of actual term, that is, it will have its corresponding part in virtual being, although with its act it goes out from virtual being. In this case, there is something of which virtual being is not predicated, that is, the term of being, cut off from being. But this would only be the case if it could be cut off, which is impossible because the term would be annihilated if it were not joined with being. Hence, the *necessity* for every term to be joined with *virtual being* as with its first and fundamental element. In virtue of this absolute *necessity* that every term is only through its union with being, being can and must be predicated of every entity, whatever it is, and therefore of every difference. Thus a dialectical equation is established between every thing and being.

In fact, we can see that separating *being* from its terms outside the mind involves contradiction. First, the word 'term' involves an essential relationship with the subject of which it is a term. Second, proof of the contradiction shows that it contains an

absurdity. The proof runs as follows: by means of abstraction, I think a term of being separated from being. But if I think it, it stands before my thought. If it is before my thought, it already has that mental *being* without which it could not be present to my thought. I believe I have separated it, but without actually doing so. It is still united because otherwise I would not be able to think it. I have not separated it from being in its purity, which is superior to every other manner of being; I have simply separated one aspect of being, extramental being. *Being* is therefore necessary to every thinkable and possible entity. The terms of being cannot be divided from it even through abstraction, although *being* can be divided by thought from its terms. This is how we arrive at the concept of virtual being.

281. From this I conclude that virtual being is indeed different from, but necessary to, its terms whatever they may be. It is necessary for all entities. In saying, therefore, that all entities are *being*, we express an identity which means only that *virtual being* is necessary for every entity. Without it, every entity would cease to exist. We could say therefore: 'Virtual being is the essential part of all entities without exception, however they may be divided by thought.' Nevertheless, it is not completely one of them. Identity is not perfect.

From here we can go on to say that while *being* is called *virtual* as a necessary and essential predicate of all entities which are not being itself, it is equally the antecedent dialectical *subject* of all entities themselves, and as such is called *initial*. On one side, as we have seen, being can be conceived by the mind divided from its terms which are therefore logically distinct from it. We also saw that being is the first element, essential to every entity in such a way that if it were removed all entities would be annihilated as objects of thought or become absurd. In other words, the terms are only the completion and as it were the continuation of the act of being itself. From here we go on to say that being is conceived as the beginning of every entity, and as the subject of all the terms in which the entities in question terminate. Consequently, the terms can be predicated of being itself, and we can rightly say: 'Here, being is this stone, this man, and so on.' This way of speaking introduces another dialectical form of the same identity between being and its terms.

Article 2

How being is the *first determinable*, the *common determinant* and the ultimate *determination* of every entity

282. In order to put this teaching into more appropriate language, I shall define universal, dialectical matter as *first determinable* and the universal, dialectical form as *common determinant*. It follows from this that being, in its concept of virtual being, is the *first determinable*. As such it is altogether devoid of every determination and yet susceptible of all determinations. Herein lies its virtuality. Moreover being, in its concept as initial being, is the *common determinant* of every entity because it is the act through which every entity is. These two concepts of being correspond to the two Pythagorean elements 'the unlimited' (τὸ ἄπειρον) and 'the limited' (τὸ πέραν).¹²³

283. These two elements, therefore, of all the entities posterior to being are reduced to one, that is, to *being intuited* by human beings through nature, but increased by two different relationships with the entities posterior in the mind to being, as a result of a twofold view taken by *reflection*.

It is already clear from what has been said that virtual *being* is the first determinable. But we have not yet explained sufficiently how *initial being* is the final determinant.

We said that being appears as determinant when it holds the place of *antecedent subject* in the definitions of entities. For example: 'Here, being is this entity.' But this proposition can be taken as a whole or in its parts. If it is taken as a whole it means that being is actuated in the way indicated by the entity to which it is made equal. Actuated being is the same as the act of being possessed by that entity, and this act of being is the determinant of that entity because without that act of being, the entity would not be what it is.

If, however, that proposition is not taken in its total value, but considered according to the value of its individual parts, that is, of its three principal parts 1. the subject 'being', 2. the copula 'is', 3. the predicate 'entity', we find that the subject 'being' is still virtual being, that is, the *first determinable*, that the 'is'

¹²³ Philolaus, *apud Proc. in Timaeum* 1, p. 26. — Cf. Boeckh, *Philol.*

copula is being as *determinant* which, in determining *virtual being*, makes it take on the concept of *initial being*, and that the entity expresses the *mode* or limit of this determination. However, because 'is' as copula is the *determinant* — but without expressing the determination which never is without its mode — it is fittingly called determinant (τὸ πέραινον). The entity itself, considered in its relationship to being, is more fittingly given the name of *determination* (τὸ πέρας), although these two elements were confused by the ancients.

We should notice, nevertheless, that when we say that *entity* is the determination itself, we mean in relationship to being as antecedent subject. Indeed, it can be in itself a determined ens in all respects and thus merit the Platonic name 'that which is commingled' (ζυμμισγόμενον). But nothing prevents its being considered in the dialectical order, of which we are speaking, as a determination of virtual being itself. In this case, it must be called τὸ πέρας.

This shows that these concepts, *determinable*, *determinant* and *determined* express only dialectical relationships which can suit various objects. Several of them may in fact suit a single object, according to the dialectical views of the mind.

Virtual being, therefore, is the *determinable element* which the mind knows in all entities. It becomes initial being when it is placed in conjunction with the act of being expressed in the monosyllable is (the *determinant*) and receives the *determination* of the predicated entity. Through these three steps of *initiality*, *determinant* act and reception of *determination*, *virtual being* becomes more or less determined according to the degree of determination itself, that is, the entity predicated of it.

284. As a result of these distinctions, we should emend the propositions expressed previously if we wish to retain the terminology *dialectical universal matter* and *form*. We need to distinguish the *form* from the *determinant act*, and say:

1. Dialectical *universal matter* is being in its concept as virtual.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Some of the first philosophers glimpsed this. They said that all things are a single nature: 'There are some who spoke of the universe as if it were one entity'* (Arist., *M.*, 1: 5). But then the philosophers parted company and fell into disarray because they had not reached the abstraction called *initial being*. Consequently, they were unaware that this opinion was valid only in

2. Universal *act* is virtual being itself when it acquires the concept initial¹²⁵ as a result of its being considered in relationship with the later act expressed in the monosyllable *is*..

3. *Universal form* is *initial being* itself when considered in relationship with the later determined act as a result of the addition of the predicated entity¹²⁶ to *is*. It is this which adds its determination to the later act.¹²⁷

These three concepts of being can therefore suitably be called *first and universal determinable*, *universal determinant* and *ultimate* and *universal determination*, in so far as being is considered either as susceptible of all the terms, or in relationship with the act which gives it a term, or in relationship with the term itself, which without being is impossible.

284a. The reason why this *determinable* is called *first* the dialectical order of abstraction.

¹²⁵ 'Every ens, in so far as it is ens, is in act, and in some way perfect because every act is a certain perfection'* (S.T., I, q. 5, art. 3).

¹²⁶ 'Being itself is the supremely formal element of all things'* (S.T., I, q. 7, art. 1).

¹²⁷ According to Aristotle, Plato places the cause of essences or ideas in the *one*: 'For the Forms are the causes of the essence of all other things, and the One is the cause of the essence of the Forms'* (Metaphysics, 1: 6).

The *one*, therefore, was the cause of the quiddity of ideas, or *essences*; the *essences* were the cause of the quiddity of things. Plato considered *being* in these things and consequently says in *Parmenides* that being is 'the essence which shares in present time.' Plato did not attain to *being* except as it subsists in things of this world; he did not attain to it as subsisting in itself and separated from them. Such a distinction is proper to the light brought by Christianity. Instead, Plato ascended a scale of empty abstractions, beginning from the *being* with which temporary things are furnished to the abstract *essence*, that is, ideas, and from essence through another abstraction to the *one*. Little by little he lost his grip on *being*. But having arrived through mental abstraction at the one, he realised that the one needed essence to be something. Divided from essence, it is annihilated, as he proves in the first part of *Parmenides*. The *one*, together with *essence*, needed time, *space* and other conditions proper to things of the world, as he proves in the second hypothesis in *Parmenides*. In thinking like this, Plato definitely exposed a weak flank to his indomitable disciple, Aristotle — Aristotle, when saying that Plato made the one the cause of the quiddity of ideas, is speaking of the formal cause. Elsewhere he says that Plato, following the Pythagoreans, called the one, 'essence', that is, the subject of things. Hence Aristotle attempts to prove that this cannot be so, and that the one must have as subject another nature (ἡ μᾶλλον ὑπὸκειται τις φύσις) (Metaphysics, 9 (10): 2).

[284a]

becomes clear the moment we consider that the mind, already constituted by intuition, normally first conceives every entity as something determinable. The reason why this *determinant* is called universal is also clear from the moment we consider that, if determinations are added to virtual being, it is necessary that an act of being add them there (otherwise the virtuality would not come forth to that act). Finally, the reason why the determination of being is said to be *ultimate* is because the other determinations would not be if they had not already received the act of being.

This being, taken in accordance with the dialectical concepts we have explained, is *anterior* and *posterior*, first and last of all entities which are not itself. But it is not anyone of these entities considered on its own and exclusively. It is a dialectical subject prior to these entities, and a dialectical predicate posterior to them. It is also a copula, that is, act of conjunction and of continuation between them and virtual being. It is, therefore, the cause of all things in three manners: as *determinable cause* (as virtual being); as *efficient cause* (as determinant cause); and as *terminative cause* (as common determination of all determinations).

This explains why the Scholastics, when they saw that no created thing was being, but that being was predicated of all things, called it *transcendent* or *transcendental* predicate. They then gave this name to all the elementary concepts of being.¹²⁸

Article 3

Initial being is the principle of what is knowable, and
the dialectical beginning of all things

285. What has been said explains why our German philosophers, while proposing to find the principle of what is knowable, and indeed of philosophy, said that they had found the

¹²⁸ Tom. Campanella: 'A transcendent term is one pointing to the most universal community of all communities. We find it, therefore, immediately predicable about all genera as something analogous, such as ens, truth, good and one' (*Dial.*, I, 4, p. 32. *Dialecticor* 1).

principle of all things and, it would seem, remained unaware that the result exceeded the aim of their search.

There is, in fact, a dialectical principle of all things, but our German friends did not realise that a principle which is both principle of what is knowable and principle of things (if there is one), can be only a dialectical, abstract entity. Nor were they searching for such a principle. They sought, and thought they had found, an absolute, subsistent principle which appeared to them to be the Ego. Their endeavour was stimulated always by the insistent need, proper to human intelligence, of arriving at unity.

286. If we now consider the concept of *initial being* which, as we have seen, is the concept of virtual being considered in relationship with actual terms, we shall easily recognise that initial being appears to the mind as the beginning not only of what is knowable but of all real things. This is clear from the instant that we reflect on the priority of initial being relative to its terms and consequently to the categorical forms, the first terms of being from which all others come. Now, the *order of knowledge* comes from the objective form of *ideality*, and the *order of real things* pertains to the subjective form of *reality*, just as the moral order pertains to the subjective-objective form of *morality*. Our concept, therefore, is not only the beginning of knowledge and of all subsistence, but of the perfective, moral act which brings together in one both knowledge and reality. Kant and Fichte did not see this. They put their *practical* (moral) *reason* to one side by sequestering it from theoretical reason. This split rendered ontological unity impossible, despite Schelling and Hegel's efforts to re-establish it.

It may be objected that I am making *initial being* an idea, and as a result posit the ideal form as the dialectical beginning of all things. This would show a false understanding of the theory I have proposed. It is true, of course, that initial being, like every other essence, is seen in an idea, which is being itself as essentially intelligible. But when I speak of being as the beginning of things, I abstract from the idea in which and through which we see it (from its own intelligibility) and speak of the essence itself, that is, of pure being itself seen in the idea. I am, therefore, speaking of being which, precisely because it is initial, is anterior dialectically to every ideal form understood by us. The

ideal form, from which we prescind through abstraction, is one of the terms of initial being.¹²⁹

287. Initial being, therefore, is the *beginning* both of what is knowable and of what is subsistent (I leave aside the moral aspect which for me is a consequence). There is a difference, however. *Initial being* relative to what is knowable can also be called *principle* when it is considered in its virtuality, that is, because it contains implicitly all intelligible things.¹³⁰ As I said, this *being* is seen in the idea, although it is considered in abstraction from the idea. Consequently, when it is taken as the beginning of the ideal order, we find that the whole of this order is in-generated in being itself and drawn from it as a thread is drawn from a reel, provided certain conditions are present. On the other hand, when it is considered as the beginning of real being, this beginning is pure beginning antecedent to this form of being, and the real cannot be drawn from it unless an act is added which goes outside the sphere of the idea in which ideal being is contemplated. Initial being, therefore, is known as the beginning of the ideal order when it is considered solely in relationship with the ideal form because it is this form that we have along with initial being and in which we see it. But in order to know it also as the beginning of reality, it is not sufficient to consider it in relationship with the idea that is given along with it. We have to compare it with real feeling, which requires a *principle* or real cause obtained from outside the first idea.

Nevertheless, when we have experience of some reality, we

¹²⁹ St. Thomas distinguishes between *ideas* and *understood ideas* (*ideas intellectas*). The latter require the kind of reflection through which we can give them exclusive attention (*S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, ad 2).

¹³⁰ This is what St. Thomas says: 'The first thing...to fall into the imagination of the intellect is ens, WITHOUT WHICH NOTHING CAN BE APPREHENDED BY THE INTELLECT.' (This is information about being, information recognised as primordial and necessary for all other knowledge and consequently not originated by other knowledge.) 'Similarly, the first thing believed by the intellect are propositions known of themselves, and especially this: "Contradictories are not true at the same time." Hence ALL OTHER THINGS ARE INCLUDED IN ENS IN A UNITED, INDISTINCT WAY as in a PRINCIPLE.' (This is *virtual being* which virtually contains everything in itself as in a principle or beginning of things.) 'From ens, too, everything has a certain kind of uprightness. This is especially true of the divine name'* (*In I Sent.*, d. 8, q. 1, art. 3).

recognise initial being as the dialectical beginning of this reality. This is true not only of contingent things, but also of the dialectical beginning of God himself. This requires some explanation.

288. The difference between *being* and 'existence' is the same as that between *essence* and *existence*. According to me, the word *existence* expresses *initial being*; the word *essence* indicates much more (cf. 211, 227–236). All conceivable things, all of which can be manifested to the mind, are in this sense equal relative to *existence*,¹³¹ but their *essences* are many and very different. As I showed elsewhere (*Introduzione alla filosofia, Lettera ad Alessandro Pestalozza*), simple *existence* is predicated of God and of creatures. It is not repugnant, therefore, for being, conceived in its beginningness, without any term, that is, as pure existence, to be equally the beginning of God, as he is conceived by us, and of creatures. In other words, existence is predicated commonly and univocally of one and of the others. In fact, if we did not know what *existence* is, we would not know that God or anything else exists.

It is clear that pure existence, which is nothing more than the beginningness of being (what we call the common beginning of being relative to God and creatures), does not prejudice the question of their *essence*. Relative to his essence, God remains totally different from creatures. There is no danger of confusing one with the others and thus slip into pantheistic teachings. To avoid them, we have to ensure that no other predicate, except that of pure existence, accompanies both God and creatures. This is impossible in the systems of Schelling and Hegel, and of all those who admit the Ego as the principle of what is knowable and of things. The Ego is not a dialectical, extremely elementary entity antecedent to things but rather, a totally complete ens, reaching to the highest possible actuality, that is, to personhood. If the Ego is the principle common to God and creatures, pantheism is inevitable, however philosophers comport themselves.

289. Some theologians may deny that being can be predicated

¹³¹ Caluso attempted to establish a difference between *being* and *existence* which did not equate with normal common use. He was followed by Gioberti, his fellow citizen. See the notes I have appended to Caluso's *Principi di Filosofia per gl'iniziati nelle Matematiche*, c. 1.

equivocally of God and of contingent entia. This is not a genuine difficulty. First, they are not, properly speaking, discussing initial being. Normally, they are dealing with being without any qualifications. The word 'being' remains indefinite and admits of several meanings, and we must expect to find division of opinions on this question. We are dealing with contrasting words rather than with facts; with misunderstandings rather than contrary opinions.

At the deepest level, all hold my conclusion. Let me prove this.

If there were nothing common between Almighty God and finite entia, there would be no basis of *analogy* between the world and God. *Analogy* is founded on what is common to *initial being* and what is held by all other things. *Initial being* is the least possible element that can be common between two entia. If this were not common, nothing common would remain, and there would be no dialectical passage, no argumentation from one to the other. Indeed, if by *analogy* we mean *proportion*, as we normally do (and I shall analyse this concept in its own place), proportion always supposes commonalty of numbers and of certain relationships. We say, for example, 'As there is intellect and will in human beings, so there is in God something which corresponds to the human intellect and to the human will, although this is of a different nature from that of the human intellect and the human will.' Here we relate one power which is in us to one power which is in God, and another power which is in us to another power which is in God. One refers to one, and again one refers to one. This is commonalty of number and of certain relationship. But number and any relationship whatsoever suppose commonalty of initial being. Number and the relationship in question are simply elementary abstracts from this being. The argument from analogy would be impossible, therefore, if initial being and its intrinsic elements were not something common between God and contingent things.

But the whole of theology always argues by *analogy* from creatures to Creator and in this way forms a body of teaching about God. All theologians recognise this. If we were to deny the commonalty of *initial being* to God and contingent things, we would deny *analogy*, and thus destroy all theology. No teaching about God would be possible. We could not even

recognise his existence, if the existence we refer to does not have the very simple value that we apply to ourselves when we predicate it of creatures. We know no other existence, and cannot have two concepts of it because two concepts of existence are absolutely impossible. If one were the concept of existence, the other would no longer be the concept of existence, but of something else.

Let us take a more particular example. Theologians say: 'God knows himself not only in so far as he is in himself, but also in so far as he is *imitable* or participable by creatures.'¹³² It would be different, however, if between God and creatures there were nothing common. God would not be *imitable* or participable (excuse the word!) if there were nothing common, not even existence, between them. Destroy the *imitability* of God relative to his creatures, and all teaching about God is eliminated.

If all analogy between God and creatures were removed, there would be no information whatsoever about the Divine Word. Not only would speculation about him disappear, but revelation itself would be unintelligible totally and in all its parts. We would not even have any information about what we should believe.¹³³

If, therefore, all theologians admit analogy, and analogy supposes something common between God and creatures, at least *initial being* should be common. If not, nothing could possibly be.

Article 4

The part of ens which corresponds with *initial being*

290. I have said that initial being, when it is thought as a result

¹³² St. Thomas will serve as an example of all theologians. He says: 'God can be known not only in so far as he is in himself, but in so far as he is participable in some way by creatures... Therefore, in so far as God knows his essence as thus imitable by creatures, he knows it as the reason and idea proper to this creature'* (S.T., I, q. 15, art. 2).

¹³³ St. Thomas again: 'For this kind of information we need to know what the word of our intellect is. It is this which serves as a likeness enabling us to speak about the Word in divine things, etc.'* (De Veritate, 4: 2).

of abstraction, is not ens, but something pertaining to ens. We now have to see what that 'something' is.

291. Here, we can easily see that this initial being does not have the same connection with entia thinkable by us, because we think both contingent ens and necessary ens.

§1. *The question is resolved relative to contingent ens*

292. If we ask ourselves what initial being is relative to contingent ens, we find that it is not conceived by us as a true *element* of this ens, but only as a *necessary condition* for its existence.

I have indeed said, universally speaking, that virtual being is the *first determinable*, that initial being is the *common determinant* and the *ultimate determination*. None of these three concepts, however, tells us anything about any intrinsic element of an ens, or of a contingent entity. They simply express *necessary conditions* without which such entia or entities would not even be conceivable.

When we say: 'Being is, in this instance, a stone', *being* is not yet the stone, but a subject antecedent to the stone. It is the *first determinable*, and as such is not stone because any given stone is something determined. Determinable and determined are opposite concepts to which there corresponds in the ens something that is opposite. If we take the first two words of the above statement, 'being is', we have the first determinable (being) and the common determinant (is). But because there is as yet no determination, the determinant extends to all possible determinations. 'Stone', however, is a determination of being. Consequently, being as determinant, that is, considered in its act expressed with the monosyllable 'is', is not the stone. It is still antecedent to the stone. And if *virtual being* is a first beginning, it begins to move out towards its act when we mentally add to it the act which expresses is. Nevertheless, this act is still initial because it is not completed by any determination. In other words, we still do not know where this act is going to finish. The addition of is places the determinant power in thought, but still anterior to the determined thing. The determinant power is not, therefore, something intrinsic to the stone, but something

antecedent to it. It is the necessary cause of the stone, the *determinant* and *creating* cause.

Through reflection, therefore, we distinguish in our conception of contingent ens three indivisibly connected levels: 1. determinable being (first level); 2. the 'is', that is, the act with which it is determined, the determinant (second level); 3. the determined stone (third level). These three levels are connected in such a way that the second cannot be conceived without the first, and the third cannot be conceived without the other two. For the conception of the stone, therefore (and the same may be said about every other contingent thing), the prior conception of being is absolutely necessary. It must be conceived both as noun and as verb (if the conception is expressed in the form of a statement), that is, as determinable, as determinant, as virtual (initial in the extreme), and as initial. This analysis confirms the principle behind my ideology. But although this intimate, indispensable connection between the three levels is present in such a way that the conception of the stone is rooted in the two preceding concepts of being, it is clear that they precede in the conception and do not constitute the stone itself. Being, conceived in this way, can be called *cause* of the stone under a twofold title.

If we now analyse the other statement: 'The stone is', we see that the stone needs *is* in order to be. So, being takes on the concept of the ultimate determination posterior to all the determinations of the stone itself, each of which would be annihilated, even in the concept, if being could not be predicated of the stone. This predicate, common to all entities is, therefore, the act which determines their being. For this reason, it is called the *ultimate determination*. The connection between the stone and this common predicate is so intimate that the word 'stone' would have no meaning unless *is* were implicitly understood in it, even when 'is' is not pronounced. This is the case with intuited being itself: implicit to it is the act which is then expressed under the verbal form 'is' (*Logica*, 320–327). If we now compare the two statements: 'Being is, in this instance, this stone' and 'This stone is', we find in the first that 'is' is *determinant* of being, in the second (which has as subject the determined stone), 'is' is the *ultimate determination* common to all entities, all of which would vanish into nothingness without 'is'. In the first proposition, the contingent ens, *stone*, is conceived as that which has its root in

being, but is not being; in the second proposition it is conceived as that which completes its essence in being, without which it would not, as a finite essence, be. Thus, being can be called the *final cause of the essence* of contingent things.

293. All this teaching is so important that I think it worthwhile to recapitulate it and repeat the conclusions in the following points:

1. *Being*, properly speaking, is not an element intrinsic to contingent entia. It is prior to them, and embraces them.

2. *Being* is the *creating*, *determinant* and *final* cause of the essence of contingent entia.

3. If being, this triple cause, were to cease for a single moment, contingent entia would no longer be, and would not even be conceivable.

4. Therefore, the essence of contingent things not only depends upon virtual and initial being as their cause, but depends in such a way that their very essence consists in this continual dependence.

5. The essence of contingent things, in so far as it endures, implies a continual act of creation. This essence is a continual *being made*, a continual reception of being.

6. Virtual and initial being is, therefore, independent of contingent entia, and is conceived even without them. It must, therefore, be something proper to absolute ens, not to contingent entia.

7. *Contingent entia* are *terms* of initial being, but not terms necessary to it. Initial being remains before the mind even without them. I call them *improper* terms.

8. *Contingent entia*, therefore, are not *nothing*, but something. This 'something', however, cannot exist alone. It is continually joined to initial and virtual *being* as to the cause which creates, determines and finishes its essence. These entia are not in any way independent. All that they have is received by them at every moment.

9. The relationship of contingent entia with virtual and initial being is a relationship of *synthesis* because they cannot be conceived without virtual and initial being. The relationship of virtual and initial being with contingent entia is not a relationship of synthesis, but of absolute independence because initial being can be conceived without our needing to

conceive contingent entia. This proves the falsity of the proposition: 'Ens creates existences.'¹³⁴

§2. *The question is resolved relative to necessary ens*

294. If, therefore, virtual and initial being is not something proper to contingent ens, it must be something proper to necessary ens. It cannot be nothing; it is a contradiction if being is not.

295. Let us consider the difference between all contingent things, and being. We cannot reason in the same way about contingent things. Take the example we have already used, that of a stone. If I consider what I think when thinking of the essence of a stone, I find in this essence a corporeal nature which occupies space, has the quality of hardness and all the other qualities proper to a stone. But the following reasoning would certainly not be correct: 'Corporeity and all the other qualities are present in the stone; therefore the stone exists.' The explanation why such reasoning is incorrect is evident: *existence*, which I attempt to deduce from the corporeity and other qualities making up the essence of the stone is not contained in the stone. Virtual and initial being are not contained in it; they are only the necessary condition and the cause of this essence. The existence present in my reasoning is arbitrarily added by me.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Leaving aside the impropriety of the word 'existence', this formula, which does not express either the freedom or contingency of creation, would lead us to believe that not only *existences* (that is, contingent entia) could not be conceived or exist without ens, but not even ens could be conceived without prior conception of existences. Otherwise, existences, precisely because they are contingent, could not have a place in the first principle, which has to be necessary. In fact, entia, if contingent, cannot be admitted as existing *a priori*. We have to recur to experience to know of their existence. But how can we begin philosophy from a datum of experience if we have not proved the veracity of this datum? Indeed, is there any need for this experience to exist, if it too depends upon contingent entia?

¹³⁵ We shall see elsewhere that this is valid not only for the real stone, but also for its essence seen in the idea. Although eternal, this essence depends upon determinable being, determinant being, and determination. Cf. *Rinnovamento*, [bk. 3, c. 52].

But the same is not true if I argue in a similar way about being. In this case, I can say unhesitatingly: 'Being is present in the concept of being; therefore, being is.' In this argument, I add nothing arbitrarily in the conclusion but, with a perfectly analytical judgment (*NE*, 1: 342–343), I enclose in the conclusion exactly what is in the premisses. In other words: saying 'is' is equivalent to saying 'being'. But I have already said that being is in its concept, which is the same as saying that the essence of being is being. The identity in the proposition, 'being is', is rigorously exact because we are speaking of *being* conceived prior to its primal forms and hence without any modality. We are not saying that being is in the real or ideal mode, but that being is, without reference to any mode. We are saying that being is, whatever its mode may be. We are dealing, therefore, with what is characteristic of *per se* evident propositions: that the predicate be contained in the subject.¹³⁶ This is all the more true in our case because predicate and subject are identical except for the different view with which the mind conceives them (*Logica*, 321).

Either we have to deny that anything is, or we admit that initial being is present as the condition and beginning of all else. But the choice between saying that everything is nothing (this is of course contradictory), and admitting that being is, is clear-cut. This is the point where the witness of experience converges with rational evidence to constitute one and the same logical necessity. From the moment that we think being (and the same can be said about everything else), even if this thought is apparent and illusory, being cannot be lacking. It embraces everything, including what is illusory and apparent, precisely because the being of which we are speaking is virtual and initial being without reference to its mode. In other words, we are not yet arguing about its appearance or its illusoriness. We are simply saying that it is. There can be no appearance or deceit in saying that *being*, either apparent or in any other mode, *is*. This is the firm point, safe from all contradiction and evident.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ 'A proposition is known *per se*, because the predicate is included in the meaning of the subject'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 2, art. 1, [resp.]).

¹³⁷ There is no doubt that Thomas De Vio, from Gaeta, was one of the most learned philosophers of Italy, or rather of the world. His intellectual acumen led him to point to the true distinction between *noun* and *verb*, as I dealt with it in *Logica* (320 ss.). He says: 'Nouns indicate things as they are conceived;

If therefore initial being 1. evidently is, and is not ens but something appertaining to ens, and 2. cannot be something appertaining to contingent ens because it is the pure cause of the essence of contingent ens (that is, it is the creating, determinant and completing cause, but not an intrinsic element of this essence), then it has to be something appertaining to necessary Ens.

This is confirmed when we see that virtual and initial being is absolutely necessary; it cannot be thought as not being; thinking that it is not means admitting it (*NE*, 2: 1059–1089; *Rinnnovamento*, bk. 3, c. 1 ss.; *Logica*, 1044 ss.). If virtual and initial being is necessary, it cannot be a part of what is contingent, but must be an appurtenance of a necessary ens.¹³⁸

verbs as they are exercised.* But he did not see at all that even in things purely conceived there is an *act* which can be expressed admirably with a verb, although this act is exercised not in the form of reality, but in that of ideality. This explains why the verb is used in every definition, although we are dealing only with an ideal essence. For instance we use this verb in the sentence: 'Stone is a body, and so on.' The stone of which we are speaking in the definition is not a real stone, but the essence of the stone seen solely in the idea. Consequently, we either have to extend the expression of *act as exercised* even to the act with which ideal essences are, or modify the definition of verb and noun so that it is clear that *the thing conceived* indicated in the noun and the act of its existence indicated by the verb are the same act, although they vary according to the mode with which our mind sees and expresses it. Our philosopher says next: 'Hence the expression 'Existence is not' does not imply what is contradictory. However, 'What exists, is not' does imply what is contradictory'* (*In S. S. Th.*, II, III). If these expressions are to be true, they have to be understood as follows: 'Existence is not' (*existentia non est*) does not imply contradiction if by the verb 'is not' (*non est*) we mean existence in the form of reality. If, however, by *non est* we mean that existence absolutely is not, we have a clear contradiction. Saying 'It is not' is the same as saying 'It is nothing whatsoever, and therefore not even existence.' But saying that existence is not existence is undoubtedly a contradiction.

¹³⁸ St Thomas writes: 'Nothing has being except in so far as it shares in divine being which, because it is first being, is THE CAUSE OF EVERY ENS. But everything which shares in something, is in it in the mode through which it shares. Nothing can receive what exceeds its own measure. But since the mode of any created thing whatsoever is finite, all created things receive finite being. This is less than divine being which is perfect in the extreme. It is clear, therefore, that the being of a creature, by which it is formally, is not divine being'* (*In I Sent.*, D. 8, q. 1, a. 3, contr. 2). In these words: 1. the being which creatures share is called *divine*. This means that virtual and initial

296. It is certainly theology's business to show that there can be only one necessary being, and to indicate the mode in which we understand virtual and initial being as something proper to the single, necessary being, that is, to God. But, as I said in the preface to *Theosophy*, it is impossible to separate the three teachings about being, God and the world because there is one, truly single, intertwined teaching at every point. Here too, therefore, without any scruple about exceeding arbitrarily imposed limits, I shall indicate that the absolute unity of necessary Being is already proved by the unity proper to any essence whatsoever. Indeed, every essence is made *one* and simple in such a way that it would lose its identity through even the smallest change made in it (*Rinnovamento*, 522 ss.) If this perfect unity is proper to every essence, it is *a fortiori* proper to the first essence, which is that of being. If being as essence exists in itself, it can only be one and extremely simple. Such being is necessary Being as it is in itself, and of which *initial being* is an appurtenance.

297. I have already shown how initial being can without difficulty be called an appurtenance of absolute being (cf. *Difficoltà che l'Ab. Gioberti move alla filosofia di A. R. ec.* at the end of the booklet *Vinc. Gioberti e il Panteismo*, Lucca, 1853, p. 279 ss.). However, *absolute Being* is in three modes, that is, three primal forms. We must still see, therefore, whether *initial being* is an appurtenance of absolute Being in the subjective form, or the objective form or the perfective and moral form. Note: it is certain that *initial being* is conceived by the human mind as prior to the forms, and as their common beginning. But as such, it appears as *essence* viewed in the *idea*, not as idea. In being, as in

being appertain to God; 2. we have to distinguish that which shares, that is, the thing created, from the being in which it shares. In other words, the essence of the creature is not the being which it shares; 3. we say that the being 'by which the creature is formally' (*quo creatura formaliter est*) is not divine being. This being by which the creature formally exists is the act of being which the form has already attained. And this being, already shared by the special form, is limited to the form: it is not common to all other forms. Considered in this limited way it is not, and cannot be, the same as the being of God, which is essentially unlimited. But if this act is considered as the *ultimate determination common to all limited forms*, it is the *final cause* of these forms which come to exist through it. Once more, therefore, this act is an appurtenance of God, 'the cause of every ens' (*causa omnis entis*).

every other object of the mind, the essence as seen is distinguished from the light (adhering to the essence) through which the essence becomes visible (*Rinnovamento* [3, 47, 52 *Dial.*]). As light, it is called *idea*; as seen, it is called *essence*. Initial being therefore as *essence*, is prior to the forms and their beginning. But in so far as this essence illuminates the mind, it shares in the objective, intelligible form of being. Absolute being, however, is called, in its objective form, the divine Word. Consequently, initial being considered in its objectivity is something pertaining to absolute Being in its objective form, that is, to the divine Word.¹³⁹

Article 5

Important corollaries.

Three important corollaries from what has been said

§1. *First corollary, the a priori demonstration of the existence of God* (NE, 3: 1456–1460; *Sistema*, 178)

298. Virtual and initial being, that is, being naturally intuited in which reflection uncovers the relationships of virtuality and beginningness, is necessary, as we have seen, because being cannot not be being. But it is not an ens; it is, therefore, something pertaining to an ens. But this ens, of which being is something, cannot be a contingent ens because what is contingent is the opposite of what is necessary. *Being intuited* by human beings must, therefore, be something pertaining to a *necessary, eternal ens*, a creating, determinant and finalising cause of all contingent entia. And this is God.

299. The *a priori* demonstration of the existence of God does not, however, resolve the other question: 'Is God's existence known *per se*?' The answer to this question depends on an accurate definition of the meaning of the words '*known per se*.'

¹³⁹ All the Fathers of the Church always taught that the light of the human intellect is something pertaining to the divine Word. Cf. St. Justin, *Apol.* 1, n. 3; St. Athan., *De incarn. Verbi*; Tertull., *De testimon. animae*; NE, 1: 14–17; *Rinnovamento*, 460 ss.

If by 'known *per se*' we mean that God is intuited directly and naturally by human beings, the answer is negative. To say that we see God naturally is nothing more than the exultant cry of over-enthusiastic philosophy.

If by 'known *per se*' we mean a proposition whose predicate is contained in the very concept of the subject, the proposition 'God exists' is certainly known *per se*. But it does not follow that this proposition is known *per se* by human beings. It could be that we do not have sufficient knowledge of the subject or predicate under discussion to realise that the predicate is contained in the concept of the subject itself.¹⁴⁰ In fact, in the proposition, 'God exists', the subject, God, is unknown because, in the natural order, we have only negative knowledge of the divine essence.¹⁴¹

300. If, in the third place, 'known *per se*' is taken to mean a proposition in which the predicate is contained in the concept of the subject, and the subject and predicate are sufficiently well known to enable the predicate to be known already in the subject, the proposition can have three meanings:

1. Either the subject and the predicate are such that they are known, at that level, directly by all human beings. In this case,

¹⁴⁰ Consider this saying of logicians: 'Those things are said to be known *per se* which are known as soon as the terms are known'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 2, art. 1, ad 2). This bears witness to the saying, 'Being is known through itself' because they always suppose that the copula 'is', or 'not is', is already known, without more ado (*Logica*, 1059). The principle governing my ideology is admitted, therefore, and indirectly professed by all, even those who expressly deny it. For the same reason, the copula 'is' is not normally expressed verbally in ancient languages. It is left to be thought in the mind of the hearers who, it is presumed, have it present to themselves and then supply it of their own accord. This, too, is a witness of mankind in favour of my ideology.

¹⁴¹ 'Because we do not know what God is, it (the proposition: God exists) is not known to us *per se* but needs to be demonstrated through those things which are more known to us, and less known as far as their nature is concerned, in other words, through effects'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 2, art. 1, ad 2). Although St. Thomas has recourse to effects in order to demonstrate the existence of God, my *a priori* demonstration is not in opposition to his general principles. In the final analysis, his teaching says that the existence of God is not known to human beings *per se*, that is, without some middle proposition from which it can be proved. This middle proposition may be known by us directly or through experience.

the proposition is *known per se, both in itself and by all human beings*, and all admit it as evident. This is the case with the first principles of reasoning, all of which are composed of pure undetermined being, being that is clear to all (*NE*, 2: 559–570; 3: 1452–1453; *Logica*, 337–363). The proposition, ‘God exists’, is not known *per se* in this sense because not everyone knows the subject ‘God’ distinctly enough to understand that his existence is necessarily contained in this subject. As a result some people, such as atheists, deny it, while others, such as idolaters and so on, fabricate erroneous concepts of God.

2. Or the subject and predicate are known to certain learned people who have thought about them carefully. This information, however, can be acquired by such people prior to or after the proposition we are dealing with. If they have acquired it prior to the proposition, the proposition itself is *known per se both in itself and relative to these learned people only, not to everyone*. This occurs with some propositions. For example: ‘The sentient principle is not extended’; ‘The thinking principle is not extended’, and similar propositions which, in this sense, can be said to be known *per se* to the learned.

3. Knowledge of the terms of the proposition may be sufficient to enable us to know that one is included in the other. If so, and if this knowledge was acquired after information about the proposition, the proposition is not known *per se* even to the learned, but only in itself. The example here is precisely the proposition, ‘God exists’, because, although we can know that God’s existence *MUST* be present in the concept of God, this is not known until after we have known that God does indeed exist, as we shall see later. Our information does not serve, therefore, to make this proposition known to us, but only to confirm its truth.

301. Finally, in the fourth place, if we wish to understand that a proposition is known *per se* when it is implicitly contained in another proposition known *per se*,¹⁴² we can in this sole sense

¹⁴² Cf. *Logica*, 199–206, 533. — That acute philosopher, Thomas De Vio, whom we have already encountered, noted that it is true to say: ‘The propositions whose predicate is contained in the notion of the subject are known *per se*’, but that this is not a definition of propositions known *per se*. There are others known *per se* even though the predicate is not found in the notion of the subject. This important observation, which confirms what I

say, but improperly, that the proposition, 'God exists', is known *per se*. Indeed, in the *a priori* proof which I have already given, we have a proposition known *per se* even relative to all human beings which states: 'being exists'. Through careful consideration of this proposition we can find another proposition, 'God exists', contained implicitly in it. It is not contained as what is more contains what is less, but as 'the concept of what is conditioned implicitly contains its condition.' The condition is extracted from the concept through deduction in virtue of its co-relativity. Indeed, if undetermined being necessarily exists, and if in order to exist it needs *absolute Ens* to which it belongs, it follows that absolute Ens must also exist.

In this process of ideas, we see that the proposition, 'God exists', is a consequence of the other proposition, 'being exists', and that only after drawing this conclusion do we understand that the concept of existence is contained in the concept of God. This is known after we know that God exists. The information, therefore, that existence is contained in the concept of God is not that which proves the existence of God to us because the former supposes the latter.

But according to the proper way of speaking, which we constantly follow, the proposition, 'God exists', must be said to be demonstrable *a priori* but not known *per se*, because it needs a preceding proposition in our mind from which and with which we argue, although it does not need to be deduced *a posteriori* from information received from the external senses.¹⁴³ This is the

taught in *Logica*, (*op. cit.*), says: 'It is true that in St. Thomas every proposition whose predicate falls within the notion of the subject is known *per se*, but the converse is not true. When one most general thing is denied of another, and when the first passion is predicated of the first subject, they become of themselves immediate propositions, and consequently of themselves are known *per se*. If, however, it is somewhere found to be defined in this way, it should be glossed *ly* so that it is understood to be formerly, or proximately VIRTUALLY, in the notion of the subject'* (*In S. S. Th.*, I, II, 1).

¹⁴³ The character assigned by De Vio to propositions known *per se* is this: they need no *a priori* means to make themselves known: 'If every proposition known *per se* has its predicate in the notion of the subject, it is necessary always for *ly* to exclude of itself any middle *a priori*. But because there is sometimes a middle between those things where there is no *per se* middle, as they are known to us, it does not exclude an *a posteriori* middle'* (*ibid.*).

very reason why St. Thomas, although admitting some natural knowledge of being in all its universality to human beings,¹⁴⁴ denies natural knowledge of divine existence, that is, of absolute being.

§2. *Second corollary: the a priori demonstration of creation*

302. We have seen that nothing contingent is virtual and initial being; this being is necessary, not contingent.¹⁴⁵ This truth can be confirmed with other arguments.

1. Virtual being embraces virtually all ideas and all real things. But none of these things which make up the world

¹⁴⁴ St. Thomas grants the following:

1. *Truth in common* is known *per se*, but denies that God is *truth in common* because he is first and subsistent truth: 'That there is truth in common is known *per se*, but that the first truth is, is not known *per se* as far as we are concerned.'^{*}

2. Human beings may naturally know *bliss in common*. He says therefore: 'That God is in something common has been inserted into us naturally, in a confused sort of way, in so far, namely, as God is bliss for human beings.'^{*} But this does not mean knowing God simply, just as knowing that someone is coming does not mean that we know Peter. Bliss in the last analysis is being in its full, moral form. The divine essence, therefore, is implicitly present as a condition in the knowledge of being in common. Hence, St. Thomas does not deny that it can be deduced rationally.

3. Human beings understand naturally the meaning of, 'that than which one cannot think anything greater'. But he says that the possession of this universal, negative concept does not bring with it the certainty that 'that than which one cannot think anything greater' truly subsists because the concept contains nothing more than logical possibility. But the concept, 'that than which one cannot think anything greater', reduces to being in its real form.

Arguing, therefore, from each of the three forms to the existence of God (*Sistema*, 179–181) is not opposed to St. Thomas' thought. On the other hand, it is extremely in conformity with his thought to grant, as known to man by nature, cognition which is most universal and undetermined, and to acknowledge that the object of this cognition is not God himself, who is a most determined being.

¹⁴⁵ Contingent means that which can be thought as something which is or is not, without logical contradiction. This is possible relative to all finite entia which, for that very reason, are contingent. It is not possible relative to being, which is hence necessary. This shows the error in the system of those philosophers who attempt to posit necessity relative to the natures making up the world. I have refuted these philosophers more fully in *Rinnovamento*, 413 ss.

contains in itself all ideas and all realities. Virtual being is therefore something different from such realities.

2. Each of these subsistent realities is so enclosed within itself that all that it is, is proper to itself and not held in common with anything else. But all these realities equally have being. This common being cannot be any of them because what is proper and what is common are opposites, and these reciprocally exclude one another. This common being is *initial being*; initial being is therefore something entirely different from the realities which make up the universe.

3. Initial being is virtual being itself in so far as it is considered common to things. But despite the addition of this relationship, virtual being remains what it was before; it still contains virtually all ideas and all things. Whether the things of this world exist or not, virtual being suffers no modification; it remains identical. Virtual being is, therefore, different and independent of the things of the world, and cannot be confused in the least with them.

303. Granted this difference, we can move on towards another evident proposition: 'Without being, all the realities making up the universe would not be.' The proposition cannot be denied because the statement 'This contingent thing is' and 'This contingent thing has being' are identical propositions. Hence the difference between the two copulatives, *to be* and *to have*, to which all the others are reduced (*Logica*, 427–439). We may conclude therefore: 'Contingent reality is not being (first proposition), but has being.' This states that the essence of contingent things and the essence of being are two different essences, but that the former is through the latter, acquires the latter and is necessarily united to and shares in the latter. The essence of being is the 'sharing' ($\mu\acute{\epsilon}\theta\epsilon\zeta\iota\varsigma$) of which Plato speaks.¹⁴⁶

304. A third proposition, the one I wish to demonstrate ('All realities making up the universe are created'), proceeds from the two we have stated. — The definition of creation shows how this third proposition is a corollary of the other two because creation can suitably be defined as: 'The act through which that which does not have being (and which, therefore, is

¹⁴⁶ Arist., *Metaphysics*, 1: 6.

still nothing) acquires being.' I have already shown elsewhere (*PSY*, 2: 1228) that the following is essential to the concept of creation:

1. The term of the creating act remains outside the act itself. In other words, it constitutes another, different essence from that of the creating act. In our case, it is indeed true that the essence of contingent things is different from that of virtual and initial being (first proposition).

2. The essence of the creating act in no way changes as a result of anything new which acquires existence, but remains unchangeable and identical. This, too, happens relative to virtual and initial being, which suffers no change in itself as a result of being shared by contingent things, as I have said in the proofs dependent upon the first proposition itself.¹⁴⁷ The second proposition shows that contingent things are not being, but have being. It follows ineluctably, therefore, that they are created, that is, they exist through an act which gives them being, and is none of them [*App.*, no. 2].

305. We must note here that this demonstration of creation proves not only that contingent things are created at their very beginning, but additionally that their conservation is a continual creation. While they endure, they must continually receive, that is, have being. If they were to lose it for a single instant, they would be no more; they would be annihilated.

I say that they must continually *receive*, that is, *have* being, in order to indicate that the reception of being is in an instant, in every instant, so that receiving it is not successive, but is the same as having it. This satisfies another condition of the concept of creation, which is not brought about through succession of any kind but through an instantaneous passage from non-being to being. There is nothing between the moment in which we can say of a contingent thing *it is not*, and the moment in which we can say *it is* (*PSY*, 2: 1228).

306. Such a condition entails that these are not two but one instant, the instant of which Hegel caught a glimpse when he

¹⁴⁷ Hence, we arrive easily at a rigorous demonstration of the existence of God and of creation simply by considering a necessary, immanent and immutable act in order to explain transient acts and the immanent acts terminated by them. I have done this in *Psychology*, 2: 1224–1228.

said that *becoming* is the moment in which being and non-being are identified. However, he expressed this truth badly and abused it. He expressed it badly because the word 'becoming' supposes a subject which becomes. But a subject which becomes has not yet become, and therefore does not exist. 'Becoming' therefore is a different concept from 'being created'. The word 'becoming' has no sense except for already existing subjects which are modified or changed into others. It has no meaning for what is created, which first was not and then is, without any passage of the same subject from one state to another. The subject itself is created.

Hegel was perhaps deceived by dialectical identity. In our way of conceiving, being is a dialectical subject antecedent to everything. He did not understand that it was *antecedent* to the thing and was not the contingent thing itself. It was a necessary condition of both the essence and the idea of the thing, but I repeat, it was not the thing.

He abused this improper word 'becoming' through his desire to deduce that being identifies itself with nothing in the act of becoming. And this would be the case if created being were something which becomes. But precisely because we would run into a contradiction in this case, 'becoming' must be excluded, and 'created being' retained. Now I [grant] that at this point, created being is *conceived* as non-being and being at the same time. But I do not grant that the two phrases form an equation or that being is one with non-being. The concept of being always remains supremely distinct from the concept of non-being which is nothing more than negated being. Our only conclusion, therefore, is that the mind needs two concepts: the concept of being and of non-being, to understand what is created. Comparing and bringing together these two concepts does not mean fusing them into one or making them identical. The mind, in considering what is created, understands two things contemporaneously: that 1. what is created is not 'being' (granted this negation, the concept of *non-being* arises in the mind); 2. what is created *has* being (granted this affirmation, the concept of *thing in being* arises in the mind). The concept of being, therefore, remains prior to the thing, and is a necessary condition for knowing at one and the same time the *thing in being* and the thing *not in being*. The concept of the *thing in*

being is the concept of something which is through being; the concept of the thing *not in being* is the concept of something which is annihilated through lack of being. They are two perfectly different concepts, and different and posterior to the concept of being. There is not, therefore, a moment in which the thing is being, and is not being; it is never being. There is no pre-supposed moment in which the thing passes into existence while still not existing, because the moment in which it passes into existence is that in which it already is; this is the first moment of its existence, not a moment in which as yet it has no existence.

307. Contingent things, therefore, can be considered from two points of view. In one, we can say that they are not, that is, they are not *per se*; in the other, we can say that they are, that is, they are through the received being they already have. In this case, we can say that ens and non ens are in the thing. But these are two aspects. And two mental considerations of the same thing result in a distinction, not an identification of concepts. These were the two concepts St. Augustine had in mind when he said of things inferior to God 'that they are, but not entirely, and that they are not, but not entirely' and, speaking to God himself, 'They are, because they are from you; they are not, because they are not that which you are. That alone truly is, which unchangeably remains.'¹⁴⁸ This saying has been repeated in so many different ways by the Fathers¹⁴⁹ as well as philosophers.¹⁵⁰ This teaching, which has endured for so long in the Church and the philosophical schools is explained immediately by the teaching on virtual and initial being, and reveals the errors of the German philosopher we have mentioned, who has not understood it.

¹⁴⁸ *Confessions*, 7: 2.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. St. Anselm, *Monolog*, c. 28. Fénelon repeats the same sentiment in his *On the Existence of God*. In one place he says: 'O my God, I am not that which is. Alas! I am almost that which is not. I see myself as an incomprehensible half way between nothing and being'* (II P., a. 3: 95).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Plutarch, *On the Delphic Inscription*, E. n. 17.

§3. *Third corollary: the imperfect grasp of the creative act
on the occasion of intellective perception*

308. Another corollary arises from what has been said: in the intellective perception of contingent real things, human beings have some grasp, but an imperfect grasp, of the creative act. They see that being is united with the contingent real and, at the same time, that this real would not be without the creative act, and that it is through this act (although only reflection and philosophical meditation distinguishes all this in perception, and knows how to express it). Moreover, because the contingent real continuously *is* through the creative act, we also see as we perceive it that it continuously receives being and is, therefore, continuously being created. Understanding all this means understanding that the creative act is perceived in perception, and that through this creative act contingent reality is, and is apprehended.

We apprehend the real, therefore, in the same act in which it becomes ens, that is, in the act which makes it ens, the act which creates it.

309. However, the following considerations easily show us how imperfect is our grasp of the creative act.

1. We see the creative act in its term, but not in its principle. Note here that the human mind can apprehend the *act* detached from its *subject*. This is precisely what happens, as I have noted elsewhere (*Logica*, 334), in the natural intuition of *being*. We see being, not as the *subject* of an act but simply as *act*. The concept of subject and the concept of act are distinct in the human mind, and although they can be made to converge into one in such a way that the subject is necessarily an act, not every act is a subject. Our mind, then, can have and has the universal concept of act without its being necessitated to recognise this act as a subject, or to add a subject in the first intuition of the act. Later, however, through reasoning, it finds that it is necessary to give some subject to the act (even without having a positive, determined knowledge of the subject). This comes about through what I have called ‘the principle of subject’ (*Logica*, 362).

In the perception of real, contingent things, therefore, we

[308–309]

apprehend the *creative act* as act that makes an ens of what is real. But we do not yet know who does or moves this act. In other words, we do not apprehend *Almighty God*, the subject of this act, *as creating*.

This grasp of the creative act is imperfect because we do not see that it must reduce to the divine essence, which remains hidden so that we can only argue to it.

Nor can we say that the creative act cannot be divided from the divine essence because it is one thing with it. Our reply to this objection is that the act certainly cannot be divided and distinguished in reality, but can appear as divided to our mind, which is limited. The appurtenances of the divinity are in fact communicated to our mind as divided and cannot merit the name 'God'. This comes about because God the Almighty is essentially indivisible. Consequently, when an appurtenance of God is conceived on its own, it no longer presents the concept of God, but something other according to the principle, 'If by the faculty of conception something is taken from an essence, something else is thought in its place' (*Logica*, 971–978; cf. *NE*, 2: 646–656).

2. The creative act which we apprehend on the occasion of intellective perceptions is limited. Through the exclusive nature of perception, we apprehend in each perception only the creative act which makes an ens, the individual reality which we perceive (*Sistema*, 74–79). If we could apprehend the creative act fully, we would see its perfect unity and how in its oneness and simplicity it brings into existence all the entia which make up the world and all its different states. Indeed, we would see everything contingent: all that was, is and will be. But we do not apprehend it except *in so far as* it makes an ens of the individual real which we perceive intellectually. We apprehend it as *beginning-being of that individual real*, which is not the creative act and, without the creative act, is not. the nature of the creative act, therefore, is to stand between being and nothing. This does not mean that it actually has this separate nature, but that the abstracting mind sees it in this way, united to and through being.

3. The creative act that we apprehend in the perception of contingent things has a third, extreme limitation. It is apprehended as a continuous communication or conjuncture of

being to real things, but not as producing the realities themselves. We see that these receive the being that makes them entia, but when we say *these*, the realities themselves are already presumed to be conceived as distinct from their conception through abstraction. But in the act we do not see the origin, and still less the nature of the realities which correspond to this abstraction. Hence the creative act is apprehended as it were in a reduced fashion. We see that the realities receive being and are not being, but we do not see *how* they receive it, nor how something can be thought which receives being and is not being. This is in fact the mystery of creation about which I shall speak in its proper place.

310. Granted all this, we can easily discern the particle of truth which recently deceived the fluent author of *Gli errori di Antonio Rosmini*, and separate this particle from the remaining falsity present in Gioberti's system.

The particle of truth is this: human beings have, in their direct knowledge of real, contingent things, some vision, although very imperfect, of the creative act.

The false part of the system can be summarised in the following points:

1. It is false that there is a *natural intuition* of the creative act in such a way that we always intuit it naturally as we intuit *undetermined being*. Rather, we apprehend it in our act of *perception* only within the three limitations I have already indicated.

2. It is false that this creative act is seen united to its subject, God. The creative act is apprehended only as an impersonal act, not as a personal subject.

3. It is false that this act *is intuited* along with *existences*, that is, with created things as though these, too (and consequently all of them), were the object of our first intuition. No real, contingent thing is the object of intuition; individual things alone are terms which are made objects in *perception* and through intellectual perception.

4. It is false that there is a natural intuition of *Ens*, that is, of God; the human subject has only the intuition of *undetermined being*, that is, of being as universal act deprived of its terms. This is not an ens, and much less God; it is the beginning of all entia.

5. It is false that God is seen in perceived things (cf. V. *Gioberti e il Panteismo, Saggio di lezioni filosofiche*, Lucca, 1853, lesson 7). God is subsistent, absolute, terminated being. In perceived things, however, we apprehend nothing more than indifferent being, neither ideal nor real. In other words, we apprehend it prior to all its forms and all its terms. This is the way in which it is united to sensible reality and constitutes real, contingent ens perceived by us. This real, contingent ens has being as dialectical, antecedent matter and as dialectical, ultimate form. It does not possess this form as though it were its own, but in common with everything else that is real and finite.

6. Finally, it is false that Almighty God is not an object suitable to be thought by the mind without the existences or contingent things that he has created. It is true that these are not *per se object*, just as they are not *ens per se*. But to be such, they need the mind to see them in and together with being (not through being which is in God and together with God). Nevertheless, as I have said, the contrary is not true: it is not true that *being* is not *per se* the object of the mind; much less is it true that being as object of the mind is God himself (cf. *op. cit.*, 140 ss.).

Article 6

Plato's dialectic

311. From all that has been said in this chapter, it is clear that *undetermined being*, as it appears to the natural intuition of human beings, is the ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετη (non-hypothetical principle) from which, according to Plato, knowledge has to begin.¹⁵¹

This being receives from us, after perceptions and as a result of philosophical reflection and abstraction, the name: 'initial'. A further reflection enables us to call it 'virtual'. Considered then as a means towards knowledge of individual realities it is called the essence of each reality. This essence with its characteristic of intelligibility is called 'idea'. These essences, having the immutability of being, which constitutes their common basis, are

¹⁵¹ *De Rep.*, 6, p. 511.

things which truly *are* (τὰ ὄντως ὄντα). Plato wanted the philosophical mind to think about them at length in order to arrive finally at what he calls the end of what is intelligible (τοῦ νοητοῦ τέλος), Good, Almighty God, the idea of which he places at the apex of knowledge. This is the ultimate and greatest discipline, ‘the idea of the good is the greatest discipline’ (ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα μέγιστον μάθημα).¹⁵² This idea is still not God himself, but a kind of ray from him; and it is that ‘most’, perhaps, which according to Plato, is given to us to know (*IP*, 72–73).

Plato always approaches this ultimate *end of what is intelligible* with reverence, and with immense diffidence in the suitability of his own and other people’s intelligence for scrutinising it. He barely hints at it, and although everything in his dialogues tends towards it and prepares for it, it remains always hidden, as it were, behind a sacred curtain. Learned people, now strengthened by the light of Christianity, can certainly speak of it with more courage. Those, however, who leave Christian light to one side and rashly confront such an argument of themselves, as though they lived in pre-Christian times, remain oppressed by its very light.¹⁵³

Plato, therefore, saw that the *idea* is only a faint light enabling us to contemplate something divine. But granted that reasoning, as an expression of reflection, is that which makes us know the nature of ideas with their connections and conditions, and leads us to contemplate the divine element which is in them,¹⁵⁴ Plato goes on to say that dialectic, which for him is the art of managing ideas, and the management itself of ideas (cf. *Logica*, 847), must be philosophy, the most excellent of all branches of knowledge.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² *De Rep.*, 6, at the end, and 7, at the beginning.

¹⁵³ Charles Kuehn in his booklet *De dialectica Platonis* (Berlin, 1843, pp. 30–31) has the following to say in general about Plato’s method: ‘The ancients, rising up from individual things, tend to unity; the difficulty consists in understanding how they arrive at this unity. The moderns (he is speaking of the Germans) begin with total confidence by establishing the first unity; the difficulty consists in understanding how one can pass from this unity to plurality.’

¹⁵⁴ Plato goes so far as to say that Almighty God is divine because he adheres to ideas (πρὸς οἷσπερ ὁ θεὸς ὢν θεῖός ἐστιν) (*Phaedrus*, p. 249).

¹⁵⁵ *Sophist*, p. 253; *Phaedrus*, pp. 265–266, 273; *Republic*, 7, p. 334.

Under this word 'dialectic' Plato certainly brought together two very distinct things: the art of reasoning, which is the *way* that leads us on, and the divine object which is the final and most sublime end to which we are led. These two branches of knowledge were brought together under the single name 'Dialectic' because Plato saw that the ideas themselves used by reasoning share in the nature of the object which the philosopher wants to know. In other words, they share in something divine.¹⁵⁶

312. All that I have said in this chapter shows the sublimity of Plato's view. I had to begin from dialectical distinctions and hold hard to a dialectical entity, that of virtual and initial being, which excludes the systems promoting absolute identity. On the ruins of these systems, I had to build up the system of dialectical identity which satisfies the need of unity shown at a certain time with immense strength in the human mind. I maintain that it satisfied this need without absurdities, and without strange, erroneous consequences contrary to other equally powerful needs of our intelligence.

The German school became the teacher of those monstrous errors, in which it found its own tomb, the penalty of its desire to deal with the second part of the Platonic dialectic without applying itself sufficiently to the first. Plato himself, almost in fear of the majesty of this second part, was content to have indicated it and greeted it from a distance, and laboured indefinitely on the first part. He was well aware that this alone was a vast work, riddled with huge difficulties and dangers, and that only when it had been brought to perfection would a sure, level and firm road be open to the second part (in so far as human limitation permitted).

¹⁵⁶ "That Plato himself propounded two kinds of dialectic, one of which was the form, the other the argument of the highest knowledge"* is fully demonstrated in Kuehn's book (*op. cit.*).

SECTION THREE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEING-AS-ONE AND ITS TERMS IN GENERAL

CHAPTER 1

The investigation to be carried out in this book and the next about the multiplicity of being

Article 1

Definition of being in itself as opposed to dialectical being

313. At this point, I can define more precisely the investigation to be made in this book, *Being-as-One*, and in the next book, *Being-as-Many*. I could not have done this previously because an investigation of how multiplicity is present in being-as-one and how it is present in each of the three forms, presupposes that we know how being-as-one, prior to its forms, presents itself to human thought. Once this unity of being is known, we can determine both the kind of multiplicity that pertains to this book and the kind we can leave to the next book.

In fact, the word 'being' has two fundamental meanings: that which is conceived as an abstraction from its forms, and that which is conceived as present in its three forms or essential terms. Although it is one in both meanings, only in the second is it trine. Here, I shall deal with it in the first meaning, where it is only one.

These differences in the meaning of the word 'being' have to be understood if we are also to understand how the unity and

multiplicity we are looking for in this book are purely dialectical entities and not some unity and multiplicity in *being in itself*.

314. I must define the expression 'being' or 'ens in itself'. I call 'being' or 'ens in itself' that which can be conceived as existent, prescinding from any mind alien to it which thinks it. Hence, when the being or ens that we think is seen to be such that it cannot exist of itself, but needs a mind alien to it which thinks it, and is considered as present only in this mind, we do not say 'being, or ens in itself' but 'being, or dialectical ens', or something similar. I will analyse this definition when necessary.

Ens therefore, conceived as prior to its forms, is simply a dialectical ens. It cannot exist in itself but solely in any mind whatsoever which thinks it either with natural intuition or reflection, or in any other way whatsoever. Nevertheless, as we saw, it is not nothing, but something in our mind. Furthermore, although its essence is something of ens in itself, it is not ens in itself, because it is not whole. Ens in itself is always *whole*; a part of it cannot exist in itself (PSY, 2: 1319–1321, 1362).

Article 2

The principle of the theory of being-as-one

315. Granted what has been said, we can now determine the principle of the theory of being-as-one, which is precisely the theory I am explaining in this present book. This *principle* is the source of all the teaching in this book and can be indentified easily by the following process.

First, we must determine whether the being under discussion is, in its concept, prior to its forms and therefore to all its terms. If so, no multiplicity can be found in it. It remains always one, solitary and sterile. And this is precisely what I have been saying. The multiplicity we are seeking cannot be found in *abstract being* cut off from its terms but, as I said, by considering the relationships it has with its terms. This is precisely the principle of the theory dealt with in this book: 'The relationship which being, conceived as prior to its terms, has with its terms.'

This principle furnished us with the three concepts of *undetermined being*, *virtual being* and *initial being*. The first, the

[314–315]

object of intuition, is considered solely as devoid of terms, the second as susceptible of all terms, the third as the beginning of all entities having or involving some terms. In other words, being is always considered in relationship with its terms. Thus, being-as-one prior to its terms is multiplied before us, and is multiplied still further in proportion as we develop the already outlined principle of the theory.

Article 3

The principle of the theory of trine being

316. If being, considered in relationship to its terms, is the principle of the theory of being-as-one, what is the principle of the theory of trine being?

The answer is clearly seen in what has already been said. When we consider being in relationship to its terms, we posit being on one side and its terms on the other. Without this division of concepts, the mind would not be able to conceive any relationship between being and its terms, because every relationship supposes two opposites between which relationship is considered. On the other hand, when we consider being as finalised or extended to its terms, we no longer separate it from them but unite it to them and consider it as united. Now the first terms of being are the three forms. Hence being, united to the terms, can no longer enjoy a unity which excludes all plurality. If the first term were the only one, being with this term would still be absolutely one. But because all these three terms are equally first, the mind can only conceive being united with its terms as multiple, that is, as trine. But in each of these first terms being is one. Nevertheless this one in each kind finds some multiplicity. If we can find how it does this, we will have the principle of the theory we are looking for. *Being-as-one*, therefore, prior to all its terms, receives some plurality as soon as we consider its relationship with its terms. Similarly, being-as-one, in each of its first terms, that is, of its forms, receives some multiplicity as soon as we consider its relationship with other terms posterior and subordinate to the first term. Consequently, the relationship between being in each of

its three primordial forms, and the terms posterior and subordinate to each form, is the principle of the ontological theory of trine being. I will deal with it in the next book.

Article 4

What remains to be done to complete the investigations
carried out in this book

317. Any discussion on 'the relationship of being with its terms' must be broken down into its parts. They are two, because we can ask:

1. What is this relationship, relative to being, of being with all its terms universally, and
2. What is this relationship, relative to its terms, of being with all its terms universally?

These two questions constitute the two parts of this book.

318. I dealt with the first question in chapters 1 and 2 [actually, in the last six articles of the preceding section], where we saw that:

1. Undetermined being pertains to necessary, absolute ens, not to contingent ens.
2. It is dialectical matter, the *first determinable* of all contingent entia. But precisely because it is dialectical and universal, that is, common to all entia, it does not constitute the *essence* of any of them. On the contrary, it is only the cause and condition which precedes their essence in such a way that the essence exists through and is inconceivable without the first determinable.
3. Being, as universal and very first act, is also the *first determinant*, that is, the act which makes the essence this essence rather than another. As determinant, it is not the essence of any contingent thing but the universal determinant cause which determines the essence in its mode of being.
4. Finally, when the human mind receives the determined essences of contingent entia, being is the act through which every essence is, and hence the ultimate determination of them all. It is therefore the universal form of all forms.

319. But if, relative to the terms themselves, we consider the

[317–319]

relationship between being and its terms, we can express the question simply as: 'What does being confer on its terms?'

In this precise form, the question we have to deal with in this book can easily be solved with a universal reply which, when analysed, will act as a fruitful principle for discovering everything the terms of being owe to being itself. This reply will therefore serve as a thread to guide us as we develop the second part of this book. The reply states:

'Everything that we can find as universal in entia and equally apt to be in the three modes or forms proper to being, is conferred on ens by initial being prior to the terms.'

In this principle and rule we must note only the following. Because the third form results from the embrace between the first two forms, all we need do, on most occasions, is verify that the element under discussion can be thought equally in the first two forms. We can then affirm that it definitely pertains to being as prior to its terms. I say 'on most occasions', because, as we shall see in theology, although this short argument is valid for all finite entia, it does not hold fully for infinite, absolute Being.

Article 5

A comment on ontological method

320. A comment, already wisely made by the German philosophers, is appropriate here about the method of ontology. This method identifies with ontology in such a way that the science itself is its own method, or better, involves its method within itself. In fact, because the principles of the method are simply the intrinsic order of being considered in relationship with the human mind or are extracted from that order by the mind as norms to be followed in the branches of knowledge, it is clear that the discipline which deals with being in all its universality and its order (as ontology does), obviously cannot have a method prior to itself. It must find its method in the very act of speaking about being and its order. Consequently, there is this notable difference between ontology and other disciplines: the method to be followed by other disciplines must in

[320]

some way be a prior requisite to these disciplines because the principles of their method are given by a discipline prior to them. In ontology, however, which is precisely the science that contains these principles in all their universality, a prior, requisite method would simply mean detaching a part from the discipline to place the part before the discipline. This would ruin and tear ontology apart. Furthermore, a method required antecedently to the discipline would either remain an arbitrary requirement or, to be justified, would have to present reasons which by their nature would themselves constitute the whole discipline. In other words, instead of presenting the method beforehand, we would be attempting the impossible by positing the whole discipline prior to itself.

Ontology is like the argonaut mollusc which as its own boat, pilot, sail, oar and rudder, journeys tranquilly through the sea. So ontology composes its own method by which it journeys safely through the immense region of being. All that we can do in ontology, therefore, is to contemplate and describe being and ens as it presents itself to the mind. Then, as ontology gradually discovers parts of the order which being has within itself, we must stop and determine these parts. In this way we devise the method and explain the discipline at one and the same time. This is precisely what I had to do: after distinguishing being from its terms, I paused to indicate that we still had to consider the relationship between being and its terms from the point of view both of being and of its terms.

CHAPTER 2

An investigation about that which being confers on its terms from the point of view of absolute, infinite ens

321. We now have to investigate what *being* confers on its terms. First, however, it is necessary to consider this investigation from a universal point of view relative to infinite Ens, and then relative to finite entia.

It is not difficult to see in the first place that the investigation changes its nature in so far as the three terms to which being is referred are infinite (this is the case with absolute, infinite ens), or finite (in the case of finite entia).

From what has been said, it is clear that infinite Ens, and finite ens proper to the world, can be defined as follows, in a way that brings out their difference.

‘Infinite Ens is *being* which subsists in its three forms.’

‘Finite ens is the form of the finite real which has being.’

322. Comparing these two definitions, we see that:

1. The *subject* in infinite Ens is being itself; in finite being the *subject* is not being, but the *real form*.¹⁵⁷

2. Hence, infinite Ens, because it is being, is *per se*; finite ens, because it is purely form, is not *per se*, but through being, which is added to it.

3. Because infinite Ens is Being itself subsisting in its three forms, there can be no real distinction between it and its forms, which are nothing more than the triple act of its very subsistence. On the other hand, because finite ens is not being but a finite form which needs to share being (something other than itself) in order to exist, there is a real difference in finite ens between the real form that constitutes the subject what it is, and being which makes it exist.

323. This gives rise to the expressions: *proper* and *improper terms* of being. The proper terms of Being are the forms in infinite Ens; the *improper* term is the real form that constitutes finite ens as it shares being.

¹⁵⁷ ‘No created form or nature is its own being’* (St. Thomas, *De Potentia*, 2, 1).

From this we conclude that the question: 'What does being confer upon its terms?' cannot apply to infinite Ens because there is no duality of being and individual forms in such a way that being can give something to the forms. We are dealing here with perfect identification. Being in infinite Ens gives either nothing to the form, or gives everything. Every form is simply being itself, subsisting whole and entire in that form.

The only possible question which can be asked about this being, therefore, is: 'What does Being, subsisting whole and entire in one or other form, give to itself?' In other words: 'What are the active relationships of the forms of absolute being?' The answer is the teaching about the procession of the divine Persons, but this is not relevant to the present book.

324. The teaching that absolute Being is not distinguished from its form is lacking in Plato, and rendered his ontology defective. Everywhere, but especially in *Parmenides*, he cannot conceive any other ens except that which he calls *ens-as-one* (ὅν ἓν) and which he makes up from two elements: from essence (οὐσία), the abstract form of being, and from one (ἓν).¹⁵⁸ Plato, who was unable to conceive any ens except composite ens having plurality in itself, brought forth as a result all the antinomies which he expounds briefly in the *Sophist* and at length in *Parmenides*. These antinomies necessarily remain irreconcilable. Being itself (εἶναι) becomes a composite for him, that is, it becomes *participation in essence* and in *present time*.¹⁵⁹ Only elements of ens, not any true ens, possessed something pure and simple, according to Plato. Nothing else remained. Such elements are the *one* and *essence*, two abstracts. Plato did not realise that essence expresses an act lacking a subject, but with some relationship to a subject (cf. [211, 227–236]). Consequently, the concept of essence supposes something else which is not abstract, but real. Basically, this is Aristotle's criticism of Plato.

The universal principle that ens-as-one is composed of *one*

¹⁵⁸ *Parm.*, p. 142.

¹⁵⁹ **Parm.*, p. 151. We see, therefore, how his disciple Aristotle could not conceive being as something subsisting in itself, but always considered it as an act of something else. For Aristotle, it was knowable only through abstraction, although he hit upon the truth involuntarily and through dialectical necessity. Cf. *Aristotele* [139; *passim*]).

and *essence*,¹⁶⁰ gives rise to the conclusion that every ens is made, that is, becomes. This system was reproduced by Hegel as something new in our day! But here it is in Plato's express words:

Would you not say that receiving essence means being made?

Certainly.

And being deprived of essence means being destroyed?

No doubt about it.

The one, therefore, comes about and perishes by taking up or laying down essence?

Of course.

And because it is one and many, and makes itself or perishes, must it not also happen that when it makes itself one it ceases to be many, and when it makes itself many it ceases to be one?

Certainly.

And in making itself one and many must it not combine and uncombine?

Just so!

Indeed, can I not go so far as to say that every time it makes itself unlike and like, it must both liken itself, as it were, and unliken itself?

That is so.

And when it makes itself greater or smaller, must it not increase, decrease and equal itself?

Yes.

But every time it passes from motion to rest, and from

¹⁶⁰ Plato deduces *multiplicity* from first *duality*, which is the union of what he calls *one* with *essence*. This duality is found in every *ens-as-one*. This union cannot be dissolved mentally because the one cannot be conceived except as being (otherwise it would be annihilated). For the same reason essence cannot be conceived without the one. So the concept of essence does not abandon the one even if the mind tries to divide these two elements when it thinks the one alone. Despite what the mind wants, the concept of essence follows the concept of the one. When the mind thinks essence alone, it thinks it with the one. Each of the two elements, therefore, remains twofold and because it can replicate this operation *ad infinitum*, thought finds an indefinite number, every number. From this, it deduces that *essence* is distributed according to number, and the one multiplies itself according to the distributed essence (*Parmen.*, p. 142 ss.). In this system, the one and essence are the two ultimate elements of entia. But *ens-as-one* is always necessarily composed of both.

rest to motion, must it not do this at one and the same time?

Why is this so?

Because if it was first stationary, it then moves, and if it was moving, it then rests. It cannot experience these things without some change.

That is true.

Now, there is no time whatsoever in which something can be in such a state that at the same time it is stationary and moving.

No time at all.

Indeed, time does not pass without some kind of change.

It would be a contradiction.

When does it pass, then? It does not pass when it is stationary, and does not pass when it moves, not even when it is in time.

Yes, I see that.

Isn't it wonderful to see the state it is in when it passes?

What do you mean?

It is, I maintain, an indivisible instant. This instant, you see, means something determined, from which there is passage to the one opposite and the other opposite. For as long as it is stationary, it does not yet pass from its state, and as long as it is moving, it still does not pass from motion. But nature itself, instantaneous and wonderful, posits itself between motion and rest, and is not in any time whatsoever. To nature and by nature, what has moved passes to non-movement, and what is at rest passes to motion.

That's a bit risky.

The one, therefore, if it is stationary and moves, passes without doubt to movement and to rest. Only in this way does it carry out one and the other. But by passing into an indivisible instant and in the act of passing, it is not in any time. It is neither stationary nor does it move.

How could it be otherwise?

Isn't it the same for other changes? When the one passes from being to destruction, or from not-being to making itself, we then have a middle point between stops and starts, and we cannot say either that it is not, nor that it is made, nor that it has perished.

That seems right.

In the same way, by passing from the one into the many, and from the many into the one, it is not one and not

many; it is neither brought together nor dispersed. And by passing from what is like to unlike, and again from what is unlike to what is like, it is neither like nor unlike. It is not likened and it is not, as it were, unlikened. Passing from what is small to what is big, and to what is equal, or to the contrary, it is not small, it is not big, it does not grow, it does not decrease, it does not stay the same.

It would seem not.

If then the one exists, it undergoes all these experiences.¹⁶¹

325. Plato, not having reached an understanding of how *being subsists* in itself as always the same and most simple, was unable to conceive a true ontology. He lacked the doctrine of subsistent being, and had to restrict himself to talking about composite being, which is finite ens. This kind of knowledge is, therefore, never more than *cosmological ontology*. But what should make us wonder is how a modern philosopher is incapable of profiting by the splendid light brought to this doctrine of being by Christianity and, like Hegel, should have preferred to turn back so far with the hope of appearing to be an original philosopher by singing out yet again what pagan philosophers once stuttered in such an admirable way amidst the silence of truth.

¹⁶¹ *Parmen.*, pp. 156–157.

CHAPTER 3

The investigation about that which being confers on its terms from the point of view of finite entia. The analysis of this investigation

326. Our investigation about 'what being confers on its terms' has now to be undertaken relative to finite entia.

This investigation cannot be undertaken in an ordered way relative to these entia unless it is analysed and divided into its parts. It is clear that it can be brought to a conclusion only if the following special questions, which are implicit in the general investigation, are dealt with:

1. What, in being, is incommunicable to finite entia?
2. What is the nature of the communication of being, and of the participation in the properties of being, on the part of finite real things?
3. Does being receive anything from its communication with finite real things?
4. What are the properties of being, communicable to finite real things and found in them?

CHAPTER 4

That which in being is incommunicable to finite real things

Article 1

The origin of the incommunicability of certain properties of being to finite real things

327. There is something incommunicable in impersonal *being* as it shines naturally before our intelligence. This does not arise, however, from the nature of being itself, but from the limitation of *the real*, which constitutes the subject of finite ens, that is, the ens itself to which the definition refers.

In the real element of the finite ens, that which prevents the full communication of being is precisely its finiteness or limitation.¹⁶²

Article 2

Six first incommunicable properties of being

328. The first incommunicable element of undetermined being is its *unlimitedness* which contradicts the condition, already posited, that the *real* with which we are dealing is *limited*. Being, therefore, which makes 'a limited real exist', cannot make this real have an unlimited existence such as being itself has.

The limitation of real things is more or less, and the existence which they receive from being is also more or less.

The phrase, 'unlimitedness of being', can be analysed, and many properties found in it. All of them are incommunicable because they pertain to the unlimitedness of being.

The *limitation* of the real is, therefore, the *first reason* why there are in being certain properties incommunicable to the real.

¹⁶² St. Thomas: 'Form is not perfected through matter, which rather reduces the fullness of form'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 7, art. 1, [resp.]).

The second reason (this, too, is a limitation) is this. Finite ens is constituted by one of the three forms of being. This form is itself finite because it is not being itself, but a form of being. One form, however, is incommunicable to other forms. Consequently, finite ens cannot communicate itself as *being* which can exist in the three forms. The property which being has of communicating itself is, therefore, lacking to *finite ens*. All that remains for finite ens is the action of one ens upon another. This action is proper to the form, not to being, where communication is proper.

329. We can now see the three principal, incommunicable properties of being:

1. Being does not receive being from something else. *Aseitas* is an incommunicable property of being.

2. Being communicates being to finite real form. *Communicability* is a second incommunicable property.

3. Being is being: this *identity* with itself is another incommunicable property.

Finite ens, however, has the following opposite properties.

1. It does not exist of itself, but from something else; 2. it has the power to act on other entia, but not to communicate being to them; 3. it is twofold, equal to itself and unequal, not one and simple and equal to itself as being is.

The *limitation* of finite ens and its *lack of the being* proper to it as something real are the two reasons which explain the presence in *being* of incommunicable properties, which can be reduced to four universals: 1. *unlimitedness*; 2. *aseitas*; 3. *communicability*; and 4. *identity*.

The definition of finite ens does not constitute a valid objection against what has been said. The definition is: 'Real ens is a finite real, united with being.' The objection which presents itself to the mind is this: 'Ens is in three forms, but finite ens is also ens. Therefore it too must be in three forms.' The answer is: finite ens is called ens with a very different meaning from when we call ens infinite Ens. Hence, finite ens, although it has its three forms, has them in a totally different way from that in which infinite ens is in its three forms. Infinite Ens is called ens precisely because it is itself 'Being terminated in itself'; finite ens, however, is called ens not because it, too, is 'Being terminated in itself', but because 'it is something real that

participates in being without being being'. Finite ens is a relative, not an absolute ens. Properly speaking it is, as I have said, only a term or improper form of being itself, suspended as it were from being.

330. But what, we may now ask, are the other two forms, that is, the objective and moral forms corresponding to the real form which, united to its initial being, is called finite ens? — I reply that this results from what has been said, and will be seen more clearly as a result of what I shall say now:

1. The objective form of finite ens is not finite ens, but *determined ideas*. These are only *being* itself in so far as it serves to make known finite ens as possible, and as subsisting. Finite intelligences share in this finite form, not in so far as it constitutes their subjective and real, proper existence, but as object different from them.

2. The moral form originates with the act with which the same finite entia, endowed with intelligence, make themselves one in their operation with objective *being* which presents, that is, makes known all things. Consequently, the moral form of finite ens is a communication of moral being itself, that is, of being as lovable. This form is therefore received in finite, subjective being which draws its own perfection from it. Nevertheless, it is something other than finite ens. The loveliness and love of being, supremely ordered *in se*, shows itself to finite ens without confusing itself with finite ens. By its activity finite ens then receives in itself this loveliness and thus perfects itself.

331. Finite ens, therefore, is not its own being but a finite form of being (the real form). Equally, it does not exist in itself in the three forms, but only in the real form. Thus, as finite ens has an intimate conjunction with being, without which it would not be, so it has an intimate conjunction with the other two forms of being (the objective and the moral forms). Moreover, these also are said to be its forms in so far as it is referred to them and shares them. But they are not its forms in the way that the real form is. The latter pertains to it through the copula 'is', the other through the copula 'has' or through 'shares' (*Logica*, 429), which is reduced to 'has'.

It remains, therefore, that finite ens can be defined only as 'something real that has being and can have communication

with the objective form and the moral form of being, but cannot be confused with them.' It follows that the forms, too, can be comprised amongst the things which being cannot communicate in constituting finite ens. In this case, two other incommunicable properties have to be added to the four already named. So we have: 5. the objective form; 6. the moral form, in both of which, however, [finite ens] shares.

Article 6

Six other properties of being, incommunicable to finite real things: 1. universality; 2. necessity; 3. immutability; 4. eternity; 5. absolute simplicity; 6. absolute primality

332. From these first six properties, many others are derived which cannot be communicated to finite real things.

The act of being is found equally in all entities because it is the act through which they are. The act called *being* is therefore *universal* and common to all possible entities.

Here we need to note that the concept of *universality* consists in this: 'Universal being means that being is found identical in all entities.' This characteristic is discovered only in initial being which, distinguished mentally from all its terms, is susceptible of them all. It remains identical, therefore, whether it has or has not terms. Every possible change occurs only in its terms. *Being* is the seat, the fount, the one sole reason for all universality.

But if being is a universal act, will entities themselves, having that act, have a universal act? No, they will have the act proper to each of them because the universality of initial being is not an act that passes into entities.¹⁶³ Only the act called being, not the *universality* of this act, is united to the particular terms. This universality consists in the *capacity* of initial being to unite itself to all possible terms; it does not consist in its act of union with each one. We have already seen that initial being is virtual being

¹⁶³ In the following book, we shall see how the *essences* of contingent things share the universality of being, but never receive it whole and entire as it is in being itself.

itself in so far as it is considered united to its individual terms. But the universality of initial being consists, on the contrary, in its *virtuality*, that is, its susceptibility of terms while it remains identical.

This is a new proof that *being* is distinguished from all contingent entities which need it if they are to exist. Being does, in fact, preserve some kind of *universality* which cannot be communicated to them.

333. Necessity and unchangeableness are another property of being. We have already seen that being is necessary and unchangeable. But if contingent entities also have this act of being, surely they too will be necessary and unchangeable, not contingent? — My reply to this difficulty is similar to that given to the preceding problem: necessity and unchangeableness pertain to *virtual being* in which there is no change whatsoever when contingent terms are joined to it. The only difference is that it is now called 'initial' by the mind which sees it in union with its terms. The whole change arises in the terms, which are united to it. When they are separated from initial being, they no longer are; but being, to which they are united or from which they are detached, remains the same, perfectly identical. The terms do indeed receive the act of existence, but this act is something different from them. This is another proof of the important statement: 'Being is one thing, its contingent terms are another.' The contingent terms are not, unless they are united to being, but being is that which is *per se*, whether terms are united to it or detached from it.

334. Perfect simplicity is a third incommunicable property of the act of being. — The act of being cannot contain any *succession* because it is perfectly simple and is therefore immune from time; it is eternal.

It has no *gradation* in such a way that it is more or less.

Two corollaries flow from this.

(a) The reason underlying the principle of contradiction has its origin in this simplicity of the act of being, that is, of existence, in which neither succession nor gradation can be thought. There can be nothing between being and not-being; everything is, or is not (*Logica*, 321, 341–342, 345–346). If this absolute and evident simplicity of the act of being could not be had, the principle of contradiction would not be true because

[333–334]

there would then be something between an absolute yes and an absolute no.

(b) The concept of *becoming* cannot be applied to the act of being. 'Becoming' involves the concept of motion and hence of changeableness and succession. This explains why Hegel, who wanted to apply this concept to being, found himself obliged to deny the principle of contradiction and indeed to accept contradiction as principle of a system which, by that very fact, annihilates itself.

This *simplicity* of the act of being is shared by all entities which share the act of being, that is, existence. Of them, too, it can be said: 'They are or they are not.' The principle of contradiction, therefore, can be applied equally to all objects of thought.

335. Another property of being is its *absolute primality*. In other words, the act of being is the act of every contingent act. This characteristic of being harmonises with the property, which I have already attributed to it, of being something dialectically anterior and posterior to all contingent things.

This characteristic of primality cannot be shared by contingent things because none of them can be said to be anterior to itself.

Finite entia, therefore, cannot receive in themselves *universality*, *necessity* and its accompanying *unchangeableness*, *eternity*, *absolute simplicity*, and *absolute primality* of being because these prerogatives pertain to being considered in itself and in its virtuality, and not to being in so far as it is precisely the *beginning* of individual entities. Although virtual being is the same as initial being, the latter, in so far as it is initial, is seen by the mind under a more restricted relationship. That is, it is restricted to the individual terms which are joined to being as their beginning.

Nevertheless, a necessary condition of contingent entities is that they be united as terms to necessary being — 'being' furnished with all the other prerogatives which cannot be communicated to them.

Article 4

The twofold relationship of being to contingent things:
one relationship arises from the communicable properties,
the other from the incommunicable properties of being

336. We can draw the following important consequence from all that has been said: 'The relationship of contingent things with virtual and initial being is twofold. One relationship is this: being must be found in contingent things with certain of its prerogatives if contingent things are to be. As such, being is *formal*, *universal*, *antecedent* and *subsequent cause* in the dialectical order. The other is: being must have other prerogatives which it does not have in things. These prerogatives are nevertheless necessary and proper to it, and characterise it as *conditional cause*, that is, an absolutely necessary condition, if contingent things are to be.

In considering the different prerogatives of being, we must keep this principle continually present and define which of the prerogatives under examination is shared with contingent things and which remain within being as their simple condition. I have already indicated the criterion for this discernment: 'Those prerogatives are shareable which pertain to being in its precise relationship as initial to each contingent thing; those which pertain to being only in its relationship as virtual are non-shareable.'

Article 5

The incommunicable and communicable properties of being
relative to the essences of finite things

337. Relative to the present discussion of contingent entities, other entities present themselves which refer to contingent entities. These are their *essences* seen in the idea. I have already said that the essences of contingent things seen in the idea are universal, necessary, unchangeable, eternal, and so on, and as a result share the most noble prerogatives of being itself (*NE*, 1: 42, 213; 2: 414–417; *Rinnovamento*, 447 ss.). Here we must note

[336–337]

that not even the essences of contingent things seen in ideas share in the *primality* of virtual and initial being. They do share in a limited way in other divine qualities because:

1. The *universality* of the ideas of contingent things is not universality except in relationship to those things whose essence it represents. It is not universal relative to all things and essences (as the universality of initial being is).

2. The *necessity* is not absolute. An act of absolute being is presupposed as I have noted elsewhere (*Rinnovamento*, [III, XLII fn., LII]) and will explain better later on.

3. The same must be said about the eternity of contingent things.

4. The unchangeableness which results from their simplicity, and explains why the distinction between substance and accidents does not occur in them, is itself conditioned to their existence.

The reason why ideas, and the essences seen in them, share such sublime endowments is that they are being itself considered as the intelligibility of contingent things (the ideal form of being). As such, being is considered in its exclusive relationship with each essence. This relationship is seen by the mind, which transfers into being the entitative limitation of the thing and thus intuits being itself limited to the need the thing has to be illustrated by being.

338. We must therefore distinguish, in entities in general, two degrees of participation in the prerogatives of being:

1. A greater degree of participation in the prerogatives is proper to essences and ideas (ideal entities).

2. A much lower degree of participation is enjoyed by real contingent things (contingent entities).

CHAPTER 5

The nature of the communication and conjunction of being with real things

Article 1

Triple relationship of being with the real

339. Initial being has three relationships with its *real* term:

1. The relationship of *identity*, found only in the infinite, *per se* subsistent Being.
2. The relationship of *direct act-cause*, found in certain finite real things, which, therefore, are called *substances*.
3. The relationship of *indirect act-cause*, found in certain finite real things, called *accidents* because they receive being only by means of other real things (substances) which have already shared directly in being.

Article 2

The relationship of identity

340. The relationship of identity between *being* and the *infinite real* is purely mental and relative to the mode of abstract knowledge. Absolute Being is perfectly identical and one in itself and cannot therefore admit intrinsic relationships which can be conceived only between two things. We ourselves first conceive *being* devoid of subsistence and, after joining it to the real things which occur in our feeling, conceive *finite entia*. When we wish to raise our thought to infinite ens, which does not occur in our natural feeling, we are forced to use the analogy of finite ens (the only real thing we know positively). Hence, we conceive infinite Ens through the union of two elements which previously we thought of as divided: 1. being, and 2. the real. Although it is true that with our thought we can increase the real into the infinite, nevertheless the pure real remains in our

[339–340]

concept without the actuality of being. We add the actuality to it and form the concept of absolute, infinite Ens. But after carrying out this action, we reflect on the concept and see that the two separate elements we first conceived can neither remain two nor be elements in infinite being; they must be a single, extremely simple being without any true distinction. The reason is as follows:

1. Being itself is the subject which subsists; in other words, subsistence or reality must be the act through which Being is, not something different from it. This is also proved when we say, 'The true subject is always the real'. But being, in God, [is the true subject. Therefore etc.].

2. If the real were not being itself, it could not be infinite, because only being is infinite. In this *conjunction* I join being with the infinite real. I then express the conjunction in such a way that there is no absurdity (as there would be if we were dealing with a simple union and conjunction), by calling it 'identification', and the union itself, 'identity' or 'relationship of identity'. This second expression corrects and removes the defect caused to our concept of God by its origin, that is, by the indirect, analogical way in which our mind had been obliged to form the concept.

341. This explains universally the origin of the concept of *identity* or what I call 'relationship of identity'. Its origin is: 'Our mind, whenever it conceives an entity as twofold or multiple, and then realises that each of these multiples is the whole entity presented to thought under different concepts, says that these multiples have the *relationship of identity*' with themselves (*Logica*, 344 ss.).

The relationship of identity is therefore a thought which abolishes the plurality introduced unduly into the conception of some entity by another preceding thought, and thus emends the conception.

Article 3

The direct and indirect relationship of act-cause

342. I then said that the relationship of being relative to the finite real is that of *act-cause* which is either indirect or direct.

The reader will gather from what has been said that I distinguish between *act-cause* and *subject-cause*. I pointed out that initial *being*, in the way we conceive it, is seen by us as act, not as subject of this act (*Logica*, 334). Hence, when in speaking we take being as subject of things, we are simply using a mental fiction which changes the act into subject. We then call this subject a purely dialectical subject. Similarly, we call *being* universal *dialectical matter* through the same fiction by which we call it *dialectical subject*.

But when we consider it not as subject but as the pure act which it is, we call it either the most universal form and not the proper form of things, or else the one, universal form of all finite things. Thus, it is distinguished from the supreme cause, God, who is the *subject-cause* of things; being is purely their *act-cause*.

This also shows how *being* can be very closely united to finite real things and constitute the act through which they are, without any consequent pantheism. Just as *objective being*, from which the subject has been abstracted by the free intelligence of God, constitutes the light given to the human mind, so *subject-being* from which the subject has also been abstracted by God (in the next book we will see how this abstraction is carried out) is pure act common to all finite real things. This subjectless act is not God because God is essentially subject-Being. It finds its missing subject, however, in finite reality, of which it is act. All this happens because divine abstraction is the foundation of creation, as I will explain later.

I have said that this *act-cause* is united to real things either directly — in which case real things become substances — or indirectly — in which case they are called accidents. I am therefore obliged to determine universally the characteristic of *substance* and *accident*. This distinction, however, is found solely in finite ens, and would thus pertain to cosmological science. But because all these theosophical teachings have to be brought

together, we must turn to one or the other, according to need, without regard to the three parts, ontological, theological and cosmological, which, for this very reason, I have called parts of a single science, theosophy.

343. What then is this finite real we call substance? And what is the finite real we call accident?

The distinctive characteristic of real substance is to be one and indivisible, and as one and indivisible to be able to receive being, which makes it subsist in itself.¹⁶⁴

The concept of *substance*, like every property of finite ens, must be formed *a posteriori* because *a priori* reasoning is valid only in relationship to infinite ens. How then do we form the concept of substance?

First of all, from consciousness of ourselves. We are all conscious of being one and of subsisting (*PSY*, 1: 124 ss., 140 ss., 180 ss., 431 ss., 560 ss., 626 ss., 676 ss.), that is, of possessing the above-mentioned characteristics of substance. We must bear in mind that although our own feeling is not always consciousness, consciousness is always our own conscious feeling, *myself*; in other words, what consciousness says of *myself*, is. The thing known is the thing itself, and consciousness, through this identification, cannot err. We have in ourselves therefore the first concept and first example of substance.

The same is true of accident. We feel ourselves one and identical despite all our passive and active acts and the habitual modifications left by them. These multiple and continuously changeable acts and modifications cannot be conceived as existing without the soul, that is, without *myself* which experiences them. Hence, because they have neither unity nor direct subsistence, they are accident, not substance.

This is the case even for a sensitive principle lacking intelligence: its concept includes the concept of unity, and we see that it can subsist in animals, which also have their accidents.

When we turn to corporeal, extrasubjective entia,¹⁶⁵ we see that their nature is relative to feeling. But they obviously subsist

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *Aristotele etc.*

¹⁶⁵ Pure space cannot be called substance. It does not *per se* have accidents, and the concept of substance includes a relationship with bodies. Space is therefore an extremely simple, extrasubjective ens.

because they act on the sensitive subject, and action pertains solely to what is subsistent. Their unity is judged by the understanding according to the unity of the feeling which they arouse and of which they are terms. In cosmology I will investigate the nature of this unity and the degree to which it falls short of perfect unity. For the present it is sufficient that feeling bestow on them some unity, both qualitative and figurative. We understand that they are substances in the same way that they have subsistence and unity.

344. Everything we conceive as one, therefore, everything that can subsist in its unity, and is subject to modification without losing its unity and subsistence, is a substance. I have called the idea corresponding to it ‘abstract specific’, and deduced this idea from the substance’s capacity to receive being directly and thus to subsist (*NE*, 2: 649–652). But here I add another observation. This capacity — to receive being directly — pertains to the nature of *the real* which serves as a kind of matter for the form of being; it does not pertain to the nature of being which in itself is always communicable.

For the same reason there is something *real* (*accident*) which is not susceptible of receiving being except in some other real thing, that is, in the real thing which, by directly receiving being, is *real substance*. This real (*accident*) also depends on the nature of the real which is more or less limited, and this limitation determines the mode and the quantity of participation in being.

Let us now look at the kind of conjunction between being and the *real* and *substantial*, and between being and the *real* and *accidental*.

Article 4

The direct relationship of act-cause, or entification

345. The conjunction and communication of being with the *substantial real* is not primarily *identification*. As I have shown, identification is found only in infinite, absolute Being.

Moreover, identification is the most intimate of all possible conjunctions. I distinguish it from all other conjunctions by calling it ‘entifying’ conjunction.

[344–345]

This identification, however, is not made solely in the conception of infinite Ens; it is a *synthesising* union, and of the kind brought about by one side only, not by both. I call such unions 'unilateral synthesising unions'. Their nature is such that although one of the two elements does not perish when the other element perishes, the other element perishes when the first element is removed from it. Thus, *being* does not perish even when the real element is annihilated, but the real element is annihilated and no longer conceivable when being is thought as not present or is separated from the real element. When the real element disappears, the ens resulting from this union disappears.

Article 5

The antinomies found by Plato
in his meditation on entification. A critique of them

346. The constitution of finite ens is such that it appears to our thought as if it were not one but two. In fact, it has two definitions, one dialectical in which, as we have seen, a dialectical subject is posited; the other proper, in which its true subject is posited. Hence, the ancients said that real ens is not identical, but differs from itself. Indeed, this was principally the foundation of the antinomies presented by Plato in *Parmenides*. It will be helpful, I think, if I add some observations about these antinomies to the observations I have made elsewhere. I want my philosophy to be tied to and in continuity with philosophical tradition so that the human race may be seen to have only one philosophy to which it always returns — philosophy is not the errors or equivocations which the limitation of human reasoning can bring to it.

In the first part of *Parmenides*, Plato's intention is to show that the *one* by itself, without any multiplicity, cannot exist (pp. 137–142). The word 'one' (ὅν, neuter gender) means 'all that is conceived as one'. It means therefore both abstract one and real one. Plato intentionally left this indetermination of meaning so that he could extract contradictory propositions from it, taking the word now in one sense, now in another. In the first part of

[346]

the argument, however, the word 'one' is always used with its indetermination, so that there is no error; we have a true and serious demonstration that 'the sole, pure one whether abstract or real cannot exist'. In other words, being necessarily involves multiplicity and unity simultaneously.

In the second part (pp. 142–157), he no longer posits the hypothesis that the one remains alone; he posits another hypothesis, 'the one exists', whether alone or not, and he investigates the conditions necessary for its existence. Now, one of the conditions for the one to exist is clearly that it must be something real and determined, whatever the determination and reality is. In fact, when Plato posits on the one hand the *one*, which must have existence, and on the other, *essence* (by this he means the essence of being, not a determined essence), it is clear that in the *one*, which is the subject of existence, everything else necessary for constituting ens, which consists of essence and the one, must be present. Consequently, the one can be only a determined real.

347. As we have seen, he begins by saying that, granted that the *one* is, it must share in *essence*. This essence is an element different from the one because it is referred to the one; it is essence of the one. Furthermore, in the statement 'The one is', 'is' expresses something different from the word 'ONE'. He thus finds a duality in the existing one. Now, I have noted that this duality does not exist in the infinite Being and that it is only a simple distinction made by imperfect human thought. Consequently, all Plato's dialectical reasoning applies only to finite ens, which is truly composed of two elements. Let us accept therefore that his reasoning applies solely to finite ens, and see what results, in the light of this most important argument, concerning the intimate constitution of *finite ens*.

Plato deduces that what is existent as one has two parts: 1. one, and 2. essence. But he continues: if we predicate essence of being-as-one, and one of being-as-one, we conceive these two parts separately. But we cannot in any way conceive essence without one, nor one without essence. He therefore deduces a synthesis of these two elements, that is, one never abandons essence, and essence never abandons one. Indeed, they are found — in what is existent as one — as a whole made up of these two parts. This certainly shows the indissolubility

of what I have called 'entifying union', granted that finite ens exists.

No one, therefore, who thinks of being-as-one, that is, ens-as-one, can concentrate on essence without thinking also of one, nor can one be thought without reference to essence. Plato infers from this that each of the two parts is also twofold, and so on to infinity, because the same reasoning can apply to the two elements of the parts: 'One always embraces ens, and ens always embraces one' (τὸ τε γὰρ ἓν τὸ ὅν ἀεὶ ἰσχει, καὶ τὸ ὅν τὸ ἓν) with reciprocal connections. He concludes that 'ens has an infinite multitude' (ἄπειρον τὸ πλῆθος). But this does not in any way prove that real ens is an infinite multitude; it simply indicates a law of human abstraction which, while wanting to stop at one of the two elements which compose finite ens (the real element, and being), cannot think either without, so to speak, keeping the other before it, as I have explained in *Psychology* (2: 1319 ss.). We can reflect abstractly *ad infinitum* without ever being able to separate totally one abstract element from the other. This is a necessity imposed by the composite thought from which the abstraction is made. The result is that entities of reason multiply endlessly. But this posits no new multiplicity in ens; on the contrary, it shows more strongly the indissolubility of the entifying conjunction without which ens cannot be conceived.

347a. Plato then considers that essence and one can be conceived in two modes, each of them as something in itself and each in relationship to the other. We say, for example, that essence is 'the essence of one', or that one is 'the one of essence'. He infers that each is two but that these two form only one. But in this case there is also the connection between them. Thus, they are free. If therefore we take essence and one, together with their connection, we still have three. Let us say, however, that we take essence and then one, and consider them 1. in themselves; 2. relative to one another; 3. forming in themselves and as relative to a single essence, or a single one. In this case, we have an even and an odd number, as well as twice the even number and three times the odd number, and twice the odd and three times the even number. In a word, we have both the elements of numbers (even and odd) and all the numbers coming from them. He concludes: 'If one exists, number must also exist' (εἰ ἄρα ἔστιν ἓν, ἀνάγκη καὶ ἀριθμὸν εἶναι). This reasoning is not

[347a]

exclusively dialectical as the previous argument is; it contains a truly ontological element. It pertains to pure dialectic in so far as it supposes that essence and one can be in themselves. In fact the first, that is, essence (existence) can be only in the mind that thinks it, while one (which in *ens* is different from existence) cannot even be in the mind unless it exists in reality. But thought can consider them in themselves through a double abstraction: 1. by considering one separate from the other; 2. by removing from them their reciprocal relationship. Hence, what Plato says are two, are only two abstract ways of considering essence and one. When, however, he says that these two must have some connection if they are to constitute one (that is, either one or essence), he is simply expressing another reflective thought by which we understand that we are considering the same object in itself and in relationship with another. All this pertains to the pure dialectic of human thought without positing any distinction or plurality in *ens* in itself.

348. Finally, we must ask whether the two really distinct elements in finite *ens* (essence, and what is one or real) have a connection which constitutes a third element. This connection must be considered either as potential or actual.

The potential connection is: 1. the aptitude of initial being to become the ultimate act of the finite real, and 2. the aptitude of finite *ens* to receive this act and so exist. Relative to initial being, this double aptitude is something positive, that is, the property I call *virtuality*; relative to the real, it is simply the *possibility* of existence, whose true foundation lies only in the creative power of God. It cannot be something pertaining to the finite real because this does not yet exist.

If, however, we are speaking about the *actual connection*, we find that this is *finite ens* itself, and precisely the act through which *ens* subsists. Hence, there is nothing between being and the real. When brought together directly, their finalised, permanent contact is finite *ens*. This contact, considered at the moment it happens, is called 'entifying conjunction'.

Plato, after finding *infinite number* in *ens-as-one*, goes on to say that essence must therefore be distributed to whole number and to its parts: 'It is divided as far as possible into minimum and maximum essences, and into all things in whatever mode they are. It is more divided than anything else and its parts are

infinite.’ But because we said that one cannot abandon any part of essence, ‘one distributed by essence is an infinite multitude’ (p. 144).

We have seen that infinite number or, better, indefinite number (the infinite is never found through succession), is composed partly of 1. real entities and 2. of pure, dialectical entities. Real entities are, for instance, the two elements of being and the real, together with the virtuality of being and the resulting finite ens. Pure dialectical entities are, for instance, those resulting from the unending twofold division, made by the mind, of those elements. Consequently, the entities produced from the distributed essence (I would call it ‘initial being’) are always of the same nature; and ‘one’, which follows the essence in its distribution, is of the same kind.

349. But [if] instead of taking abstract one as an element (more accurately, it is an element of an element), we take the true element, that is, the real, we find that the other element, that is, essence (I would say ‘being’), is distributed to the finite real as a result of this element and not *per se*. Hence, *being* and *the finite real* is not distributed in the same way. The finite real is distributed and divided by its finiteness; being is not divided *per se* but gives to the finite real the act which it can receive, while itself remains undivided. We saw therefore that the mind cannot know how any ens whatsoever is a particle of the real without necessarily using the whole of simple, undivided being ([cf. 285 ss.; 302 ss.]). But because the finite real cannot be receptive of the whole act of being, being itself seems to be divided. This is a kind of transcendental illusion, which is dispersed by a higher reflection. The defect in Plato’s reasoning is therefore [that] he attributes multiplicity equally to being and to the one, whereas the true foundation of multiplicity is in the real through its limitation. Consequently, while changing the meaning of the one, he finds that this one becomes the *real one*. After all, ‘that which is one’ can also receive this meaning. But that is not all.

For Plato, then, the one has parts which are always parts of a whole and included in the whole. And because that which includes is term (τό γε περιέχον, πέραις ἂν εἴη), the one also is terminated, that is, finite. He concludes that ‘ens as one is, in some way, one and many, whole and parts, finite and, through multiplication, indefinite’. This clearly shows that his one, as I said,

[349]

changes in meaning (or certainly that the entities in question change) by bundling together real and dialectical entities. Thus, ens-as-one (ἐν ὅν) — which is what the discussion is about — is in itself one, constituted by two inseparable, real elements, although our abstracting thought can find in it indefinite and purely dialectical entities which, strictly speaking, pertain not to ens-as-one but to thought.

Ens-as-one, as a terminated whole, has *beginning*, *middle* and *end*, where the middle is equally distant from the extremes. Hence, that which is has shape. If ‘distance’ and ‘shape’ were not understood in a metaphorical sense, the philosopher would have plunged from the heights of speculation about ens in all its universality into the depths of a particular, corporeal ens. Moreover, the proposition that every existing ens has a *beginning*, *middle* and *end* has several meanings. In a corporeal whole, we can easily distinguish the two extremes and an equidistant, mid-way point. But in simple, spiritual ens it is more difficult, and if we are dealing with infinite ens, only the three hypostases (about which Plato certainly lacked an accurate teaching) could be understood as beginning, middle and end. In finite ens, *being* can be taken as beginning, *reality* as middle, and the *limits*, which give it its proper form, as end.

Granted that the one which has being has parts, each of which is one undivided from the rest, Plato says that it must be in itself and in something other. It is in itself because the parts are in the whole and the parts are one and the whole is one. But the whole is neither in the parts, nor in single parts, nor in some, nor in all. The one is therefore in something other; if it were not in something other, he says, it would be nothing (οὐκοῦν μηδαμοῦ μὲν ὄν οὐδὲν ἄν εἴη). He concludes that, granted the existence of the one, it is in itself and in something other.

350. As I said, if *ens-as-one* is considered to be composed of two elements, the discussion is limited to finite ens alone. Finite ens is certainly, in a sense, all its parts (ἐστὶ δὲ τὰ τε πάντα τὸ ἐν), and these parts are in the whole, so that it is in itself. But this opinion is founded on a twofold way of conceiving real ens and of expressing it. We conceive real ens by starting from its matter as from a subject to which its proper form is attributed, and starting from its proper form to which its matter is attributed. These two ways of mental conception passed from Plato to

Aristotle where they play a large role. We can therefore define real ens as 'all the parts taken together' and as 'the whole which embraces the parts'. Thus, we say that ens taken as parts is in ens taken as whole. But the first definition, when carefully examined, is not valid: the parts are not ens; ens is the union itself of the parts, that is, the whole which the parts form. As a result, the proposition that ens is in ens is not strictly true; the only true proposition is: 'The matter proper to ens is in the form of ens.'

Plato's other proposition states that, unless the one which is, is in another, it would be nothing. According to him this is obvious. He does not support it by proofs, as if the example of body which is always in some place could be applied to ens in all its universality. But a careful examination of the proposition shows that it is not universally true. If it were, the other would have to be in yet another, and so on to infinity. The case is not true even relative to infinite Ens, which alone is in itself. But it is valid for finite ens because finite real ens (entire matter and form) is in being, its ultimate form, and this being is in God, as I have said.

Plato supposed that ens-as-one is in itself and in something other. He therefore deduced that, in so far as it is always in itself, it continually remains stationary; in so far as it is in something other, it is never in itself (*ἀνάγκη μὴδέποτε ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ εἶναι*) and is therefore continually in motion. Moreover, it must be always the same to itself and always other than itself. Similarly, relative to other things, it is other than they in so far as it is the same to itself, and it is the same with them, in so far as other than itself.

But here again, 'rest' and 'motion' are understood figuratively. Every changed aspect in which ens-as-one is considered is called motion; every same aspect is called rest: movement and rest of thought are attributed to ens-as-one. However, is there some truth in this thought of Plato, beyond the dialectical sense?

351. We have seen that *ens-as-one* is said to be in itself when considered as the composite of the parts (matter) which are in the whole (proper form). This is the concept of rest because ens-as-one stands in itself. We also saw that ens-as-one is said to be in something else when it is considered as the whole (proper form) unifying the parts. This is the concept of motion. If we apply this concept to finite ens, we see that considered as a real subject (matter) existing in its proper form, finite ens is

conceived as something stable in itself. But if the whole ens (matter and proper form) is considered as existing in something else, that is, in being which makes it exist, we see [that] it continuously receives existence. Hence, it flows as it were in continuous movement from non-existence to existence. Finite ens therefore neither entirely is nor entirely is not, according to the two aspects in which thought sees it.

But Plato adds that it is both the same and something else, even relative to other things. According to him, these other things, different from ens-as-one are non-ens. This is true for finite ens in the following way. In its proper form, finite ens is considered as subject having being. If this is what finite ens is, it is something other than things which are non-ens. Finite ens is not, but, considered as a whole which exists in being, it is continuously in the making. In this sense, it can be called non-ens and is the same as other things which are non-ens. As non-ens it remains stationary relative to things that are non-ens, but as ens it is continuously in motion, that is, it starts from non-ens and moves to ens.

After showing that *ens-as-one* is both the same for itself and something different from itself, and is also the same and something different relative to other things, Plato deduces that in the same way it is like and unlike both in regard to itself and in regard to other things which are non-ens. Whatever undergoes the same experience is like (τὸ δὲ πού ταὐτὸν πεπονθὸς ὅμοιον, p. 148 [A]). But ens-as-one shares in the idea of what is the same and what is different. If therefore we compare these two participations or experiences, ens-as-one, which shares in what is the same or what is different, is on the one hand unlike to itself (which participates both in what is different or what is the same), and on the other hand is like. We can say the same relative to other things (non-ens) which together with ens-as-one participate in the ideas of what is the same and what is different. It is like or unlike these ideas, depending on whether we are dealing with ens sharing in the same idea or in another idea.

352. Plato next demonstrates that existent one both touches and does not touch itself, both touches and does not touch other things which are non-ens. Here again, we must take 'touch' in a metaphorical sense if we are to continue with at least

a dialectical relationship in which one cannot be thought without the other. He proves his thesis as follows.

We have seen that ens-as-one taken as the totality of the parts is in ens-as-one taken as the whole. One is therefore in itself, and touches itself; it is continuous to itself. But if ens-as-one as totality of the parts is in the whole, understood as the whole, it is not in the parts and thus does not touch itself. The parts are other things, non-ens, when abstraction has been made from the whole. Now, every part can be conceived only as one. Ens-as-one therefore touches other things because each of them is in it. But if the parts are conceived as many, not as one, but as not-one, then ens-as-one does not touch other things different from itself, that is, the many parts without unity. Again, either ens-as-one is thought solely as one, and thus it is not touched because every touch arises between two things; or if ens-as-one is conceived under different aspects, that is, as multiple, it is touched because, as one under all its aspects, human thought sees it as continuous in its different aspects.

In other words, if the parts are considered as pure matter lacking their proper form which makes them single ones (Plato calls this matter τὰ ἄλλα), these other parts are neither one, nor two, nor determined by any number (οὐτ' ἕρα ἐν ἐστὶ τὰ ἄλλα οὔτε δύο, οὔτε ἄλλου ἀριθμοῦ ἔχοντα ὄνομα οὐδέν); contact with the one ceases. But if we consider matter unified by its proper form, then although matter is something different from the form unifying it, it is joined with the form and touches it by means of the one. The one, therefore, is understood in two senses: sometimes as unified matter, sometimes as unifying form, because in fact 'that which is one', that is, that which exists as one, can only be finite real ens in which matter and form are distinguished. It is to this existing one that dialectic is applied — the other element, that is, essence (I call it being), is forgotten.

This contact, therefore, discussed by Plato, is the union between proper form and matter, and between matter and proper form. There is no contact when proper form is considered in abstraction from matter, and matter considered in abstraction from form. Unified matter is considered in its totality, or in its larger or smaller parts, and non-unified matter is neither one nor any other determined number.

353. Plato then proves that ens-as-one is equal to itself and to

other things (the parts) and is thus larger and smaller than itself and other things. In the pure concept of one, the concepts of larger and of smaller are both absent. These concepts are not even present in the concept of other things, that is, of the parts. If therefore neither the largest nor the smallest concept is in one nor even in the other concepts, the one must be equal to itself and to the parts. As we see, this equality is clearly negative; it is an absolute lack of relative size, which is not found in the two concepts.

If we consider that the parts are in the whole, that all the parts together are also ens-as-one, and that the whole is ens-as-one, then ens-as-one is larger than itself because the container is larger than the content: ens as form is larger than ens as matter. Vice versa, ens as matter is smaller than ens considered as form and therefore smaller than itself.

Moreover, because the others, that is, the parts, whether individual or several, can also be conceived as one, the one is larger than the others, that is, the parts, if it is considered as the whole one containing the one, the individual parts or a number of the parts; it is smaller if it is considered one of the individual parts or several parts relative to all the parts. Plato therefore deduces that under these different aspects, the one and the others (the parts) have a greater, smaller or equal number of sizes and parts.

Here, we see the ever-present role of the double definition of the one, based either on its proper form or on its matter. We see also the variation in the ens-as-one we are discussing, a variation dependent on treating ens-as-one not as some determined ens, but as a vague individual.

354. After discussing ens-as-one, considered as one, Plato deals with it as ens, that is, as participating in essence (p. 151 ss.).

He says that if the one is, being must be fitting for it (εἶναι μὲν ποῦ αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει, εἴπερ ἐν ἔσταιν). He considers being as the act of participated essence, which is the meaning of ὑπάρχειν, so much used by Aristotle as well. From this he deduces that *being* is the participation of essence with present time (τὸ δὲ εἶναι ἄλλο τί ἐστίν ἢ μέθεξις οὐσίας μετὰ χρόνου τοῦ παρόντος). If we bear in mind that in *Timaeus* Plato himself says that time originated with the world, we see that the ens-as-one under discussion can be only *finite ens*, although by means of abstraction he will sometimes consider ens in all its universality. He deduces from

this that ens-as-one, by sharing in time and flowing over time, as he explains (πορευομένου τοῦ χρόνου), is present, past and future. It is therefore older, younger and contemporary with itself, and with the other things. Not only is it like this; it makes itself such. If ens flows over time, it becomes older than it was, but also makes itself younger. Moreover, because it is identical, it is contemporary with itself. But when it has touched present time, it no longer makes itself such, but is such. The statement that 'the present, throughout the whole of being, is always next to the one' (τό γε μὴν νῦν ἀεὶ πάρεστι τῷ ἐνὶ διὰ παντός τοῦ εἶναι, p. 152 E) shows the eternity of essence. However, he does not stop here.

He goes on to show that ens-as-one is, and makes itself younger and older and contemporary with other things. He quickly points out that he is speaking about other things (ἕτερα) not the other thing (ἕτερον), because the singular would mean that the other things share in unity, whereas the plural means that other things, that is, parts, pure matter, have no unity. This observation is a key for understanding Plato's use of language.

Other things, understood in this way, are therefore many, but 'the one is made before the many' (πάντων ἄρα τὸ ἐν πρῶτον γέγονε τῶν ἀριθμὸν ἐχόντων). The one is therefore older than the other things, but it has parts, that is, beginning, middle and end. Furthermore, there is no ens-as-one before the end. Hence, ens-as-one is the last to make itself and therefore younger than its parts which other things are. But neither the beginning, nor the middle, nor the end can stand without the one. It is, therefore contemporary with each of the other things. He then shows that ens-as-one is not only such, but makes itself such.

355. Because ens-as-one was, is and will be, he concludes that there is *knowledge* of it; because one-ens was making, makes and will make itself, he concludes that there is *opinion* and *feeling* of it. Here, we clearly see that, for Plato, the argument includes the eternal *ens-as-one* (of which alone, according to him, there is knowledge). He is not aware, however, that he is attributing to eternal ens the properties of *finite ens* which, understood as some vague individual, is the only ens to which his argument applies. It seems therefore that he never formed for himself an accurate concept of God because he attributed to this concept the composition of essence (as ultimate form) and

of the one (proper matter and form) in the likeness of finite ens. Hence, speaking soon afterwards about the continuous conjunction between essence and the one, he falls into the system (copied later by Hegel) of *becoming*, as I said earlier where I quoted his words [cf. 324].

Article 6

The indirect relationship of *act-cause* or *action*

356. When something *real* is entified, it exists.

What therefore is the nature of the real?

The existing finite real is either principle or term or mixed (*PSY*, 2: 842–845). A substance-term has no action, like space. Hence, pure matter considered in abstraction from its proper forms has no plurality relative to its proper modes nor therefore relative to its accidents. These real things cannot, therefore, be discussed here.

The principle-finite-real (such as things composed of principle and term when the term does not constitute the subject but only a condition synthesising with the subject, as in the human soul) has the property of being active and, with this activity, of modifying itself, or other real things in continuity with it, into which the activity passes.

We must therefore consider the activity proper to the finite real, and determine its nature. This activity is reduced to giving a new actuality, a new mode, to itself. ‘Giving a new actuality to itself’ means that we admit a new actuality in the finite real. Acting, undergoing or receiving always supposes an activity in that which acts, undergoes or receives. Consequently, the action of that which is real and exists extends to all this.

357. If we want to classify the *modifications* received by the real from its own *action* (this includes experience and reception), we find that they all reduce to three classes:

1. Modifications which add some actuality to the finite real without destroying previous modifications, or add some greater actuality more important than what has been lost. This is proper to *perfectible entia*; in fact their *perfectibility* consists in this.

[356–357]

2. Modifications which add some new actuality but simultaneously bring about the cessation of another actuality of equal value.

3. Modifications which cause some actuality to cease in real things without adding new actualities, or add less valuable actualities. This constitutes the *deterioration* of real ens.

Whatever these modifications may be, whether 1. perfecting, or 2. indifferent, or 3. causing deterioration, the same real ens is their subject as long as it exists; it is called 'substance'. The *modifications* which are referred to this subject without harming its identity are called 'accidents'.

358. We must now see how being is communicated to these accidental entia. If it did not communicate itself, they would not be.

We must bear in mind that, by means of *entification*, being is joined to all that is real in such a firm bond that it never abandons it. Because the existing real has in itself the activity I have spoken about, being is united to it. When the activity operates, being accompanies the action right up to its term, serving the real thing, as it were, in its movements. Hence, the resultant new accidents, which are the terms of the action of the identical real thing, also receive being.

The action proper to the real produces and changes the accidents in some way, therefore, and is an imitation of creation itself: it communicates being to certain real actualities. However, it differs from creation and entification in this: *creation* produces finite ens (being and the real, simultaneously); *entification* is that through which being is joined to the real (considered abstracted from the creating subject, as this subject is offered to the ontological observation of nature); finally, *action* produces modifications in already existing, finite real ens, of which it is an action.

And as God, when he produces finite ens, necessarily produces an ens different from himself, because it is repugnant that finite ens be infinite, so the finite real produces something pertaining to itself, because it is not repugnant that the thing it produces as a finite term of its action is something pertaining to itself.

I will speak elsewhere about that action of a finite ens by which it loses its identity and becomes something else (the

ancients called this corruption and generation). It is sufficient for the present to note that even in this action, *real* ens communicates the being which it has in itself but does so only by developing that which it has potentially within itself, and to which it is already joined with indissoluble bonds, as it is to all the rest of the real.

359. Three relationships, therefore, exist between being and the real:

1. the relationship of *identity*;
2. the relationship of *entification*;
3. the relationship of *action*.

Article 7

The relationship of subject-cause

360. The real can be considered in relationship either with being as pure act, knowable without the subject which remains hidden, or with being as subject of the pure act and in the act. In the second case, we move away from finite real ens and consider its relationship with infinite real ens, that is, with God who creates it. As we have seen, being, as a subject subsistent in itself, is God. This is precisely the relationship of *creation*.

CHAPTER 6

Does being receive nothing from its conjunction with finite real things?

361. When pure, self-subsistent Being, that is, God, creates finite ens he acts in such a way that 1. the act of creation is in himself, and 2. the created ens is in his creating intelligence as object seen and affirmed in the really subsistent, *per se* intelligible and understood Word. But, in so far as finite ens exists subjectively, it adds nothing to absolute Being and thus is not necessary to its nature. It is therefore freely willed. The creative act and the finite object affirmed in the Word and with the Word is not a change in God,¹⁶⁶ but one of his eternal perfections, as I shall explain better in its own place.

Being, in so far as intuited by us as simple act (separate from the subject), is seen in us not only as pure act, but as actuating real things. This intimate connection with the real makes intuited being become, for our thought, the *dialectical subject* of all real things universally, and of each of them. Every reality in real ens is predicated of it, as of a dialectical subject. But being also presents itself to us as restricted to individual real things. This kind of restriction does not take away from its universal virtuality, as I shall explain.

362. There is, in being intuited by the mind, 1. essence, 2. objectivity and intelligibility. As essence in its virtuality it is and remains universal, but as ultimate, common act of real individual things it truly restricts its act to the real things that receive it. This act of being, however, does not constitute being's necessary essence; it is an act that corresponds to the free act of subsistent being, which we rightly distinguish from the necessary act.

In God, therefore, although he is in himself a single, most pure and eternal act, we distinguish (according to our way of mental

¹⁶⁶ According to St. Thomas: "To change" is used rightly about distancing from a *terminus a quo*; "to become" about accession to a term.* He adds: 'A person who knows is not properly speaking changed when he is considering something, but perfected, as the Philosopher says in bk. 2 (tex. c. 57, 58) *De Anima*'* (*In III Ss*, 2, art. 1, ad 1).

conception) a *necessary act* through which he is, and a *free act* (the creative act), through which the world is. In the same way, we distinguish in being as naturally known to us (that is, act without subject) an act which corresponds to the *necessary act* of God (*virtual being*) and an act which corresponds to the *free act* of God, that is, the act with which he makes individual finite real things exist. I have called this act direct or indirect *entification*.

Moreover, as God, the almighty creator, brings about in himself, in his very own essence, the creative act, so the act of entification remains within virtual being where intelligent subjects join it to the real, which they feel by means of their perceptive affirmation of real entia.

In so far as being itself is object, real entia are also known through the very act with which they are entified relative to us.

However, I have distinguished the free act in the subsistent subject-Being and the act of being which simply actuates the finite real corresponding to the free act. Consequently, we have to consider first the relationship of the finite real with the free act of the subject-Being, that is, with the creative act, and then the relationship of the real with actuating being, which is entification itself visible to us in its effect.

Finite ens is either intelligent or relative to what is intelligent. We have to speak, therefore, of both. First, intelligent finite ens.

363. We have seen that the creative act remains in God and has as its term the divine Word in whom the Father sees and affirms at one and the same time initial being and the real in the world in its objective form. But the World, when seen and affirmed as object, immediately acquires a subjective existence which cannot be in God because it is totally relative to finite ens itself. This subjective existence, proper to the world, emerges as it were from the objective world in God by means of the energy of the divine affirmation. God then makes initial being, which I also call *act-being*, appear as object to some part of the real. In this way, God entifies the real and makes it intelligent. This real ens *is*, because it has being present to it. From this state comes its very own intellective feeling, that is, its principle (*PSY*, 1: 71 ss.) and consequently self-consciousness, when it sees its own principle in the being which is manifest to it. The intellective soul exists in this synthesising conjunction of being with the real because it has received objective being as indivisibly connected with itself. The

intellective soul results, therefore, from two elements. One is the principle proper to the intellect. This is the real, and constitutes the subject (to which the definition of intellective soul is referred); the other is objective being, in the contemplation of which the intellective soul is. The first is lower in dignity to the second; the second is *divine*, as I have shown in an appropriate book (*Del divino nella natura*). It is divine because it is initial being itself which stands as term in the creating mind, but not seen as term of this mind. Initial being is seen only as *act*, an act not seen in the subject which makes it, nor in the object at which the subject gazes in making it, but by itself alone.

But this first constitution of the intellective soul, when formed by the union of a real, intuiting principle and object-being, is followed at some time by an act of the soul itself through which it applies to itself (that is, to its own feeling), and predicates of itself, the being which it first saw as pure object. Along with this act, the soul says: 'I am.' Hence, the celebrated expression on which Fichte and the whole German school constructed all philosophy: 'The soul or the Ego (improperly speaking) posits itself.' This phrase has some truth, understood as a second act; but it is erroneous, and indeed absurd, as I have shown, when it is understood as the first act constituting the soul, making it exist and giving it its own proper real essence.

Nevertheless, we have to agree that this act of the soul, with which it becomes an actual *myself* through consciousness, is of immense importance and is, as it were, the completion of its own proper constitution. Being is indeed first joined as object to the soul and thus renders the soul a subject which intuitively being. But after the affirmation comprised in pronouncing *myself* or the phrase 'I am', being is joined to the soul as one of its subjective qualities, that is, as the act through which the soul is to itself.

Before this act, the soul is not to itself but to God who has affirmed it and united it to objective being.

Now this act of the soul which says 'I' is the first act exercised by created intelligence as subject-cause of relative entification.

364. We come now to finite, non-intellective entia. Almighty God intuitively affirms them in the Word as he wants them to be, that is, relative not to themselves but to intellective entia. He intuitively affirms them together with intellective entia because to him the world is a single object which he makes with a single

act. Thus, finite entia acquire, relative to God, an existence independent of their own action.

But finite entia would not have this subjective, personal existence for this reason alone unless there were amongst them intellectual entia who refer themselves to the being they intuit. These intellectual entia need to receive other things or the actions of these things, which they then refer to being itself without entifying them to themselves.

When I say, 'other things or the action of these things', I do not wish to decide what these things are which have no intelligence. This difficult question pertains to cosmology. This explains why I said 'other things or the action of these things'. I did not want to prejudge such a serious question before time (*PSY*, 2: 747, 758, 775, 777).

365. From all this we can see that there are two subject-causes of entification:

— Subsistent Being, Almighty God, first gives to the world objective existence which remains in him.

— In this objective world, which as objective is not distinguished from the Word except according to the divine reason which distinguishes it, the finite real is situated through the energy of the divine affirmation. The finite real is distinct from God, but relatively only to God himself, not yet to itself.

— Almighty God manifests *act-being* as object to the finite real, but only to part of it, making this part intelligent and giving it an existence of its own.

— Because this intelligent real has as object *act-being*, identical to that which is in the divine mind, it becomes subject-cause of relative entification and thus acquires a likeness to God.

— This intellectual finite real, by exercising its entifying potency of predicating being of the real (in the act by which it feels or sensibly perceives the real) completes its own subjective, personal existence and entifies all other real things felt by it in the entification relative to itself. No other entification except dialectical existence¹⁶⁷ is possible for entia which exist without a faculty of reason.

¹⁶⁷ By 'dialectical existence of non-intellectual entia' I mean the way we understand such entia in an absolute mode, as if they existed to themselves. In fact, they exist only to intellectual entia, of which the first is their creator.

There are therefore two subject-causes of entification: subsistent Being, and the intellectual principle created by subsistent Being.

366. Finite real things in their own subjective existence posit nothing in subsistent Being; they give it nothing. But subsistent Being gives itself from all eternity objective, finite ens because it intuits it in the Word (proper to the subsistent Being, where it is indistinct), and distinguishes it through the act of creative affirmation. This act also remains in God, indistinct from the act with which almighty God is being.

The created, intellectual principle, because it is not being, cannot, as subject-cause of entification, exercise this act, that is, attribute something of itself to the real. Only Almighty God, as Being itself, can affirm something of himself (the objective finite real) by creating the world. Human beings, therefore (and the same can be said of every finite intelligence) attribute being, different from themselves, to the real. The being which they intuit, however, is purely act and not subject. The reason why being is seen as actuating the finite real is this: pure being actuating the finite real is the term of the divine affirmation and retains something of the efficacy of this supremely real affirmation. But it does not follow from this that such being is seen in union with the divine affirmation. It is seen only in relationship with finite real things which are at the same time terms of the affirmation. The proof lies here: being is seen purely as act, not as creating subject.¹⁶⁸ We have to say, therefore, that in our perception or entification of real things the being that we first intuited as virtual shows us certain of its acts relative to real things which are in the divine affirmation. However, we do not see this affirmation entirely, nor do we see the principle, that is, the subject, which makes the affirmation. It is in this manner that finite real things are true terms of this *actuating* being ([cf. 308 ss.]).

¹⁶⁸ Consequently, *being* intuited by the human mind is not seen in God. If it were seen in God, we would see God, as St. Thomas shows (II-II, q. 173, art. 1). In this case, God would be seen as subject-Being.

CHAPTER 7

The properties of being, communicable to finite real things, and predicable of them

367. If we consider the logical order of the creative act, we shall find that *virtual being* must be first to appear in the divine mind, followed by the finite real, which the divine mind designs in the infinite real as in an object which contains eminently the finite real — as if while looking at a circle, we imagine a polygonal shape in it. This design or circumscription of the real must be made according to the norm of virtual being. Finally, we have the divine affirmation which entifies this *formed* and determined *real* in its proper order.

In fact, the *finite real* could not exist in itself if it were not determined and therefore furnished with its own proper forms and with the order of these forms which derives from the unity and harmony of the universe (*PSY*, 2: 1357 ss., 1372 ss.). The *finite real*, when stripped of all its determining forms, is nothing more than a dialectical entity which cannot receive existence in itself. Some have called it *first matter* (*PSY*, 2: 779–815), but it could be called *abstract reality* to avoid the danger of restricting the concept to corporeal matter. There is no doubt that a pure reality, without form or determination, or indeed anything real that is not completely determined, cannot exist in itself, cannot receive the being which entifies it (*PSY*, 2: 770 ss.)

We have to establish this logical order in the entification of the finite real. First, the undetermined or *pure real* comes into the mind; this *real* then receives the *forms* that determine it; finally, the *real* receives being which makes it exist in itself, which entifies it.

But in the entification, which we carry out relative to ourselves, of the finite real, we add only *being*, not the determination and proper form of the real. The real, which is our feeling or the action felt in our feeling (*PSY*, 1: 778), is given to us in nature fully determined and formed. We have to say, therefore, that Almighty God, in communicating to us in some way a likeness of his entifying power, communicates only the likeness of

the final act which makes entia of already determined real things. He does not communicate the likeness of the divine act which produces finite real things relative either to matter or to form, except for the fact that the majority of real things, as I said, have a potency for modifying themselves and for modifying one another reciprocally.

368. We have seen that the form of the finite real must precede the communication (to the finite real) of the being that makes the finite real exist in itself. We now have to see if this form, imposed on the real, comes from *being* itself or is different from being, as it is certainly different from matter. Although there is no doubt that this form comes from *being*, it does not come from being as actuating real things, but from being as the intelligibility of things, as idea. Only as a result of a given end could the limits of the real be determined and a proper form be granted to it, along with order connecting a plurality of real things. Assigning the end, however, pertains to the practical intelligence of God which is never separated from his speculative intelligence.

God, therefore, who is essentially lovable and loved, who is end for himself, and directs all things that he makes to this end through an instinct of love, must have conceived the World as ordained towards this end. In order to find the end, he had then to apply (according to human analysis which breaks up the divine operation) virtual being as first universal idea. This idea makes known and invents all the ordered forms with which virtual being must be clothed if the World is going to attain its end in the most suitable way. The forms, the sequence and the order of the things in the world must therefore have been conceived by God prior to the existence in itself of the finite real. They must have existed in him in the state of ideas, together with the objective finite real seen in the Word. The finite real constituted the foundation of the relationship with initial being. Seen as such, it was pronounced by God and created.

It follows from this that being, according to the logical order, communicates to finite real things, before they exist, something of itself in the divine mind. This it does in order then to make them exist in themselves. Before they exist, being, as determining, communicates to them in the divine mind the ideal form (exemplar of the world). According to the norm established by

this form, and strictly speaking simultaneously with this form, Almighty God gives them actuating being, that is, being as the final determination through which they exist subjectively (or extrasubjectively) in themselves. They could not receive existence without first having that determining form. *Being* is 1. intelligibility, that is, idea, 2. at the same time, essence. As intelligible it makes known to the divine mind the determinations that finite real things should have in order to attain the end pre-established for them by essential goodness. At the same time, they receive their proper existence from divine affirmation through initial being as actuating essence. Later, I shall speak more at length about this.

369. The exemplar in the divine mind derives, therefore, from being. This exemplar is an ordered composite of full, specific ideas, and is seen in the Word where it exists eminently. There, the divine mind by its own energy distinguishes it, and the effective power of God directs his own proper creative act so that the finite real which he creates may correspond to this exemplar. This correspondence consists in the way that limitations imposed on the creating act by the creating, exemplifying mind are the same in the subjective and extrasubjective existence proper to the world.

In fact, in the affirmed, infinite real object, that is, in the Word, everything already is. The finite real results from the limitations described in it by God's thought. Within these limitations the divine affirmation produces the finite real, the World.

All that is in the world is in fact in God, but unlimited and in an eminent mode. As soon as absolute Being not only affirms as unlimited the real of which I have spoken (that is, generates the eternal Word), but also, with his intelligence, affirms it as limited, the temporal world exists. Activity, feeling, intelligence — in a word, everything present in the finite real — is in the infinite real. But there is much more, and in a much more excellent way. Hence, what is added to determine this are simply *limits*. Once determined, the finite real is simultaneously made to exist by the divine affirmation.

The forms, therefore, exist in the finite real as limitations that determine it. These *real forms*, or subjective and extrasubjective determinations, are certainly different from the *divine ideas* which express at one and the same time the real, and the

limitations within which the real remains enclosed in an objective mode. The finite real, however, has, as its real, subjective and extrasubjective form, only the limits determining, dividing and distinguishing it. Thus, specific ideas are not yet imposed upon things as their *real forms*. Aristotle, who confused specific ideas with real forms, was not aware of this, and believed that real forms could be separated from their matter (that which is comprehended within the limits) and thus be changed into ideas. But ideal being, when given to finite intelligences, is not given as real, subjective form. It is manifested to them as undetermined object, and nothing more. The real form comes to the intuiting principle from this manifestation, as from its cause.

370. God, with his mind, determined and designed the limits to the finite real, in the very act of creating it, by deducing them from initial being as consequences from principle. In the same way, human beings, to whom initial, universal being is present, bring to it the felt real. Because of this reconnection, the limits of what is felt remain designed in being. From them we then form full, specific ideas (from which all other ideas come through abstraction). However, we cannot transport the real into ideal being because it has, relative to us, only a subjective and extrasubjective existence, not an objective, eminent existence as it has in God. Because of this, it remains in the intuiting mind not as a real object, but only as an *idea*. We know the finite real with the same, sole act (as a result of the unity of the intelligent and sentient principle) with which we simultaneously intuit the idea, and feel and affirm the corresponding felt real.¹⁶⁹ We affirm the real in the idea, saying as it were: 'What is felt is

¹⁶⁹ St. Thomas says: 'Knowledge is twofold. First, and principally, it is concerned with universal reasons (ideas), on which it is founded. In another, secondary way and, as it were, through a certain reflection, it is concerned with the same reasons in so far as it applies them with the help of lesser forces to the particular things of which they are reasons.' This is what we call 'knowledge of predication' or 'affirmation', which comes about *adminiculo inferiorum virium* [with the help of lesser forces], that is, with the aid of feeling. He continues: 'The person who knows makes use of universal reason as something *known* and as a *means of knowledge*. By means of human universal reason, I can JUDGE about this or that.' This is knowledge brought about through judgment, that is, through affirmation, something that interests also particular felt entities. Cf. St. Thomas, *Super Boet. De Trinit.*, q. 5, article 20.

comprised within these limits of being.' This is the part we play. In our own single feeling we apply the real to being by considering being as intelligible, that is, as idea. In doing this, we restore to being, as we may say, the limits, forms and order which through the divine mind have come from being to the real. But what is the origin of this reconnection? What exactly is it?

Being is not only intelligible (idea), but also essence. Being as essence is, as I said, what actuates the real. This is what I may call the physical connection of being with the real, and it is here that we find the reconnection of which I was speaking. In other words, it consists in seeing that the real is actuated by being (this is done in perception, not in simple intuition). Consequently, the real is a term of an action of being, of an action not necessary to being but simply existent in such a way that being can be thought as whole without this term, even though it has it. If this physical connection between being, as actuating essence, and the finite real, were not, and were not apprehended, we could not intuit the felt real as intelligible in being. In other words, we could not make the reconnection because principle and term would not possess any union. But because, in perception, being is seen as actuating the real, even its smallest parts and in the act proper to it (being is the act of all acts), being and the real are apprehended in intimate union without the loss of any actuality on the part of the real. Thus the whole of the real is understood in being. Consequently the real is said to be objectivated, not object, because in the objectivated real the beginning of ens (that is, being) can always be discerned by the mind as separate from the term, that is, the felt real which is not being itself.

371. Having considered all these things, we return to our question: 'What are the properties of being, communicable to finite real things, and predicable of them?'

As I said, being presents itself in its relationship with finite real things 1. as intelligible, that is, as idea, and 2. as essence actuating the real.

Our question, therefore, is divided into two other subordinate queries:

1. What are the properties that being communicates to finite real things as a result of its essential intelligibility?

2. What are the properties that being communicates to finite real things, as essence actuating them?

But before resolving such questions, we need to note that in them we are no longer speaking of 'being' cut off completely from its forms. We are speaking of *being* which retains something of its eternal, proper forms. If we were to take being rigorously cut off from its forms, every relationship between it and the finite real which pertains to its forms would be taken away. In fact, when we consider being as essentially intelligible, as idea relative to us, we already consider it in its object-I've and divine form. When we consider it as actuating the finite real, we consider it as retaining its real, subjective form because 'to act' is the characteristic proper to this form, just as 'making known' is proper to the first form. As I said, such a communicative activity of existence to finite real things pertains to the creative act, although the divine subject of this act remains hidden.

372. I reply now to the first of the two questions into which I have split the general question that I proposed. From what has been said, we can see that:

1. The divine ideas about the world come from being as virtual and intelligible.

2. These ideas have, as their foundation in God, the infinite real in its objective form, that is, the Word. They have, therefore, a real foundation but, as real, are not distinguished from the Word himself except mentally through an intuitive act of the divine mind. The distinction, therefore, remains in the divine mind.

3. These ideas prescribe *limits* for the finite real, object of the creative affirmation. These limits constitute the *real forms* of finite entia, which must be created.

4. These *real limits* or forms are not divine ideas, but the effect of the creative act directed and circumscribed by divine ideas.

5. Therefore the *real forms* of the world in their proper subjective and extrasubjective existence are not a participation of *actuating being*, but limitations, posited beforehand on the real by the divine Mind.

6. These *limits* are conditions and predispositions making the finite real capable of receiving existence because it is they

[372]

which determine it (if it were to remain undetermined it could not receive existence in itself).

7. Through these forms, limits and determinations, the finite real acquires a special relationship with intelligible, initial being, even though the finite real has nothing more in itself than a subjective and extrasubjective existence. Through this relationship it becomes intelligible because these limits and forms come from being, not as *actuating being*, but as *intelligible being*. The divine mind traced them by taking as its norm the ultimate end it proposed to itself in creating the world.

Indeed, the finite real is not knowable *per se*, in so far as it exists subjectively and extrasubjectively, because it is not object. It does not exist in God except eminently in the Word, and as idea in the intuiting mind of God. It could not, therefore, be known unless it had the limits and the real forms which I have described. But these are limitations of *actuating being* itself which gives existence to the real. They are knowable, therefore, as limitations and determinations of *initial being* itself.

373. This explains why Plato and Aristotle, and all the more well-known philosophers, have always taught that 'only the form (separate from matter) of worldly entia has an intelligible nature'. Matter itself is not intelligible.¹⁷⁰ However, they did not grasp the true reason for the intelligibility of form and of the non-intelligibility of matter. We can summarise this reason as follows: 'Pure, undetermined matter cannot receive being. But only *being* is intelligible. Therefore matter remains unintelligible.' On the other hand, 'The form of matter, and more generally of reality, is that which determines reality which, as determined, is susceptible of the actuating being that makes it exist. As susceptible of being it is therefore susceptible of intelligibility either through the being it can receive (idea), or through being joined to it in fact (knowledge proper to affirmation).' Determined reality, therefore, is intelligible not as subjective or extrasubjective reality, but through its determination or

¹⁷⁰ Plato, *Thaet.*, pp. 185–186 — Arist., *De Anima*, 3: 4, 6, 8; *Metaphysics*, 1: 7; 8: 10, 13, 16; 9: 7; 11: 1–2; 13 — *Sophist*, 22, §17 — St. Thomas, also, following Aristotle, says: 'Everything is known through its form'* (*Super Boeth. de Trinit.*, q. 5, art. 2).

limitation. Moreover, the limitation or determination of finite real entities comes about in the mind of God before they are in themselves. We have therefore: first, limitation and determination of intelligible being, then limitation and determination of creative efficiency, and finally of the finite real, existing in itself. This limitation and determination is therefore: 1. in ideal being; 2. then in creative efficiency; finally 3. in the finite real in itself. Because it is first in being, it is knowable as something of being; in the finite real it is unknowable except in so far as it shares *actuating being* which makes it exist and restricts its act within the limitation and determination that I have spoken about. But this *actuating being* is not the determined real, because this real, although determined, is not known in itself — it is not being. It is known through its relationship with being, a relationship established first by the divine mind, then manifested to the human mind in the act of perception.

We can therefore draw a philosophical explanation from the metaphorical phrase used by Aristotle and other philosophers: 'Form is known by separating it from matter.'¹⁷¹ What is this separation from matter? How can the form of a real remain separate from the real itself? The answer to this question is left in the dark by philosophers who perhaps have never uttered it. They acknowledge, however, that this is the work of intelligence. But does intelligence have the strength to operate on the real and divide the two elements which compose it, and are indivisible? No progress can be made here. But everything is clear in the theory I have set out. Before limits are in *being* which *actuates* the real, they are in the real. But such being is knowable *per se*. Limits found in the felt real by us are seen in ideal object-I've being itself, and in it are separated from the real and thus from matter.

374. But how can these limits be common to the real and the ideal? — Because they are proper to ens, and because what is proper to ens and not proper to the form of ens, is common to the three forms. We have already seen that entia are divided into two *supreme classes* (cf. 144–146) which are neither forms nor genera. These two classes are absolute Being and limited, relative being. Both these entia have their three forms although in

¹⁷¹ *De Anima*, 3: 4.

different modes. We have to distinguish the three forms, therefore, even in limited ens. But that which is common to these three forms pertains to ens itself, and not to the form, according to the principle I have laid down. Consequently, the limits constituting the determinations of limited ens are through their nature prior to the forms constituting limited ens, and thus must be reduced to being itself, not to some proper form.

We can conclude our answer to the first of the partial questions we have asked by saying that finite real ens [receives] from being as intelligible its own *proper form*, which is reduced to the limitations of the real. It receives this imposition in the divine mind, before existing in itself. Finite intelligence does not in anyway share in this power of imposing form on the finite real. It can, however, know forms already imposed and use them, up to a point, to change the forms of real things. This happens for example in works of art.

375. We come now to the second partial question: 'What are the properties which being communicates to finite real things as essence actuating them?'

This question is easier because it is clear that being as actuating communicates existence in itself (subjective or extra-subjective) to determined finite real things. Existence is the act of all that can be thought as actual in the determined real. In fact, although *acting* is proper to determined finite real, it must come after *existing*. Before existence, there is only the concept of potential action, which is not true action. Finally, being as actuating communicates to finite ens the intelligibility of perception, that is, of affirmation, because *being* in any of its acts is always intelligible.

I now have to speak separately about all that *being* communicates to the [finite] real. First, therefore, I shall consider the three ultimate properties, that is, *existence*, *act* and *intelligibility of predication*, which come to the real from being as actuating essence. Then I shall consider *form* as it is common to all finite entia and comes to them from being as intuitively intelligible.

SECTION FOUR

WHAT SUBJECTIVE BEING COMMUNICATES TO FINITE REAL THINGS

CHAPTER 1

The first property communicated to finite real things by initial, actuating being is existence

Article 1

Existence

376. Existence, therefore, as we see from what has been said, pertains to being, in any ens whatsoever.

If existence is essential to the ens of which it is predicated, this ens is necessary. In such a case, the ens is being itself which is not solely initial, but is in itself terminated. Moreover, because being is infinite, this ens, which is simply being terminated in itself, is God. This is the process by which the human mind arrives at God. Let us consider the process in the order of reflection. The mind, after forming for itself the dialectical concept of initial being, applies it to an ens to which the mind believes it is essential. Now if being is essential to such an ens, this ens is being. But an ens is always terminated. Being, therefore, must be terminated in this case; it is no longer initial. Such is the concept of complete, absolute being. Here, the terms are proper, not foreign, to being because being terminates itself.

But existence is also conceived as something accidental in a given ens, in which case the ens is not being itself — finite, contingent entia are of this kind. Such an ens considered in itself is

not being. Hence, it can only be a term of *being*, because everything is either being or a term of being (bk. 1 [*The Categories*]). This term is not proper to *being*, but foreign and improper. In fact, being is conceived perfect without such a term. Moreover, being is not found in the essence of this ens, just as the ens is not found in the essence of being, except virtually.

Consequently, 'being' found in such an ens, devoid of the term which does not pertain to its essence, remains before the mind as initial, actuating being, but nothing more.

The ens, therefore, is recognised as composed of 1. a term and 2. initial being, that is, of what is finite and real, and of being.

Nevertheless, initial, *pure being* is common to absolute being and is therefore divine. However, in absolute ens it is *identical*; in finite ens it is *different* from the ens (cf. *Del Divino* etc.).

Article 2

Duration

377. Duration is indivisible from existence (*PSY*, 2: 1363 ss.); if an ens did not last in any way, it would not exist.

The finite real receives, therefore, along with existence the duration proper to being. This provides the foundation for time but is not time itself, because duration is not succession, although succession comes about in duration. *Succession* does not come to the finite real from being, but is proper to the real. Time, then, is the relationship of succession with duration (*PSY*, 2: 1139 ss.).

Hence, the two elements constituting time have their reason and explanation in the duality of finite ens. Duration is in one of the elements, that is, being, while changeableness and consequent succession is in the other element, the real.

CHAPTER 2

The second property: initial, actuating being communicates to finite real things the act of their acts

378. Let us now consider existence under the concept of act. In fact, the existence of a being is the act of all its acts, as I have said. But to illustrate this concept of act we must compare it with that of potency.

Article 1

Concept of potency and act

379. The concept of act involves a relationship with that of *potency*.

A primal fact provided by the observation of contingent entia is that they are found in different states without losing their identity. Consequently, on passing from one state to another, the state to which they pass is implicitly existent in them as in a seed. These states which still do not exist, although the active principle producing them under certain conditions certainly does exist, are called 'states in potency'.

'Potency, therefore, is a cause which at the same time is the subject of its own effect' [*App.*, no. 3].

The cause of this effect, in so far as the effect is already produced, is considered as subject of the effect and is said to be in act. The effect itself is said to be the *act* of this subject. But this subject, in so far as it is considered as cause of such an effect, is said to be *potency*. If this effect however has not yet been produced, the subject of which we are speaking is *in potency*.

The human mind, considering the nature of such a cause as subject of its effect, and the nature of this effect as a state different from its cause, forms for itself the *concepts of act* and of *potency*, which depend on the prior and more general notions of *cause* and *effect*.

These concepts themselves take their origin from what we see

[378–379]

happening in contingent entities that compose the world, the direct object of our perception. If nothing changed, these concepts of cause and effect would never arise. They presuppose that something *new* occurs, and every novelty, every new happening, supposes a contingent nature. This, in fact, is how ideology explains the origin of cause and effect (*NE*, 2: 615, 628 [618], 637–638).

Granted, therefore, these concepts of *cause* and *effect*, the concepts of *act* and *potency* originate. Potency is a kind of cause, although not every cause is potency in the sense of the given definition. ‘Potency’ is the name given only to that cause which is at the same time the subject of its own effect. The act is a kind of effect, but not every effect is an act that remains in the productive cause as in its subject.

Article 2

Concept of virtuality

380. The concept of *virtuality* is very different from that of *potency* (as given in the definition above).

I define virtuality in this way: ‘Virtual is that which thought sees to be contained in something, from which, however, it is not *per se* distinct, although it can be distinguished by thought, or even receive an existence by itself, separate from that of the thing in which it is found indistinctly.’

For example, thought sees a smaller number contained in a larger number. The smaller number is not distinct from the larger in which it is contained because, if it were, the larger number would no longer be that number. Nevertheless, thought can see the smaller number in the larger, and can see it even separate from the larger as another number without any consequent alteration in the larger number. Equally, thought can see many polygons in a circle. They are, however, indistinct. If they were distinct, there would no longer be the simple shape of a circle. Nevertheless, they can be thought by themselves, without the circle and without any need to alter the circle. In the same way, all geometric shapes of any size and form whatsoever can be thought in the unlimited extension of space, although

they are not distinct in it. And these shapes themselves can be thought without unlimited extension.

This is the concept of what is *virtual*. If we understand it abstractly, we have *virtuality*. But virtuality is predicated both of that which is *virtual* and of that which contains in itself what is virtual — in other words, the entity that thought distinguishes in what is virtual, although this entity is not *per se* distinct in what is virtual. In the first case of predication we say: ‘This is virtually in that’; in the second case: ‘This virtually contains that.’ The virtuality of the former is relative to its own existence; the virtuality of the latter is relative to the existence of that which it holds within itself, and which has no distinct existence in itself, although it can have existence outside itself, at least as object of thought.

It is clear from this that not always having virtuality is an imperfection in the container. In regard to the content (and relatively to thought which posits it in something other), virtual existence is imperfect existence and in itself is not even existence.

381. But we need to look at the different species of *virtuality* and find when it indicates imperfection or non-existence, and when it does not.

I have distinguished two kinds of cause: 1. potency-cause and 2. non-potency-cause.

Now the effect always exists virtually in the cause.

I. But the effect of the *potency-cause* remains in the cause, because the cause is the subject of which the effect is an inherent act. This act perfects the cause by giving it an act of its own which forms part of itself, the subject. In this case, the virtuality of the potency-cause is an *imperfection* — a lack of actuality which this cause must have in order to be a subject in act. Relative to this act, its virtuality is *non-existence*; the act does not exist as long as it is virtual, except purely in thought which sees it as possible. If we strip the potency-cause of everyone of its acts, we are left with the concept which the ancients formed of *pure matter*, that is, of pure *potentiality*. The *imperfection* of this potency-cause was pushed to such an extent here that it became *non-existence*. In fact, the *potency-cause* without any act at all cannot have existence in itself, nor is it a subject — except a dialectical subject — to

which acts can be attributed. It remains, therefore, a mere entity of reason produced by *hypothetical abstraction* (PSY, 2: 787).¹⁷²

II. The same cannot be said about non-potency-cause.

The effect produced by this cause — an effect which has its own existence, altogether separate from the existence and essence of the cause — does not perfect the cause. For example, a man is perfectly man whether he has a child or not, because the act of existence of the child is not part of the act with which the father exists. If we mentally conceive that a man virtually contains a child, this virtuality seen in the man is not an imperfection because he has no need of the child in order to be a perfect man. If, however, we consider the virtuality in the child who is the effect, the virtual child has no existence in itself, and only thought distinguishes it in the cause. The virtual child, therefore, is nothing more than an entity of reason.

In this second genus of efficient causes, the effect of which has an existence distinct from that of cause and is not itself the act of this cause, we have to distinguish the effect itself from the act with which the effect is produced. This act is proper and inherent to the producing cause. Relative to this act, it is the *potency-cause* before producing the act.

But we also have to consider that this act which produces the effect is *transient* or *permanent*. If it is transient, the effect perfects the cause only in the moment in which the act endures, and in that moment perfects it only in so far as this cause is cause relative to that effect. Consequently, the subject of the cause does not necessarily remain perfected when the act ceases. Indeed,

¹⁷² This concept is indeed different from that of *prime, corporeal matter* which is the result of *thetical abstraction*, considered in *Psychology*, 2: 788–789, where I proposed that the phrase ‘prime matter’ should be reserved to indicate this matter alone. *Potentiality* or some similar name would be reserved for the concept of a potency-cause devoid of all its acts. Prime matter, in the sense of *corporeal force*, stripped by the mind of all its other qualities and determinations, represents a real element, and hence a real subject of the other qualities and determinations present both in existing bodies and in the thought which adds them to the real subject. The abstraction producing this concept is, therefore, *thetical*. On the other hand, simple, absolute potentiality, without any act at all, presents no real element and is, therefore, produced by *hypothetical abstraction*.

the subject itself may then remain weakened and undermined if, for example, the act producing the effect were malicious (moral deterioration) or too strong for the subject doing it (physical deterioration).

If we are dealing with a permanent act, we find that this too can be good or bad, and can consequently perfect or ruin the subject of the cause, although the cause, considered abstractly as cause relative to the effect, would remain perfected. This is the case with all habits.

Finally, we have supposed that the act which produces an effect whose existence is different from that of the cause has a beginning, and we have said that the cause, before such an act can be brought about, is *potency* relative to the act. But if the act were *eternal*, as in God's creative act, the cause would never be potency, and could only be conceived as such dialectically through hypothetical abstraction.

III. Up to now we have considered the *potency-cause*, the *non-potency-cause*, and the two kinds of *virtuality* proper to them. These causes, because they are *efficient causes*, pertain to the real subjective and extrasubjective form of being. All efficiency, all action, pertains to real ens.

382. But now, if we consider being in its objective form, we shall find a third kind of *virtuality*. It consists in this: the intelligence, in contemplating an *object*, can distinguish in it several entities and consider each one separately as if it were an object by itself.

The object in which the intelligence distinguishes such multiple entities is one; otherwise it would be several objects, not one. Because the object is one, and the entities distinguished in it by the mind are many, the mind, by considering each entity, separates them, and, posits of its own accord in the object the separation which breaks the unity of the object. We say, therefore, that all these multiple entities are, like parts, *virtually* contained in the one object contemplated by the mind. This virtuality does not necessarily suppose any imperfection in the object because the object, relative to these entities separated by the mind, is not a *potency*. They do not exist separately as an act of the object itself, but as an effect of the mind's contemplation of the object, that is, as an effect of the limitation which the thinking subject places to its own gaze. It is, of course, true that

the mind, in order to limit its gaze in this way, needs to have the entire object present, and to distinguish the entities in the object, but the separation is posited by the mind itself; it is an effect of the mind alone. We have to distinguish, therefore, the object in itself from the relationship that the object has with the mind. There is, as it were, a twofold existence of the object, one proper to the object, the other relative to the mind. The object in itself, in so far as it has a proper existence, is one and indivisible, and as such is continually present to the mind (*PSY*, 2: 1319 ss.); otherwise it would not be object. But the same object, in so far as it has an existence relative to the mind, is broken up by the mind which sees many things in it and separates them. Nevertheless, as I said, the object does not cease to remain whole and entire in itself before the mind.

This is objective, mental virtuality.

383. This, however, is subdivided into many classes which, if accurately distinguished, are highly useful in theosophy. The principle of this subclassification is as follows. As I said, the *object* in which the mind distinguishes several things is *one*. But the unity enjoyed by the object can be of various kinds. This differing nature of the unity enjoyed by the object is the principle of the subclassification of which we are speaking because *virtuality* is nothing more than 'the mode of existence which the many have in the one.' Let us apply this principle.

A) The *object-as-one* which contains the many can be an object whose *unity* is dialectical, that is, it is the work of our mind either totally or in part. In such a case, the parts (one separated from the other) composing it have in themselves a true, actual existence, and the *virtuality* — the mode with which they exist unified in the object — is *dialectical*.

If we give the name 'heap' to a collection of various things, we have arbitrarily created a unity which those disparate things do not possess in any way. In this case, the word 'heap' expresses a purely dialectical object, granted that the unity of the heap is entirely the work of our mind. The mind, when it distinguishes and separates this multiplicity of things in the single object (heap) simply destroys, through this separation, its own work. The 'heap', therefore, as dialectical object, includes virtually all these individual things which actually exist in themselves. But

the object in which they exist only in a mode relative to the arbitrary act of the mind which invented it.

Sometimes, however, the dialectical object is not wholly *dialectical*, that is, it is not an arbitrary product of mental activity. Its unity arises from a mixture of real, ideal and moral bonds which would not however be sufficient to fully constitute such a unity without the intervention of the mind. In this case, the mind carries out a dialectical operation in order to complete the unity and thus constitute a one-object. This happens whenever the one-object is composed of several entia which exist by themselves taken individually as, for instance, in a society of persons, or in any organic unit of several entia, such as a machine. These organic units may contain real bonds. For example, in a machine, various forces act reciprocally; in a society, real acts of individual members constitute social behaviour; ideal bonds, such as the end imposed on the society or the machine, are present; in society, there are also moral bonds such as reciprocal obligations. But if such objects are conceived as possessing unity, the mind must intervene to add a dialectical operation, that is, abstraction. The unity of the machine-object is conceived only on condition that the parts of which it is composed are considered abstractly, that is, relative to the end of the machine itself. In society, likewise, the mind must consider the persons who compose the society not only as human beings, but also abstractly as human beings who are *members* of that society — for example, citizens, if we are dealing with civil society. When the mind considers the parts of these *dialectical organisms*, therefore, it considers true entia which exist *virtually* in the single object, but only as *abstract entities*. What we have, therefore, is an *abstract*, not a merely dialectical, virtuality. And that which has a virtual, abstract existence in one-object has a real, actual existence in itself.¹⁷³

B) There is a *purely ideal* unity of the object, present in the *idea* of universal being. When the mind distinguishes several properties or elementary concepts such as unity, universality

¹⁷³ Note that the intelligence would not have the power to constitute dialectical and arbitrary *unities* of the whole or of parts unless *virtual being* were present to it. Virtual being is the foundation of every unity and of every unification, even merely mental unification.

and so on, in universal being (*NE*, 2: 575 ss.), and considers each on its own, it forms in their regard dialectical concepts which, taken separately from the object in which it distinguishes them, do not exist. We say, therefore, that they have a *virtual existence* in the object, and a purely *dialectical, actual existence*. This kind of virtuality does not involve any imperfection in the object in which it is found. Rather, it is a perfection of the object because the virtual existence of such entities is a united, simple existence and the virtuality is relative only to dialectical division on the part of the mind. But *unity* is a property of perfection, while *division* and its correlative separation is a property of imperfection.

We can, therefore, establish the universal principle that ‘every time the word “virtual” is relative only to separation in such a way that it expresses nothing more than virtual *separation*, it implies perfection, not imperfection, in the object’.

C) There is *unity proper to the ideal and real object*. By ‘ideal and real object’, I understand that the object is an ens which can subsist in itself, and can also be thought in the idea. These objects appertain to the *full species*, which, as fully determined, can serve as exemplar for the production of a *really* subsistent ens. But the unity of this ens can be conceived as a property of the *full idea*, or as a property of the *real ens*.

Equally, it is possible to conceive *virtuality* in the one-object as *idea*, and in the one-object as *real ens*.

Let us consider both virtualities.

384. I. *Virtuality, in the object, which has its reality as a basis.*

Real ens has more or less perfect, real unity, which I shall divide here into two degrees for the purpose I have in mind.

First degree of unity. Some real entia, although possessing *real unity*, can nevertheless be divided. This division allows other entia to subsist, still fully determined and real.

Second degree of unity. Some real entia have such perfect unity that they admit of no division because they have no parts which can subsist by themselves as real entia.

1. Entia which have some real unity, but admit of division giving rise to other real entia.

I do not mean that pure corporeal matter, although determined by some measure and shape, appertains to these entia. Measure and shape give unity relative only to the sentient

principle which holds the matter within that unity (*AMS*, 94 ss.). Unity is proper to the sentient principle, not to corporeal matter which is simply the term of the sentient principle. Only the mind attributes some kind of unity to an inorganic body (or one considered as such) by taking this unity from the relationship between the body and the sentient principle. But this unity is *dialectical*, and pertains to those objects formed by the dialectical operations of the mind of which I have spoken. Hence the division of such a body provides real entia whose nature is equal to that of the body which is divided. If these real entia are considered as virtually contained in the whole body before it is divided, we are dealing only with a *dialectical virtuality* of the second kind when we prescind, as we have done here, from every organic power intrinsic to the body. Otherwise, the body would belong to organic bodies, which is against our present supposition. I am speaking about the second kind because the dialectical unity is not entirely arbitrary: it finds a real bond in the relationship of this body with the sentient principle. — It will be objected perhaps that the body acquires some kind of unity from the unity of the space it occupies, but I shall speak of the unity of extension later. For the moment, it is sufficient to say that even such a unity is unity of term, that is, relative to the sentient principle which contains the term.

384a. Composite entia, therefore, which have some real unity and which admit of division from which arise other real entities, are:

a) Those which are a single subjective principle, but have divisible terms. For example, human beings who, at death, are separated into intellectual soul and body. — These two separate elements have a *virtual* existence in human beings.

But is this *virtuality*, with which these elements exist in human beings, an imperfection in man? Or is this virtual existence an imperfection of these elements found in man? — To answer these questions, we have to examine the two separated entia to see if they acquire, as a result of their separation, a better and more excellent state than they had in their virtual existence. Now it is clear that the separated body is an ens greatly inferior to the body united to the intellectual soul, and that the soul itself, deprived of its natural instrument, has lost some of its

[384a]

natural perfection. This *virtuality*, therefore, is not in any way an imperfection, but a perfection relative to the separated entia. And relative to human beings, who virtually contain these entia in their unity, virtuality is more than simple perfection because it is that which constitutes their nature, without which they do not exist.

We can, therefore, draw the following universal principle from what has been said: 'Every time that other entia arise from the division of an ens, and in a separate state have a lower degree of existence than that which they had when they were virtually united, this virtuality is not an imperfection, either in them or in the ens which virtually contains them.'

b) Those which have a single subjective principle whose term is multiplied when the principle is divided, as in animals (*AMS*, 323 ss.; *PSY*, 1: 455 ss.). This division comes about in several modes, according to which the *virtual existence* of the separated entia changes nature.

i) The division comes about without any disintegration of the first ens through, for example, generation and production. — In this case, the generated or produced ens has no prior existence in the generator or producer which, relative to what is generated or produced, is only the efficient cause. This *efficacy* is a perfection of the nature of the ens which possesses it. The effect is only the act of that cause which, in relationship to this effect, cannot be called *potency* in the sense I have defined it. It is, however, a *transient* potency of the act of generation or production, and momentarily perfects the cause as cause, but not the subject of the cause from which the cause is distinct. What is then generated actually exists with different degrees of successive perfection (when it exists). Its existence, however, is not *virtual*, but proper.

384b. Every time, therefore, that a real ens arises from another, without disintegration of the former, there is no *virtuality*, but only *potency* in which we can at most conceive some ideal, dialectical virtuality.

ii) The division comes about as the first being disintegrates. — If a body animated by a sole principle disintegrates and gives rise to several others, each animated by its principle, these multiple entia existed virtually in the first ens where, however, they existed in a more perfect, eminent mode. *Virtuality*,

[384b]

therefore, was a perfection relative to the whole animated body. Partially animated bodies, however, even united to the whole, are not free to develop on their own account, although they can have a certain imperfect individuality. Because their conditions vary, it would be outside our scope to attempt to classify them and determine the degrees of perfection or imperfection they have when living in the greater organism. When divided, they can each acquire the perfection of the first ens, but this added perfection has nothing to do with the comparison I am making between the virtual existence of the parts and the existence proper to each of them.

2. Real entia which have real unity, but do not admit of real division.

These simple entia, not susceptible of any real division, do not *virtually* contain in themselves other real entia. They do not, therefore, admit anything more than ideal virtuality. In other words, only the mind can find several things virtually comprised in them in so far as these entia exist not only in themselves, but also relative to the mind. Let us pass, therefore, to the consideration of virtuality in the one-object as idea, that is, as full, specific idea to which corresponds the real ens, indivisible in itself, and which we have been discussing.¹⁷⁴ We have already spoken, under B, about virtuality pertaining to the purely ideal object, that is, to being.

385. II. *Virtuality in the object which has its ideality as a basis.*

The full, specific idea, although it has existence only in the mind, is not a dialectical ens because it is not formed by the operations and decision of the mind. It has a certain necessity and a unity proper to itself. What, therefore, is its virtuality? What kind of entities does it virtually contain?

It contains: 1. some dialectical entities, and 2. some full, specific, formless ideas. It has, therefore, a twofold virtuality. But

¹⁷⁴ The full, specific idea of a really divisible real ens represents the divisibility also, in so far as it is reduced to several full specific ideas found in the real. The *virtuality*, therefore, which is found in these ideas composed of several full species resides in the real ens of which I have spoken, and is reflected in the idea. But the full species which represent some indivisible real ens have that twofold mental divisibility and virtuality which I am discussing.

how are these entities found in the full, specific idea and separated by the mind?

This comes about through two operations which I shall call *abstraction* and *ideation*. *Abstraction* finds the dialectical entities virtually contained in this full, specific species; *ideation* finds in the same species certain full, specific formless species which it then forms in the way I shall explain.

386. Abstraction or formal analysis (*Logica*, 315–317) produces all the abstracts virtually comprised in the full species, that is, the *abstract species*, and all genera both substantial and accidental, or genera of relationship, which are purely abstract and not themselves full species (*NE*, 2: 655–656). These genera are virtually comprised in the full species. This kind of *virtuality* of the full species is not an imperfection, but a perfection of the species. Moreover, the virtual existence of these abstracts, even in relationship to the genera, is more perfect than their separate existence before the mind, as I have said about being (B).

Pure abstracts are dialectical entities because they cannot be realised and cannot exist even in the mind, unless the mind keeps present the whole which contains them and in which it sees them because they appertain to partial thought (*PSY*, 2: 1319).

But if we consider this work of abstraction in its natural progressive order — which consists in first removing the less common determinations of the full species and then, one by one, the more common — we can distinguish between what is removed from them and what remains. Everything removed certainly pertains to purely dialectical entities. But we reach a point where through division we have removed everything with abstraction so that nothing remains for us to divide and remove. All we have is the final, extremely simple foundation of the full, specific species, a foundation that allows no division. If this foundation were removed, nothing would remain of any sort. In other words, we have reached the point where we have only the pure idea of being. In this case, what remains is no longer a purely dialectical entity precisely because it is being itself; it is the pure idea of whose virtuality I have spoken (B). Being is not a species which cannot exist by itself; it is such that it subsists necessarily by itself alone and without the addition of anything that it does not have deep within it.

Nor can we say that being exists virtually in the full species. The contrary is true: the full species is virtually present in being because being is the very act through which the full species, and every other entity, is.

Abstraction, therefore, enables us to find, in the full species which represent indivisible real entia, the *dialectical entities* virtually contained in these species. What is left after this work of abstraction is not, however, a dialectical entity, but the pure idea, being.

387. We come now to the process of *ideation*.

I call *ideation* that function of the mind through which the mind finds other full, specific species in the full species of an indivisible ens, or in a full species considered as indivisible.¹⁷⁵ This occurs, however, not because these other full species are comprised in all their fullness in the species, but because their rudiments are present, which the mind then uses to form the new full species.

This takes place when the mind, in gazing upon an ens, conceives another ens implicitly contained in that ens. This ontological fact will become clearer if we consider first that not all full species necessarily have abstract species. In fact, not all entia are composed of substance and accidents. Space and God, for example, are not composed of substance and accidents. Nevertheless, many entia present a substance (to which the abstract species corresponds) and some accidents. Ideation is exercised, therefore, sometimes relative to the accidents alone, sometimes relative to the entire ens. I shall call the former, *accidental ideation*, the latter *entific ideation*.

No *ideation* is therefore ever exercised on real entia as such, but on their species, and more generally upon the object as object relative to the mind.

We must, therefore, put to one side the virtuality which lies in real ens, as a subjective or extrasubjective real entity. This virtuality, about which I have already spoken, does not pertain to *ideation*. For example, it is not the function of *ideation*

¹⁷⁵ I say 'of an indivisible ens, or a full species considered as indivisible' because the mind can exercise *ideation* over a composite, divisible ens. In our case, however, the ens is not divided and is therefore considered as an indivisible whole.

to find the virtuality which lies in a real ens as in a *potency-cause*. The child certainly contains the quantitative or qualitative accidents which it will acquire as an adult; in the same way, it contains virtually the lack of all those accidents which it will lose during its life. All these accidents are in the child virtually as in a *potency-cause*. The virtual existence of these act-effects, if they are perfective of the *potency-cause*, is an imperfection of this cause, as I have said. Relative to these act-effects, virtuality is a non-existence. Ideation does not regard these effects. We must see, therefore, what the object of accidental *ideation* is.

388. Ideation is relative to those accidents which do not exist in real ens as in *potency-cause*, but are found by the mind when it gazes upon the full species of the real ens. This happens every time there is, in the *real ens* represented by the species, no *potency-cause* of the accidents, or when no account is made of it. When such accidents are conceived by the mind, another cause is required if they are to be posited in act and made to exist in themselves. An example is found in inorganic bodies, which have no power as such to modify themselves, or in organic bodies relative to all those accidents to which their potency does not extend. Thus, when a sculptor reproduces the same statue in various sizes, the type of the first statue is contained in the new statue, but with different dimensions. In itself, the statue had no power to enlarge or to diminish itself; the new statue did not therefore exist in the old as in a *potency-cause*. The reduction or the enlargement of the statue was carried out by the sculptor on the *full species*, not on the real statue. When the statue has thus been worked out ideally, another efficient cause (the hand of the artist) and another material cause (another block of marble)¹⁷⁶ is required to make it subsist. The full species of the second statue existed virtually in the full species of the first statue. Only the measurements differed; all the rest was the same. This is the sole reason why we say that 'the second statue' exists virtually in the first.

¹⁷⁶ If the marble of the first statue is used to make the second, and the first is thus destroyed, we cannot say that one exists virtually in the other, but only that the species of one exists virtually in the species of the other. The first statue is destroyed when the second exists, but the species are not destroyed.

389. Let us consider this work in the mind of the artist and see which accidents of the full species of the first statue he has carried over into the second, and which he has not. Let us suppose that the first statue is larger than the second.

It is clear that all the accidents comprising the form in the first statue are identical with those in the second. Relative to these accidents, no ideation has been brought about. We are dealing, therefore, with the accident of size, and nothing more. Only the size varies. But how is the smaller figure, as seen in the second statue, virtually contained in the first, larger statue? It is certainly not contained as already formed. What is present, therefore, in the larger statue which enables us to say that the smaller figure is implicit in it? All the elements necessary for the mind to form it are present: that is, 1. the extension with which the mind can reduce the limits of the second statue; 2. the *rule* used by the mind as a directive for forming an idea of the lesser, extended figure (the rule is the *proportion* between the parts). This is why I said that the smaller full species is in the larger, but in an unformed manner. By 'unformed', I do not mean that it is present properly speaking in the full species of the larger statue, but that all the elements necessary for the mind to form it are present, that is, both the material receptive element and the rule for finding the form which we want to give to this element.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ The form is not present, even virtually, in the *matter* alone because there is no rule which leads the mind to find it. Hence the necessity that the mind should receive or have every form in a real formed ens. In other words, the real ens either has this form which is sought, or has another form which provides the rules by which the mind can find the form. When Leibniz said that the statue exists virtually in a block of marble, he was unaware that the form of the statue was in the marble on condition that there was a mind in possession of the form, which it imposed upon the marble. This is not, either actually or virtually, the statue in the marble. Even limited spaces are not present virtually in *pure space*: for example, geometric figures designed in pure space by thought. On the contrary, every limitation and shape designed in space proceeds from something *real* and active, whether this 'real' occupies a portion of space and itself has a shape (as bodies do) or whether it is the mind which either already has the shape present to its imaginative faculty or has the rules for forming the shape. But, granted that the mind is so disposed, space and corporeal matter is susceptible of such shapes. In this case, we can say that space and corporeal matter have the *receptivity*, or susceptibility, but not the *virtuality* of the shapes.

So far I have described *accidental ideation*, relative to a single quantitative accident, that is, size.

More generally, we need to note that *ideation* falls on a single genus of accidents at a time because accidents separated from substance have no unity amongst themselves: one is not virtually contained in another, although all are virtually contained in substance. Only one (proximate) genus of accidents, therefore, can virtually contain several species of accidents. The mind passes by *ideation* from one species to the next. Hence, the colour or material qualities, etc., of the statue are not virtually contained in the size of the statue. We must therefore establish in general the following rule: 'A full accidental species is virtually contained in another when the mind finds in the latter a rule for forming the former.' This occurs when the full, accidental species pertain to the same proximate genus.

390. As I said, the accidents, if divided by abstraction from the substance, remain separate one from the other. In this case, *ideation* cannot be carried out except over one proximate genus of accidents at a time, when these accidents are considered divided from their substance. But if they are considered as existing in their substance, *ideation* can be carried out over many of them, and upon all of them together, as follows.

Perfect knowledge of a substance implies knowledge of all possible accidents of which it is susceptible, whether these perfect or worsen it, or are indifferent. Consequently the mind, in its perfect knowledge of the substance, has the rule (that is, the perfect concept itself of the substance) enabling it *to form an idea* of all the accidents with which it is pleased to clothe the substance. Hence, 'all the accidents are virtually contained in the perfect concept of the substance'. But this existence of the accidents in the abstract concept of the substance is an imperfection of the substance itself because the accidents, considered in this way, have that virtuality which lies in the *potency-cause* — which is what the substance is, relative to the accidents which it does not possess in act.

However, such *perfect knowledge* of substance is not given to human beings. Man knows substance only imperfectly. This imperfection of the knowledge of substance, which is an abstract species, places a limit to *ideation* by man, according to

which the mind passes from the concept of substance to form an idea of the accidents adhering to it.

Before passing to the explanation of the teaching about *entific ideation*, I must touch upon two questions intimately connected with what has been said.

391. We have supposed that the statue, in which the mind sees a second statue by means of *ideation*, is bigger than the second statue, and I explained how the smaller statue is virtually contained in the larger. Let us now suppose the contrary: can the larger be said to be virtually contained in the smaller? — My answer is ‘Yes’, and for the following reason. The rule for finding the smaller shape is the *proportion of the parts*. This rule is valid for finding both the smaller and the larger shape. — We may ask, however, isn’t the matter lacking; it is understandable that the lesser extension be virtually contained in the greater, but surely not vice versa?

My reply to this objection is that no limit would be virtually included in continued extension if this were unlimited because limit does not pertain to extension as extension; it pertains to something different from extension, that is, to the sensible body or the mind’s imagination. Limited extension is simply a relationship between unlimited extension and what is sensible. But in the small statue, extension and limit are present, and hence limited extension. But in limited extension every other more or less limited extension is virtually included. The reason is this.

No limited extension can be conceived unless unlimited extension is conceived (*AMS*, 149, 156–174). This arises from the very nature of extension which, as the subject of limits, must mentally precede any limit whatsoever which circumscribes extension. Given therefore unlimited extension in the mind, and together with it some limited extension, it is clear that the mind can take this, or as small a part of this extension as it likes, as a unit of measure. Having found this unit of measure which it requires, the mind can use it to measure any portion of unlimited extension present to it, and thus form for itself before its intellective imagination whatever size it pleases, large or small. In order to explain, therefore, how the mind can pass from a small to a large extension, it is sufficient to explain how the mind can replicate sufficiently the unit of measure. But this is

explained through the idea of the possible, which is the form of intelligence (*NE*, 2: 821–823).

The difference, therefore, between the operation by which the mind goes from a large to a small extension, and from a small to a large extension, is this: in the first case, it must remove, in the second, it must add.

Yes, but if we remove something, that which remains (the small extension) was already present; on the other hand, when we add something, the added extension was not present, but had to be obtained from elsewhere.

That is true, but let us see where the mind obtains this quantity of extension which it adds. It does not need to take it from some other limited extension given to it by sense. The measure which the mind has already found in the lesser extension is sufficient because of the mind's faculty for replicating the measure indefinitely or for taking as a measure a part of the smaller extension and replicating it as much as it pleases. In fact, the mind needs only two elements to do this: 1. that of untermi-nated extension; 2. that of suitable limits for circumscribing this extension. Given these two elements, intelligence can, with the concept of limits, circumscribe at will the untermi-nated extension. But such extension is given to the feeling principle as its first term, or terminative form, as I have shown in *Anthro-pology* and *Psychology* (*PSY*, 2: 554–559). Hence the concept of limit is given either in the statue, however big or small it may be, or by any other limited body whatsoever. The mind, therefore, enlarges or lessens the limited extension as it pleases without its having to take the quantity of this enlargement or diminution from anything external. Thus, as the small statue was virtually in the big statue, so the big statue was virtually in the small one. This virtuality is not a small extension in a large extension. This is not virtuality because what is small is not in the large continuum precisely because it is a continuum and has no division or distinction in itself. The virtuality consists in submitting to the mind the concept of a limit suitable to circumscribe the extension, and the concept of a determined shape. The passage is made by the mind from species to species as it finds in one full species another full species which is still formless (by 'formless species' I mean the elements needed to compose the species which, as I said, are limit and shape). The virtuality with which

we are dealing resides properly speaking in the species of the statue, not in the material statue. This virtuality is, however, also predicated *a posteriori* of the statue because the statue submits to the mind the elements which the mind uses to compose the other species with the activity I have called 'ideation'.

392. At this point, the second question presents itself — I mean the second question that I said we had to deal with: 'Is *virtuality*, and hence *ideation*, present relative also to abstract species and, in general, relative to ideas which have a greater extension than that of the full species?'

I reply: by *ideation* I mean that function through which the mind forms a *full species* which is not given to it by intellectual perception.

To constitute a new *full species* (whether what is new in the species is relevant to the accidents alone or to the ens itself), the mind must have all the elements forming the species. No mind can create these elements; it must find them in some real ens which, perceived or possessed in some way by its intelligence, gives the intelligence the required full species. These elements are: 1. the reality as thought, that is, the given kind of reality of which the new full species must be composed; 2. a rule, according to which the mind can find the determinations or limits of this reality. Neither of these two elements can be created but must be taken from a real existence to the mind. This real existence is that which is said to contain virtually the new formless species because it provides the mind precisely with those elements according to which the mind forms the new species. Both these elements, however, are only abstract concepts which the mind takes from the known real ens. In these abstract concepts taken together, the full species, which the mind then forms with these concepts, virtually exists. Indeed, the concept, either limited or generic, of reality is surely an abstract, just as the concept of a given kind of limits or determinations, of which the generic reality with which we are dealing is susceptible, is an abstract. In *ideation*, therefore, we find the following process: 1. the *full species*, or the real ens either perceived or possessed in some way by the mind, is present; 2. the mind abstracts from the full species the elements necessary to compose the new species (the new species is virtually contained in these elements); 3. the mind, in composing these elements, forms the idea of the new, full species.

In this process we notice:

1. The abstract idea cannot be conceived unless it is preceded by the full, specific idea from which the mind abstracts it. Hence the abstract idea virtually exists in the full species.

2. No new species can virtually exist in a single *abstract idea*, but it can exist in several abstract ideas taken together. In other words, it can exist in that complex of abstract ideas which provides the mind with all the elements, although still separated, with which the mind can compose another full idea.

3. The new idea is always formed by the mind which draws it proximately from this complex of abstract ideas, in which it is virtually included.

393. But the difficulty can also be expressed in this way: 'Can other ideas be virtually comprised in a single abstract idea?'

The answer is: 'Yes', and I shall point to these cases soon. But the ideas virtually comprised in other ideas are not found by means of the function I called *ideation*. Such a discovery depends upon simple analysis or synthesis. The cases are as follows.

1. Ideas are split up by formal analysis, that is, abstraction, and the parts which result are abstract concepts virtually contained in the idea split up through abstraction. Consequently, a) in ideas of greater comprehension, we can find with our mind ideas of lesser comprehension and greater extension than those in which they were virtually contained; b) the differences between these lesser ideas are also abstract concepts, that is, they are the content of the first idea, a content divided through abstraction. This explains why simple ideas are virtually contained in composite ideas, etc.

2. The concept of a determined measure is an abstract (although the measure is determined) because it is divided from what is measured. But this idea supposes the continuous presence in the mind of something *measurable* which is not abstract but infinite. If it were finite, it would already be measured, contrary to the hypothesis that it is only *measurable*. We have therefore a relationship between an abstract concept of a determined measure and a non-abstract concept of something infinite and measurable. Hence we can replicate the determined measure as often as we wish by applying it to the measurable. This replication provides other determined

measures which are also abstract concepts contained in the first measure. Granted, therefore, that this *infinite measurable* is always present to the mind, any determined measure whatsoever virtually contains every other measure. But this virtuality of a measure in every measure conceived by the mind does not lie in the measure cut off from what is measurable. It depends rather on the co-existence in the mind of the measure and the measurable, and on the synthesis of these two ideas, one abstract and the other non-abstract. The dependency is such that one cannot be separated from the other. This synthesis was at least glimpsed by the Pythagoreans when they used the finite (determined measure) and the indefinite (the infinite measurable) as the first two elements of all things.

393a. 1. We see in this teaching the reason for the nature of numbers. Granted 'one', which is the determined measure of discrete quantity, this 'one' can be replicated by the mind and thus form 'two', 'three' and all successive numbers. Each number, as Aristotle noted, is distinct from the other, as species are. With the single species of 'one' (which is drawn from the real individual, and proximately from the vague individual) and with the replication of 'one', therefore, all other numerical species are formed by the mind. But the mind could not do this if it did not have before it some infinite measurable into which it could peer to be able to replicate the measure of 'one'. But this infinite measurable is each of those *full species* whose realised individuals can be infinite. The mind of every grown person always possesses many of these full species although it is sufficient that only one of them be present for the mind to apply individual 'one', then 'two', and so on, to it. This infiniteness of the species comes to the species from being, the supreme *infinite measurable* or, as I have called it more fully previously, the *first determinable*.

Consequently, not only are all numbers virtually present in 'one', but also the whole of arithmetic — granted the presence to the mind of the first determinable which virtually contains also all the rules for reasoning.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Anyone who fully understands this teaching will see in it a new demonstration of the principle governing our philosophy, that is, that being is always present to the mind.

2. The same teaching also shows us the reason for continuous quantity. Given a determined measure, as I have said, the mind by splitting it, or by replicating it or its divisions, can find all possible measures and sizes. This does not come about because such measures are present in the determined measure cut off from the infinite measurable, but because every measure, small or great, supposes always before the mind an infinite measurable, with which it synthesises. This measurable is infinite or immeasurable space which, as I have said, is the terminative form of the animal feeling principle.

Consequently, through the presence of and synthesis with this measurable, every measure virtually comprises every other measure and shape, and indeed the whole of geometry. In other words, if an intelligence had seen nothing more than a body of any size whatsoever, and abstracted determined size and shape from it, the mind would have sufficient to invent the whole of geometric science.¹⁷⁹

394. I now have to describe *entific ideation*, the work of the mind with which the mind sees in a real and indivisible object (known, that is, in the *full species* of the object) the unformed species of some other real object. In other words, the mind finds in this object all the elements with which it is able to form another full species, not accidentally different from the first, but presenting an ens which does not pertain to the first species. This is another kind of *virtuality* through which we say that a real, indivisible object contains another real object.

I am obliged always to begin these ontological speculations from observation of finite entia of which alone we can have naturally the full, positive species, relative of course to the capacity of our senses.

We have seen that in every finite ens, we find the first duality, that is, 1. *being* which is not the ens itself and 2. what is *formed and real*, the ens itself. Here, we have to leave *being* aside precisely because it is not the finite ens whose ideal virtuality (that is, relative to the mind) we are seeking, and because being is common to every finite ens and cannot, therefore, provide us

¹⁷⁹ This is a new demonstration of the necessity for unmeasured space to inform the animal feeling principle. Without this space, the reasoning of geometers would be inexplicable.

with the different natures in which we want to find the reality under discussion.

394a. In the *formed real* of finite ens I distinguish *pure reality* and the *form* which it receives. Thus, if I consider corporeal reality, I can strip it of all those forms which are or are called substantial or accidental and thus enable so many different forms of bodies and so many individual bodies to be in the universe. I now have before my mind only the reality susceptible of all these forms which are called corporeal reality. This 'susceptive reality' does not present the mind with any difference or multiplicity because all differences have been removed with its forms. It is, therefore, an extremely simple concept on which no formal analysis can be exercised. We can only think it or not think it. But this *corporeal reality* devoid of its forms is different from other realities. For example, it differs from the reality of *animal*, which is an active, feeling principle terminating its first act in extension and in an organic, felt term. Different species of animal arise from diversity in the organic felt terms. This diversity varies from the smallest animals which cannot be seen under the microscope to the largest whose immense size causes such wonder and fright. If we remove from this active, feeling principle all its organic felt terms, we leave as its term only immeasurable space which is common to everything. In other words, we are left only with animal reality devoid of all its forms. All that remains is one, simple reality which cannot be stripped of any other form without its being annihilated. Here, therefore, we have two *simple realities*, corporeal and animal, which differ in everything; they differ with their whole selves and neither have nor can have anything common (granted abstraction from being, as I said). We could say the same of other realities. Now these *realities* devoid of their respective forms are the true foundation of *genera*, that is, of *real genera* (NE, 2: 654–655).

Aristotle saw this when he said that there were different kinds of matter, and what differed in matter differed in genus.¹⁸⁰ But while engaged so wisely in the investigation of nature and the constitution of finite real things, he failed to grasp the teaching about being. He lacked the great key, the truth given by

¹⁸⁰ *Metaphysics*, 7 (8): 5; 9 (10): 2; 10: 2–3; 14: 1.

Christianity to philosophy, that 'being subsists by itself alone, without any addition.'

There are, therefore, *realities* totally different from one another. These are the foundation of all the finite entia composing the universe and are thus classified in a certain number of *genera* without any passage from one to another because they have nothing in common except being. Being, however, is not what is finite and real, but something other.

395. As a consequence, none of the finite entia which compose the world can provide a full species which *virtually* contains all the others. The *full species* which a finite ens provides can virtually contain only those full species which do not exceed the genus to which this real ens pertains. But are the full species, relevant to the same genus, themselves of such a nature that they virtually contain all the species in the same genus?

My response is that if the full species were perfect, every full species would virtually contain all the full species of the same genus, that is, the intelligence which possesses it would find in the full species the elements for composing another full species of the same genus. Indeed, in a full, perfect species, we know both the first reality and a *limit* within which it is contained. In other words, we know its form. But other forms of the same reality result from the same elements contained in each species, although the elements are united in various ways and with different measures and intensity. Every full species, therefore, is the result of 1. a first reality and 2. limiting elements, which are contained in every full species. Consequently, the mind can clothe this full species in various ways with these elements and thus form other full species — all those species in which that reality can be represented, if there are indeed several examples of it.

This shows that the number of forms is determined by the nature of the first reality, which is the *potency-cause* of the number of forms. However, these forms cannot differ in their constitutive elements. The change lies only in their conjunction, intensive quality and size.

396. We have until now assumed that the full species of a finite ens is perfect and possessed by a perfect intelligence. But are the full species which we have of entia composing the world truly perfect? If we are speaking about external bodies, the full

species that we have are very imperfect indeed. They represent only the action which an ens exercises on our sense. Moreover, sense itself is divided into many senses, while each sensory gives its own full species to the mind. This in its turn puts together a single, full species of the body — a species made up of the various full species provided by several sensories. But the feelings proper to the different sensories are as divided amongst themselves as the genera of realities with the result that colour (stripped of all its varieties) is a *sensible genus* different from that of smell, sound, taste, and so on (these too are considered here as stripped of all their variety), just as corporeal reality is different from animal reality. The mind cannot, therefore, go from one to another; one is not virtually contained in the other. This is explained by the *simplicity* of the feeling proper to each sensory: 'Every entity, which is so simple that a plurality of elements cannot be found in it through formal analysis, is wholly within itself and is not, through one of its parts, different from another equally simple entity.'

Moreover, the same sensory has sensations which are so simple that they differ totally amongst themselves and thus constitute different *sensible genera*. For example, the seven colours and the seven sounds. It would be impossible for the mind to pass from green to red or to purple if it had no sensation other than green. The same can be said about sounds. Consequently, we can find in a sensation no virtuality other than that of intensity of sound and of its varying duration (this duration pertains properly speaking not to the sensation, but to being). The mind, as a result, cannot pass from the concept of one sensation to another, but only from one degree of the sensation itself to a stronger degree. Even this can be done only within certain limits (*NE*, 2: 887–888). The *sensible genera*, therefore, are many, and divide *corporeal reality* (which of itself pertains to a single genus) into many genera. Relative to human intelligence, this plurality limits the virtuality of corporeal reality to each *sensible genus*.

396a. Granted then that the mind has formed a full species of a given body from the sensations of various sensories, this full species depends for its greater *virtuality* on the number of sensories and the variety of the sensations coming from them which make up the full species in question. Such virtuality will

[396a]

be in proportion to the number of sensories and the variety of sensations. This is the case not only because the virtualities of each generic feeling unite, but also because the mind, capable of varying the disposition and mix of such feelings, can compose many more full species from them. The imagination is constantly doing this.

If the *full species* of a body arises not only from sensations, but also from second qualities of the same body (*NE*, 2: 693–697, 886), the *full species* is made more perfect and provides new elements of corporeal reality with which the mind can form for itself a greater number of full species.

If, instead of the full species of extrasubjective bodies, we consider the full species of our own body as given to us by the fundamental feeling, we have to distinguish between the full species of the fundamental feeling and the various full species of the subjective body, which are clothed with the feelings we experience within ourselves, that is, within the fundamental felt. The first species, which is simple and uniform, contains no virtuality and we can pass (granted that we could will to do so) only from our individual feeling to the thought of other, equal feelings. This is not virtuality coming from the finite real, but from the species which potentially contains individuals as a result of the being in which it participates.

If we suppose the subjective feeling to be enriched with various internal, transient feelings to which we advert, the full species provides elements which can be combined in various ways by the mind, and diversified in degree. In this case, the mind can form for itself other full species of other living things. The extension of the formation of these species will be in proportion to the cognitions enriching the animal feeling, and even those concerned with the efficacy and laws of the organism as a result of external observation, induction, and so on.

397. Finally, human beings have in [the concept] *myself* the full species of the human subject. This is the most perfect full species that we have, or can have. It is, therefore, that which contains most virtuality. This full species provides the mind with philosophical teaching about souls and separate intelligences, and about God himself. We must note, however, that the full species provided by the feeling of *myself* contains a principle-ens (*PSY*, 2: 837–846) which is referred to a term. But

[397]

while the principle-ens serves us as a type for conceiving all possible spiritual entia, the term — that which specifies and determines the principle — is in *myself* only as limited to ideal being and to the animal body with its modifications. This term, however, does not give sufficient elements for us to form a full species of entia superior to man. We are restricted to forming equal or lower entia. On the part of the *principle*, therefore, we find in *myself* an element of the *full species* of other separate intelligences greater than man, and of the species of God. But on the part of the term we find in *myself* only deficient and imperfect elements.

Granted the existence of separate intelligences greater than man, we can know that they are all principle-entia. We cannot, however, lift ourselves up to a positive knowledge of the term to which these principles are joined and as a result cannot form for ourselves their full species. We are limited to a species that has as it were an obscure reason which for us is without light.

The imperfection of our full species of God is much greater. Of this being, where the principle is identical with the term, we cannot form in any way a clear idea of the *principle*, granted that the type of principle given us by *myself* is a principle with a real difference from the term provided for it. In fact, the term is neither the principle nor *myself* (TCY, 59–67).

The full species of *myself* does indeed provide the mind with material for the most noble and elevated teaching open to man. Nevertheless, these teachings are not so perfect that they offer us a full species of any intelligence of a nature higher than our own. Relative to these intelligences, the virtuality of the full species of *myself* is only dialectical. The mind cannot, therefore, draw from it the *ideation* of such higher entia, but only that of abstract, negative species.

398. So far, I have spoken about the virtuality which lies in the full species of finite entia. I first considered this full species in its perfection, then the imperfection (and consequently the imperfect virtuality) of the full species which human beings can have of finite entia.

We now have to consider *virtuality* in infinite Ens.

As we saw, finite ens is divided into *real genera*, which are incommunicable and inconfusable, and (for us) into *sensible genera* relative to human beings. If we now leave these

sensible genera to one side, and concentrate on real genera, which are as it were the foundations of the universe, it is clear that infinite Ens, as pure being, as I said, does not admit genera of any sort in itself. It must be perfectly one. Nevertheless, by embracing all being, it cannot lack anything contained in the immensity of being. At the same time, because it is not purely ideal being, but being in the three perfect forms, it must consequently contain all reality which is in the genera — not divided however by the genera but unified in being. Hence in infinite and totally real Ens, nothing real or formal can be lacking of that which is necessary to the mind if it is to form for itself the full species of finite ens in all its possible extension and multiplicity. The full species, therefore, of finite ens, that is, of every finite ens and all finite entia, virtually exists in infinite Ens. This means that the Mind which knows infinite Ens fully can take from it all the elements necessary to form every full species of finite ens. We can go on to say that these full species exist only virtually in infinite Ens because it is one and simple and without distinction of any kind. Nevertheless, the mind has the capacity, in so far as infinite Ens exists in a mode relative to the mind, for limiting and dividing infinite Ens. Thus, the mind of God, gazing into the Word, its object, could draw from it the Exemplar of the world. And it did indeed draw out this Exemplar in the act itself and with the same act with which, through its own power, it produced this Exemplar.

399. But this virtuality of infinite Ens is twofold because it can be considered under two aspects:

1. as virtuality of the full species of finite entia in so far as infinite Ens is the knowable object; or
2. as virtuality of finite real entia themselves in so far as infinite Ens is what is absolute and real.

Neither of these *virtualities* is such that it brings imperfection to infinite Ens, where it exists as in a non-potency-cause. Rather, it results from the supreme perfection of infinite Ens.

Relative to *finite* ens, before the divine Mind draws it to ideal and real existence, virtuality is not imperfection, but non-existence.

It does not exist, therefore, in God as in a *potency-cause* before it is created, although it is said to exist in an *eminent*

mode. But I need to clarify this phrase, much used in the Schools.

Eminent existence is not the existence of finite ens, but the existence of the infinite to which the mind compares the finite after the finite has been drawn from the divine mind. If we then consider that every perfection and every element of finite ens is found by the mind in the infinite (because the mind divides and limits the infinite to itself), we say that finite ens is in the infinite in an eminent mode. This phrase, therefore, expresses a relationship that the mind establishes between the finite and the infinite. The mind can establish this relationship because the infinite object, besides existing in itself, also has an existence relative to the mind. This relative existence is 'knowledge of the infinite object'. This mind, which limits the infinite object, can also see the relationship between what is limited, which it has produced, and what is unlimited, on the information about which the mind has exercised limitation.

400. Granted this mental relationship, what happens is this:

1. Many ideas can be predicated of God (this occurs when many attributes are predicated of him). This means that 'many ideas of perfection correspond to God, the unique object, without however positing any multiplicity in God. In fact, all these ideas correspond to God, the unique object, not in so far as they are separate one from another, but in so far as the mind has separated them in the information about the object'. This lies within the power of the mind which has the limiting faculty.

2. Many real things (all the genera of real things) are considered as existing in the supremely real being, but here too not as they are (separate), but without the separation posited by the mind.

Therefore, because the divine Mind has the power to limit ideally infinite Being (not in so far as infinite Being subsists in itself, but in so far as it is purely the mind's knowledge), and because the divine Mind has done this in creating the world, it happens, vice versa, that the mind can restore to God those elements which it has distinguished in him. As a result, every intelligence can rise from the sight of the universe as a vestige of God, to form for itself a certain negative and imperfect knowledge of God himself.

Article 3

Classification of potencies — potencies in the proper sense of the word, and in the dialectical sense

401. Let us return to the concept of potency, and search for a first classification according to the way in which our human mind conceives things. We need to do this in order to state the act which being communicates to finite real things, and to discover whether there is some potentiality enclosed within being itself.

According to the definition I gave, potency 'is a cause which remains subject of its own act'. It is clear, therefore, that this definition will change in meaning in so far as the words, *cause* and *subject*, change in meaning and will thus determine a different genus of potency.

In fact, because these words can be taken with different meanings, we have here 'the principle of every classification of potencies'.

But let us confine our investigation to that for which we are searching and which we need. I have distinguished an *antecedent* and *dialectical subject*, and a *subject proper to each finite ens*. It follows, therefore, that if we have a cause which can be considered as a dialectical subject of its act, this cause can be called a *dialectical potency*; if we have a cause which is a *proper subject* of its own act, it will be a potency in the proper sense of the word.

This is the first twofold partition of potencies to which we must now turn if we are to explain the question of the potentiality of being.

Article 4

Being considered as dialectical potency

402. We have seen that being is the universal, dialectical subject of all finite entia. But this antecedent and universal subject is also their cause. The concept of potency is, therefore, applied to being as both cause and subject of all finite entia.

But because being is only a dialectical subject the concept of

potency can apply to it in one mode only, that is, relative to the conception proper to the mind, in a purely dialectical sense.

However, we still have to see if this phrase 'dialectical potency' is applicable to being in all those modes in which 'cause' is applicable to it. As we have seen, being is dialectical cause of all entities in a threefold way:

1. as first and universal determinable;
2. as universal determinant;
3. as ultimate, posterior and universal determination.

Is being, therefore, the dialectical subject of its acts also, relative to each of these three modes of cause?

§1. *If and how being, considered as the first determinable, is dialectical potency — Teaching about the possible*

403. If being is considered as the *first determinable*, it becomes the species of dialectical potency called *possible being* when it is referred by the mind to its terms.

But this word 'possible' has two very different meanings which cannot be confused without giving rise to many errors and fallacies. If *possible* is taken as a quality of *virtual* being, and simply expresses *virtuality* itself, *possible being* is understood as 'unterminated being susceptible of terms.' If, on the other hand, *possible* is taken as a quality of the terms themselves, 'a possible entity' means a term of which being is susceptible.

These two meanings have proved a great stumbling block to philosophers who, by not distinguishing them, have thrown the philosophical world into turmoil.

Here, I have to speak of the first, not the second concept of the possible.

But I must first note that determinable being and its terms are concepts which synthesise by expressing a mutual relationship. If the terms were abolished in our thought, the concept itself of determinable being would also perish.

404. Granted these concepts, therefore, and our desire to investigate the relationship of determinable being with its terms, we remember that such terms, according to their supreme classification, are reduced to the three categorical forms.

[403–404]

This susceptibility of the terms, which enables us to call being 'possible', is of three categories. In being, considered as possible, we find therefore three categorical modes of possibility, that is:

- A) possibility of concepts, or of objects;
- B) possibility of real things;
- C) possibility of moral things.

A) The *possibility of concepts or of objects* is that through which undetermined being is susceptible of all its terms in the ideal or objective form. These terms are extended as far as the sphere of what is intelligible. This sphere has no other confine except contradiction, which alone is excluded by intelligence. And indeed, contradiction strictly speaking is not a confine except relative to the human mind, which *opines* that it can go beyond it (*Logica*, [114]).

B) The *possibility of real things* is that through which being is susceptible of all its terms in the real form. This form obviously extends as far as the possibility of fully determined concepts (full species). But this possibility of real things is also a purely logical potency. In other words, we know only that it does not involve contradiction in so far as something real may correspond to a fully determined concept. For the rest, the whole mode in which being finds a finite real term to which it is joined, as we have said, remains unknown to us. Reasoning enables us to come only to the following conclusion:

1. Undetermined being, because it cannot not exist, and at the same time cannot exist as undetermined, must necessarily have its own *proper* term, hidden from our intuition, which completes it. United to this term, it is *ens*, and necessary *ens*. This term has to be identified with being ([cf. 321 ss.]). But when being is conceived as joined and made one with its term, it no longer retains the relationship called *possible being*, nor that of virtual being, relative to its very own proper terms. However, there is nothing to prevent this relationship from being *opined* by our mind through some purely hypothetical abstraction. This is, indeed, the concept of the *possibility of God*. Properly speaking, this possibility is not present because all that there is of God is existence identified with essence. Nevertheless our mind, through the habit it has of conceiving contingent things, in which existence is one thing and essence another, applies the

same form of conception to God and thus *opines* that it thinks such a possibility, and thinks it as a purely dialectical entity.

2. There is no contradiction in thinking that undetermined being assumes contingent, finite real terms, whatever they may be, within the limit indicated as proper to the full species. At the same time, no force appears in it capable of making these real terms exist. In fact, the creating *subject* which has the power to make these contingent real terms exist is veiled to us ([cf. 308–310]).

405. We must, therefore, distinguish this cause into two species relative to physical terms:

a) that which we can fittingly call the *possibility of real things*, and

b) that which is a *real cause*, not a mere possibility. This second cause is not uncovered for us through intuition nor in the analysis of intuited being (although the first cause is). It is pure cause; it is not even the dialectical subject of finite entia.

C) The *possibility of moral things* is that through which being is susceptible of all its terms in the moral form.

Because the moral form is the completion and perfection of ens, and involves in itself both the real and the ideal, to which it places the ultimate act of perfection, we see that undetermined, initial being is susceptible of these moral terms for the same reason that it is susceptible of the first two classes, that is, because the thought of its production as far as these extreme terms does not involve contradiction.

406. But here, too, we must distinguish the *possibility of moral things* from *moral efficiency*. Only the former, not the latter, is seen by the mind in undetermined being. Moral efficiency presupposes a real, intelligent subject which truly possesses it.

Hence this possibility also of moral things is seen only logically, as a pure possibility, in undetermined being.

The *possibility of concepts* embraces all ideal and dialectical entities, which are innumerable.

The *possibility of real things* embraces a more restricted sphere because it extends only as far as the number of those entities which are fully determined, ideal entia.

The *possibility of moral things* embraces an even more restricted sphere and is conceived in two modes by the human mind:

[405–406]

a) in an *analytical and imperfect mode*, when the mind considers the possibility of individual moral entia, and this *analytical possibility of moral entia* extends to those entia which are endowed with intelligence and hence capable of the essence of good;

b) in a *synthetical and absolute mode*, when the mind considers the possibility of total created good, and this *synthetical, absolute possibility* has for object only that totality of holiness in the universe which conforms to the attributes, will and holiness of the Creator.

Being, therefore, considered as *first determinable* presents in itself to the mind these three modes of *possibility*.

407. Hence, *possibility* is not to be confused with *active* or *passive potency* (which are found only in the order of reality), nor with *receptive potency*. Note, however, that here we are dealing only with a dialectical concept of potency which can be called 'dialectical potency of determinability'.

This potency is dialectical in a different mode if it is considered relative either to its proper, infinite terms or to its finite terms. There is no true distinction, as I have said, between the beginning and the term of being in absolute Ens, which is Being with its proper terms. Only our imperfect thought imagines being as a potency which sends forth its proper terms and thus perfects itself; by means of these effects of which it remains the subject *it becomes* determined from undetermined. This 'becoming', however, marks the progress of our thought, not that of being, which is always terminated and absolute through its essence.

Relative then to improper, unnecessary terms of being, the *dialectical potency* of determinability is something pertaining to absolute being. It is not distinct from absolute being, but truly distinct from improper terms. Consequently, the *possibility of concepts* is not the same as *actual concepts*; the *possibility of real things* is not the same as *real things themselves*; the *possibility of moral things* is not the same as *moral things themselves*. Rather, between them there is present the distinction I have described between unique, common, initial being and its multiple, individual terms.

§2. *If and how being, considered as determinant cause,
is potency*

408. Being, considered as *first and universal determinable*, shows, therefore, in itself the three possibilities I have indicated, through a relationship with terms that can determine it. But when we think of being as *universal determinant* and as *ultimate determination*, we can consider it under two different aspects, that is,

a) in entities, of which it is the dialectical subject. Under this aspect, it is considered in the act in which it is *determinant* or *ultimate determination*. Here, it does not reveal itself as potency, but as act;

b) prior to entities, and as possessing that power through which it can make itself *determinant, and ultimate determination*.

Considered under this second aspect, it appears at first sight as a concept embracing a twofold potency: the potency of determining each entity to be what it is rather than something else, and the potency of adding itself as ultimate, common act to determined entities.

409. Let us see, therefore, if being truly admits the concept of determinant potency, or whether this is not rather a dialectical illusion of our own.

It seems to us that we can form such a concept by rising, through thought, from the act which we perceive to the potency which we do not perceive. This seems to be the case because of our habit of universally referring the acts of finite entia to certain of their potencies. Here, too, we make an effort to distinguish a *determinant potency*, which we consider one only, from the *acts* determining individual entities which, as we see, are multiple. But when we subject the concept of such a potency to examination, it totally escapes us. In fact:

1. in all entities we always see being as *pure act*;
2. if there are various entities, their diversity is wholly in the terms to which being, with its presence, unites itself while remaining one and the same (initial being);
3. this self-uniting of being to entities does not alter the nature of pure being — we are dealing solely with the

[408–409]

conception of various terms to which being is of assistance. If, therefore, determinant being remains pure act, one and identical, the removal of this extremely simple act does not leave us with any concept of potency, but with nothing.

Granted, therefore, that the reason for the diversity of finite real entia lies in reality, not in the act of being through which they are, it is clear that the cause of the determination of this reality remains hidden from us, and that conceiving this cause as being itself in potency means destroying the very concept of being. The only concept of *determinant being* that remains, therefore, is that of act. The concept of potency is a false, opinative concept whose sole result is to destroy being itself without providing any substitute for it.

But if we now investigate the possible reason why finite real things are determined in one way rather than another, we find no explanation either in real things themselves or in being which, as united to them, appears to us. We have necessarily to recur to a most powerful will which has freely and wisely established the determinations of these indifferent, real things. As we move forward with our speculation, we shall also find that this will must be Being itself as subsistent by itself, something that is hidden from us. It is easy for us to conceive a cause in this Being, but not a *potency-cause*, precisely because it subsists by itself; finite realities do not form any part of its subsistence.

410. I conclude that:

- a) we argue securely that there must be a subject *determining* the various entities;
- b) we do not know, either intuitively or through an analysis of the object of intuition or through analysis of the entities we perceive, the nature of this determinant subject, and consequently can have only a negative concept of it;
- c) the *determinant cause* is not a potency-cause, but a creating cause which, because it is the subject we are discussing, is not seen or known by us positively, but only negatively, through deontological arguments;
- d) in the perception and conception of finite entia, we see only the *act which determines the finite ens* we perceive.

Moreover, we always see this act fully complete, and understand that we cannot see it otherwise, because the act of being has neither succession nor degrees: it is, or it is not ([cf. 334]).

We can, therefore, think only two things relative to determinant being: either this act is not or that it is. If it is, we think of it as most simple and hence always complete.

411. But can we not think the instant itself in which the act is done? And if we can think this instant, can we not apply to what we think is done in it the Scholastic tag, *in actu actus nondum est actus* [in the act of the act, the act is not yet present]? — This tag, taken grossly, deceived Hegel. It is not valid, however, for all acts, but only for a certain kind. There are acts which admit of *succession*, but they are all merely phenomenal (*NE*, 2: 779–799) and completed in time; they are not yet done while they are being done. But there are also acts which, because of their absolute simplicity, admit neither succession nor degree. These, properly speaking, are not being done, but are. Such is the act of being, as determinant, and also as ultimate determination. On the other hand, we are used to considering phenomenal and temporary acts, not the pure act of being. As a result, we are overconfident when we transfer language invented for phenomenal acts to this pure act of being, and easily deceive ourselves. We say of phenomenal acts: ‘They are being done, and while they are being done they are not yet.’ This is true, and we want to say the same about the pure act of being, but this is false and a contradiction in terms. Hence, if we want to say that this determinant act of being ‘is being done’, we should remember the impropriety of what we say, and that ‘is being done’ means nothing more than ‘is’.

We can prove this rigorously as follows. The third person, present tense, of the verb expresses the act which is being done (*Logica*, 320 ss.). Thus the act which is being done as a person speaks is expressed with the word: *he is speaking*; as he eats: *he is eating*, and so on for all other verbs. Now let us take the verb ‘to be’ and see how the act, proper to this verb, is expressed as being done. It is expressed by saying *is*. If the monosyllable *is* expresses the act of being which is being done, it follows that *is* has in this case a meaning equal to ‘is being done’. But *is* indicates a completed act, not simply an act which has been started, an act *in fieri*. Relative, therefore, to being, it is impossible to say: *in actu actus nondum est actus*. Two acts are presupposed in this tag: we say ‘in the act of the act.’ But because the act of being is the first of all acts, we cannot think, without absurdity,

‘the act of this act’; being itself is the act of every act ([cf. 378 ss.]). Consequently, theologians rightly deny that the concept of *change* applies to creation.¹⁸¹

412. Nevertheless, the human mind, accustomed to temporary acts, has to make an effort to conceive an act which properly speaking is never being done, but uniquely either is done or not done, and is such that it cannot truly be conceived other than as done or not done. It is impossible to conceive it in the act of being done because such an act, relative to it, is not, and cannot be — such an act is excluded by the very nature of being.

If this is not understood, there is an immediate objection: ‘But does not Almighty God, in creating, do something?’ I reply that what God does is simply this: he posits all of a piece the act of being of creatures. This act, therefore, is not properly speaking *done*, but *posited*. As most simple and indivisible, and posited all of a piece, there is no instant in which it is being done and still not is. The eternal act of God posits the act of being of creatures in that instant in which he wishes it to be, and in that instant such an act fully is. Prior to this instant, the act is not even incipient.

I conclude, therefore, that we observe in entities *being* as *act* which determines each of them. But the *potency* of all these acts, the universally determinant potency, remains hidden from us. This potency is the very subject of that act of being, that is, God, of whom we can have only negative knowledge, as I said. We see determinant being only in each determined entity in the act in which determinant being both determines and makes exist what is determined.

§3. *Whether being, considered as ultimate determination, is potency — The question concluded*

413. As I said, being makes entities exist in so far as it is the ultimate determination common to them all. As a result, the illusory potency of which I have spoken vanishes completely because the ultimate, common determination, which is that of existence, appears as totally pure act for each entity.

¹⁸¹ Cf. S.T., I, q. 45, art. 2.

We can now reply to the question that we set ourselves: 'Can being as potency be considered as first determinable, as determinant and as ultimate, posterior determination?'

Let us first recall the definition of potency: 'Potency is a cause which at the same time is subject of its own effect.' Now:

1. Being as *first determinable* is certainly the dialectical and antecedent *subject* of all determined entia, as well as their cause. It can, therefore, be called 'potency' in the special way that I have described. It is also threefold potency, according to the categories of the determined entia. Nevertheless, this potency has as its proper name *possibility*. This threefold potency is, therefore, the possibility of concepts, the possibility of real things and the possibility of moral things.

2. Being as *determinant* is certainly the cause of the determination proper to each entity in which it is seen as determinant, but it is not the *subject* of its *effect*, that is, of the determination proper to each entity. The entity itself is the subject of this determination. Being as determinant is *cause*, but not *potency*. This cause is in act in the individual entities and presupposes another free cause, not potency, in which alone can be found the reason for the determinations.

3. Being as *ultimate determination* of each entity is also cause (formal cause in the strict sense) because it is the cause through which the real is ens. But this *effect*, that is, the existence of each entity, has as its subject the entity itself, not the being which causes it with being's own potency. It is, in fact, the entity which exists. Being, therefore, as ultimate, posterior determination is not *potency*, but simply cause in its act which is visible in its term. The pure and simple act does not presuppose any potency prior to itself, but only absolute being to which the act of being of the entities can be reduced.

Consequently, in the entities which we conceive, being manifests itself 1. as potency, *possibility* in the proper sense of the word; 2. as *act* which presupposes a *determinant cause* which is not a potency-cause; 3. as act which presupposes before itself an act complete in itself, that is, *absolute being* (the Creator).

Article 5

Is the virtuality of initial being a limitation?

414. From what has been said we can now ask the question: 'Is the virtuality of initial being a limitation?'

It is clear that the *virtuality* of being, if considered as virtuality of its own terms, does not limit being, but simply removes from it mentally the terms present to the human mind considering it. These terms are now only implicit in being. Consequently, virtuality is not a limitation relative to being, nor to the forms, but a total abstraction from them relative solely to the mind contemplating virtuality in this way.

The virtuality of being, relative to improper and finite terms, is not a limitation because such terms are not necessary for the subsistence of being in its absolute perfection. Rather, it is a *perfection* to have them eminently comprised in its proper, absolute terms (*PSY*, 2: 1375).

CHAPTER 3

Continuation — Teaching about possible being

Article 1

The state of the question: 'How can being, as first determinable, be potency?'

415. What has been said so far must raise many thoughts in the mind. Even the question I have just resolved will generate equally difficult problems. Indeed, how can we attribute the concept of potency to being as first determinable?

Being is primarily presented as most pure act, and was acknowledged by me as the act of all acts.

But if it is simple and one, how could it be potency at the same time, as I have just said it is?

Article 2

General solution of the question

416. The solution of this difficulty depends entirely on the correct concept of *dialectical potency*. When something is called dialectical potency, I do not mean that it has true potentiality in itself, but only a potentiality posited in it by the mind through the way the mind conceives the thing in relationship to other things.

But it is clear that *being*, when considered by itself, and consequently without relationship to finite real things, provides us only with a most pure act without the debility proper to potentiality of any kind whatsoever.

Indeed, properly speaking being is the origin of the concept of *act* because it is *act by essence*. Nor would we have ever discovered the two words, *being* and *act*, if we had known only being. The second word, *act*, arose from the need to distinguish *potentiality* from *being* itself.

[415–416]

417. Hence, the concept of potentiality arose in the mind because some restriction or limitation foreign to the proper nature of being was added to being. We now have to examine such limitations and see how many species of them there are.

First, our finite nature and our mind conceives being separate from all its terms. This does not mean that being is separate in itself. Indeed, the human mind, using a reflective, posterior argument, shows that being conceived with this separation is not such in itself, and that in itself it must be found united with its own terms. What, then, is meant by: 'Being conceived without its terms?' It means that being, according to a natural hypothesis of the mind, *can* have its terms even though it does not have them. Thus the human mind, according to its own way of conceiving, has posited in being a potentiality which being does not have in itself, that is, a potentiality for having terms. The potentiality which arises from this dialectical limitation is not, therefore, a potentiality of being in itself, but of being seen in a limited mode by the human mind which does not see the depth of being. It sees only the beginning and not the completion of being, which it therefore sees as susceptible of completion (*NE*, 3: *App.*, no. 6). But because this completion is threefold, this susceptibility or dialectical potentiality is also threefold, and properly speaking is *possibility*.

Moreover, the terms of which undetermined being is susceptible are either infinite or finite. Relative to the infinite terms, being is considered as *dialectical potency* because it is cause and dialectical subject. Relative to the finite terms, being is considered a potency because as a true cause it is dialectical subject.

Article 3

Possibility of ens — Ten genera of potencies

418. We have also seen that the word *possible* receives two fundamental meanings — one when it is predicated of *undetermined being*, and in this respect means 'being can extend its act to terms'; another when it is predicated of the *terms*, and in this respect means 'the term can receive the act of being'.

But when an ens exists, both these possibilities have found

[417–418]

their act. It is not the case that one of them can find its act without the other finding its act at the same time. Ens is the single act of both possibilities. The *possibility* of *ens*, therefore, embraces both possibilities at the same time. It is in no way extraordinary that *ens*, being necessarily one but separated by the mind into two synthesising elements, should be conceived by the mind with its *possibility* related to these two elements. In this way the mind forms two relative concepts of possibility.

419. If we speak, therefore, of the possibility of an *ens*, we have to consider that this possibility is a *potentiality* distinguished from every other potentiality because it is referred to the pure act of being. It expresses 'that which can be,' not that which can do or be done, not that which can suffer, not that which can have or be had, not that which can give or be given, or receive or be received. These nine copulatives posterior to *being* (*Logica*, 427–439) constitute *nine species of potencies* all relative to acts posterior to the very first act of being. On the other hand, the *possibility* of *ens* expresses a potency relative only to the very first act of being. It is, therefore, a peculiar potency, totally different from

1. the *potency for doing*;
2. the *potency for being done*;
3. the *potency for suffering*;
4. the *potency for having*;
5. the *potency for being had*;
6. the *potency for giving*;
7. the *potency for being given*;
8. the *potency for receiving*;
9. the *potency for being received*.¹⁸²

¹⁸² This clearly shows that the division of potency into active and passive does not satisfy the needs of ontology. Even Aristotle's way of classifying potencies is incomplete (*Metaphysics*, (4) 5: 12). The Scholastics, for example, criticised him because the species of potencies which he numbered did not include that of creating (cf. Suarez, *Index in Metaph. Arist.* 5: 12). But to create is to posit the being of things. Being, however, as we have noted, is thought in two modes, initial and absolute. The potency for creating pertains to absolute being; the *possibility of its terms* is what pertains to initial being, as I have said. This possibility, as we saw, is threefold as a result of the trinity of categories. This, too, was not sufficiently dealt with either by Aristotle or by the Scholastics.

Article 4

The possible predicate of undetermined being relative to its proper and improper terms

420. The *possibility* which we think in initial being, that is, 'the susceptibility of its terms', is referred, as I have mentioned, either to its proper or to its improper terms.

In so far as it is referred to its proper terms it is 'the possibility of God', a possibility which the human mind opines that it thinks, as I have said. This possibility is simultaneous to all three supreme terms because initial being could not finalise in one of them without finalising in the other two. If, then, the mind distinguishes between finalising in one of the three forms and finalising in another, this too is opinative and a dialectical illusion whose absurdity the mind can later demonstrate to itself.

In so far as *possibility* seen in initial being is referred to its limited terms, the possibility is certainly absolute and needs nothing in order to be conceived.¹⁸³

421. But reflection, when it begins to be exercised, finds that there is an order in possibility, as follows.

First, the presence of limited terms in being requires that being be finalised with its own proper, unlimited terms. Absolute and unlimited being is therefore the first condition, not for thinking the susceptibility of limited terms — this can always be

¹⁸³ Two ways of conceiving the possibility of anything whatsoever are to be distinguished: 1. simple, absolute possibility is conceived without thought's undertaking to determine the conditions required for the possible thing to pass to actual existence. Thought neither denies nor affirms such conditions, although it knows implicitly that they can be present precisely because it knows that such a thing is *absolutely possible*. In other words, this concept implicitly contains the *absolute possibility* of all the conditions, without which this absolute possibility would not be; 2. possibility is conceived not only in the sense that a thing is conceived as absolutely possible, but at the same time that its conditions for *existence* are conceived and thought — above all, the cause suitable for producing it. This explains why the Scholastics distinguished possible things as negative and positive. Negative possible things were defined as 'those which do not involve contradiction' and positive as 'those which can be produced by a cause known to exist'.

thought by itself without further thoughts, as I said — but in order that this susceptibility or possibility may truly be. If absolute being were not first, there would be no determinant and limiting subject.

Secondly, granted beforehand this determinant and limiting subject, ontological reflection finds an order between the three possibilities relative to the limited terms of being. Real terms cannot in fact be conceived except on condition that first there are corresponding *ideal* terms, because to conceive is nothing more than to intuit what is ideal. Finally, we cannot conceive that there are moral terms unless we first think that there are ideal and real terms.

Consequently, the ideal terms of being, which are the first and the condition of other terms, have been considered as the *possibilities* of finite things. The essences of finite things intuited in ideas were neatly expressed by John Duns Scotus in the phrase *objective potencies*,¹⁸⁴ but I think it would be clearer to call them *possibilities* of finite real things, or *possibles*, or simply their essences.

422. From this order, a subordinate series of possibilities, that is, a series of subordinate concepts of possibility relative to finite terms of being, can be deduced. The links of this series are as follows:

A) *Supreme possibility* — The *possibility of full, ideal essences*. This possibility resides, that is, is seen by the mind, in *undetermined and initial being* (because absolute being is a necessary condition for this possibility).

B) *Middle possibility* — The *possibility of finite real things*, which resides in ideal, determined essences.

C) *Ultimate possibility* — The *possibility of finite real things*, which, as I shall indicate later, resides in the perfect order of ideal, determined essences. The order itself results from the relationship of these essences with initial *being* and with absolute being (the existence of real, finite intelligent things is a necessary condition for this possibility).

This threefold, subordinate possibility relative to the finite terms of being will receive its necessary explanation from what I shall say later.

¹⁸⁴ In II, *Dist.* 12, q. 1.

Article 5

The possible, predicated of the terms of being — Are possible finite things something positive? Logical possibility and metaphysical possibility of these finite things: the twofold necessity of absolute being and of possible finite things

423. Are possible finite entia something positive? This question has been debated. Some have answered positively, some negatively.¹⁸⁵ Fr. Parchetti started from a defective definition of ideas, common in the sensist schools of his day. For him, ideas ‘are representations of either existing or possible things’.¹⁸⁶ He went on to deduce from this that possible things are objects distinct from ideas; these objects are eternal, independent of the divine intellect, entia in which the creative act terminates. The creative act simply adds *existence* (reality) to these possible entia in such a way that the entia comprising the world are the same possible entia which have passed to existence, another way of being. But the new ideology which I have introduced overturns this definition. I showed that ideas are not representations of possible things, but are possible things themselves. At most, ideas can be called, improperly, representations of real things (*NE*, 1: 91, 97, fn. 67, *App.*, nos. 2, 7; 2: *App.*, no. 43). The idea is *initial being* itself (*NE*, 2: 417), which is thought either without determinations or without limits, and is called the *idea of being*, or as more or less determined, when it is called the *idea of some other entity*. What appears to have deceived Fr. Parchetti and others are those very expressions: ‘idea of being, idea of such an

¹⁸⁵ Amongst those who strongly denied possible things in modern times, Fr. Ercolano Oberrauch is especially notable for his acute mind. The first treatise of his *Morale* deserves to be read. Fr. Parchetti, another great thinker, argued forcefully for the opposite view. In his *Fragmenta Cosmologiae*, Lucca, Veladini Printers, 1844, chap. 1, he maintains that the *first possible entities* are things, substances, entia that are eternal and independent of the divine intellect. It is very interesting to compare the arguments put forward by these two acute thinkers and see how subtlety, and with equally pious and Catholic understanding, they uphold extreme opinions, as they both depart, by different ways, from common thought.

¹⁸⁶ *Fragmenta Cosmologiae*, c. 1, p. 12, where he says: ‘Therefore, the object must correspond to the divine ideas of possible things: otherwise they are mere chimeras, zero, that is, nothing.’*

entity, and so on', in which a distinction seems to be made between the idea and its object. That the object is distinct is not, however, the source of the problem. I myself have spoken about the distinction in several places of *Rinnovamento*.

Everything depends on which distinction is being dealt with.

Initial being, whether considered as unlimited or limited, can be seen from various points of view, although it always remains one and the same. It can be thought of absolutely, without relationships; in this case, it is called *being*. Or it can be thought of as intelligible in itself; in this case, it is called *object*. Or this intelligibility is abstracted from initial being as a property intrinsic to being in its objective form; in this case, it is called *idea*. But these are different viewpoints from which the same being is considered. It could be considered from other points of view: for instance, as the act of a subject, after the subject has been abstracted, when it is called *essence*; or as that which gives us knowledge, when it is called *light*; or as proximate, immediate and immanent cause of intelligence, when it is called *form of the intellect*. Hence, if it is called 'object of the idea', the intention is to indicate only that being which is known through its own very intelligibility. In fact, *intelligibility*, if abstracted, becomes common to all intelligible objects just as *idea* does — *idea* is this intelligibility itself. If, therefore, we want to indicate the being to which this property of intelligibility under discussion pertains, we call it the object of an idea. The same can be said about the expressions 'idea of being, idea of this or that entity' which mean only 'the intelligibility inherent in being, the intelligibility inherent in such an entity'. But entities themselves are not multiplied because of this.

We still have to consider Fr. Parchetti's other proposition: 'The creative act does not draw things from absolute nothingness. It simply makes those entia exist which already exist *ab aeterno* as possible without depending on the divine intellect.' I cannot agree with such a proposition, disapproved perhaps by all Catholic philosophers and theologians, but I would like to indicate how Fr. Parchetti could have been led to such an error. I shall do this by replying to the question I have already set out: 'Are possible entities something positive?'

424. We have to consider that 'possible' has two meanings because it is a predicate which can be referred to two subjects: to

a common, ideal subject and an imagined, individual subject. If it refers to an ideal subject (for example, an ideal horse), it means: 'This ideal ens (horse) CAN be realised in an individual.' If it refers to an individual subject which does not yet exist, but is *imagined*, it means: 'This individual ens, which I am imagining, can be realised.' The possibility in this second case, that is, as predicate of an individual subject, real or imagined as real, is the same as that predicated of real individuals. Hence, we say that we pass by inference from reality to possibility, as though the argument ran: 'This horse subsists, therefore it is possible.' The two subjects to which the predicate *possible* is referred are objects of two different human faculties, namely, the *intuitive faculty* of ideas and the *intellective imagination* which corresponds to sense-perception. In both cases, the concept of possibility contains the *relationship* between *the idea* and a real thing, perceived or imagined. And because a relationship can be considered from the point of view of each of the two entities between which it passes, we have a twofold meaning for the word 'possible'.

425. Our question, therefore, divides into two. We can ask:

1. Is what is possible, considered as predicated of the essence intuited in the idea, something positive in the essence?
2. Is what is possible, considered as predicated of a perceived or imagined real thing, something positive in this real thing?

To reply adequately to these questions, I have to investigate the nature of relationship. I shall try to do this in the following book, but for the moment, I shall say what is strictly necessary.

Relationship always falls between two entities. Its origin, however, is sometimes only in one of them. This is called the *foundation* or *principle of the relationship*; the other, to which the relationship is ordered, is normally and simply called the *term* of the same relationship.¹⁸⁷ The subject in which the

¹⁸⁷ Philipp Melanchthon wrote with excessive universality in his books *De Dialectica* (Wittenberg, 1534): 'Every relative stands between two things, one of which is called the foundation from which arises the relationship. The term is that to which the relationship is ordered. Between these two things, the relationship is the application itself or order of the foundation to the term'* (bk. 1, p. 55). For example, in the relationship of the distance between two bodies, which of them is the foundation, which the term? Either none of

foundation exists is called the 'subject of the relationship'. In this case, the *principle* of the relationship is the essential or accidental, positive or negative *quality* of only one of the entities under discussion. Thus the principle of relationship between cause and effect lies in the cause: causality itself is the essential or accidental quality of an entity which is called cause as a result of the causality. The effect, on the other hand, when it has an existence different from that of the proper, independent cause, is only the term of the relationship. The pure condition of effect is either not a quality, or is a quality dependent upon the causality proper to the entity which has the power to produce the effect.

426. Let us return now to the first question: 'Is what is possible (this relationship which the mind conceives between the ideal essence and the real) something positive in the essence when what is possible is considered as predicated of essence?' — Taken in this way, 'possible' means that this essence may be realised without involving contradiction. But is this absence of contradiction the final reason why an essence is said to be possible of realisation, or can we still ask why, as soon as the mind intuits an essence (which would not be an essence nor intuitable if it involved contradiction), it understands and says that this essence is possible? This ulterior question can certainly be asked. The reason for it lies in the very nature of being which *per se* is thinkable, that is, intelligible. Intelligible being, moreover, involves absolute possibility. The absence of contradiction is an essential property of being, and a condition, therefore, if being is to be being and, as being, to be thinkable. But

them is foundation and term of the relationship, or both are simultaneously foundation and term. The choice will depend upon the way in which the mind freely goes from one to the other. Consequently, the foundation or principle of the relationship here is purely dialectical and arises from the point of view taken by the mind. In itself, however, the principle of the relationship of distance is neither one nor the other of the two terms of the relationship, but the nature of space (cf. *Logica*, [421]). Hence the distance between the two bodies is 'one relationship following another', following, that is, the relationship of matter with space. We have to distinguish, therefore, amongst other necessary distinctions, between 'the direct relationships between two unities' and the *indirect* relationships which arise from preceding relationships in which we have to look for the principle or foundation of the relationships.

after I have thought being, does it not seem that I add something, that I add some other property when I immediately say that it *can* be realised? — The first answer springing to mind when I say: ‘This essence can be realised’, is this: I simply intend to say, ‘If hypothetically the real, corresponding to that essence, were supposed to exist, this real would also be thinkable, without difficulty, as something which would not be opposed to the laws of thought (thought rejects nothing except what is contradictory).’ But this reply, although correct in itself, establishes only *logical possibility*, a synonym of *thinkableness* (NE, 2: 543; 3: 1070). At this point, however, we can ask whether this logical, negative possibility has a metaphysical foundation. Does not everything negative derive from some positive antecedent?

There is no doubt that this is so and, as I said, the antecedent positive element is the *nature of being* which we must now consider anew. I have said that *being*, although intuited imperfectly by human beings, always shows in itself an absolute *necessity* (because being cannot not be). Reflection deduces from this that being, which must be, must have all that is necessary for it to be, although this condition of its existence is not intuited by us. This ontological, or rather deontological reflection then moves forward in search of the nature of this condition for the existence of being, and finds that this condition is complete determination of being in its three categorical forms. This conclusion enables us to understand that absolute being must exist. The threefold term is an essential condition for being to be, and nothing more is needed for being to have existence in itself. Thus, the existence of being is assured in itself because it is required by the ultimate necessity of being. Reflection now goes further, and sees that the concept of being is so extended that it embraces also the limited modes of being, although these are not necessary to the existence of being in itself. There are, therefore, two properties of being: 1. being contains in its concept all limited modes of existence, and 2. these limited modes are not necessary if being is truly to be in itself and not be annihilated (as it would be if it lacked the conditions of its existence in itself). These two properties comprise the concept of the metaphysical or ontological *possibility* of finite entia.

427. This possibility, therefore, involves two things: 1. being

[427]

is not intelligible in all its extension unless it embraces in its concept these limited modes; 2. these modes do not have to exist in themselves for being to be itself; it is sufficient that they exist in the concept. But they must exist in the concept of being. Otherwise it would not be the concept of being, which has an unlimited extension. There are, therefore, two necessities both of which arise from the nature of being:

1. The necessity that being exist in itself, and hence have its own terms without which it would lack existence in itself and would be annihilated in itself. This is the necessity of *absolute* being.

2. The necessity that being exist as intelligible. If it were not intelligible, it would lack the very concept of being, and would even be less capable of having existence in itself. The necessity of the concept of being requires that in this concept all limited modes of being should be present. Without them, the concept would be something other than it actually is; it would no longer be that of being. This is the *necessity* proper to *possible things*, that is, to the essences of limited things (*NE*, 1: 380, fns. 233, 274; 3: 1158, 1460).

This is the origin of the concept of *contingency*. Every necessity comes from the nature of being as from its font, and is reduced to the following formula: 'Necessity is the property that being has for existing in itself.' But the conditions for this existence of being in itself are two: 1. that being exist with its proper terms; 2. that its concept, which embraces all improper terms, should exist. It is not a condition for being's existence, however, that it exist in itself together with its finite terms. The real existence of these terms is not, therefore, necessary, and the lack of this necessity is called *contingency*. 'Hence, contingency is the negative property of finite entia according to which it is not necessary in any way that they exist in themselves, that is, in their real or moral form.'

This analysis shows that the *possibility* of contingent things, although it means nothing logically beyond the absence of contradiction, nevertheless has its foundation in an essential property of being. In other words, being must have a totally unlimited concept, seen in initial, undetermined being.

In this sense, and according to what has been said, we have to conclude that the possibility attributed to essences, although a

logically negative concept, has as its base and principle a positive property of the essences themselves, a property which nonetheless derives from the nature of being. Possible things, therefore, are said to be such ‘in so far as they share in that being which contains in its intelligibility all limited modes of being.’

428. We now come to the other question: ‘When possibility is attributed to real things, whether perceived or imagined, is something positive predicated of them?’ At this point it is not difficult to reply that these real things are not the principle but only the term of the relationship of the possibility of which we are speaking. Hence ‘a possible real’ simply means that this ens has an ideal and necessary essence in which resides its logical and metaphysical possibility in the sense explained above.

We can conclude, therefore, that *possibility* as predicated of finite real entia does not regard anything positive appertaining to them, but solely a condition antecedent to them. This condition is the very quality which we have acknowledged in their ideal essence in so far as this essence lies in the concept of being.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Aristotle’s way of speaking, when he says that intelligible things are *in potency* in entia having matter (ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔχουσιν ὕλην, δυνάμει ἑκαστόν ἐστι τῶν νοητῶν) (*De Anima*, 3: 4) is full of equivocations dependent upon the various meanings of the word δύναμις, *potency*. As we have seen, this word is divided into many genera and species. According to Aristotle, therefore, what is intelligible in potency would seem to be something positive in material, sensible entia. He was led to express himself in this way after having considered how real entia are conceived by the mind which, in conceiving them, brings together the real part (matter) with the ideal part that is in itself. Aristotle also at least glimpsed this truth when he defined the mind as ‘the potency of entities devoid of matter (ἄνευ γὰρ ὕλης δύναμις ὁ νοῦς τῶν ποιοῦτων)’ and insisted that ‘all intelligible things are composed of this potency’ (*ibid.*). But if the potency (δύναμις) of intelligible things is the mind, how can these intelligible things be in potency (δυνάμει) outside the mind unless potency (δύναμις) is taken in an altogether different sense? If the mind is like some intelligible matter which becomes all the intelligible things, as he says, this mind is *undetermined being*. If Aristotle’s opinion is to receive some reasonable significance, ‘having the intelligible in potency’ can only mean that real entia can be conceived by the mind, that is, seen in *relationship* with their ideal essences. But Aristotle unfortunately destroys this *relationship* by changing it into true identification. He identifies the real mind with the idea, and thus commits his capital error: ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἄνευ ὕλης τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστὶ τὸ νοοῦν, καὶ τὸ νοούμενον [because, relative to things without matter, the mind and what is known are the same thing] (*ibid.*).

Hence, the double locution by which possibility is made now a predicate of an ideal essence, now a predicate of a real, subsistent thing, does not express a double possibility but the same possibility considered relative to the two entities to which it is applied in order to be a *relationship*. The difference is this: when it is predicated of the essence, it is attributed to the entity that is *principle* of the relationship, in which it resides as something positive; when predicated of a finite, subsistent thing, it is considered from the point of view of the entity in which the relationship terminates and in which it does not constitute any positive quality.

429. It may be objected that in finite real individuals it is possible to recognise a *potency for being made*, a *potency for receiving being* and a *potency for having being*, which are three of the nine genera of potency previously indicated. But these three genera of potency, if they can be attributed to finite reality, cannot be anything more than dialectical concepts which would not give any positive quality to subsistent real ens. In fact, all three of them are illusory modes of conception, rather than dialectical modes.

By the expression *potency for being made*, we understand either the logical and metaphysical possibility itself of which we have spoken, or the creative potency possessed by absolute being for determining and realising essence. In this last case, such a potency indicates a positive quality in absolute Being, the principle of the relationship, but no positive quality in the term of the relationship — a term which exists only after the creative act. If this term is conceived anteriorly, the conception is only an act of the intellectual imagination, an act subsequently recognised as illusory. The only determination possible is the ideal essence contained in objective being, or in the concept of being.

Relative to the *potency for receiving being*, we have to reflect in one of two ways:

1. The subject of this potency is again the ideal essence. In this case the expression *receiving being* only means that this essence can be realised or that it can receive the real form of being (here it falls back into the concept of the possibility predicated of finite, determined essences).

2. The subject of the potency for receiving being is *reality*

itself. In this case, it becomes the subject of this reality, which is not and cannot be conceived as subject, separated as it is from being, because it is not whole and entire. It cannot, therefore, be thought as *potency for receiving being*, but only as having already *received being*. After having received it, the subject is conceived as existing and can by abstraction be divided from being. Hence, as potency for receiving being, finite reality is nothing more than an illusory concept.

Finally, granted the existence of the finite real, and by dividing reality from being through abstraction, we can in some way conceive *reality* as *potency for having being*, just as we can say that someone who possesses something can have it. But here, too, we have only a false and illusory dialectical manner of conception. In fact, reality either actually has being or does not have it. It can, therefore, be conceived as in the act of being, but not in potency for being. Conceived as potency for being, it is ideal essence; it is not real.

We have to conclude that *finite reality* is always in act (because it is a term of being), but never in *potency for being*.

CHAPTER 4

Continuation. — Act considered in undetermined being

Article 1

A summary of what has been said, and its connection with what follows

430. From what has been said, we conclude:

1. Being as *first determinable* is conceived as a potency for having its terms.

2. This potency is merely dialectical.

3. This *dialectical potency* does not have the same conditions relative to the proper and improper terms of being. Relative to the proper terms, undetermined being is conceived as potency *to be* determined being; relative to the improper terms, it is conceived as potency for *having* such terms.

4. The potency attributed to undetermined being to be determined being is an *opiniative dialectical* potency. In other words, it is only a dialectical illusion. On the other hand, the potency for having finite terms is a true, dialectical potency.

It is not possible for being to be determined by its proper terms; it is always actually necessary. Indeed, the concept of being provides no other necessity than that being is. But being is not, if it is not in itself; at the same time, it cannot be in itself unless it has its proper terms, which are therefore necessary.

The opposite must be affirmed about the improper terms of being which are not shown to be necessary by the concept of being. This concept demonstrates only the necessity of their *possibility* in so far as the extension of the concept is such that it embraces all possible modes of being, including the finite modes. It is necessary, therefore, to conceive in being the *dialectical potency of its finite terms*, but not their act.

5. Because the potency-cause is the subject of its own acts, and is dialectical every time the *subject* is dialectical, the dialectical potency is divided into multiple species according to the species of the cause. But in our case, undetermined being is not

the *efficient cause* of its terms. As first determinable (conceived as separate from its terms), it is simply the *logical* or ideal *cause*. Being, as potency for having finite terms, must therefore be called 'an ideal, dialectical potency'.

But how can being, which is wholly simple, be called (as first determinable) ideal, dialectical potency, when at the same time, as first determinant and ultimate determination, it provides a concept of pure act? This is what we still have to investigate.

Article 2

How opiniative dialectical potency is reconciled with
the actuality proper to being

431. In fact, if to be *act* appertains to the very essence of being, however imperfectly the essence is conceived, being must appear as *act* from the instant that it is conceived.

This is true. Initial being is always act, and the act of every act, whether it has or has not its terms. This will be better understood if we consider how initial being is united with its terms. It is united properly speaking through its *presence*, without suffering modification of any kind; it is equal, whether united with its terms or not. The act of uniting itself pertains, therefore, to the copulative *giving*, but it is more particular than *giving* taken in all its universality. It gives, that is, *posits itself*, and nothing more. More exactly (because, as we have seen, it is not the *giving subject*, but absolute being) it is *given*, it is *posited* simply as it is, that is, as act. But if an act is here or there, in several or fewer subjects, it does not as a result either lose or acquire its proper nature and essence as act. It always remains what it is, that is, act. The same can be said about any act whatsoever, even an act posterior to that of being. The act of seeing, for example, is a contingent, not a necessary act. Nevertheless, if it is present, it is necessarily present as act. It cannot be present as potency because its nature and essence is that of act. The act of being, on the contrary, is a necessary act; it cannot not be. It is, therefore, as act. But this act, which necessarily is, is found united to more terms, less terms, or different terms; its nature is the same; it is

[431]

always act. That which by its essence is act, cannot be in any other way.

When we say of undetermined, initial being that it is the *potency of being*, we do not understand this in the same way as we understand it of other genera of potency. It must not be understood as if the *entity* of which such a potency is predicated has the *nature of potency*. Rather, it is to be understood in the sense that there is a possibility that this *act* can be united with its terms, granted that the entity of which we are speaking has and retains the nature of act. We are dealing with a potency relative to its terms. It is the terms which acquire the act. The act is already present as act, but not the terms, which can therefore be.

This may seem at first sight the opposite of what I said above, that is, that *possibility* is not something positive which we predicate of terms, but something positive that we predicate of being or of essence. Careful attention, however, will show that there is no contradiction between these two teachings. What is positive in being, and also in the essences constituting the *possibility* of the terms, is this: being is *act*, and because it is act, wherever it is it gives the act of existence to the terms. Consequently, the potency of being, that is, the possibility of the terms, could not be present unless being were supremely pure act. The attribution of *potency* is fitting for initial being precisely because this being is not potency, but act, and as act *can* enable all other things to acquire act.

Such is the nature of this *first*, singular potency of being: it is a potency that follows necessarily on the nature of supremely pure act. In other words, being, precisely because it is pure act relative to itself, has the *potency* to enable the terms to which it unites itself to have act. This kind of *potency*, therefore, is not like others which presuppose some defect in whoever possesses the potency. The potency of which we are speaking is such that it cannot be found except in that which is pure act.

432. It may be objected that in this situation we cannot fittingly apply the definition of potency ('a cause which at one and the same time is the subject of its own effect') [cf. 379] to the potency proper to initial being. Initial being remains equally act whether it is divided from or united to its term, and the effect consequent on this union is not a new act of initial being as subject. — I reply that for this very reason the universal potentiality

of which we are speaking, is merely dialectical, just as initial being is universally the dialectical, antecedent subject of all entia. For instance, only the mind says: 'The being which has the entity called "rational animal" is man', but it is not true as such that being itself is man. What is true is that 'man has being, that is, participates in being'. Hence the first expression indicates nothing more than the *order of conception*; the second indicates 'the order of existence of the ens, man'.

It will be further objected that this reply is valid for the finite terms of being, but not for the infinite terms essential to being. — I reply that the infinite terms are essential if being is to exist in itself, but that it exists before our mind without any revelation of the terms. As a result we consider (in the dialectical order, which is that of our mental conception) initial being as subject even of its infinite terms and as act of their existence, although this is an opinative, illusory dialectical mode which we then dispense with. In fact, when later we come to reflect, a dialectical concept made in this manner fades away. We come to know that being with its terms is equally pure act in so far as the terms themselves are indistinguishable from their principle. In absolute being there is truly no distinction between principle and term; only most simple act is present. If, therefore, initial being is no longer present, precisely as initial, it follows that it has no potency in respect of the essential terms because, in their respect, it is not present as initial. And if it is not present, it cannot have potentiality of any kind.

Universal potentiality of being relative to its terms is therefore purely *dialectical*, except that relative to its *finite* terms this dialectical potentiality is dissolved by ontological reflection through an absolute distinction between initial being and the term; relative to its *infinite* terms it is dissolved through perfect identification in such a way that initial being disappears, leaving only absolute being.

Article 3

How ideal dialectical potency is reconciled with the actuality of being

433. As we saw, only the proper, infinite terms of being are necessary if being is to be in itself, and not simply relative to a mind that contemplates it.

But these terms, essential to being, must be infinite. This is easily understood if we consider the extension of being. Because this extension is infinite, being would not be wholly in itself if its terms were finite. On the other hand, because being is simple and indivisible, it would be unable to exist in itself with one of its parts and at the same time not exist with another. Moreover, that part of being which remained devoid of its terms not only would be unable to exist in itself; it could not even be thought. A necessary condition for being able to think being, is that it be. But it would not be, unless it were in itself, although it is not necessary (when it is thought) that it be thought with the conditions of being in itself. For the same reason, only the infinite terms are its *proper* terms. Finite terms are indeed fitting for a finite but not an infinite essence. It follows that 'the mind cannot think that being is in itself except on the supposition that being is finalised in its infinite terms, that is, in the three categorical forms'. Every other thought about being as it exists in itself contains some absurdity.

Being in itself, therefore, must have its proper, infinite terms, although it is not necessary that it have its improper, finite terms, which are not a condition of its full existence in itself. Nevertheless, it cannot exist in itself, as we have seen, unless it exist also as an intelligible object of the mind. Moreover, the concept of being (and the concept is only the object understood by the human mind) contains the possibility of all finite modes, that is, it contains the concept of these modes. Consequently, such a possibility is also a condition of the existence of being in itself. In this case, the possibility is not simply dialectical, but ideal and dialectical. And in so far as it is ideal, it can also be called 'ontological'.

However, this possibility of finite terms does not place any *potentiality* in absolute being. This becomes clear from the

definition I have given of potency: 'Potency is a cause which is at the same time the subject of its own, proper effect ([cf. 397]).' But finite entia, when they exist, are the effect of absolute ens. Nevertheless, they are not related to it as predicate is related to subject; absolute Being is not in any way the subject of finite entia. I say 'not in any way' because it is not their subject either ontologically (they themselves are subjects) or dialectically (the only dialectical, antecedent subject of finite entia is *initial* not *absolute Being*). Consequently, the *concept of cause* of finite entia is fitting for absolute Being, but not the *concept of potency*. The existence of the possibility of finite entia in absolute Being does not, therefore, posit in absolute Being any *potentiality*, and consequently does not prevent its being pure *act*.

434. Once we have seen that the real existence of finite entia adds nothing to the perfection or act of absolute Being, we understand how the *virtuality* of finite entia can exist in absolute Being. I have already said that in all causes which are not *potency* (where the effects do not have the cause as subject), the *virtuality* of such effects pertains to the nature of the cause, although the effects themselves in act do not pertain to the nature of the cause ([cf. 380]). The effects, therefore, which constitute entia different from the cause, do not have their own virtuality in themselves, but in their cause. This is fully the case when we are dealing with the *virtuality of being* to which corresponds a totally full and absolute cause in which the entire effect exists in a virtual state, and not in its proper act. In fact, if we were dealing only with the cause of an accident, or the cause of the substantial form which is to be imposed on some preceding matter, the cause would not be full because it would need the latter to produce its effect. The *virtuality* of the effect would thus be divided between the *efficient* and *material* causes, and between other causes contributing to the effect. In our case, however, there is a sole, extremely full cause. We are dealing with the creative cause, that is, the cause of being, in which alone lies the entire *virtuality* of the effect.

But, as I have said, the word *virtuality* expresses a relationship about possibility. The foundation or principle of this relationship is in absolute Being. This principle of relationship is a positive property of absolute Being, a property which is, therefore, in itself act. Consequently, this act is said to be virtuality only

when considered relative to the effect. Let us now separate the virtuality of the finite ens from the finite ens itself. Whether this ens actually exists or not, it adds nothing to absolute Being because it does not pertain to this Being: it is not a part, nor a property, nor a quality of absolute Being of which it cannot, in a word, be predicated. On the other hand, the virtuality of finite being, that is, virtual, finite being, is not something that pertains to finite ens in itself (the existence of finite ens is solely actual), but something that pertains to absolute, infinite Being. This 'something' is the essential, infinite intelligibility of being.

This intelligibility is called *virtuality* in so far as it serves as *principle* of the relationship of which the finite ens is *term*. But it is clear that this concept of virtuality (virtuality taken as relationship to finite ens) is posterior to *intelligibility* itself (intelligibility which is the base or principle of the virtuality) because it supposes a finite ens, existing and determined in itself, as term of the relationship. Hence, if hypothetically no finite entia had ever existed, nor ever were to exist, nothing would be conceived in absolute Being except a finite, intelligible, virtual, undetermined ens, and the power or cause suitable for determining it and creating individual, finite entia. If, on the other hand, we suppose that this cause has created them, there arises between these finite, determined entia, which exist in themselves, that relationship with the universal possibility and virtuality of which we are speaking (the property of the absolute intelligible) which makes us see their essences in this possibility and virtuality. In other words, we see the possibilities of real, determined entia in the way we have described in the dialogue entitled *De' possibili* (*Rinnovamento*, 543 ss.). Nevertheless, absolute Being acquires nothing more. But we shall have to return to this in theology.

435. Readers should not be suspicious of the twofold way in which I have expressed this universal possibility of finite ens. Such a possibility has been considered in absolute Being, and I have sometimes called it *virtuality of finite being* and sometimes *virtual, finite ens*. The first of these two phrases expresses the relationship between *virtuality* and *finite ens*, and is therefore posterior to the creation of finite ens. That is, it supposes the existence of finite ens because it indicates the two terms of the relationship. If we want to emend this phrase so that it expresses

only a simple property of infinite Being, we should say: *absolute virtuality*.

To me, this expression seems valuable and exact. It does not mention that to which the *virtuality* is referred because as yet there is no term to which it is referred. It is referred to everything. It is *what is possible* subsisting in God. God is the One who with his free *will* can provide a term and thus constitute a *relationship*. This term is conceived as posterior to the act of God's will. Prior to this term, there is present the *property* which soon becomes, when the term is present, the principle or foundation of the relationship. This property is that which can suitably be indicated as *absolute virtuality*. We thus establish the true origin of all the posterior and relative *virtualities* which could not in fact be conceived with ontological, absolute thought without a prior supposition of a first, essential, absolute *virtuality* which has no determined term, but can have them all.

But this *absolute virtuality* is act, not potency, and pertains to the very act which constitutes absolute Being itself.

436. We come now to the other expression which we have used as equivalent, that is, that 'undetermined, virtual finite ens' is present in absolute being. This does not offer in itself a relationship between two entities and is, therefore, equivalent under this aspect to the expression *absolute virtuality*. But because it speaks of a *finite ens* in the *infinite*, it presents thought with another difficulty instead. Because the finite is present in the infinite, it seems that we have a duality in the infinite, which is repugnant. It is necessary, therefore, to clarify the matter and take care to understand what this form of words means.

For clarification and understanding we first have to consider how with our mind we distinguish virtual (that is, intelligible) *finite ens* from infinite Ens, and posit the former in the latter as its property. Once the nature of this distinction has been understood, all duality in God vanishes. First, let us consider that the finite ens we are discussing is not finite ens existing in itself, that is, having a subjective existence, but finite ens having only an objective existence. I have said that undetermined being as object is something that is reduced to the divine Word, who is absolute Being in its objective form. But what is Being in its

objective form? It is Being in so far it is essentially intelligible and understood. But Being as such, without any restriction of any kind, is simple, unique and wholly intelligible in all its extension, depth and modes. Being, therefore, in its form as intelligible, is one sole being, essentially understood. It is a single act. If we could separate being, essentially understood, from being in its subjective form of subsistence, the finite would not in any way be distinguished in it from the infinite. But we cannot separate it because the essence of being, as I have said, is common to the three forms. Hence in objective being itself, *essence* is distinguished from the objectivity of being only in a purely dialectical, mental mode. But this same *essence* of being, which as objective constitutes absolute Being as understood, is also in the subjective form of subsistence. Moreover, that which is present in objective Being as understood is precisely the essence in this subjective form of subsistence. The understood object, if it were not this subsistent essence, would be nothing more than initial, undetermined being. This would involve two absurdities: 1. only the beginning of being, not the whole of being, would be understood; 2. being in itself would no longer be able to be (being cannot be being in itself unless it is conceivable, that is, intelligible, as I have said). If, therefore, Being in the objective form, Being essentially understood, is subsistent essence itself, we need to see how this essence subsists.

It is clear that this essence, because it has no limits, must exist in a form of infinite subsistence. If it subsists in an infinite form, it cannot exist equally under forms of finite subsistence because finite and infinite are mutually repugnant. Hence the ontological law: 'The term of composite thought is either something finite or something infinite; they cannot change into one another' (*PSY*, 2: 1381 ss.). In fact, if the essence of being could subsist as finite, it would no longer be the subsistent essence of being, because this essence is infinite. If, then, the essence of being subsisted as finite, its finite subsistence (granted again that this were possible) would add nothing to it because it is already infinite. Indeed, it would add only a defect because limitation is a defect relative to an ens which is unlimited of its nature. — But why was it said that the essence of being in its objective form, that is, being as essentially understood, contains also all the modes of being and, consequently, being in so far as it can be

limited? — Note first that being in itself, in its essence, is not limited. Limitation does not lie in being, but in its *real term*. If it seems to lie in being, this is accounted for by its relationship to this term. Being makes this finite real term to be. Thus being is considered by the mind not in itself, but in the term of its creative act. But this finite term of the creative act depends on the *free will* of subsistent Being. This *free will* of subsistent Being is also present as essentially understood in objective Being because subsistent Being is necessarily living, intelligent and cause. This cause is concerned with the *limitability* of the real — limitability which is included in the essence of being, essence understood *per se*. And this is precisely what we mean by *absolute virtuality*.

437. I can now state the difference between the two expressions, *absolute possibility* and *absolute virtuality*. The difference arises because we conceive *objective being* in two modes: as *possible or ideal being* (initial) and as *objective real being*. When we conceive objective being only as possible or ideal, we see in it possible, real being, something which is infinite and limitable. This limitability of real being conceived as possible I call *absolute possibility*. But if we then take objective being as something real and understood, we conceive absolute Being subsisting in itself, and having a volitive principle of action or a causal power which limits the reality of being. In other words, we conceive it as creating. This free, essential *cause* we then call *absolute virtuality*.

This second way of conceiving is ontological, the first dialectical. Nevertheless both are necessary for ontological investigation, which cannot be carried out or expressed unless it is adapted to the laws of the human mind. Later, of course, we have to reduce the dialectical manner of speaking to the ontological manner. This is the only way to arrive at the absolute truth, that is, at information which is absolutely and wholly true. To continue on this path, we should note once more that if we restrict our consideration only to the *essence of being* without its terms (undetermined being) and suppose that this *essence* were understood *per se* in this understood object, we could not discover what we have called the *limitability of being* because, as I said, being or its essence is not limitable in itself. The concept of *possibility*, therefore, comes after our perceptions of real finite entia; it is found by ascending from them to their

intelligibility. But in this mental ascent, thought has begun from *finite reality*, that is, from the real, already limited, form of being. We have not, therefore, drawn the concept of possibility from the pure essence of being — in other words, from essence separated from every form. Hence I have already first shown that the concept of possibility and of virtuality involve a relationship between the ideal or objective, and the real. So, as we find in being a purely dialectical limitation (which does not exist in being itself) by comparing *finite ens* with *undetermined being*, we have to go back to the origin of finite real ens if we want to initiate ontological research about the origin of the limitability of being which makes its appearance after finite real ens. But we cannot find the origin of finite real ens except in the active, volitive and free principle of absolute Being in its real form. Absolute Being has the power to limit *real form* and give it being, that is, to create. Granted this creative act which, by looking at intelligible and objective being, limits the object of the creative act by following the indications of the lovableness of being itself, we see how the objective reality can receive the limitations which appear in finite entia. The origin of the limitations of real being, therefore, lies in the intelligent, volitive and free activity of absolute Being. This activity is guided by the Lovableness of real being itself as a result of which absolute Being wants real being to be actuated even in finite modes. The *limitability* of the real form of being resides, therefore, in the supreme, free cause, while *virtual, finite ens* is determined in this form solely by the cause's perfect love of being, that is, of itself, which comes from essential Lovableness to objective, real Being itself. Consequently, we can say about the two expressions 'absolute virtuality' and 'finite, virtual ens', that the first regards a logical property because it simply indicates the *cause*, and the second regards the cause in act because it is that in which the causal act terminates.

438. If we now consider finite ens in the act through which it exists in itself, we see that the free, loving activity of absolute real Being is not *potency* because this effect is not something pertaining to the nature of absolute Being, which is not therefore the subject of this effect. Absolute Being is pure absolute cause which fulfils the actuality and personship of absolute being itself.

[438]

If, however, we consider finite ens as still virtual, we find that our previous difficulty returns with greater force than ever. Let me try to formulate it again, but in other words. A cause which is mere potency produces no effect other than that of which it remains the subject. A cause which produces an effect of which it is not the subject is called a non-potency-cause. But we have to note that even this second genus of causes, in order to produce an effect of which these causes are not the subject, has to emit an act, as first and direct effect, of which they are the subject. Thus we have to say that although a cause of this second kind is not potency relative to its second effect, of which it is not the subject, it is nevertheless potency relative to the first effect, that is, relative to the act with which it has produced the second effect. As a result, we do not understand how the creating cause is not also potency when this cause is considered prior to the emission of the creating act.

This difficulty is more pressing than the first difficulty I offered when I considered the possibility of finite things in relationship to undetermined initial being. Then I said that such a possibility posits no potentiality in initial being because it does not itself do anything or suffer anything as a result of its *presence* to finite realities. Because initial being is act by essence, it is act whether it appears connected with finite realities, or does not actually appear but simply can appear. I was able to reply in this way because initial being, of which I was speaking, is purely *act*, and not *subject* of the act (essential being as subject remains hidden from our intuition). But now that we have succeeded through ontological reflection in finding the real subject which limits the real term of being, we can happily go on to consider this subject (absolute, real Being as a will that delights in the finite real) under two different conditions, that is, as potency before it emits the creative act, and as act after it has emitted this act.

If it please God, I shall address this problem more at length in theology and dissolve all difficulty. For the moment, I set forth the answer as follows. In infinite Being, there is no before and after. From all eternity, infinite Being has always loved both being with its infinite, real term and being with its finite, real term, according to the loveliness of being itself. Hence, the very creative act is eternal. It has never been lacking because

such love has never been lacking and could not be lacking. Nor has potentiality of any sort ever occurred in God. If we think hypothetically of this potentiality, we have a purely dialectical concept possessing no truth, but arising solely from the imperfection of our intelligence.

Article 4

The sense in which we have called being 'universal matter',
that is, 'the first determinable'

439. Everything I have said up to now offers new light on the phrase: 'Being is universal matter, that is, the first determinable.'

I have enunciated this proposition by considering it only dialectically. I have spoken 'of undetermined being, the object of our natural intuition', and said that this being always remains the same. However, its terms change and being itself, as present to them all, is called 'the matter of all entities'. This does not mean that it is modified like a body, which takes different forms, but that each of the various terms intimately united with being takes from being the name 'entity' and 'ens', and without being would not be. Being, therefore, is considered as *determinable* through the terms brought alongside it, and not in itself. Determinability is simply its *relationship* with its different terms. The principle or foundation of this relationship resides in the terms themselves.

Nevertheless, what I have said here takes this theory a step further. I have found the *term* which varies in different entia. In other words, the variant is the *real term*.

The volitive, loving principle of subjective absolute Being is that which creates a finite real by seeing it in the objective, infinite real, by designing it in this infinite reality and willing it according to the rule of the Lovableness of objective being. This *finite real* in its subjective existence is the universe.

440. Hence the dialectical process and the order (before and after) of concepts in scientific reasoning (*Logica*, 440 ss.) is the following:

1. First, the *concept of the divine will* which diffuses itself in the whole lovableness of objective being.

[439–440]

2. Second, the concept of *finite reality* determined and created by the act of that divine will.

3. Third, the relationship of this *finite, already existent reality* with undetermined *being*, as a result of which this undetermined being shows to our mind various finite determinations corresponding to the finite entia of which undetermined being remains the antecedent subject. Entia as real and different from one another have a multiplicity of relationships with unique, identical, undetermined initial being which is therefore considered as *determinable* in various ways. In so far as it receives these different determinations, it is called 'universal dialectical matter'.

The *principle* of this dialectical relationship lies therefore in the different finite real terms; being, because it constitutes only the *term* of the relationship, is not as a result modified by the relationship. But because it is *per se* antecedent to these terms and common to them all, it is called dialectically the first determinable.

The quality of *determinable being*, although it appears immediately to our minds, granted the perception of finite entia, does not however find its *ontological reason* until speculation of a higher reflection rises to the creative act itself of God. But precisely because this ontological reason is not given by intuition nor by intuited being, the speculation of which I have spoken is that which investigates it. This reason, therefore, is not necessary if we are simply to have the information that undetermined being is the *first determinable*, despite the non-appearance of the reason in this information.

441. It may seem, however, that I have contradicted myself here. In one place I have said that *possibility* is a relationship which has its principle or foundation in *essences*, and *its term* in perceived or imagined real things. Possibility is therefore a positive quality in essences, but not in perceived things. Here, however, I maintain that the principle of the relationship of *determinability* attributed to being lies in its terms, which restrict and determine being itself. Consequently, being is determinable through them, and not them through it. Being is determinable through their relationship with it, not vice versa. Indeed, the very word 'determinability' (relative to the dialectical form) indicates a potency for receiving rather than giving.

But the appearance of contradiction will disappear when we consider carefully that we are dealing with two possibilities. The *possibility* of the real things we have perceived is contemplated in their *direct essences*. This I have called *middle possibility*. *Supreme possibility*, that is, the possibility of the essences themselves ([cf. 422]), is the *determinability* of being itself anterior to essences.

Relative to the second possibility, I have said: 'The Essence of being in itself (this includes initial being also) does not admit of modifications. It is simple and unchangeable. Such is being in its objective form.' But Being itself, when calibrated in its subjective form against Being in its objective form, is living, intelligent, volitive; its will is its operating or practical intelligence. This operating intelligence has as its object Being in its objective form in so far as it is essentially Lovable and Loved. The intelligence, loving Being in all its modes, loves and wills it in its entirety and then, because it is intelligence, restricts its reality and loves it as restricted. This restriction of objective reality is not something that affects or modifies objective being itself. The restriction remains in the loving gaze of this operating intelligence which is not content, as it were, with seeing and loving objective being in its whole, entire reality. Operating intelligence also loves objective being as restricted to all those modes of reality in which it beholds it, and in beholding it, perceives it. In all these modes, intelligence finds objective being lovable to the extent that it can be loved in limitation. This act of the operating intelligence of absolute, subjective Being — with which it restricts its loving gaze to an objective reality defined by the reality itself according to its lovability — is the creative act.

441a. But the real term thus circumscribed by the voluntary, loving gaze of God would not be a full, true object if it did not have *subjective existence*, because it would not be present entirely in the object without this existence. As a result of this gaze, therefore, the objective existence of what is finite necessarily involves the subjective existence which is the Universe in itself. Consequently, the finite real thus acquires an *objective* and a *subjective existence*, and in itself. On one side, therefore, we have *essences*; on the other, *finite, subsistent, real things*. The world, as I said, is in itself only the *finite real that has subjective existence*. The same is true about man as one of the real things

[441a]

which exist in the world. But *subjective existence* is composed of two elements: 1. the real and 2. being. Without *being*, the real would have no existence because there is no term without its principle. Nevertheless, being is not modified in order to be present to its finite, real terms, as we saw. It is present to them only in so far as they have reality, and with this presence it makes them entia. Man, one of these entia, is endowed with intelligence. This means that man has the faculty for apprehending the intelligibility of entia. Being is essentially intelligible and cannot be apprehended without being understood; it is, therefore, being which makes known its finite, real term. Hence, man as intelligent intuits being. But the being in all finite real things is only initial being, because the finite real is not its proper term, which is essentially infinite. Man, therefore, intuits initial being. Prior to its terms, however, initial being is undetermined. The intuition of this undetermined being constitutes human intelligence which, through undetermined being, sees being itself in finite real things, as their beginning. Note that this undetermined being cannot be restricted to any term because as yet it has no term and is necessary to see the whole of being, if not wholly, in order to understand each term (being is indivisible).

442. Having carefully established all this, we realise immediately that finite terms can be considered in three relationships with being:

1. in relationship with ideal *undetermined being* which is the object of man's natural intuition;
2. in relationship with absolute Being in its subjective form, as it is found to exist through reflection;
3. in relationship with absolute Being in its objective form which is discovered also through reflection.

If we consider the relationship of the *finite terms* of being with *undetermined being* which, according to nature, informs created minds, we find that we cannot conceive undetermined being as limited, determined and finite unless we bring finite terms alongside it. It is rather like applying a piece of coloured embroidery, full of gaps, to white linen. The linen suffers no alteration in any way, nor does it change, although the coloured circles with all their intricate stitching appear on its surface. What happens is that the person looking at the embroidery and

the linen unites them by placing one on top of the other. If the mind did not make this comparison, no difference could be conceived in undetermined being, which is uniform and totally simple. This explains why this undetermined being, even after having been conceived as determined through this gaze, appears to the other gaze of undetermined intuition just it as did before. Thus, the mind finds finite ens in the relationship which it makes between the finite real and being, a relationship whose principle and foundation lies wholly in the *finite real*. It is finite real ens which is thus brought and referred to being, which becomes the principle of finite real ens in the mind, and finite ens is constituted. After having perceived finite real things as entia by joining them to being (as Almighty God has first joined them with his creative intelligence), we can then exercise abstraction on them and once more divide intuited being from real things. In this way, we consider undetermined being as apt to receive these finite real things as its term. Moreover, we can go on to imagine as many finite real things as we want, because we see that undetermined being suffers nothing by rendering itself initial being and, as unlimited, can receive an endless number of such terms. Being, thus considered as abstracted from finite, real terms perceived or imagined by us, gives rise to the thought that it has this aptitude for serving as the beginning to such terms. This aptitude is what I call *possibility*. But precisely because this is the work of abstraction, and abstraction is never a first but a posterior conception, which pertains to partial thought (*PSY*, 2: 1319), the concept of *supreme possibility* (attributed to being and not to determined essences) does not pertain, properly speaking, to intuited being. Only later is it discovered and formed by the mind when, through reflection, which abstracts from and succeeds the perception of real things, we think of its *susceptivity* for having finite real things as term in the way I have described.

All this shows the truth of what I have said, namely, if we are speaking about *supreme possibility*, we are describing a relationship of finite terms with undetermined being. This relationship has its principle and foundation in finite beings themselves and its term in undetermined being. Such a relationship exists only if we suppose that the finite terms, either perceived or imagined, already exist, and existing can be abstracted. Thus abstracted, but

not annihilated, their *possibility* can be seen in undetermined being.

443. But a totally different approach is needed when we are speaking about *middle possibility* which, as I said, is that which resides in the *full, determined essences*¹⁸⁹ of finite entia. In this case, the relationship constituting this possibility does not pass between finite terms and undetermined being, but between finite real things and their determined essences — in other words, between terms of being. Both determined essences and the real things which correspond to them are terms of being. I have pointed out already how, as a result of the creative act, the finite real acquires both an objective existence and, at the same time, the subjective existence required by the objective existence (the object is only the subject in the form of object — objectivised). Objective existence is determined essence, essence through which the real is known in its subjective form; it is the intelligibility of the subjective form. When our mind, therefore, brings the real (existing subjectively) to its essence (its intelligibility), the two terms of the relationship already exist. They exist not only absolutely through the creative act which makes them exist, but also relative to human intelligence.

They exist absolutely through the creative act in the way I have indicated: Absolute Being in the subjective form transported itself with its loving gaze into objective being. There, absolute Being considered and loved not only all the reality which objective being showed to it, but also loved in objective being a finite reality which absolute Being itself defined. This finite reality exists relative to human intelligence when intelligence brings the perceived, finite real to undetermined being, manifest to human intelligence. Our intelligence then sees in undetermined being the initial being of the finite real, that is, being proportioned to the real. This initial being of single things is, as intelligible, limited to the individual real things which it makes known, and it is that which shows in itself their full, determined essence accompanied by the limits of the perceived,

¹⁸⁹ I speak of these alone, which are the first. The others, that is, abstract specific ideas and generic ideas are only abstractions from these first ideas. The same argument, therefore, can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to generic and abstract specific ideas.

real things themselves. We have seen that there is, in the object of intuition, a distinction between *essence* or being (which is known), and its knowableness (which follows and adheres to its objectivity). This knowableness, if abstracted, is called 'idea'.

443a. Because being is knowable *per se*, the initial being of any given real thing makes us know this real thing. In doing so, initial being is called either 'essence' or 'idea' of the real thing. The intelligible essence of something finite and real is not being which is still undetermined, but that being on which our mind has superimposed (to continue the likeness used previously) the piece of holed embroidery or stitching of another colour. In this being, our mind notes the points which overlay being and, as it were, coincide with it. Having done this, we can use abstraction in two ways: 1. we can abstract both from the real (the embroidery already noted in the example) and from its design which we have mentally transported into being and which is its objectivity and intelligibility (relative to us). By carrying out this abstraction we reach the concept of what I have called 'supreme possibility', which resides in being; 2. we can abstract solely from the real, while preserving and looking at the design of the real in being. Thus, in this design, which is intelligibility and essence, we form for ourselves the concept of *middle possibility* which resides in the essences. To know the principle and foundation of this relationship, we have to investigate the order of the two terms: 1. the essence; and 2. the real. But we see that initial being, through which the real exists, lies in the essence of the real (it is impossible for the real to be or to be conceived without being). In the essence, although it is objective and as such intelligible, being is contained as seen, and it is this being which acquires subjective form through its union with the real.

443b. We see in the second place that the real is subject to time in such a way that it need not have always existed. It is sufficient for it to have existed once, either in the past, present or future. If this is the case, the essence relative to it is always conceivable, and conceivable as eternal and unchangeable, because it shares in these qualities as a result of the being in which it is seen. The determined essence can, therefore, exist in a mind before and after the real exists in its subjective form, although this essence refers to the real (which must, therefore, have existed at one

[443a–443b]

time). Hence, although the determined essence and the real are intimately connected in such a way that they form a single term of the creative act, nevertheless the essence exists in the mind even though the real is suppressed through abstraction or destruction or as a result of tardiness in its subjective existence. On the other hand, however, it is impossible to conceive the subjective existence of the real without its essence. This is so because the real — within the limits described — can be suppressed through abstraction or in fact; in the essence, however, we see the *possibility* of the real. This possibility, in so far as distinguished from the real, has its principle and foundation and its proper seat in the same essence. Once the mind has acquired the essence, this is sufficient for it to see a possible real entity, and even to imagine it as existing (a kind of species of imaginative creation). This is what I have affirmed when speaking of middle possibility considered as relationship.

444. We can confirm what has been said if we consider that sometimes innumerable real things can correspond to one and the same essence which contains the possibility of each in exactly the same way. Hence, while some real thing is indeed required if its essence is to be thought and be as it is (I shall speak of this later), one real thing is sufficient for thinking an essence which can have innumerable real things as its term. The possibility of real things cannot, therefore, be contained in any of them because this possibility is universal and embraces them all equally. Even granted, therefore, that a real thing is necessary to its essence, all the other equal things are not necessary, although they are possible in this essence. Nor is the necessary, real thing necessarily one rather than another of innumerable things. Consequently, the superiority of the essence over the real thing (which is only one and not any particular one) is the possibility of all these things. This possibility, therefore, is a relationship which has its foundation in the essence. This foundation is rooted in the property of the determined essence 'for containing that amount of initial being necessary for the existence of each and every real thing limited in this way, and hence for containing the knowableness of these entia'. The essence, therefore, is the principal element of real entia because it is the being proper to each ens. The other element is simply the real term which of itself is neither ens, nor conceivable, but when

united to the essence can be multiplied indefinitely while the essence remains one and totally simple.

444a. At the same time, we understand how an essence, once seen as object of the mind's gaze, neither changes nor can be changed whether the real things corresponding to it are few or many, or whether they are all destroyed and then reproduced. Being, as we have seen, makes real things exist through its simple presence. Its presence, however, does not change it, and essence is nothing more than being, circumscribed by the divine mind according to the need of the finite, real term. Because being must be present to every least part and actuality of the real ([cf. 302 ss., 376, 385 ss.]), being itself must appear before the mind as defined and limited by the real and by the varying complexity of its formal and abstract elements. It is thus a representation of the real ens itself, a representation which was called 'idea-exemplar', or 'type' of contingent entia. But because it is the divine mind which determines being in this way through the creative act, this intellectual determination of being is altogether independent of and impassible relative to real things themselves.

We can therefore conclude that objective, undetermined being has *per se* no limit. When, however, it has before itself finite ens, it takes on limits relative to the mind which looks at it. The result is the relationship which I have called 'supreme possibility'. Although this possibility is contemplated in undetermined, objective being, its foundation lies in finite ens (without which the relationship is inconceivable), while its term lies in infinite, objective ens. Finite ens, however is composed of two elements: *essence* which is its principle, and the *real* which is its term. If we compare these two elements with one another (and the comparison cannot be made unless finite ens is supposed as given), we realise that the middle possibility lying in the essence is a relationship, whose foundation and principle is in the essence itself, and whose term is in real things. But this is not all. We have to take into consideration another element which completes this teaching.

445. With this in mind, let us consider the origin of all these notions in us humans:

1. We first *perceive finite entia*.
2. We then see that the finite entia we have *perceived* are

[444a–445]

composed of two elements: a) essence; and b) the real, and we divide one from the other through abstraction.

3. We compare the real element with the essence and by means of the comparison see that without essence, the real element would not be an *ens* because it would not be in any way. We also see that essence can be thought by us even if its corresponding real *ens* is annihilated. We therefore place the possibility of the real in the essence.

4. With another reflection, we realise that we would not have begun to think the *essence* unless we had *perceived* at some time the real *ens*, whole and entire. This proves to us that the two elements have some kind of synthesis between them. In other words, they must have appeared together before the mind. At the same time, we see that this does not prove the necessity for the subsistence or *in se* existence of the finite, real term in order that the essence may be. It simply proves the necessity of a *mind* which in some way or other has the potency for thinking at one and the same time the essence and the real thing. Granted this mind, both elements are present before it, and there is a relationship between them. The mind, whatever it is (divine or human) is itself a real thing. In order that the essence may be, therefore, it is indeed necessary that a real thing in itself exist, but it is sufficient that this real thing be a real mind which simultaneously thinks the two terms. It is not necessary that the finite real thing corresponding to the essence exist.

5. Having seen this, and having presupposed that this mind is suitable for thinking (in any way whatsoever) the essence together with its corresponding real thing (although this thing may not exist in itself), there is a relationship between the two elements thought by this real mind, that is, between the essence and the *thought real* thing which does not yet exist in itself. This *thought real* thing is the third element which, as I said, is necessary to complete the teaching about the possibility under discussion. The relationship between the *essence* and the *thought real* thing is one thing; the relationship between the *essence* and the *real thing* existing in itself (through its union with the essence) is another. This second relationship constitutes the ideal, *middle possibility* we are discussing, and has its principle and foundation in the essence, and only its term in the real thing in itself.

But if we consider the other relationship (between the *essence* and the *thought real*), we are no longer discussing the concept of the *middle possibility*, but another relationship which is the ontological condition of the relationship that constitutes *middle possibility*. This other relationship, precisely because it is an ontological condition of middle possibility, is discovered only as a result of very advanced, laborious reasoning, while the second relationship is presented to us directly, as it were, by the intuition of essences. This explains why philosophers have dealt with this second relationship, but scarcely ever with the first.

We see therefore, in the relationship between the *essence* and the *thought real*, that these two extremes have perfect synthesis between themselves. Each one is equally principle and term of the relationship which they together constitute. In other words, an essence is not conceivable unless it is over and against the *thought* of a real thing, nor is the *thought of the real* possible without its facing the essence. Both together form finite ens in so far as the essence is in the objective form and in so far as the *real* is in the subjective form; and the subjective form in the objective form. I shall leave this argument now, and take it up again later.

6. So far our speculation has considered matters from the point of view of the essences of a multitude of finite entia, and seen that all of them are nothing more than being limited and conformed in different ways to the *finite, thought real* things of which they thus become the beginning and their very own being. This limitation and, as it were, configuration of *being* is explained by what we have said. It will be helpful to repeat it here. In other words, for every least particle of the real, being is necessary — if the real is to be. Hence being, by following with its presence every least part of the real (and nothing more), is seen by the mind as adapted and configured to the real, and limited by it. This gaze of the mind, therefore, which thinks the limited real, is the same as the gaze which sees being as equally limited and called, through this limitation, 'essence'.

Having seen this, we conclude that being is not limited either through itself or in itself. It is limited only by the gaze of the mind which, in thinking the finite real and needing being to do so, limits being to itself (to the mind) and thus sees it as limited. We see, therefore, that the limitation comes from the mind's

gaze, not from being itself. The limitation is posited by the mind, although the mind could not limit its gaze in this way if being, its essential object, were not. Hence, if we compare the essences produced by the mind as a result of the limitation of its gaze, with being, we consider being as the *possibility* of the essences. These, however, are constituted in their limitation by the mind, while being itself undergoes no modification except relative to the mind. We have to say, therefore, that the principle and foundation of this relationship lies in the essences produced by the mind; only the term of the relationship is in being. And although it is true that the basis of the essences themselves is being, it is not called 'essence of the finite' except through the limitation which is precisely the principle and foundation of the relationship itself.

446. In the whole of this argument, I have presupposed the necessity of a mind as condition and cause of essences. We now have to see what kind of mind is required for finite essences to exist. If we consider the human mind, and the way it gradually comes to these speculations by means of the six steps of ontological reasoning I have just distinguished, we see that it begins its work from the *perception of finite entia*. Consequently, *finite real things exist* before the human mind undertakes this work, and are independent of it. When these finite real things have acted on our feeling, we mentally transfer this felt action to the being which we intuit. Our gaze, limited to the extension of these real things, sees being accommodated to them. In other words, we see essences. In this way we obtain intellectual perception of finite entia — the simultaneous thought of the essence and of the real, that is, the union in a single ens of the *essence* and the *thought real*. However, granted that finite real things exist before the mind does all this, and granted that the real cannot exist without its essence, we have to say that these essences must have existed, as necessary to the existence of real things, before we saw them. At the same time, because essences could not have existed except through and in a mind, we also have to conclude that prior to the human mind, a mind exists which simultaneously thinks essence and the finite real, and that with this thought the mind has made both elements exist simultaneously. This mind is the creating mind of God. Here we have a new and extremely illuminating proof of the divine

existence drawn from the existence of finite real things (*Sistema*, 103, 180).

447. Hence, the question about the supreme and *middle possibility*, which refers to undetermined being, leads us to another, that is, to the problem about the *efficient cause*, the origin of all this possibility. As I said, this efficient cause can only be the practical, creating mind of God.

We are faced once more with the question: 'Can there be potency in this *efficient cause*' (potency is to be understood according to the definition I have given)?

We need to consider that we always conceive *potency* and *act* in finite entia, which are the positive object of our knowledge. We do this because finite entia normally have this precise property: they do not exist with all their activity, but keep some of it back, reserved and undeveloped. These entia, because they are not full causes, develop their activity by means of certain stimuli and occasions. We, however, apply these same dialectical forms of potency and act to all causes, even to the first cause, although on further reflection we see that we made the application precipitately, because there is only pure act in the first cause.

According to this imperfect mode of our conception, we consider even the operative Mind and Intelligence of God as though it had two successive states: *potency* and *act*.

When we consider this Mind in the state of potency, we form for ourselves the concept of *creating potency*, in which we see the *ontological origin of supreme possibility*. This possibility could not be without the presence of creating potency, that is, the potency which posits finite reality and with it the essences corresponding to finite reality.

When we consider this Mind in the state of *act*, we already have the created Universe, and see in this act the *ontological origin of middle possibility* because we thought the finite real as possible in the essences that actually exist in the divine mind.

Note, however, that when we consider the practical, creating Intelligence of God as in potency to create (a state in which it never has been), finite essences are not yet present because the divine Intelligence has not yet carried out the act which circumscribes and distinguishes them. Consequently, all that remains for us is the possibility of these essences — supreme possibility,

as I have called it. But this possibility can be considered from two points of view: 1. from the point of view of divine Intelligence, which has the potency of its act (this can appropriately be called the 'potentiality' of essences) or 2. from the point of view of *objective being*, into which the divine Intelligence looks and forms the essences (this is, properly speaking, called 'possibility').

448. Let us now recall the three relationships of finite terms with being, which I distinguished at the beginning:

1. Their relationship with *undetermined* being. We have spoken about this and seen that it has its principle and foundation in the *finite terms*, and its term in undetermined being. This is *ideological supreme possibility*.

2. Their relationship with absolute Being in its subjective form. This is the *supreme potentiality* of essences, and has its principle and foundation in the practical Intelligence of absolute Being (in reality, therefore), and its term in absolute, objective Being.

3. Their relationship with absolute, objective Being. This is *ontological, supreme possibility*. But this relationship means only that 'objective, absolute Being has the aptitude for being seen by the mind not only in its entirety, but as restricted. This does not mean that objective, absolute Being suffers restriction. It is restricted only by a restriction relative solely to the way in which the mind itself operates.' If, therefore, we compare finite essences with this absolute Being, we can say that this Being contains the *possibility* of the essences before they actually exist, and that while 'the principle and foundation of this relationship resides' in this being, 'the term resides in the essences which, as yet, are not'. It is clear, however, that this is a dialectical relationship because as yet neither the essences are, nor is the aptitude of objective absolute Being for being seen in this way something proper to this Being. Rather it pertains to the mind and to the relationship of the mind with this Being. Hence, the *potentiality* of the essences is the cause of the dialectical relationship which I have called 'ontological supreme possibility'.

449. The nature of these *supreme possibilities*, both the *ontological* and the *ideological*, can also be expressed by distinguishing between the *origin* of a relationship and the *nature* of an

existing relationship. When a relationship already exists, we can determine its nature and discover which of the two entities between the relationship has the property of *principle* and which the property of *term*, granted that we are dealing with a relationship whose entities have these distinct properties. But before the two entities exist, one over against the other, and therefore before the existence of the relationship between them, the principle or foundation of the relationship (a positive quality) can exist. This would be better expressed by saying that that *property* can exist which later, when the other entity acquires existence, becomes principle or foundation of the relationship of which the second entity is, as soon as it exists, the term. This is precisely the case with *ontological supreme possibility*, before the divine will turns to its creative act. In this case, the possibility does not yet exist as relationship because no finite ens is seen in absolute Being alone. Indeed, in order to think of its aptitude for submitting finite ens to a Mind, we have to turn to the potency that the mind has for restricting its gaze. This *aptitude* is, therefore, conceived after we have conceived the relationship of the Mind with it. In other words, *ontological supreme possibility* is, as it were, a consequence of this potentiality. Hence, *ontological supreme possibility* is consequent to the relationship between absolute Being in the subjective form and absolute Being in the objective form. It is a consequence drawn from the thought of this relationship.

But thought cannot deduce this consequence about the *aptitude of objective Being for being in such a mode seen by the mind* unless it first knows the act of this mind. Only this act makes the potency known to thought. Hence, in the logical order *ontological supreme possibility* is a concept posterior to that of *supreme potentiality*, just as *supreme potentiality* is a concept posterior to that of the *actuality of the creative act*.

449a. If *ideological supreme possibility* is now considered ontologically and relative to the supreme Mind, which knows its origin, it is a concept posterior to all those we have considered because it already supposes the creation as something which has taken place. But relative to the human mind, this possibility is given directly, because the mind is endowed with the intuition of undetermined being in which it finds the possibility. Indeed, undetermined being, upon which the human spirit

[449a]

constantly gazes, is itself consequent on the creation of man and other finite intelligences. Undetermined being is simply objective Being restricted to its beginning, while its term remains hidden. This, therefore, is the first restriction (dialectically speaking) which the creating Mind placed to its gaze when it wished to create the World. Objective Being *per se* is wholly light without distinction of principle and term. It appears to human beings as beginning only through the creative act of the divine mind. Initial, undetermined being is therefore limited in this way by the creating Act.

But how is the ideological possibility of essences found by us in initial being? By referring perceived real things to initial being, and by seeing the beginning of these things in it. Comparing these real things with initial being, the human mind determines it. Then, moving backwards by means of reflection, the mind calls it the 'first determinable', that is, ideological supreme possibility.

CHAPTER 5

Important corollaries from the previous teaching

450. Before going ahead with the explanation of the teaching about act and potency, we have to pause to deduce some important corollaries from what has been said.

Article 1

First corollary: the ontological reason for the principle: 'Only what is conceivable can exist'

451. This proposition has already been posited as evident by ideology, and needs no proof.

The ideological evidence can also be analysed by reflection and reduced to an argument as follows: *all* that does not involve contradiction is conceivable. But that which involves contradiction implies annihilation of itself because one extreme of a contradiction annihilates the other. Every contradiction can, in fact, be represented by the formula: $a - a = 0$. But nothing cannot be, precisely because it is not being. Therefore, all that cannot be conceived, cannot exist.

This proof is founded on the breadth of thought and intelligence. In turn, this breadth arises because the proper, objective form of intelligence is being and, in the case of human intelligence, *undetermined being*, which has no limits. The essential unlimitedness of being and of undetermined being is, however, evident *per se*.

Ontological reason is not necessary, therefore, for us to know this truth as evident. But even things which are evident to the mind have the cause of their evidence in absolute being. It is this evidence which I call 'ontological reason'. It does not serve to form or increase the evidence of truth, but is useful for science and moreover for resolving the sophisms which reflection sometimes brings against evidence itself.

We have seen that Being has three essential forms. The second of these is objective and, because absolute Being has to subsist

complete in all three forms, it is clear that it is not only conceivable and intelligible to itself, but actually understood. This is the nature of objective form.

452. Relative to limited, created ens, I have shown that it is a non-necessary term of Absolute Being, and cannot, therefore, exist except as a result of an act of free will, that is, of the loving intelligence of supreme Being in its subjective form. But the World, if it is the work of operative, free Intelligence, must have been created with the same act with which it was understood. In this case, it is conceivable and conceived. Nothing, therefore, can exist without being conceivable.

This is also the *ontological reason* not only why 'the inconceivable is immediately understood as impossible', but also why 'every thing conceivable is declared possible'. This happens because that which is conceivable, in so far as it is conceivable, is seen as eternal (essence). But this could not be the case unless it were conceived by an eternal mind. If, however, there is an eternal mind, which has the power to first conceive it and thus make it be, it is fitting that the eternal mind also has the power to give reality to what is conceivable. Reality is, in fact, less than essence, and a cause powerful enough to produce the latter can *a fortiori* produce the former. Consequently, because eternity and immutability are directly evident, we are ready, through an intellectual instinct, as it were, to conclude that they contain also the ontological possibility of the realities which correspond to them.

Article 2

Second corollary: only that can really exist which is not only conceivable, but conceived by some mind

453. The student of ideology proves this proposition through what I may call 'a deontological divination'. He uses the following series of propositions: 1. no real thing could be, and would be, unless it were conceivable; 2. because it is conceivable, it has its ideal essence or intelligibility; 3. this essence is unchangeable and eternal; 4. but it could not be eternal if there were not an eternal Mind to conceive it; 5. hence, nothing can really exist unless it has actually been conceived from eternity.

[452–453]

Ontology confirms and explains this argument. Once it has been shown that absolute Being is essentially objective, it is also shown that it is understood through its essence. But once it is shown that finite real entia cannot exist except through an act of the free will of divine intelligence, we have to conclude that they cannot exist unless they are conceived and understood by the creating mind. Nothing, therefore, can really exist unless it is both intelligible and actually understood by some understanding.

Article 3

Third corollary: creation cannot be carried out except by God

454. This corollary results in various ways from what has been explained, and thus finds an equivalent number of demonstrations in these things.

The first is this. The finite entia which compose the world result from two elements: from the finite real term, and from initial being which gives this term the form of ens. But initial being is something pertaining to absolute Being ([cf. 292 ss., 294 ss.]). Only absolute Being, however, can dispose of what pertains to it. Absolute Being alone, therefore, God, can be the creator of the world.¹⁹⁰

The second way is this. The finite entia which make up the world are not logically necessary because they can be denied without our falling into contradiction. But if they are not logically necessary, they are not ontologically necessary because, as we have seen, the possible is conceivable (cf. 451–452). But it is equally conceivable that the world exist or not exist. The existence or non-existence of the world is therefore equally possible. If we are to verify the existence rather than the non-existence of the world, a real cause is required which will determine the former rather than the latter. But such a cause

¹⁹⁰ Hence, St. Thomas distinguishes with considerable acuteness between the *first* and *second cause* of action. He says: 'God gives BEING, other causes determine it'* (In II, D. 1, q. 1, 4; cf. *TCY*, 522, 547, 556–562, where it is shown that God always works by way of creation).

is not determined by the object, whose existence and non-existence is indifferent. Hence this *cause*, this *sufficient reason* for the existence of the world, can only be a free cause outside the world itself. But outside the world, which is the composite of finite entia, there is only infinite Being, God. God alone, therefore, is the creating cause of the world.

The third way, which reinforces and clarifies the second, is this. Nothing is necessary except Being, which is simple, indivisible and infinite. Hence it is present in its three infinite forms of subjective, objective and holy or moral form. No limitation can be present, therefore, in Being. No finite ens is necessary for the completion of Being, whose *nature* cannot be the subject of any limitation. I conclude, therefore, that *finite ens* can be only the effect of the free *will* of Being, that is, of loving and practical Intelligence. If *finite being* were a consequence of the divine nature, it would be part of this nature. But I have shown that this is impossible and repugnant to the essentially unlimited nature. If finite being, therefore, can be neither part nor appendix of the divine nature, it is a free work which goes beyond this nature. The cause of the world cannot, therefore, be other than free, divine activity.

Article 4

Fourth corollary: the concept and necessary existence of divine freedom

455. At this point, we can draw out the concept of divine freedom and prove its necessary existence.

As we have seen, the concept of *contingency* is that through which we conceive how an entity may equally be or not be. It does not form part of *being* itself, which, as wholly necessary, cannot be conceived as not being. The same is true of the concept of divine freedom which is 'the power possessed by absolute Being of making things which do not form part of its nature', that is, contingent things which can equally be conceived as being or not being. Absolute Being, therefore, is neither obliged nor determined to make them because it is complete in its own nature without them.

[455]

The proof that this power exists in absolute Being is given by arguing from the *finite real* making up the world, as I have done. The argument is summed up in the following propositions: 1. the finite real exists; 2. if it exists, existence is united to it, that is, initial being which makes it exist, that is, makes it be ens; 3. *initial being* is an appurtenance of absolute Being; 4. absolute Being, therefore, is the creating cause of finite, contingent entia; 5. but that creating cause, or power of absolute Being, which makes contingent things exist, is called 'free cause, or freedom of God'; 6. therefore, *freedom* is necessarily present in God, according to the concept I have indicated.

Article 5

Fifth corollary: emanatism is an erroneous system

456. Emanatism is the system which makes the contingent emerge from the substance of absolute Being.

But we have seen that the contingent does not pertain to the substance of absolute Being.

Emanatism is, therefore, an erroneous system.

Article 6

Sixth corollary: pantheism is an erroneous system

457. Pantheism is that system which compounds absolute Being and the contingent into a sole nature.

But we have seen that 1. the contingent does not form any part of the nature of absolute Being; 2. it is not being, but participates in being, in the way I have explained, and thus acquires the condition of ens; 3. it is not compounded with being by participating in it because being remains the same for all contingent things (hence its mental relationship as universal); each contingent thing, however, is predetermined in itself and divided from the others.

Pantheism is, therefore, an erroneous system.

Article 7

Seventh corollary: description of creation

458. As I said, the finite entia that compose the Universe result from two elements, that is, the *initial being* proper to each, and the *real*. I shall now deduce from this teaching, first the corollaries which aim to make known the nature of the first element, then those that aim at making known the nature of the second element, and finally those which deal with the union of the elements.

Relative to the first element, I said that initial being accompanies even the smallest fraction of the real. There would not be a single particle of reality if it did not have initial being. I concluded, therefore, that initial being becomes the *essence* of every real ens by receiving from the real its measure and, as it were, its configuration. But because all real entia which were, are and will be are joined in a totally ordered manner to form the World, so all their essences are also joined in a totally ordered manner to form what I have called the Exemplar of the world. In speaking of the nature of this Exemplar, I shall state the nature of all full, specific essences, and of initial being in all its extension.

It is simply a question of distinguishing between the composite of these essences as it is present to the divine Intelligence and the same essences as seen by us humans. In fact, we see them only in a very imperfect and relative mode, as I have explained elsewhere (*Rinnovamento*, 548 ss.). The Exemplar of the World, therefore, does not mean the composite of essences of finite things as we see them, but the same composite as it is present to the divine mind. I have to speak separately about the essences that constitute the exemplar of the world, and of the essences that constitute the object of our ideal knowledge. Let us begin with the Exemplar of the World.

459. Relative to the nature of the Exemplar of the World, what has been said enables us to draw the following corollary: this Exemplar is not the divine Word through which we understand absolute Being in its objective form, that is, as *per se* actually understood.

Indeed, I have said that *being* is one and totally simple, and

admits of no limitation of any sort. It cannot, therefore, be the subject of these limitations. This totally simple, infinite and one being, repugnant to every limitation, is being in itself in all its three forms; it is complete being, and therefore complete in its objective form. The *essence* of finite entia is indeed being, but limited being, subject to limitations and, as a result, the *first determinable*, as I have called it. It follows that this being, which is the subject of all the limitations with which it becomes all the essences of finite things, cannot be objective, absolute Being, that is, the divine Word. Here I am speaking of being, subject of all limitations, whether it is conceived as susceptible of them (undetermined being, and determinable) or conceived as already determined and thus become all the *full essences* of finite entia.

460. But we have yet to see what this Exemplar of the World must be, according to what I have said.

I said that it is the work of the creating freedom of God, a freedom which is a power, a force of absolute Being in its subjective form. Absolute Being in its subjective form loves itself infinitely as understood in its objective form: Being loves Being infinitely. This love brings Being to love being in all the modes in which it is lovable, in which it can be loved. In order to love it in all its modes, Being in its subjective form must love Being not only as absolute, infinite Being, but also as relative and finite being. And this love is the creative act. It creates, therefore, for itself a lovable finite object through the expansion of love. This object is the World. In order to create it, Being must: 1. *conceive* it — both because this creative principle is intelligence, and because it cannot love that which it does not understand; 2. *realise* it — because if it were not really in itself, the object of love would not exist, but would only be possible, and because that which is loved, seen in its possibility, is willed to exist. Hence the two elements of *essence* and the *real* come to birth at the same time and form the entia of the world.

Essence in the divine mind is, as it were, the Exemplar. How could divine intelligence conceive the Exemplar unless it were in objective, absolute Being? Keeping in mind that there is no succession of any kind in divine operation, and that all is done in an instant (if we can speak thus about eternity), I shall set out the logical order of the divine operations as though they were

distinct and successive (this is an inevitable requirement of our limited intelligence). No error will result because reflection, once warned, will then remove both what is imperfect and human in the argument, and what is dependent upon the fact that we can speak to one another only in a human way.

461. 1. Keeping this well in mind, I say that the first operation of supreme Intelligence relative to finite being was what I call 'divine abstraction'. Through this operation, the Intelligence of absolute Being freely abstracted *initial being* from its Absolute object. In other words, besides understanding *objective, absolute being*, it carried out another act of intelligence with which it distinguished in *absolute being* the *beginning* from the *term*, and saw the former separate from the latter not because it was truly separated in objective, absolute being, but because it separated it through mental abstraction. In fact, the human mind also has the power to divide a unique, indivisible object and fix itself on one of the elements it has created (this is called abstraction). Why, then, are we afraid of granting this power to the divine Mind? It is true that we sometimes need to abstract in order to acquire knowledge; this is not the case with Almighty God because the intelligence of infinite being is never lacking to him. But if abstraction is often an imperfection in us, in God it is nothing more than an overabundance of perfection, as it were. In this initial being, therefore, Almighty God sees within himself, from all eternity, finite being, totally and virtually included in initial being. This abstraction or vision of finite being in infinite being is still not the free act of creation, but pertains to the necessary act of divine intelligence with which this intelligence knows finite, possible being.

But this *initial being*, seen by absolute, subjective Being in objective, absolute Being, could not be this same objective, absolute being because initial being is an abstract. An abstract, as we know, is a mental concept, a term that the mind has provided for itself by limiting its own gaze; an abstract does not exist in itself, but in the mind and through the mind. It cannot exist in itself in the state in which the mind wishes to see it because it is not a full ens, but only the beginning of an ens which lacks its term. This beginning of an ens makes known possible, finite ens. Objective, absolute being, on the other hand, is an ens in itself; it is, I may say, of such a nature that the

infinite term is necessary to it — otherwise it would not be what it is. *Initial being*, present to the mind, is not therefore identical with objective, absolute Being. It is something else, a product of an act of the mind, the creation of a proper object. It is, of course, true that the divine Mind, when abstracting, has found and produced this object which I have called ‘initial being’ by keeping its gaze fixed on objective, absolute Being. In this sense, it can be said that the divine Mind sees it in objective, absolute Being. But the expression ‘seeing initial being in objective, absolute being’ simply means ‘using objective, absolute being as a foundation for abstraction’. This does not prevent the product of abstraction from being something different from the foundation on which the abstraction was carried out.

461a. This foundation, considered in relationship to the abstraction, is understood as what is greater, or the whole; the product of the abstraction is understood as what is less, or the part. This, however, is not true in the sense that ‘more’ and ‘less’ are distinguished in the foundation of the abstraction, or that distinct parts are present in it (and if there are no distinct parts whatsoever, there are no parts); ‘part’ and ‘less’ depend on the abstraction which appertains to essential, divine intelligence, although the foundation of the abstraction does not become in any way the subject of ‘more’, or ‘less’, or ‘parts’. ‘Less’ and ‘part’ are themselves the effects and products of the abstraction which pertain to the mind’s abstracting act, and receive this nomenclature only as a result of a relationship between two mental faculties: one which thinks the foundation of the abstraction (in our case, objective, absolute Being and the necessary, natural thought of God), and the other which thinks the abstract (in our case, initial Being).

The proposition, ‘Initial being is contained in objective, absolute Being and seen in it’, does not mean that initial being is something *in se* contained in absolute Being in itself. It means only that initial being, which is nothing in itself, but is something relative to the mind, arises from a gaze of the mind into absolute Being and as a result of the limitation of the gaze. Consequently, this limitation does not pass into absolute Being, but remains in the gaze.

In order to clarify better this difficult relationship between initial being and objective, absolute being, let us consider that

[461a]

the Mind, and the Object in which it terminates its act, are distinct entities, as their definitions indicate (*Lezioni filo.*, 5 ss.). Nevertheless, the nature of the Mind and of its essential object is such that the Mind and the Object synthesise; the Mind must have its Object in order to be Mind, and the Object must be present to the Mind in order to be Object. Granted these two simultaneous extremes, the object is understood as light, and the mind is likened to the eye which receives light. But as light can be considered in itself, and considered as received and seen by the receiving eye, so the Object can have a double existence, one in itself, the other relative to the mind and as such produced by the act of the Mind. Thus, because absolute Being has to be complete ens even in the objective form, it is necessary that it exist in itself in this form also, that is, subjectively. In this way, it is a subject, and through its essence, object. This object exists in itself, therefore, and in relationship to the absolute Mind by which it is essentially understood.

461b. But this Mind has an activity of its own, *divine abstraction*, through which it unites another act to the act of knowing the object in itself. With this other act, the Mind considers the object in *its beginning*, and thus gives this *initial being existence relative to itself*, although this initial being, the object of its free gaze, has no *existence in itself*. In other words, it is not a subject.

The objection will be this: 'What is this object produced to itself by the Mind with a gaze called abstraction if it is not on the one hand the mind itself, and on the other is not the absolute Object?' I reply that it is the first production, the divine knowledge of possible finite being, the fundamental element of the creature (*Rinnovamento*, [565–570]), the light which, as communicated to created intelligences, can be called created. It is that creature of which it is written: 'Let light be, and light was made.'¹⁹¹ *Initial being*, this first creature, has no subjective subsistence. Its sole existence is objective and relative to the creating Mind and, as I shall say later, to all created minds. It exists through an act of the Mind and stands before the Mind, without its being the Mind itself. The act of the Mind created initial being by gazing into the absolute Object which subsists in itself,

¹⁹¹ There is nothing to prevent these words from expressing at one and the same time the creation of sensible light as a symbol of intelligible light.

but initial being is not the absolute Object subsisting in itself. Nothing prevents our saying that it is in this Object virtually, but virtual presence does not mean having its own existence. 'Existing virtually' simply means that the Mind produces initial being by gazing at the absolute Object. It could not produce it unless it gazed at this Object.

461c. Consequently, and according to all these explanations, I say that 'initial being is something of the divine Word; it is an appurtenance of the Word: it is an uncreated light, and so on'.¹⁹² In fact, the Mind with its gaze abstracts *initial being* from objective, absolute Being, finding the former as something of the latter. But as soon as initial being is considered on its own by the gaze of the mind, it is considered as a 'something'. It is no longer objective, absolute Being, nor can the definition of objective, absolute Being be applied to it. The simplicity and absoluteness of the absolute Object is such that it is something else once its identity has been diminished even in the slightest. This is precisely what gives rise to creation, that is, making other entia, finite ens, come to existence from non-existence. Nevertheless, the divine Abstraction, in exercising itself on the absolute Object, which is God, retains some divine properties: objectivity, intelligibility, and so on. As a consequence, we have a distinction between the *divine* and *God*, a distinction I have explained in an appropriate book. Because the absolute Object (God, the Word) has an existence in himself and an existence relative to the divine Mind, the second existence can be contracted by the mind and abstracted, although the whole remains present, as always happens in abstractions, even human abstractions (*PSY*, 2: 1319 ss.). The same contraction cannot be carried out on the first existence. However, what is taken by the Abstraction still remains *divine*, although it does not exist in itself and, lacking divine personhood, cannot be the Word, but only an appurtenance of the divine essence. As I said, the Mind through abstraction has the power to conceive the divine *nature*

¹⁹² This explains why the first principles, 'whose knowledge is innate to us' (*quorum cognitio est nobis innata*) — and all are present in the intuition of being — are suitably called by St. Thomas and many other Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, a 'likeness of the uncreated Truth' (*De Veritate*, q. 10, art. 6, ad 6um).

without conceiving the divine *personhood*. The former is what is divine, and does not exist as distinct except before the mind; the latter is Almighty God.

462. 2. This is the way, therefore, in which we can conceive the first act of God regarding the finite, and at the same time constituting both divine knowledge of finite ens, and the light communicable to intelligent nature. Let us pass now to the second act.

God's operative and free Intelligence is borne into the Lovableness of objective Being, that is, Being essentially understood, and is borne into this Lovableness with all the infinite force of its love. It is, therefore, borne into objective Being as much with necessary power as with free power. It is borne with necessary power into simple, indivisible, objective, absolute Being; it is borne with free power into all the limitations of absolute Being which it wants to create, guided by the lovableness of limited being. The instinct of Love in the luminous sea of absolute Being finds all that is lovable even amongst what is limited, and the gaze of the free, operating Mind is limited to this. If we want to give a name to this operation also, we can call it 'divine imagination'.

Divine imagination differs from *divine abstraction*. In so far as the absolute Object has existence relative solely to divine abstraction, divine abstraction separates the principle from the term, in the Object, and, withholding its gaze from the term, thinks only of the *beginning* of being. Divine imagination on the other hand imagines the limited *real term* which, as imagined with its limits by the operating and free Mind of God, is the *reality* of the universe. The divine mind could not freely contemplate the real term of Being limited by the mind except by creating it, that is, making it exist not only relatively to itself [Being], but even in its very self [as term]. The reason is this: the *real term* is the subjective form of being, and the subjective form is that through which ens exists in itself, not simply relative to a mind. If, therefore, the limited real term were seen by the Mind, and did not subsist in itself, the Mind would see what is false and be overtaken by illusion. But this is absurd relative to divine Intelligence. We have to choose between two propositions: we say either that the divine Mind cannot think the limited, real term, or that it can make this term subsist *in se*, that is, create it.

Maintaining the first alternative is impossible because the Mind would not know the real, and intelligence would lack the power that even the human mind has to think finite being. The only other proposition free from absurdity is this: 'The divine, operating Mind can make subsist in itself with its free gaze the real that it imagines as limited.'

462a. This proposition contains the mystery of creation, as I said previously. Nevertheless, the human mind is constrained to admit it as true (although it cannot understand it fully) because the contradiction of this proposition involves absurdity (*Logica*, 492 ss.). There is indeed a great difference between the mysterious, inexplicable quality that a proposition can possess, and any undemonstrable, false quality. The proposition can be such that its truth is demonstrable, without its explanation being seen (*Logica*, 802–805). Hence mystery.

I make no claim, therefore, to lifting the mysterious veil which covers the creative act. I simply describe it to the extent that it is conceivable by human beings. But conceived in this way, I can demonstrate both that it does not involve contradiction in itself, and that when thought in any other way, involves inevitable contradiction. This demonstrates its truth.

I have called this divine power 'imagination' for this reason. We have to apply words to God by taking them from analogy with creatures, that is, with those things which alone we know positively. But there is no other human faculty so analogous with the action by which the real is created as the faculty of *intellective imagination*. In fact, human, intellective imagination also has its word, and creates in some way (*NE*, 2: 531–533). The difference, however, between *divine* and *human imagination* is infinite. But let us see briefly what constitutes the analogy, and what constitutes the difference.

The *analogy* consists principally in two things: 1. both the *human imagination* and what I have called the *divine imagination* are moved and guided by an instinct of loving delight; 2. both give existence to an *object* wished by the instinct as mover.

462b. The *difference* is this: the human imagination is a faculty which follows the faculties of feeling and intellect as they co-operate in producing perception, and more proximately follows on the perceptions themselves. The intellective perceptions of sensible things are, as it were, the root of that ulterior

[462a–462b]

movement called 'intellective imagination', through which we not only recall the vestiges of the perceptions we have received and their images (*NE*, 2: 519–520), but also put them together in different ways and thus make new, wanted and loved objects exist for our contemplation. *Perception*, however, does not provide the whole ens for us. We receive only an effect, limited both by the mode itself of the agent and of its action, and by the nature of the corporeal organ, and by that of the human fundamental feeling (*NE*, 3: 1213 ss.; *Rinnovamento*, 407 ss.). Consequently, what we apprehend of ens is not its entire entity, but an *effect* which ens produces in us. This effect serves as a *sign* for representing entia. Because the object of our perception is limited in this way, and because human imagination takes the elements of what it produces from perception, these objects created by the human imagination cannot be entia, but solely *sensible signs* of entia, which are then recalled in various ways and put together in a new manner by the imagination.

This is not the case with *divine imagination*. Divine imagination does not come from any preceding faculty or potency in God, as though it were some activity coming forth from a passion. Nor is it a faculty or potency. There are no faculties or potencies in God distinct from his essence. What then is divine imagination? It is the very essence of God. But the essence of God is Being and nothing other than Being. The *divine imagination*, therefore, is absolute Being itself in its subjective, entirely real form. Granted that subsistent, entirely real Being itself imagines a *finite ens*, this new object must be a true ens in itself and have, therefore, its own subjective, real existence. Essential, imagining being cannot ever imagine an accident because it does not have accidents, nor a modification of itself because it does not have modifications, nor a passion which it has received because it does not have passions and can receive nothing. What it imagines, therefore, can only be being in its real term. It is true that there is no example of this kind of imagination in nature (*TCY*, 59–60, 62–74). Nevertheless, we understand that this *MUST* be the case in God because every other way of thinking the finite as applied to God involves absurdity, just as admitting that God does not think or does not know the finite is absurd. All this will receive greater light from what I shall say later.

463. 3. We have seen how *initial being*, the first element of finite entia, has been produced through *divine abstraction*; we also saw how the *finite real* (all the realities composing the universe) has been produced by the *divine imagination*. The third operation of absolute Being in creating the World is *divine synthesis*, that is, the union of the two elements, *initial being* (which is the common beginning of all finite entia) and the *finite real* (better: the different, finite real entia, that is, the different terms of initial being). Finite entia are created through this union. Here, too, what we call the third operation is simply a rational distinction which we human beings make according to our way of thinking. In fact, this third operation is comprised in those I have already described as the first two operations. But because all three are brought about by a single divine act, they are totally united in the divine act so that Almighty God produces initial being all of a piece together with its finite, real terms. But because the effect of this single operation is trine, nothing forbids our considering this single operation as though it were three different operations. We remember, however, that in speaking like this we want to express only the relationship which that single operation has with the three effects that can be distinguished by the mind which produces the relationship.

Let us now consider carefully the consequences of *divine synthesis*.

First, I said that *initial being*, considered as essence of being, is anterior to the forms. As essentially intelligible, it is in the objective form. Then I said that initial being must be present to every slightest material or formal part of being, and thus constitute with its presence all finite entia. If, therefore, *initial being* is considered present to every real thing, it produces, in every part of this thing, *finite ens in the subjective form* (the extrasubjective form is reduced to the subjective, as we shall see later). But if initial being is considered in the objective form as intelligible, it renders intelligible all the real down to its least parts. This intelligibility of finite real things are their *essences* which, as contemplated by the mind, are called 'ideas'.

Divine synthesis, therefore, does two things: at one and the same time, it produces *essences* or *ideas*, and *finite entia* in their subjective, real form, in the way that I shall describe shortly [*App.*, no. 4].

[463]

464. But first, let us recapitulate this entire description of the creation of the universe, from which the following consequences derive:

1. *Initial being* is drawn by way of *abstraction* (carried out freely by the operating divine Intelligence) from absolute Being in the objective form, called the 'Word'.

2. *Finite real things* which form the finite real term of initial being are made to exist by the force of the *imagination* of the absolute Being in its subjective form, which according to Christian revelation, is called 'Father'.

3. The real terms, referred by the intelligence to *initial being* (considered as intelligible object) by means of divine synthesis, act in such a way that the *essences* or *ideas* of finite entia are seen in initial being.

4. Initial being (not as intelligible but simply as essence), referred by the intelligence to the *finite real terms*, makes the *finite entia* exist subjectively and really.

With these things clearly in mind, we can in some way understand how *divine synthesis* can obtain these last two effects. Through *initial being*, this synthesis informs the real so that the real becomes intelligence and person. Intellective entia have the real as proper subject, and initial being as object. From this object, the real receives existence, and thus we have perfect, although finite, subjective entia. On the other hand, non-intelligent entia are pure, real things, that is, *terms*. By perceiving or conceiving these terms, intellective entia apprehend them in objective, initial being, that is, in the essences. In this way, these terms acquire *initial being*, the first element through which they are, and are called, 'entia'. It is of entia that we constantly speak, and indeed cannot speak of anything else — it is impossible to speak of non-conceived entia except through abstraction (*Rinnovamento*, 573 ss.). We can say, therefore, in some way that the creation of entia devoid of intelligence is continued and completed not only with the act of divine intelligence, which truly creates them, but even with the act of human intelligence and every other intelligence. Each of these intelligences completes the creation of such entia relative to itself. Thus the creature imitates the Creator [*App.*, no. 5]. Nor can it be objected that if the created mind added *being* to sensible, real things, these things would not be, unless created

intelligences knew them. The only conclusion that follows from this teaching is that they would not be relative to such intelligences, but would be relative to divine intelligence which posited them, and by understanding them created them. Creating them in this way, he made them apt to receive even from created intelligences the being which they can have relative to created intelligences. This being which these things have relative to each species of created intelligences, and by which they differ from one another, is much more imperfect than that which they have relative to the divine intelligence. Divine intelligence knows and penetrates them entirely, while every created mind knows them in a manner restricted to the physical connection which these real things have with it, as I have said (*NE*, 3: 1213 ss.; *Rinnovamento*, 407 ss., 502 ss.). The *known essence* of the thing, which is indeed the reality designed and circumscribed in being, does indeed change because the difference arises from the reality which communicates with the different feelings of the various species of created intelligences. Nevertheless *initial being* remains exactly the same for all intelligences, granted its wholly simple and divine nature.

Article 8

Eighth corollary: the Exemplar of the World is not the divine Word, although the Exemplar is found in two modes in the Word: 1. eminently, 2. consequently

465. From what has been said, we can understand the nature of the Exemplar of the World and how it is distinguished from absolute Being in its objective form, which divine revelation calls the 'divine Word'.

Absolute Being in its objective form is Being essentially understood *per se*. Being does not admit of divisions or limitations of any kind; it is infinite and perfect in itself. But absolute Being in its subjective form, besides essentially understanding itself (and thus becoming essentially understood object), and infinitely loving itself as understood (having thus become loved), tends to love being also in its finite modes. Consequently, through *divine abstraction*, absolute Being fixes its

[465]

free, loving gaze, also on the infinite object while limiting its gaze to the beginningness of being, and at the same time, through *divine imagination*, creates the real in the way most pleasing to it. Then, by *divine synthesis*, it unites this real to *initial being*. Thus it simultaneously sees and creates the whole series and order of world-beings. When I say 'in the order most pleasing to it', I mean that loving instinct guides it to find directly the quantity, species and order of the finite ens which is called 'cosmos' because of its beauty. But in so far as this ordered reality is seen in *initial, objective* being, it is the composite of intelligible essences of all finite things, a composite endowed, through its order, with harmony and unity, and called 'Exemplar of the world'.

466. From this, we have the following:

1. The Exemplar of the world is created by God's free, loving Intelligence.

2. In the logical order of formation, creation of *initial being* comes first, creation of *finite reality* second. Third is the *Exemplar* which results from the relationship between *finite reality* and *initial being* in so far as initial being is objective and intelligible *per se*. Fourth is the World, that is, the composite of finite entia resulting, by means of the mind, from the synthesis of the real with the Exemplar.

3. This logical order does not indicate an order in time (because all the acts of the Almighty are done in eternity, and all are a single act that relatively to us contains the three operations which we distinguish necessarily as the result of our way of understanding). In other words, I do not mean that the Exemplar is posterior in time to the creation of initial Being and of the real. When loving instinct led divine Intelligence to limit its essential, infinite object, it was working in the light because this same object is light. Nevertheless, the object was accompanied by a light logically preceding that of the Exemplar. This light was found by divine Intelligence in a way similar to that of an artist who uses the rules of his art as guiding *principles* from which he draws as *consequences* either the beautiful forms of a shape he intends to express in marble or on canvas, or the beautiful composition of sounds and feelings used to make real a piece of music or a poem. With the same act, therefore, with which creating Intelligence, guided

by loving instinct, found, and in finding, produced the real in the infinite object, it also found the *Exemplar* because it found the real as object, that is, as united to *objective, initial being*. The three divine operations, which I distinguished and which in God are a single act, cannot be separated.

4. Although the *reality of the world* is the foundation and the subject of the relationship I have called 'supreme possibility' (whose term is initial being¹⁹³) in such a way that this possibility cannot be understood except posterior to *reality* itself, nevertheless after this reality has been known, and through it the essences of things have been designed in initial being, these *essences* (the Exemplar) have a logical priority relative to the intelligence, when they are compared with the realities themselves. It is precisely through these essences that realities are known and made.

5. A distinction must be made between the logical order in the act of creation, and the resulting logical order after creation or as a consequence of creation. In the act of creation, the logical order of objects, conceivable by us, is, as I said: 1. the divine Word; 2. *initial being*; 3. *finite real things*; 4. the essences of these real things, that is, the Exemplar of the world, designed in *initial being*; 5. the World. After creation, the order which results, relative to our intelligence, is the opposite: 1. the Word; 2. initial being; 3. the essences; 4. finite real things; 5. the World.

466a. I have distinguished *divine creation* from the kind of *completing creation* carried out by human intelligence relative

¹⁹³ This teaching about the nature of the relationships is that of St. Thomas. From it he deduces that the relationship of the creature to the Creator has its subject in the creature, not vice versa: 'Sometimes two things are related to one another in the sense that one depends on the other, but not vice versa. In this case, there is a real relationship in the one which depends, but only a mental relationship in the one on which the other depends. In other words, nothing can be understood as referred to one without there being understood also the opposite relationship on the side of the other. For example, in knowledge, which depends on what is knowable, but not vice versa. So, because all creatures depend on God, but not vice versa, there are real relationships in creatures, by which they are referred to God, but in God there are opposite relationships according to reason only'* (*De Veritate*, q. 4, 5). The same must be said consequently about the relationships between the entia of this world, and initial being.

to the real non-intelligent entities of the world. But these two logical orders are seen not only in relationship to the creative act of God, but also in relationship to the creative act that we carry out with our intelligence. This creative act of ours, with which we make unintelligent real entities — bodies, for example — become and be called entia relative to our intelligence, is brought about in *perception* which corresponds analogically to God's *creative imagination*. Let us consider, therefore, the relationship between essences and the real in the act of *perception* and after *perception*. Before perception, we intuit *initial being*, but the *specific essences* of things do not yet exist for us. But in perception, we *perceive* the real *sensibly*, and simultaneously with our intelligence bring the real to initial being, which we intuit. Thus we objectivise the real, and form for ourselves the idea of it, that is, its essence (*NE*, 1: 55–57, 337–339, 357–359, fn. 53, *App.* nos. 4, 25; 2: 417–418, 495, 506, 510, 518, 530, 961–978, fn. 235, *App.* no. 3; 3: 1220–1222 — cf. *Introduzione alla filosofia*, 4: *Sull'essenza del conoscere*). Then, uniting the two things, we *perceive intellectually the real*, that is, as *formed ens*. As we can see, the following logical order is found also in human *intellective perception*: 1. ideal being; 2. a felt real; 3. essence, or exemplar, exactly as I have said about the divine, creative act; 4. created or perceived ens.

466b. We must be careful here. The order we have considered is absolute but, if we limit our thought to the consideration of the order relative to pure intelligence, the second link of this order, that is, the *felt real*, no longer exists because it is no longer understood. Hence, it does not exist for intelligence. Its place is taken by a third element, that is, the *understood-felt real*, formed ens. The logical order relative to intelligence is, therefore: 1. initial being; 2. the essence of the real; 3. the understood-felt real. This is equivalent to St. Thomas' affirmation when he teaches: 'The proper object of the human intellect is the quiddity of the material thing, which falls under sense and imagination.'¹⁹⁴ Quiddity is not the material thing which falls under sense and imagination, but the essence of the material thing, its idea, through which it is known.

Because this is the order of intelligence, not the absolute order

¹⁹⁴ *S.T.*, I, q. 85, art. 5.

of the *formation of ens*, we find that *essence* precedes the *real* and has become *ens*. This logical order of which we are speaking must be considered after perception, when an *ens* is already made relative to our mind. In this case, the *real* (now become *ens*) is known through the *essence*, and we cannot even understand that the *real* alone exists without the *essence*, although, through abstraction, it can be conceived as on its way to becoming *ens*, because of its condition as felt or imagined. Plato rightly declares it non-*ens* when it is in this state.

This explains the true origin of the sensists' error. They pay attention to the order of formation of *ens*, but understand the order badly. They believe that the *real* is prior, and that ideas are drawn from the *real* by way of abstraction. The error lies here: they do not see that prior to *perception*, the *real* is not *ens* for human intelligence, and consequently does not exist for it. The *real* is, in this case, a concept abstracted from *intellective perception*. With the idea removed from intellective perception, we are left with the purely *real*. But the idea cannot be abstracted from what is purely *real*, although it can be added to it. With this addition, *intellective perception* arises so that we can, by means of abstractive analysis, divide the idea from the *real*, and the *real* from the idea.

This again shows us how in the order of formation, *determined essence* depends upon the *finite real*, and can be considered as the *subject* of the relationship with the *real*, as I said. But in the order of intelligence, the *real* already known (*ens*), dependent on *essence*, becomes *subject* of the relationship, while *essence* becomes the term of the relationship. Everything lies, therefore, in the relationship between the *pure real* and the *real as ens*.

6. We see, therefore, that 1. the Exemplar precedes the World, but in the order of its formation, logically speaking, does not precede the *pure real* (non-*ens*) which is an element of the world, and 2. the World is simply the *synthesis* of the *pure real* with the *essences* which are in the exemplar made first by the divine mind, and then by the human mind.

467. There may still be some difficulty in understanding what I have said about the loving instinct of absolute Being in its subjective form. Does it truly find in the absolute Object the *real* together with its measure, species and order? I ask this because

these endowments pertain to intelligence and to wisdom, which do not exist in the real, that is, in the real as we are considering it now, cut off from all else. We have to clarify this point, therefore, before we can proceed.

Note that the absolute Object is the infinite Real in its objective form, and that in so far as it is in this form it is essentially understood. All that the Absolute in the subjective form sees in this object — whether its gaze is necessary (when it embraces the whole) or freely limited (when it limits to itself the absolute Object) — cannot, therefore, be other than a limited real thing in the objective form and hence understood. But being understood means that the real is united with initial being. We have therefore separated these two elements through abstractive analysis, as I have noted, although they were always united in the divine mind where they form a single ens. I ask — and this is the difficulty I have to clarify — ‘What is the rule according to which subjective Being limits its gaze in such a way that it finds the reality endowed with measure, species and order, rather than a reality which is non-composite and uninformed, such as that described by Plato in *Timaeus*?’ As I said, the rule is the loving instinct of the practical Intelligence. But surely love which searches, and has not yet found its object, is blind? This is true, and explains why I added that divine Love was guided by *initial being* itself in its search for the real, that is, in establishing the limits within which to contain its creative gaze. Divine abstraction of initial being needed no other light except that of desiring to create finite ens because *initial being* is the self-determined beginning of every creation and every finite ens. There were, therefore, no more possible objects from which to choose, relative to initial being, which is the most common, identical and sole beginning of all things. Initial being is the directive *principle* of Love in finding the measured, specific and ordered real. Indeed, *ideal being* contains all the principles of wisdom applicable to the finite because the principles of knowledge, identity, contradiction, and all other principles subordinate to these, together with the very principles of the order of being, are simply *applied initial being* (NE, 2: 559–574; 3: 1452–1453).

Let us go back to the analogy we have used before. As the artist’s mind is guided by the principles of his art in finding the

most beautiful types for his work, so the divine mind is guided by wisdom-principles which are all contained in *initial being* as consequences of the application carried out when the rule called 'ideal being' is applied to the absolute Real. In this way, the divine mind finds and determines the finite real which, in its finiteness, is the best and most perfect, both in regard to number, weight and measure, and with regard to species and their order, if they are to obtain the end proper to love itself. The difference is this: the artist first conceives the type in his mind and then expresses it in real matter; the divine Mind conceives the real as it must be, just as we do in intellectual perception. But just as the essence or type, in the purely intellectual order, logically precedes even in perception, to the exclusion of the pure real (which later becomes real ens), so in the intellectual, divine order, the world of principle and of consequences (and hence the essences which compose the exemplar), precedes the real as ens, that is, the world, and excludes the pure real. The pure real, however, is conceived by us as antecedent in the order of formation and naturation. Thus, we explain the origin of the concept which the ancients had of uninformed matter anterior to the forms themselves. Plato describes this uninformed matter in *Timaeus*, although in his description he inadvertently provides it with some forms — not, however, the form of universal order to which the great philosopher dedicated almost all his attention.

468. Having thus clarified the nature of the divine exemplar, I now have to prove my thesis, which has two parts: 1. the Exemplar is not the divine Word, but 2. is contained in the divine Word in an eminent, implicit mode, and in a consequent, explicit mode.

That the Exemplar is not the divine Word can be shown as follows, in addition to the other proofs I have already indicated.

The divine Word is not susceptible of limitations, or of divisions into species, or of quantity, or of measure. The Exemplar, however, is a composite of ideas, divided as the entia of the world are divided, having the number and the measure of these entia. This is sufficient to understand that it cannot be the divine Word. Who gives and determines the limitations to this entire composite of essences and to each of them? The practical Intelligence of God which works freely. These limitations, therefore,

as indeed the many specific essences circumscribed by these limitations [and] different from the divine Word, cannot be entia in themselves. Thus they remain pure *entia of reason*, which have a true existence, but relative to the mind which in producing them contemplates them. The same has to be said about generic essences or ideas, even the most universal. These totally universal ideas are implicitly contained in less generic ideas in which they are found by abstraction. The last of these universal ideas is that of being itself, that is, initial being, which in its more universal applications is transformed into all the principles of reason. This entire world of entities of pure reason which are not in themselves, but are in the divine mind, constitute, together with the art of using them, created Wisdom to which can be suitably applied the words: 'From the beginning and before the world, was I created,'¹⁹⁵ and again: 'I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made... I was with him forming all things.'¹⁹⁶

Secondly, we have seen that the limitations which circumscribe the essences or ideas of the things of the world depend, in the act of their formation, on the real,¹⁹⁷ which it pleases God to create, that is, the finite real. The finite real is circumscribed and ordered according to the guide provided by initial being which contains the supreme principles of reason. But the Word does not depend in any way either on the free will of God or on *initial being* which is abstracted from God, or on the finite real, and determined by this initial being in so far as it is intelligible

¹⁹⁵ Eccles 24: 14 [Douai].

¹⁹⁶ Prov 8: 23, 30.

¹⁹⁷ When St. Thomas says of the divine essence: 'It can be known not only in so far as it is in itself, but also in so far as it is shareable (according to a certain mode of likeness) BY CREATURES'* (S.T., I, q. 15, art. 2, [resp.]), he too makes use of the relationship with *creatures* to explain *possible entities*, that is, divine ideas, which in the logical order are presupposed as existing in some way. They are, as it were, the foundation of the relationship with the divine essence, the essence from which arise ideas, that is, 'many reasons proper TO MANY THINGS' (*plures rationes proprias PLURIUM RERUM*). In order to conceive the specific ideas of the things of the world in God, we must presuppose not that these things already exist in time, but that the creative act exists from eternity. This creative act is the *divine imagination* of the real, with which the real from eternity is created in time.

object. Consequently, the Exemplar of the world is not the divine Word, but Wisdom created from eternity, relative to created ens.

Before going on to demonstrate the second part of my thesis, it will help if we compare this teaching with that of the greatest philosopher of Italy, and perhaps of the world. Any individual's thought is considerably sustained and strengthened in itself when it can be seen to agree with the thought of other, wiser individuals.

469. Aquinas distinguishes 1. the act with which God understands things; 2. the species with which he understands them; 3. the things understood; 4. the specific reasons, that is, ideas or reasons of the things understood.

The act of divine intelligence is one alone. Hence Aquinas says that *uno intellectu intelligit multa* [with one understanding God understands many things].¹⁹⁸ The *species with which* the divine intelligence understands finite things is purely one, although the things understood, and consequently the ideas, are many. Thomas defines *species* as *forma faciens intellectum in actu* [the form making the understanding in act] and adds: 'It is not against the simplicity of the divine understanding if it understands many things, but it would be against its simplicity if this understanding were formed by means of many species.'¹⁹⁹ But what is this *one species* which St. Thomas distinguishes, according to reason, from the divine understanding when he says that the divine understanding is informed by it, that is, placed in act to know all finite entia? What is this species, *with which* all finite entia are understood? St. Thomas himself says elsewhere that the *form* which perfects a potency must extend itself to all the things to which the potency extends.²⁰⁰ But this form, which relative to the intelligence is the species, can only be virtual and *initial being* if it is to be extended to all finite entia, if it is to contain them all within itself. This explains St. Thomas' most commonly stated opinion that *objectum*

¹⁹⁸ *S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, ad 2.

¹⁹⁹ *S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2.

²⁰⁰ 'If potency is to be perfectly completed through form, it is necessary that all things to which potency extends itself be contained under form'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 55, art. 1; cf. *Rinnovamento*, 575 ss.).

intellectus est ens vel verum commune [the object of the understanding is ens, that is, common truth].²⁰¹ Initial being, therefore, is that *one species* which informs the divine understanding about the knowledge of finite entia, and in which and through which it knows them all.

The things understood are finite entia, which in their own proper existence and in themselves are outside God. They do not, therefore, detract in any way from divine simplicity.

The ideas, that is, the specific reasons for these finite entia are the relationship that the determined, real element has with the divine essence. When this element is referred to the divine essence, this essence acquires the notion of their likeness. Thomas de Vio, 'who set out the great comment', observes that the concept of specific idea implies a *relationship with the thing* of which it is the idea, and that in the divine essence, because it is most simple, only the foundation can be present. This is precisely what I said previously about the divine Word. De Vio's words are worth quoting here: 'Because that (foundation of imitability) is totally one in all ideas — it is the divine, most simple essence in which there can be no distinction between the absolute imitable by a stone and the absolute imitable by a lion — plurality of ideas cannot be upheld in God. It is impossible to understand several ideas unless the pluriform meaning of the idea is understood.'²⁰² Hence he deduces that ideas cannot be conceived with the sole concept of the imitability of the divine essence, but that ideas are the divine essence only in the sense that the divine essence is imitable by creatures. This, however, means only that the divine essence is the foundation of ideas, but not yet the ideas themselves. Consequently, it is necessary, if ideas are to be had, to join the *different aspects* proper to the divine essence to different creatures. Or, as it would be better to say, to join the aspects proper to creatures, which differ, to the divine essence. These *aspects* correspond to the freely limited gazes on the part of the divine understanding of which I have spoken previously. But these *aspects*, according to this most acute commentator of St. Thomas, are those which constitute divine ideas and are made by divine understanding:

²⁰¹ *S.T.*, I, q. 55, art. 1.

²⁰² *In S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, ad 2um and ad 3um.

‘Because these aspects, which distinguish ideas, are constitutive of ideas, they do not follow the act of divine understanding as it understands ideas, but come about through the act of divine understanding as it understands its essence comparatively.’*²⁰³

470. An apparent diversity will be found perhaps between St. Thomas’ teaching and my own because I have applied to the divine Word what St. Thomas says of the divine essence. I said that absolute Being in its subjective form looks at absolute Being in the objective form with a freely limited gaze, and that seeing with this gaze creates finite entia, that is, their ideas, and the real which constitutes them subjectively. Aquinas, it would seem, says this about the *divine essence* imitable by creatures. But the difference is only apparent. The divine essence is also in the Word, and the subjective intelligence of God sees it in the Word to which it is communicated in the objective form. Nor can the divine essence stand without the Word.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, and Vio adds that ‘these ideal aspects are not necessary to God so that he may understand creatures distinctly: the perfection of divine understanding has no need to go begging aspects from reason. But they are necessarily constituted as a result of the perfection of divine understanding itself’. This seems difficult to understand because 1. if such aspects are recognised as necessary to the perfection of divine understanding, nothing prevents their also being recognised as necessary for the distinct knowledge of things; this recognition does not detract in any way from divine intelligence and knowledge; 2. St. Thomas considers them as necessary to divine knowledge of the order of the universe when he says: ‘The reason for some whole cannot be had unless we have the reasons proper to those things from which the whole is constituted’* (*S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2); 3. De Vio himself *observes* that because the divine essence is totally simple, ideas could not be distinguished in it if the divine understanding were not considered as imitable under different aspects, that is, by different creatures. The divine understanding would indeed understand them all in an implicit mode, but not as distinct. I think that De Vio’s opinion has to be stated as follows if it is to be true: ‘God creates things by making their ideas or essences together with the reality of which they are composed arise with the same act.’ God, therefore, has no reason for first having *respectus rationis* [aspects of reason], that is, ideas abstracted and separated from things. And this is precisely what I was saying.

²⁰⁴ De Vio acknowledges that the idea is fitting to the divine essence in so far as it is object and that ‘it is clear that it is not fitting to divine essence according to its merely natural being, but in so far as it is object to the divine mind’*. And he adds against Scotus that *objective being* in God is real:

[470]

Nevertheless, granted that the divine essence in the Word is wholly simple and infinite and does not admit of limitations, the limitations are constituted by free, subjective intelligence. But the object has two modes of being, one in itself and the other in the knowing intellect. Relative to the first mode the object, absolute Being, is called 'Word'; relative to the second mode, the object is called 'idea'. Because of this, the limited objects, that is, the limited essences of finite entia, are primarily in the subjective, divine intellect alone, by which they are constituted. And I add that primarily they are only in the divine intellect by which they are constituted for this reason: they are constituted by limitations in their being proper to specific ideas which differ according to different finite entia. But the Word cannot be a subject of limitations.²⁰⁵ Now although the principle of the divine intellect — like every other thing we conceive in the divine essence — is that which the language of Christian wisdom calls 'Father', nevertheless the intellect pertains to the divine essence which the Father communicates to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. This explains why divine ideas are rightly said to be in the divine essence. However, as I said at the beginning, they pertain to the Father of whom St. Thomas says: 'The Father in his knowledge contains every creature as exemplar of the whole creature.'²⁰⁶

'Although objective being in common is not real, nevertheless objective being is real in divine understanding'* (*In S. T.*, I, q. 15, art. 1). As far as I can see, if *objective being* in God is real, it must be really distinct from *subjective being*. But since there are no other real distinctions in God except those of the divine persons, we have to say that *objective being* in God, as pronounced by the Father and thus generated, is the divine Word. Every objectivity, therefore, comes to the intellect, that is, to subjective Being, in this way.

²⁰⁵ This induced John Duns Scotus to deny that the different *ideas* in God were the divine essence (*In I*, D. 35). But this seems more a question of words than anything else. Indeed, the basis of the ideas can only be the objective, divine essence, where the divine intellect as it were signs, circumscribes and multiplies them. But these signs, marks and circumscriptions, although they remain in the subjective divine intellect, remain there with the objective form that comes to them from the objective divine essence in which they are signed by divine thought. But the divine intellect itself is the divine essence itself in the subjective form. It cannot be denied, therefore, that the ideas are all divine essence in so far as they have their real basis in God.

²⁰⁶ *De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 4, ad 1um.

471. We come now to the second part of my thesis which stated that the divine Exemplar of the world is in the Word eminently and consequently. It is there in an eminent mode because, as we have seen, the divine Word is absolute, objective Being in so far as it is pronounced and thus generated by absolute, subjective Being (the Father). We also saw that the free, subjective intelligence of the Father sees in it *initial being* and the *essences of things* which this intelligence circumscribes and multiplies according to the principle of creative wisdom which is initial being. It is clear, therefore, that both initial being and determined ideas or essences which make up the Exemplar of the world, are all in the divine Word eminently, that is, as less is in great, as limited is in unlimited, as all polygons are contained in a circle.

It is there in a consequent mode in so far as the Father, by pronouncing himself, objectivising himself, and thus generating his Word, expresses all that he has, and hence expresses also his free, creative act, his intellective act and that act (which is always a single act) with which he understands that he understands [*App.*, no. 7], and therefore the things he has understood and created. This explains St. Anselm's famous dictum: 'With one and the same Word, he enunciates himself and every creature.'²⁰⁷ And this is the teaching of St. Thomas, followed, I believe, by all theologians:

In God, in order that his Word may be perfect, it is necessary that his Word express all that is contained in that from which the Word is generated. This is especially the case because Almighty God with one intuition sees all things, but not in some divided mode. Thus, it is necessary that all that is contained in the knowledge belonging to the Father — all this — be expressed through his one word, and expressed in the mode in which it is contained in this knowledge, so that this may be the true Word corresponding through consciousness to its principle and that his Word may express principally (*principaliter*) the Father and consequently (*consequenter*) all other things which the Father knows in knowing himself. Thus the Son in expressing the Father, expresses every creature. This is precisely the order shown in St. Anselm's

²⁰⁷ *Monol.*, c. 34.

words when he says: In saying himself, he says every creature.²⁰⁸

472. Here we have to consider carefully the two differences that St. Thomas assigns between the *idea* and the *Word* of God. The first is this: ideas are first in the Father, whose free intelligence in creating the world from eternity constitutes them as an equivalent number of 'aspects of reason' (*respectus rationis*). These ideas, therefore, pertain to the divine essence communicated by the Father to the Word so that the ideas pertain to the Word as one exemplar drawn from another. St. Thomas says:

The Word differs from the idea because the idea nominates an exemplary form absolutely. But the Word of the creature in God nominates the exemplary form drawn from another. The idea, therefore, in God pertains to the essence, but the Word to the person.²⁰⁹

This is explained by what I have said. The object in God, universally speaking, is conceived according to two modes of existing, that is, in itself (and as such it is person, the divine Word generated by the Father), and in the divine intellect (and as such it is idea). But the different ideas of things only have existence in the divine intellect, not in themselves (otherwise we would have to admit separate ideas existing in themselves as so many gods), because they are mental entia (*respectus rationis*). The divine intellect pertains first to the Father, the first subjective form of absolute Being; the Father communicates it with the essence to the other two persons. Thus, the idea pertains as exemplary form, considered absolutely, to the essence, in so far as the essence is the Father who freely understands and creates, and then as communicated to the Word.

The second difference posited by St. Thomas between the divine ideas and the Word is this. Ideas are directly concerned with creatures. But because creatures are many, there are many ideas — every creature has a different relationship with the divine essence. The Word, however, is directly concerned with

²⁰⁸ *De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 4.

²⁰⁹ *De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 4, ad 4um.

God, and is therefore only one.²¹⁰ We see here that, properly speaking, there is no idea of the Word in God except in so far as even the negative ideas which finite intelligences have of the Word are known by God. But the very existence in itself of the Word is also his existence in the divine intelligence. It follows that there are not two modes in this absolute object, but one mode of existing, just as in the idea referred to the creature, there are not two modes of being, but one only, the mode through which it is in the intelligence [*App.*, no. 8].

Article 9

Ninth corollary: the created real is not the divine real

473. We have seen that the divine real is infinite and indivisible, and admits of no real distinction. It is whole and entire in each of the three primordial forms of being. It follows that it cannot be the finite real. In the second place, the finite real is the finite, subjective form of being. But the finite, subjective form of being, in order to be complete, implies a feeling proper to itself which by means of intelligence becomes consciousness. This takes place in human beings. But man is conscious of being a finite feeling, and of possessing an instinct and a finite potency. This feeling and consciousness [which we cannot but have] is ourselves. Hence, we are not the infinite real because finite real and finite conscious feeling are identical terms.

In the third place, we know, through our own consciousness, that we are not the object through the intuition of which we know ourselves. This object is being (*NE*, 2: 439–442, 980–982),²¹¹ and we know that we are not being itself. But the

²¹⁰ ‘There is another difference between idea and word because the idea is directly concerned with the creature, and there are therefore many ideas of many creatures. But the Word is directly concerned with God who is first expressed through the Word, and consequently with the creature. And because creatures, according as they are in God, are one, there is one word for all creatures’* (*De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 4, ad 5um).

²¹¹ According to St. Thomas: ‘When the mind knows itself its conception is not the mind, but something expressed by information about the mind’* (*De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 2).

divine real necessarily exists also in the objective form *per se*. Hence finite real ens does not have infinite, divine reality.

A fourth argument can be drawn from the consciousness, possessed by the finite creature endowed with intelligence, that he is not in the moral form *per se*, but only by referring himself to the infinite. But if the real of the intelligent creature is not real and divine, the real proper to non-intelligent entia, which are much inferior and far more limited, must be even less real and divine.

Article 10

The tenth corollary: the real of finite entia, as proper to them and pertaining to their subjective (or extrasubjective) existence, is outside God; but it exists eminently in absolute, objective being as object of the creating, intellectual act

474. I have spoken about initial being and about the finite essences which constitute the Exemplar of the World, and shown how it is formed and exists in God. I now have to speak about the second element of finite entia, that is, about the real.

The thesis which I intend to prove has two parts, the first of which is this: 'The real of finite entia, as proper to them and pertains to their subjective or extrasubjective existence, is outside God.'

By the expression 'outside God', I mean simply this: 'The finite real, in so far as pertaining to the subjective existence of finite entia, does not constitute the divine essence or any part of this essence.'

First proof. Finiteness is essential to finite being, and infinity to infinite being. Each of these essential, contradictory properties excludes the other. Hence the origin of the ontological law of thought: 'The term of thought is something finite or something infinite' (*PSY*, 2: 1381 ss.). The intimate reason for this is that 'finiteness and infinity are properties of being, and being becomes a different entity as a result of every difference which is conceived in it. Every difference is a difference of being, not of accident'.

Second proof. This is drawn from consciousness, as we saw previously. Consciousness cannot deceive, relative to its own

feeling (*NE*, 3: 1246). But in making us know our own feeling, it makes us know ourselves (*PSY*, 1: 79 ss.). But we know through consciousness that we are not the other things which we distinguish from ourselves. We also know that there are many things unknown to us. Hence, we know that our nature is not the divine nature whose property it is to know all things and to be the intelligent cause of all things; we are therefore subjective entia outside God. We must say the same, but in a much more emphatic way, about purely sensible things and inanimate things which we conceive through their limitations — limitations much more restricted than our own.

Third proof. We know and feel that we are persons. But our personship is incommunicable (*AMS*, 836). Our personhood cannot, therefore, be the same as that of God, and cannot as such, that is, as our personship, be in God.

All theologians agree that finite entia are in God as in their *cause* and in their *exemplar*, but not as a result of their matter or subjective form.²¹² The real, therefore, as it pertains to the subjective existence of finite entia, is outside God.

475. *Objection.* God will, therefore, lack something if he lacks finite reality in so far as it exists subjectively.

Reply. The subjective existence of finite reality is relative to finite reality. Almighty God is absolute being, which excludes relative existence. This exclusion is not a defect, but perfection, because the relativity of existence is a limitation. God's lack of limitation is therefore a lack of a lack, and lacking a lack means having, not lacking.

But what is this relativity of existence, you may ask? What does the relationship consist in? I answer that the two terms of the relationship are *initial being* and the *finite real*. Initial being, that is, existence, is relative to its finite term and extends no further. If initial being were not to exist with its presence alongside the *finite real*, the latter would not be. The *finite real* united to *initial being* is finite ens which must, therefore, have an existence relative to its own reality. This relative existence constitutes finite ens as it is. Finite ens, therefore, is a relative; it is in no way absolute because it is through the relationship of initial being with it. And granted that finite ens is, we see in it the

²¹² Cf. *S.T.*, I, q. 3, art. 8.

relativity of its real nature, which is its very self; initial being is not finite ens, but something other.

476. The second part of my thesis is this: '[The real of finite entia] exists eminently in absolute, objective Being as object of the creative act.'

In the logical order of our conception, the *creative act* is posterior to the act of *generation of the Word*, with which the Father objectivises himself by affirming and pronouncing himself. This is admitted by theologians. Because the creative act, in pertaining equally to the Word, is communicated to him by the Father together with the essence, it is necessary that the Word exist in order that the Father may create.

We can prove this as follows. The Father creates finite entia with an act of his practical, free intelligence. But he carries out this act by beholding himself as objectivised, that is, he sees himself in the Word because he objectivises himself by affirmation and pronouncement. He does this by gazing into absolute, objective Being and by freely limiting his gaze within the confines which he is pleased to set to the ens which he creates. We have to suppose, therefore, that logically precedence is given to the absolute, objective Being on which this gaze rests. In other words, the Word exists.

But in gazing into this absolute, objective Being, the Father does not posit any limitation or real distinction in it because absolute Being does not admit of any limitation, division or real distinction. The limitation remains in the term of that gaze, that is, the limitation has no existence in itself, but in the divine mind. The term of this creating gaze is the World. But, as we have seen, the world results from two, or if we prefer, from three elements: 1. from initial being which is communicated as essential object to created intelligences; 2. from the real which, united to initial being, constitutes the subjective existence proper to the World; 3. from the reference, brought about by the mind, of the real to initial being. This reference makes the essences or full, specific ideas of things seen, with their order, in initial being, and constitutes their exemplar.

I have said however that initial being, and in it the exemplar, exists first in the creating intelligence and not in itself, and that it exists eminently and consequentially in absolute, objective Being, that is, in the divine Word.

I said that the real, subjective existence of the world, that is, existence as proper to the world, exists outside God and does not form any part of the divine nature.

We still have to see if anything in God corresponds to this external reality. I maintain that the reality itself of absolute, objective Being, in other words, the Word, corresponds to it. Created reality exists eminently in the Word because it is in this reality of absolute, objective Being that the divine mind of the Father sees created reality, and in affirming it, creates it.

477. Here we notice that I posit a certain difference between the way in which the exemplar exists in the divine Word and the way in which finite reality exists in the divine Word. As I said, the exemplar exists in the Word not only *eminently*, but also *consequently*. But finite reality, as I said, exists only *eminently*.

The reason for the diversity is this. The Exemplar, that is, initial being and its determinations, has objective form and can, therefore, exist in an intelligence. Thus, it exists in the intelligence of the Father who creates it. But if it exists in the intelligence of the Father who creates, when the Father pronounces himself and thus generates the Word, it is necessary, if he is to pronounce and affirm his whole self, that he also pronounce his act of creating intelligence together with all that is present in his act. This includes the Exemplar, its interior term. Thus, *consequently* he must communicate this exemplar, together with his divine essence, to the Word. But this exemplar was already *eminently* in the Word where the Father had gazed on it with his free gaze.

It is different with the finite real, which cannot exist in a mind because its nature is essentially and solely subjective. It would therefore be absurd, as Aristotle notes, to think a stone could be in the mind. The finite real can indeed exist in absolute, objective being eminently, that is, as what is less exists in what is more, because absolute, objective being is pure being, and being is also objective *per se*. But it cannot exist *consequently* because as real, finite and subjective, it is not found in the mind of the Father who sees it only in the Word with his free gaze, without its being able to be cut off from the Word by abstraction. In itself, the real is not subject to abstraction; only the idea of the real, which is in the mind, is subject to abstraction.

There is no doubt that this teaching presents apparent

difficulties. I must now explain and resolve the principal problems.

478. *Objection 1.* You said that in the logical order, we first have the generated Word, then the act of creation through which the *exemplar* in the divine mind exists together with the finite real which has its own existence outside God. After that, according to you, the *exemplar* is communicated to the Word in the very act in which the Word is generated. This looks like a contradiction. If the exemplar is communicated from the Father to the Word in the act in which the Word is generated, we have to suppose that it is prior to the Word himself.

Reply. This antinomy, or apparent contradiction, is resolved when we consider carefully the difference between the *logical* and the *chronological orders*. There is no chronological order in divine operations because all are eternal. The Word was generated and the world was created in eternity, not one before the other. The world was communicated to the Word together with the divine essence. The exemplar of the World was enclosed in this intelligent essence. Our conception, first of the Word, then of the world eminently contained in the Word, then of the distinct exemplar communicated to him, does not mean that the creative act is posterior in time to the generation of the Word, nor that the Word, after being generated, was perfected by receiving the distinct exemplar of the world from the mind of the Father. The Word was always generated, the creative act always was, and the exemplar was always communicated to the Word. But this only indicates, as I said, an order relative to the mind that conceives this single act of the Father with which he pronounces himself — Word — and the world in the Word and through the Word.

479. *Objection 2.* If the subjective real of the world is outside God and not the term of creating intelligence, it is impossible to understand how it is created.

Reply. What I have said does not imply that the subjective real of the world is not the term of the creating intelligence. If it were not the term, it could not be created. What I have said simply implies that it is the external term to which, as internal term, objective absolute being corresponds, that is, the Word, in which the finite real exists eminently.

480. *Objection 3.* I understand that finite reality is eminently

present in absolute, objective Being, that is, in the Word. In other words, it is present as what is less is present in what is more. However, eminent existence does not imply distinction and limitation, which is necessary if finite reality is to be known. The Father, therefore, does not seem to know finite reality distinctly but only in a confused manner.

Reply. It is true that the existence of one thing eminently in another entails the distinction between content and container. This distinction, however, is made by the mind of the Father through initial being and the exemplar which have in themselves all the distinctions and limitations of finite essences. Consequently, these essences are applied by the creating affirmation to the infinite, objective reality of the Word. By means of this application, the mind sees the limited, objective reality within the limits of those ideas and thus knows finite reality as distinct, and not confused in the Word.

481. *Objection 4.* Finite reality, limited in this way, is seen in the Word by the creating intelligence of the Father. It is not, however, the finite reality of the world because this reality is subjective and proper to the world, outside God. Finite reality as seen in the Word has an objective existence. Moreover, it is certain that the reality of the Word cannot be the reality of the world.

Reply. We have to consider that here we are dealing with knowledge. But, in order to know reality, it is not necessary that the one who knows be the subjective reality itself which he wishes to know. It is sufficient that this subjective reality be present to the knower in the objective form, because this form is the intelligibility of the subjective form. Now, the whole of subjective reality proper to the world, with all its distinct parts and limitations, has its objective form in the Word in which it is seen distinctly by the Father through the application of the exemplar which determines, limits, distinguishes and orders it. This is sufficient for the divine intelligence to know the subjective, proper reality of the world, although in its subjective form this subjective reality is outside God and is not God. Note carefully, that the objective form embraces the subjective in itself because the objective form receives everything, even what is subjective. But in so far as what is subjective is subjective and *nothing more*, it has

an existence in itself. In so far as it is clothed with and contained by the objective form, it has its existence in the Word, and is another mode of being which makes known the other, that is, subjective mode.

482. *Objection 5.* If finite real ens is distinct from the divine mind in the Word, and finite real ens exists in itself outside God, there are then two finite real entia, not one.

Reply. I deny the consequence, because we have seen that being is one in three forms. Hence, the finite ens itself can exist in itself, that is, subjectively, and in God objectively. This does not duplicate entia, because being is not duplicated. Only the forms in which ens exists are duplicated. One of these forms is the intelligibility of ens which is not another ens.

483. *Objection 6.* The opponent may push his case by insisting that there are not two forms of the same being, but the same form repeated because finite reality, while present in the Word, is also in itself, outside God.

Reply. When finite reality is objective, it is no longer in its real, subjective form, but in the objective form. Hence, it is not true that the same form of ens is repeated; rather there is the subjective form in itself, and the objective form in the divine Word.

484. *Objection 7.* Another difficulty. The initial being which pertains to finite, subjectively existent reality cannot be the same as the initial being in the mind of God. Hence, because there are two initial beings, one real, the other ideal, in the divine mind, there are two corresponding finite entia.

Reply. I deny that initial being which informs finite entia in such a way that existence is predicated of them is different from that contemplated by the divine mind. The identical *initial being* is in the divine mind and in the human mind, and in finite entia in so far they are created by divine intelligence and perceived by human intelligence. This does not involve any absurdity because initial being is immune from all space and is seen everywhere as identical, although the bodies to which it is applied are in space. But initial being is not bodies, just as it is not any finite ens, but something antecedent, and the dialectical subject of all things, as I have said.

485. *Objection 8.* Your explanation of divine knowledge of the finite real has not been sufficiently clarified. With the

exemplar that it produces in itself, divine intelligence can know only the possible world, not the subsistent world.

Reply. I grant that with the exemplar alone, only the possible World is known. You must notice, however, that this exemplar is found by the divine mind in the way I mentioned, that is, by applying *initial being* to the absolute Object which contains infinite reality. But the divine Mind, when applying initial being to the absolute Object, not only designs in this Object the reality of the world which it wants to create, but also *imagines* it, as I have said, and pronounces it. This imagination, pronounciation or affirmation is contemporaneously knowledge and creation of the world. But precisely for this reason I maintained that this exemplar is *applied* by divine intelligence to absolute, objective being. If we want logically to distinguish three degrees of divine knowledge of the world, we have: 1. initial being which makes known the possibility of finite ens in all its universality; 2. intuition of the exemplar in the Word which makes us see the possible but distinct and ordered *reality* of the world; 3. affirmation of this reality by which God knows and makes subsist, that is, creates the real world itself.

But the finite real is not known except in the object and by way of *affirmation*, as I have shown elsewhere at some length (*NE*, 1: fn. 53, *App.* no. 35, (15); 2: 405, 407, 479; 3: 1234; *System. fil.*, 14 ss.; *Saggio di lezioni filos.*, 13 ss.). Hence God, by affirming the world exemplified in the Word, knows it fully in its very reality and subsistence.

486. *Objection 9.* The existence proper to the world is an existence relative to its reality. But the object, because it is an essence or idea, is always absolute. Therefore the purely relative existence cannot be known in the object.

Reply. The objective form always pertains to the absolute, but in that form everything can be contained, including relative existence which remains relative in itself, while the object, which contains it and makes it known, is absolute.

487. *Objection 10.* If the exemplar, and the ideas composing it, are limited and distinct (this must be the case if it is to be the exemplar of the world), and if it exists in the divine mind and consequently in the Word, it follows that the distinctions and limitations are posited in the divine mind.

Reply. The essences or ideas found in the exemplar are limited and distinct amongst themselves, but this does not posit them in God because the distinction and limitation of ideas and essences, although known to God, do not regard God himself. The one who thinks the limitation of some ens is not himself the subject of this limitation.²¹³ The subject of the limitation is the limited thing itself. It will be said, perhaps, that ideas in God are the divine essence itself which, therefore, must either be varied or as it were differently tinted, like the exemplar, or that the exemplar cannot be in the divine essence and be it. My reply to this is that the real subject and the foundation of the varieties and limitations are the real things which have subjective reality outside the divine mind. Consequently, the divine essence is only the term of this relationship which constitutes those things called 'ideas' or 'exemplars'. But the term of the relationship is not real. It is only an entity of reason, resulting from how we conceive things, as I said before.

488. *Objection 11.* But this way seems to lead to another difficulty. If the limited ideas in God come from a gaze which he turns on himself limited in this way, seeing not the whole of being but part of it, that is, seeing finite ens that he wants to create and, by affirming it, creating it; if, moreover, this being, seen in such a limited way, is the exemplar, and when affirmed is the world; and if by this means we remove the difficulty which arises from the limitation and multiplicity of ideas; it nevertheless remains that we have transported the limitation into the act of divine intelligence, and therefore into God himself.

Reply. The act of divine affirmation has two terms: one infinite and necessary, with which it affirms itself and generates the Word, the other finite and free, with which it both affirms the world designed by it in itself and creates the world. By means of the first term, it has actual information about the whole of being in its absoluteness. This is infinite Wisdom. If, moreover, it

²¹³ St. Thomas: 'Understanding many things is not contrary to the simplicity of the divine understanding: but it would be, if this understanding were formed through many species' (S.T., I, q. 15, art. 2). We have seen that the divine understanding sees all finite things through a single species — *ideal being* — and that this species is seen by the divine understanding in itself, that is, in the Word, through the operation I have called 'divine abstraction'.

affirms what is finite, this does not remove or limit its infinite wisdom, but perfects it (if it is possible to speak in this way) in so far as it thus knows what is knowable in all possible modes.

The objection could regard *undetermined limitation* and *limitation determined to a certain measure*. Let us consider them both, and thus reply to the two implicit parts in the objection.

1. Relative to the limitation considered undetermined, what is finite cannot be known except as finite. If the case were otherwise, it would not be known as it is, but as infinite. But logical necessity, and also metaphysical necessity also, places no limit either to being or to intelligence, although there can appear to be a limit if the necessity is not properly understood. It places no limit because that which is logically or metaphysically impossible is nothing. Now knowing the finite also pertains to wisdom because it would be a defect if the finite were unknown. But in order to know the finite, it is metaphysically necessary not to extend the gaze of the intelligence outside the finite, as I said, for the sake of enabling us to understand how we contain and restrict the finite (although in fact it simply means guiding the gaze to find its object). However, this restriction of the mind's gaze to the finite in order to know the finite is not an imperfection or a limitation of the one who knows, but a perfection.

But this mode of gazing proper to the divine mind is not in any genuine sense a restriction of the act of intelligence. This follows from what I have said in various places: a) the finite can only be known by the mind with the same act with which the whole of initial being is known — and initial being is virtually infinite ([cf. 213, 380–400]); b) *initial being* cannot be known by the divine mind unless this mind knows itself in its entirety with the same act. In other words, it must know infinite, absolute being through the law of abstraction which requires that abstraction be formed on the entire object (*PSY*, 2: 1319 ss.). It is not fitting, therefore, to distinguish acts of intelligence in God in whom there is a sole act of intelligence simultaneously embracing the infinite and the finite. Consequently, this act is itself complete and infinite and most perfect.

The objection about the restriction of the divine gaze arises, therefore, from the erroneous supposition that this restricted

gaze is of itself an act of divine intelligence. This is not the case; it is only a part, as it were, of the single, infinite act, a part separated by us through abstraction. If God, with this infinite act of intelligence, did not know all that is finite, his wisdom would be defective and he would not even know perfectly his own essence, as St. Thomas notes, because he would not know how this essence is suitable to be limited or participated in a finite mode: 'He knows his essence perfectly. Hence he knows it in every mode that it is knowable. But it can be known not only according to what it is in itself, but also in so far as it is shareable by creatures according to a certain mode of likeness.'²¹⁴

2. We turn now to the *limitation determined to a certain measure*, which is in the world and in the divine exemplar. First of all, logical and metaphysical necessity require the presence of some measure, as we have seen elsewhere (*TCY*, 480 ss.). My reply, therefore, is in accord with the reply I have given to the objection drawn from undetermined limitation.

Second, God's will to affirm and create one measure of limited ens rather than another does not place any limitation in God. Although he acts freely and places on his work the limits prescribed by essential wisdom and goodness, this does not mean that he places limits to himself. His potency remains what it was. The limitation imposed, as I said, by free will and not by any foreign necessity is not a limit to the one who operates, but simply a limit imposed on the thing which is activated. Moreover, as I said, the act with which Almighty God affirms and creates *finite ens* is not an act by itself; it is the same infinite act with which he affirms himself and generates the Word, as all theologians teach.²¹⁵ It is therefore infinite act.

489. *Objection 12.* From all the theory explained so far, it

²¹⁴ *S. T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, [resp.].

²¹⁵ 'Thus it is necessary that whatever is contained in the Father's knowledge should be expressed whole and entire through one word of his. This has to happen in the mode in which it is contained in knowledge if the true Word is to correspond to its principle through knowledge. And the Word of the Father expresses the Father principally, and consequently all other things which the Father knows in knowing himself. So the Son, because he is the Word perfectly expressing the Father, expresses every creature. This is the order given by Anselm (*Monol.*, 32) who says that, in saying himself, the Father says every creature)* (*De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 4).

seems that divine knowledge has to follow the generation of the Word and exist solely through the Word and in the Word. This is opposed to the common teaching that divine knowledge pertains to the divine essence, and that the Father communicates it to the Word together with the divine nature.

Reply. This could seem to be the case for anyone who does not distinguish the logical from the chronological order, and attributes to the chronological order, which has no existence in God, what is said solely about the logical order. We have to consider, therefore, that the divine essence does not exist in itself separate from the divine persons, but subsists solely in the three divine persons, and identical in each of them. We should not, therefore, speak of the divine essence separate from the persons. If we did, we would be speaking about something abstract, and of some indefinable abstract precisely because it lacks personship. On the contrary, we should have the perfect Triad present, and speak of the essence which exists in it.²¹⁶ The three persons must, therefore, be admitted as preceding the concept of the divine essence. Granted this, the act of intelligence pertains to the essence primarily in so far as this essence is in the Father as the fount-principle of the other two persons because the acts all belong to the suppositum and in our case to the persons. The act of intelligence which the Father emits, however, is one, but with three terms: 1. the Father himself; 2. initial and virtual being, which contains all finite, possible ens, but still undetermined; 3. the world. The act of intelligence with which the Father knows himself is that with which he affirms himself and thus generates the Word. But the Word responds, as St. Thomas says, to that which in us is 'actual information'.²¹⁷ If then we wish to find through an abstraction what is conceived in the Father before the generation of the Word, all that would be left is some *potential information*. It would not be expressed or actual. This abstraction, however, is absurd and impossible because before the generation of the Word there is neither the Father nor the

²¹⁶ 'No nature has being except in its suppositum'* (Cf. *S.T.*, In III, D. 1, q. 11, art. 3, q. 1).

²¹⁷ 'The information which is posited in the definition of the Word is to be understood as information expressed by another; in us, this is actual information'* (*De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 2, ad 2um).

divine essence which is not really distinguished from each of the persons. To know, therefore, what pertains to the essence and what pertains to the persons, we have to proceed not by this way of abstraction but through another principle: 'We have to see what the Father communicates of himself to the other two persons; all that he communicates to them pertains to the essence', which is common to all three persons. But infinite *knowledge* is common to the three persons, and pertains therefore to the essence.

489a. However, we have to distinguish between the *intellection* which produces the knowledge or science and the knowledge or science itself. Now the intellection of the Father is a single act, as I said, but with three terms. In so far as it has the Word for term, it is the affirmation with which the Father in affirming himself objectivises and posits himself as Being essentially understood. But this Being, essentially understood in itself in the mind of the Father, brings about consciousness, knowledge and persuasion of itself in the Father as intelligent. This total knowledge and persuasion proper to the Father, and consequent to the presence of the Word in the mind, is the infinite knowledge of God common to all three persons. But it is common in different modes. It is in the Father as generator of the Son, because the Son, eternally generated in the mind of the Father, is subsistent, actual information. It is in the Son as Being understood through its essence and therefore as subsistent, living, personal information. It is in the Holy Spirit as Being essentially loved in this subsistent, living information, that is, in essentially understood being, in the Word. The Word, because it is absolute, objective Being understood *per se*, cannot be subtracted without annihilation of the divinity; a divine, most wise essence is no longer conceivable. But leaving the Word and considering the Trinity as it is, infinite wisdom and knowledge is present in each of the three persons.

489b. We come now to the second term of divine intellection, that is, *initial being* or the virtual knowledge of finite ens. This term does not subsist in itself but only in the mind which abstracts it from the Word with its abstractive gaze. It is seen as knowledge that pertains to the divine essence and is communicated by the Father to the other two persons: to the Son by the Father's affirming himself with what he has and therefore with

[489a–489b]

this term of initial being also, and to the Holy Spirit by the Father's loving himself in the Word with the act through which absolute Being becomes essentially loved. Moreover, this same intellection, which abstracts this exemplar from the Word, is also communicated because the Word is not generated with it. As a result, the intellection is called 'essential', not 'notional' by theologians.

The third term of divine knowledge is the World. This World, in so far as it is in God, contains the *affirmed*, and thus created *exemplar*, and the same thing has to be said about it, that is, not only is knowledge of the World communicated to the other persons, but also the intellection with which the world, both real and at the same time exemplar, is produced through affirmation. The same reason holds. The creation of the world is, therefore, common to the whole Trinity. Nor does this prevent the affirmative and abstractive intellection, which has these three terms, from being a single act, or prevent the Father from generating the Word and producing the world with a single affirmation. Nor does it prevent him from communicating this act to the other two persons not in so far as he is generative of the Word, but in so far as it is abstractive, relative to initial being, and creative, relative to the World [*App.*, no. 9].

Article 11

Eleventh corollary: ideal being, the light of the human mind,
is not the divine Word, nor the divine essence,
but an appurtenance of the divine essence

490. We have seen that *initial being* is not the divine Word, but pertains to the divine essence or the divine mind as its term. Existing only in the divine mind and not subsisting in itself personally, initial being is not in any way the Word, although the Father, in gazing at the Word, that is, at himself as affirmed, knows initial being and communicates this knowledge to the other persons.

But divine intelligence is different from human intelligence. In us, there is first the person which is the individual, subsistent, human essence who has essential intelligence, that is, the

[490]

intuition of being, and then has intelligence as a potency with which to apply being and know other things. There are, therefore, three really distinct things in us: 1. the subject; 2. the object or initial being; 3. the potency for applying the object. The object, that is, initial being, is totally different from the subject, man, although we receive our form from the object. The potency for knowledge is equally distinct from the subject and the object. In God, on the contrary, there are no potencies: all is essential act. The object is not distinct from the divine essence which subsists both subjectively and objectively. The mind of the Father, when it knows *initial being* as a result of what I have called *divine abstraction*, does not see something with a nature different from its own, but sees its own nature subsisting objectively in his Word. It sees something of the Word which it distinguishes not really but mentally from the Word. This *distinguishing act*, purely according to reason, pertains to that manner of knowledge which I have called 'affirmation', which in man is distinguished from 'intuition'. Neither distinguishing according to reason, nor simple affirmation distinct from intuition, produces any new object. It does however give some new knowledge of the object on which the distinction of reason and the affirmation fall (*Lezioni*, 19–22). The distinction of reason which the divine mind makes between *initial being* and the *absolute object* does not produce in God any object new in itself, but provides some new knowledge (new, I mean, according to the logical order — everything in God is eternal, nothing is new in a temporal sense), proper to the divine essence. This is a new object of reason; it is not new in itself. In God this object of reason is inseparable from knowledge and from the distinguishing act already described. The act of reason and the object of reason have a continuity and constitute a single entity because the object of reason is the proper completion of the act of reason. But this act, by which the beginning of being is distinguished in the divine Word, is proper to God because every act is subjective and cannot be common to creatures. But the object of reason which is the completion of that act, precisely in its condition as object and not in its condition as act, can be communicated to creatures, not in the sense that creatures themselves can be that object (which is proper to God alone), but in the sense that it can be intuited by them as something different

from themselves. This is possible because it is the nature of the object to be manifest, to be intellectual *light*.²¹⁸ Hence even finite, subjective ens can be illuminated by it, although it cannot be confused with this object. The light which illuminates is never confused with what is illuminated because of the intrinsic opposition between subjective and objective forms.

490a. We have, therefore, *initial being* in God. At one and the same time, this being is *an act that is subject* (because God's act is God himself) and an *object*. As *subject-act*, initial being cannot be communicated (because subjects are incommunicable); it can be communicated only as *object*. Hence, *initial being* exists in the human mind in a mode different from that in which it exists in the divine mind, from which it is indistinct.

If the act of this distinction of reason, which I have described and which is identical with the subject that carries it out, could be shared with creatures, creatures would themselves be God, which is absurd.

If the *absolute object* were communicated to creatures, they would see the divine Word. This cannot be the case according to nature, but only through grace in a supernatural order.

But an *object of reason*, such as *initial being*, has been communicated or shown to the human subject without reference to the divine act which produced it, and consequently without the divine subject with which that act is identified. Hence, man, in seeing this *initial being* does not see God, although he does see in initial being an *appurtenance* of the divine essence (*Lezioni*, 63 ss.; *Difficoltà* etc., p. 179 ss. of the book *Lezioni*).

²¹⁸ St. Thomas has been interpreted very mistakenly by those who attribute to him the teaching that every single one of our cognitions comes from the senses. Many places in his work give the lie to this interpretation. Amongst them I note the following: 'The likenesses of things (ideas) are in the Word as causes of existence in things. So, too, they are also a cause of knowledge of things in so far, that is, as they are impressed on intellectual minds which, in this way, may know things. So as things are called 'life' in so far as they are principles of existence, they are called 'light' as principles of knowledge' (*De Veritate*, q. 4, art. 8, ad 4um).

Article 12

Twelfth corollary — difference between initial being and the real, the two elements of the world

491. We have seen that the *exemplar* of the World and the real in the World must have been made with a single, creating act of God. Because there is no real distinction in the Word or in the divine essence, the determined and distinct ideas of which the exemplar is composed can only result from a relationship between the created real and *initial being*. The foundation of this relationship is in the creature itself, that is, in the finite real which must, therefore, exist in the creative affirmation if this relationship is also to be present. It is not a suitable answer to say that the finite real was present in its possibility. The reference is to either a *remote, implicit possibility*, and in this case it is the divine Word himself without distinctions, or to a *proximate possibility*. This possibility is either universal and *indistinct*, that is, initial being, or distinct, as it is in the exemplar. It is this last possibility which arises from the creative affirmation, that is, from the real existing through this affirmation and consequently presupposing this affirmation.

However, although the affirmed real is the foundation of the relationship with initial being — a relationship which distinguishes in initial being the *ideas* of things — and as such logically precedes, it does not follow that the finite real in its subjective existence, which is in time, precedes the exemplar. Only the *creative affirmation*, which is in eternity, precedes the exemplar.

Second, the loving instinct always precedes and guides the *creative affirmation*. Initial being, which guides the loving instinct with its light, also precedes.

Third, when I say that the *creative affirmation* logically precedes the exemplar, I mean in the *logical order of entities*, not in the *logical order of knowledge*. In fact, the opposite happens in the logical order of knowledge because distinct, real things cannot be known unless distinct ideas are present beforehand. This is precisely what we observe in our perception, in which we distinguish the same two orders: 1. the *order of entities*, that is, of formation — in these entities what is felt precedes the *specific*

idea; 2. the *order of knowledge* — in this order the *specific idea* precedes *the felt element*, which, prior to the presence of the idea, is not the object of knowledge. But in God there is no external felt element. What is present is the act which posits it — an act completed with the specific idea which originates the order of distinct knowledge.

492. These logical orders do not prevent the creative act from being one and eternal, relative both to the real and to the exemplar. No plurality of acts can be recognised in the creative act, nor any succession in time, nor successive duration.

However, there is a difference between the exemplar and the real. The former does not constitute the subjective, proper existence of the World; the real constitutes this existence. Hence the exemplar remains in God eternally and pertains to the divine nature. But two questions arise here:

1. Is the exemplar, by remaining in God, communicated to finite real things? If it is communicated, how does this come about?

2. If the finite real constitutes the subjective, proper existence of the world, outside God, is there nothing in God which corresponds to the finite real?

I reply to the first question on the basis of what has been said. God communicates the sight of *initial being* to certain finite real entia, and this renders them perfect and intelligent. These entia then refer sensible things to this being, and thus form by themselves their world of ideas. This ideal world is not the divine exemplar, as I have said elsewhere (*Rinnovamento*, 502 ss.), but something analogous to it and proportioned to human feeling, which is the foundation of the relationship.

In reply to the second question, I say that the finite real is not and cannot be in God in so far as it constitutes the subjective, proper existence of the world. The finite real is a mode of being relative to the world, as we have seen. What corresponds to it in God is the exemplar indivisibly united to the divine affirmation of finite ens which is manifested in the exemplar. The finite real is present in this affirmed exemplar, but in objective form, analogously to what occurs in our intellectual perception through which we see the real in objective being (*Logica*, 307; *Introduzione alla filosofia*, 4: *Sull'essenza del conoscere*). The finite real itself in subjective form is that which pertains to the

world outside God — the world whose existence is relative to the real. This finite ens in the divine affirmation of the exemplar is the internal term of the affirmation itself; it is not different from the affirmation because, as I said, affirmation in God is not made by way of progression. In other words, God does not have to take steps to arrive at the term of the affirmation; this term is found directly. Hence, the term is the divine affirmation itself eternally complete in the exemplar seen in the Word where the Father distinguishes and pronounces the term with one and the same act.²¹⁹ Finite ens, therefore, is in the Word eminently, while the distinction between finite and infinite ens is present in the operations of divine intelligence (abstraction of initial being, imagination and affirmation) together with the force through which the finite real subsists.

493. *Objection 1.* If, in God, only the finite real is present eminently in the divine Word, and is distinct through an act of intelligence, and through the efficacy of this act is at the same time made to subsist in its subjective, proper form outside God, it follows that the knowledge and action of God does not come to know the world in the subjective form. In other words, the world in its subjective form is not the term of the divine action and consequently is independent of God.

Reply. These are erroneous consequences which do not follow from the premisses. The subjective, proper form of the world and the relativity of the existence of this form is comprised in the objective form. In so far as it is comprised in the objective form, it is called 'objective'. This is exactly what occurs in human, intellectual perception where the real and the subjective is comprised in objective being and to this extent is called 'objective' (*Logica*, 307; *Lezioni*, 38 ss.). As a result, 1. the subjective world can be known through the objectivity with which it is clothed in the form that is found in God; 2. it can be produced by a subject powerful enough to do that, as God is, who knows it as an object. Consequently, we ourselves produce in our subjective reality (to which extrasubjective reality is reduced) those works which we have objectively present to the intelligence.

²¹⁹ Hence St. Ambrose says: 'His will is the foundation of all things, and because of him the world still remains'* (*Hexaem.*, 1: 6).

494. *Objection 2.* Man produces in subjective reality those modifications and forms which objectively he has present to the intelligence, because he has, in addition to intelligence, a subjective force with which he works on the subjective and extrasubjective reality that has been given to him. But, according to you, divine potency does not operate on the subjective or extrasubjective reality of the world. It only produces objective reality in itself. Hence the existence of the subjective world is not explained, nor do we know how it is continually dependent on the divine action.

To reply to this objection, I have to offer some introductory thoughts which I shall draw from what has been said.

We have to be perfectly clear about the origin of the diversity between God's operation and that of finite entia. We then have to explain why finite entia need in their operation some pre-existent matter on which to operate, and why they can produce only new forms in the existent entia on which they work. God, on the other hand, has no need of matter or anything else which exists prior to his direct operation; he produces these entia.

This occurs because the nature of the operation and that of the effect is similar to the nature of the operating cause. We can now ask: what is the nature of God? What is the nature of finite ens?

Almighty God is pure being, absolute being itself. This is his nature.

Finite ens, as I have shown, is not being, although being is necessary to it. Without being, it would be nothing. Finite ens participates in being; being is present to it. But if finite ens is not being, but only depends continually on it and, as we say, shares in it, what is finite ens? I have distinguished being from its forms, and I said that the universe, as real, is a form, that is, a term of being, the form of reality. This is the *subjective* form, and the universe in itself is simply this subjective form. Being has been joined to it so that this form may subsist, but it is not being nor is it confused with being. This form is individual; being is universal and the same for all finite individuals. When, therefore, being is taken as the subject of all the things of the world, it is a purely dialectical subject. But when the real individual is taken as subject and being is predicated of it, we are

speaking of a real subject (*Logica*, 334–336, 406). The entia of the world are therefore real subjects, and operate as real subjects. They do not act as being, which is not them, but only their common, dialectical subject.

Once the two natures of the operating subjects are known — the nature of the infinite subject is to be being, the nature of the finite subject is not to be being, but the pure, finite, real form of being — we can draw the following conclusions about their different modes of action and the different nature of their effects.

495. 1. Every act of divine being is being. In God, intelligence and will are not potencies distinct from being, but are being itself operating. Consequently, if this divine operation, which is itself actual being, produces something, it must produce being so that the nature of the effect may conform to the nature of its direct, full cause.

Granted therefore, that being itself — being which is pure being, and cannot be other than being in all its activities, and as absolute being is wholly complete ens — understands and wishes something, it can only understand and wish ens. Its first act (I distinguish the acts only according to the notion of their effect — as I said there is only one act in God, which is himself) will turn back on itself, therefore. Being will understand, will and affirm itself. This is the generation of the Word, when being posits itself as object of its own complete affirmation and intellection. The term of this act of pure and absolute being is therefore pure and absolute being. Being proceeds from being. Nor can anything else proceed. Note carefully that we are not dealing here with being in the abstract, but with absolute being which, therefore, is necessarily intellectual and volitive. It is clear that it could not be absolute if it lacked intelligence and will, which also are degrees of being. The second act of this absolute being is to see in itself, that is, in the Word, finite ens which it wills and affirms. It is clear that the effect of this act must be finite ens because ens, absolute being, cannot have as term anything other than ens. But to will and to affirm finite ens is to produce it; this will and this affirmation is an act of being and of essential, absolute ens whose term of operation cannot be other than being and ens. It would be absurd, therefore, to deny that essential being could not understand and affirm finite ens. If this were so, being would no longer be essential and absolute,

which is against the definition. On the one hand, it would lack a part of being. But nothing can be lacking to an essence without annihilation of the essence. On the other hand, if we grant that being itself understands and wills, it must produce a term that is ens because understanding and willing are acts productive of being.

495a. We still have to see why this term of absolute being must have a subjective, proper existence outside God.

I have already proved that absolute, intelligent and willing being can understand and will absolute being. If this were not the case, absolute being would not be what it is supposed to be. I have also proved that the term of the will of this being can only be ens because this volition is itself essentially being and remains such even when it has reached its term. It follows that such a volition (different from human volition) must be productive, and cannot be sterile, or end in what is false or only possible. Its term cannot be other than *ens*. With this carefully in mind as proved, I can posit the series of the other propositions.

Every ens — which is not merely possible and not yet actuated in itself — must be a subject (or refer to a subject, as in the case of what is extrasubjectively real).

If, therefore, essential and absolute Being understands, wills and produces finite ens, this also must be a subject, or that which is referred to the subject itself.

But the divine subject (essential, absolute Being) is essentially an infinite subject which can indeed have finite ens as its *object*, as I have said, but cannot in any way be a finite subject because every subject must be infinite or finite. There cannot be contradiction of any kind in being (*PSY*, 2: 1381 ss.).

Finite being, therefore, as term of intelligent, willing, absolute Being must be a different subject from the divine subject, although it is an *object* of the divine act and subsists through this act.

But being a subject different from the divine Subject is equivalent to saying that it is outside God. The subjective ens of the world, although produced by God, is rightly said to be outside God. The same is true of extrasubjective ens, which is referred to this subjective ens.

496. 2. We come now to the operation of finite, subjective

[495a–496]

ens and to the effects which it can produce. As subject, this ens is not being, but only a finite real form sustained by something else, that is, by being which is not itself. It does not therefore operate as being, but solely as subjective reality. Hence, if the effect cannot exceed the nature of the cause, the effects which such an ens can produce cannot be entia. This is the first consequence which evidently arises from the principle I have posited. Finite ens as an acting subject cannot create anything new.

What, then, can it do? Two genera of effects remain to be examined. One produces real form without being, the other modifies the form of already existing entia.

But the first of these effects is impossible because real form cannot exist without being which makes it exist. It would be a non-existent form, that is, it would be nothing. Only the one capable of producing finite ens is capable of producing also the finite reality which constitutes it.

The only capacity left to the finite, real subject, therefore, is to modify the reality of existing, finite entia in accordance with the power of the agent, and according to the nature and laws to which this reality itself is subordinated through the creating will.

Therefore:

1. The finite subject, operating not as being but as the real, cannot by itself bring to existence the matter which is term of its operation, but can exercise its activity only over some pre-existing matter.

2. The finite subject can produce only modifications in this limited and conditioned matter in accordance with its own finite power and with the susceptibility of the matter on which it operates.

Thus the finite spirit, by its acts of intelligence, of will and of other interior potencies, modifies itself, and by its external potency modifies the other finite entia which surround it. Thus, the other entia act and react, and reciprocally modify one another according to the reciprocal forces with which they are endowed.

497. Granted these notions, I resolve the objection as follows:

Man and finite entia have a subjective force with which they operate on the subjective or extrasubjective reality which they are given. The acting subject here is not being, but the real,

limited form of being. Divine potency, too, is a subjective force, but this subjective force is absolute being itself. The effect of this force is finite ens. This finite ens is the *object* of this operation of absolute Being, but this produced object has a subjective existence in itself, an existence relative to the reality that constitutes it as subject. It follows from this that God with his creative act does not operate on reality subjectively considered, as though it existed before his operation — as happens in human activity. God proceeds by producing it, and while it first was not, now it is. Then, granted that it is (in virtue of the creative act) reality is now to itself, that is, it has an existence relative to itself and therefore different from the subjective existence of God, for the reason stated. But this does not mean that the subjective existence of the creature does not exist for God and does not depend on God. Rather, it proves this subjective existence is the term of the continuous, creative act which continuously makes it subsist. In finite ens as *object* of the creative act the *subjective existence* of finite ens is indeed contained, but contained as object. When God makes finite ens subsist as his object, he makes it subsist also in itself as subject. Only, this subject which he makes subsist is not the divine subject, but another subject whose existence is relative to itself. The subjective existence of the world, therefore, depends and is founded on objective existence in God, through which alone it is.

This will be fully understood when we keep present the dialectical difference (relative also to real finite ens) between being and its forms. Being is one in its forms. In finite ens, being is also one in the objective form, and in itself in the subjective form. But being in this ultimate form is not that which constitutes the real subject of finite ens. The real subject of finite ens is the real form itself. Being simply gives it existence. The difference, therefore, between God and finite being considered in itself is this: when we speak of God as subjective ens, we are speaking of an ens which defines itself as 'being'; when we speak of finite ens as subject, we speak of an ens which cannot be defined as being; its definition must be 'finite form of being'. Hence the name given it by the ancient philosophers: 'non-ens'. The word 'ens' is not taken in the same meaning when applied to both God and finite being.

The whole difficulty arises because this difference in meaning

has been overlooked. We have to say, therefore, that finite real ens exists in itself subjectively because God has made it the object of his own practical intelligence, and that it has its relative existence in this absolute object.

498. *Objection 3.* When things stand like this, you identify the World with God because you make a single and same ens of the finite as *object* of the creative act, and of the finite as *subject* existing in itself.

Reply. This is completely out of place. As I have established the unity of being in three forms, so I have distinguished the forms. And as the unity of being is the greatest, so the diversity of forms is also the greatest. The diversity of form, therefore, constitutes the maximum possible diversity that can be assigned amongst all the assignable varieties and diversities.

Granted this, I said that the objective *being* of the World is that which gives the world its subjective form. But I said that being is not the world; it is the proximate and immediate cause of the world. The world considered in itself is only the subjective, finite form of being; it is not being. If this subjective, finite form of being is called an *ens*, the word is applied to it not because the subjective, finite form is being, but because it *has* being, because it is sustained by being. The word 'ens' is applied to it, therefore, as a result of its intimate and indispensable relationship with being. But the objective world in God is God himself, as I have shown. God therefore — and through a distinction of reason, the objective world — is called 'ens', not through a relationship with being, but because he is being itself. Consequently, 'ens' applied to the objective world, and to the subjective existence of this world, has a completely different meaning. In the first case, it means ens absolutely, and absolute cause; in the second case, it means 'non-ens', that is, ens relative to being which assists and continuously produces it. There is, therefore, an infinite distance between the real, subjective World and the objective world in God, and an absolute dependence of the former on the latter.²²⁰

²²⁰ For the two modes of being that finite entia have in God (objective) and in themselves (subjective), see St. Thomas in *De Veritate*, q. 6, art. 8, and q. 6, where he says, amongst other things: 'When we ask whether things are more truly in themselves (subjective existence) than in the Word (objective existence), we have to distinguish, because 'more truly' can designate the

CHAPTER 6

The third property which being communicates to finite real things: the intelligibility of affirmation

499. I have said a great deal in this book, and in others already published, about the third property which being communicates to the finite real by constituting it as ens. There is scarcely anything new left to say. I will therefore confine myself almost entirely to re-calling what has already been said.

Intelligibility is a property of being alone, to which it is essential. Wherever being is, this light is; wherever being is taken away, darkness remains.

Consequently, subsistent being, Almighty God, subsists as absolutely understood *per se*. Here, however, we have to consider this light in finite beings.

They are not this light because they are not being; but they have this light because they have being, and they have the light in the same mode as they have being.

Being is objective and subjective. It is united to the finite real in these two modes in order to entify it. I say nothing of the third form of being because it does not *constitute* finite ens, but only *perfects* it.

Because being is intelligible *per se* and has the two forms, objective and subjective, that I have mentioned, it must be knowable in two modes. This is the ontological reason for the two modes of knowledge which manifest themselves in human beings: knowledge of essence and knowledge of subsistence, that is, knowledge through idea and knowledge through affirmation (*System*, 41 ss.; *Lezioni fil.*, 31 ss.).

But being is not communicated in both forms to all finite entia. It is communicated in the objective form to those real entia which have the nature of principle and, through this

truth of the thing, or the truth of predication. If it designates the truth of the thing (the truth of *ens*), there is no doubt that the truth of things in the Word is greater than in themselves (they are said more truthfully to be entia). If the truth of predication is designated (in which the real thing, existing in itself, is taken as subject), the opposite is the case. 'Man' is predicated more truly about something as it is in nature than about it in so far as it is in the Word.*

communication, become intelligent entia. Being neither mixes nor is confused with these principles, but is present and manifest to them, illuminating and simultaneously creating them.

But being, which communicates itself to the human principle in this mode, manifests only its *objective form* to it. It contains nothing manifestly subjective, but everything virtually. Thus it appears void of all manifest real, subjective content and acquires the name 'idea'.

499a. Intellective ens, constituted in this way when considered prior to all its second acts of intelligence (and taking no account of the feeling actuated by a corporeal term proper to man — man is not purely intellectual, but also animal) has no other feeling than that which arises from the intuition of being and which is itself intellective because to intuit is to feel (*Introduzione*, [p.] 414 ss.). Hence the two modes in which, as I said, the object can be considered as existing: in itself and in relationship with the mind, as knowledge of the mind. In itself, the object is indivisible; as knowledge of the mind, it can be separated from the mind by way of abstraction or other operations. Thus, if purely intellective ens has no other feeling than that of being and if the subjective form of being is reduced to feeling, it follows that purely intellective being exists not only through being, but even in being, that is, in the object. The subjective existence of the intellective principle resides in felt, objective being.

This union of the intellective principle with objective being, from which arises its subjective existence, was, I believe, that which deceived the ancients when they taught that the soul is known through itself. Above all, it deceived Aristotle who said: 'Every form separate from matter is intelligible and intelligible *per se*.' On the contrary, the *form* of finite entia, if taken in an objective sense, is intelligible, but not therefore intelligent; if it is taken in a subjective sense, it is intelligent, but not *per se* intelligible. It is intelligible only through the object in which it takes its own existence. These are two meanings which Aristotle, and others, confused and made one.

The truth is that an intelligent principle cannot exist without having being as its object. Having being in this way, the subjective existence of the intelligent principle is essentially in this object as in its necessary container, although it is not confused with this object. But everything in the object is intelligible.

[499a]

Hence that which is intelligent is intelligible. It can also be called intelligible through its nature, but not *per se*. It is indeed something real, and a subject, but the reason for its intelligibility is not the fact that it is real and subject. This reason lies in something different from itself, that is, in objective being with which it synthesises and in which it is seen as in its object.

But if what is intelligent is *intelligible*, it does not follow from this that it is *understood* relative to itself. In order to be understood in this way, it has to carry out another act beyond that of existence.

500. Summarising, therefore, I say that what is finite and intelligent is a real which does not exist unless united to objective being, and in virtue of this union. Its nature is the feeling of object-being. But a principle and term is essential to every feeling. The real subject of this ens is the principle. 'The feeling of being' equals 'felt being'. But being is intelligible: consequently, felt being is also intelligible. For the same reason, therefore, this feeling is also intelligible in its principle. But, with the act with which it exists, it feels only the object. It has to be given, therefore, a potency for emitting a second act with which it may understand its already intelligible self. This potency of reflection is given it by the One who created it as a real principle. With this potency, it applies intuited being to its own intuiting principle (which is already intelligible because united to intuited being), and through the identity of the principle of the second act and the principle of the first, says: 'I am' (*PSY*, 1: 61 ss.). Thus it gives itself conscious, subjective existence.

In this way, *being* communicates its own *intelligibility* to intellective, finite real things in the act of constituting them. With one simultaneous act and effect, the Creator 1. creates the finite, real principle and 2. manifests undetermined being to it. Neither effect can be before or after the other because one cannot be conceived without the other. For the same reason that finite ens is created as intellective, it is also created *intelligible*, but not as *understood* relative to itself. Intelligibility is present in it, but it still lacks the intellectual gaze which finishes in this intelligibility, because nothing is *understood* relative to a given intelligent ens without two conditions: 1. that it is intelligible; 2. that what is intelligent carries out the act of understanding with which in itself it admits the thing as intelligible.

[500]

501. Let us see now how the intelligibility of other, non-intellective things is communicated by *being*. I mean intelligibility relative to the human being as intelligent. We have already seen that relative to divine intelligence, God creates such things by understanding and pronouncing them.

Whether principles or terms, these entia do not have objective being communicated to them. Hence, they are neither intelligible *per se* as only being is, nor are they intelligible through their own constitution. How, then, is their being and intelligibility relative to us human beings communicated to them?

This comes about only through the effects which they produce in our feeling which, as we have seen, is intelligible (*TCY*, 153) in the way I described. These effects hold the place of the real, which produces them as so many vicarious signs. We supply in them the being which we know through nature by seeing them in ourselves, and ourselves in being. We attribute known being to them in the subjective form precisely because we feel their *action*, which can pertain only to this form.

Relative, therefore, to ourselves as finite real entia, we only have to look at ourselves to understand ourselves because we are already intelligible by constitution; relative to other non-intelligent real things, it is necessary for them 1. to be rendered intelligible to us by acquiring an existence in human feeling through the actions which they exercise in us and the modifications which they produce in us; and 2. when rendered intelligible with the act of intelligence, be apprehended by us.

SECTION FIVE

WHAT OBJECTIVE BEING COMMUNICATES TO FINITE REAL THINGS

CHAPTER 1

**The *finite form* which being communicates to the real in
the mind, before finite ens can exist with an existence
of its own**

Article 1

The finite real cannot receive existence
unless it is fully determined

502. In finite ens the four listed properties, 1. existence, 2. duration, 3. act, and 4. intelligibility as existing subject, are to be referred to being and not to the real. Being is one of the two elements constituting finite ens; the other element, the real, exists when informed by the four properties. Being therefore communicates its four properties to the finite *real* when it is present as the *ultimate determination* of the latter.

But the *finite real* could not receive being as *ultimate determination* if it did not have the preceding determinations presupposed by this ultimate determination. These preceding determinations, which make the finite real capable of receiving its own existence, must therefore be given to it when it exists only in our mind, not in itself.

The finite real exists with these determinations in the divine mind which produces it and in the human mind. In the human mind it exists, determined in this way, as an imperfect full species, but in the divine mind as a *perfect full species* and exemplar. The divine mind, looking into its own real, objective and

absolute Word, extracts with its own power the *perfect full species*. The human mind extracts its imperfect full species while looking at itself (a finite feeling and reality) and at its own modifications in undetermined being which lacks subsistence. The divine mind, in the very act in which it sees the exemplar-full species in the Word, pronounces the finite real, and in this pronouncement the world exists; in other words, the ultimate, common determination of existence is given to the entia of this world in the very act in which they are given the preceding determinations.

The divine mind is self-subsistent Being in its subjective form. The Word is also self-subsistent being, but in its objective form pronounced by the divine Mind. The divine object, as cognition of the divine Mind, is limited by this Mind. This limited object is the idea of the world and, as united to the creative act, is cause of the subsistent world.

503. The determination of the idea of the world is made by the Mind, which in this mode and as subject-cause is *being* which *determines and actuates* the world. However, let us leave aside the real World and consider its idea, which is logically prior to the real World and in which the determination must be found (still in the logical order). Let us consider instead how the divine Mind finds this determination.

It certainly does not find it by chance and independently of any order; it finds it with wisdom. And granted this wisdom, the determinations must be virtually contained in objective being, which is the intelligible absolute and the understood absolute. But if the determinations of the idea are only virtually understood in objective being (the understood absolute has no real distinctions in itself), the divine mind must, in order to reduce them from virtuality to act, follow certain fixed norms abstracted from the objective essence itself. For this reason, when describing creation, I said that in the logical order the first element of the divine mental process had to be initial being, that is, as an abstract which took the place of rule or norm for finding all the rest of the determination to be given to the idea or exemplar of the world. Hence, although the divine Mind is, as subject-cause, *being* which *determines and actuates*, I have not wrongly called *initial being* visible to us both *determinant being* and *actuating being* as act-cause, in the sense that this initial being

1. taken by itself, is the *rule* according to which the determination of the idea, and therefore of the real, is effected, and 2. taken as united to the finite real, is the *act* of existence of the finite real. But initial being, seen in another relationship, is also *first determinable* because the mind applies this being, to being's own self (*Logica*, 701 ss.), determining initial being with itself, that is, with rules which initial being provides for the mind. But we cannot explain this without mentally ascending to a first, absolute determined thing. Being, as being, is *per se* determined and needs no other determination in order to subsist. But we say it is undetermined when considered as cause which actuates finite real things. Its concept alone does not contain sufficient reason to justify the assertion that it actuates finite real things or actuates some rather than others. Being, in itself, is essentially determined, just as it is essentially simple. Absolute Ens itself is also *per se* determined, and determined in all three forms, and is also the essence of subsistent being. That which is essential to a thing cannot be lacking if the thing is; if it were lacking, the thing would not be. Hence, it is of the essence of an ens to be determined in all its parts; if it were undetermined in one part alone, it would not be an ens (*PSY*, 2: 1372–1395).

504. Someone may object that this kind of argument would prove too much. With it we could show that every ens must be infinite, granted that absolute Ens, which is the subsistent essence of being, is infinite. I reply that the conclusion is not valid because being is one thing, the forms or terms of being another. The only conclusion from the argument is this: 'Being must always have infinity', but not all its forms must have it. The limitation of finite ens does not lie in being, but in the real, which is a form. We have seen that no ens whatsoever can be known without the whole of being ([cf. 213, 380–400]), which is simple and indivisible. The finite real receives the nature of ens from being, which is given to it by the mind, whether the divine mind, or the human mind which makes it ens to the mind itself. It follows therefore that the whole of infinite being concurs in imparting the nature of ens to the finite real. It is true that in finite ens, being appears as if it were limited, but this limitation is simply a relationship of the finite real with being. The finite real can exist only as finite, and the foundation of this relationship is in the real ([cf. 466, 475, 487]). Being, itself, is not limited;

unlimited being, by its presence, makes the limited real subsist, and in so far as it does this can be called 'actuating being'. That which is more can carry out what is less without itself becoming less. There is nothing absurd in this.

505. This teaching receives new light if we reassume the logical order of the creative act. The divine Mind abstracts *initial being* from absolute being. As I have said, this is not a limitation of being because all its terms remain virtually within it. The mind simply prescind from them while being remains before the abstracting mind as pure *idea*, that is, pure object.

Next, the divine mind, wishing to give some finite terms to this virtual being, asks itself[:] on what condition can I give them to it? — Initial being relative to its infinite terms is fully determined. Hence, if the divine Mind wished to restore to initial being its infinite terms, it would simply cease this act of abstraction. But this is not the case relative to finite terms. These do not exist, and initial being is not determined to initiate some rather than others. But the divine Mind, which must conceive the *species* of the finite real things it wishes to make subsist, is aware that these real things must be determined in every part if they are to receive being. It sees in itself that being cannot receive any other real term than what is *determined* in all respects, simply because subsistent being is determined. Finite, relative ens, as ens, can be such only in the likeness of absolute ens and on the same conditions in so far as it is ens, but on other conditions in so far as it is real and term (a finite term). If therefore absolute ens, as ens, is fully determined, finite ens must also be fully determined. Consequently, we see a repugnance between virtual being and an undetermined, real thing. Virtual being is precisely absolute being in so far as it is ens, granted its abstraction from its terms. Indeed, an undetermined real thing is no more a real thing than another. If therefore the mind wanted to make an undetermined real thing subsist, it would not know what it wished to do, because *this* thing remains uncertain. The mind cannot apply virtual being without knowing to what it should apply it. Hence, it is repugnant for virtual being to receive a real, undetermined term. The divine mind, therefore, in wishing to give a finite real thing as term to virtual being, understands the necessity of fully determining it.

506. In order that we poor humans may understand each

other, we have supposed that the creating mind reasons as I have stated. In doing so, the reasoning reveals not only the necessity of determination in the finite, real which the divine mind wishes to bring into existence but also uncovers the *principle of determination*.

This *principle*, according to which the divine mind can determine the finite real, consists in the relationship which the divine mind itself sees between virtual being which it has abstracted, and the infinite real. Through this relationship, virtual being ceases to be virtual, and is God subsistent and living. 'All the conditions which the infinite real has in relationship to initial being must also be possessed by the finite real if it is to be capable of receiving being and thus become ens, with the exception, of course, of non-limitation and all its consequences'.

When, therefore, in divine being, the divine mind mentally distinguishes *being* from *real*, *subsistent form*, it finds in the mental *relationship* between them the principle, that is, the law, according to which the finite real must be conceived if it is to be capable of receiving being which makes it ens.

507. Another question now presents itself: 'We do not see the divine subsistence, nor do we naturally see any of the terms of divine being. Consequently, we do not see the relationship between initial being and the infinite terms; we do not know what these terms are like. Nevertheless, we certainly understand that, as long as the real remains undetermined before our mind, it cannot acquire existence in itself. How then, if we see it, are we aware of this necessity, which must surely be deduced from the light we receive from initial being?'

I reply that we cannot argue *a priori* from initial being alone. The concept of the finite real is also necessary and cannot be given by pure being alone (*NE*, 3: 1438 ss.). The concept is acquired later, after perception, when by means of reflection and analysis we divide finite ens into its two elements of being and the real. Granted this concept, we certainly can argue *a priori* but not purely *a priori*.

Firstly, when human reason has once come to know that the existence of the real is the work of an intelligence, it sees, as I have said, the absurdity of the supposition that intelligence gives being to a real which it cannot ascertain and distinguish from every other real. But as long as a real remains

undetermined, it pertains to many determined real things. The mind, therefore, must choose among these and not remain uncertain about them; it cannot act as long as it remains uncertain about what it wants to do. This argument arises from the concept of the *undetermined real* in relationship with the concept of the mind which is acting and attributing being. The undetermined concept contains the plurality and diversity of the determinations which it can receive. Hence, it is not one but many, and the human mind does not know which of the many it is.

Secondly, the being given to the real is its ultimate determination, its ultimate act. But this determination can be given only on condition that the real has all the preceding determinations of which it is susceptible. Hence, the real, if undetermined in some part, does not have all the determinations preceding the ultimate determination; it cannot therefore exist. This argument also arises from the concept of the real in relationship with the nature of being as its ultimate act. The real is conceived by the mind as something tightly rolled up which gradually unfolds itself before the mind and, passing through all the stages of development, arrives at the ultimate stage where it only needs to receive being to complete it. As long as the concept of the real has not passed in the mind through all these successive links, it is not, properly speaking, real: it lacks something essential to the real, and cannot therefore exist. Nothing can exist unless it has everything necessary for its proper existence.

We see therefore how we come to understand that 'the real cannot receive being unless it is fully determined'. We do so by means of the *relationship* which we note between the *concept of the real* and *pure being*. It does not matter whether the relationship is considered relative to the mind, which is the subject-cause bestowing being on the finite real, or whether it is considered relative to pure being itself, which is the act-cause.

Article 2

How ideal being contains the principle of determination
of the finite real

508. I have said that *ideal being* is the principle of

[508]

determination; it is the rule according to which the divine mind forms in itself the finite real. But how?

Ideal being as the principle of determination can be considered relative to the divine mind and relative to the human mind. I will first consider it relative to the divine mind and then to the human mind.

The proper, essential object of the divine Mind is absolute being, where there is most perfect simplicity. Hence, in order to see finite ens in this being, the divine Mind must, with its own act, distinguish this ens in it. Because the distinction is not real, it must be an ideal distinction in the Mind. But this idea in which the divine Mind sees finite ens distinct from infinite ens, embraces simultaneously being and the real because the real, if it is to be, must be pronounced, not simply intuited. The idea is therefore both word and efficient cause of things (*Rinnovamento*, 359 ss.). Because the finite real is not being, and being is not the finite real, the divine Mind must distinguish the two elements composing finite ens, that is, being and the real, in its thought of finite ens. If the divine Mind distinguishes them, it also distinguishes initial being from its term, which is the finite real. Initial being, therefore, which itself is pure being (ideal being), must be present to the divine mind; it must be present with all its properties and in all its infinite extension, which separates it by nature from the finite real.

When being is thought in this way by the divine mind in relationship with its possible, finite terms, it makes these terms known, which, divided from being, have no being and therefore no intelligibility. But if ideal being makes known to the mind the proper finite terms, it must also make known which real things can be its terms and which not. It is, therefore, ideal being which makes known that its terms can be only those real things which are totally determined in every respect. Consequently, ideal being relative to the divine mind is the principle and rule for the determination of real things. In the preceding article, where I said that the concept of the undetermined real contains the inability of this real to receive being, I was speaking about an undetermined real which ideal being reveals to us as having this inability. In fact, I was talking about the *concept* of the undetermined real, not about the *real itself*, and in doing so, I

was obviously talking about the undetermined real as united to ideal being, which is the source of every concept.

This gives us the first principle or rule according to which the finite real cannot subsist, if its determination lies solely in its concept and not in ideal being which produces this concept, that is, when the mind sees the undetermined real in ideal being. It is only in and through ideal being that we know and speak about the undetermined real. This knowledge tells us that the undetermined real cannot subsist in itself. It has only an ideal existence in the mind and excludes its existence in itself.

The same process is carried out in the human mind so that ideal being is the first principle of determination of the finite real, that is, the principle which manifests the necessity and conditions of the finite real.

Summarising all that has been said, we see that *being*, that is, the nature of being, does two things:

1. As intelligible, that is, as idea (objective form), it makes known to us both the determined and undetermined term. It gives us their concepts, in which it makes known that the determined term, but not the undetermined term, can receive its own existence.

2. Being, with its power to actuate (subjective form), rejects undetermined terms and accepts only determined terms.

As intelligible or idea, being makes known the fact that being, with its power to actuate, rejects undetermined terms and accepts only determined terms.

It rejects undetermined terms because its power to actuate is essentially and purely act while its entifying power consists in making the real an act. The undetermined real, however, cannot receive this pure and most simple act because this act must affect what is one. If it did not, the act itself would divide into several acts and thus no longer be most simple act, contrary to its nature; it would contradict itself.

509. Someone will say: 'You admit that indetermination can exist in the mind but not in itself. But doesn't the existence of indetermination in the mind present the same difficulties as existence in itself? I answer 'No', for the following reason.

The existence of indetermination in the mind pertains to a determined ens, that is, to the mind. The mind, as a determined

ens, can subsist, and subsist with everything pertaining to it. It is repugnant, however, for what is undetermined to exist as a real subject because a real subject must be one, as I have explained. But in the mind, it does not have the nature of real subject; it exists only as object, as something pertaining to the mind itself. The mind is not the subject of the indetermination of its object in such a way that it itself is undetermined; the indetermination is solely in the object.

Granted this, how does the indetermination remain in the object? It does so only hypothetically, not truly. The mind could not have present the undetermined real without having present the determined (*PSY*, 2: 1372 ss., 1357 ss.). It sees the undetermined in the determined real because it restricts its gaze to the former (a limitation we call abstraction) without affecting the true, totally determined object. It is, therefore, an act of the mind which constitutes the undetermined, and this act, although limited, is totally determined. Nevertheless, the act falls only on a part of the object. The mind, knowing that it is only a part, not the whole, also knows that it cannot be an ens because a part of ens is not ens. By hypothesis, the mind then considers the part by itself, as if it were an object, and lends it the form of being, but without deceiving itself. Thus, properly speaking, the object does not exist undetermined in the mind, but solely as partly visible and partly invisible, through the will of the gazing mind. This object-part simply limits and determines to itself the mind's act, without leaving this act in a state of uncertainty.

In fact, in the case of the divine mind, the finite real is seen in the infinite real which is a totally complete, absolute object. In the case of the human mind, the undetermined is extracted from the full species which is also a determined object.²²¹

²²¹ Aristotle certainly was aware that the undetermined, the universal, existed solely in the singular. St. Thomas agrees: 'Universals are not subsistent. They have their being only in single things, as shown in 7, 2 of the *Metaphysics*'* (*Contra.Gentiles*, 1, 65). But Aristotle was not aware that *being* has two different aspects, one when considered in itself and one relative to finite entia. It is undetermined and universal relative only to finite entia; in itself, it is one, determined and subsistent. We can also consider it by abstracting from it all indefinite, finite terms, as we have seen. Considered and isolated in this way, being exists virtually in absolute being.

510. But the objector may wonder how the mind can separate being from the finite real when, without being, the finite real cannot be known or used in an argument?

We must keep before our eyes the distinction between being and its forms. The mind divides being from the finite real only in its subjective, actuating form, not in its purely objective or ideal form. If the mind were to remove ideal being from the finite real, the finite real would completely disappear from thought; in fact, it remains there as concept of the real, that is, as possible real. The form here is still objective because the idea is the container (cf. book 1 [182–187]). But the mind can never divide the real, that is, the content, from the container (except through the abstraction I have called hypothetical). Consequently, when we try to divide the content, that is, the real, it still remains enclosed for us in the idea (otherwise it could not be thought). This is the indissoluble union which Plato noted between one and essence, and from which he deduced, as we have seen, that all numbers are necessarily in one ([cf. 346–355]). We may think we divide one from essence, but essence still remains with one, and one with essence, although we are unaware of this. For this reason, the analytical acts of the mind simply multiply the first two elements to infinity. The mind cannot do otherwise.

511. But now another, greater difficulty looms up before us which will enable us to discover a truth of equal importance. Someone will say: 'If we take the totally undetermined real, how does its idea differ from the idea of being? And if we extract from the idea of being all that is real, even if totally undetermined, what does the idea of being continue as? Surely it disappears altogether? If ideal being is act, it must be real act or nothing. If anyone says it is the idea of act, he has not understood the question. The question asks whether this idea of act is itself an act or not. If it is intelligible, it must make something known, either itself or something else. If it makes itself known, this 'itself' will be something real or an idea: if an idea, we would pass from one idea to another *ad infinitum*. If it makes something else known, surely it can do so only by making itself known? After all, if it did not make itself known, it could not make anything else known. This something else, as the first thing known, would then be intelligible *per se* and we would

[510–511]

have to say about it what we said about intelligible being. Consequently, we have to admit that the *idea of being* and the *idea of a totally undetermined real* are identical ideas. Ideal being is simply the real, which is thought as totally undetermined' (NE, 1: App., no. 35: (16). [Cf. NE, 2: 555 ss.; 3: 1177–1181]).

I do not deny this conclusion; on the contrary, I have made it my own. In fact, when I said that being is the *first determinable*, and universal matter ('matter' understood in the widest sense), I was simply affirming the objector's conclusion.

The *finite real*, which divides into different genera, must be distinguished from the *infinite real*, which is one and superior to all genera. The *infinite real* is simply being itself in its infinite, real form because, as I have often said, being is distinguished from the infinite term only mentally, not in itself. Hence, the infinite real is being. When therefore, as I said, the divine Mind abstracts virtual *being* from absolute being, this virtual being is equally virtually real and subjective, virtually real and objective and virtually real and holy. The infinite forms are implicit in virtual being. Now if we consider the meaning of 'the idea of the totally undetermined real', we find that such an idea expresses solely 'the virtual infinite real'. I say 'the infinite real' because, as maximum indetermination, it has no limits and therefore virtually embraces all possible indistinct and, therefore, unlimited, determinations. Hence, the idea of the totally undetermined real is the idea of initial being in so far as this idea virtually contains the infinite reality, that is, in so far as susceptible of having an infinite real term. Later, by means of a mental operation, the term allows limitations, and with these limitations present, is no longer totally undetermined, because the determinations themselves are also limitations.

512. It follows that three concepts correspond to and identify with *initial being*: 1. the *concept of object* or of *the totally undetermined intelligible*, called absolutely 'idea', 2. the concept of real or of *what is totally undetermined and subsistent*, and 3. the concept of *loved* or perfection, and *totally undetermined end*. These are the three terms virtually comprised in initial being, each identifying with it. The ancients, although they used other words, said the same when they asserted that *ens* (real), *true* (the idea) and *good* were three transcendental concepts, each of which converted into the other.

[512]

This teaching gives another important corollary. Subsistent, divine being has no *form*, distinct from itself, which determines it. The infinite real, existing through itself, is *per se* determined, which is also true for the infinite object and the infinite loved. Its very infinity, its lack of every form or limiting determination, is its own determination. I have mentally divided initial being from these infinite terms and called them *forms*, but each of them has no distinction in itself from being. Hence, in God, being is form of itself — theologians say: in God, there is no real distinction between matter and form. However, if the terms are mentally separated from initial being, they acquire the concept (through a hypothetical abstraction) of matter, and being acquires the concept of their common form.

This gives rise to the purely dialectical distinction between *initial being* and the other three concepts identifying with it. Initial being, relative to the three concepts of undetermined real, undetermined object and undetermined loved, takes on the condition of form, and the three concepts take on the condition of its matter. But because the concepts are being, it is always identical being which is simultaneously matter and form, due to our mind's way of conceiving.

The case is quite different when we are dealing with a *real* which is not totally undetermined, and therefore not totally infinite. All real things which fall under our perception are of this kind, if we strip them of their determinations until they remain in our mind as simple essences. In this way, we arrive at something thinkable from which nothing more can be taken (the only further step would be to remove the real things themselves by annihilation). But these real things, despoiled by abstraction of every removable determination without their being annihilated, are not yet the totally undetermined real. They are among the *supreme genera of real things*, and as such retain a generic determination which constitutes each as its own genus, and distinguishes them from every other genus. The determination they retain is, therefore, restrictive compared with the supremely undetermined real. But, because this restrictive determination is simple (so that nothing remains of real things when it is removed), it clearly constitutes them as they are. Their proper essence, therefore, consists in a limitation. Hence, none of the generic real things

is the *supremely undetermined real* which, as we have seen, is being (as first dialectically determinable). Here again, we have a new, clear proof that the finite real is something truly distinct in itself from *being*, whose essence it is to have no limitation whatsoever.

513. The human mind, therefore, carries out one of the following tasks.

1. It considers the nature of being present to intuition (where the unlimited real resides). But because the real as virtual remains hidden, the mind cannot discern the act proper to the real (if it could, it would have positive knowledge). All that the mind sees is supremely simple.

2. On receiving perceptions of finite real things, the mind, by abstraction, rises from them and from the full species which provide them, to the supreme genera of real things, that is to undetermined, but not wholly undetermined, real things.

3. Finally, on seeing all these supreme genera of real things as reciprocally exclusive, and consequently limited, the mind leaves them and rises from them to the thought of an *infinite, supremely undetermined real*. But it has no experience of this real, and consequently does not know its act. As a result, it forms a totally negative cognition of it, that is, a cognition composed of logical, abstract notions, nothing more.

Hence, when the mind starts from the perception of finite entia and arrives at the supreme genera of real things, it becomes aware of the following:

1. The supreme genera are not being, because being is unlimited and they are limited; being is one, and they are many; being is necessary, and they are contingent; being embraces everything which is, they do not, and so on.

2. Although they are not being, they depend on being as the cause which actuates them and makes them exist.

3. Being gives them primarily an ideal existence in the mind, without which they could not be conceived, much less pass to subsistence or existence in themselves. With this idea of existence, they are simple essences incapable of any further abstraction or of being formally broken down.

4. The mind abstracts these simple essences from perceived real entia, and could not think them without these entia in which they are. These simple essences are formal parts

of a full species, and could not be created by us (even if we had creative power) unless we created the ens of the total full species in which they reside and by means of which we intuit them. We never see the supreme genera of matter existing in themselves (with the sole exception of space). But precisely because we see them as genera and therefore as universal, we see them only as capable of existing in the abstract species as in their container, and the abstract species existing in the full species. It is in the full species that we find the subject which I have defined as that which is 'first, the container, and cause of unity in an ens'. But ens without a subject cannot exist in itself because what is second cannot exist without what is first; a content cannot exist without a container, the many without the one. In the human mind, therefore, the supreme genera of the real have the second or posterior condition of being contained and of something devoid of circumscription.

Furthermore, the only real we know positively in itself is our own fundamental feeling and intellectual feeling (*myself*). We see both of these as totally determined. In fact, if *myself* were not determined in all respects, if it were not a single, simple principle with its own definite, felt and understood term, it would not be *myself*. Relative to this real therefore, its own determination and limitation essentially constitutes and forms it at every moment. Extrasubjective real things are known only through their determined action on us. If this action were not determined, we would see that it would not be action at all. Hence, the agent must be determined in all respects; otherwise, it could not be agent. And if it were not agent, it would not be something real existing in itself. The finite real, therefore, in order to exist, must be totally determined and circumscribed by certain limits which alone make it this rather than that thing.

514. As we see, the supreme genera of real things cannot exist in themselves either 1. as finite entia, because they lack the subject and limits which constitute them one rather than another particular ens, or 2. as infinite ens, because they have a first limitation so natural to them that one excludes the other.²²² They are

²²² The Scholastics' question: 'Can genus be directly individuated by the thing itself?' is irrelevant here. — Granted that a given genus could, through creation, become a real individual, it would as such lose the nature of *genus*,

therefore called the 'matter' of ens, while the determination they lack but need in order to be entia and capable of acting (the characteristic of the real form), is called 'form'.

As matter they are not being, and do not have the form necessary for subsistence. As I said, they acquire their form from *being* in its objective, ideal form. We have seen that in order to be conceived, even as genera of the real, they must receive ideal being and also be seen in this being as generic essences virtually contained in it. We have also seen that generic ideas are only in specific ideas where our mind sees them, and sees them in the full specific ideas which we obtain from the perception of subsistent entia. The divine mind, however, obtains them from absolute, objective being which contains them virtually and eminently; it obtains them with the same act with which it pronounces and creates finite ens. The real, therefore, is first determined and then undetermined; it is first of all limited, determined ideal being. In the divine mind, before creation, this is the case in the logical order and simultaneously in the order of fact; in the human mind, it is the case after creation and through the perception of created entia.

The divine mind determines the real which it wishes to create because it sees 'in the essence of subsistent real being' the necessity of this determination, if the real is to subsist as finite ens. The 'essence of subsistent real being' is the same as saying 'the idea of the unlimited real', which, as I said, is the same as 'the idea of being', or ideal being, or supremely undetermined being. Consequently, the finite real cannot exist unless the idea of being, in so far as virtually containing the infinite real, imposes on it the necessity of totally determined being.

which is a concept that involves relationship with its species. Thus, the same idea which is generic relative to a species, can be specific relative to certain individuals, for example, 'the idea of animal', as I noted in *A New Essay* (2: 97). Later, I will say that space is precisely an extrasubjective individual which has neither genus nor species and therefore, under a certain aspect, can be considered an individuated genus. But I will discuss these questions more at length in the cosmological works.

Article 3

In the universe there is something which pertains
to the Creator's choice, and something which is
a necessary consequence

515. The creation or non-creation of the world, and the end of creation, are God's absolute choice because they are prior to the world.

But granted both the world as created and the ontological bond between all the entities that make up the world, we see that the supreme genera of matter are determined solely by the creator's choice. In the reality of the world, there is no explanation why these genera should be created and not others. Whether there can be others is a question for cosmology, which must also deal with the question of whether or how the choice of the genera were determined by divine wisdom. It is certain however that the supreme genera of matter which constitute the first traces of this universe are not necessary; we can think of them either as not created or as created fewer in number.

But granted that the supreme genera of matter have been chosen by God to constitute the first traces of his great work, what has been said clearly indicates that if they are to be capable of receiving their own existence as finite entia, their determinations must constitute a *necessary consequence*. As long as the supreme genera did not receive the ultimate determinations making them full species, they could not be realised.

The supreme genera of everything real and created are, therefore, the pure choice of the creator; the further determinations necessary for them to come to their own existence constitute that part of the world which is a *consequent necessity*.

Article 4

The supreme genera of matter, that is, of reality, which
make up the world

516. When things are considered individually, greater light is thrown on abstract theories. I will therefore say something

[515–516]

about the cosmological question, 'What supreme genera of reality make up the world?'

I have already said what I mean by 'supreme genera of reality': 'a simple essence abstracted from the reality of world entia perceived by us, entia from which nothing more can be abstracted without going beyond what is in the real from which we are abstracting'. Hence, a supreme genus of reality is 'that real element which is conceived as the first determinable in the whole genus.'

We see from this definition that we leave aside dialectical or ideal matter, which pertains to the real only is so far as it virtually contains the real. The matter under discussion here pertains to a real subject.

The supreme genera of reality which we are looking for pertain partly to the subjective world, partly to the extrasubjective world. In other words, what we are seeking is partly the reality of principle-entia, and partly the reality of term-entia.

If we are speaking about the supreme genera of reality in all their universality, we can ask: 'Is an absolutely first, supreme genus one only, that is, finite ens?' But I will deal with this question elsewhere.

For now, I shall limit the discussion to the supreme genera of the reality of principle-entia. There seem to be two: 1. pure feeling, and 2. intellectual feeling.

The supreme genera of the reality of term-entia also seem to be two: 1. corporeal matter, and 2. extension.

Relative to extension, I note that properly speaking it is not a genus, because it does not admit abstraction or determination or its own limitation. It is therefore only something simple and real and not included in the other genera. Although devoid of the conditions of the other genera, it is, through this exclusion, considered a genus in relationship with the limits which the mind can apply to it. For this reason Plato considered it *mathematical matter* (cf. my *Aristotele* [158–160]). I call it a 'hybrid genus' because its species, that is, mathematical figures, are a mental operation. Extension, on the other hand, is something real which provides their matter, their source.

Article 5

How the divine mind was able to find in the unlimited real the supreme genera of the realities which make up the world

517. In discussing this question we must first exclude the supreme genera of extrasubjective reality. Their whole nature consists solely in being terms of the feeling principle; they exist only relative to this nature through which we know and name them. If they had a hidden nature, this would never be what we speak about when we use the words 'space' or 'corporeal matter' (*NE*, 2: 667, 749 ss., 855 ss.).

These genera therefore are absolutely first only through an abstract operation of the mind which considers them in themselves and not in their essential connection with the sentient principle. They can fittingly be called 'genera of reality, relative to principle-entia'.

Furthermore, we must bear in mind that if these genera are considered as terms and not in themselves, they multiply. They change into the 'genera of felt elements', about which I have already spoken. Even these 'genera of felt reality', which are multiple, are only 'genera relative to us'.

Now, all genera relative to principle-entia are called genera when considered by the mind either as 'sensiferous realities' or as 'felt realities'. But if the mind considers them in a more complete mode, united, that is, to principle-ens, they are only 'genera determining principle-ens'.

Granted therefore the perfect idea of principle-ens, the ideas of all these genera relative to such ens are virtually contained in the idea, because the full specific idea of a principle-ens must contain the correlatives, that is, 1. the genera of terms or of determinant felt elements, and 2. the genera of extrasubjective entia (force and space).

To solve our question therefore, we need simply to explain 'how the divine mind was able to find in the absolute real the idea of the genera of the reality of principle-ens'. There is no difficulty if we consider that God is simultaneously infinite feeling and infinite intellective feeling, without any real distinction. The divine mind therefore was able to separate in itself one feeling from the other and limit them. In this way it found the

supreme genera (generic ideas) of all the finite realities which make up the world.

The divine mind was able to separate them by abstraction, and also limit them (this is required by the intention of creating a limited ens) because limitation does not mean addition but subtraction, and to perform a mental subtraction, new matter is not needed — the mind can subtract purely by mental action. Moreover, the limitations themselves were first chosen by the mind and then created. They contained the ideas of the terms, that is, of the extended and of the felt, and of the causes of these terms and their actions, that is, of those genera of ‘extrasubjective reality’ as I have called it. For this reason, the mind, in order to have these ideas relative to the first two fundamental ideas of the gen4era pertaining to principle-entia, had no need to resort to anything else; it could form them all simply by its mental action on two genera of this kind.

Article 6

The number of elements making up the form of the finite real

518. In the finite real, I have distinguished matter from form.

I defined matter as ‘that which in each genus is the first determinable’. I also indicated the various supreme genera of the finite real, that is, the various genera of matter which constitute the World.

There is in matter the positive real which makes up the world. We must now consider the form proper to the finite real; I mean the whole composite of its determinations. I have said that this form proceeds partly from the free divine will, partly from a consequent necessity.

By free divine will I mean here a will which is not determined by any finite real entity, or even by ideas of such entities, to act or not act, or act in one mode rather than in another.

On this will depends the decree creating finite ens, and creating it for the end which the divine will proposes.

Granted this decree therefore, a consequent necessity is that the ens which the divine will wishes to create is finite. Hence, the first element of the form of the finite real is *limitation*, because this is the first condition of creation.

Limitation, however, is imposed on finite ens not by the nature of objective being, which is infinite, but solely by the free decree of God's will. In fact, the first limitation pertains to the kind of knowledge I have called 'affirmation' because it originates from the limit imposed by the affirmative act of the mind. From this act we obtain the objective concept of limitation, but only through abstraction. Hence, limitation is not one of the qualities which the real, as concept, receives from determinant objective being. We must therefore consider the universal quality of 'limited' as a preliminary condition for the determinations which the finite real must receive from objective being if the finite real is to be susceptible of actuating being.

Limitation has been universally fixed by the decree of creation. It follows that the ens which God wishes to create must have as its foundation one or many generic real things. The *limitation proper to the supreme genera* is the first and least of all limitations; it is also a dialectical subject of all subsequent limitations. The *supreme qualities* therefore (that is, the supreme generic qualities) constitute 1. the second element of the finite real, and 2. the first of those elements which are imposed on the *finite real* by ideal being in order that the finite real can be determined to existence.

518a. Now, the *supreme genera* can exist only in the mind. Consequently, ideal being imparts to this generic first matter *objective intelligibility* and thus makes it exist. This intelligibility, coming from ideal being, is the second of the elements which constitute the form of the finite real. But this second element is neither chronologically nor logically posterior to the genera; on the contrary, it is the genera themselves, which can be considered under two aspects: either as *essences*, which makes them *supreme qualities*, or as *ideas*, which makes them intelligible. This follows from the fact that, as I have said, the real in the mind must always participate in the idea, otherwise the real would not be. It can be only in the mind in objective form, that is, as containing the real itself.

The third element is the *determined quantity* of the real in each of the supreme genera. This quantity can be understood in two ways: the finite real must have a determined quantity which is either 1. not stated, or 2. of a precise, fixed measure.

In the second case, the quantity of reality which makes up the

World and which must be stated exactly is a secret hidden in the abyss of the end which God proposed for himself. This is not the place to investigate whether human beings can reason about this; the argument pertains to cosmology. But to say universally that the finite real (granted that it must be created) must have a *determined quantity*, whatever it may be, is clearly necessary, and is certainly an element which ideal being, in the divine mind, imposes on the finite real prior to its creation.

Granted therefore the supreme genera which constitute the world; granted their essential intelligibility, and granted that they have a determined quantity, we must consider the other conditions necessary to the real if it is to receive actuating being and become real ens. Now, the condition which embraces all other lower conditions is that the real must be *one*. This follows from what has been said. But I give the following as a proof which can be expressed in a few words: 'The real cannot acquire a subjective existence unless it becomes a subject.' But the subject is 'that which is first present as containing everything else found in ens, and as cause of the unity of ens'. Therefore, every ens which has or has attributed to it a subjective existence, must either be one in itself or have the unity attributed to it. Consequently, being one is the fourth of the elements which constitute the form of the finite real.

Article 7

Determinations common and not common to every finite ens

519. The four determinations: *generic quality*, *objective intelligibility*, *determined quantity* and *unity*, are universal, that is, no finite real could receive actuating being and become a finite real ens if, in the creating mind, it lacked even one of these four determinations.

These determinations must therefore be equally encountered in every finite ens. As indispensable conditions of the connection between the real and being, they are required by this connection.

They can be equally called *determinations of the finite real* or *determinations of finite ens* because, as we have seen, finite ens 'is the finite real with being', not 'being with the finite real'.

[519]

They appear therefore as common characteristics and predicates of every possible *finite ens*.

But they are not equally properties of infinite Ens. Infinite Ens certainly has no *generic quality* nor *determined quantity*, which come from the limitation of the real. These two elements are not *ontological elements*, that is, properties of pure ens, because ens can be conceived without them. They are properties of finite ens and therefore *cosmological elements*.

Objective intelligibility and *unity* are found in infinite Ens but not in the same mode as in finite ens.

The finite real, under the form of the real, is intelligible only *a posteriori*, that is, not as object but solely by way of affirmation in the object. On the contrary, the infinite real is being itself in the form of the real. It is therefore intelligible *per se* as simultaneously affirmed and object. Hence, the finite real does not have intelligibility in itself; it shares in it and does so through the objective form which precedes in the divine mind. This objective form does not exist *per se* but through the work of the divine mind which draws it from the infinite real object where it is virtually contained.

Similarly, *unity* is not proper to the finite real, which is conceived as an undetermined genus lacking subjective unity. The divine mind itself adds unity to it as its determination and form. Hence the finite real has unity only through participation, a participation which does not depend on the finite real itself but on the divine mind which imposes unity on it so that it can be susceptible of existence in itself.

These four universal determinations, common to *finite ens* and originating from the connection between its real element and its other element (actuating being), contain below them other generic, specific, proper and accidental determinations; in other words, they contain the determinations necessary for each species to become a *full species*. Only this kind of species can be exemplar for a real ens to exist in itself. But this discussion pertains mainly to cosmology.

I must now speak about each of the four universal determinations of the finite real imposed on it by ideal being so that it can then exist as ens.

CHAPTER 2

Continuation — The first element of the finite form common to every finite ens: supreme generic quality

520. We have already asked whether the concept of *quality* in the logical order precedes that of *quantity*, or vice versa. In the book of Categories, Aristotle places quantity before quality, although in other places he names quantity after quality. The question is purely dialectical because of the abstraction through which the concepts are conceived, that is, because the concepts called 'predicables' are separated from those called 'predicaments'. Here, however, speaking as a student of ontology, I must reunite them and consider *quality in the supreme genus*, and not speak about it without defining whether it is generic and which genus it belongs to, or whether it is specific and which species it belongs to.

In the case of the quality which pertains to the supreme genera of the real, there is no doubt that it is a concept which precedes the concept of quantity. We could not conceive anything in the universe without first conceiving some supreme genus of reality. This is why I said that the supreme genera of reality are the foundations of the universe.

But because these supreme genera of reality exist as distinct only in the mind, the foundations of the universe lie in minds.

The divine Mind sees the supreme genera in the absolute real Object, where they virtually exist, and distinguishes them through abstraction. It sees them therefore in ideal, objective being, that is, abstracted from the absolute real.

The human mind sees them in the perceived finite real, that is, clothed with ideal, objective being. It sees them, therefore, in this ideal, objective being through abstraction.

The divine mind sees them with the same act with which it determines them; having determined them, it pronounces them finite entia and creates them.

The human mind goes back and, beginning from these finite and already existing real entia, comes, by means of universalisation and abstraction, to intuit the supreme genera in the ideal being itself.

CHAPTER 3

Continuation — The second element of the *finite form* common to every finite ens: objective intelligibility

521. I have distinguished between the properties of being which being communicates to finite real things in the act of actuating them, and the properties it communicates before the real things are actuated into an existence in themselves, that is, when they are still in the objective form of the idea.

Among the first kind of properties I have classed intelligibility ([cf. 499–501]), which is also in the second properties.

But the mode in which being communicates intelligibility to real things, while they are still in the *ideal form*, differs greatly from the mode in which it communicates intelligibility to them in that act in which it makes them subsist with their own existence. The following are the differences between these two kinds of intelligibility of the finite real:

First difference. Being communicates an *objective intelligibility*, or an intelligibility of intuition, to real things before they subsist, while still pure terms of the mind. Actuating being, that is, being in the act which makes them subsist, communicates to them a *subjective intelligibility*, or an intelligibility of affirmation.

Second difference. *Objective intelligibility*, or intelligibility of intuition, makes the real known not as subsistent but as possible to subsist. *Subjective intelligibility*, or intelligibility of affirmation, makes the real known as subsistent.

Third difference. *Objective intelligibility* is mostly universal because many, indeed an indefinite number of, subsistent individuals have the identical essence intuited in their objective intelligibility. *Subjective intelligibility*, or intelligibility of affirmation, is single, that is, all it makes known is one solitary subsistent individual.

Fourth difference. The objective intelligibility (intelligibility of intuition) of a real in its ideal form is referred to a mind different from the known real — the real is still pure object, whereas a mind is subject. Hence, because the finite real as object cannot be a real subject, the finite real cannot be the mind to which the

real object is referred. On the other hand, subjective intelligibility (intelligibility of affirmation) can be referred to a mind which can be the finite real itself, for example, when the human mind affirms itself.

Fifth difference. *Subjective intelligibility* of the finite real is logically posterior to and dependent on *objective intelligibility*, in the way that subjective, actuating being is a concept logically posterior to objective, intelligible being. The dependence and logical posteriority between *subjective* and *objective intelligibility* is exactly the same as between affirmation and intuition. We cannot affirm what we do not first know. Hence, knowledge which comes from affirmation supposes previous knowledge, which is objective.

522. Affirmation is both divine and human. Divine affirmation imparts subjective existence to the finite real and, at the same time, subjective intelligibility relative to God. Human affirmation imparts subjective existence to the created, finite real and, at the same time, subjective intelligibility to the affirming human individual.

Divine affirmation is efficacious because it is an act of being which produces ens. Human affirmation is that of a mind which is not being, but only mind (finite real) and consequently produces only knowledge and persuasion.

Efficacious divine affirmation produces the finite real together with being by affirming the finite real. The term of this affirmation are finite minds together with the rest of the universe which is referred to these minds. Divine affirmation constitutes minds so that they intuit objective being. Here the subjective act of divine affirmation in the constitution of finite minds has, as its term, not only the finite real, but also the manifestation of ideal objective being to the finite real. This manifestation is affirmed together with the subjective, real principle of the mind.

We see therefore that Being, when in the subjective and affirming (or pronouncing) form, uses objective being in favour of the entia it creates by manifesting and communicating being as their objective form, cause of their subjectivity.

But as we have seen, I posited the first, objective intelligibility of finite real things in their supreme genera. In fact, if these genera were not primarily intelligible, they could not be in the

mind where alone they can be conceived as existing, nor would it ever be possible to explain the intelligibility of the other things of the world which have in the supreme genera their first foundation and the first dialectical subject proper to finite things. Being, as a dialectical subject, transcends all finite things.

Granted therefore that the first objective intelligibility proper to the Universe lies in the supreme genera of the realities composing the world, the intelligibility of the supreme genera extends to the lesser genera, to the abstract species and finally to the full species. Thus, the whole ideal universe is intelligible with an objective intelligibility. All that remains is the ultimate act of actuating being which, when divided from objective being, is not intelligible *per se*. As I said, however, this act acquires subjective intelligibility by the *affirmation of the mind*. This affirmation cannot be conceived unless there is intuition or at least the possession of *objective intelligibility* in the one who makes the affirmation. The mind, in its affirmation, applies this objective intelligibility to the ultimate act of the real.

CHAPTER 4

Continuation — The third element of the *finite form* common to every finite ens: determined quantity

Article 1

Origin of the infinity and universality of ideas

523. Do the supreme genera of reality have any quantity? Are they not infinite in their own essence?

The only limitation each has is the first of all limitations, namely that they are supreme genera. When reciprocally distinguished, one is not the other nor can one change into the other.

Indeed, if we take *pure feeling* as a supreme genus, there is obviously limitation only of generic quality in the concept of pure feeling, not of *quantity*. Consequently, it would not be contradictory if purely feeling entia existed in any number, even indefinitely, because in the mind, the genus of feeling will never come to an end nor be diminished.

Universality therefore, before being present in every other element of the finite real, is present in the supreme genera and, as a unilateral infinity, excludes any determined quantity whatsoever. This infinity of the supreme genera, as the first infinity, is also the maximum infinity observable in the elements of the finite real, because the supreme genera are the closest, in the order of logical procession, to the infinite real where they exist virtually and whence the mind extracts them by abstraction prior (logically) to every other element.

Certainly, a logical or mental procession and successive evolution exist: one element emerges from another where it is virtually contained, always through the operation of the mind. This succession is not in the one all-embracing act of the infinite mind, but is a relationship between the links of the ideal series embraced by the infinite mind. We can therefore lay down this principle: 'Every entity which, through the mind's action, emanates and proceeds from the infinite real, keeps that amount of the infinity of the infinite real which is proportionate to its proximity to the source of the emanation or procession.'

‘To proceed’ means to pass, through the mind’s action, from virtuality to distinct, proper existence. Thus, if we conceive a series whose first term is the *infinite real* which virtually contains every finite real, and the ultimate term is a single, finite, real ens having its own existence, we will see that the first, mentally emanating entities are the supreme genera, each of which retains a maximum virtuality relative to other world entities. When the mind attributes certain differences to these supreme genera, it can extract from the genera less extended genera, then the abstract species, then the full species; finally, it can extract individual real things by means of being which actuates and realises the full species. We see therefore that virtuality, universality and infinity are continually reduced until totally exhausted in the ultimate link, that is, in the real. This real, having received the last act of being, is now an individual ens with its own, subjective existence.

This explains the infinity or universality of ideas: their infinity comes to the supreme genera from the infinite real. In the world of ideas, it is present in the supreme genera as in its proper and first abode, and from the supreme genera gradually comes to be shared by less extended ideas, even as far as full, specific ideas. Hence, just as all the objective intelligibility of the world descends from the supreme genera, so all the infinity and universality which the mind conceives when it considers world entia descend from the same genera.

Clearly then, in all these entities, that is, in the ideas of the elements of the finite real, there is no *quantity* in so far as they are infinite, because infinity excludes quantity. In this respect, therefore, ideas do not have quantity.

Nevertheless, since the supreme genera and, even more so, less extended ideas have limits, is it not possible for us to conceive some quantity in them relative to the limits? To answer this question, I must first investigate what quantity is.

Article 2

Definition of quantity

524. Quantity is ‘the relationship between an entity and its limits’.

[524]

The definition is most universal, that is, it embraces every kind of quantity.

We note therefore that quantity is broken down into the concept of a *relationship* between *entity* and the *limits* that enclose it. But entity, considered in its relationship with the *limits* within which it exists, can vary. In other words, we can undertake to consider one entity rather than another. Consequently, the definition changes its meaning as the entity changes and has within itself a different kind of quantity.

Article 3

Ontological quantity

525. For example, if the entity whose quantity we are seeking is the infinite real, as seen in the mind, we see in the supreme genera of the finite real 'the infinite real enclosed by the mind within extremely generic limitations'. In each supreme genus therefore we can consider a quantity of such a nature that it is relative only to the infinite real, that is, in so far as it exists in the divine mind which limits it. In other words, it is a quantity which as such is relative only to being, the undetermined object of human intuition which virtually includes the infinite real. I call this kind of quantity 'ontological quantity'.

Ontological quantity is therefore limited being, that is, being as enclosed by limits. Hence, it can also be called 'quantity of being'.

But undetermined being virtually contains all its three forms. Consequently, ontological quantity will be threefold, that is, there will be three *categorical quantities*, each of which is ontological, in so far as being is considered within ideal limits, real or moral limits: ideal quantity, real quantity, moral quantity. Each of these categories of quantity of being can be suitably called 'ontological'.

In each of these three categories of quantity, being is considered by us as limited: in the first, in so far as being virtually contains the objective form; in the second, in so far as it virtually contains the subjective form, and in the third, in so far as it virtually contains the moral form.

Ontological quantity is therefore present in the supreme genera of the finite real, and is communicated from them to the entities below them. In each of these entities, real being can be considered as limited, and a series of *degrees of real being* can be established in so far as increasing limitation diminishes the real which they enclose.

But because the supreme genera of finite real things contain the real under the objective form (otherwise they could neither be nor be conceived), we think ideal being (the virtual object), and real being residing in it, in the supreme genera and also in all the lower entities, down to the full species. We can therefore consider the supremely generic ideas and all the other lower ideas in relationship to the two forms of being, that is, to ideal objective being, which contains, and to real, subjective being, which is contained. They can also be considered in relationship to objective being in so far as they are ideas, and to subjective being in so far as the nature present in them is reality. In the first mode, they are 'limited ideal being', in the second, 'limited real being'.

This is the origin of the two ontological quantities seen in ideas and called 'extension' and 'comprehension' (*Logica*, 317–318, 380, 406, 414–416). The first is the quantity of the idea considered as 'limited ideal being'; the second is the quantity of the idea considered as 'limited real being' in so far as it contains the real.

526. We may be surprised to see that one of these quantities is in indirect proportion to the other. Why is it that, as being increases, the real in ideal being grows less, and the more that being contains of the real, the more it is limited? In infinite Being, the objective form is in perfect agreement with the subjective, real form; both are equally infinite. Why then, in the sphere of finite ens, must the real and the ideal follow another law?

The question itself suggests the answer, precisely because of the difference between infinite ens and finite ens. As we have seen, the finite real is not being; it is the pure term of being. But the infinite real is being itself. As being *per se*, both the infinite object and the infinite real equal one another; one can never be greater or less than the other. The finite real on the contrary is precisely that which limits being. Being, in itself, can only be

infinite, but receives from the finite real a limitation relative to this real in so far as being actuates it solely and exactly with the being the real has. As I said, the limit of finite ens arises from the real, not from being. Consequently, the more a finite real is finalised and has progressed to its proper subjective existence, the more complete and therefore greater is the *limitation* which it brings to the ideal; the more a finite real is complete and finalised, the more real it is.

Every finite real therefore has its proper limitation which is independent of objective being and comes from the free will of the one who applies this limitation when creating the finite real. But when the limitation is fixed, it divides into many elements, that is, into generic and specific elements, and into the elements of the full species. After this the finite real emerges as it were from the shell of objective, ideal being, and thus receives the act of subjective being together with the final element of its determination; it is now constituted a real ens existing in itself, an ens subjectively considered. Because, as I have said, this final limitation is subjective existence, it emerges entirely from objective being (the subjective ens is no longer idea). At this point, the real ens cannot be known unless a mind brings it back and joins it once more to objective being. But the prior elements of finite reality remain hidden within the ideal objectivity of being, and therefore limit the amplitude of ideal being, while still preserving something of its infinity.

527. It is proper to ontological quantity to have only proportional measure. Because this quantity is a *quantity* of being, and being is infinite, no *measure* can exist capable of measuring being.

All we can know therefore is 'more and less' but not how much more or how much less. For example, we know that generic reality is less than infinitely absolute reality but we do not know by how much. I call this quantity 'transcendent quantity', and define it as 'that in which more and less is known, but not how much more or how much less, because it is infinite'. This kind of quantity becomes 'transcendent quantity of *proportion*' when used to determine the proportion between being and two or more finite entia. For example, in the case of a categorical quantity such as 'the quantity of objective being', we can say that the *species* has less objective being than a *genus*. In

the case of ‘the quantity of real being’, we can say that ‘an intellectual, finite ens has more reality than a purely sentient, finite ens’.

Infinite quantity of proportion is therefore ‘that which measures several finite entities relative to what they share with a third entity but cannot establish a determined quantity. It can only acknowledge that one participates more, another less, in the third entity’.

This ontological quantity is nevertheless of supreme importance for establishing the moral value of things (*PE*, 21–42).

Article 4

Abstract ontological quantity

528. I said that ‘quantity is the relationship between an *entity* and its limits’ and that there are different kinds of quantity when a particular value is substituted for ‘entity’ in the definition. When I made this substitution to find the different kinds of quantity, I began by replacing ‘entity’ with ‘being’ and found ontological quantity, which can be defined as ‘the relationship of being with its limits’.

Because being subsists in its three forms, I deduced also three categories of ontological quantity.

I distinguished, however, between *ideal being* and *absolute objective being*. I said that ideal being, relative to the creating Mind, is an *abstract* species which *virtually* contains both the objective infinite real and the finite real. This *undetermined being* is the object of human intuition.

Furthermore, we ourselves can, through abstraction, find many elementary concepts of being (*NE*, 2: 575) whether being is considered solely as undetermined or as each of its three forms virtually included in it. In our mind therefore, being can, at different times, become act or the one or the possible or the universal or the necessary or the immutable, or what absolutely is, etc.

There is therefore an ontological quantity of ideality, a quantity of act, of unity, of possibility, of universality, of immutability,

of absoluteness, etc, all of which correspond to the quantity of being.

I distinguish this quantity, considered in its abstract, elementary concepts but not in being, by calling it 'abstract, elementary ontological quantity'.

Equally, however, it could be called 'fundamental cosmological quantity' because it refers directly not to *absolute being*, but to being in some limited mode. None of the elements of being in the divine and human mind exists as distinct, although their distinction is the principle or beginning of the creative act.

Article 5

Continuation — Discrete quantity — Abstract one is absolutely measure; it is not measured; all other measures are measurable and receive being-measures from abstract one

529. Among these elementary, ontological quantities or, if preferred, fundamental cosmological quantities, there is a quantity that deserves further consideration, namely, the quantity presented to us when being is considered as abstract *one*.

Although *abstract one* admits of no intrinsic quantity — indeed, it is a concept which denies all intrinsic quantity — it nevertheless admits of what is called 'discrete' quantity. This is the quantity which supplies the matter for arithmetic and for all sciences based on arithmetic.

It is an abstract, ontological quantity, not a purely cosmological quantity, and is abstracted solely from finite entia. We can see this by considering the forms, three in number, that are essential to being. From this number, by the action of the mind, all numbers and all arithmetical operations can come.

Note that this kind of quantity has the following property which makes it differ from other *elementary, ontological quantities*: the abstraction of the concept is not performed on being but on its three forms. Being, identical in its forms, is one, not multiple. Consequently, if unity is abstracted from being, we have only one, that is, the negation of all quantity. On the other hand, if one is abstracted from the forms, we find the number three which remains three distinct ones, precisely because the

number three is abstract, and thus through abstraction we prescind from the absolute unity of being. The three forms therefore, although only a single being, truly give three abstract ones. Hence, the abstract number does not suppose some being under each unity as a complete, corresponding thought, but a pure *form* of being. The other abstract, ontological quantities have, on the contrary, being as a complete thought to which the quantities are referred. Thus, the number three is made through a double abstraction: the forms are first abstracted from being, then the number three is abstracted from the forms. Numerical quantity has therefore an abstract, ontological origin.

530. This kind of discrete quantity is endowed with two prerogatives that are absent in other quantities:

1. Its proper measure is the least possible, that is, *one*. This measure does not need to be measured because it does not have, and cannot have, any prior measure. It cannot even be called quantity because entities and limits are not distinguished in abstract one. Indeed, one, taken by itself, does not involve any relationship with limits; it can be equally finite and infinite.

2. Number therefore, as quantity, is the *most determined* and *measured* of all quantities because measured with unity which is the ultimate possible measure; in fact, it is the measure which alone is *absolutely measure* and cannot be measured by any other measure.

All other measures receive being-measure from the unity they possess; they vary solely through the element united to the unity.

If we remove this element added to one as a nature subservient to it, pure, abstract one remains. In itself, this pure, abstract one measures only abstract number, which is a composite of unity, a composite considered as a single number.

But if we suppose that some nature is subservient to one, the nature can have a *quantity*. However, the quantity of the nature subservient to number can sometimes be measured and sometimes not.

It cannot be measured:

1. when the nature in question is infinite;
2. when it is not infinite relative to the nature which is infinite in all respects, but is infinite relative to other lower

qualities. In fact we have seen that the *supreme genera* of the reality which comprises the world are not infinite relative to the *absolute real* from which the divine Mind draws them, but infinite relative to lower genera, species and individuals. I have already dealt with this case, namely, that there is a *quantity* which has no *determined measure* but only a *proportional measure*, that is, a measure that indicates more and less but not the quantity of excess or deficiency.

All this is explained by the presence of the determined measure 'when the entity, taken within the limits enclosing it, exists a determined number of times within the same entity which has not yet received those limits'. Now no limited entity whatever exists a number of times within the entity which is infinite in all respects, because the infinite infinitely exceeds the finite in both quantity and essence. Hence the finite and the infinite can be entia only in an equivocal, not a univocal sense (*PSY*, 2: 1381 ss.), nor can one ever change into the other. Consequently, 'in all cases in which one entity cannot be found to be comprised a number of times in another, and in which there is a determined measure between one entity and another, there remains only proportional measure, as I said, through which we know more and less. How much more or how much less is not measurable, however, because it has no measure at all'. I conclude, therefore, that 'number alone has a determined measure (that is, one). Where a number cannot be assigned, there is no measure, and as a result no determined quantity'.

Article 6

Cosmological quantity

531. The world is finite ens in its three forms, whether it only participates in them, as in the case of ideal finite ens, or is constituted by them, as in the case of the real form, or simultaneously participates in them and is constituted by them, as in the case of the moral form. This last form, however, requires special treatment which I must postpone to the seventh ontological discussion.

By 'cosmological quantity', I mean the quantity discernible in

ideal being, as first foundation of the world, whether in supreme genera, lower genera, abstract species, full species or real individuals, taken comparatively. These six links bind the world and all finite being together.

Just as ontological quantity is 'the quantity of being in its three forms' found in the world, so cosmological quantity is '1. the quantity of ideal being found in the supreme genus, 2. the quantity of supreme genus found in the lower genus or species, 3. the quantity of abstract species found in the full species, and 4. the quantity of full species found in the really existing individual'. As *ontological quantity* is one, so *cosmological quantity* has at least four subordinate classes. I will examine the nature of each.

532. *First fundamental, cosmological quantity*, or quantity of ideal being. I said that the quantity of ideal being is proportionate to the extension of the idea. But ideal being is void of all reality; it is pure being. Properly speaking, therefore, it pertains to the world only as a preliminary condition, as the intuited object of minds, the cause of their subjective existence and the cause of a genus proper to itself, which I have called 'formal, objective cause'.

Hence, as I said, this quantity of being can be equally called 'abstract, ontological quantity'.

533. *Second cosmological quantity*, or *quantity of supreme genus found in the lower genus or in the abstract species*.

When a supreme genus of finite reality is applied as a measure to infinite, real being, it is clearly not an adequate measure: the infinite is unmeasured and unmeasurable. The only possible result is that 'infinite being is greater than the supreme genus of finite reality in that infinite being, as infinite, does not have *quantity*, as I have said'.

But a question now arises: 'Although neither a supreme genus, nor all the supreme genera of finite reality taken together can be commensurate with infinite, real being (whose excess is always infinite), is the number of possible supreme genera infinite or only finite?' This question pertains to cosmological studies.

But if being has neither quantity nor measure because it does not have confines, does genus have quantity, and if so, can it be measured?

Three *measures* are possible:

1. First, a measure which is *greater than the thing measured*. This measure is used when we see how much the thing is a share of a larger quantity which, for that very reason, is called the thing's measure. Thus, when we have proved that a sphere is equal to two-thirds of the cylinder described around it, we have measured the sphere by a larger measure, that of the cylinder.

2. Second, a measure which is *equal to the thing measured*. Thus, in the proof that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides, the sum and the square measure each other.

3. Third, a measure which is *less than the thing measured*. Thus, when we know how many times a particular line is contained in a longer line, the latter is measured by the former, which is a lesser measure.

Clearly, no supreme genus has a *greater measure*, because the only thing greater than it is being, which is infinite. Hence, if we want to call being a measure, it is a transcendent measure.

Nor does a supreme genus have an *equal measure* because every supreme genus is one only and without equal.

534. Can a supreme genus be measured by another supreme genus as by its equal? Before I answer this question, I must reply to the question previously asked which pertains to cosmology: 'Can genera be reduced to the first, single, supreme genus of finite ens, of which all the others are lower genera?' If the first supreme genus is one only, it is clear that there is no other to measure it.

If we now consider as supreme genera the genera of principle-ens or term-ens, there are no equal supreme genera. One contains a portion of being more or less excellent than the other. We can say, therefore, about these genera compared with each other, that one is greater than the other. But we cannot assign a *measure* of more or less because the portions of being which they enclose are reciprocally incommensurable. The genera, in fact, differ from each other in every way except in being. But because these portions of being do not have measure, none of them is a share of being; each differs from being through an infinite difference. They can be compared

with each other only as more or less, but never as measure and measured.

535. But let us suppose that we are dealing with *lower*, not *supreme genera*. The lower genera of finite reality are the higher genera enclosed within certain limits. To search for the quantity of a lower genus is to search for *how much* it contains of the higher genus, not how much it contains of being.

We must carefully note the difference between these two tasks.

When we search for the quantity of being contained in a limited entity (for example, in a supreme genus), the task becomes twofold: either we are looking for the quantity of being understood as most real being, or we are looking for the quantity of being understood as undetermined or ideal being which alone contains virtually the infinite real.

In the first case, it is clear that supremely real being exceeds infinitely and in all respects the supreme genus of finite reality and, if there are several supreme genera, exceeds them all. This quantity is called absolutely 'ontological quantity'.

In the second case, undetermined being, as idea and as virtually containing an infinite real, also infinitely exceeds every genus of finite reality. But relative to the distinct actuality of being, finite genus has a greater actuality in relationship to the real that it contains. At the same time, it lacks the infinite virtuality of the real which is not contained in any way, either actually or virtually, in the supreme genus. In other words, the supreme genus is infinitely less than ideal being, but greater relative to the *actuality* of an infinitely small portion of reality when this portion is compared with the absolute reality virtually contained in the ideal. This greater amount is not something ideal but 'an actual, finite, real amount' which in the ideal is still immersed in virtuality alone.

However, when we ask: 'What is the quantity of a lower genus relative to a higher genus, granted that the reality of the higher genus has no subjective existence?', we are dealing with only one question: 'How much of a higher genus is contained in the limits of a lower genus?'

If we compare these two genera as ideas, then the higher genus, as container-idea, is greater than the lower. And this is the ideal quantity I have spoken about; it is not a quantity of reality.

If we compare the two genera as contained reality, the higher genus contains a more *extensive* but less *actual* reality than the lower genus.

We need to ask therefore:

1. By how much does the higher genus with its *virtuality* exceed the lower?
2. By how much does the lower genus, by means of *actuality*, outstrip the higher?

The first question can be subdivided into two:

a) Are the lower genera, into which the higher genus can be split, finite in number, or can they be infinite? I will deal with this question in cosmology.

b) Does the reality contained in the lower genus have a measure, that is, has a share of the higher genus? I will deal with this question here.

536. To answer it, we must compare the *actual reality* of the lower genus with the *more virtual reality* of the higher genus, and then find out whether we can measure how much the latter extends beyond the former. But before comparing them, we must consider how much the actuality of the lower genus limits the virtuality of the higher genus. I must therefore speak about the actuality of the lower genus and, at the same time, answer the other question: 'By how much does the lower genus outstrip the higher genus in *actuality*?'

The greater *actuality* of the lower genus actuates the higher genus and at the same time limits its extension. Hence, it makes the higher genus become a lower genus. This needs careful attention. The higher genus becomes limited by the addition to it of a new *act of reality*. But this new act is more limited than the reality contained in and proper to the higher genus. It is an act virtually contained in the higher genus but, because it is more restricted, does not exhaust all the virtuality. Consequently, the reality contained in the higher genus and compared with the reality contained in the lower genus, is virtual but more extended; the reality contained in the lower genus and compared with the reality contained in the higher genus, is more actual, but more limited. Let us suppose that all the virtual reality contained in the higher genus passed directly to full actuality. In this case, the higher genus would be subsistent with a subjective existence proper to itself. However, instead of this

sudden passage to subjective existence made by all the virtual reality contained in the higher genus, we have in the lower genus only a portion of the virtual reality which has not yet come to subjective existence but simply taken one step towards this existence while still clothed with the objective form.

The reality, therefore, contained in the higher genus does not pass directly to subjective existence but, as it were, breaks up, with one part remaining virtual and another part taking a step towards subjective existence. This division constitutes the difference between the higher and the lower genus. But how does this come about? In one of two ways: either we have recourse to the will of the creator, which imposes this limit on the reality's step towards subjective existence, or we discover whether this slow progress constitutes a necessity in the very nature of the real. I will discuss this question later when dealing with the nature of limitation. Here, it is sufficient to observe that the higher genus, granted it exists in a mind, is complete and at rest in its objective existence; of itself it has no power to produce its own actual difference which will make it become a lower genus. The difference is therefore produced by another cause because in fact it is an *actuality* not possessed, but only received by the higher genus.

Clearly then, the concept of the higher genus tells us only that it cannot receive a greater actuality except as an addition to the reality it contains. This certainly limits the sphere of possible, actual differences.

Furthermore, the greater or lesser *amount* of these differences is not determined by the higher genus itself but by something foreign to it, whether this be creative freedom or the nature of the infinite real.

Finally, granted the actual difference, and the constitution of the lower genus, we see that the extension of the virtuality of the genus is greater than that of the differential actuality. But we human beings cannot find a measure to determine how much greater the extension is because all the rest of the higher genus lies in an absolute virtuality, whose extension cannot be measured by a lower actuality. To do this, we would need to know how many times the actuality is contained in the virtuality. But because the virtuality is uniform and shows no difference at all in itself, we cannot assign the number of times to

it. As I have said, there can be no measurement where there is no number.

537. The argument is also valid for lower genera relative to abstract species. We can therefore conclude:

1. The supreme genus of finite reality has no greater or equal or lesser *measure*. It simply manifests itself as an idea less extensive than the idea of being. However, it has a finite reality, which is only virtual in the idea of being. Moreover, as reality, it has a greater extension than that contained in lower genera, and is greater than all lower genera and abstract species.

2. In the same way, the quantity of higher genus enclosed within the limits of a lower genus or of a species does not have any measure. The lower genus is seen as more restricted than the higher genus but more extensive than other genera lower than itself, and abstract species. At the same time, however, the amount of *actuality* of reality increases in less extended genera. Hence, the *cosmological quantity* of reality among higher and lower genera and abstract species is of two kinds:

- a) *quantity of extension of the real,*
- b) *quantity of actuality of the real.*

538. But we must now ask: is there an infinite difference in the quantity of the extension of the real? And: is there an infinite difference in the quantity of actuality of the real?

I reply. The word 'infinite' means the absence of limits. Hence, the phrase, 'limited entity', supposes the possibility of conceiving this entity in two modes: 1. as separate from its limits and thus still unlimited, and 2. as limited, that is, within the sphere of the limits.

In the case of the entity of the supreme genera, the entity cannot be conceived outside its limits because, without these, all that remains is either 1. undetermined being, which actually contains no reality and is not therefore the reality contained in the supreme genus, a reality which has a first grade of actuality, or 2. infinite real being, which is not in any way subject to limitation. Consequently, in the supreme genus of finite reality the limit cannot be distinguished from the limited entity itself. In this sense we cannot say that 'the reality contained in the genus is a finite entity' or that the extension of this reality is finite.

We must therefore distinguish two species of *infinite*: 1. that which has neither limits in itself, nor limits when compared and

related to another entity — this infinity is proper to God alone; 2. that which has no limits in itself, so that its entity can be distinguished from the limits enclosing it, although it has limits when the entity is mentally referred to another entity. This kind of *infinity* is also found in the extension of the reality of supreme genera. In this sense the supreme genera of finite reality are *infinite*. If the mind compares them to absolute being, they are seen to be infinitely less than absolute being, but if we consider the *entity* itself of the supreme genera, we find that it has no limits enclosing it. As a result, we cannot think the entity as unenclosed and then enclosed. It is thought purely as it is, without anything else enclosing or limiting it.

I will call the first ‘absolute infinity’, the second ‘infinity proper to essence’. Thus the supreme genera each have ‘infinity proper to essence’.

539. But if we compare the extension of a lower genus with the infinite extension of essence of a higher genus is the difference infinite?

In a lower genus, we see the entity of a higher genus limited by the degree of actuality added to a portion of the real in the higher genus. This gives us the distinction between limitable entity, and entity already enclosed in its limits. In a lower genus, therefore, there is nothing of the ‘infinity proper to essence’ which we have seen present in the supreme genus; in other words, a lower genus has a reality whose extension is limited. But the difference between a limited and an unlimited extension is infinite. Therefore, all lower genera and abstract species differ infinitely from a supreme genus relative to the *extension* of the reality they enclose.

540. But are the lower genera and abstract species infinitely different relative to the extension of their reality?

We must note that nothing of the reality present in a supreme genus is present in ideal being, and that reality is present in the infinite real only virtually and eminently. Hence, it is not a reality which, limiting itself, becomes the reality of a supreme genus.²²³ On the contrary, the higher genus is in the lower genus

²²³ We see here another fine demonstration of the impossibility of pantheistic and emanatistic systems. The demonstration that the first finite reality, that is, the reality contained in the supreme genera, has no prior

and abstract species, that is, the same reality is present as in the higher genus, but limited in extension by a further degree of actuality. Thus, in the lower genus and in the species, the entity is distinguished from its limits; the entity is first thought without its limits, then enclosed by them. Hence, the reality of the lower genus and of the abstract species have the characteristic I have assigned to 'limited entities'.

It follows from this that the lower genus and the abstract species relate to each other as finite quantities to finite quantities, with resulting finite differences.

However, we cannot know *how much* these differences are because the extension of the species determined by the greater degree of actuality present in a portion of the reality of the genus is not commensurable with the extension of this reality which, relative to the greater actuality, is a virtual reality. We can now establish the following as a general principle:

'Whenever a given virtual reality acquires a degree of actuality which extends to only a part of the virtual reality, we cannot know what share this is of the whole of that virtual reality because that which is virtual has no number. In other words, different measures representing unity cannot be indicated in virtuality.'

We know therefore that the reality of the species compared with the reality of its genus has a finite difference of extension, but we cannot assign its determined quantity.

541. I come now to the second question: 'Is the difference of quantity of *actuality*, seen in the finite reality, infinite?'

If we compare the actuality of reality in a supreme genus with the nothingness of real actuality of undetermined being, the difference is between nothingness and something. This difference is something. But this something can be more or less. Therefore the difference can be more or less (*SP*, 545–573). However, this way of evaluating the difference is purely mathematical; it is a concept helpful in calculus. Ontologically, between

reality which, when limited, becomes the first, also demonstrates that the first, fundamental truth or, as it is called, the first matter of the world, has no other prior subject, and cannot therefore be another evolved or emanated or differentiated reality. This is sufficient to destroy pantheism and emanatism. But I will discuss all this in Theology, if God grants me life and time.

nothingness and something, there can be no comparison of quantity, and therefore no difference. The quantity of *actuality* cannot be known unless it is compared with another greater or lesser actuality. But because an actuality less than that of the supreme genus does not exist, we must compare the actuality of the reality which the genus contains with the greater actuality in the lower genera and species.

But as, in moving from the supreme genus to the ultimate species, we pass from a greater extension of reality to a lesser extension, so, moving from the supreme genus means passing from a lesser to an ever greater actuality.

On the other hand, if we compare in succession the links of this chain, we come to the ultimate link, that is, to the real, self-subsistent individual. As a pure real, this individual has changed in categorical form. The previous links, however, having their reality in the idea, were all in the objective form ([cf. 181–187; 380–400]). But categorical forms do not differ from each other in quantity, not even relative to more and less; they differ totally. This is the *first difference*, which cannot be considered either finite or infinite because it is prior to the concept of the finite and infinite, prior also to the concept of more and less, and certainly prior to the concept of quantity. Hence, the only way to express this difference is to call it an absolute difference of categorical form, or simply a *categorical difference*.

If, however, instead of the forms of being we consider pure reality, whether in itself or enclosed in the objective form, the *actuality* of that real which subsists as an individual has no limits. Here we prescind from the limits of extension and consider only the *actuality* of the real, without reference to whether this real is more or less extended, excellent or perfect. Such an actuality, which cannot be considered as a limited entity, is infinite and in fact the very actuality of the real. Consequently, the quantitative difference of actuality between the subsistent real and what is present solely in the idea is *infinite* — a difference between the finite and the infinite.

Contrariwise, if we ascend from the full species to the supreme genus, we see that a degree is always taken from the actuality of the real. The actuality is therefore limited throughout the whole series of ideas so that in the genus there is only minimum actuality. The differences of *real actuality* between

the realities present in the first species, then in the abstract species, the lower genera and the supreme genus, are all finite and continually reduce the actuality by a degree.

542. Can these degrees which reduce the real actuality be measured? Can we assign them some determined quantity?

When I proposed to measure the extension of the reality contained in genera and species, I recognised that it was impossible to give some determined measure because an actual amount had to be compared with a virtual amount. This, however, is impossible. The two amounts have no measure in common. But this obstacle is not present when one degree of actuality is used to measure another. We can tell the difference because the degree of actuality added to the previous degree is precisely the difference. The added degree of actuality can be taken as the measure of the amount of actuality which has increased the previous actuality. Knowledge of this and of the previous degree gives us the amount of increase in the actuality. But this is a measure of direct knowledge in which what is measured is the measure of itself. Now, this *measure of direct knowledge* has only a direct use, which makes it appear obscure and unsatisfactory when compared to the measures which give universal results, applicable to many quantities. Generally speaking, we humans are interested solely in the last kind of measures. In other words, we call measure 'an amount applicable to quantities of different things'. As a result, no common measure is found which can be applied to the previous and subsequent degree of the actuality we are talking about. However, it would be found if these degrees could be measured by a third measure different from them, that is, measured by an amount other than their own.

This kind of measures, which I have called 'measures of direct knowledge', tells us the following:

1. One thing is greater or less than another.
2. We know the difference between them, that is, the excess or shortfall.
3. The excess or shortfall cannot be related to another measure which would enable us to determine which share makes one quantity differ from another.

Nevertheless, we know more with these measures than that one entity exceeds another, although we do not know one of the two compared entities. Thus:

[542]

When the reality of the supreme genus is compared with infinite reality, we know that the latter infinitely exceeds the former, although we have no knowledge whatsoever of the infinite reality.

When the reality of the supreme genus is compared with the reality in ideal being, in which nothing of the reality of the supreme genus is actually visible, we know that the reality of the supreme genus is greater in actuality, although the term of the comparison is lacking because the term is purely nothing.

When the extension of the reality of the species is compared with the extension of the generic reality, we know that the latter exceeds the former, although we do not know how far generic reality extends through its virtuality.

On the other hand, when we compare the degree of actuality of the species with the degree of actuality of the genus, we know that the former exceeds the latter. And because we know both the former and the latter, their difference is clear to the mind and comparable, although not with a third measure common to both. This quantity is a 'quantity of direct comparison'.

543. 3. *Cosmological quantity, or quantity of abstract species seen in the full species.*

Relative to both extension and actuality, the difference we see between the reality contained in the *abstract species* and the reality contained in the *full species* is less than that between the abstract species and the genera or between the genera hierarchically arranged amongst themselves.

This difference is less because the differences between a supreme and a lower genus, and between a lower genus and an abstract species are *substantial*, whereas the differences between the abstract species and the full species are only *accidental*. I will explain.

Only the reality of the full species can acquire subjective existence and thus become a real ens. Granted this *real ens*, we see in its reality a force to modify itself, without loss of identity, principally through its own power, although helped as well by agents or stimuli different from it. In this ens, which preserves its identity in spite of the different modifications it undergoes, we can distinguish the identical ens (potency-cause of its modifications) and the modifications. The *abstract species* represents the identical ens (potency-cause of its modifications) which

takes the name 'substance'; the *full species* represents the identical ens (potency-cause) with its changeable modes, mentioned above, called accidents. The variation of these modes neither adds to nor removes anything from the ens, which remains identical. The full species therefore, no longer has anything of the abstract species which could constitute the real ens; all it has are certain determined modes of the ens itself. The abstract species contains in itself all the substantial or *entitative reality*, while the differences added by the *full species* are simply *modalities* of the ens itself.

To understand better how much the difference between the abstract species and the full species is divided from the difference between the abstract species and the genera, we need to consider more closely what I have said, namely, that the real contained in the abstract species is, when the real subsists, the potency-cause of its accidents. It is true that the real certainly could not exist without having some accidents to determine it fully. But granted that it is created, it is created with its accidents in such a way that these are products of its intrinsic activity, an activity which, under certain conditions, can vary. Thus, when the potency-cause of the accidents is fully determined in the abstract species, the accidents themselves are also determined, together with all their variations which the subsistent real is capable of receiving. On the other hand, we have seen that genus presents a real, which of itself cannot produce the greater degree of reality possessed by another lower genus or the abstract species; this degree must be added from outside, that is, by the Creator. The generic reality does not contain any productive real activity; it is not a potency-cause, precisely because it does not represent determined real ens which we suppose as not immediately realisable. If it were realised, it would have the nature of abstract species or, if it admitted no accidents, of full species.

544. The supreme genera differ therefore from the lower genera, and the ultimate genus from the full species by means of an *entitative quantity*, that is, they differ by means of a part of that entity which is necessary for constituting a real ens. The *abstract species* does not differ from the *full species* through any entitative quantity but solely through certain acts and completions of the ens, called accidents. The real which constitutes

finite ens in the abstract species is already complete but lacks the variable acts which the complete ens, of itself, necessarily performs as a result of its radical activity. All subsistent individuals, therefore, that are referred to the same abstract species receive the same name.

Consequently, the reality of the full species is fully present in each of the individuals because reality in each produces the same ens relative to the intelligence which names it. On the other hand, the genus is not fully present in each abstract species because it concurs through many species to produce entia. These entia are different in so far as they are known through another species and thus receive another name.

The *abstract species* therefore contains the real which, as already one, can be an existing subject of its own acts. The *full species* differs from the abstract species only by representing also the completion of these acts, but is not a new subject. The genera, on the other hand, present some reality which is not yet one, nor able to be a real subject of its own acts. It needs to be unified. This can be done in many ways. As a result, many real subjects, and hence many distinct entia, issue from the mind which necessarily has to conceive them with different species.

The degree of actuality therefore by which the full species differs from the abstract species does not constitute an amount of real ens but an *amount of action* of this ens.

This *amount of action*, more of which is contained in the full species than in the abstract species, can be measured only with the measure I have called the 'measure of direct knowledge'.

Moreover, the different full species or modes of the same specific idea differ from each other by *degrees of imperfection and perfection*. These degrees allow for greater or smaller numeration, which is a certain, determined measure because wherever there is number, there is some determination of measure (*NE*, 2: 648 ss.).

545. 4. *Cosmological quantity, or quantity of full species seen in the subsistent, real individual.*

The real individual is the fully determined real which has received subjective being and become ens. We have seen that this subjective being is given to the real by an affirmation of the mind. The mind has before it objective being in which, as in its container, subjective being is present, but it cannot affirm unless

it attaches this subjective being to the real. In the full species the real, that is, the real ens in objective being, is united with subjective being. When the real makes itself felt outside the mind, the possessor of this mind sees the real in the object, and seeing it there as ens, affirms it as ens. In this way the real acquires the condition of subjective ens with subjective form because no longer contained in objective being.

In the full species, therefore, there is more than the external, real individual because the determined real is present, not as pure term of being, but as *real ens* in objective being. But the determined finite real exists as subjective ens either 1. in the mind and therefore enclosed by objective being, or 2. in itself, and therefore enclosed not in objective being but in subjective, categorical form.

Finite ens then, existing in itself, consists of two indivisible elements: 1. an element relative to itself, that is, the pure real, and 2. another element, subjective being, which is in the mind. The mind attributes this second element to finite ens in a permanent mode by the creative affirmation of God, and in a transient mode by human perception and affirmation which human beings can renew as often as they like.

The mind, in attributing subjective being to the real in itself, makes subjective being exist as ens in itself and therefore outside the mind.

In the act of perception, we find outside our mind only the pure real, which could not exist without being. We see the pure real because it is permanently united to the divine mind. This mind contains subjective being in objective being, and unceasingly attributes subjective being to the pure real. Thus, the finite real exists as ens relative to God. But relative to us, it is communicated as pure real in our feeling, while at the same time we intuit the subjective being of the feeling. In our simultaneous apprehension of the two elements (the real and being), we see and perceive *real ens*. Through abstraction however we also distinguish the real from the being which makes the real into ens. We think the pure feeling by abstracting from the thought with which we think the real. Hence, it seems that the real is given us without being, divided from being. But this is only a *dialectical illusion* whose foundation is the truth that 'the real is not being'. Nevertheless, as I have said, the real is

inseparable from subjective being, and subjective being is inseparable from objective being, which contains it in the mind.

The determined, finite real, therefore, is not, unless it is ens, and depends on both the divine mind which creates it and on the human mind which, attributing subjective being to it, makes it an ens relative to itself.

We see then that the full species is finite real ens enclosed in the object and therefore in objective form. The subsistent, real individual is the same finite real ens in subjective form.

They do not differ relative to being, as we will see later, but in categorical form.

The difference in categorical form is not a difference in quantity nor a *difference in generic quality*, but a first, maximum difference, which is the original principle of all other conceivable differences.

Article 7

Continuation — The concept of ‘quality’

546. *Quality* is ‘a permanent actuality abstracted by the mind from the totality of an ens and then predicated of the ens’.

This is a universal definition and includes all the meanings normally given to ‘quality’.

Indeed, there are accidental, integral and essential actualities, as well as those of pure relationship; all of them can be abstracted by the mind, distinguished from the totality of the ens and then predicated of it. Aristotle himself considers the generic and specific essence of entia as quality.²²⁴ It is true that if we remove these essential entities from an ens, the determined ens is destroyed. But in this case, the mind considers the *undetermined ens* as the subject to which these essential qualities are to be attributed. In other words, the mind still has a dialectical subject, and by restoring its essential constitutives forms the previous determined ens again.

We must also note that besides *real qualities* there are purely *dialectical qualities*. If, from the totality of an ens, the mind abstracts some actuality contained only virtually in the ens, or

²²⁴ *Categ.*, 5.

not contained there except fictionally, the quality we are dealing with is not real but purely dialectical.

547. Now it is important for us to know the *relationship* between '*this kind*' and '*this much*', when each of these concepts is understood in its greatest universality.

'This much' is first conceived in something concrete, the subject of the quantity. The mind then produces an abstract which it calls absolutely 'quantity'.

'This much' of a subject is nearly always 'this much' of 'this kind' because nearly every subject has some actuality which can be abstracted from it and then predicated of it.

The *quality* of a subject, therefore, considered relatively to the subject's *quantity*, is the relationship between what is undetermined and the limits determining it. As I said, quantity is 'an entity considered within its limits'. If, in this definition, we substitute 'quality' for 'entity', we do not have the total ens but an elementary *actuality* of it, to which we can then add the limits, and so have *quantity*.

Hence, *quality* is not the whole ens but any actuality of it which the mind can remove and then predicate of it. The definition tells us that the actuality must be permanent in order to distinguish *quality* from the *transient* act of an ens, which is not inherent to the ens. *Quality*, conceived in this way, can be the subject of *quantity*, that is, of limits.

548. But which actualities of an ens can be divided from it and then predicated of it?

In the case of absolute Ens, nothing can in reality be divided from it or considered divided, absolutely speaking. However, thinking imperfectly, and by means of a hypothetical abstraction, we can distinguish from it, or rather in it, many of the attributes and perfections virtually contained in it, which can then be predicated of it, that is, they can be considered as its *qualities*. But as these dialectical qualities are absolutely infinite, they admit no quantity whatsoever precisely because they admit no limits.

In the case of undetermined being which we intuit, we can, by abstraction, distinguish in it the concepts I have called 'elementary concepts of being'. These also, as infinite, can be considered *dialectical qualities*. They are, however, non-susceptive of limits and hence immune from all quantity.

[547–548]

Quality, therefore, can be found in pure being by a purely hypothetical abstraction, but not *quantity*.

Three consequences follow:

1. The purely dialectical concept of *quality*, as found by the mind through a hypothetical abstraction, is prior to the concept of *quantity*.

2. In the case of a true, not a *dialectical quality*, that is, in the case of the actuality of an ens really distinguished in the ens itself, this quality can be found only in finite entia where actualities exist as really distinct from the subject to which they are attributed.

3. *Quantity*, which does not exist in being, must be sought in the forms of being.

549. We must therefore first investigate whether quantity is encountered in the forms of being as found in infinite Ens or in finite ens.

First, purely discrete quantity appears to be present in the three infinite forms because it would seem that, as truly three and inconfusable forms, the number three can be predicated of them. But here we must make a careful distinction. Number is an abstract and hence a mental conception which, as abstract, exists only in the mind. Moreover there is no real distinction between the number three and the divine persons.

Second, when we predicate a number of a subject, which as a consequence has a discrete quantity, the subject of which the number is predicated must be *one*. If it were not, there would be no subject of the discrete quantity. In God, however, the one subject of which the number three can be predicated, is missing: in him there is only nature and persons, and the nature is one. Three therefore cannot be predicated of the nature, by saying 'three natures'. The persons, on the other hand, as persons, are not a subject because they are three.

The number three is predicated of the persons precisely because the three divine persons are conceived by the mind as a mentally collective subject; it is as if we predicated three of three, by saying 'Three is three'.²²⁵

²²⁵ It may be objected that this is always the case when number is predicated, because number cannot apparently be predicated of anything except a collection of things, and therefore of a mental subject. But there is a

550. We can conclude:

1. Discrete quantity cannot be admitted in God because the *divine one* is not the measure of the *three* who are persons; the same one is totally in each person, yet remains identical, not triplicated.

2. Neither one nor three in God can be distinguished as abstract numbers where one is replicated. But the three subsists absolutely and cannot be predicated of another one subject; one also subsists absolutely, identical in number in each of the three.

We must therefore conclude that, properly speaking, all *quantity* is found solely in the *forms* of finite ens, not in being nor in the infinite forms of being.

But we have seen that finite ens, as subject with its own proper existence, is *constituted* by the *real form* only, and simply *participates* in the other two forms, which are not limited in themselves, but through a *limitation of relationship*.

Quantity is therefore proper to finite ens and to *finite reality* which is the element constituting this ens as a proper subject. Hence, quantity has the same condition as *real quality*

difference between the collections of finite entia and the collection formed, incorrectly speaking, by the divine persons: in the collections of finite entia there is a species or genus which truly contains the one real. This real is then divided and replicated in many real entia by means of different limitations. In the divine nature, however, there is no foundation for division into several, because there is no question of division or limitation; there is only one extremely simple, divine nature totally subsistent in three different, incommunicable modes. The nature, therefore, cannot be numbered, only the persons. As persons, they are three subjects without any reference to another subject. The objection may continue: it is the abstract species of personhood which is replicated. But this abstract species is simply an entity of reason; this species of personhood contains nothing real and common to the persons, or prior to them, or shared among them. Properly speaking, personhood is not predicated of these persons; each person is the subsistent personhood itself of the nature. Finally, we must note that I was speaking about abstract one and the abstract number three. To predicate the number three of abstract one would be to form a contradictory proposition because abstract one is equal to each one of the three. On the other hand, the proposition, 'The divine nature is the three persons', is not contradictory because the divine nature is not the same one with which the persons are numbered. If it were, the nature would also be a person. Thus, the three persons can be predicated of the nature, but not abstract three of one.

[550]

because, as we have seen, real quality also pertains solely to finite entia.

551. Both *quantity* and *real quality* appear together with the existence of the finite, but which of the two appears first?

We have seen that the *supreme genera* of world reality are not 'entities circumscribed by limits' because prior to the supreme genera, no entity exists which, by receiving limits, is their subject. Nevertheless, the supreme genera are conceived as infinitely less than absolute reality. Hence, the only quantity we find in them is that of more and less, which does not admit of any measure. Consequently, in the supreme genera there is no distinction between entity and limits; it is entity which limits itself; it is the finite as existent. The supreme genera are also the limits of the *whole* creation because they contain creation: the created is simply the supreme genera limited in different ways.

If, therefore, we take 'quantity' to mean also that of which only more and less can be affirmed, even though the excess and shortfall are without quantity, *quantity* and *quality* are coeval as they appear in existence. This is so because supreme genera are the *supreme qualities* and are simultaneously infinitely less than infinite, *absolute reality*.

552. But can the supreme genera be considered as *limited*, *absolute reality*?

Absolute reality, existing in itself, knows no limitation and distinction. However, as simply present to the divine mind, it admits mental limitations with which the idea becomes exemplar of the world. This exemplar contains the reality of the world, that is, of the world enclosed in the object and therefore not yet World. Nevertheless this reality is such that by virtue of the creative act, it acquires a subjective, proper existence of its own and relative to itself. It thus becomes the World.

If, therefore, we are speaking about the reality of the world in the divine mind, we can say that it is absolute reality limited by the free act of the divine mind, and can thus be considered, according to the definition I have given, as a quantity 'of an entity in so far as enclosed by limits'. This is true even though the entity taken as subject of the limits infinitely exceeds all limits. The quantity is simply that 'of more and less', where the excess has no measure. It is therefore a *divine mental quantity*.

Moreover, we can know *absolute reality* only virtually, in

virtual being. Hence, we can only compare the supreme genera as ideas with the idea of being, and conclude that ideas are the idea of being as limited. Consequently, we can say ideas are to the idea of being as the limited to the unlimited. We now have an ontological quantity 'of more and less', an ideal quantity 'of more and less'.

But if real things are compared that have their own subjective existence and are seen as contained in the supreme genera, they are not in any way a limited reality, in which case they have no quantity of any kind. What would subjective reality be if it constituted real things by adding limits to itself? It could not be absolute reality, which does not receive limits and is being. This contrasts with the reality of the supreme genera which is not being, and therefore not a common foundation of limitation. If the supreme genera were limited, absolute reality, this reality would be their subject, in which case the genera would *per se* be beings. On the other hand, the real subject of everything that is finite can only be a pure real which is not being. The supreme genera however do not have an antecedent real which is pure real and not being, because, according to the supposition, they are the supreme genera of finite real things. Hence, they do not have limits and, without limits, have no real quantity.

553. The answer therefore to the question I asked, 'Which, together with existence, appears first: quantity or quality?', must be the following:

If we are dealing with a divine mental quantity, quality and quantity are coeval.

If the case concerns a quality and quantity of ideas, they are again coeval.

But if we are dealing with quantity and quality really existing in entia in so far as these have their own subjective existence, *quality* precedes *quantity* because the supreme genera of realities present the concept of *supreme qualities*, totally lacking quantity. We must therefore return to what I said at the beginning: 'this much' is always 'this much of this kind'. Quantity supposes prior to itself a *quality*, or more generally, an *entity* of which it is predicated as of its proper subject.

The lower genera and species in their turn can be considered under two different respects, as *quality* and as *quantity*. They are considered as *quantity* when referred to the higher genus as

‘the genus limited’. They are considered as *quality* when viewed in themselves, either without relationship to the higher genus which exists as limited in them, or else relatively to the lower genera or species. In this respect, they are the ‘this kind’ of which the lower genus or species is the ‘this much’.

But if we exclude from our consideration everything in the idea and think only of pure reality, we are left solely with the abstract concept of *quantity* referable to a quality which remains hidden because undetermined by the mind. Indeed, if we do not preserve in our mind the concept of at least some undetermined ‘this kind’ we could no longer conceive a *quantity*, even an abstract quantity.

Consequently, at the peak of the universe stands the pure quality of the supreme genera; then, in the lower genera and species, a quality which can also be considered under the concept of quantity, a ‘qualitative quantity’, as it could be called; finally, we have abstract *pure quantity* to which, however, is counterposed in the mind the concept of undetermined and abstract *quality*.

Note that Aristotle, who had made too large a division between his *predicaments* and what we call *predicables*, could not give a clear answer to the ontological question concerning the priority of the two concepts of *quality* and *quantity* (*Logica*, 413–415). The question cannot be answered by the simple comparison of the two abstract concepts of quantity and quality. We need to consider them in genera and species, and finally in the real, and see where one or the other first begins to present itself to thought.

Article 8

Physical quantity, that is, the finite real in itself

§1. *Quantity of the determined finite real, considered in the full species*

554. The *full species* contains the fully determined, finite real. But is the determined quantity of this finite real also found in the full species existing subjectively in itself?

[554]

This quantity can be conceived in two ways:

1. The quantity of reality which comprises a subsistent, real individual.

2. The quantity of reality of a subsistent individual replicated in a given number of equal individuals.

I will call the first 'individual physical quantity', the second 'discrete physical quantity'.

555. We may doubt whether the first is contained in the full species. It is certainly contained in the perfect *image* or the representation of an individual spiritual ens which replaces the image. But the perfect image or perfect representation seems to be the matter proper to the full species, because the form of the species is ideal being which the mind attributes to the phantasm or the representation. In fact, without a phantasm we cannot conceive either a full species actually present to the intuition of our mind or the representation of the determined actuality of a spiritual ens. For this reason, I have always maintained that the species, to be truly *full*, must also contain the individual quantity of the reality (*NE*, 2: 402).

Although the full species clearly does not contain a discrete physical quantity, it does seem at first sight that a single full species can correspond to innumerable, really existing individuals. Each of these, together with all its details, would exist equally in the full species, but their number would not exist in it.

Can many perfectly equal individuals in fact exist? We can determine this only in the cause which produces their number. The number is the discrete physical quantity we are discussing because finite real individuals cannot exist in an undetermined number: they must exist either as one or two or three, or any determined number. Where does this determination come from? We could say that it must come from the subjective cause of the world, that is, from the free will of the creator; it cannot come from the objective cause. We could add that a human being in possession of a full species can, by replicating the act of hypothetical imagination, first imagine as subsistent an individual corresponding to the full species, and then imagine another individual, and another, and so on without end.

556. But here a greater difficulty presents itself: 'If equal individuals have no foundation for their number and consequently for the quantity of the real which they all have in the full species,

[555–556]

the whole of this quantity of the real has no objectivity whatsoever. And if it has no objectivity, it cannot be known. Nor can it receive being, because subject-being supplied by the mind is found in objective being which contains it. Therefore many equal individuals cannot exist. Furthermore, we cannot say that because the Exemplar of the world is not a single full species but the whole complex of possible full species, these species can be replicated. The full species, which does not admit replication of any kind, is always one. Moreover, in the exemplar, a full species can occupy only one situation; if it were to occupy a different situation, this situation must be understood in the concept of the full species in all respects.'

I consider this reasoning unescapable. It confirms *a priori* the principle of excluded equality or, as Leibniz called it, the principle of indiscernibles, which I supported in another book (*TCY*, 617 ss.). But I had not yet found an *a priori* proof for it. This is why I did not dare present it in all its extension, but limited its application.

557. It will be objected that an indefinite number of individuals can correspond to the full species, as I myself have said in another place (*PSY*, 2: 1623). I reply that the *full species* is thought in a more or less perfect mode; it can be taken as the concept of an ens enveloped in its accidents in such a way that we can imagine or hypothesise the real individual corresponding to it. I will call this 'vague full species'. The full species can also be taken as that which has in itself not only all the accidents of an ens but all the essential relationships of the ens. I will call this 'fixed full species'. For example, if I want to form the full species of a tree, I can think of it enveloped in its accidents but without relationship to the space in which I might place it. I can also think of it enveloped in all its accidents and in the place it is to occupy.²²⁶ In the first case, I have a *vague full species*, relative

²²⁶ I have excluded space from the full species discussed in *Psychology* (2: 339) because in the nature of a given body one place rather than another does not effectively enter. Nevertheless place is a relationship with this nature, which must be determined if the body in question is to be able to pass into subjective existence. For this reason, place is correctly not understood in the full species of the body when considered in isolation. But if the full species is considered as part of the exemplar of the world, it must also include place, and determined place.

to which I can imagine an indefinite number of real trees and locate them in different places of space which are themselves indefinite in number. In the second case I have a *fixed full species* to which only one real individual can correspond because two bodies cannot simultaneously occupy the same space.

It may be objected that by bringing in space, a real element has been introduced into full species because space is something real. Not so! *Space* and the *idea of space* are easily confused but different because the only possible individual that the idea of space has is a single, fully determined individual. This idea does not have another generic idea above it. Consequently, it could be considered a genus, but without any species under it. It participates, therefore, in the characteristic of fixed, full species. For this reason, I said elsewhere that a sentient principle whose only term is space can only be one (*PSY*, 1: 555–557).

And I added that ‘several principle-entia with truly identical terms cannot subsist’ (*ibid.* and fn. 281). Hence, the full species of such entia, whenever it contains the perfect determination of the term constituting them, is necessarily a *fixed full species*.

It follows that not even two term-entia can be perfectly equal. If they existed, they would give subsistence to two principle-entia. But because there cannot be two principle-entia with a perfectly equal term, neither can there be two perfectly equal terms.

This argument also proves that two mixed entia of principle and term cannot exist.

We must conclude that the whole reality of a real individual is present in the perfectly full species, but enveloped in the objective form. Hence, it does not exist in itself but in the object. The subsistence of finite real entia in themselves, that is, their proper, subjective existence, consists solely in their being stripped of their objective shell, as it were, in their emergence from their metaphysical egg.

To bring them out of this egg and give them their own proper existence is the task of the will of subsistent Being itself, whose will is being, and consequently that which it wills exists in itself.

558. We have therefore found the perfect equation between objective and subjective forms of finite entia. In the objective form, they are not existing subjects; in the subjective form, they are. Their entitative nature in both forms is identical, but only in

the second do they constitute the external world. This explains the expression used by St. Paul to indicate creation: 'Visible things have been made from invisible things' (*ex invisibilibus, visibilia*).²²⁷

§2. *Quantity of finite real considered in
different finite real things compared with each other*

559. Our investigation has taken us from the supreme genera to the fixed full species of finite reality. It has shown us all the determinations which *finite reality* receives from objective being, and which render finite reality apt for creation, that is, make it emerge from the bosom of the objective form and subsist as subjective form.

As long as the finite real exists in the objective form it is *being*, that is, being in the objective form, because this form is the maximum container.

But when it emerges from the objective form to subsist as subject, it is no longer being but form, that is, term of being. Hence it can emerge only on condition that at the precise moment of its emergence, the mind adds subjective being to it. God does this, by pronouncing and affirming it as subjective being. The word of Being cannot be anything but being, because in pure being there is no act and no term of the act which is not being. The finite real therefore emerges from the objective form by receiving subjective being from the divine act. Human beings, too, perceive the finite real, in perception, through the very act which affirms the subjective being of the finite real. They intuit subjective being in objective being and predicate it of the finite real given them in feeling.

Finite real entia, therefore, are constituted in this way relative both to God and man (man himself also is a finite real ens constituted in this way). We must now investigate the quantity of finite ens in itself, that is, the comparative quantity of its reality in different finite entia.

The investigation is not about the objective determination of the finite real (a determination completed in the full species).

²²⁷ Heb 11: 3.

Nevertheless, what I am about to say will show our need to complete in some way the teaching about this determination.

The varying quantity of the real, which is present in finite entia, is the cause of their multiplicity, that is, of the multiplicity of the fixed full species. But this multiplicity of entia must first be determined in the object; otherwise, a determined number of entia could not emerge from the object into subjective existence. An undetermined number cannot come into existence.

560. So let us first see what different kinds of comparative quantity of finite real entia there are, and then search for the determining reason in their objective being.

I said that quantity is 'a relationship of an entity with its limits'.

From this definition I first concluded that an entity not enclosed in any limits has no quantity of any kind.

1. I also concluded that an entity, limited in some respect but unlimited in others, has no quantity in its unlimited respects. This entity can be called 'unilateral infinity' or simply 'lateral infinity'. But the entity has quantity in its limiting respects. This can equally be called 'lateral quantity'.

2. Secondly, the limits within which a given entity is contained can be either immutable, or mutable by further extension or diminution. If they are immutable, we have what I called 'quantity of direct knowledge', which has no measure but is a measure to itself. Although the mind perceives the amount through the act with which it perceives the entity, it cannot give the entity another definition nor carry out any calculation concerning it. Consequently, it seems to the mind that it has not even apprehended a quantity.

3. Thirdly, the limits within which an entity is considered to be enclosed can be mutable and thus can be thought larger or more restricted. In this case, the mind understands at once that an entity enclosed within lesser limits has a smaller quantity than the same entity within larger limits or, vice versa, the second entity has a greater quantity than the first. But this excess or shortfall of the entity which increases or diminishes can either 1. be referred to another quantity serving as a measure, as if the increase taken on by the entity in extending its limits could suitably be distinguished into equal degrees or

parts (the unity of which would be the measure), or 2. not be measured because it cannot be divided into equal parts. In the first case, we certainly know that the quantity has increased or diminished, but do not know by how much. This is what I have called 'quantity of more and less'.

4. If, however, the degrees of increase or diminution can be measured, we have 'measured or measurable quantity'. This quantity can be defined as 'the relationship between the confines of a given entity'. Note the conclusion from what we have said: when there are several entia, we can number them only if they have a common entity as subject of the quantity. Without this entity they are not reciprocally measurable.

5. Nevertheless, in all real measures, the unit of measure remains unmeasured, and is a quantity of direct knowledge. If on the other hand we abstract numbers, the abstract unit in numbers is simple and perfectly indivisible. In this abstract quantity of numbers, everything that could remain undetermined and unmeasured is excluded by the abstraction itself. This quantity is therefore 'discrete, abstractly determined quantity'.

We have therefore five supreme genera (abstracts) of quantity: *lateral quantity*, *quantity of direct knowledge*, *quantity of more and less*, *measured quantity* and *abstractly determined quantity*.

Furthermore, the definition tells us that quantity supposes an identical entity which is its subject. Hence quantity is not a relationship of one entity with another but of an entity with itself, that is, with its more or less extended limits.

561. Clearly, therefore, one quantity cannot be compared with another unless there is an identical entity as subject of both. This is necessary both to indicate which quantity is greater or smaller and to measure them.

Consequently, if we are searching for the comparative quantity of two entities, both must have something common which can be taken by the mind as the one entity, the one subject of both quantities.

The comparative quantity of different finite entia, therefore, does not depend on the extent to which they differ, but the extent to which they are identical.

For this reason, entia which might have nothing in common except being could have no other comparative quantity than ontological quantity.

Those which have nothing more in common than limitation (which in fact is common to all finite entia) will have comparatively cosmological quantity as well.

Those which additionally have in common subjective form and existence in themselves will also have comparatively *physical quantity*, that is, the quantity determined by the fixed full species.

But because *fixed full species* vary, real subsistent entia in the universe are many and varied. To indicate their comparative physical quantity, it is necessary to see what they have in common. This will serve the mind as the one sole subject to which the different quantities can be referred.

This subject, relative to the reality contained in the full species, which has the same quantity as the subsistent finite real, is the reality contained in the abstract species. On the other hand, relative to the realities contained in the different abstract species, it is the reality contained in the genus, and so on, up to a supreme genus. Thus, in order to have the one entity which receives the different confines within which different real entia are contained, we must look to the realities contained in the supreme genera. This investigation differs from that which I undertook earlier concerning cosmological quantity. In that investigation, I wanted to indicate the quantities of real things contained comparatively in genera and species, or to establish the extent to which this could be done. Here, on the other hand, I am concerned with different subsistent real things and their comparative quantities. But because these quantities appear only when referred to one sole subject of the quantity, that is, of the different limits within which the quantity is seen to exist, we must once again turn to what is supremely generic in the subsistent real.

562. I must now deal with the question mentioned earlier: 'Can the supreme genera of finite ens be reduced to one?'

At first sight it seems that the supremely undetermined concept of finite ens can be considered as one sole genus to which all finite entia are reduced. But in fact supremely undetermined 'finite ens' is purely a nominal genus²²⁸ (*NE*, 2: 655–656). It is true that no real genus or even a mental genus of the genera which present an accidental essence can exist unless the word

²²⁸ *Nominal genera* can be considered a subdivision of *dialectical genera*. Thus, the classes of genera are reduced to two: real and dialectical genera.

indicating the genus has the same meaning and is not understood equivocally. 'Ens' and 'real' in the expressions 'finite ens' and 'finite real' do not have the same meaning. Both subjective real ens, which is principle-ens, and extrasubjective real ens, which is term-ens, are entia only in an equivocal sense. Extrasubjective real ens, which is not considered in itself, is ens solely in relationship with subjective real ens, which *is* ens considered in itself. Extrasubjective ens, therefore, considered in itself, is non-ens but subjective ens is ens considered in itself. For this reason, the word 'ens' in the expression 'finite ens' means either subjective ens by itself or both ens and non-ens, in which case it is equivocal. If the word 'ens' is to have only one meaning in the expression 'finite ens', where 'finite ens' is understood as only one genus, it would be necessary to carry out an abstraction on two opposites, ens and non-ens. This is required because the elementary concept of *finite one*, which includes only pure *relationship*, and the genera which express pure relationships, are *nominal*, as I have said. Substantial and accidental essence has been removed from them (*NE*, 2: 656). Nor is it valid to object that the elementary concept of 'finite being' remains in these genera. In fact, being is limited solely by reality, the subject of limitation. The concept of finite being therefore contains a relationship to reality, causing the return of equivocation. Reality in subjective ens is reality in itself; reality in extrasubjective ens is not reality but rather non-reality.

Now a purely nominal genus cannot be the subject of different limitations unless purely nominal quantities are in question. But in our search for the comparative quantity of subsistent, real ens, we need as one sole entity (subject of the different limitations) that which is given us by real genera.

These two real genera — the genus I called *subjective* or *principle-ens* and the genus I called *extrasubjective* or *term-ens* — are irreducible.²²⁹ Someone may possibly object that by

²²⁹ *Mixed entia* of principle and term are reduced to two supreme simple genera because *mixed entia* divide into two classes: 1. principles with a term, like a human being whose term is body; these pertain absolutely to principle-entia; and 2. terms which have principles, like the living body; these pertain absolutely to term-entia. The nature of ens is constituted by the *subject*, which in principle-entia is *real* and, in term-entia, is thought by the mind. In other words, it is something supposed.

reducing finite reality to two supreme genera instead of one alone, the unity of the whole world is destroyed. This is not true: the unity is secured from the moment that one of the two genera is relative to the other in such a way that only one real genus dominates and is real *per se*; the other is real only through the relationship it has with the first. Hence, the sole genus and true foundation of the Universe is 'finite principle-ens'.

563. The comparative quantity of principle-entia must, therefore, be treated separately from the comparative quantity of term-entia, which are solely terms.

These two kinds of quantity are not commensurate. All we can attempt to say is that principle-entia may be infinitely more than term-entia. But because the latter relate to the former as non-ens to ens, we cannot even say that principle-entia as entia may be more than term-entia; they may be more, purely through the *dignity* or estimative, moral value they have in the human spirit where non-ens also is calculated because of the effect produced by non-ens in the spirit. Ens and non-ens, when evaluated in this way, are not considered in themselves but as relatives, that is, relatives to the human spirit, and in this sense they can be compared.

If therefore we want first to investigate the comparative quantity of principle-entia, we must distinguish six kinds of quantity in each principle-ens: 1. the quantity of nature, 2. the quantity of natural actuality, 3. the quantity of natural potency, 4. the quantity of acquired potency, that is, of habit, 5. the quantity of act, and 6. the quantity of acquired perfection. I will consider each in turn.

564. 1. *Quantity of nature of a principle-ens.* The nature of a principle-ens is constituted by its term (*PSY*, 2: 878 ss.). Hence, the term's amount of being determines the principle's amount of being. We know of three terms: 1. what is felt, 2. objective being, and 3. moral being. No nature, except the divine nature, has moral being as its proper term. Moral being in the divine nature is simultaneously term and principle-ens because it is God, subsistent person and cause of the world.²³⁰ In finite nature the

²³⁰ The same is true about object-being. In God, object-being is simultaneously term of the divine intelligence and subsistent principle-ens: perfect God, divine person.

moral term is a term of perfection not a constitutive term of the nature itself.

The constitutive terms of finite entia are therefore two: 1. what is felt, and 2. what is understood, that is, objective being. These correspond to the two supreme genera of finite principle-entia. What is felt is the term constituting a purely feeling principle-ens, while objective being is the term constituting the intelligent principle-ens.

The felt term is a finite real and, of itself alone, non-ens; the objective term is being. These two terms cannot be compared because one is being, the other non-being. Hence, they are not commensurable and, as I observed about principle-entia and term-entia, have nothing in common. Their only difference is an infinite difference in dignity and value relative to the human spirit. It is not a difference of quantity or of being, like the difference between being and nothing — their difference is solely in dignity, a difference which, as infinite, has no amount.

Consequently, if the nature of principle-entia depends on the terms, the nature of a purely intelligent principle-ens differs from the nature of a purely feeling principle-ens in infinite *dignity* but not in *quantity*.

Note, however, that a principle-ens is always a *feeling*. If it were not, it would be something dead and inert, which is contrary to the condition of principle. The intellective principle is therefore a feeling (*Introduzione alla filosofia*, p. 414 ss.).

565. Does the reduction of every principle-ens to a feeling reduce principle-entia to a single supreme genus?

We have seen that finite ens is composed of two elements: *being* and the real. Relative to the real, all that is *real* of principle-finite entia is certainly reduced to a *supreme genus* of the real, which is feeling.

But this does not mean that *principle-entia* can be reduced to only one *supreme genus*. That which is purely sentient is not in fact an ens by itself, but because the mind considers it objectively and gives it subjective being through supposition (*Logica*, 434).

An intellective principle-ens is therefore a feeling, which can be considered in two ways: either as feeling, where it is the only thing felt, or as a feeling where in addition to itself as felt and to being as intuited, there is some other *felt* element, different from itself.

If in this intellectual principle-feeling the only felt element is the intellectual principle-feeling, the felt element is that which feels. The term therefore is also simultaneously a principle.

This is the case first of all in God who has only himself as felt element. Thus, every term in such an ens (absolute Ens) is likewise principle.

In the case of finite ens, however, experience does not furnish us with any example of this kind. All we can speak of is possibility. So can we conceive a principle-ens which, with ideal being as the natural term of its intuition, has no other felt element than its intuiting self? It is a difficult question to answer. Elsewhere I have supposed that such a concept is possible by means of a hypothetical abstraction. But I must admit that if we wish to restrict the principle which intuit ideal being to having as *felt* element only itself, this element becomes so restricted that it seems to vanish entirely and become nothing.²³¹ I will therefore set aside this ontological question which at the moment I do not need, and simply observe that if objective (not ideal) being were real and absolute, the intellectual principle would at the same time receive an infinite felt element and consequently participate in an infinite life. In this case something understood as term would not be alone, but contain a felt element foreign to it. Both of these would be being, the very same being.

566. Leaving this question aside then, let us suppose that the intellectual principle-ens has, in addition to the intuited object, another felt element which is not being. In this *felt* element, different from the intellectual principle, lies the firm foundation for an ontological classification of finite intellectual entia, because the nature of intellectual entia varies as the nature of the *felt term* varies (PSY, 1: 164–203).

Man, an intellectual ens, has a *felt term* which is different from himself and extrasubjective, as well as different from the object. By means of this felt term, he has *pure, corporeal extension*, an extension which determines his nature and fixes the human species.

²³¹ This would not be the case were a principle to have another term-ens already, only to be deprived of it later, as happens to the human soul which leaves the body. The habit of the lost term remains with the soul.

Nothing prevents us, however, from accepting the possibility that God has given to other intellective entia other *felt terms* as their natural constitutive element, terms which are totally different from *pure, corporeal extension*. These entia would be other *species* of intellective entia totally different from the human species and even from the genus of intellective entia which can be conceived as composed of spirit and body.

The *quantity of nature* of the *felt terms* corresponds to the quantity of their reality. However, although we can indeed think the possibility of such entia and make a conjecture about their existence, we cannot know anything positive about them in this life. Consequently, we can know nothing more about their natural, comparative quantity.

The extrasubjective felt element, which determines the *species* of finite intelligent entia, is not any partial felt element, but 'a primal, fundamental felt' (*PSY*, 1: 178 ss.), which potentially includes all the sensible modifications of which the ens, as sentient, is susceptible.

Entia therefore change as 'the primal, fundamental felt element' changes: if the genus of what is felt changes, the genus of the ens changes, and similarly for species. The comparative quantity, as well as the excellence and dignity of these entia, are proportionate to the quantity of the real element revealed by 'the fundamental, extrasubjective felt element'.

567. Leaving aside intellective entia, let us consider the quantity of nature of purely feeling entia. And because the only example of such entia are animals or animated things, I will restrict my argument to these. Animals and animated things are entia which have pure, corporeal extension as their extrasubjective term.

We note first of all that these entia have three kinds of life: life of continuity, life of stimulation, and life of organisation or of harmonious stimulation, one supported by the other (*PSY*, 1: 534 ss.).

The quantity of life of continuity is proportionate to the continuous extension of the corporeal matter which is the term of this life.

The quantity of life of stimulation is proportionate to the quantity of stimulative motion, a quantity which results from several elements.

The quantity of life of organic stimulation depends on the quantity of perfection of the organism, a quantity which itself depends on many elements.

The first kind of life, granted certain conditions, acts as potency relative to the second, and the second, granted again certain conditions, acts as potency relative to the third. In this way the lives relate to each other as potency to act.

Wherever there is any one of these lives, or the first two, we find something *animate*; if the last also is present, the *animal* is complete.

Every harmony of stimulations constitutes a different constitutive term and, therefore, a different *species* of animal. All these different species converge in the *genus* of animal, whose foundation is the *harmonious stimulation* presented by the organism. The feeling of stimulation is a higher genus, and a higher genus still is the feeling of continuity which is the *supreme genus* of non-intellective principle-entia known to us as principle-entia of pure feeling.

The quantity of purely sense life therefore is proportionate to the limits which enclose the *primal, fundamental feeling*. This feeling can actuate itself in greater degree in proportion to the size, complexity and unity of the organisation, and in lesser degree if some organisation is lacking. It also actuates itself in proportion to the multiplicity, vastness, speed and pressure of the stimulation. If this stimulation is altogether absent, it actuates itself less. Finally, it actuates itself in proportion to the extension of the continuous matter.

Hence, it is the quantity of the supreme genus present in individual sentient entia which determines the quantity of their nature.

568. 2. *Quantity of natural actuality of a principle-ens*. The nature of a principle-ens is determined in the abstract species. No matter how often the abstract species is realised, the principle-ens retains the same nature which, however, is realised according to the full species. These species have a sequence of degrees of perfection, beginning from the extremely imperfect and extending to the perfect or complete full species (*NE*, 2: 648–652). Hence, the quantity of *actuality* of nature of real ens corresponds to the quantity of the realisation in it of the complete full species or its archetype.

[568]

The abstract species is, as it were, the invariable theme of the ens, and the ens is always identical in its actuation but in varying degree right up to the ultimate perfection of its nature. This greater actuality of nature must not be confused with the perfection acquired by the ens through its own acts. One human being, for example, is born more perfect in nature than another; the first has more humanity than the other. But this 'more' concerns non-essential parts of humanity, without which the human being would still be.

Clearly then, quantity of nature is one thing, quantity of actuality of nature another. The first bestows on real entia a degree of excellence pertaining to a higher order. Between this order of excellence arising from nature itself and the degree of excellence arising from the subsequent actuality of the nature, there is no comparison. They are not commensurate because the subject of the limits changes: the subject of the quantity of nature is the genus of abstract species, and then sequentially the higher genera up to the supreme genus of the principle-ens (or of the reality of these entia). The subject of the quantity of actuality of nature, however, is the abstract species.

569. 3. *Quantity of natural potency.* The quantity of natural potency in finite entia is proportionate to the quantity of nature and of natural actuality.

This is a new difference between infinite ens and finite principle-ens: infinite ens, having an infinite nature, has no potency at all, but the quantity of nature of a finite ens dictates the quantity of its potency.

But several things must be distinguished here.

A finite principle-ens may have as its sole term a *felt element* without an understood element — by *felt element* I mean the extended, material felt, because we have no positive cognition of other *felt elements*. In this case, the natural potency of this principle-ens is reduced to the development of its feeling and thus to the completion of its nature, and to the acts of the feeling itself. This potency develops the nature up to a certain state, beyond which there is no other development and perfection. When the potency has reached this point, it decays, together with the acts of the feeling and its nature, which perishes when the ens changes into another ens.

This takes place because, if the ens is animal, its organisation is

mutable and dissoluble, that is, its constitutive term is mutable. Its stimulative movement also can cease. Furthermore, the potency of the elementary life is modified by the greater or lesser continuity of the elements. But the nature and seminal life of the atom remains immutable and, although it lacks potency relative to itself, has the potency to enter into the composition of another feeling, that is, of another ens.

Intellective principle-entia, however, can be conceived in two ways, according to their two terms: objective being and moral being. The former is actual and direct; the latter is potential in the entia.

Granted that these entia had no development relative to objective being — this would be the case if nature itself bestowed on them all the knowledge of which they were susceptible — their only potency would be moral potency. This would not be a potency of development but of absolute choice between good and evil. However, this is not the place to discuss whether such entia can or cannot exist.

On the other hand, if we are considering human beings who have a double development relative to both terms, we see a potency of indefinite perfection regarding both knowledge and virtue. This potency lasts, or can last, as long as the existence of the human being lasts, or can last, on earth. This is human perfectability.

In human beings, there are six genera of potency: 1. animal development, 2. indefinite intellective perfectiveness, and 3. indefinite moral perfectiveness. Three other potencies correspond to each of these: the potency of animal acts, the potency of intellective acts, and the potency of moral acts.

570. 4. *Quantity of acquired, that is, habitual, potency of principle-entia.* When the acts of a potency are in harmony with the potency, it increases and multiplies through these acts. The increase and multiplication is called 'habit'.

The potency increases by making its action *faster, easier, more certain, more intense* and *more pleasant*. Because this habit has its degrees which are in some way measurable, it has its own proper quantity. But there is also a quantity for all the above five endowments of the habit: a quantity of promptness, of facility, etc.

The potency multiplies because one and the same potency,

using the five endowments mentioned above, acquires the habit of performing a certain class or group of its acts. The potency itself, considered relative to these classes and groups, then seems to be different special faculties. Relative to other groups, the potency has no habit.

Moreover, because all the potencies are moved and directed by the one sole subject which possesses them, the subject itself also acquires habits, that is, it increases its power to move and direct the different potencies, particularly to move several of them simultaneously. The different grouping of these potencies gives rise to a new habit in the subject.

Although habits considered in themselves are a subjective perfecting of potencies, there are habits which cause baleful effects to the subject. These arise from disordered, harmful acts. Thus, in animals, the potency of sensuous instinct can acquire a habit of action which leads the animal to death (*AMS*, 406 ss.).

This is seen much more in intellective entia whose perfection depends on the object. In them, evil habits are an increase of subjective potency but impart to the subject all the imperfection coming from the subject's lack of adherence to its proper object.

571. 5. *Quantity of act*. The total quantity of act of the principle-ens depends on several elements:

1. the intension of the act;
2. the multiplicity of the act — a single act can result from several associated potencies;
3. duration;
4. the extension of the felt term, if it has this kind of term;
5. the order of the act, indicated by the order the principle-ens produces in its term, if the act is a modifying or producing act;
6. the dignity of the term: if its term is a material felt element, it has *per se* non-being; if it has objective or moral being as term, its term is being which is infinitely greater from the point of view of dignity than non-being;
7. the degree of virtuality and greater actuality of the objective term and of the moral term.

Because each one of these has its own quantity, we can ask: 'If each has quantity, to which of the five dialectical supreme genera of quantity does it belong?'

The total quantity of act depends on the sum of all the quantities of its elements.

If we consider a series of successive acts repeated or following each other in a certain order, the quantity of time (a measure I discussed in ideology (*NE*, 2: 764 ss.)) must also be calculated.

If we abstract the real acts from the quantity of time and consider only the possible acts, we have pure *quantity of time* and also its *abstract measure*.

If we calculate the quantity of acts in a given time, the result is called 'quantity of action'. This quantity is not always equal to the effect produced, because the succession and complexity of the acts can be such that some have destroyed a part of what others have produced, or have left no perceptible effect.

572. 6. *Quantity of acquired perfection*. Although the acquired perfection of an ens comes from its acts, the perfection is not in proportion to the *quantity of action* because the acts can be defective and disordered.

The quantity of acquired perfection is therefore 'that portion of its own archetype which every ens has realised in itself through its acts'.

573. After dealing with these six entities whose quantity can be found in the finite principle-ens, let us look at the order in which their quantities are subordinate to each other in entitative value.

The *quantity of actuality* has as much entitative value as the excellence of the nature.

The *quantity of natural potency*, as much as that of the nature and actuality.

The *quantity of habit*, as much as that of the potency whose efficacy it increases.

The *quantity of act*, as much as that of the potency and the habit from which it comes.

The *quantity of acquired perfection*, as much as that of the acts from which the perfection comes.

Hence the *acquired perfection* of an ens is equal to the dignity of its acts; the dignity of the acts is proportionate to the dignity of the habits; the habits, proportionate to the dignity of the potencies; the potencies, proportionate to the dignity of the natural actuality, and this is proportionate to the dignity of the nature.

Clearly then, we cannot compare the dignity and excellence of the *perfection* of which different entia are susceptible, without knowledge of the value and excellence of their nature. Without this knowledge the *quantities* of acquired perfection of *act*, *habit*, etc. of entia of different natures are not commensurable. Instead, we have to compare their natures in order to extract a comparative quantity of their five subsequent entities. In other words, we have to extract a quantity of proportion.

If, for example, we compare the *act* of one ens with the *act* of another of different nature and ignore their natures, we have simply a *comparative quantity of abstract entities*, from which nothing can be argued concerning the entitative quantity relative to the two entia.

574. I come now to the comparative quantity of term-entia, and note that we know positively only two supreme genera of term-entia: *space* and *body*.

Although pure space has the property of the supreme genera, that is, there is no other real genus above it, it lacks the other properties of genus because it has no subordinate species nor any potency whatsoever. It is certainly receptive of bodies but this receptivity would incorrectly be called potency because it does not fit the definition I have given of potency: 'a cause which is subject of its effects'. Space is not a cause of bodies, nor is it their subject, nor does it receive any modification whatsoever from bodies. As pure extension, it remains identical whether filled or empty.

Hence, having no genera or subordinate species, space does not have *cosmological quantity*. It cannot be limited within any confines whatsoever in the universe; its only limitation is relative to being and the reality of being, which gives it *ontological quantity* only. This limitation is supreme because space, considered as ens, seems to be the least of term-entia, although it is infinite considered as space or extension.

Space then, having no cosmological limits in itself, has no quantity. However, it does admit *limits of relationship* and therefore *quantity of relationship*.

This arises from the fact that it is receptive of corporeal matter. The existence of corporeal matter in space is the inexistence of one term-ens in another, an inexistence which is by no means absurd (*Rinnovamento*, [512–515]), provided that the ens

which contains is by its nature suitable for this, and that the ens which inexists in it is by its nature suitable for being contained.

The quantity of the relationship of space originates from the inexistence of corporeal matter in space, because matter does not occupy the whole of space. Space, limited by matter, is limited relative to matter. These limits, which are not of space but of matter, are transferred by the mind to space. The *quantity of relationship*, therefore, attributed to space is not a real but a *dialectical quantity*, although the extensive limits of matter are a *real quantity* of matter.

575. Then, by abstracting from matter but retaining the extensive limits of space, *mathematical shapes* are conceived which the mind delineates in space at will. This explains why Plato considered extension as the matter of geometrical figures. He was unaware, however, that extension in itself is unmodifiable and that such matter is relative only to the bodies from which the mind abstracts the confines and transfers them to space which does not receive them in itself except as a relationship between the infinite and the finite. But because one of the two extremes of this relationship is infinite and unmeasurable, the only relationship of quantity between the infinite and the finite is that which I have called 'of more and of less'.

In the case of geometrical figures, there is a *measured comparative quantity*, which however is not fully determined, as in the case of numbers, because the first quantity, as measure of the other, pertains to what I have called 'direct knowledge'.

The quantity proper to geometrical figures is called 'continuous quantity'.

The true subject of this quantity is bodies. When bodies are considered as purely *possible* bodies in which no quality of matter is determined, we have *mathematical continuous quantity*. When considered as *imaginary bodies* (for example, a stone column), we have *pure, corporeal, continuous quantity*. When considered as *really existing bodies*, we have *real continuous quantity*.

The true subject of geometrical figures, therefore, is not unlimited extension, but abstract *corporeal matter*. The subject of *pure, corporeal, continuous quantity* are imaginary but non-existent bodies. The subject of *real, continuous quantity* are real bodies.

Hence, the amount of the real relationship of corporeal matter with the space in which it extends (the foundation of this relationship is corporeal matter itself, space is only its term) is proportionate to the matter's *continuous quantity* or quantity of extension.

576. Other elements endowed with quantity can be distinguished in this term-ens.

Indeed, *corporeal matter* presents itself to our experience as a threefold ens:

1. as a stable or mobile *felt* element,
2. as a *sensiferous* element, that is, an agent which, acting in our soul, produces the *felt* element, whether this element is continuous or of *stimulation* or of harmonious stimulation, and simultaneously as cause of the communication of motion,
3. as a cause of motion itself.

The *felt* element and the *subject susceptible of motion* is a passive, pure and inert term-ens (*PSY*, 2: 816–822).

The cause of motion cannot be an inert ens. That is why I have distinguished this cause from matter-ens, attributing it to a *principle-ens*, that is, to life present in the elements (*PSY*, 2: 822).

The cause of the *felt* element and of the transmission of motion cannot corporeal matter. Hence, I have said that this cause is a *principle-ens* hidden, as subject, from our experience. This subject I have called a *corporeal principle* (*PSY*, 2: 820–821).

I have already dealt with the quantity of principle-entia.

Only matter as a *felt* element and as a receptive subject of motion therefore need to be dealt with.

I have already made some observations about the quantity of the *felt* element when I spoke about the quantity of principle-entia whose sole term is the *felt* element.

As regards the *quantity of motion*, motion is equal to the sum of the quantity of the speed, and of the time the motion lasts. The speed is equal to the quantity of space traversed in the same time. If we want also to find the *quantity of motion of a whole body* in motion, the sum must be multiplied by the mass.

CHAPTER 5

Continuation — unity, the fourth element of the finite form common to every finite ens

577. We come to the fourth element of the form, unity, which finite reality must receive from objective being if reality is to be fully determined and made apt to receive its proper, subjective existence.

The teaching concerning unity is shrouded in equivocations which from the earliest attempts of philosophy passed gradually into the later schools. This was due to the absence of necessary distinctions and to defective philosophical language. I will start therefore by distinguishing the different meanings that can be given to the words ‘one’ and ‘unity’.

Article 1

Universal definition of unity and one

578. Unity is that quality of a *subject* through which the subject is undivided in itself, and divided or separate from every other subject.

When this quality is predicated of a subject, it takes the form of a predicate and is called ‘one’.

These definitions have a negative form through their exclusion of divisibility. But because divisibility is itself a negative concept, we have a negation of a negation, which is affirmation. The definitions are therefore truly positive.

Article 2

Various meanings of ‘one’, all of which admit of the above definition

579. The various meanings of the word ‘one’ depend on two causes. The first is the different way with which the predicate

[577–579]

'one' is referred by the mind to the *subject* of which 'one' is a predicate. The second is the variation of the word 'subject' used in the definition, given above, of *unity*. In the very general definition, the word 'subject' is undetermined. If we substitute various meanings for it, that is, various subjects, the whole definition receives a different meaning.

Let us consider the first cause, that is, the different ways in which the mind refers the predicate 'one' to the subject, and find the different meanings which 'one' receives.

Sometimes the subject of 'one' is expressly mentioned. For example, we say 'one human being'. Here 'one' has the grammatical form of an adjective.

Sometimes the subject, any subject whatsoever, is understood as present but without determination. In this case, 'one' takes the grammatical form of a substantivated adjective. According to this use, 'one' means 'that which is one', as if we were saying, 'One is not several', that is, 'That which is one is not several'.²³²

Sometimes 'one' is abstracted from the subject and considered separately from it. In this case, it means 'to be one' in the sense of 'one is a property of every ens', that is, 'to be one is a property of every ens'. The only difference between this abstract 'one' and the concept of *unity* is that the latter has a greater degree of abstraction. In this sense, therefore, 'one' indicates the degree of abstraction with which *common nouns* are formed; *unity* indicates the degree of abstraction with which *abstract pure nouns* are formed (*PSY*, 2: 1471 ss.).²³³

²³² The most recent Pythagoreans have taken the words 'one' and 'many' in this sense. They have called the body 'many', the quality (or rather, the substantial form) 'one-many', the demon 'many-one', and God 'one' (cf. Ficinus, *De immortalitate*, 3, 1). 'Many' means 'that which results from many entia'; 'one-many' means 'that which results from many entia unified by a single form'; 'many-one', 'that which is one but has many faculties or acts'; 'one', 'that which is absolutely and fully one'. These are all 'substantive adjectives'.

²³³ These concepts are generated in the following order:

1. The mind, abstracting 'one' from the finite entia it perceives, considers this 'one' as *common*, and from it forms the *pure abstract* of unity.
2. When it has abstracted this quality of oneness and knows it as necessarily common to all entia, it predicates 'one' of each ens by an analytical judgment. This is *adjectival* 'one'.
3. Finally, the mind substantivates this adjective and says 'one', understanding any subject whatsoever, without determining the subject.

Let us now consider the second cause which multiplies the meaning of 'one' which, as I said, is unity as a predicate. I have defined unity as 'the quality by which a given *subject* is one'. But the subject can vary: 'one' can be predicated about infinite ens, or finite ens, or forms of infinite ens, or finite real form or the other two forms which envelop or are communicated to finite ens, or undetermined being, or a purely dialectical ens which can be divided into various classes. The unity in which these subjects participate, and which is predicated of them is not in any way equal; it varies in perfection and in a different way. Consequently the predicate 'one' itself receives different meanings when applied to one or other subject of predication.

Article 3

Are one and ens interchangeable?

580. We see therefore the sense in which we must understand the Scholastic opinion that 'one and ens are interchangeable'. This is true only when one is used as a 'substantivated adjective' and ens is understood in the universal sense of *entity*. It is not valid when we are speaking about common one, because this is purely an abstract, a formal element of ens, or rather of any entity whatever conceivable by the mind.²³⁴

Article 4

Origin of the concept of *common one*

581. *Common one* has two properties: 1. it is abstracted from every individual subject, to which it can be applied as a

²³⁴ It is clear that the ancients and, later, the Scholastics, when expressing this opinion, were speaking about *substantivated one* because they used 'one' in the neuter. St. Thomas expressly defines this 'one': 'One means purely undivided ens', and then adds: 'From this it is clear that one is interchangeable with ens'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 11, art. 1). This removes all doubt. Anyone who wishes to know the principal opinions of the Scholastics about 'one' should consult Suarez, *DD. MM.*, D. 4–6.

predicate; 2. it is so necessary to every subject and ens that if any of these were not one, it could not be thought.

The human mind finds the first property with the same abstraction with which it divides the unity of perceived finite entia from their other qualities.²³⁵ The second property requires 'common one' to be predicable of every subject and ens. However, abstraction, which is carried out only on a few perceived entia, not on all possible entia, cannot furnish the mind with this second property. How then does the mind acquire the knowledge that no ens can exist unless it is one?

To understand that nothing can exist unless it is one is to understand that existence and 'not one' are so mutually repugnant that we cannot conceive 'not one' as existing. This repugnance could not be seen by our mind unless if first possessed the two concepts whose repugnance it directly sees; the mind, which notes this repugnance, must first know what existence is and what 'not one' is.

The repugnance seen by the mind admits of proofs in the form of reasoning.

The proofs can be reduced to two: one proof drawn from the idea of being in all its universality, the other from the concept of absolute being.

The argument drawn from the idea of being is the following. What is that which exists? It is being with its full term of a given categorical form.²³⁶ Let us suppose that there are two completed terms of being of the same categorical form. In this case, there would be two of what exists because being with its full term (this constitutes an ens) would be present twice. Each of these entia would duly be *one*. To be one is therefore necessary for the conception of an ens or of that which exists. This proof can be called ideological.

An ontological proof is drawn from *absolute being*. I have

²³⁵ Because abstraction is necessary for acquiring the pure concept of one, this concept evidently cannot be the first idea or information possessed by the human mind: abstraction must be preceded by the concept on which the abstraction is carried out (*PSY*, 1: 1295, 1297–1301, 1305, 1319–1321).

²³⁶ I say 'of a given categorical form' because we have seen that ens, under different categorical forms, remains the same. Different forms therefore do not multiply ens; they multiply only the modes in which identical ens is.

already presented this argument which can be summarised as: 'Absolute Being is essentially Ens. But absolute Being is one. Therefore to be one pertains to the essence of an ens. Therefore an ens cannot be unless it is one.'

This proof has its final reason in the teaching about the supreme forms of being. Because each of these is a *maximum* container, they have *unity* as their essence ([cf. 181–189]). No ens can exist except in one of the three forms of being. Because each of these forms is a *container*, it is impossible for any ens to exist without being one. Any ens which is contained must be one; 'to be contained' means simply to be gathered into a unity. Hence, because finite reality can be composed into unity in many ways and therefore subsist in many ways as contained, it can constitute many finite entia.

Article 5

'One' predicated of a single subject and predicated as common to many subjects — The concept of plurality and number

582. I have said that if the full terms of the same categorical form are multiple, multiple entia emerge when being is added to them.

'One' can be considered therefore as predicated either of a single subject or as common to many subjects.

Predicated of a single subject, it can be defined as 'that quality through which a *subject* is indivisible'. But the definition does not express how 'one' can be predicated of multiple subjects. Considered as a predicate common to many subjects, it takes on two different concepts: the concept which makes it a predicate of a subject, and the concept that this same identical predicate fits each of the many subjects.

If we wish to express this second property of 'one', it can be defined as 'the quality through which one subject is divided from another, that is, excludes another'.

583. But an ontological question of supreme importance now presents itself: what is the origin of the plurality of entia?

The trinity of forms found in the absolute Ens precedes the plurality of entia which is possible only in the sphere of finite

[582–583]

entia. Because there is trinity in absolute being, the Mind can abstract from it unity, duality and trinity, which are the elements of all abstract numbers. Hence, these abstract forms which generate all numbers are *per se* in the infinite mind *ab eterno* through divine abstraction. The human mind, however, does not deduce number from so sublime a height but from contingent finite entia which, according to the mind's experience, are already divided into many subjects. For us therefore the plurality of entia precedes the abstract plurality of number. The question therefore now changes to: 'If absolute Ens is only one, whence the plurality of finite entia?'

I can reply only as follows.

When infinite Ens decreed the gift of existence for finite ens, it imposed on itself this condition: 'The ens to which it wished to give existence would be finite.' *Limits* are therefore the first condition of the work of creation. Consequently, the concept of finite ens in the divine mind had to be the infinite reality of being from which the divine mind might remove infiniteness. When pure thought had removed infiniteness from the infinite reality, this reality, in the free mind of God, was no longer Being but pure reality limited by the willed act of his mind. Now if, in order to exist with its own proper existence, this finite reality had to receive subjective being and become finite ens in itself, the limitation, whatever it was, must always have had the following condition: the reality which had to subsist as an ens must be 1. limited, 2. limited in such a way as to have in itself a perfect unity. The reason for this is that subjective existence is the same as existing as a subject, and subject is 'that which is conceived as first, as container, and as cause of unity'. Hence, unity is essential to every subject conceivable by the mind; in other words, nothing can exist with subjective existence without unity.

It follows from this that 'exactly the same number of finite entia can be, that is, can be created, as there are modes which can limit reality in such a way that it is one'.

We see therefore that reality can be one by receiving different limitations. It can be limited and be one with limitations which differ and vary in extent. Consequently, many finite entia can be conceived by the divine mind and be created.

584. We have therefore the following ontological order between *ens* and *one*:

1. First, there is infinite reality which is absolute Being in the three forms.

2. Abstract one is present in the divine mind as the condition of finite ens.

3. The divine mind, because it wishes to limit infinite reality as found purely in its thought in such a way that limited reality can be created, conceives this limited reality in all those modes in which it can be really one.

4. Finite entia composing the World are created by God and are as many as the modes in which the reality can be limited so as to form one.

Hence, 'one' subsists first of all in the divine Being and is simply the absolute indivisibility and unlimitability of this Being.

Next, abstract one is present in the divine mind.

Then 'one' is present and applied numerous times to the reality by imposing on it the varying limitation of which the reality is susceptible. In this way, finite entia are pure objects of the free thought of God, without their subsisting in themselves.

Next, 'one' is present in created finite entia. This 'one' is simply the indivisibility essential to each.

Then 'one' is present and abstracted by the human mind from the multiple finite entia.

This replication of one (as many times as there are finite entia and their possibilities) forms the concept of plurality and of number in the human mind.

585. From this ontological genealogy we see that:

1. Abstract *one*, that is, 'the quality of being one' is a concept prior to that of finite ens but not of infinite Ens.

2. The *plurality of entia* is produced by 'one' applied by the divine mind to limitable reality in so far as this reality can receive 'the quality of being one' in different ways.

3. *One* is always the identical concept of the indivisibility of an ens, but the nature of reality, which is susceptible of receiving this quality in many modes, itself becomes many entia with varying participation in one. The cause of the plurality of entia, therefore, is 'the reality's varying susceptibility to be limited in such a way as to be one'.

We are now able to evaluate the opinion so often repeated by the Alexandrians and Neoplatonists that 'one is prior to ens', and that 'unity precedes all things'. Like all the ancient

philosophers, they took all their concepts from ens, and all their ontology from what they saw in finite ens. When they wished to ascend higher, all they could do was turn to abstraction carried out on finite ens.²³⁷ This explains the defect in their ontology, a defect which has always been present in this science. They lacked a true knowledge of infinite Being.

Their opinion contains only a part of the truth. To make it true it must be changed to: 'Absolutely speaking, abstract one is prior to finite ens, just as the condition is to what is conditioned, but posterior to absolute Ens'.²³⁸

Article 6

Is ideal being one?

586. The number of possible finite entia is determined by the possibility that *reality*, the term of initial being, be conceived within limits as one.

²³⁷ For example, Jamblicus says: 'In separable forms, unity overrides multiplicity and overrides it in the Gods to such an extent that their being is a certain unity. I say "certain" because the first principle is UNITY itself' (**L. de Mysteriorum*, §16f). *Abstract unity* can be at most only a dialectical principle (we have seen that the first dialectical principle of things is initial being). But these ancient philosophers make their God the abstraction carried out on finite things. St. Thomas corrects this error where he shows that subsistent unity is greater than abstract unity. Cf. *S.T.*, I, q. 11, art. 1, ad 1um, and q. 4, art. 4.

²³⁸ The Aristotelian opinion (*Metaph.*, 3 (4)) that the one and many are accidents of ens as ens, suffers from the same defect by restricting ontology to finite entia. It is true that the existence of one or of many finite entia is accidental to finite ens, but *many possible finite entia* are necessary because they arise from the nature itself of *reality*, a nature which is necessary. Relative to infinite Ens, this must be one and not many; it is not accidental to this Ens. Equally, every finite or infinite ens must be *one*. The fact that this 'one' may be replicated in finite ens is *accidental*. Hence the expression 'The accidents of ens as ens are one and many' is at least equivocal. It is true only 1. when 'ens as ens' is taken to mean not absolute Ens which is essentially Ens but 'abstract, undetermined ens', and 2. when *one* is taken to mean simply 'not many'. This explanation gives us the following true opinion: 'Undetermined ens which the mind conceives can be considered in a single ens or in many.' In this way, to be one or many is accidental. This is how St. Thomas understood the opinion. *Contra Gentiles*, 1: 50.

The question arises: 'Is being itself, as seen in the idea, one?'

I reply that being as intuited, if we are talking about this, clearly manifests the pure *essence* of being. This essence, as totally simple, is not only one but also the *reason* why every ens is necessarily one. In other words, it is the reason why finite reality cannot become ens unless it has first received unity from the mind; the totally simple essence of being can be associated only with a term that is one. Precisely for this reason it seems so obvious that there are many entia wherever the complete real terms are many ([cf. 581]). Indeed, I have said that in the mind of the creator, objective being imposes the form of one on finite reality before reality is created, as a necessary condition for the creation of reality.

Hence, the essence of being, as one, cannot be divided, as would be the case if ens could be many. It follows that being, itself, considered as the *initial* being of various realities, each of which is one, is present to each of them as the same identical being with its entire essence ([cf. 293, 458–464]). But because the various real ones are many, being acquires many relationships through which it seems to multiply. However, it is the *entia* that multiply, not *being*. Multiplication arises from reality receiving one in many different modes and, unified in each of them, receives the subjective act of being through the presence of total being to each 'one' of the realities. The act received in each reality remains limited by its own limitation as I have explained.

587. It may be objected: 'You say that the being of intuition, that is, the essence of being, is one and the reason for unity. Why then cannot it subsist without its terms?'

Being without its terms cannot subsist, not because it is something multiple (like reality before it receives unity from the mind), but because it is something less than one; it simply does not have all that constitutes perfect one. It is therefore a diminished one, a fraction as it were of one, just as it is a diminished ens, and as it were a fraction of ens. But it displays this defect to the mind contemplating it, so that the mind needs only being itself as rule or type in order to know the defect. This is because being contains its terms in a virtual mode, and in so far as it contains them, I have called it 'virtual being'.

But in considering this virtuality of being, we see that being itself is virtually ens and perfect one. In other words, being

manifests within itself the necessity that ens be exactly one, no more no less.

Article 7

The concepts 'individual' and 'common'

588. The word 'individual' means etymologically *indivisible*. It is therefore equivalent to 'one as substantive'.

But according to its most frequent use it means 'a real ens in so far as one and indivisible, and without any possibility of its being another ens'.

The reader will find more complete teaching about individuality in *Psychology* (1: 560 ss.). Here I want to indicate the difference between *individual*, taken in this second sense, and *identical*.

Individual is a concept whose opposite is *common*, not *identical*. *Identical* is present both in individual and in what is common. In fact, what is common to many entities is *identical*, otherwise it would not be common. But as common, it is not individual. Although it is certainly one because it remains identical, it is *one* united simultaneously to many ones. On the other hand, the *individual* real has, as ens, nothing it can share with others; everything that constitutes it as determined real subject is proper to it and incommunicable.

The concept of the *individual* real is the opposite to that of *common*. It must therefore be fully determined, because whatever is undetermined in any part but capable of being determined in different modes is *common* to all the entities that result from its being determined in the different modes.

The individual real is constituted by its one real term, not by common being. That which constitutes an ens as individual is the unity of the final term of the ens, not divided, however, from the rest of the ens.

The *individual* is constituted by what is proper to ens, not by what is common. That is, it is constituted by the final term in such a way that an individual ens is itself, not something else. However, this quality of *exclusive property* is fitting to each individual ens, only when one ens is considered separately from

the other. For this reason, the quality was called by the Schools a 'vague individual'.

Vague individual is the concept of this property through which each ens, terminated in itself, is individual, that is, not common to any other ens. Thus, although by virtue of *formal thought*, the concept excludes what is common (in fact, the concept consists in the exclusion of what is common), it nevertheless becomes common because the negation of commonality is conceived as common.

Moreover, the reason explaining several individuals is the same as that which explains how one can inform the real in many ways and thus ensure the presence of several.

589. Let us now turn from 'proper' to its opposite, 'common'. What is the nature of what is common?

I said elsewhere that 'common' means an equal relationship noted by the mind between several individuals and an identical essence (*NE*, 1: 60–61, 247, 249). *Common* is not a *quality* existing in entia, but a *relationship* between entia and the mind. The subject of this relationship is the identical essence, of which the common element is predicated. Its foundation is the *plurality* of entia participating in the same essence. Its term are the many individuals. Its cause, the cause of multiplicity, that is, the nature of *finite reality* which can receive unity from the mind in many, definite ways, and in the same number of ways be created or made ens, or thought after being created.

This analysis of what is *common* tells us that the common element cannot exist without a mind to think it. The reasons for this are:

1. *Plurality* exists only in the mind as a relationship between abstract *one*, which exists only in the mind, and *reality* which, limited and not yet unified by the mind, can exist only in the mind.

2. Because plurality exists only in the mind, even entia, that is, entia as *many*, must exist in the mind where alone plurality is present.

3. Abstract one and finite reality susceptible of one in various ways is, as I said, solely in the divine mind.

Consequently, although nothing common is real, there is nevertheless something real: only identical *essence* which constitutes the *subject* of this mental relationship of commonality.

590. We still have to see what this *identical essence* is, of which 'common' can be predicated.

Every reality contained in the supreme and the lower genera, in the abstract or full (but not fullest species) can acquire subjective existence in many real individuals and thus become common. We say that the predicate 'common', meaning the reality contained in them, can be applied to these ideas. However, as I have said, the reality in the *fullest species* cannot be common to many individuals.

The reason is that the reality of the supreme and lower genera and of the abstract, non-fullest species is not completely determined, but is determinable in many ways. In these kinds of ideas, therefore, the reason for the common element contained in the real is *indetermination*, that is, *multiple determinability*.

This common element gives rise to the common element in the *ideal form*, with which the undetermined real is clothed to varying degree.

Ideas, therefore, have the relationship of what is common in two modes, as *container* and *content*.

But we still need to know whether we can find, outside ideas and under the categorical form of reality, any *essence* which is identical to several individuals and the subject of that relationship with the mind which is called 'common'.

At first sight it seems that the undetermined *reality* intuited by the mind in ideas is also realised in real entia. This reality is certainly present in real entia but is no longer undetermined or determinable; on the contrary, it is fully determined and has become proper to each individual represented by the fullest species. If we predicate what is *common* to real things by saying for example: all these flowers before me have red or another colour in common, we are simply abstracting the colour red. The colour red, thus abstracted, is the colour found in the *genus* of the colour red. This real thing therefore, in so far as in the genus but not in so far as in the individual subsistent flowers where it is proper to each, is the *subject* of the relationship of what is *common*. Consequently, what is common is predicated of both what is undetermined in the idea and what is determined in the subsistent thing, but with a different copula: in the first case, with *is*, in the second, with *HAS* (*Logica*, 430), as if we said: 'This colour red (which is undetermined in the genus) is common to

many flowers (possible or subsistent)' and 'These flowers (the determined, subsistent element) HAVE the colour red in common.' This second statement really means: 'An identical colour red can be abstracted from these flowers perceived by the mind.' Thus, the mind returns to the genus. Again, we see that this common colour red is formed by a mental abstraction because *many* flowers, that is, their collectivity, do not exist outside the mind, where individual flowers alone exist. When the real, seen in the idea as something undetermined, is considered to be subsistent, it cannot be subject of the relationship of what is common except by a rapid mental return from its determined to its undetermined state.

591. What is *common* therefore, if present in the sphere of the real and subsistent, is something other than that which exists as undetermined in the idea. Is this subsistent something else, a true subject of the relationship of what is common? If so, what can it be? The reply to the first question is affirmative. To the second, I reply as follows.

Real entia divide into *principle-entia* and *term-entia*. In both there is something real which is *subject* of the relationship of what is *common*, and of which what is common can be predicated with the copula *is*. Relative to principle-entia, I have shown in *Psychology* that they are constructed in such a way that they have *real roots* prior to the individual ens and common to all the individuals which can be classified in a species or genus. In the whole genus of animals, this root is the fundamental act whose term is space (*PSY*, 1: 556–559); in all individuals of the human species, it is the fundamental act which intuitively being (*ibid.*, fn. 281).

These real roots, prior to individual principle-ens, ARE truly *common*, that is, are true, real subjects of this relationship of commonality which the mind adds by thinking collectively of their individuals.

CHAPTER 6
[The concepts 'whole', 'division' and 'parts']

Article 1
The concept 'whole'

592. From the concept *one* we derive the concept *whole*. One, predicated purely of ens, is 'the quality through which ens is indivisible, and as common to many entia is the quality through which an ens excludes every other ens'.

Every ens is therefore considered a whole, in that outside it there is nothing which pertains to it; it has all it must have.

Thus, the definition of whole is: 'Whole is the composite of the things which form one.'

There are clearly as many wholes as there are ones. The difference between the concept *one* and the concept *whole* is this: one, applied to many entities, has in itself the relationship through which one entity excludes others; whole has in itself the relationship which embraces the parts composing the same entity and denies that other parts are involved in its composition.

One therefore excludes other *ones*; whole excludes *other parts* from one.

Relative to one, *whole* has the condition of predicate and can be predicated of every *one*. One can also be predicated of whole because every whole is one in such a way that the propositions 'every one is whole' and 'every whole is one' are dialectically interchangeable. However, in the logical order of the generation of concepts, the concept 'one' precedes that of 'whole'. Unless our mind has first thought one, we cannot speak of whole; our mind can indeed have conceived the entity as one without having yet reflected that it constitutes a *whole*. In order to think that an entity constitutes a whole, we must have reflected not only that the entity admits of no division but also that none of its parts is outside it.

The correlation of the concepts of *one* and *whole* also enables

us to distinguish various sorts of *whole* just as we can distinguish various sorts of *one*.²³⁹

Although the definition of whole includes a relationship with the things which compose it (I have said that 'the whole is the composite of those things etc.'), parts are not necessarily found in the *whole* as a consequence, because the relationship can be *negative*, that is, exclude parts. This is the case when 'one' is entirely without parts, or else when our mind with a single act conceives the whole alone without regard to the parts. The Greeks called this concept of the whole 'the whole before the parts' (*totum ante partes*, ὅλον πρὸ τῶν μερῶν).

If, however, *one* is regarded as a composite of parts, it was called 'the whole from the parts' (*totum ex partibus*, ὅλον ἐκ τῶν μερῶν), a concept which is acquired by considering the parts and their conjunction.

Finally, our mind considers a *possible one* in the parts themselves; it considers the whole, in the composite of the parts, as existing in its matter. The Greeks called this concept of the material whole 'the whole in the parts' (*totum in partibus*, ὅλον ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι).²⁴⁰

This shows that the concept of the whole cannot be explained without the teaching about the nature of parts. I will now deal with this teaching.

²³⁹ This shows ever more clearly how *unity* and *totality*, the two characteristics which I assigned to philosophy, require one another. Cf. the *Prefaces* to the *Opuscoli filosofici* and to *A New Essay*.

²⁴⁰ Eustratius, in *1.m Ethic. Arist.*, p. 11. — He says: "The whole before the parts are those forms and the most simple ideas which lack matter. Each of these exists before the parts assigned to it."* This shows that the ideas or forms were called 'the whole before the parts' because the whole has a positive relationship with the parts. In this case, the parts are understood as the many realisations of the ideas or forms. It is as if someone had said that all bodies were like parts of the essence or idea of body, but that body, as a whole, preceded the parts. Although 'the whole has parts and precedes the parts' is a contradiction if understood in the order of reality, there is no contradiction if the statement is taken dianoetically. In fact, our mind can simultaneously think the idea and the real individuals corresponding to the idea; it can also consider the individuals in the idea. In this case, the individuals take on the concept of parts in so far as they acquire a bond from the idea and a kind of dianoetic unity.

Article 2

The concepts 'division' and 'parts'

593. If one is defined as 'that which is undivided in itself and divided from others', the concept of division, which involves the concept of parts, must precede the abstract concept of one. This is a new reason why the concept of one is not prior to that of ens, as the Neoplatonists claim.

St. Thomas recognises the following logical order of these concepts: first, *ens* occurs in the intellect, then the *division of one ens from another*, thirdly, *one* (that is, the non-division of each ens), and fourthly *many* and the multitude [*App.*, no. 10].

However, various considerations have to be made relative to the concept of division, a task which pertains to *formal dianoetical* thought. Multiple considerations are needed because human reflection has great difficulty initially in concentrating on being as formal and dianoetical. Reflection easily falls into the order proper to anoetical being and entangles itself in an inextricable confusion of concepts and perpetual anomalies.

Let us first note therefore what I said earlier: the *concept of division* adds nothing to the whole, to the ens which is divided. On the contrary, divisibility is a concept of diminution, because an undivided whole is equivalent not only to the totality of the parts into which the whole is divided but, in addition to everything in the parts, contains the connections, the forces, the universal energy which unites all the parts so that the whole is purely a whole. Moreover, this pure whole, which is as great as the power which joins the parts, is at its peak when the power is so dominant that no scar, as it were, is left between the parts, no sign of division, no difference; even the concept of part disappears and all is brought together in unification. Clearly, there can be much more in the concept of the whole than in the concept of the aggregation of parts. In fact, the more the whole is one, the more there is in it.

594. Consequently, the principle that 'the whole is equal to its parts' is not true, absolutely speaking.

But why do people accept this principle as sound? Why did

[593–594]

the ancient metaphysicians consider it one of the most obvious principles of reason?

Because the principles we use most — and on which ontology has been formed as a science until today, I dare to say — were not drawn from the consideration of being and of ens in all their fullness, but from the consideration of material ens, the least of entia. What people saw of bodies and extended things was made into the properties of ens. They wrongly universalised what applied solely to a very narrow species of ens. This explains the poverty of ontology, still present today, and the material aspect found at its base.

It is true that two kinds of whole were distinguished: 1. the first is *homogeneous*, composed of similar parts, that is, the continuum and matter, or at least a certain species of matter; 2. the other, *heterogeneous*, composed of dissimilar parts. In the homogeneous whole, the part has the same form as the whole; in the heterogeneous whole the part does not have the form of the whole.²⁴¹

The principle that ‘the whole is equal to the parts’ is of course true relative to the homogeneous whole, such as the whole which is extended and matter. Thus, a hectolitre of water equals a hundred litres; a hectometre, a hundred metres.

But even relative to material ens and to what is extended, the principle is true solely on the condition that *pure matter* is being considered. The principle would no longer be true if something else were considered in matter or spaces, for example, form. It is false that all the dust to which, for example, a statue of Canova has been reduced equals the statue because the dust lacks the form which the matter first had.

The principle is also clearly untrue when, instead of considering in bodies some property different from that of matter, we consider some relationship in them, for example, the cost, the effects, etc. Thus, the tiny pieces into which a solitaire may have been split would never equal the entire, unsplit diamond, even if no piece were missing. If two or three harmful substances are mixed together in a certain way, you have a poison. How true then that a whole, relative to its effects, does not equal the parts which compose it.

²⁴¹ St. Thomas, *S.T.*, I, q. 11, art. 2, ad 2.m.

We can conclude therefore that the principle is valid only relative to *dimensive quantity*, and this explains why mathematicians, who made the principle credible, have made so much use of it.

CHAPTER 7

The concept 'simple'

Article 1

The antinomy between ens-as-one and composite ens

595. As I have said, ens is one, but not always simple. In fact there are many composite entia.

This seems to offer an antinomy. One, as one, is certainly simple, but it is neither one nor ens in so far as we distinguish many parts in it. If then every ens is one, why is every ens not simple?

This antibody needs to be considered. If we consider it carefully and reconcile the opposites, we will learn how the *concept 'simple'* is distinguished from the concept 'one'.

Article 2

A certain kind of simplicity is essential to every ens

596. First, we must note that a certain kind of simplicity can never be lacking in any ens, whatever genus the ens may belong to or be conceived as belonging to. This simplicity is precisely the kind which is indivisible from the quality essential to ens, the quality '*one*'.

This observation begins to dissipate the antibody in question because it preserves for every ens the simplicity deriving from 'one' which is the basis of the antibody.

In fact it is *one* which contradicts *multitude*; one ens is contradictory to many entia. On the other hand, the concept contradicting the concept *simple* is *multiplicity*, that is, composition. Multiplicity is a predicate, predicated of ens-as-one by either denying or affirming multiplicity; it is not predicated, not affirmed or denied about a multitude of entia unless this multitude itself is considered as one. Furthermore, the copula *to be* is not used in predicating *multiplicity* of ens-as-one, as if

[595–596]

ens-as-one *were* multiplicity itself, because this would again involve contradiction. The copula used is *to have* (*Logica*, 429), which means that some multiplicity is intimately joined to ens-as-one. Hence, when we say that an ens is multiple, we are not saying that it is several entia or that it itself is multiplicity, which would equally be contradictory. We are saying that there is not, in the unity of the ens, a multiplicity of entia but of something else, that is, of elements which compose the ens.

When *unity* and *multiplicity* (*composition*) are together predicated of some ens, these two qualities of the same ens are predicated under a different aspect, not the same aspect. This avoids contradiction in the predications: unity is predicated of the ens but multiplicity and composition, of its components, not of the ens. Thus, the antibody disappears. Ens as such remains one and simple; it is multiple and composite in so far as the unity and the simplicity of ens result from several elements.

The *unity* of ens is a predicate attributed to the subject; *composition* or *simplicity* are predicated of its predicates, that is, of the things which are not ens, but attributed to it.

Article 3

The concepts 'composition' and 'composite'

597. The concept 'composite' contradicts the concept 'simple'. To reduce the concept 'composite' to a universal definition which satisfies all the meanings the word is given by the human mind, we can say: 'Whenever thought can distinguish several entities in an ens, that ens is called the composite of all the entities taken together and contained in the principle of the ens.'

This definition applies equally to the *objective composite*, the *dialectical composite* and the *real composite*. But generally speaking, we say that the real composite is *simple* whenever it has no real composition, although it can have a dialectical or objective composition.

We use the word 'composition' in the same way. It means the act of composing, of placing all the entities distinguished in ens in the principle of ens as in their container. Indeed there is on the one hand, a composition made by the *mind* which is called

dialectical whether the result is a purely objective or also a dialectical composite, and there is a composition made by a *real force* called real composition.

From the very general definition I have given of *composite*, we deduce that the concept of *composite* always makes known a *dianoetic essence*; in other words, an act of the mind is involved in forming it. Indeed, even when speaking about the real composite, the concept indicates a *relationship* of components with the one which results from it. Every relationship can, of course, have its foundation in what is subsistent. Nevertheless, the complete nature of relationship can be received only in the mind, which alone embraces the two extremes of the relationship. Each of these extremes is subjectively different from the other and does not therefore embrace in itself the whole relationship if the extreme itself is not intelligent.

Thus, a mental element is involved in every genus of composites as such, precisely because they are composites. But some of these have their *extremes* in the reality of being; in other words, they have being *in se* and are *real composites*. Others are such that their extremes depend on the mind as well, whether as objects (ideal composites), or as dialectical entities (dialectical composites).

Article 4

The difference between *objective composites*,
dialectical composites and *real composites*

598. Object can be considered in two modes: as pure object of the mind, in other words, as containing *idea*, or as *contained essence*, known because it is contained. This *contained essence* can be *object* itself, as contained or real or moral. If we reduce the last to the first two, we can set it to one side.

The mind predicates simplicity, or composition and multiplicity, of the *essence* contained in the object.

If we take as *essence* the object itself as contained, that is, as understood, we can ask whether this object is simple or composite. We can also inquire about the genus of its simplicity and composition. This question pertains to the objective, that is, ideal composite.

[598]

If we take the real as essence, we have either a complete real which simply is, or else can be in itself (that is, outside the object), or is a diminished, *incomplete real* which cannot have the mode of being (called subjective) outside the object but only in the object.

In the case of the incomplete real, which is solely in the object, in the idea, and without its own subjective existence, we can ask 'whether it is composite or simple'. The question applies either to something *simple* or to a *dialectical composite*.

In the case of a complete real which, although certainly seen in the idea, is such that it can subsist of itself, outside the idea, we can again ask 'whether it is composite or simple'. The question concerns what is simple and real or what is composite and real. This is almost the only case in which people in general use the adjectives 'simple' and 'composite'.

We see therefore:

1. Every question concerning simple and composite concerns an essence contained in the idea. Consequently, simple and composite are qualities which would not be, unless there were a relationship with the mind. Hence they are correctly called 'dianoetic'.

2. What is dialectically *simple* and what is *composite* always have something objective in them because the essence of which they are predicated, which is not anything complete, real and fully determined, cannot despoil itself of the object. Nevertheless, nothing dialectical is purely objective because it concerns a *real essence*.

3. The objective composite and simple always have something *dialectical* in them. By 'dialectical' I mean what the mind *pretends* or *supposes*, when it uses these pretences and suppositions to reason. But the objectivity of which we are speaking is not fictitious or simply supposed by the mind, and cannot therefore be called dialectical fiction or supposition. When, however, the mind predicates simplicity or composition of a pure object or idea, it pretends that the *object* is a subject to which some predicates can belong. The *object* as such is not a *subject*; it is the form opposite to the form of subject. This operation by which the mind clothes the pure object with the form of subject is, therefore, purely dialectical. Hence, when speaking of the simplicity or composition of the

object or of the idea, a dialectical operation is always involved. For this reason, the objective composite and simple retain a dialectical element.

Article 5

To know whether an ens is simple or composite, and in what sense, we need to consider if many entities compose the *subject* of the ens, that is, the subjective ens

599. I have said that the subject is essentially one but can *have* (not *be*) many entities whose *multiplicity* is predicated by the copula *to be*. Many entities can therefore be predicated of the subject with the copula *have*, but in this case *have* has the meaning of *contain* because the subject of the ens, or subjective ens, has many entities which it contains. In this way these entities compose the ens, taken subjectively, that is, the subject of the ens.

Hence, in order to know whether the ens under discussion is composite, we must examine whether that which constitutes its subject contains, as subject, many entities. I say intentionally ‘as subject’, because otherwise these entities would not form one single ens. In fact I defined subject as ‘that which in an ens is first, is container and cause of unity’. A subject, therefore, if it contains many entities in this way, is composite; if it contains nothing actual or only itself in another mode, it is *simple*.

But the subject is either *real* or *dialectical*. When it is purely dialectical and there is no real subject which in itself is, there is *in reality* neither simplicity nor composition. Only unity or multitude are possible. In this case the simplicity and composition can be only dialectical. Thus ‘multitude’, in any discussion about a multitude of persons, expresses a purely dialectical subject. The subject here can be said to be dialectically but not really composite, because a multitude is not a *real subject*. Without the *real subject* there cannot be predicates and hence, really, neither simplicity nor multiplicity; all that really exists is the multitude itself of persons. The same can be said about an aggregate of unconnected matter which the mind takes as the subject of discussion.

[599]

Similarly if, on the one hand, the subject is real and is in itself, and, on the other, the entities which it contains are many dialectically but not really, we cannot say that the subject is *really* composite, that is, contains many different real entities. In this case the subject is simply considered by the mind — fictitiously — to be composite; in this case, the composition is dialectical. We can, however, say that it is really *simple* because *simplicity* is a negative predicate which excludes multiplicity. If there is a real subject, and no *plurality* of real elements composing it, it is really simple.

600. From this we see the following:

1. Simplicity and multiplicity are always subjective, that is, predicates pertaining to the subject in the way described.
2. To predicate real multiplicity, there must be a *real subject* containing *many real entities* as its components.
3. To predicate *real simplicity*, there must be a real subject which does not contain a plurality of entities or, if it does, only in a dialectical sense.

But note here another difference between the concepts of *one* and *simple*. *Simple* is predicated of a subject; this denies *multiplicity*. *One*, properly speaking, is not predicated of a subject but is the subject itself and, generally speaking, an elementary idea of ens which pertains to intuitive knowledge, not to knowledge by predication. For this reason, *simplicity* can be predicated of *one*, where one serves as subject, and simplicity as predicate. In this way every ens is, as I said, simple in so far as it is one because, as one, it excludes in itself the concept of multiplicity, even though this multiplicity can be contained in one. Similarly, *many* is not a predicate of a subject because a subject is one and not many. Nor is *many* an elementary idea of ens; it is purely a *dialectical subject*, formed by the mind which imposes the form of *one* on the many. Hence, *multiplicity* is a positive predicate of a subject from which it receives unity. Thus, wherever the mind prescind from a subject, the concepts 'simple' and 'multiple' (which are relative to a subject) are no longer found, although the concept 'one' can remain. The concept 'many' remains, however, only if a dialectical subject is added.

Article 6

Simplicity and multiplicity considered in objects as objects,
that is, in ideas

601. Two entities are distinguished in the object of the mind: the container which is the object as object, that is, the objective form, and the content, that is, essence.

The object as object is the opposite of subject and therefore excludes the latter. Hence, because there is no subject in a pure object, what I have said demonstrates that while the object can be *one*, the predicate 'composite' is totally inappropriate to it. However, if we take *one* as subject, the predicate 'simple' can be essentially appropriate to it, precisely by the same title that it is one — one, as one, excludes all multiplicity. Note here how the appropriateness of 'simple' and 'composite' to the *object* differs from their appropriateness to a *subject*. When the determinations 'simple' and 'composite' are attributed to a subject, the mind considers the subject as first and antecedent (which is required by the definition of subject); the attributions are therefore considered second and posterior. But if there is no subject (and there is none in the pure object), and the mind does not invent a subject, there is simultaneity but no order of priority and posteriority in the concepts 'object' and 'attributions'. Hence, simplicity in the object is not a predicate, nor does it have the form of a predicate; it is simply an elementary, abstract idea seen in the object as its objective constituent. The same applies to multiplicity, if present.

Furthermore, the object as object, that is, the objective form, is *one* and not *many*, although the essences which it contains can be many.

602. Nevertheless, the object as object, although excluding a subject, refers essentially to a real subject, that is, to the intuiting mind. The question therefore arises: 'Are the intuiting mind and the pure object two or one? And if two, are they components of the mind-subject?'

I reply. Whenever the human mind is under consideration, the intuiting mind and the intuited object are undoubtedly two and inconfusable. The human mind is conceived as finite reality, not as being, and the object is conceived as infinite being.

[601–602]

Moreover we must say, and accept as an evident fact, that the object is given to the human mind, which receives it from the hidden, donating cause. However, we cannot say in any way that the mind is composed of subject and object: the mind is purely subject; the object given to it is purely object, and is independent of the mind. But the mind, in the presence of the object given to it, is actuated by the act of intuition which constitutes it. This act, an effect of the presence of the object, is not the object but the subject itself in act. The mind therefore is not composite, but one and simple, with an *essential relationship* to the object; in other words, the mind is an act of relationship.

If our thought now rises to a first mind and supposes that this mind produces and possesses its object from eternity, and we consider this object in its quality of pure object of that mind, we must say that the object is the finalised and completed act of the mind, and not something else. Thus the mind, which in this case is not distinguished from its act but is the act itself, will simply be something understood *per se*, which means that is more than something *intelligent*. The word 'intelligent' expresses the act of understanding in process but not yet completed and fully finalised, when only what is actually understood remains. This verifies what Aristotle finally arrived at in his speculation about the nature of intelligence — that the knower and the known, totally in act and nothing in potency (τὸν ὄντιον ὅλως), are the same.²⁴² In fact, if the object is eternally produced by the mind, it can only be the mind as understood. If there were something else in this primal object, we would first have to explain how this 'something else' was produced, which we could not do without supposing that the eternal mind was fully constituted. The object produced by an eternal mind therefore can only be itself as eternally understood. Hence, the intelligent being which understands itself has always understood itself (granted that the act of its understanding is never about to be carried out but is always carried out). The 'itself' is thus always something understood *per se*; the incomplete act of understanding is contained in what is understood as the less

²⁴² 'For in the case of things without matter, that which thinks and that which is thought are the same'* (*De Anima*, 1: 4 and 5. Cf. *Metaph.*, 11 (12): 7).

within the more, and only through abstraction can be dialectically divided from the 'itself' understood *per se*. Relative to this mind therefore, what is understood *per se* is a complete and totally finalised intellective act. As complete, the mind subsists and constitutes the totally actual, subjective mind. In fact, it would not be a totally actual mind and intelligence if it were not eternally understood *per se*. This is the constitution of the infinite subject where, we must note, we are speaking only of the object as pure object, not of that superabundant act of the eternal mind by which being, contained in the object produced by the eternal mind, subsists as produced, that is, as generated. This is called the eternal generation of the Word, about which I must speak in another place.

602a. Returning to the start of the discussion, I said that our mind distinguishes two entities in the object: the container which is the object as object, and the content which I normally call essence. Relative to the object as object, we saw that in the human mind the object is distinguished from the mind-subject. This is simply a relationship of opposition, not a composition of the mind. Relative to the eternal mind, the object as object is not distinguished from this mind; the eternal object is itself the eternal mind in totally finalised act, as it naturally is. The only duality in the eternal mind is that placed there by the human mind. Our mind applies to the eternal mind the inadequate concepts which our mind takes from itself; the notion of intelligent being, relative to the human mind, differs from the notion of what is understood: what is intelligent is not pure intellective act *per se* but becomes such through something else, through the understood object, and what is understood is not *per se* understood in act but, relative to our mind, becomes understood in act through something else, that is, through our mind. On the other hand, if *what is understood* were actually understood *per se*, it would necessarily and simultaneously be a totally pure, completely finalised intellective act. I must now speak about the multiplicity and simplicity of the essence contained in the object.

603. I have said that the object, as object, can be only *one*, and that this 'one', taken as a dialectical subject, is essentially simple. However, the essences it contains can be many, some of which can be multiple, not simple. In fact, in every intelligence, even as

[602a–603]

limited, like human intelligence, there is one object, in which all possible essences are known. In humans, this object is *ideal being*; in God, it is *divine essence understood per se*.

These essences known in the object are either the object itself, or real or moral essences. For the purpose of my present discussion, moral essences can be reduced to real essences. Again, what is said about the contained object can be said about the container. It is sufficient therefore for us to discuss real essences in so far as contained in the object. These essences are either *perfect subjects*, and as such can be susceptible of simplicity and multiplicity, or abstract and therefore dialectical subjects, and as such can be susceptible of one or other of the two predicates.

However, because in this article I am discussing the simplicity or multiplicity of the object, two questions need to be asked:

1. Does the *multitude* of essences contained in the object produce many objects, contrary to what I have said, namely, that the object is one?
2. Does the *multiplicity* of some of the essences contained in the object make the object multiple, contrary to what I have said, namely, that the predicate 'simple' pertains to the object taken as dialectical subject?

604. In answer to the first question I say that the multitude of essences does not multiply the object. It is always the same object which causes knowledge and thus contains all essences. But because these essences are many, the *relationship* of the one object with different, real essences differs. Consequently, there are *many relationships*, one of whose extremes is one and identical, while the other, the term, is many different things. Hence, the foundation of the plurality of relationships lies in the many real essences, not in the one object. This is true relative to the object of the human mind and of the divine mind: the object of the human mind is ideal being, in and with which the mind knows all that it knows; the object of the divine mind is the divine essence, the divine mind itself. I have dealt elsewhere with the human object. Relative to the divine mind, I say what St. Thomas says. He teaches that God knows everything through his essence alone. This essence, however, as the reason or likeness of individual things, is called 'idea'. Thus the different

relationships or reasons which the divine essence has with different real things are called ideas understood by God.²⁴³ Multitude therefore lies in things or real essences, not in the divine essence which, as one, makes them all knowable. The great philosopher adds that this does not mean that these aspects of knowability come from things themselves but from the divine intellect which compares its own essence with things.²⁴⁴ Indeed, finite real things are not knowable *per se* because they are not objective *per se*, but subjective, and make themselves knowable to God through his own essence which is objective and *per se* knowable and known. If, however, the aspects which make things knowable come from God and are in God as know abilities, that is, ideas, nevertheless, as *many*, they come from things, because things alone are many, although God is the author of this multiplicity. Consequently, the *multitude* of these aspects is not itself in God, but in things, although God understands the multitude as existing and posits it in things.²⁴⁵

605. A difficulty now arises: 'If the know abilities of things, or ideas or known things, or whatever we call them, imply a relationship of things with the divine essence and, according to St. Thomas, are made "by the divine intellect comparing its essence with things" (*ab intellect divino comparante essentiam suam ad res*), things are prior to ideas.' The answer is that God makes everything with one and the same act — he makes things and their relationships with his essence. Hence, only dialectical priority and posteriority are possible, because of the imperfect mode our mind has of conceiving. Things then are *many*, and the divine essence which knows them is *one*. We predicate 'many' or 'multitude' of things because our mind, by clothing many things or a multitude in the form of 'one', makes a dialectical subject of them.

²⁴³ 'The idea does not name the divine essence in so far as essence but in so far as likeness or the reason of this or that thing. Hence, because many reasons are understood from one essence, they are called many ideas'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, ad 1).

²⁴⁴ 'These aspects, by which ideas are multiplied, are not caused by things but by the divine intellect comparing its essence with things'* (*ibid.*, ad 3).

²⁴⁵ 'Aspects which multiply ideas are not in created things but in God. They are not real aspects, however, like those by which persons are distinguished, but aspects understood by God'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, ad. 4).

But now another difficulty arises: 'I can understand that things, in so far as real, are many, without prejudice to the unity of the divine essence; they are obviously the (dialectical) subject of their plurality. But if things as known, that is, as ideas, are many, the unity of the divine essence seems to be destroyed because these *ideas*, which are not in themselves but in the divine essence, become the subject of a multitude.'

I reply as follows. Ideas are internal objects of the divine essence, *respectus intellecti a Deo* [aspects understood by God]. But the object, as pure object, of the divine intelligence is identical with the act of divine intelligence because, as we have seen, the nature of this act is to be the very last of all. Hence, if one object is identified with this act, every other object is identified with it; in other words, all objects are identified with it. The identical act therefore simultaneously terminates and finalises in all these objects, although their multitude has no subject in God because their (dialectical) subject is in subsistent things themselves; the multitude is a *purely known multitude* of another subject, not a multitude proper to the knower or the knowing act; the knower or knowing act is another subject, not the subject of the known multitude. Consequently, many known things, called objects as objects, have no multitude in themselves because the subject of the multitude is something other. Nevertheless the known things are always one, that is, the divine essence which knows many. *Many* and *knowledge of many* are not the same; God's knowledge is not many. It may be conceived as *many known* things, *many known objects*, but these expressions truly indicate not many objects in the mind, but outside the mind and known through a single object of the mind. This single object is called *many objects* solely because it makes known many things outside the mind.²⁴⁶

Consequently, in the divine intellect there are not many objects but only one. But there is an act (which does not differ from the divine intellect) with which this intellect creates many finite things which have a relative existence totally different

²⁴⁶ Hence, St. Thomas wisely says: 'It is not contrary to the simplicity of the divine intellect to understand many things, but it would be if God's intellect were formed through many species. There are therefore many ideas in the divine mind, understood by the divine intellect'* (S.T., I, q. 15, art. 2).

from the divine, absolute existence. These things are the (dialectical) subject of multitude, and with this very act the divine intellect causes its own knowledge of these many things. When we consider this knowledge, which is one, in relationship to these many things, we call it many objects because its identical self is referred to these many things.

606. We see then that when God creates many real things, multitude remains proper to them; in God, however, there is only the knowledge or knowing act which remains one, act, object, and understood divine essence. We, as human beings, find this very difficult to understand because the case is different for us.

First of all, in God the object as pure object (not as person) is the intelligent subject itself through finalisation of its act. The object therefore always retains subjective unity. In us, however, our mind (a subject) differs from its natural object, which does not therefore receive subjective unity from our mind. Hence, the object never identifies, not even as pure object, with the subject. Moreover, in the case of God, as I said, the only multiplicity possible is that of things having being *in se*, such as the Word and the Holy Spirit, and relative finite entia. However these entia, with their relative existence, have multiplicity only in themselves, not in God; the only multiplicity in God is that of the persons. Finite, relative things are in God only in so far as they are the single intellective and simultaneously creative act which, as I said, is also divine essence and single object. On the other hand, in us humans, the pure object, the object with which we know everything, is one. Finite realities, however, have multiplicity not only in themselves, but also as contained in the object. The reason is that the one natural object of the human mind is empty of content. As virtual being, this object contains nothing except itself. Consequently, we acquire knowledge of finite real things as time passes, not with one act alone but with many successive acts, as feelings and sense-perceptions occur. For us, sense-perceptions correspond analogically to the creation of finite things in God. But sense-perception proceeds from finite entia having being *in se* and acting in our human feeling. Now, finite real things, in so far as they exist *in se*, are *many*. As a result *many perceived things* remain in us. This multitude of *perceived things* comes from the

multitude of finite entia having being *in se*. The knowledge we have therefore of finite real things comes from finite real things having being *in se* and are *many*. With their many actions and impressions, they produce in our feeling *many sense-perceived things*, which are then known in the object. The opposite is true of God: his knowledge of finite real things proceeds from the creative, intellectual act. This act receives nothing from the many finite real things having being *in se*,²⁴⁷ which by knowing he creates²⁴⁸ ('nothing came to his wisdom from them; they existed as and when they should, wisdom remained as it was'²⁴⁹). The creative act is one only and is the divine essence itself, which is both act and object in so far as the act is most final. This creative act refers at one and the same time to created things which are many in themselves, without their multiplicity passing into God as it does into man. All the many sense-perceived things that we have, therefore, find their knowability in the one object (virtual being) in which we see them. They do not receive any unity *in se* from this object because an object of this kind, empty and not full, does not have in itself the infinite reality in which many finite real things could be seen in the unity of their origin. Hence, sense-perceived things, brought by our mind into the one object, ideal being, are certainly known in it as *real entia*, but their *reality* remains obscure because we do not see how it can be present in the *infinite, per se knowable reality*; we do not see which dialectical part it is of infinite reality. Hence, because finite real things are seen only as entia, not as real things, in the *per se* knowable real, their reality is neither explained nor made intelligible by infinite reality: their reality is contained as a sensible, not intelligible essence in ideality (although we do understand in ideal being the existence of what

²⁴⁷ 'But surely God the Father, from whom was born the Word of God, is God? Surely God the Father did not learn, in the knowledge that he is to himself, some things through the feeling of his body and other things through himself? — Surely God the Father did not learn from somebody somewhere those things which he knows through himself but not through the body, which is nothing to him; surely he did not need messengers or witnesses in order to know them?'* (St. Aug., *De Tr.*, 15: 13).

²⁴⁸ 'He does not know all his creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, because they are, but they are because he knows them'* (*Ibid.*).

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

is not intelligible but of which we have the feeling). Only the reality of one's own intellective principle is to some degree intelligible for the reason which I will explain later. Many real, distinct essences remain therefore relative to the human mind not only in themselves but (as contained in the ideal object) in the mind itself. The knowledge of many finite real things, existing in themselves, is therefore a concept which does not necessarily require some plurality in the intelligible object with which many finite real things having being *in se* are known. The concept does not require this plurality when the act of knowing precedes *many finite real things*, as in the case of the divine act of knowing, which precedes them because it creates them. However, the concept does require plurality in the intelligible object when the act of knowing these real things is posterior to the *many finite real things* which through their action produce many sense-perceived things. These many perceived things remain such, that is, many in the intelligible object, as signs of many things that have being *in se*. This object receives them without giving them anything real, without unifying and without restoring the signs to their origin which is infinite reality as creative act. Consequently, these perceived things can and must be known with many different, successive intellective acts, and appear as many intellective objects.

607. Indeed, although the intelligible object *with which* we know many finite real things is one, the *known objects* are many; they are called essences, on which our intuition comes to rest. Furthermore, the object *with which* and through which we know these objects is certainly known with the first act of intuition with which our human intellect exists. The other acts of intuition, however, which follow upon sense-perceptions and constitute the ideas of real things, terminate in the sensible essences seen in the first object. These posterior acts no longer come to rest on the first object because our attention moves on to the (possible) real things.

Because the acts of human intuition and the objects (that is, the concepts in which our intuition terminates) are many, we can consider, only with great speculative difficulty, how divine intellection is one and has no need of many objects (that is, distinct concepts) in order to know many subsistent real things, but knows these things distinctly and in their own natures with

one and the same creative act. This act is the one, same knowable object with which it knows many.

Let us return now to our two questions. We first asked whether the multitude of essences contained in the object produce many objects. I replied that, granted a true multitude of distinct essences in the object as object (which requires an internal object in the mind), these essences would represent to the mind many objects of second intuition. The object of first intuition, however, which contains all real essences would remain one only. This is the case in human beings and gives rise to the multiplicity of ideas or concepts. But the divine object is different: it contains not many essences, but only one essence, the divine essence, the object itself. All multiplicity rests in relative entia, existing in themselves outside God. In God, knowledge of these many relative entia, as relative, has one object only. This object is a single act of creative knowledge, the very act which creates the many and of which the many are the effect. The many remain outside because relative existence is different from and outside absolute existence.

608. The second question was: 'Does the multiplicity of any of the essences contained in the object as pure internal object of the mind make the object multiple?' The answer is 'No'. As I have said, multiplicity can be predicated only of a *subject*. But the object, as object, is not a subject. Therefore, multiplicity cannot be appropriate to it. Nor can it be appropriate even if the object is taken as a dialectical subject. The nature of object, as such, is that of container, and a container is essentially one; if it were not one, it could not contain the many contained things. It is simplicity, never multiplicity, that is always appropriate to the object, that is, to the container, taken as a dialectical subject. Every object, whatever it contains, is therefore essentially simple; *multiplicity* can only be a predicate of some real, subjective essence contained in the object.

This is true for the object considered as pure object, but when we consider the human object in its relationships with what it contains, we have seen that it multiplies by means of these relationships and becomes many objects. Taken as a dialectical subject therefore, it, too, receives the quality 'multiple'.

Hence, we must distinguish two kinds of objects in the human being: the object of first intuition, and the object of

second intuition. The former informs the human intellect and the first intuitive act is borne into it. With this object we subsequently know all sense-perceived things and their abstractions and relationships; it cannot have any multiplicity whatsoever. The other object is real essence itself which, as contained in the object and therefore as purely possible, is intuited with successive intuitions; it is essence, made knowable and real and known by the object. This other object or known thing can be multiple because the real essence intuited in it can be multiple. In fact, I have said that there are as *many* of these kinds of objects as there are many sensible known things, together with all the abstract things deduced from them. If these many things have an order, they become a single, organated object, which in this sense is multiple. Such are those ideas whose parts remain distinct like, other ideas. Thus, the idea of the universe can contain all the entia of the universe bound into one single whole. Precisely for this reason, such an object would be multiple with a multiplicity shared by the real multiple essence which it contains and makes known.

Article 7

Simplicity and dialectical composition

609. I have defined 'dialectical' as anything invented or supposed by the mind in its operations but not such in itself, that is, when we prescind from the mind.

'Dialectical' is distinguished from 'dianoetical'. 'Dialectical' is the product of a pure invention or mental supposition. 'Dianoetical' is what is produced by the mind in things having being *in se*; the mind concurs with its operations in making the thing what it is *in se*. Thus anything 'dianoetical' is not the non-being product of invention but the true product of some causation.

The thing invented or supposed by the mind, which must move to its other operations, is multiple. It is normally and at most only an element of an operation. Indeed, a *dialectical element* is involved in all human thought but not in *absolute thought*, which is precisely what has been purged of every dialectical element (*Logica*, 36–42).

[609]

But precisely because some *dialectical element* is involved everywhere, to assemble all its appearances and different forms would be difficult and require much time. Leaving this to others, I will speak, when occasion demands, only about the part needed for my argument rather than draw up a fully integrated treatise on the matter (which would however be very useful).

I have already distinguished between what is *dialectical* and what is *objective*. I said that what is simple and dialectically composite is predicated of something real. This is not a complete subject suitable for possessing its own existence; the mind understands and supposes it to be a true, complete subject. It is in fact only one class of dialectical subjects (*Logica*, 422–423) because even ‘object’, ‘nothing’ and every relationship can be clothed with the dialectical form of subject.

We must bear in mind, however, that the subject can be dialectical in the predication of what is simple and what is composite. But also the predicate of what is composite can be dialectical, that is, invented by the mind. Or both the subject and the predicate can be dialectical.

For example, if I say that the faculty of will, with its function of simply willing and of choosing is multiple, I have dialectically invented the subject. The faculty of will is certainly something real but not such that it constitutes a perfect subject that is in itself. The predicate ‘multiple’, however, is *real*, not dialectical.

On the other hand, if I distinguish many properties or attributes in God and thus posit *multiplicity* in him, this multiplicity is merely a dialectical predicate, that is, invented by the mind, although the subject is real. In fact, in God there is no multiplicity.

If I say that a nation ordered as a state is one and simple, I have dialectically invented both the subject and the predicate because a nation is only a subsistent subject for the mind which considers it as such. In reality this dialectical subject is multiple because it is composed of many real subjects. Hence, the predicate ‘simple’ is only dialectical.

A nation is one and simple as object of the mind. But the subject I invent here is the kind I have discussed earlier. Its nature lies in this: our mind takes the object in its objective unity and pretends that this one thing is a subject.

Dianoetical composition

610. We must distinguish between what is *dianoetically composite* and the three classes of what is simple and dialectically composite in which either 1. the subject, or 2. the predicate of what is simple and what is composite, or 3. both the subject and the predicate is a dialectical entity. The realised, objective composite, not invented but produced by the mind in real things, is dianoetically composite. Thus, a real ens which exists in itself and can be a true, perfect subject is seen to be composed of 1. a generic and a specific element (substantial or accidental); 2. an undetermined element which remains the same (matter); 3. a determination which changes (form); 4. a potential element (potency) and 5. an actual element (act).

Each of these elements is something real, distinct from the others, but their distinction arises solely from the relationship of procedure between a finite real ens and an objective ens. In fact, in a real ens existent in itself these elements are united in such a way that they form a single ens and cannot be separated to make them subsist separately. Consequently, the origin of their distinction, which makes them many and multiplies the ens, is due solely to their presence in the object: one thing can be separated from another by being thought of as a different object, that is, as an essence of different nature. Because the essence contained in the object can break up into several totally different essences, this *separation of the elements in the object*, that is, in their type, is called 'real distinction' in real things, as realisations of these types.

I said that the *real distinction* is not invented by the mind simply because the mind has need of it to reason (this would be *dialectical*) but that it is true and *dianoetical* because of the clear notion of what I call the dianoetical element of real things. As we have seen, this consists in the condition necessary for all real entia to exist: they must have an intimate union with their typical concept. This necessity arises from the fact that all the real entia under discussion are *known real entia* — if they were not known, they would not be. Indeed, if they were removed from all knowability, we would have the absurdity of having

something unthinkable. But the unthinkable is the impossible (*NE*, 2: 395, 424; 3: 1070), and the impossible cannot exist. If a finite ens is to be thinkable, it must subsist, but if the necessity of *being thinkable* is essential to it, it must also *be thought* — if it were not thought by some mind, it would not be thinkable, and to be thinkable it is sufficient that there is a mind in potency. But all minds cannot be in potency. If they were and none were in act, they could never pass from potency to act and consequently never think finite ens. If no mind could think it, it would not be thinkable. We must therefore admit a fully actual mind prior to minds in potency, and if there is a fully actual mind, it would think finite ens. Consequently, finite ens does not exist unless thought by some mind. The condition for *being thought*, which is necessary to the subsistence of finite ens in itself, is the dianoetical element, not invented by the mind but contained within the existence of the ens. Human beings always speak and reason about real entia in so far as *thought* by them, but to be thought is necessary to real ens. This is a first constitutive of real ens, given to it, as I have said, by objective being, by objectivity ([cf. 499–501, 521–522]).

611. Granted therefore that real ens is such only when thought, that is, it exists in the object, we predicate of it what is seen in the object and this makes it understood. But several essences *separate out* in the object. Hence, we say that in real ens there is a *real distinction* of these essences, although in reality the essences are a single thing constituting a single ens.

Dianoetical composition is therefore what is found in *real ens* because such ens is essentially in the object. Now, the same identical ens is both in the object (this is why we say it is thought) and outside the object. It is also seen as composite in the object but, outside the object, lacking this composition. We therefore say that outside the object it does not have this species of multiplicity but is one. On the other hand, we say that it has a dianoetical multiplicity through its identity: it cannot be separated from its object, from the conjunction through which it receives this multiplicity. Hence, these elements, separate in the object and unified in its realisation, are said not to be separate but *really distinct*.

I must add here an important consideration. I said that the dianoetical elements are not found divided in a real ens,

[611]

purely as real. This must be understood of the elements of non-personal entia which are incomplete subjects. In personal entia, however, we must bear in mind that there is an element which truly and really is separate from the rest, separate in itself and on its own. This element is the complete subject personal principle. The rest, joined to the personal principle, is not separate but makes one thing with the principle.

Hence, one element is really separate from another, but the other is not separate from the first. This relative separation is both real and dianoetical. The personal principle is constituted by the fact that it is separate and divided from the rest; it is therefore real. But it is also dianoetical because constituted by the mind and by its own consciousness, which themselves are constituted by the intuition of the object.

Article 9

Simplicity and composition in real things

612. Relative to what is simple and what is composite in real things, it is impossible, or at least of no help, to separate the discussion totally from the other kinds of composition and simplicity I have so far discussed, that is, objective, dialectical and dianoetical. These enter into every discussion about real entia. If we systematically separated them, the discussion would become exceedingly abstract and difficult. It will therefore be sufficient to indicate them when they are present. This will help to clarify them further.

Real entia are not always complete subjects. For example, neither extrasubjective things nor term-entia are complete. We must clearly understand therefore that a dialectical element always enters into the discussion whenever we speak about non-person entia as if they were true, complete subjects. This observation will avoid all equivocation.

Taking this for granted and concerning ourselves with all real entia, we must distribute them into two classes.

613. Some are constituted entia by the connection which unites different entities (whether these are dianoetical essences or are able to subsist even when separated). In this case, the

[612–613]

nature of such an ens, as well as that of one, lies in this *connection*. Entities joined together by this connection or principle do not *per se* constitute the ens in question; they are, however, its condition because there could be no connection unless there were entities to be connected. Thus, the connection, and therefore the ens, has an essential relationship with them.

Consideration of this class of entia gave rise to the ancient distinction between *form* and *matter*. The real connection (the unifying virtue) or principle is the form of such an ens; it formally constitutes the ens, and is the reference with which the name given to the ens is associated (*PSY*, 2: 735–822). On the other hand, the entities connected by the unifying virtue do not *per se* constitute this ens but are its integrating part and necessary condition. They can be considered by themselves as a rudiment of and predisposition for the constitution of the ens, that is, they are a kind of potentiality of the ens in so far as they are apt to receive the connection in which the act of the ens lies.

This unitive, real virtue, which constitutes both the subject (whether complete or incomplete) and the ens itself subjectively, is of such a nature that it can exist only in the entities it unites. It has therefore an existence *dependent* on something else, that is, on the entities which are not it, but which are also called its *matter*.²⁵⁰

Now, *unity*, which is common to every other ens, is fitting to this class of real entia, but not perfect *simplicity* because, if the unitive virtue depends on something else, it cannot be on its own. For the same reason this ens cannot be on its own; it has to be with the entities which it joins and unifies. Hence, although ens is always *one*, this ens is not totally simple but, in this respect, composite.

Clearly there is here no true contradiction in attributing to this ens *unity* on the one hand, and *multiplicity* of composition on the other. Unity is attributed to the *unifying virtue* which is the *act of ens* — multiplicity is attributed to the entities which

²⁵⁰ The Greek word ὕλη, that is, *forest*, taken to mean *matter*, contains the concept of a multitude not reduced to unity. The word τὰ στοιχεῖα has the same meaning. It is used to mean *matter* — not only corporeal matter but spiritual and ideal matter, as we can see in Aristotle, *Metaphy.*, 1: 6. Cf. Trendelenburg, *In Arist. De An.*, 1: 2, 7.

unite and in which there is no act of ens; the entities are inseparable conditions. Consequently, we are not simultaneously affirming and denying the same thing about the same subject under the same aspect. Let us now consider the second class of entia.

614. This class concerns entia in which the act of ens (the subject) does not lie in the union of many entities but terminates in itself. All multiplicity of composition is therefore excluded from such entia, to which pertain the common predicate of unity and that of *simplicity*.

To avoid equivocation we must note here that the words 'matter' and 'form', like all the other words of ancient ontology, were drawn from the observation of bodies. Substantive names are very often applied to bodies in so far as they have a given form, like a statue, a vase, a trident, a ring and suchlike. These names express the thought which considers the form as the ens, while the matter underlying the form is considered as an *essential condition*, not as the named ens. The act through which this ens is (the subject) lies in the form, and the form is the connection which unites the multiple entities in that given unity. This *connection*, that is, this form, expressed by a substantive name, has its own act which is considered by the mind as the constitutive act of that particular ens. But because this act, although real, is purely a unitive act of other entities, it *essentially* supposes other entitative acts prior to itself; for example, in our case, the act through which the corporeal elements composing the statue, or any of the other things I have mentioned, subsist.

Whenever the entitative act of the connection is supported by these prior and similarly entitative acts, the act of connection (in our case, the form) is called more appropriately 'substantial form' than 'substance'.

But I need to make other observations about this origin of the words 'form' and 'matter'.

615. 1. By virtue of formal and dialectical speech, the mind considers as *ens* whatever it pleases, even what is not an ens in itself, that is, not a real subject. There is nothing therefore, whether accidental or imaginary or even absurd, which cannot be taken as the subject of a proposition, for example: 'Red is a colour', 'Nothing is the exclusion of ens', 'What is contradictory cannot be thought', etc. In these propositions, 'red',

[614–615]

‘nothing’ and ‘what is contradictory’ are subjects. Although the subject is always considered as absolutely an ens, we need to decide whether the ens forming the subject under discussion is purely dialectical or is an ens in itself, independently of the manner of its conception.

But because there are many kinds of dialectical entia, we also need to see what kind of dialectical ens is under discussion. Thus, substantive names applied to bodies through a form given to them express entia which can correctly be called dialectical, not because the thing expressed is purely relative to the mind (form is a true determination of matter) but because the mind itself considers the form (in which the matter terminates) as the subjective act of the ens it names. The mind does this because of certain needs which impel the human being to act in this way.

Now there are many things which are true of dialectical ens but not of ens as such, prescinding from the way we conceive them. Contrary things are true of dialectical ens. This gives us another source of *antinomies*, which can be reconciled by means of the distinction between ens taken dialectically and ens as it is, prescinding from its dialectical manner of conception. Indeed, if we asked, ‘Is the *statue* an ens?’, reasons could be given for a negative and a positive answer without any final conclusion. We could prove that it is an ens by showing that it is called by a substantive name and that it does not differ accidentally, but totally from every other ens. On the other hand, we could deny that it is an ens by affirming that only matter is ens because it is the first act which makes the statue subsist, and because any form is accidental to the matter. This kind of argument was used by the sophists, who promised to defend the positive and negative aspects of every proposition. But we can answer this sophism as follows: if both the statue (that is, the form) and the matter are taken as dialectical subject, the two contradictory propositions are true because they simply exchange the subject. There is no contradiction when one proposition says, ‘The statue is an ens’, and the other, ‘The matter composing the statue is an ens’. But if we ask whether the statue and the matter are two entia, we must reply in the negative: the *statue* as form is an ens which supposes *some* matter as its condition for being an ens; the *matter* is an ens which supposes a form, that is, some limits which, as its condition, determine it as

such and such an ens. There are therefore two dialectical ways of conceiving the same ens. In the first, some matter is necessarily involved, but the kind of matter — wood rather than stone or metal — is *accidental*. In the second, some form is necessarily involved but the kind of form — a statue rather than a cube, or some other shape — is *accidental*. What therefore is the true ens, that is, the true and real subject in the inanimate statue? We have seen that term-entia are all *subjects by supposition* (*Logica*, 434). But what the mind supposes as a real subject is the *matter* defined by the form, because the matter pertains to the *reality* which always constitutes *finite ens*.

616. 2. The dialectical manner of mental conception therefore changes a limitation, any accident whatsoever (for example, the form of extension relative to corporeal matter), into an ens, although it is not an ens, or at least takes this limitation for the *base* of an ens, through the constitutive and specific act of the ens. For example, a statue is defined as an ens simply because we give great importance to the form of extension of the statue through the relationships which our thought gives to it; we do in fact give it more importance than the matter. The ancients did not meditate sufficiently on this dialectical manner of mental conception with which human beings move away from the nature proper to an ens. Indeed, Aristotle drew all his Logic from dialectical conception, taking it very often for a faithful representation of entia. This in turn forced the Scholastics into a dense thicket of innumerable subtleties and distinctions in order to free themselves from objections arising from the nature of entia as they are in themselves.

If we take the *form* and the *matter* of bodies dialectically, as I have said, we can consider the form (which in itself is only an accidental limitation) as a base constituting corporeal entia in their species. In this case both words, through an extension of their meaning, will apply to the two elements distinguishable in finite entia: the *potential element* and the *actual element*. In other words, we have noted that finite ens has in itself an *order of generation*. This order, seen in finite ens, is the following: 'Granted any entity, simple or multiple, but thinkable by our mind, it is possible to imagine that the entity acquires some new act which because of its importance to us attracts our attention. This is true no matter how the act has been acquired. With this

new act we can dialectically consider the entity as another ens. We then say that the acquired act is the *form* of this ens and that the entity of which we thought prior to the acquirement of this act is the *matter* of the ens'. In this way we generalise what happens in bodies, as I have said. Thus, prior to the form of the statue, the matter is thought as the potential element of the statue, that is, as the entity capable of receiving the form. The form of the statue is the *actual element*, the new act added to the matter and taken as the base of the new ens, as the entitative act, by means of certain interesting relationships added by our mind and of interest to us, as I was saying.

Consequently, everything thinkable in a given ens, prior to this final act constituting the new ens, and thought of as *in potency* to receiving this act, was called matter; the *act* was called form.

The two words 'matter' and 'form' were used not only in the order of substances but 1. in the order of accidents, 2. in the logical order, when for example the matter and form of propositions are distinguished, 3. in the grammatical order, when syllables are considered as the matter of a word, or sounds as the matter of construction, 4. in the moral order, when material sin is distinguished from formal sin, and 5. in any other order whatsoever of things about which human beings reason. All this shows that this distinction is as extensive as dialectical thought, whether this thought is purely dialectical, or is dialectical and simultaneously in conformity with the nature of entia in themselves.

It often happens, however, that the ancients and the Scholastics themselves were opposed to extending this meaning to the word 'matter'. St. Thomas expressly says that the word is inappropriately applied to intellectual natures and inappropriately extended to everything that is in potency in any way whatsoever, that is, has any kind of potentiality. According to St. Thomas, the proper meaning of 'matter' is 'that which is in pure potency', that is, without any act. For this reason he denies that intellectual natures are composed of matter and form, although they have some potency. On the other hand he allows that they are composite whenever the more extended sense is given to the word 'matter'.²⁵¹ Both words are so readily and commonly used

²⁵¹ 'If what is in potency, in any way whatsoever, is called matter, and every act is called form, then we must accept that the human soul and any created

for distinguishing potential and actual elements of ens that the Scholastics themselves, despite St. Thomas' observation, often use them in the very extended meaning that I have pointed out.

617. From all I have said therefore, the following is clear:

1. In many entia the *base* of an ens must be distinguished from the *appendices* which compose the ens.
2. The base of an ens (referred to by the *substantive* name given to the ens) is always one and simple, while the appendices can be multiple.
3. The distinction of the two elements composing these entia, that is, the *base* and the *appendices*, applies both to entia which are or can be real or are supposed as real, and to purely dialectical entia.

Article 10

Continuation: the teaching about the base and appendices
of entia

618. I must also add that the relationship between the *base* of an ens and its *appendices* is of many kinds in both purely dialectical entia and real entia (whether these are in act or in potency or supposed as such). The field is therefore open to an ontological study of great importance, that is, the determination of the various kinds of possible relationship between the *base* of an ens and its *appendices* in the order of real entia and the order of dialectical entia. But because the distinction between the base and appendices of an ens can be made only in finite entia (as we shall see later), properly speaking this study pertains to cosmology, the science of finite ens. However, the teaching about the infinite cannot be given without that of the finite; the human mind must begin here when it wants to determine the being which is intuited solely in a state of indetermination. Similarly, the teaching about ens in all its universality (properly speaking, ontology) also requires us to begin from finite beings. I must

substance is composed of matter and form. — If however matter is properly accepted as that which is purely potency, the human soul cannot be composed of matter and form"* (*Quodl.*, 3, 20).

[617–618]

therefore include this study here and refer to it when talking about the concept of simplicity.

I begin by saying that the relationship between the *base* of an ens and its *appendices* is first of all of two kinds.

619. I. There are certainly entia of such a kind that if we remove the base, the ens is removed, but not every ens, because the entities which are unified by this connection are entia that differ from the previous ens constituted by the connection as its base.

This happens whenever the base of the ens, which is the act constituting it and to which the substantive name refers, is lost and another base remains which through its difference constitutes another ens different from the first.

This second base, remaining after the destruction of the leading base that gave the ens its name, is of various kinds: sometimes only one base remains, sometimes several bases. In the first case, only one ens remains; in the second, several entia. Sometimes, the base that remains existed previously only in potency, and with the destruction of the leading base passes into act, constituting immediately another ens. And finally, at other times, the subordinate base was itself in act but, relatively to the leading base, was only at the level of a simple appendix. We can therefore classify this intimate composition of ens in the following way.

620. A. Entia in which, once the base is destroyed together with the ens specified by the base, other bases are immediately formed and therefore other previously non-existent entia.

1. This occurs when entia, considered as composed of only corporeal matter, have as their base or constitutive act the form which holds the matter together.²⁵²

²⁵² Here I suppose that the matter is held together by the form not because the form is what really holds it but because dialectically it is considered as the base of the ens and called statue or vase or anything else which signifies form. On the other hand, if it were necessary to consider as base of the ens what really holds the matter united and can be called 'force', the base would be unknown. This is the case when by means of a negative or undetermined concept, the base of material ens is considered as 'a force defused in extension'. If then, by means of a cosmological and ontological investigation, we want to determine and make positive the concept of *force*, we will arrive

Once the form of the matter has been removed, another form is immediately discovered which then serves as base for the new ens. Thus, if the form of the statue is removed from the statue, the statue will take other forms. The matter itself will be considered under other forms either as a complex of other entia if it is broken down into many pieces, or as a single ens if unbroken and given only one other form, like a wax statue reduced to the form of a sphere.

2. The same happens in entia composed of sensitive principles and extended terms. In my opinion, the matter is never separated from all sensitive principles. In keeping with the theory explained in *Psychology*, I say that whenever an animal dies through destruction of the organism, either the matter retains some partial organisations, which result in other animal entia or, whenever the animal is totally disorganised, the elements continue as extended terms of elementary principles which feel. Thus, when an animal is destroyed, the base of the ens perishes together with the ens itself and its name, while other bases and other entia, that is, other feeling principles take their place. These, which remain separate, because their terms are separate, individualise, and are thus constituted as other entia different from the previous ens, which has now perished.

621. B. Entia in which the base of the ens, that is, the base separated from its appendices, remains subsistent, and the separated appendices preserve their own base which, although it existed before, was considered not as a base but as an appendix of the leading base.

The subsistence of certain bases, even when separated from certain of their appendices which previously constituted part of their matter, is seen in entia composed of intellective soul and animate body. The base, that is, the perfectly simple intellective principle, has its own complete act independent of its appendices. It is therefore indestructible even when it loses its appendices. Here, the constitution of the *ens* remains identical. Hence, the real ens remains identical, although it has lost certain activities given it by its appendices. Nevertheless, when the base has

at sensitive principles, whose matter is term, as I explained in *Psychology*. In this case what I say in no. 2 applies.

[621]

all its appendices, it receives a substantive name which, in this case, is 'human being'. This name differs from the substantive name given to the *separated base*, that is, to the 'intellective soul'. Both names express, but only dialectically, two entia. In reality the word 'human being' expresses the same ens as the word 'intellective soul'; both express the same *base* of the ens, although one of the words expresses this *base* with more appendices than the other base.

When we say 'human being' therefore, our mind posits the ens in a composite of base and appendices. Consequently, such a substance, or ens, is destroyed when the composite is destroyed. But the substance, when considered in this way, is posited in the connection between an act which stands and subsists on its own, and some appendices of this act. The substance therefore results from two parts, one of which is the principal. This principal part is the base both of the ens and of the composite substance and is entitled to be called 'person'. Hence, this substance, even when destroyed and decomposed, remains the identical *person*, which is a simple substance.

Now, relative to the particular appendices we are discussing, that is, the animate body, it is not impossible to think that the intellective soul can be divided from this body by divine power without the body losing the quality of animal. The animal principle, which existed beforehand as an appendix, now becomes base of the new ens, that is, of the pure animal which would remain. But I think this can happen only through a miracle, granted what I said about it in *Psychology* (cf. 1: 672–680). Nevertheless, the absolute possibility of this ens is sufficient to give it a place in the present classification of entia according to the different modes of their decomposition, or separation from the appendices.

For the rest, if this miracle of decomposition were to happen, both the intellective soul and the animate body with its organisation intact would remain. We could therefore say with all truth and propriety that the human being is dead according to the correct concept of human death (discussed in *Psychology*, 1: 670–700). We could also say with equal truth that the body, as a human body, is dead because it would be deprived of human life; it would have animal but not human life.

622. II. There are other entia in which the *base*, that is, the

constitutive act of the ens, is so intimately joined to its appendices that they are annihilated when the base is annihilated. If we take as the principle of classification the intimate relationship between the base and the appendices, the entia can be subdivided as follows:

A. Entia whose base and appendices are so closely united that not only do the appendices cease when the base is removed but the appendices themselves are implicitly contained in the base. Hence, removing them totally means removing the base. As I said, these are *simple* entia. — Note that in the entia also under no. I, the base depends on the appendices, in the way that the form of the statue depends on the matter. But in the entia under discussion here the dependence or condition of existence is reciprocal: the appendices are necessary to the base, and the base is necessary to the appendices, if these are to remain in some kind of mode. Thus, the human soul (the rational principle) has as its appendices different potencies. These potencies, because implicitly contained in the principle, are annihilated with it. And if we consider the potencies as annihilated, we could no longer conceive the rational principle, which would be annihilated.

B. Entia which, with the removal of the base, also lose the appendices. However, some appendices could cease without the base perishing, in which case the ens would not be annihilated. This relationship between base and appendices is expressed by the words 'substance' and 'accident'. 'Substance' indicates the act, that is, the base, which names the ens; 'accident' names the appendices which can vary while the ens remains identical.

This happens in certain, purely dialectical entia and in real entia. It happens, for example, in dialectical entia when the base is seen as an abstract concept considered dialectically as substance, and the appendices are seen as its determinations considered as accidents. Thus, speaking in general about a statue, the definition of the statue contains the base or *dialectical substance*, or more properly, the *essence* of the ens. The statue may be big or small, of stone or metal, of a man or of a woman, beautiful or ugly, but these are all considered as variable accidents of the statue. They can vary because the statue must have one accident from among all opposite accidents. When this occurs, the

accidents are not accidents but appendices of the previous class, A. In the case of two opposite accidents, however, the statue need not have one rather than another.

All this shows clearly that ens, although always one, admits greater or less composition relative to its entitative appendices. Hence, in the case of entia which a) have several entitative appendices and b) are connected by a less close union of the appendices with the base, composition is in proportion to their distance.

On the other hand, those entia are more simple which a) have a smaller number of appendices and b) are connected by a closer union of the appendices with the base.

CHAPTER 8

Theory of Identity

Article 1

The formation of the concept of identity. Identity as the opposite of the concept of dialectical difference, and as the opposite of the concept of objective difference

623. What has been said so far involves the concept of identity, which I must explain.

This concept can be applied to both dialectical and real entia.

In itself it needs no explanation, because 'identical' is clearly the opposite of 'different'. Nevertheless, all the simplest concepts demand attention and perspicacity in their application and give unforeseen results because of their simplicity and ease.

We human beings would never have explicitly thought about *identity*, or formed this abstraction, unless we had first found *that which is different*. Just as we do not spontaneously move to direct our attention to abstract qualities without some need or stimulus, so without something to move us we would never have thought abstract identity (*PSY*, 2: 1456–1473). Our mind takes three steps in coming to the thought of identity.

a). *First step*. It apprehends different entia and, for whatever cause, reflects that they are different, that is, that one is not the other. This is the concept of *difference*, which implies its opposite, *identity*. Mentally, however, identity remains implicit in its opposite; we direct no separate attention to it. Before we think about the difference of perceived entia, both concepts (of identity and difference) lie implicit and undivided in the idea of being. The concept of *difference* is the first to become explicit; it is not necessary that both correlative concepts be explicitly present, that is, stand apart before the attention of the mind, although the non-explicit concept must, in some way, be implicit and undivided in the mind.

b). *Second step*. When the same object presents itself many times to our apprehension and attention, we already

have a first opportunity for recognising that this ens is identical to itself. This recognition enables us easily to abstract the concept of *identity* and name it in an abstract form. But if our spirit is to be able to carry out this abstraction, something must change either in the object or at least in the *relationships between the ens and the subject* thinking the ens. For example, the change could be in the number of times we think the ens or in our different mode of conceiving it. If nothing changed relative to the subject thinking the ens, we could not say the object was identical or different. But when an object presents itself many times to thought and the act with which the subject thinks the object changes, either time changes (and the subject thinking the object for a second and third time has in the meantime undergone some modifications), or finally the mode of thinking the object, or the form in which it is thought, changes. Along with these changes, the relationships between the object and the thinking subject change and multiply. None of these changes, however, has altered the object in itself; in no way has their multiplicity made the object multiple. The object has remained one; it is what it was before. Our mind now begins, for whatever cause, to compare this subjective multiplicity and variability with the object, which in itself does not really experience multiplicity and variability. If we want to indicate this condition of the object, which is totally immune from the differences found in the acts of the subject, we say that the ens or object is identical with itself. Thus the word 'identity' always implies some relationship with a *difference*; without this relationship, identity could never be thought. In fact, 'identity' expresses solely the *negation of difference*.

Here, we might ask whether *identity* is something positive rather than negative. Because *difference*, relative to ens, is something defective and lacking (I said the same about the concept of division and part (cf. 593)), its opposite, *identity*, seems necessarily to be something positive. Certainly, the identity of ens indicates lack of the defect present in the difference of ens. Nevertheless, lack of a defect proper to ens is not in itself something positive; the corresponding positive lies in ens without that defect. This gives us the following important truth for dialectics:

'A concept which contains a positive, standing on its own,

does not always correspond to a concept which contains a negative. Sometimes, the positive corresponding to the negative is superior to the import of the simple co-relation.'

c) *Third step*. Finally, the same ens can present itself many times to our attention and apprehension in varied forms or other diversity. In this case, our mind compares the frequently apprehended ens with these variations, and notes what has not changed and what has remained identical.

The last two steps of thought produce the concepts of two kinds of *identity*. The first kind is the opposite of any *dialectical difference*, because we suppose that the object remains totally the same; only our mental acts are multiple. The second kind is the opposite of any *objective difference*; the difference to which the identity refers concerns the object itself which presents some variety to our mind.

Article 2

The difficulty encountered in judgments about the identity of entia; the seat of identity; double kind of these judgments

624. When our mind makes judgments about the identity of entia, it often encounters serious and unexpected difficulties. We therefore need a principle by which we can recognise when the identity of an ens is lost, and when not lost despite certain differences arising in it.

But because the *realisation* of finite entia differs from their essence, one single principle cannot be found for finite entia *as real* and for finite entia *as essential*. Two principles must therefore be established.

1. Whenever there is any variety in essence, an ens or entity has lost its identity. If an ens or entity loses the least part of its essence, it is no longer that ens or entity but another.

2. Whenever a finite, real ens loses its subjective real base, identity is lost; the former ens is no longer.

The difficulty rests in deciding 1. whether the variation always present in the apprehension of the object, or in the object itself, is such that it removes what constitutes the *essence* of the ens, which is the seat of identity proper to entia in their

objective form, or 2. whether the variation removes the *base* of the ens, which is the seat of identity of entia in their *subjective* or *real form*. In the case of the *identity* of being itself, in its three forms, the seat of identity is again the *essence*, which also constitutes the reason for the three forms, as I have said (cf. book 1, c. 12). Hence, the seat of identity is always either the *essence* itself or the *base of the ens* because, when one of these changes, the ens is something else; the former ens is no longer.

625. I have distinguished two distinct kinds of identity: that which corresponds to subjective difference or variation and that which corresponds to objective difference or variation. There are therefore two supreme kinds of questions and judgments to be dealt with concerning identity. Because we can investigate either of the identities, the two generic questions can be expressed as follows:

First generic question concerning the identity of entia. Granted different acts of the mind, each of which has its object, we can ask: is the object identical for all acts of perfect identity in such a way that nothing changes in the object, but that all variation and multiplicity pertain to the acts of the subject repeatedly thinking the object? In other words, is variation and multiplicity *extrinsic* to the object?

Second generic question concerning the identity of entia. Granted many objects present to thought and manifesting some variety, does the ens in them remain *identical* despite their variation, and therefore despite some variation *intrinsic* to the object?

It is clear that the aim of the first of these two questions is to find a *perfect identity*. The question does not concern the variations present in the ens. It simply refers to the variation and difference arising either from the multiplicity of the acts of the subject conceiving it, or from the difference of the mode of conceiving it, or from the form in which it is conceived.

Both kinds of questions can be asked about any object whatsoever of thought, whether the object is an ens or a simple entity, whether it is being or the forms of being, or something concrete or abstract, or an ens in itself or a purely dialectical ens.

It follows from all this that the first rule for recognising the identity of objects, no matter which identity is in question, is to grasp and mentally retain 'the precise kind of object whose

identity is being sought'. The obstacle encountered in these investigations consists for the most part in confusing the object whose identity is being sought with other objects which our reasoning intermingles with it and which are bound with it through various relationships.

Article 3

Identity relative to extrinsic variation

626. Relative to the first kind of identity which the first kind of question concerns, I said that *extrinsic variation* (the opposite of this first identity) consists 'in the different relationship between the thinking subject and the thing thought. This difference of relationship does not cause any intrinsic change in the entity contained in the object, which is the thing thought'. The difference or variation is totally on the part of the acts of the thinking subject.

The variation conceivable in the acts of an ens thinking of an identical entity is of many kinds.

§1. *First kind of variation extrinsic to an entity as thought: multiplicity of the acts of thought; judgments on the identity of an entity as thought with multiple acts*

627. If anyone thinking of an entity actually ceases to think of it and then by renewing the act of thought thinks of it again without discovering anything new in it, he judges that the *entity* thought with these multiple acts is identical.

This judgment is true if the *entity* in question has not truly changed in itself. It could however have changed while still appearing the same, that is, the *identity* could be *apparent*. Here we meet the first difficulty concerning these judgments about *identity*. The difficulty consists precisely in assuring ourselves that we are dealing not with an appearance of identity but with a true identity of the thing we perceive or think.

Granted therefore that the entity has truly not changed, we

[626–627]

have ‘an *identical entity* present to repeated acts of thought which, although supposed equal by us, differ from each other; in other words, an identical entity in the face of a *numerical variation of acts*’.

The fact, however, that the entity has not truly changed and is therefore not apparent but truly and identically the previous entity does not depend on the mind thinking it but on the nature of the entity itself. Indeed, if the entity had suddenly undergone change without our noticing the change, it would not be identical but only appear to be so. The change then, granted it took place, would pertain to *intrinsic variation*. Consequently, ‘the judgments pronounced about identity opposite to extrinsic variation (the opposite of the variation present in the acts of the thinking subject) can be verified only by having recourse to judgments pronounced about identity which is the opposite of intrinsic variation’. In other words, the first judgments are verified only through dependence on the second judgments.

This is true for all kinds of variation extrinsic to the entity whose identity we wish to determine.

§2. *Second kind of variation extrinsic to the entity thought: different modes of thought; judgments about the identity of the entity thought with different modes*

628. An identical entity can therefore be thought several times not only with equal acts but with different modes. Whenever the *entity* thought remains the same, while only the mode with which it is thought changes, it is identical because variation in the mode of thinking does not necessarily make it another entity. The fact that an entity thought with different modes is the same and does not simply appear as such depends on its being truly free from *intrinsic variation*, as I have said above.

Granted therefore that the entity appears and is truly free of *intrinsic variation*, we have a second species within the first kind of identity, that is, ‘an entity identical relative to the different modes with which it is thought’. Although these modes make the entity multiple as seen by thought, because of the different

relationships which the entity acquires with thought, the entity remains identical.

629. Here a second difficulty is often encountered in declaring what is true in this species of judgments.

The difficulty is this: 'The basic modes of human thought are three: *intuition*, *perception* and *reflection*. But these, strictly speaking, are different modes of thought solely because something changes in the term of thought. Thus, *perception* adds reality to human intuition, and *reflection* itself would be a truly different mode of thinking only if some new relationship were either added to the object, or restricted or analysed or synthesised the object, etc.' (*PSY*, 2: 1032). Indeed, 'the principle does not change either in itself or in its acts unless its term changes in a corresponding mode'; this ontological principle governing the nature of entia is of supreme importance. 'But if different modes of thought suppose some change in the term of thought, how can this term preserve its identity?'

To reply to this difficulty we must recall the rule I formulated as the first for recognising the identity of objects: 'The object whose identity is being sought must first of all be accurately defined'.

Different modes of thinking cannot have an entirely identical term because the term necessarily undergoes at least some change in its relationships with other things if we are to think it in a different mode. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the rule, we can easily understand that an identical element can be present in the object to which the different modes of thinking refer. Grasping this element, and judging it identical relative to the different modes with which it is thought, is precisely to apply the prescribed rule, that is, to define exactly the object of which the identity is predicated. If, however, another object is posited in place of this *element*, which is the term common to all modes of thought, the question 'Is the object identical?' must receive a negative answer; in other words, we must deny that the object is an identical object.

On the other hand, when we have recognised the identical *element* present in different objects corresponding to different modes of thinking, another question immediately presents itself: 'What meaning does this identical element have in the objects corresponding to the different modes of thinking?', that

is, is the element such that it constitutes the *essence* or *base* of the ens as thought? If the answer is 'yes', identity is predicated of the ens and we truthfully say that in all the modes the ens as thought is identical. If the answer is 'no', the same ens is no longer thought. In this last case, the question is of another kind, because truthfully the objects of the different modes of thinking no longer have only the variation corresponding to the different modes with which they are thought; they have an *intrinsic difference* independent of the different modes of thinking.

For example, if I think *man* in the *intuitive mode*, I am thinking the idea of man. If I think a real human being, I am thinking in the *perceptive mode*. The common, identical element in the objects of these two modes of thought is the *essence* of man; the identical *essence* has always been present to me in both modes. I can therefore say accurately that I have thought the *identical ens* with two different acts and modes of thought. On the other hand, if I *perceived* a real human being and then by means of abstractive reflection formed the idea of *animality*, I would not, with this idea, be thinking the same ens I previously perceived. Here, the *identical element* would be simply *animality*, which constitutes neither the *essence* nor the *base* of the ens 'man'.

630. We can therefore ask two series of questions about the *identity* found in objects corresponding to the different modes of thought. They are:

1. Questions which investigate the kind of identical element present in objects which a) differ from each other solely through the different mode with which they are thought, or b) constitute through their variation the different modes of thought.

2. Questions which investigate whether this element constitutes one and the same ens, that is, whether the ens, although thought in different modes, can be called identical.

The first series of questions admits a general solution, that is, the solution can be reduced to a single formula, as follows:

'Varieties of objects which constitute different modes of thought can be reduced to those variations in which, relative to any thing, we think more according to one mode than according to another. At the same time while we think more of some thing under one aspect in the same mode, we can think of it as less under another aspect. Thus, with the mode of intuition, we

normally think of something more than extension, and with the mode of perception something more than comprehension, and with the mode of reflection something less and more depending on whether we abstract or synthesise or carry out other operations. What we think of as more, by means of each mode relative to the other modes, constitutes the *different element* in the objects. What remains, when everything thought as more has been removed, is the *identical element*.

The second series of questions, 'Is there identity of ens?', that is, 'Is the identical element *ens*?', requires that we first define the ens under discussion, because the word 'ens' admits different definitions. The most universal definition has been given by me as: 'Ens is that which is'. Hence, the response to each definition will differ. This returns us to the first rule; we must clearly define 'the object with which the question of identity is concerned'. However, if we are dealing with a *complete ens*, that is, an ens which subsists or can subsist, the answer is found by means of the same rule: 'If the *identical element* is the *essence* or the *base* of the complete ens, the same ens is thought with different modes. If the identical element is not the essence or the base, we are not thinking the same ens.' We can also ask, 'Is the ens identical in the different modes?' If in this case the ens is outside the *identical element*, the answer is clearly negative.

631. If for example we have two thoughts, one of which is the intuition of animal, the other of man, and ask whether we are thinking something identical with these two thoughts, we have to define, as the first rule tells us, the precise object which the identity concerns. Because, in our case, the object can be triple, we have three different questions:

1. Is the identical element in the two thoughts animal?
2. Is it man?
3. Is it animal but limited to the human species?

The answer to the first question is 'no', because in the thought of pure animal, man does not exist either potentially or virtually. Intelligence can never be drawn from the concept of animal; it must be added from elsewhere if man is to be constituted. Intelligence, that is, rationality, is that 'something more' in the second thought that constitutes what is *different*, not what is *identical*.

The answer to the third question is also 'no' because in the

first thought, in which only animal is thought, determination proper to the human species does not exist either in act or in potency simply because intelligence is not virtually comprised in animal. This specification is 'something more' which is thought with the second thought, and this 'more' constitutes what is *different*, not what is *identical*. But if instead of man, we thought a *sheep* with the second thought, this species would be virtually comprised in the genus. We could then say that the identical sheep-ens was thought with both thoughts but in two different modes: in the first thought *virtually*, in the second *actually*.

The answer to the second question is 'yes'. *Animal* is an identical idea thought in the two thoughts but in a different mode. In the first thought it is thought as *term* on which our attention rests; in the second, as *means*, which contains the term of the thought, man. In these two thoughts therefore we find an *identical* element which, however, is not a complete ens. Hence we cannot say we think the same ens with the two thoughts. Furthermore, although this *element* can be called a common, identical object of the two thoughts, it cannot be called an *identical* term. It is a term of the first thought in which the attention rests on the idea of animal as genus but is not a term of the other thought in which attention rests not on animal as genus but simultaneously on a specific animal. In the second thought there is the added determination of rationality, which completes the concept of man.

Consequently, in so far as several thoughts have a totally identical object, they are *equal thoughts*, differing only in number. In so far as they have in their objects a *different element*, they are called *different thoughts*. Finally, in so far as they have an *identical element* in objects that are not totally identical, they are called *different modes of thought*.

632. From all this we can see that *modes of thought* can be classified according to various differences, which constitute the basis of the classification.

A first classification is taken from the different rational faculties of the spirit. This basis of classification gives us the three modes already mentioned: *intuition*, *perception* and *reflection*, which is subdivided into many functions (*PSY*, 2: 1023 ss.).

A second classification of the modes of thought is taken from

an object which manifests itself with different light. Here we have modes of thinking *virtually* and *actually*. In order to recognise whether what we think *virtually* is identical to what we think *actually*, we must 1. be certain that everything we think actually is contained in what we think virtually, with nothing added from outside, as in the example given of animal in general and man as animal which does not totally exist in the virtuality of animal; and 2. note whether the *actuality* is essential to the ens or entity whose identity we are seeking. If it is essential, the ens is not thought in the virtual thought because that which constitutes the essence of the object of the actual thought is lacking. For example, a feeling (the colour red, for instance) cannot be thought in potency because it is proper to the colour red to be in act. This explains why those born blind cannot think the colour. In the same way, to think *being in all its universality* and to think *God* is not to think an identical object. God may indeed be virtually comprised in the concept of being, but he is not thought with it because *actuality* is essential to God, and if we do not think his actuality, we do not think him.

A third but no less important classification is taken from the difference between the *term* of thought and the *object* of thought. A given entity can be thought as object which is also a *term* of thought where precisely the attention of our thought rests and ends. The entity can also be thought as object which is not a term of thought, but contains the term and is a means for knowing it, for example, when we need genus in order to conceive species.

Hence, it is one thing to investigate whether we think an identical term of thought, but another to investigate whether we think only an *identical* object. For example, in all our thoughts we think *being in all its universality* but we do not think it as object in all of them — in the majority we think it as container, means and condition of the thought of the term. To repeat therefore, we must first define the particular entity whose identity we are seeking.

A fourth classification of the modes of thought is taken from analytical and synthetical thought: we can think the same thing in its unity and as analysed into the parts forming the unity. This classification is the *identity* of judgments, much used in dialectics.

§3. *The dialectical use of identity relative to the two modes of thought, analytical and synthetical*

633. The importance of this identity of the object relative to the two modes of thought, analytical and synthetical, is so great that many philosophers considered it the first principle of human reasoning. In fact, no one denies that it is among the first and most universal principles (*Logica*, 338, 344–360).

Relative to purely dialectical entia, the question consists in knowing whether a dialectical ens, for example an accident, a relationship, a negation, etc., taken as entia and constituting the subject under discussion, remains the same in different propositions.

The question applies to any ens whatever, including real ens considered dialectically. Every proposition claims to assert an identity between the subject and the predicate. The truth of the proposition is demonstrated by proving that this identity exists; if the identity is shown not to exist, the proposition is false (*Logica*, 402 ss.).

Every syllogism claims to demonstrate that two entities identical to a third are identical to each other. To acknowledge this truth is to acknowledge the claim of the syllogism; to acknowledge that there is no identity is to acknowledge that the syllogism is defective and cannot be used as proof.

Thus, application of identity becomes the principle presiding over all human reasoning and judges it as either effective or ineffective, true or false.

Logic is the science that teaches us how to use the concept of identity for this dialectical purpose.

It does this mainly by distinguishing between *absolute* and *partial identity*. The greatest difficulty consists in finding precisely the partial identity that we claim to assert with the proposition or argument. We have no difficulty in saying, 'A human being is a human being', because here we are dealing with full identity, with the synthesis itself (a human being) repeated without analysis. But if we say, 'A human being is fallible', we are dealing with partial identity. We must therefore verify whether this quality of fallibility conceived in the abstract is found identical in the concrete reality of the human

being. Partial identities are sometimes very difficult to ascertain by thought, or require long proofs for verification.

634. Among Scholastics the difficulty of verifying partial identity has given rise to unsolvable questions. I will deal with only one of them.

The Scotists posited the principle that 'negation can never be identified with real ens'. To indicate the worth of this principle, we must note that it refers to *partial identity* because, relative to total identity, it was never called in doubt by anybody nor can it be.

Because only a partial identity was involved, the Thomists rightly attacked the principle; they distinguished between a *positive* and a *negative identity*.

In fact, nothing prevents us from expressing and determining a real ens by means of negation.

If we are dealing with a finite real, we can think and pronounce its limitations in the form of negation. Indeed, the very word 'finite' negates the fullness of being, and the two words 'finite ens' can be used to determine all real entia which are not absolute being. There is therefore a partial identity between these real entia and the negation.

If we are dealing with infinite ens, we must consider that the negation of negation identifies with affirmation. In fact, in order to attain the concept of infinite ens, the human mind accumulates negations of negations. We must therefore distinguish the *dialectical formula*, which our mind uses to think the infinite, from the *result* of the same formula, which is the infinite itself. Relative to the infinite, no simple negation can have either total or partial identity. But there is a dialectical identity between the formula and the infinite as simply *indicated* to the human mind, because the formula, as a complex of negations, truly indicates to our mind the infinite which has no negation.

The Scotists deduced from their principle that *one* taken formally had to be something positive, that is, as something which is really the same as ens.²⁵³ This was a contradiction because one, as distinct from ens, is solely an abstract which we think while prescinding from ens. When they spoke of one in the neuter gender, they were talking about substantivated one, not about

²⁵³ Duns Scotus, in 4 *Metaph.*

the abstract quality — they were talking about ens-as-one, not solely about one.

The Thomists, on the other hand, or some of them, noting the abstract quality of one, distinguished between positive and negative identity. According to them, one was negatively identical with ens in so far as one could not mean or rather indicate anything other than ens.²⁵⁴ In fact the quality proper to something indicates the thing of which it is quality and implies its presence to itself because it is unable to stand without it. This explains why one is identified with ens.

Article 4

Identity relative to intrinsic variation

635. So far I have dealt with identity found solely in comparing extrinsic variation, that is, the variation which is a necessary condition for constituting a different mode of thought. I must now speak about the second kind of identity, found in comparing intrinsic variation, that is, variation existing in the same entity whose identity we are seeking.

I will first give some general rules for guiding judgments about this second genus of identity and then give some applications of these rules.

§1. *General rules for knowing the identity of entia relative to their intrinsic variation*

636. From what has been said, we can conclude as follows:

1. Some entia are simple, others composite.
2. Among composite entia, some are more or less composite in so far as a) they are more [or less] entitative

²⁵⁴ Cajetan says: 'Being the same as something can come about in two ways, positively and negatively. One however is formally the same as ens negatively. It does not indicate another nature but the same nature in a different mode, as we find in the fourth book of *Metaphysics*'* (*In Sum. S. Th.*, I, 11, 1.).

appendices, and b) the connection between these appendices and the base of the ens is more or less broad ([cf. 622]).

3. Simple or composite ens is constituted by an act which cannot lack unity, that is, every ens is one.

4. In composite entia, the act constituting ens is called a *base*; everything that differs from the act is called an entitative *appendix*. But in simple entia, the word 'base' used with reference to the appendices is not applicable because simple entia do not have appendices; they are, as it were, all base. There remains therefore only the *constitutive act*, which is the ens itself.

These principles determine the following rules for judging the identity or diversity of entia.

A. For composite entia:

First Rule. Whenever the base of a composite ens has been destroyed, even if other entia remain, the ens has lost its identity, and the remaining entia differ from the first, which has perished.

We can err in this judgment, however, when we see that what was previously an appendix of the ens still remains. If these appendices are taken for the ens, there seems to be an identity between the remaining matter (the appendices) and the previous ens. We have to know therefore how to distinguish carefully the appendices from the base of the ens and how to cut off the base mentally in such a way as to leave no presence of the appendices. This observation applies also to the following rule.

Second Rule. Whenever an ens is constituted, that is, a new base is superimposed on what was previously present, the ens constituted by this new base is a new ens. The previous ens or entia have lost their identity, although illusorily they can still seem to exist in so far as they are changed into the appendices of the new ens. They have thus ceased to be entia, or certainly have ceased to be the previous entia.

Third Rule. If the appendices change but not the base of the ens, the identity is preserved.

B. Relative to simple entia:

First Rule. These entia cannot lose their identity through

composition or decomposition of the base and appendices because they have only a constitutive act, without appendices.

Second Rule. If the base of the simple ens can be united with or separated from other bases, it can lose its identity 1. through the union of several equal bases into one, 2. through a new actuality of the base itself, when this new actuality itself is taken as an increase of the base, and 3. through a superior base uniting itself with the inferior base so as to constitute a single base.

Third Rule. If the base of the simple ens cannot in any way be modified or changed, it preserves a perpetual identity with itself, as happens with absolute Ens, in which nothing can change.

§2. *Two kinds of intrinsic variation: variation consisting in the changes which take place in the ens itself, and variation consisting in the multiplicity found in the same identical ens*

637. In investigating the *identity* of an ens when comparing its intrinsic *variation*, we must first distinguish two species of variation. One arises in the ens through the modifications it undergoes while remaining identical (nearly all finite entia are subject to these modifications); the other is found in unchangeable ens itself, as in infinite ens which subsists in three modes.

Two questions arise:

1. How do we prove that an ens remains identical despite the different changes which take place in it? I have dealt with this in *Psychology* (2: 866 ss.).

2. How do we prove that an ens remains identical in several modes of being? I have answered this question in the book on the primal forms of being, and elsewhere.

638. However, I must add that the variation of the three forms present in identical being, the *variation intrinsic* to ens itself, contains the ultimate reason and the origin of what I have called *external variation*, that is, relative to different acts and modes of thought. Thought arises precisely from the relationship between the forms; it presupposes a subjective thinking-form in close union with an objective thought-form. Through this close relationship and union, that is, through this synthesis, ens in its

objective form receives from the subjective form. But this reception differs according as the entia considered in the two forms differ. In the case of absolute Ens, it generates objective ens by means of thought (which is itself), and creates finite entia. But this is not the case with man as ens in the subjective form; he cannot create entia with his thought — entia are given to him. All he can do is use different modes of thought to make entia into a network, so to speak, of positive and negative relationships. Thus, entia receive something from human thought also, but they remain what they are in themselves, without that thought.

Human thought, with its different modes, also does this relative to simple entia. It dismantles simple ens (as well as composite ens) and reunites the parts. It considers an ens in relationship with other entia and cuts it off from them. If we are dealing with formal or material parts or elements, a question then arises about the possible identity between these elements and the ens itself. The answer is found by turning to the rules I gave concerning identity relative to extrinsic variation. Among questions of this kind there are some which concern supremely simple and absolute ens, that is, God. This is the case when we ask if an attribute, for example, wisdom, is God, and predicate identity. Here, we are saying that God is wisdom and at the same time Wisdom is God. In theology I will discuss how this identity is verified. But if we are not dealing with a supremely simple ens, the element, although formal, is distinguished as different from the ens itself, at least in many cases resulting from the rules I have given.

In fact, because the constitutive act of simple ens is essentially one (cf. 595 ss., 614), it is no longer what it was previously, if it lacks something; it has been split (cf. 586–587). In this case, the simple ens lacks part of its essence. According to the rule I have given, this is sufficient for it to be no longer itself, and to have lost its identity.

What now remains before the mind is not a complete but a diminished ens; the mind simply considers it as ens in a dialectical mode.

639. I will give some examples to show how the identity of ens is lost through the mode of abstract thought.

a) If we take bodies (extrasubjective entia) and abstract

[639]

from all their forms as well as their quantity, a concept of *corporeal first matter* remains in our mind which we consider as a simple ens. But this ens is not identical with any body in the universe and cannot therefore be called a body. It is not in fact an ens in itself; only our mind makes it such, dialectically. This lack of identity arises because a body must have an act of size and of form, etc. If it lacks these actualities, it lacks something essential to body.

b) If we take animals (imperfect, subjective entia) and prescind from every term of their feeling, the animal no longer remains. Nevertheless we can still think a feeling principle purely in potency. This totally potential principle which feels nothing cannot be called animal or animate, and preserves no identity with the ens called animal or animate. Thus, it does not really exist in itself. It remains something present to the mind which thinks it and considers it as an undetermined ens which the mind takes dialectically as an ens. Here again, identity is lacking, because there is no term, and no act of the principle directed to the term which pertains to the *essence* of animal.

c) The same must be said about intellective entia when we think of them and remove every object from them. As a result, they do not think nor can they think. The intellective principle considered by the mind after this amputation is not an ens identical with its previous state. Indeed, the intellective principle is no longer present to the mind, which now thinks only a potential principle of this purely dialectical ens. Once again, without an object, an act essential to intellective ens is lacking. However, that which stands before the mind is not nothing; it is not the thinking subject, nor a modification or production of the subject: it is an undetermined reality in the idea.

d) I have applied the same teaching to being. If we think being with its proper terms, we have the whole constitutive act of being, which is absolute being. If we strip it of its proper and improper terms, we certainly no longer have present to our thought the same absolute being we thought previously; its identity is lost because we no longer think the whole constitutive, supremely simple act of divine essence. Instead, we think an initial being which does not merge into any term and only has the virtue of merging and completing itself either

1. absolutely in its proper terms, by which God is restored present to our mind, or 2. relatively with its improper terms, by which finite entia are presented to our mind. These three objects of thought, *being that is severed from its terms*, *absolute being* and finite *relative being*, are not therefore identical entia but three different entia: finite ens and infinite ens are different real entia, and being that is severed from its terms is a beginning of ens. The mind itself does not conceive this being as an ens in itself but as an ens in itself relative only to the mind whose object it is. Consequently it is different from the mind.

Article 5

The concept 'becoming'

640. The teaching about the simplicity and identity of entia opens the way to understanding the concept 'becoming'. Misunderstanding of this concept resulted in numerous errors, the most recent of which are those of the Hegelian school.

We have seen that *intrinsic variation* is twofold: the variation of forms containing the same ens, and the variation of changes undergone by the same ens. Among these changes, we can think of the change by which an ens ceases to exist, and only some appendices remain to constitute a new ens. This is the genuine concept of 'becoming', relative to ens. But because certain minds, lost in confused reflection, abuse the concept, we must subject it to the light of analysis and remove the obscurity which causes the error.

The concept 'becoming' results from elements which are partly real (that is, refer to real things), partly ideal and partly purely mental. When these elements are taken confusedly, the concept results in a patchwork of innumerable mistakes: unaware, our thought passes from the order of real things to that of ideal things, and then from either of these orders to that of mental things. Finally, in one of the orders we reach a conclusion which is valid only for the other order. The result is endless paradoxes and sophisms.

641. Let us first consider the concept in itself and then consider the applications to the three orders.

[640–641]

‘An ens becomes another ens’.

This proposition is strictly true only if there is identity between the ens that becomes and the ens that has become. In every true proposition there must be an identity between the predicate and the subject (*Logica*, 203–205, 348–357, 403–408). But this is impossible because the ens which has become is another ens, different from the ens which becomes. They are therefore two entia, while ens is essentially one. Nor can the form of the proposition be validly changed to ‘an ens is becoming another ens’ or ‘an ens has become another ens’. The second of these two forms contains the same absurdity because the *ens which has become* is not the previous ens. Consequently, the previous ens has not become, because the *ens which has become* is not the ens to which the act of becoming is attributed. Any identity of judgment is still lacking. In the case of the first form (‘an ens is becoming another ens’), the ens remains the previous ens as long as the ens is only becoming. When it has finished its act, it is annihilated and therefore is never ‘becoming another ens’; it is simply in the act of being annihilated — whatever remains after it, is not that ens. If it can never have become another ens, it cannot be becoming. The Hegelians who make ‘becoming’ the principle of philosophy base the science on a concept which in its strict pronouncement is an absurdity. In fact they are forced to confess that their philosophy is a patchwork of contradictions, but boast about it as if it were a great discovery.

Someone may retort that the proposition, ‘An ens which becomes is that which has become’, is not the same as the other proposition, ‘An ens becomes another ens.’ I can admit some differences in the two propositions, but if the first is not true, neither is the second, because the second implies the first. However, let us demonstrate again the impossibility of the second.

In ‘an ens becomes another ens’, the other ens is not the ens which becomes, otherwise it would not be another ens. If we indicate the ens which becomes with the letter A, the proposition, ‘An ens becomes another’, can be expressed as ‘A becomes non-A’. Now to become non-A means to cease to be A, which means that A is annihilated. Becoming another ens, therefore, is first of all an annihilation. But that which is annihilated cannot

become another ens. Consequently, as I said, the proposition implies an inevitable contradiction because it contains two contradictory things: annihilation and 'becoming another'.

642. The objector may insist that becoming another ens expresses a movement which passes through nothing: ens which becomes moves in such a way that it first draws nearer to nothing until it reaches nothing; then, once it has reached nothing, another ens arises from this nothing. Hence, 'nothing' is the end of the first ens and the beginning of the second; it is the point of continuation or indifference between the two entia. This is in fact how the Hegelians express themselves. But in doing so, they state two absurdities instead of one: they must say either that the first ens plus the nothing in which it finishes plus the second ens which arises from the nothing are an identical subject of the movement, or else that the three terms have no identity. If the terms were identical, the proposition, 'An ens becomes nothing, and from this nothing another ens becomes', would be [true] because this supposition has one subject only which becomes; if it were not identical and one, it would not be the only subject. But if the first ens has no identity with nothing, and nothing has no identity with the second ens, the proposition is false because it posits only one identical subject of the whole movement. The same ens which moves to become nothing, moves, after becoming nothing, to become another ens. To say, however, that the first ens and nothing and the second ens are all identical is to utter two absurdities. Saying that the ens is identical to nothing is absurd because when the ens is annihilated, it no longer is, and if it no longer is, the previous ens no longer is. Saying that nothing is identical to the new ens is also absurd for the same reason. In fact, nothing denies ens, and ens affirms itself. Denial and affirmation cannot be identical precisely because, as contradictory, they are different in the highest degree; difference means non-identity.

The whole of Hegelianism is based therefore on a doubly absurd proposition.

But does this exclude every meaning of the word 'becoming'? Why do we use it so much and indeed why can we scarcely speak without it?

I definitely do not exclude the popular use of the word. But we need to clarify the sense in which it is used. Then we shall see

even more clearly that although the word is acceptable in ordinary speech, it cannot be introduced into philosophy.

643. I Let us begin with finite, real entia.

A. I said that these entia are composed of a *base* and of *appendices* and that an ens does not lose its identity except when the base is removed. I also said that in certain entia the appendices vary while the base remains unchanged ([cf. 622] B). In this last case, we correctly say that an ens changes but not that it becomes another ens. In the first case, we say for the sake of brevity that it becomes another ens. This figure of speech used in common speech does not exactly express the fact; on the contrary it involves the contradictions I have indicated. For greater clarity, let us first discuss entia whose appendices vary.

If an inferior base is united to a superior base and only one ens results from this conjunction, a change takes place in the two bases which have become one base. The change relative to the superior base is naturally very different from that relative to the inferior base; the superior base remains, after the conjunction, as base of the ens. Hence the ens formed by this base has preserved its identity, while the constitutive act of the ens has acquired a new power and a new value by means of the intimate union contracted with the act constitutive of the inferior base. Because this new power affects the act which makes the ens subsist, it can be called an *increase of substance*. Whenever a superior base therefore is increased in power through conjunction with an inferior base, the substance increases without the identity of the ens being lost.

On the other hand, the inferior base, united and unified with a superior base, by itself no longer constitutes an ens. Hence the ens which it first formed no longer exists; only the ens constituted by the superior base exists. This superior base, relative to the inferior to which it is united, is called *substantial form* of the latter which itself has ceased to be substantial form of an ens.

Two things must therefore be considered: the *substantial change* which the ens constituted by the superior base has undergone without loss of identity, and the *entia change* which the ens constituted by the inferior base has undergone. This last change consists in the cessation of existence, that is, in the loss of the ens' identity because a new substantial form has come to it.

644. The substantial change which arises in the superior ens without loss to its identity gives rise in the spirit to the following doubt: 'If the base of the ens, which is the constitutive act of the ens, acquires new power with a consequent increase to the substantial part of the ens, how does the ens remain identical? Or, if it is identical, how can we say that it is perfectly one when it can be composed of one and of two?' For example, the intellectual soul separated from animality is an ens. When the animal sensitive principle (the inferior base) is joined to this animality, the intellectual soul acquires the sensitive power to move the body, a power which it did not previously possess. This addition to the human soul is an increase of substance because the rational principle, which is the base of the ens 'man' and something more than the merely intellectual principle, has become the constitutive base of the ens. The question arises therefore: 'Does the soul remain identical when separated from and united to animality?'

Before answering the question, some distinctions must be made:

1. *Accident*, *substance* and *ens* are three different concepts.
2. The constitutive act or *base* of an ens must be located only in the immanent *supreme principle* present in the reality of the ens itself.

All the activities of the ens depend on this supreme principle which is their largest container. If the ens in question is intellectual, consciousness of its own identity arises in it from this supreme principle. In the case of the human soul, this real, subjective, supreme principle is the intellectual principle alone, to which the feeling principle is subordinate. Hence, even the separated soul, granted that it may reflect upon itself, is made conscious of its own identity.

3. In principle-entia, the word 'substance' includes not only this one subjective, supreme principle containing the rest, but also all the immanent activity with which it can be endowed, that is, which it can contain within itself.

4. Finally, *substance* is distinguished from *accidents* because these are either transient acts or such that even when they change they do not remove or diminish either the immanent activity of the principle or the activity which the principle

contains in an immanent mode. When the soul, that is, the intellective principle, is joined to the feeling principle (and the two principles become one) (*PSY*, 1: 294–298, 639–644), the intellective principle, as container, remains the same but its content is increased; it has therefore acquired a new power. It (and consequently the ens it has constituted) has preserved its identity but its substance has increased because its *immanent activity* has increased. This gives the following corollary:

‘Finite substances are not altogether invariable, although they are considered invariable relative to the accidents. They admit some increase and diminution without, however, the identity of the ens being inevitably destroyed. This variability is manifest when finite substances are considered in relationship to the first constitutive principle of the ens and to the different quantity of immanent activity which the ens can contain’ (*NE*, 2: 612–613).

645. We have therefore established the ontological fact that because of the constancy of the supreme principle the substance of an ens admits some increase or diminution without loss of the identity of the ens. This happens when a superior base unites with an inferior base. Let us now consider what happens to the inferior base when it unites and unifies with a superior base.

I said that the inferior base, when taken over by a superior base, ceases to be the base of an ens and consequently the substantial form; the superior base becomes its *substantial form*. Thus, the identity of the ens perishes and a new ens results. This change is expressed briefly by the word ‘becoming’.

In fact, if we consider an animal principle as first divided from every intellective principle and then united with such a principle, we find the following:

1. The animal principle, when alone, constituted the base of an ens (whether a complete ens or not does not matter).

2. When joined to an intellective principle, this animal principle has ceased to be base of an ens; it has become the appendix or content of an ens superior to it.

Although the previous ens is now no longer present, the human mind can consider this appendix or this immanent, contained activity as an ens, and ask what kind of change the ens has undergone. And although the mind does all this through pre-tence or dialectical hypothesis, it tells itself that, despite the continuing presence of an animal principle, this principle has,

through its intimate union with the superior ens, acquired a new *substantial form*, a new dignity, an ontological relationship which changes its nature and species.

In this mental discourse, the *subject* is purely dialectical and the *predicate* real. In other words, the mind takes what is an appendix and dialectically makes it an ens, that is, subject of the discourse. Next, it attributes to this dialectical ens a real, substantial form. This form consists in the ontological conjunction of the ens with the intellectual principle which has become its real, substantial form. Relative to this form, the dialectical ens possesses the concept of matter.

Here we have an example of the mode and meaning with which the word 'becoming', applied to entia, can be used. If we were to say that the feeling, animal principle has *become* rational, we would be saying something that strictly speaking is certainly not valid, but in dialectical use is tolerable. It is not valid because the feeling principle, when united to the intellectual principle, has ceased to be an ens. However, after the ens has ceased and, as a result, the identity proper to it has been lost, it remains as matter of another ens. Nevertheless, the mind, which takes this matter as subject of the discourse, speaks about it as if it were an ens. The real ens therefore has not become anything nor has it been annihilated; it has become dialectical ens which, supposed by the mind, has remained. The mind therefore could consider the real ens identical whether disunited from the intellectual principle or after union with it, although in reality the ens is not identical. Such suppositions can indeed be made by the mind because of the way in which it has to conceive and speak. It can of course destroy these suppositions with a higher reflection and thus correct the defect of human discourse.

646. This way of speaking, although not strictly true, is true as dialectical supposition, and finds some support also in the nature of things. I have said that the generation of the human soul can be conceived through progressive levels, from the imperfect to the perfect. First, there is the feeling principle which, once it has attained its perfection with the perfection of the organism, receives the intuition of being and is thus made intellectual and rational (*PSY*, 1: 672–675). It is true (as I have shown) that the feeling principle, immediately it receives this intuition, loses its individuality; the ens that remains is no

longer the sensitive principle but a rational ens (*ibid.*, 676–680). This explains why St. Thomas can say that one soul corrupts in the foetus, and another comes in its place. The mind is therefore given the impression that the *sensitive principle* has become a *rational principle*, that it has been converted into another. It has indeed undergone a permutation through which there was first itself and then the rational ens. But this always happens for the reason I have given: the mind, by means of its dialectical power, considers the sensitive principle as ens, even after the principle has become matter of another ens. It therefore considers the principle as identical, because it is materially, although not formally, identical.

This example indicates how the word ‘become’ is applied in common speech to *matter* and to the *appendices of entia*, but not to entia themselves. The following principle can therefore be laid down:

‘Ens is, or is not; it never becomes, nor does it become another ens. But the matter, or the appendices of entia, become, that is, they become one ens or another.’

However, matter by itself is never a real ens. The mind considers it as such because of the way we have to speak. Hence, the statement ‘matter becomes’ is purely a dialectical truth upon which an absolute system of truth cannot in any way be founded, nor a true ontology as Georg Hegel claims.

647. The illusion of the Hegelians is quite obvious: they confused and identified a dialectical base of ens (that is, matter taken by the mind as the base of ens) with the real base, ens itself. Matter as such and the appendices of ens as such exist only dialectically, that is, through the action of the mind; ens alone exists. The following corollaries are therefore extremely important theorems in ontology.

I. Ens is not generated by matter in such a way that there is first matter or appendices, and then ens drawn out from the matter or from the appendices.

II. Ens without appendices or matter is not subject to the movement of generation or of formation.

III. The first origin of finite ens composed of bases and appendices (granted that its origin has been proved) can only be creation precisely because ens does not become: it either is or is not.

IV. The movement of generation and formation of finite ens is possible only in the sense that the matter or appendices of ens lose their substantial form (their base) and receive another. In this case there is no identity between the previous and subsequent ens. In other words, the first ens is no more; another exists in its place.

V. The generation or formation of finite ens must therefore take place only when there is some matter, that is, some appendices suitable for receiving different bases or substantial forms. But this matter, which never stands by itself because it is not an ens, has only a dianoetical existence. When we reason about it as if it were an ens, it takes on the form of ens, lent to it provisionally and supposedly by the mind; in other words, it is a dialectical ens.

VI. This dialectical ens is called non-ens, a rudiment of ens, or something similar, when the mind reflects upon it ontologically. Hence, the mind thinks and speaks about a movement from non-ens to ens, from the rudiment of ens to formed ens, from that which is on the way to being ens to that which is already ens, etc. The Greeks called this 'generation', but it should more correctly be called 'formation of ens'. When thought considers this movement, it abstracts from the substantial form and base, which perishes, and considers only the appendices and matter which become unformed ens, as if the matter were alone, existing on its own, or as if the unformed ens were ens.

648. I will illustrate this teaching with other examples.

Let us suppose that there is or can be a totally inanimate body with some shape or other, which becomes animate. The principle animating it would constitute the new base, the new ens. The body itself would remain body but would have acquired a new *substantial form* and no longer be the previous ens. If this body, after having received another substantial form through animation, now received the intellective form through the union of the intellective principle with the animal principle, it would have changed its substantial form once more. This body would no longer be the ens it was when it was pure body, nor the ens it was when it had acquired animation; it would be a new ens with a new substantial form. Through the acquisition of the first form, it would have ceased to be an ens and become an

appendix of the feeling base. The feeling principle, through the acquisition of the second form, would have ceased to be an ens and become an appendix of the rational ens. It would be considered subject-ens of the discourse only in this dialectical way of talking.

But if on the other hand we acknowledge that the principle of life is individually united to the elements of matter (*PSY* 1: 500–533) and that there are three levels of life, which I have described as continuity, stimulation and harmony (*ibid.*, 534–541), then the identity of the body or of the term-ens will depend on the identity of the living principle which animates it and truly constitutes its substantial form.

649. I must therefore deal first with the question about the identity of a living ens.

The question contains many more particular questions, such as: ‘Does an ens which lives at the first level of life become another ens when it acquires the second and third levels, or does it remain the identical ens? Furthermore, if what it becomes is not the previous ens, is it only a material part or appendix of the former ens, in accordance with the theory I have explained?’

But another question can be asked even before the preceding question: ‘In the multiplication of material entia (I have discussed this elsewhere; *PSY* 1: 445–553), are the different entia which exist after the multiplication identical to or different from the single ens that existed before the multiplication?’

I. I begin with this second question. It is clear that the entia which exist after the multiplication cannot be identical to the first ens. They differ from each other (different things cannot be identical to a third), and every ens must have that property which makes it one and undivided in itself but separate from all other entia (cf. 578 ss., 612 ss.). Clearly therefore all the entia that exist after the multiplication are not identical with the first ens.

II. I still have to answer the question: Can one of the entia that exist after the multiplication be specifically identical with the first ens? The answer is certainly ‘yes’ and finds verification in the generation of more complete animals.

III. Let us suppose that only the life of continuity exists, joined to a cohesive but not organated mass of matter, and that when this matter divides or, after division, reunites, the feeling

principles (the base of the ens) multiply or reunite. Do the resultant new entia, or at least one of them, preserve identity with the first ens?

When they multiply (which means they are different), they cannot be identical with the previous single ens because, as I have said, unity is a property of ens.

Even granted that the matter is always uniform, non-organated and equally distributed, we cannot say that one ens among the many existing after multiplication remains identical to the previous ens. We are dealing with entia whose base is joined to the appendix (here this would be the corporeal continuum) in such a way that when the appendices are removed, the base is destroyed ([cf. 622] A). In this kind of entia, the existence of the base depends essentially on the appendices and therefore must change as the appendices change. Consequently, when the appendices change in any way whatsoever, even if only in quantity, the ens no longer is; another ens has come. The reason is that in this case the unifying principles are at the same level; one is not at a higher level than another. Hence the principle that is now present is supreme. When the principles increase or decrease in number, a change arises in the supreme principle, which is the base of the ens. Consequently, in my opinion the feeling principle of pure continuity changes and becomes the base of another ens as the number of animate atoms increases or decreases; by means of their contiguity, the atoms unite their feeling principles into one single principle.

However, I would not say the same if the number of contiguous atoms remained equal and only their reciprocal position, condensation or rarefaction changed. These changes would be accidental and pertain to accidental appendices ([621] B). If we are dealing with a feeling principle of material continuity, its act is essentially determined by the quantity of contiguous atoms, because the space to which this matter refers is always supposed as unlimited and unchangeable (*PSY*, 1: 554–559), and difference of place does not remove the identity of body.

IV. But if the separated matter were to reunite as it was before, would the new, resulting ens be identical with the previous ens? On one hand, can the new ens in fact be identical to the former ens, if the latter has been destroyed? On the other hand,

[649]

how can the new ens be different, because relative to both form and matter, it is perfectly equal to what it was before? Does the different time of existence or the different space change the identity of the ens?

This is one of those difficulties which, when studied in depth, allows knowledge to progress. It will therefore be helpful if I deal with it at some length.

650. Body can be considered in two modes: either purely as term of a feeling principle to which it is joined or, abstracting from this principle, purely as a extrasubjective ens separate from the feeling principle to which it is in reality united.

Human beings in general think a body in this second, imperfect mode without being aware, except after much meditation and reflection, that the body does not exist and cannot exist in this second mode. I will therefore first discuss the identity of body considered in this way.

I have said that in judgments about identity we must know the *identical element* (granted that there is such an element). If the identity lies in another element, our judgments are mistaken. But the possible variety of the identical element gives rise to different kinds or classes of identity. It will help if I give the principal classes so that our solution to the question is clear.

1st. class: *identity of existence.*

2nd. class: *identity of supreme genus.*

3rd. class: *identity of lower genus.*

4th. class: *identity of abstract species.*

5th. class: *identity of fullest species.*

6th. class: *identity of full but not fullest species.*

7th. class: *identity of the really existing individual.*

651. I have distinguished *full* from *fullest species* because the latter is considered in the *Exemplar of the world*; the former is considered in itself, according to its own nature, not according to the position it occupies in the whole Exemplar.

Let us apply this distinction to corporeal entia considered purely as extrasubjective entia. In their full species the space they occupy is not represented, nor the time in which they really exist, because the species and the total essence seen in the species are outside space and time, granted that the species exists eternally in the divine mind. On the other hand, if the same full species of a body is contemplated as having being in the

Exemplar of the world, the species includes the determined time and the determined space in which the body is. But if the full species considered in itself is immune from space and time, how can it, when contemplated in the Exemplar, determine space and time? Is not the Exemplar itself eternally in the divine mind?

The answer to this apparent difficulty is as follows. The Exemplar must be considered totally in the divine mind as a single organated species, containing the whole of world reality. But the Exemplar, as species of the divine mind, and the total essence contained in the Exemplar, are certainly immune from space and time. This essence is the whole world reality present in the idea. If we take the whole world, object of divine creation (by 'whole world' I mean all space and the whole time of the world's duration), then the world, time and space are also something truly immune from space and time — the whole of space is not in another space, nor is time in another time. However, if we consider the parts of this exemplar, that is, the full species of all the world entia composing the exemplar, we find among the world entia seen in those species both a time in which each ens is, in so far as it is temporal, and a determined place in space in which the corporeal entia are. The relationships of space and time apply therefore to these parts of the exemplar, although neither the total exemplar, nor the single full species of the bodies or the essence represented by this species, manifest in themselves any determined place in space where they may be, or any time. Hence, the world entia intuited in the same exemplar have, relative to other entia in the exemplar, the relationships of space and time. These relationships make each of the full species *fullest* and capable of a single realisation.

We must therefore distinguish *full species* from *fullest species*. Although both contain *internal determinations* of infinite reality, the latter also contains *external determinations*, that is, relationships with other entia, particularly those of time, and those of space for corporeal entia and entities.

Thus, if an ens or several ens have everything found in a *full species* but not everything found determined in the *fullest species*, the identity is called 'identity of full species'.

If an ens has everything found determined in the *fullest species*, the ens is unique, and its identity is the 'identity of fullest

species'. If this identity is realised, the identity is that of a really existing individual.

652. *Eighth class of identity*, that is, the identity proper to corporeal entia which lies between the identity of full species and that of fullest species.

Corporeal entia have a midway identity. In a corporeal ens it is possible to see everything present in the full species together with some part but not all of what is further present in the fullest species; for example, position in space but not position in time.

In fact, if we suppose that two bodies occupy two different spaces, they cannot be of identical matter, even though each realises in itself everything found in the full species; the identity of matter is determined by the identity of the space it occupies (*NE*, 2: 851, 941–944). Hence they do not possess the *identity of a real individual*, which is that of the *fullest species*.

On the other hand, if a metal statue, after being forged, is returned to the crucible, and the same molten metal is used to remake the statue in the same form, we have identical figurative form (the only form proper to a extrasubjective ens considered separately), identical matter and, possibly, identical place, which is a determination pertaining to the fullest species. But because there is no continued time of existence, the *fullest species* lacks something. This is the identity which I said lies between the identity of the fullest species and that of the full species, and is proper solely to bodies considered extrasubjectively.

653. Someone may ask: can an ens identical in matter, form and place, whose existence is interrupted in time, be called 'identity of a real individual'?

I answer 'Yes'. The *subject* of a corporeal real individual is matter. Strictly speaking, matter has no *substantial form*, only a *determined quantity* which can be considered as *extrasubjective substantial form*; whatever shape matter has is accidental. The existence of the subject therefore was not interrupted; the subject was never annihilated. After the subject has regained the previous accidents, the statue-ens, considered as a *determined real individual*, can be said to be identical. Because an extrasubjective ens has no subjectivity and, much less, consciousness, it is not changed by the discontinuity of time, which is

essentially a subjective element, not found in purely material things. This gives the following principle:

‘Whenever a (dialectical) subject constituting a real ens endures uninterruptedly in its existence, and only the existence of its accidents is interrupted, it is, when it re-acquires its previous accidents, the identical real ens it was before. It is, I say, identical in everything, not only relative to subsistence and quantity which takes the place of substantial form, but also relative to accidents.’

654. Real ens can therefore undergo modifications which cause it to lose its accidents and the name given it according to its accidents, like the name ‘statue’. But by re-acquiring the same accidents and the same name which the human mind gives it according to its accidents, it can become identical to the ens it was previously. And the mind names it according to its accidents when these have a certain dominant importance for us through different relationships. This is precisely what happens when we give the name ‘statue’ to a block of stone or the name ‘portrait’ to certain colours applied to a surface.

In the same way we can conclude that ‘the interruption of time in the existence of what does not constitute the real subject does not destroy the identity of a determined, real individual when the individual has re-acquired the accidents and form which gave it its name.’

The identity of a real ens is therefore founded solely on the identity of the subject, the *base* of the ens. Hence, the *identity* expressed by the name, an identity which is sometimes purely dialectical, is one thing; the *identity* of the real ens itself is another. The former can be destroyed and then restored, but not the latter.

It should be no surprise that the identity under discussion, expressed by the substantive noun (although only dialectically substantive because deduced from an accidental form), can be lost and restored. We will see this if we consider that the accidental form, which in our case is the shape given to a body and determines the name, is by nature simple and remains co-involved in the idea. Consequently, when this form returns to the same subject, it is the same form as before, not another, although the subject, having lost and re-acquired the form, has performed different (non-identical) accidental acts. For example, the shape of a cube is always identical in whatever body

it is found, just as '3' is always an identical number, no matter to what it is applied.

655. So far we have spoken about the identity of a body solely as an extrasubjective ens and term, abstracting from its living intrinsic principle. But this mode of considering a body is partial and imperfect. In fact, a body does not and cannot exist apart from its feeling principle, which contains it. I said earlier that bodies, considered in their true nature, that is, as essentially terms of a feeling principle, have no entity and therefore no entia identity proper to them. Their identity and their existence come from the nature of the intrinsic principle whose terms they are. Hence, we saw that a body becomes another ens and ceases to be the body it previously was when the principle whose term it is changes. St. Thomas therefore states very accurately that the body of a living human being is not identical to the body of a dead human being; they are different entia.

We must now turn to the questions of identity relative to feeling, intellectual entia (I have called these 'principle-entia').

I said that the identity of a principle-ens is not lost when a lower principle unifies with it, but is lost, however, when a higher principle unifies with it and becomes the base of the ens.

I also said that the identity of a principle-ens is lost when several equal but separate principles unify, or divide if united. But in this case, the *difference* which destroys the identity is less than, and of a different species to, the difference in the previous case where a higher principle has appeared as the base of the ens.

In this theory the distinction between the *base* of an ens and the *principle* must be preserved. They are different concepts, as their definitions indicate. In fact:

The *base* of an ens is the one act which contains and unites within itself everything present in the ens and constitutes the subject-ens.

The *principle* is the act containing the term, to which the nature of principle is always repugnant.

656. From these definitions we deduce the following:

1. Every single principle united to its term can be a subsistent ens because the constitution of an ens requires only a *principle united to its whole term*; in this case the principle is the base of an ens. Thus, granted a living principle whose term is space and nothing else, this principle, when united with the

whole of space as its term, constitutes an ens which can subsist, although it is incomplete and lacking intelligence.

2. If a principle with a given term unites with another principle with a new term, the *base* of the ens consists in the unitive act of the two principles, not in one principle alone; the first principle is no longer sufficient to constitute by itself the new ens. Thus, if a principle whose term is pure space without any corporeity unifies with another principle whose term is undetermined ideal being, their union results in a new ens whose base will be constituted by the two unified principles. Nevertheless, our mind will still be able to distinguish two entia because the principle of space, which remains with its term, can be considered by abstracting from the other principle and term. Considered in this way, the principle of space has everything necessary to be a subsistent ens, but not the second ens. In fact, the principle of space remains united with the principle of being; both have become a single act and principle constituting a single ens. This ens has no identity with the previous ens because its base has changed; it is a more perfect ens, an intellective ens.

In the same way, a third ens, the principle of being, whose term and object is the whole of being, is conceived by means of abstraction. In fact, granted the unification of the two principles, only one real ens would subsist, whose elements could subsist by themselves as two entia. These two entia, because of their different bases, would not be identical either with the real ens or with each other.

Here we must note that, for me, 'space' means *space* as it appears to us. I prescind entirely from enquiring into what, in angels, is the equivalent to space for us humans. Similarly, I speak about 'being' as intuited by human beings, not as present to other intelligences different from ours. Discussion about such things would be too complicated.

3. The principle of space is independent of the principle of being; the former is a purely feeling, living principle, the latter an intellective principle. But a third principle exists which depends on and presupposes the principle of space: this is the living principle of corporeal matter. As we have seen, it has three acts: 1. the act whose term is the corporeal continuum; 2. the act whose term is the intestine movement of

this corporeal continuum; 3. the act whose term is the circular harmony of this movement. These three acts change the principle and thus constitute three different bases of entia: 'Whenever the principle of an ens undergoes a mutation arising from a new term, the base of the ens is changed. Moreover, because identity is always relative to difference, the ens loses its identity in proportion to the difference of the new term.' Indeed, it is for this very reason, as we have seen, that the identity of an ens, the individual identity, changes when several principles of continuity unite into one, or when one composite principle divides into many. If the term of the *species* (continuity) remains and only number and quantity change, the abstract species of the ens remains the same. Hence, there are four principles in the order of animal feeling, one dependent on another. There are therefore four different bases of entia and four conceivable species of entia: 1. the living principle of space; 2. the living principle of corporeal matter; 3. the living principle of intestine movement, and 4. the living principle of circular harmony in the intestine movement.

Because the living principle of circular harmony in the intestine movement depends on the living principle of intestine movement, it cannot stand without the latter, of which it is a new act. The living principle of intestine movement depends on the living principle of continuity, of which it also is a new act. The living principle of continuity depends on the living principle of space, of which it is a new act caused by a new term, as in the previous cases.²⁵⁵ The living principle of space is not dependent on any prior principle. Hence, these living principles, as four specifically different bases, constitute four specific entia in such a way that 1. the last ens results from unification and lies in

²⁵⁵ It is easy to understand why the discussion is always about new and specifically different terms if the following is borne in mind: 1. the properties of pure space, of immobility, immeasurability, indivisibility, etc., are the opposite of all the essential properties of body; 2. the properties and nature of body have only *inertia* in their concept, not *movement*, so that movement must come to a body from another cause; 3. the nature or essence of movement does not have within itself an harmonious order; this also must come from another cause which is certainly intelligent. The four terms are therefore *specifically* different, although in their concept they depend on each other, but reciprocally.

the unitive act of four different principles; 2. the third ens results from unification and lies in the unitive act of three principles; and 3. the second results from unification and lies in the unitive act of two living principles, of which the first has as its base the one principle of space.

Someone will ask what is the nature of a *higher base* and *lower base*. By 'higher base' I mean that which contains more, and by 'lower base' that which contains less. Hence, the base of the harmony of intestine movement is higher, that is, of greater dignity than the other three because the principle already has within itself and unites to itself the other three. For the same reason, the base of internal movement is higher and richer than the other two because the principle already has within itself the other two. The same is true of the base of body-ens relative to the base of space-ens. Space-ens is therefore the most imperfect and least complete of all the others.

Care is needed here in order to avoid error. The opposite to what I have said could seem true if we consider that in the order of concepts 1. space precedes body and material body, 2. the feeling of continuity precedes the feeling of excitation, and 3. the feeling of excitation precedes the feeling of harmony. This precedence of concepts is founded on progress from the imperfect to the perfect, because in finite, generable things the perfect presupposes and seems to depend on the imperfect, and indeed it does so in so far as its nature is generable. But it does not depend absolutely on what is imperfect, as Aristotle observed. We must therefore distinguish the *superiority* of the base of ens from the order of *precedence* in our concepts. Conceptually speaking, the higher base appears as posterior. This, however, does not prevent its being higher in entity and richness.

4. We must note that if the order and circular harmony in intestine movements of a body presuppose an intelligent cause, we have a new proof of how fittingly the intellective principle unifies only with the principle of a perfectly organised body. This proof can be deservedly set alongside that given in *Psychology* (1: 672–675). If, therefore, the intellective principle were to unify itself with the base of the animal-ens, it would be a higher base containing the four lower unified principles. One of these four contains the other three; one of the three the other two, and one of the two the final principle of space.

657. I have explained how we must understand the proposition that 'the higher principle always constitutes the base of an ens'. I have also explained that as long as the base remains unchanged, the ens preserves its identity. Now I must return to a question similar to that concerning the identity of the material statue-ens, and apply it to feeling ens. The question is: 'If the material term of a feeling ens changes (for example, breaks up) and then, by reuniting, returns to its previous mode, does the ens also return to its previous identity?'

In such an ens regenerated by means of composition there is certainly has the identical real matter and form as the corporeal, extrasubjective statue-ens. Its matter has never perished and its form, which ceased to exist only actually and then re-acquired this act, was virtually preserved in the atoms which compose it. Can we say therefore that the reconstituted and regenerated ens is identical? I answer 'yes' for the same reasons I used to demonstrate the identity of the extrasubjective statue-ens. That is, I am speaking about numerical, individual identity.

We must bear in mind the distinction between the principle-ens whose term is each separate atom and the principle-ens of an aggregation of atoms. A living atom admits no modification; it can, in my opinion, be completely annihilated but not broken down further. Consequently, if a living atom ceased to exist for only a moment, it could no longer be really and individually restored as identical; the atom which might be created afterwards would really be something else. I say 'really' because the nature of finite ens is to be *real*; if the *reality* ceases, the finite ens ceases. Hence, between a living atom which ceases and the atom which is created afterwards there can be an *identity of full species* (even of *fullest species*). But just as the acts of its realisation at different times would be two, so the *real individuals* would be two. Granted that they had the same *fullest species*, they could be said to be essentially identical relative to the essence contained in the idea, but not really identical relative to the realisation of the essence.

If however we were dealing with a living but non-organated aggregate of atoms which breaks up and then reunites using the same identical atoms in the same positions as before, this living aggregate would have in addition a *real identity*, despite the

break in continuity of the time of its existence. It could therefore be called an *identical real ens*. Its matter, or the elementary atoms composing it, would have continued to exist, as well as its form which would remain potentially in the living atoms. In fact, the *substantial essence* of such forms lies in the essence of the atoms and their potentiality. Hence, these forms do not exist in act except by accident. But, as I said in the case of the shape of bodies, potential essences lie in the idea; when they are reduced to act, the act is accidental to them. If therefore the matter which has them in potency brings them into act at different times, they are identical because they have the same substantial essence and also the identical, accidental act. This act gives them their name, because, as I said, the identity of the accidental act is taken from the species, that is, from the idea where the identity is. Thus, the identical element in these entia consists in the *substance, together with an accidental act which determines its mode*. Although this mode, which does not have its own real identity, is simple and one and unable to be numerically many, it becomes several through the multiplicity of the substance. If this is identical, the mode remains identical, although its real inexistence in the substance is not continuous. This kind of substantial form, therefore, from which such an ens is constituted, does not have the pure nature of substance but a nature composed of substance and an accidental mode of being. This nature, if it changes, changes the *base of the ens*, and restores the same base if the ens, after changing, returns to what it was before. This is possible because an identical substance, which is able to receive the same mode, is preserved. I call these forms 'substantial forms of accidental formation'.

But if the atoms composing a non-organated aggregate were not numerically identical, the only identity would be that of *species* between two aggregates of atoms, equal in number, size, form and composition.

The identity of the real, feeling principle, therefore, differs from that of an equally real but intellective principle. The latter could not cease except by annihilation: whereas the former, resulting from the union of several elementary feeling principles, can cease through decomposition and also reproduce itself through recomposition. In fact, this decomposition and recomposition is found in all principles composed of several

principles. We see therefore that it is possible for the human being to die and rise again identical with what went before.

658. When a real, intellective principle ceases, no pertinent real potentiality remains. Consequently, the intellective principle never expresses a *real genus* (*NE*, 2: 655). The feeling principle, however, is an expression indicating a *real genus*, below which there can be as many species as suitable aggregates of matter. But because *ens* is determined by species, not by genus, 'feeling real ens' (which is a genus) does not mean the same as 'feeling real principle' (a species). On the other hand, the expressions 'intellective ens' and 'real, intellective principle' mean the same because species is expressed in both. If we suppose therefore that an intellective principle ceases, no appendix remains which could be considered as a *generic entity*. Consequently, after destruction of the principle, no other intellective ens appears in its place. If, however, an intellective principle appears again, it is totally another principle; the first has provided nothing of itself. But let us suppose that a feeling act of continuity is destroyed and that its term is an aggregate of atoms. When these disunite (and also when they aggregate if they were disunited), the new entia receive matter and elementary, substantial principles from the first aggregate. Hence, these entia existed in the first aggregate as a real potency proper to them. In fact, the feeling principle which existed previously had in its own nature the faculty to multiply, or if it were multiple, of being divided through the quantitative division of the term.

The *substantial form* of feeling entia is therefore the feeling principle of the atom, and the substantial form of living bodies is constituted by the *accidental union* of several substantial forms, which become a single form with the power of all of them. Hence, this form with its multiple but continuous term is one and substantial, relative to its elementary matter, but determined by a unity of several substances, the formation of which is accidental.

659. Furthermore, in the subjective activity of feeling entia which have a multiple, corporeal term there is a *really* common root which apprehends unlimited space (*PSY*, 1: 556 [554]–559), and in the subjective activity of *rational souls* themselves there is a real common root which intuitively being (*PSY*, 1: fn. 281), so that if these activities, whose term is space, were not differentiated from being by other activities unified with them, they could not

constitute several individuals; each would constitute only one individual.

But these *real, common roots* provide the foundation for *real antecedent genera* which are more extensive than the *real genus* of corporeal sensitivity or the *species* of intellectual entia. They provide this foundation to such real genera when considered as generic subjects determined by the activities joined to them. Considered in this way,²⁵⁶ they do not constitute a *real ens*, the essence of which is found in the *species* not in the *genus*. However, they do constitute something previous to ens, as I said in article 8.

But if we suppose that all material atoms have some contact with each other, which seems highly likely, we must say that the principle of continuity has the whole of corporeal being as its term. This also is a sole root constituting the *real genus* of all the real species of living bodies in the universe. These species would differ only by their different points of contact which in turn are determined by the different shapes of the atoms and by the reciprocal connection of the elements; this connection is itself determined by the reciprocal size of the elements and quantity of contact, as well as by the intestine movement and by the different harmonies in which the movement circulates.

660. My conclusion is this:

If a disunited aggregate of matter reunites to its previous mode, we must say that the individual returns identical to what it was before. The identity includes number in addition to species, because its existence is continued in the *real potency* of the feeling root.

However, I must say that this species of identity is not perfect because the simplicity of the ens is not perfect. Its base has broken up into a *real, common root* and into a feeling act limited by its own term. The following therefore must be distinguished:

1. The unity and identity of all created matter. Whether this unity and identity present in *continuity* is in act or potency is accidental and depends on united or divided being.
2. The unity and identity of the term-individual. This

²⁵⁶ I say 'considered in this way', as antecedent roots, because considered as standing by themselves, they belong to those roots which can constitute an ens, as I said in article 8.

individual would be identical to itself whenever the disunited matter re-aggregated to the same mode. The identity consists in the existence of the term-individual at different, interrupted times. This kind of identity is similar to that conceived in all individuals subject to time whose existence is divided into the succession of moments. We can in some way say therefore that the ens no longer exists either in the previous or the future moment but only in the present moment. Nevertheless, the ens which existed in past moments, the ens which exists now, and that which will exist in future moments is identical because composed of numerically identical matter and form, whose property it is to be capable of identical existence in many moments of time.

3. The identity proper to those principles whose term is aggregates of matter. This identity is lost with the increase or reduction of these aggregates. This is the kind of identity which is more easily understood and more commonly used in speech.²⁵⁷

661. Let us now return to the concept of *becoming*. From what has been said, we see the kind of meaning possible for the expression, 'an ens *becomes another ens*'. Let us suppose a real principle whose term is the whole of corporeal matter, and take the principle as a base of ens. This base (granted that it is considered as base) will be found in all feeling entia individuated by different aggregates of matter. Hence, the expression 'one of them becomes another or several others' means the same as 'the identical root takes different terms as accidents of the same ens'. There is some truth in this because, although the change in these entia is accidental, the base remains equivocal. Indeed, the phrase, 'the ens which becomes', means either the root and its term, in which case the ens does not become but is destroyed after loss of its term, or only the real root, in which case it is incorrectly called ens. Moreover, the root does not become but remains identical. If the expression is to be valid at all, we must

²⁵⁷ Matter, taken by itself and separate from every sensitive principle, cannot constitute either an aggregate or anything extended (*PSY*, 1: 1157–1166). But matter can have two relationships with a sensitive principle: as proper term and as foreign term. As *proper term*, the principle acts as its form; as foreign term, the principle acts on some other matter of which some other sensitive principle is the form.

understand 'the ens which becomes' (subject of the proposition) as the *real root with its potentiality for different terms*. In this case, the ens which becomes is a *potential ens* and the proposition means that this potential ens, after being actuated in a given ens, is now actuated in another ens. Clearly then, if we are not to fall into a morass of equivocations, sophisms and paradoxical errors, as Hegelians do, great care and considerable explanation is needed in the use of the verb 'become', even in the case of purely sensitive entia.

662. We now come to the question, 'Does a living ens lose its identity when it passes from the first level of life to the second, and from the second to the third?'

Normally our order of thought is such that principally we judge the unity and identity of entia from phenomena and external effects which are important to us and serve as the base for classifying entia. As I have said elsewhere, for example, we classify plants both as flowers and fruit because some have more interest for us as flowers, but others as fruit. According to this method of classification, based on appearances, an ens alive with the life of continuity and simply called 'animate' without doubt differs greatly from an ens alive with the life of excitation, and even more from an ens alive with perpetual, harmonious excitation which we call 'animal'. Indeed, generally speaking, human beings do not observe the first two lives in any way because normally only animals are thought to be animate. But if a philosopher has succeeded in distinguishing the three lives, while maintaining the normal way of thinking, he can easily persuade himself that they are the bases of three distinct entia.

If, however, we consider the reality rather than appearances of some thing, does the principle of continuity constitute an ens different from the ens constituted by the principle of excitation? And does the latter differ from the ens constituted by the principle of perpetual or circular excitation?

This would not seem to be the case. The life of excitation and that of perpetual, harmonious excitation need to exist only implicitly, not developed, in a real mode; they can exist like a seed in the feeling of continuity. Hence, the principle which feels the corporeal continuum appears to be the subject itself actuated with greater excitation either for a moment or with a perpetual succession of stimuli.

But the common root and potentiality, when antecedent to different *subjects*, are not sufficient to constitute them.

The real common root, that is, the principle of the feeling of continuity, pertains to those roots that can stand by themselves separate from every other act. In this case they are no longer considered common, and *per se* constitute an ens. A *non-excited* feeling principle of continuity is precisely of this kind and as such is the base of the ens.

An ontological teaching of great moment, which I have dealt with elsewhere and of which I have given examples (*PSY*, 1: 680, 685, 689) is the following:

‘Whenever a principle which has an act acquires a new term more excellent than the previous term and consequently emits a permanent act of greater force or of a higher level of activity than the previous act, it ceases to be the base of the newly constituted ens, and remains simply an antecedent which I call ‘root’. The *base* or constitutive principle of the new ens is the new, immanent and permanent act.’

As a result, it can happen (and I believe it does happen continuously) that some partial systems of excitation, alien to the principle of excitation which is the *base* of the animal, can be formed in the animal body itself. These partial systems of excitation tend to constitute other animal individuals separate from the individual in whose body they are, according to the law I have explained in the 10th of the *Psychologies*.

663. I think that this action can sometimes be harmless and normal, if the principle of harmonious excitation which constitutes the animal is robust enough to repulse these attacks on its dominance as soon as they begin to harm it. Perhaps the moderate effort itself which the animal must make plays a part in constituting the activity of its life. In fact, I do not think that Brown’s opinion — life consists in some kind of moderate effort, in a kind of struggle in which the living thing is always victorious — is entirely mistaken.

Nevertheless, any partial system of excitation which, in the body of an animal, manifests itself as different from the total system of excitation proper to the animal can give other results. It can in fact prevail over the total system and destroy the animal even before the partial system is constituted a new animal.

Or else, a partial system, when limited, but withdrawn from

the dominion of the animal principle, can constitute itself into smaller, individual animals living in the larger animal. This seems to be the case with entozoa.

Finally, a partial system can prevail over the total system and constitute itself into a new animal which in some normal mode divides from the first. This is the case with generation (*PSY*, 1: 554–584).

Whenever a new circle of life is constituted, separate from the first circle, a new life is present whose base is the feeling principle of the new harmony. This fact is made known to us by virtue of our consciousness: our rational principle can become conscious not only of the feeling principle with which it is united through the fundamental perception (*PSY*, 1: 249–271), but of all the acts and passions of this principle. But it remains unconscious of other principles and animal effects. This shows that these are other animate individuals.

However, the adherence of the parts of one animal with the parts of another could be such that there is only one feeling principle of continuity common to the two animal-subjects and, if the excitatory movement is continuous, a common principle of excitation. This could be the case with entozoa which cannot live outside the body of the larger animal. The same would also be true of foetus and mother, and of bicephalic offspring.

This explains why I deduced the double action (material and feeling) of living bodies in contact with each other (*PSY*, 1: 587–602).

From all this we can conclude as follows. We can in some way say that one ens becomes another relative to real roots which can subsist of themselves and constitute the base of an ens. One example is the feeling principle of continuity. Granted an aggregate of non-organated matter whose parts are in contact, I say that there is only one act of continuity, which is the base of an ens. If this principle organises its term with the help of external stimuli and produces an animal from it, the feeling principle of continuity, which has not ceased to exist and was an ens, seems to have become another ens. However, strictly speaking, we must say that it has ceased to be an ens and changed into an appendix of the new ens, whose base lies in the principle of harmonious excitation.

664. B. I must now discuss the changes undergone by the appendices of an ens. The ens neither receives nor loses any substantial form; only the accidents change. The root, that is, the base of the ens, and all the substance of the ens are left intact.

We can never say that an ens becomes another through a change effected only by its accidents.

But surely this is a change taking place in the ens which, although it may not become another ens, acquires other qualities? The ens, therefore, is no longer immutable as ens. If, however, it is not immutable — in the sense that it must either be or not be — it is no longer true that it is one. I have solidly defended the unity of ens against this objection, in *Psychology* (2: 735–965), where I showed that 1. the base of a real ens is always a principle — terms are called ‘entia’ only through an imperfect mode of our mental conception (835–839); 2. because terms individuate entia, real entia are classified according to their terms; 3. the terms can vary in both specific and generic essence, giving rise to various species and genera of entia; 4. in the same species certain terms admit several individuals; and 5. the individuating term admits accidental changes which do not alter the substance of the ens and its specific nature. Consequently, the changes, whatever they may be, which take place in all the accidents or accidental acts, do not change the individual ens; the principle remains one and identical precisely because the accidental changes of the term do not constitute the principle itself, the base of the ens. The *accidental acts*, as accidental, principle of the ens, must therefore be considered as appendices and not as base of the ens. The ens, therefore, preserves its perfect identity without becoming another ens or changing relative to that which makes it formally ens.

665. II. Let us now see what value is to be given to ‘becoming’ through its application to purely ideal beings.

I have said that undetermined being has proper and improper terms: term is the reality of being and thus constitutes the real ens and real subject ([cf. 321 ss., 439 ss., 491 ss.]).

But dianoetically, ideal being can be taken as subject, and reality as predicate. We can say, therefore, with equal propriety, ‘The real activity of this feeling is’ (where the real forms the subject) and ‘Being is realised in the activity of this feeling’ (where ideal being holds the place of subject) (*Sistema*, 50; *Logica*, 332–336).

The fact that the real and what is ideal can be subject of a proposition is a normal source of illusion for incautious philosophers, like the Hegelians. They fell into error on seeing that being could appear in speech as subject of all entia, because all entia are truly (ideal) being with a real term, and falsely concluded that ideal being (the idea) *became* all entia. Finding the idea inpalpable and, in their view, lacking in solidity, they were unable to see how it could remain itself. Instead, they thought up the insane system that the idea itself is always about to become something else, and that this act of becoming (which as such is never completed, and is a concept composed of being and non-being, of something and nothing) is the act proper to the idea, the genitor of all things.

Clearly, they confused the dialectical subject with the real subject. They were unaware that, although human speech uses these two subjects indifferently, there is an immense difference between them. It pertains to the study of ontology to recognise the nature of the two subjects. Ontological reflection shows us that one subject is ideal and does not constitute real ens; the other is real and alone constitutes ens in its proper subjective existence; it alone is the true base of ens.

666. But ontological reflection goes further and discovers the difference between the proper and improper terms of being. The proper terms are seen to be infinite and constitute a single infinite ens.

The improper terms, however, are finite, and although united to being, without which they would not be or be knowable, they are not being. Thus, the being in them cannot be taken as subject.

Only a dialectical value can be given, therefore, to the proposition, 'When undetermined being acquires proper terms, it becomes absolute being.' Absolute being does not become; it always is, and does not admit formation or annihilation or modification or movement. The proposition expresses only a movement or passage of the *human mind*, which forms the concept of absolute being for itself by starting from what is undetermined, to which it adds its proper terms. Through this operation of the mind, the proper terms remain attached, as it were, to undetermined being. Hence, the concept of this being, which does not admit composition, always remains imperfect

and negative for us. Indeed, it has no positive concept but itself takes the place even of its concept, as we shall see later.

Similarly, no philosophical value can be given to the proposition, 'Undetermined being, when it acquires some improper terms, becomes entia or finite entia.' The proposition gives the false impression that ideal being becomes real. This, however, is totally absurd because the two forms can never change their nature. This kind of expression is best left to untutored philosophy; it can mean only what arises in perception, where the mind, by attributing being to what is felt, apprehends this felt element as ens. Being, however, has neither changed in any way nor become anything at all. The human mind has simply come to see that what is felt is an ens. This does not convert being into what is felt, but affirms that whatever is felt is united to being. The existence of the felt element, posited in this union, lies totally in the union effected in our mind. The union is neither confusion nor transformation.²⁵⁸

667. We must now see if ideal, undetermined being, which can never become anything real, can *become* something determined and ideal.

Even this is not possible, because all determinations are taken from reality. Hence, when we speak about an ideal determination, we mean, properly speaking, solely a *possible real* determination. Determinations, even when considered in their possibility, are not truly ideal but involved in the idea. For example, we cannot know a generic or specific determination positively without having perceived it in reality and kept at least a real sign of it in our memory. Moreover, a negative concept always presupposes a positive concept on which it is based. Every concept of a determination, therefore, requires the thought of some reality.

²⁵⁸ Plotinus says that Parmenides, according to Plato, distinguishes 1. the 'one' (*unum*), 2. the 'one-many' (*unum multa*) and 3. the 'one and many' (*unum et multa*) ('But Parmenides in Plato speaks more accurately, and distinguishes from each other the first One, which is more properly called One, and the second which he calls "One-Many" and the third, "One and Many"', and that the *unum multa* means the fully perfect mind. But calling the mind the *one-many*, although philosophical jargon, does indeed indicate the truth that our mind unites being and its improper terms, ens and its appendices, in one. Cf. R. Cudworth, *Syst. intellect.*, vol. 1, c. 4, §21.

Of all the entities accessible to us here on earth, therefore, only undetermined being is truly ideal. It is the only thing knowable *per se*, and all its determinations are in some way real, even though they are thought of as possible through the addition to them of possibility, which itself has its foundation in undetermined being.

Consequently, when the mind passes from considering undetermined being to considering a determined ens as possible (so that this, too, is said to be 'ideal' in the sense that it participates in objectivity), we do not mean in any way that undetermined being becomes this determined ens. It simply unites itself in a given mode to finite reality, a union effected through the synthetic energy of some intelligent subject.

668. From all this we can finally conclude as follows:

1. When undetermined being (the *idea*) is considered in relationship to finite real things, it does not become finite entia, although these are entia through union with or participation in it. Union with or participation in something, however, is not at all the same as being the thing itself.

2. Properly speaking, ideal being, by which finite things are known, is always undetermined, although its presence in the intelligent subject makes finite real things entia.

3. These finite entia, precisely because they are entia, have unity and individuality, and cannot be confused with anything else. They are determinations of undetermined being, but only relative to the mind, that is, dialectically. In other words, the mind can form the proposition, 'Being has received this finite determination', where being is taken as subject of the proposition. But later, ontological reflection undoes the mental proposition and acknowledges that finite ens is not and never was being, and that the being to which it is joined is not finite ens.

In other words, finite real ens, having its own existence relative to itself, does not go outside itself; it does not embrace being, which is infinite. But when being, which is infinite, embraces what is finite, this embrace refers only to being; it is not reciprocally true for what is finite. The finite is always distinct from the infinite; the finite is not the infinite which extends to it; it is simply the finite which terminates in itself, as we will see more clearly elsewhere.

4. When the human mind adds an infinite term to

undetermined being, it passes from undetermined to absolute being. This action is similar in form to that which takes place when it adds a finite term to undetermined being and thus considers finite real ens. However, the two operations are seen to be very different after ontological reflection. The second action results in the *perception of finite ens*, whereas the result of the first is not perception of the infinite but simply a formula that indicates the infinite. The difference between them is that the finite term is a *felt* element forming the base or subject of the ens, whereas the infinite term is not felt by us but only determined by means of abstractions and negations.

669. Consequently, because we possess the *real base* of finite ens (object of our perception), we know the relationship between this base and undetermined being, a relationship in which finite ens does not destroy or absorb undetermined being. Hence, after our perception of finite ens, both it and undetermined being are present to our spirit, but distinct in such a way that we can speak about either as we please. But the case is different relative to infinite ens. Although the same distinction between being and term is certainly present when we consider the form of the mental operation by which we know infinite ens, a higher reflection shows us that the duality cannot stand. The infinite must have a totally perfect simplicity. And if we continue with our ontological thought, we will find that two elements must be distinguished in undetermined being: 1. being, and 2. indetermination. We will also find that being must identify with the infinite term; its indetermination must disappear completely and leave only real being, with its objectivity and absolute intelligibility. Consequently, the relative word 'term' is, strictly speaking, inapplicable. This is also true of the word 'idea' is so far as it expresses something void of subjective reality. All that remains is totally simple, absolute being.

The nature of absolute being must not be confused therefore with the movement of the human mind and the steps and operations taken by it to come to the thought of this being. This movement must not be applied to being itself, as if being moved (as Hegel inexpertly says). We must not in any way say that undetermined being becomes absolute. As I said, our mind, by means of a higher reflection, becomes aware that in absolute being, the idea ceases and only absolute being remains. The only thing we

can truthfully say is that in undetermined being our mind intuitively an element which remains but neither becomes nor changes.

Human speech does indeed predicate God's being when it says that God is, just as speech predicates being of finite entia when it says that they are; the predication is dialectically univocal.²⁵⁹ But being is predicated entitatively of God and accidentally of finite entia. This means that relative to God, the predicate and the subject are absolutely identical, but relative to finite entia, the predicate really differs from the subject, with the result that the identity is only relative and participative.

670. III. In the case of purely mental entia it is even less feasible to say that one *becomes* another. Because they are the work of the movement of the mind, it is the mind which passes from one to the other. They themselves, therefore, have no movement at all.

Certainly, they are often dialectical elements of other entia, which may be ideal entia or real, possible entia, but here illusion enters in. An ens seems to break up into many entia, or one ens seems to be made from many. But not only is this decomposition or composition always the work of thought; neither decomposition nor composition are ever *becoming*. The ens, when broken up, no longer exists; only the entia resulting from the break-up are. The same happens when entia re-unite into one: they no longer are; they are a new ens. Strictly speaking therefore, there never is any *becoming*. Ens as ens does not undergo change; it merely is or is not.

671. From all this we see the following:

1. It is impossible for an ens in itself to become another ens.

2. Nevertheless, the human mind sees a transformation of one ens into another, of an appendix-entity into an ens.

This transformation does not happen to the ens in itself, but to the ens as thought by the mind. The transformation therefore pertains solely to the relationship between the ens and the mind. As we have seen, every ens, in addition to existing in itself, is also in the *knowledge* proper to the mind. For this reason, as we saw, the divine mind limits the infinite real and produces

²⁵⁹ Cf. *Lettera sulla questione se l'essere si predica univocamente di Dio e delle creature*, in *Introduzione alla filosofia*, VII: 5.

simultaneously the Exemplar of creation and creation itself. The infinite real is not limitable in itself either as *subject* or as *subsistent object*, only as *known*, that is, in so far as its presence in the mind leaves some *knowledge* about itself on which the mind can perform analysis and synthesis and other operations.

In these operations, the human mind leaves the imprint of its own limitations.

3. The movement to be attributed to the mind and its knowledge cannot, however, be attributed to *absolute thought*, with which the mind knows ens in itself. It has to be attributed to partial and dialectical thought.

4. When the human mind synthesises, it transforms the felt element into an ens by joining being to it, and with this union forms the *object* of its knowledge.²⁶⁰

5. The mind transforms an ens into another by means of composition and decomposition.

In composition, it adds some substantial or entitative forms, in two ways: either by removing the previous forms from their appendices or superimposing forms upon forms, if, for example, the intellective act were added to an animal principle.

In decomposition, it breaks down the already established composition.

6. When, by means of this ontological composition, our mind passes to the concept of an ens, we find that the concept formed in this way can be of two kinds, either 1. simply *logical* or *formal* (also called *negative* or *negative ideal*), or 2. positive, complete, materiated.

It is *logical and negative* if the composition is made when the *connection* of the component elements which forms the constitutive act of the ens, that is, the *base* (cf. 612 ss.), is unknown. It is *positive* if the connection does not remain hidden and is not therefore determined by the mind but known in a determined way. This happens only when the ens is perceived, as well as the elements with which thought logically composes it.

Properly speaking, unless we know the connection of the elements, we do not know the ens consisting in the connection. We know only that the elements, granted their necessary but

²⁶⁰ Cf. *Lettera a Benedetto Monti sull'essenza del consocere*, in *Introduzione alla filosofia*, IV.

unknown connection, would be that ens. This, however, is a kind of formula indicative of the ens, not a concept of the ens itself.

This is the kind of concept we have of God and of all unperceived entia.

It explains why in God we find a certain composition, for example a multiplicity of attributes and perfections, of levels and acts of being. The composition is in God because we put it there. When we form the concept of God by uniting all possible perfections and all their levels, this multiplicity always remains before our mind without our knowing their connection or how all the perfections and levels fuse into a totally simple nature. We understand that unity and simplicity must be present in this nature, but we do not know HOW (TCY, 59–74).

As a result, we find multiplicity even in the most simple of natures and, by analysing it, distinguish in it numerous elementary concepts.

Article 6

The richness and dignity of entia

672. A corollary of what has been said offers a criterion for knowing the extent to which one ens exceeds another in richness and dignity.

The criterion can be divided into two propositions:

I. An ens is greater than another if its terms have more entity.

II. If the terms have equal entity, an ens is greater another when it has more *simplicity*, such that there is a closer *connection* between its terms and its beginning.

We have seen that abstract one is a very impoverished concept (cf. 581–591). We have also seen that every division and real distinction impoverishes an ens (cf. 592–594), whereas simplicity enriches it (cf. 595 ss., 612 ss.). Simplicity, therefore, makes an ens more perfect, and makes it richer in proportion to the entities possessed by its terms.

Article 7

The simplicity of absolute being and of undetermined being.

673. Because absolute being has every degree and perfection of being and is being essentially with its own terms, it must have a maximum, absolute simplicity; there can be no variety in it that could be the foundation for some distinction in quality.

In the case of undetermined, ideal being, as we have seen, virtual unity is both appropriate and is the principle of [actual] unity. Furthermore, ideal being, when considered cut off from its terms, is less than one and cannot be conceived except by abstraction. Equally, its richness is virtual if we consider the manner of its presence to human intelligence. But if it is cut off and abstracted from its virtual terms, this dialectical mode also removes all virtual richness [cf. 581–587].

The simplicity of ideal being is such that it is annihilated if anything at all is mentally removed from it: we must think either *all of it* or *nothing*.

At first sight, we do not appear to think all being in the perception of finite entia; we divide it up. But, as I said in *Psychology* (2: 1306–1311) and earlier in this present work, every finite reality is perceived in universal, total being, of which the finite reality is simply an improper term. Hence, the perception of finite realities becomes possible only because being in its totality and infinitude is present to us. Only in this being, and never apart from it, can we think the limited. Emmanuel Kant proposed the problem of ideology as: ‘What are the conditions which make experience possible?’ My own question was similar: ‘What conditions make perception and abstraction possible?’ But having excluded Kant’s solution to his problem, I solved my own by saying ‘perception and abstraction are possible on the sole condition that being (which means all being) is present to the human subject’. *Partial thought* is always conditioned in relationship to composite *total thought* from which it can never be entirely divided; every individual thought is rendered possible only by the totality of being. At the supreme level, therefore, being is totally simple and indivisible; it is one with unbreakable unity, admitting no division even in the mind. Hence, when the mind thinks it is dividing being, it intuitively

[673]

being in all the parts it believes it has found. No part of being can be thought by the mind without the immovable presence of a previous thought. With this thought, the mind preserves being's indivisibility, which it is trying to destroy.

674. This gives us another antinomy of human thought. On the one hand, we see indivisible being; on the other, we divide it and consider it as multiple in various finite entia and in the different properties and particular relationships which we distinguish in it.

I removed this contradiction in the case of finite entia when I noted that they are not themselves being, but real, improper terms of being, and only in these terms is all real multiplicity found ([cf. 581–591]). This gives rise to multiple relationships between being, which is one and simple, and these multiple realities. Thus, each and everyone of these multiple terms and relationships are thought by means of the thought of simple, one and indivisible being.

Consequently, we have two thoughts before us when we think the finite: that of the finite and that of the infinite, that is, the thought of the improper term or relationships arising from the term, and the thought of being in all its universality. We find confirmation of this by analysing the concept of part (cf. 592–594). This concept would be inexplicable if we did not suppose two thoughts simultaneously present in our mind. In fact, the concept of part contains the very antinomy I have mentioned. Moreover, there is no easy defence against anyone who dialectically attacks the truth of the concept with the following argument: 'Parts are found either before they separate in the whole or afterwards. Before they separate they are not parts because the whole is not divided. Nor are they parts when separated from the whole because each forms a whole by itself and cannot be part of the no longer existing whole.' This is not a frivolous argument; it greatly helps knowledge of the nature of such a complex concept. The concept of parts is certainly relative to the whole. Hence, as I said, two thoughts must be present in the mind. Without these two thoughts we cannot have the concept of the relationship we are looking for. We must have both the thought of the one undivided whole and the thought of the parts, that is, of other wholes seen in the greater whole without each part exhausting the whole; they are called parts

[674]

precisely because of this relationship to the whole. And because, properly speaking, the part, taken by itself, is not present in reality, what has been divided has ceased to exist in itself. As I said, what has arisen through division cannot be part of something that does not exist; the parts, although smaller, exist in themselves. Consequently, the concept of part is not given solely by reality, but pertains to the essential relationship between being and a mind. Anyone who does not examine the matter with great precision attributes both the part and the whole to being, failing to see that such a relationship proceeds from being only as it is intelligible.

Article 8

The concept 'other'

675. I have discussed 'one'. I must also say something about the concept 'other'.

In the expression 'one and the other', 'other' means another 'one' which is partly unlike and partly *like* the first *in some way*, but not contained in the first. 'One' and 'other' are two subjects of speech and can be either dialectical or ideal or real or mixed. We could not use the expression, if our mind did not conceive in a single act a plurality of subjects, that is, several 'ones'.

I said that 'other' in the expression is in some way like the first. In fact, if there were no homogeneity, we could never say 'one' and 'other'. They must be like each other at least as subjects of the expression. Whenever we suppose the greatest disparity possible between them, something common will remain, at least dialectically, which will be the foundation of the expression. They are called 'one' and 'other' because of the common element, not because of the proper elements. For example, if 'one' were being, and 'other' were nothing (which is the greatest difference possible, or let us suppose it is), the common element would be that they are two dialectical entia. Hence, the expression means the same as 'these two dialectical entia'. They are called after what they have in common, although we distinguish and separate them by understanding that each has something proper and heterogeneous.

[675]

676. Various ontological questions now present themselves.

The first is: 'Is the concept of 'one' possible without any relationship to 'other'?

Note: the question does not ask whether reason can, by abstraction, cut off the concept of 'one' from everything else (we cannot doubt this), but whether the concept of 'one' in itself, without cutting anything from it, contains a relationship to 'other'.

We have seen that being is the first concept, not 'one'. This shows precisely that pure one, as an abstract quality, is relative to ens. Generally speaking, all *qualities* involve a relationship to a subject, which is their 'other', just as a quality is 'other' to the subject possessing the quality. Moreover, when a quality and subject become one, as in the case of absolute being, the two logical forms of quality and subject remain distinct. Hence, what is identical under the form of subject is 'other', that is, dialectically different from itself, under the form of quality or essence.

Furthermore, as we saw, there are several non-dialectical but real forms in absolute being, each relative to the other, that is, each has its own 'other'.

In each of these forms, being is identical and, although it has its own 'other' in the forms, this 'other' is only dialectical.

Hence, everything, whether one or being or ens has at least a dialectical 'other'. 'Whole' has its 'other', in the parts or dialectical elements.

Although this ontological law contains the principle of multiplicity which is in being, it does not split being nor remove oneness from it. Instead, it shows that there is *an order* in being, an organised multiplicity, the 'other' of 'one', which far from destroying 'one', constitutes it as subsistent.

677. The second question: 'Is there a nature which is *per se* 'other' so that the relationship contained in the concept of 'other' is or can be subsistent?'

The reply depends on what was said about the concepts of simplicity and identity, and also about what the ancients called 'matter of ens'. This matter of ens and, in general, its *appendices*, although really subsisting in ens, are not a real subject. The word 'ens' is imposed on the subject of the ens, that is, on its base which defines and separates it from all other entia. For this

reason, the appendices do not have their own name but are named according to the subject they constitute. They cannot be defined irrespective of the subject constituting them, which is their 'other'. They themselves, as constituting the subject, are its 'other'; they cannot be given their own existence, but the existence of the subject, an existence which is 'other', can be attributed to them. Their essence, therefore, consists in this: they are 'other', that is, 'other' because they themselves are not, except dialectically.

Because of this relationship of otherness, the ancients called matter 'the other nature' (τὴν ἑτέραν φύσιν)²⁶¹ or simply 'the other' (τὸ ἕτερον),²⁶² or even 'that which never truly is' (ὅν τοις οὐδέποτε ὄν).²⁶³

Article 9

Recapitulation of the doctrine of 'one'

678. In this chapter we have seen that *finite reality* could not receive being [if the] mind which produces it, did not add limits in such a way that these limits are precisely that which constitutes something as one and real. In fact, *finite reality* cannot exist except either as 1. *essence* seen in the idea, in which case it exists as ens in the objective form, or 2. as *subject* by itself, in which case it is ens in the subjective form, or finally, 3. as the active connection between subject and object, in which case it is ens in the *moral* form. But each of these three supreme forms, as a *maximum container*, has a perfect unity of being. If therefore *finite reality* exists in any one of these three modes, it must exist as one.

Now, the logical order of human thought obliges us to think that an artist, for example, who wants to give real, external existence to a painting, must first make it exist in his own thought in the objective form. This order is certainly not chronological but purely logical and, properly speaking, dialectical. Accordingly, finite reality must first receive objective existence

²⁶¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1: 9.

²⁶² *Timaeus*, p. 29, particularly here, and in other of Plato's dialogues.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 28 A.

from the divine mind which creates it. In other words, finite entia receives the unity of being in an objective form, and then, through creation, its own subjective existence and the unity proper to subjective existence.

This subjective unity constitutes the reality as something real and individual.

From this I deduced that the notion of *all* is appropriate to every finite ens, precisely because it must have unity and be an individual. It does not matter whether this concept of 'all' is considered on the part of the 'one' as container in which the content is, or on the part of the content in the container. Both concepts, which can give two definitions of 'all', result from the union of the container and the content.

From this I deduced the doctrine of parts and of the notion of simplicity. This led to the doctrine concerning the *base* of subjective ens, which constitutes the containing 'one' proper to the subjective form, and the doctrine concerning the *appendices* of ens itself, which by nature are content.

In the *base* of ens I found the seat of the *identity* of ens. But finite entia, as contingent, can cease and begin. Similarly, the appendices of ens can dissolve when they lose the base containing and unifying them, and can receive new bases. In this case, the *individual* dissolves and another or the same is constituted, according to certain laws. Because of these events, I had to examine and analyse the concept of *becoming*. I discovered that it is one of those common concepts which contain an [implicit absurdity on which] a particular kind of sophism is founded (*Logica*, 712 ss., 1066 ss.). I noted as a consequence that the foundation of the Hegelian system is purely the system of implicit absurdity.

We then saw that the base of ens can unite and contain a varying number of appendices in greater or less simplification. On these two things depend the degree of richness and dignity of entia. Finally, just as the base provides the concepts 'one' and 'simple', so the appendices provide the concept 'other', which I also explained.

CHAPTER 9

The doctrine of limits

Article 1

Introduction to the discussion

679. We have seen that the finite real could not be object of the creative act and thus acquire subjective being unless the divine mind which conceives it did not first determine it and, in the very act of its conception, endow it with the four following properties: 1. supreme generic quality, 2. objective intelligibility, 3. determined quantity, and 4. unity. These four properties are the necessary, common elements for constituting *every finite form*.

We have also seen that *finite reality* determined in this way by the mind as object-ens can be brought into its own subjective existence. The creative act does this when it adds subjective being to the reality present in the object it has described. When finite reality acquires this being, it receives four other properties: 1. subjective existence, 2. duration, 3. activity, 4. subjective intelligibility. These four properties are inseparable from the act of subsistence.

All these eight properties pertain to finite reality existing in itself and in the mind. Hence, any discussion concerning them presupposes that reality is finite. We must, therefore, discuss limitation in general as the first *condition* for the existence of finite ens, and hence the first condition for creation.

Article 2

The difference between 'limited' and 'unlimited' is a difference between entia

680. We have seen and shown that a limited and an unlimited subject cannot constitute one and the same ens. Hence limitation posits an entitative separation between God and creatures,

[679–680]

a separation greater than any other, including that of genus (*PSY*, 2: 1381 ss.).

I will present here a brief ontological proof of this proposition, as a result of what has been said.

Reality, as finite, is no longer being; it presents to thought only a rudiment which pertains not to being (which does not receive limit) but to one of its forms, the real form. Because God is being, the difference between God and finite reality considered in itself is the same as between being and non-being. This difference is maximum, absolute, infinite. If we consider the difference between *being* and *non-being*, the former exceeds the latter by the whole of *being* which is essentially infinite (cf. *SP*, 2: 574–580). When *finite reality* receives being in its subjective form, it becomes ens, which however is not its being: ens is *finite reality* to which being has been added so that ens could exist in itself. The subject therefore of finite ens is finite reality; the subject of infinite ens is being itself. Clearly then, some maximum possible difference exists between the subject as finite ens and the subject as infinite ens. As a result, one ens cannot be the other. Their difference is more than generic because the difference is being itself, superior to all genera.

Being is predicated, therefore, of infinite ens and finite ens in an equivocal sense (*Logica*, 370 fn.). The two entia differ much more than one ens differs from another. As I said, properly speaking they differ as being differs from non-being.²⁶⁴ Later, I will confirm this with new proofs.

Article 3

The ontological origin of limitation

681. I said that the origin of finite entia must be referred to an act of God's free intelligence. But because the two acts which I have [called] *intuition* and *affirmation* are proper to intelligence,²⁶⁵ we must now investigate whether the limitation

²⁶⁴ We read in Psalm 37 [38], 6: 'and my substance is as nothing before you'* [Douai]. Cf. also St. Anselm, *Monolog.*, 28.

²⁶⁵ Human *intuition* is referred solely to ideas because human beings have only an ideal object. In God, intuition has a real object. Hence, 'intuition'

of reality arises from divine intuition or affirmation. I define intuition in God as 'the act with which the divine mind sees what is'. Now, finite reality is not, but God makes it be by adding limitation to infinite reality. Thus, the origin of limitation is an affirmative, not intuitive, act. This harmonises with what I said: creation pertains to God's free intelligence. But free intelligence is precisely that which affirms; it is not that which simply intuits (*Logica*, [86–89]).

It has been objected that we do not see how the divine essence can freely limit itself because the divine essence, as object of the divine mind, cannot be limited. I replied to the objection by distinguishing between the divine essence as object of the divine mind subsisting in itself (which is the divine Word and cannot be limited), and the divine essence as known, not in itself, but as existing in the mind itself. We have seen that an object of the mind leaves in the mind not only itself present to the mind, but also some *knowledge of itself*, a kind of effect of itself. As I said, the mind can assign any limitations it likes to this *knowledge-object*. The limitations do not pass into the object in itself because they are purely mental limitations of the mind's gaze and of the object as *known*, not as *object*. Nevertheless, the object in itself, as known, not as considered in itself, serves as foundation and support for these mental, analytical operations. Consequently, the divine mind always has a real foundation before it in such analyses of itself. We, on the contrary, have sometimes only an ideal object on which to operate with our analysis and abstraction. However, even from human experience we draw the example of mental operations carried out on the foundation of something real in so far as known. For example, we can have before our eyes a very attractive apple, and from it mentally abstract its colour, its shape, its parts, and whatever we please. This mental analysis, however, produces no alteration in the apple because we carry out these operations on the apple in so far as it is actually known, and as such is in our

applied to God changes in meaning. In divine intuition, not only does God intuit but perceives, and furthermore, in affirming himself, generates the Word. But here, language forces us to abstract from the generative act of the Word and also from the affirmation. We define divine intuition as 'the act with which God sees what already is'; affirmation is 'the act with which he makes things be'.

mind, although the real apple is also present to us. And it would be in our mind as *object*, but not as *known*, if, upon its removal from our gaze, it ceased immediately and we could no longer carry out those mental operations on it. In this case, the real apple would act as foundation for them because its presence would be necessary for our actual knowledge of it. This is what happens with the divine Word: his presence in the divine mind is necessary for the actual *knowledge* of the infinite reality to which, as known, the divine mind assigns limitations.

Article 4

Infinite reality is limitable only as known;
its imitability

682. Infinite reality is limitable not as it exists in itself, as eternal object of the divine mind, but purely as *known*. Limitation therefore does not come from objective reality but from the divine mind which *wills* to restrict *known reality* within limits.

Very profound writers speak of the divine ideas of creatures in another way. They say that the divine essence is *imitable* and that God knows this essential imitability; he has therefore eternal ideas of all possible finite things. I do not reject this way of speaking used by the greatest theologians, but it seems to be unfocused and consequently involves serious difficulties. In fact the concept of *imitability* supposes something which imitates, that is, it supposes finite entia (they say). In other words, these entia exist. What the theologians say is not therefore applicable to the question in hand; we are investigating how finite entia come to exist, both eternally in the divine thought and creative decree, and in time, that is, in themselves. It is certainly true that creatures *imitate* God in some way, once they exist at least in thought. But how do they have this existence? We cannot rely on imitation to make them exist, because what does not exist at all cannot imitate or copy anything in itself. The correct answer to the question requires some other way of deducing finite entia considered in the exemplar or in themselves.

‘Imitability’ of the divine essence is posterior to creatures and

expresses analogy between them and God, and I restrict the word to this use. But in order to explain the origin of the ideas of finite things and finite things themselves, I turn to the power with which the divine mind can apply freely and with a free affirming act some limits to infinite reality in so far as this reality is known to the divine mind.

We must also investigate the nature of this *limitation* imposed by God's free mind upon *known reality*, a limitation which causes the divine ideas of finite things and therefore of the subsistent world.

In order to know the nature of this creative limitation, we must distinguish it from every other kind of limitation. This obliges us to present the doctrine of limitation in all its universality.

Article 5

Concepts similar to the concept of limitation

683. To clear the way, we must distinguish similar concepts, such as *negation*, *limitation*, and *privation*, which are not to be confused.

Negation, which denies the existence of some entity, is contrary to affirmation. It posits nothing; on the contrary, it removes what the mind has hypothetically posited, that is, the dialectical and hypothetical subject of the negation, without leaving behind a true subject (indeed it removes it). The mental effect of negation is therefore *annihilation*. The concept 'nothing' differs from that of *annihilation*: nothing involves a relationship solely with entity in all its universality; *annihilation* involves a relationship with an entity posited hypothetically and then negated by the mind; negation totally annihilates the entity whatever it is. 'Negation' takes on another sense when used to indicate an annihilated entity itself, the thing negated.

Limitation is an operation which does not deny an entity but causes something to be absent from it. It involves a relationship with an entity which, after the limitation, remains *subject* of the imposed limitation. 'Limitation' therefore takes on two meanings: 1. the limiting operation, and 2. the *limit* posited by the

operation and enduring as its effect. If we take this limit together with its subject, we call it 'that which is limited'. In negation an entity is posited hypothetically by the mind in order to annihilate it immediately; in limitation the *entity* is truly posited but without the presence of some particular thing.

Privation removes from an entity what it ought to have according to its nature. The removal is done either mentally by denying that the entity has what it ought to have, or by producing the entity, but without something that it ought to have according to the law of its nature. — 'Privation', like 'negation' and 'limitation', also has two meanings: 1. the depriving operation, and 2. the enduring effect of this operation, that is, the permanent absence of that which the entity ought to have according to its nature. — Privation is a species of limitation in the sense that it does not remove what an entity should have by nature, but only some particular limitation; this is precisely why it is called 'privation'. — Privation differs from negation as limitation does, that is, privation has a true subject which is not an entity that the mind first hypothetically posits and then removes, but is already present or produced and persists together with the privation, that is, in the absence of that which the entity ought naturally to have.

Article 6

The definition of limitation: its double meaning explained

684. I said that the word 'limitation' is used with two meanings: to indicate both a *limiting operation*, and the effect remaining after the operation, that is, the *limit*.

In the first sense I defined limitation as 'an operation which causes something not to be present in an entity'.

In the second sense, I defined it as 'that which is missing from a given entity and denied to it'.

These definitions are universal, as all definitions must be, embracing all that is defined but nothing more.

The first reveals the two supreme genera of limitation:

1. *Speculative limitation*, carried out by the mind — the

mind removes something from the concept it is contemplating, as in abstraction and analysis.

2. *Active limitation*, produced by an efficient cause so that something is missing from a given real entity.

Speculative limitation can become *active limitation*, if the thinking mind adds its practical force to produce what it is thinking.

The second of the definitions gives the following important corollary:

‘Everything positive not contained in a given entity and denied to it constitutes its total limit.’ Hence:

‘That which is contained in “one” is entity, and everything contained in “other” constitutes the totality of the limit of “one”.’

For example, space, although not limited as space, is the most limited of entities because its ‘other’, that is, what can be denied to it, is greatest.

In the definition of limitation understood as limit, after the words ‘that which is missing from a given entity’, I added ‘and is denied to it’. I did this to indicate that the limit of a given entity is not what is lacking to it considered in itself but considered in relationship to the entity whose limit is being sought and to which it refers.

Article 7

Absolute and relative limit; their measurement

685. If we wish to measure limitation, that is, the limit, and establish its absolute measure, we have to compare the entity whose limit we want to measure, with the *whole*, that is, with the whole composite of things we can conceive. We have to acknowledge what is in the entity, in the ‘one’ which it forms, and what is outside it, its ‘other’. This ‘other’, which is outside and denied to it, is its *absolute limit*.

We can also compare the entity whose limit we are seeking, not with the *whole* but with some other entity, in order to see what in the latter is excluded from the former. In this case, anything outside — which is its relative ‘other’ and is denied to the first entity — constitutes its *relative limit*.

Hence, the measure of *absolute limit* of every entity is the *whole* taken absolutely.

The measure of *relative limit* is any entity whatsoever greater than the entity whose relative limit is sought. For example, genus is the measure of the relative limit of species; space, the measure of the relative limit of bodies.

Article 8

Analysis of the definition of limit;
deduction of the different genera of limits

686. Just as infinite ens and finite ens constitute the two supreme classes of entia ([cf. 150–154]), *absolute limit* and *relative limit* constitute the two supreme classes of limits.

But each of these two supreme classes has its own genera. To determine these, we must return to the universal definition of limit, analyse its terms and see how each of these can change. We will thus establish a foundation for different classifications of the genera of limits.

I said that limit is ‘that which is missing from a given entity and denied to it’.

Three elements are distinguished in this definition: 1. the subject of the limitation; 2. the limit predicated of the subject; and 3. the predication expressing the relationship between the subject and predicate.

1. The entity to which the limit applies is the *subject*; 2. what is missing from the entity is the matter of the limit, that is, the *predicable* limit; 3. the exclusion of this matter of the limit from the entity is the form of the limit, expressed by the negative predication.

But it is clear that each of these three elements of the definition of limit can be determined in various ways. Moreover, an element determined in different ways provides a foundation for classifying as genera the limits embraced by the definition.

Hence, there are three classes of genera of limitation, that is, the classification of these genera depends on what is taken as *foundation* for distinguishing the genera, namely, either the

subject of the limitation, or the limit itself, or the relationship of the limit to the subject.

Article 9

The first class of genera of limits, arising from the diversity of subjects of the limitations

§1. *There are six supreme genera of the first class*

687. Our mind can conceive being, its three forms, ens and mental entity as thinkable subjects of limitation. A limit can be predicated in some way of these six supreme genera of *subjects*, or at least we can investigate whether and how a limit can be predicated of each of them.

According to this foundation, six supreme genera of limitation can be distinguished.

§2. *The limitation of being*

688. Natural intuition makes being known as undetermined; ontological reasoning makes it known as absolute.

Both concepts exclude *being* as receptive of limitation because, in receiving limitation, it would lose the nature of being, which is infinite.

However, as we have seen, being admits *limits of relationship*.

I. Limits of relationship make *undetermined being* the principle of the *system of absolute identity*, as I explained in [276–312] of this book; our mind refers all the limitations of all other entities to being.

I will discuss later how the three forms of being, which can be distinguished from being, are subject to limitation.

II. *Absolute being*, known through ontological reflection, admits no limit. The distinction made by our reflection between attributes or anything else in order to think about absolute being, never forms part of the object to which reflection refers. In fact reflection, after using them, abolishes

them, just as the builder destroys the supports and scaffolding used to construct a building.

I must point out here that the case is different in the *supernatural order*, which natural philosophy is unable to attain. In this order God communicates himself directly to human beings, just as in the order of nature undetermined being communicates itself directly. God, when communicated in this way, does not receive limits in himself but does receive what I have called *limits of relationship*, which pertain to mystical theology. Furthermore, because absolute being is not distinct from its forms, there are *limits of relationship* of *moral Being*, *objective Being* and finally *subjective Being* communicated to human beings. But none of these arcane doctrines pertains to philosophical theosophy.

§3. *The limitation of categorical forms and of mental entities*

689. We have seen that the *supreme forms* of being are the foundation of the three *categories*, that is, of the three supreme distinctions of all conceivable entities. The nature through which the categories are distinguished reciprocally is called *categorical form*. All conceivable entities have one or other of these three categorical forms, and are therefore contained in one or other of the categories.

Our mind considers undetermined being without reference to the categorical forms; it also considers it in each of the three forms.

As I said, undetermined being (considered without reference to the categorical forms) is the dialectical subject of all limits as a result of a simple relationship between itself and the limits.

We must now see whether the categorical forms can be subject to limitation.

The forms in which finite ens participates must be distinguished from the form constituting finite ens. As we saw, this form is the real or subjective form.

The forms (moral and ideal) in which alone finite ens participates cannot be separated from being even by the mind. Because

the idea is undetermined being itself as intelligible, moral perfection is free acknowledgement of entia, carried out in ideal being. Moral perfection therefore cannot be separated from ens and being. On the other hand, the mind can think pure reality, not being.

The categorical subjects of limits are therefore:

1. *Ideal being*, dialectical subject of all the limits present in generic and specific ideas, and even more in all the limitations of mental entia. These entia are usually ideas on which the mind has exercised some operation and thus mentally limited the entia.

2. *Moral being*, dialectical subject of all the limitations present in the moral order.

3. *Reality*, a pure categorical form, subject of all the limits in the order of the real and of real entia.

I have called the genus of limits attributed to *ideal being* and *moral being* 'limits of relationship'.

The genus of limits pertaining to the categorical form of *reality* is that of *real limits proper* to the form.

Reality, considered in this way, divided from being, is *finite reality*. This *categorical form* is like an *overall genus* in which all genera, including supreme genera, come together and unite. I do not mean that *finite reality* as such can in any way subsist in itself; it presents no determined species to thought. But it can be conceived by abstracting from the thought of the concept through which finite, but undetermined reality exists in the mind. In this way, it can be considered as universal subject of all real limits. These real limits, necessary for the constitution of finite entia, are what I shall principally deal with here.

§4. *The limitation of entia*

690. I have distinguished between dialectical ens and ens in itself. Here I am concerned only with ens in itself, because dialectical or diminished ens pertains to mental entia, relative to which the universal subject of limitation is being in the ideal form, as I have said.

Ens in itself is conceived in three modes: *abstract ens*, *vague*

individual ens and *specific individual ens*, that is, *determinately determined ens*.

Abstract ens is the universal, dialectical subject of all the limits of which entia are susceptible.

Vague individual ens is the dialectical subject of the limits of each ens taken individually, not of all entia. Consequently, the statement, 'Vague individual ens is limited', is the same as 'Each limited ens is subject to its own limitations'.

Determinately determined ens is subject to its own limitations. These limitations must therefore be the principal topic of our discussion because our chief aim is to present [the] theory of the finite entia which compose the world.

Determinately determined ens is that which divides into the two supreme classes of the *infinite* and the *finite*. But infinite ens is *absolute being*, and I have already shown how it may or may not be subject of limits. Hence, I need discuss only finite ens considered as determinately determined.

Article 10

Continuation: real finite entia; entitative limit, transcendent limit and essential limit

691. We have seen that individual ens is constituted by its base in such a way that if the base of the entia changes, the ens loses its identity, while its appendices, having received another base, become another ens. It is clear that if the new base does not differ as abstract species, the new ens will be of the same species as the previous ens. If it differs solely in species, the new ens will differ in species but be of the same genus, and so on right up to the supreme genus. Consequently, because each ens can have only one base (unity is necessary to ens), all the other possible bases of entia, taken together, are shortcomings and limits of the ens. These limits are called *entitative limits* because they exclude other entia from the ens.

If, on the other hand, we conceive only *appendices* without a base of any kind, all possible bases of entia would be missing from the concept. Hence, the limitation conceived by the mind would be greater still because ens would be entirely missing; the

[691]

difference would be that between ens and non-ens. This lack of all bases of ens on the part of the mental entity called appendix is more than an entitative limit. I therefore call it *transcendent limit*.

Furthermore, we must note that the bases themselves of entia differ through certain limits. The greatest difference is between the base of *infinite ens* and of *finite entia*: the *base* of the former is *being*; of the latter, not being but a term of being, the *real*. I call this kind of limit *essential limit*. The base of infinite ens therefore is what is missing from the base of finite ens. In other words, granted this *entitative limit*, finite ens and infinite ens are two entia. Moreover, because the base of finite ens is not *being* but *that which is real*, and because the difference between the bases is that between being and non-being, the difference is greater than any genus. *Finite ens* has, therefore, in addition *essential limit*. Again, if the base of finite ens is not being, the base does not exist unless being is present to it to make it exist. Hence, the base is not base *per se*, which means that the base of finite ens, compared to the base of infinite ens, is not base. This in turn means that finite ens has also *transcendent limit*. Thus finite ens, relative to the infinite, is a non-ens.

Article 11

Continuation: subjective transcendent limit and
objective transcendent limit; secondary limits

692. Analysing finite ens, we can now investigate the different limits it receives according to the different mode in which we can conceive it.

Transcendent limit, which consists in the lack of any *base*, is of two kinds, just as there are two series of elements which the finite real acquires from being in order to exist as finite ens. As I said, the finite real acquires four elements from subjective being and four from objective being. If finite ens is stripped of the four elements received from subjective being, it remains an objective ens, that is, an ens which, lacking its own subjective existence, is not ens in itself — in the subjective order, it is nothing, lacking both base and appendices. Strictly speaking, this is

[692]

not a *limit* but the total *negation* of ens. But in so far as finite ens exists as object in the mind, it has a base and *mental* appendices. This mental ens is an appurtenance of the mind which conceives it because the ens lacks subjective being which makes it exist as ens in itself. If therefore we mentally take finite objective ens as subject of the limitation, its limit must be subjective being. Consequently, objective finite ens differs from subjective ens as *subjectively non-being* differs from *subjectively being*. Hence, this kind of transcendent limit consists in the lack of both base and appendix.

If we now strip objective finite ens of the four qualities it receives from objective being, it is deprived not only of its base and subjective appendix, but also of its objective base. Nothing remains except the objective appendix, that is, the finite, undetermined reality (some philosophers call this 'first matter'). This objective appendix has as limit the lack of every objective and subjective base and subjective appendix. This is the second kind of transcendent limit and differs as *being* differs absolutely from *non-being*.

I call the first of these two limits 'subjective transcendent limit' (lack of subjective ens) and the second 'objective transcendent limit' (lack of subjective ens and objective base).

We can consider finite ens therefore in three modes, as:

1. *Objective appendix*. Here there is as yet no ens. If the appendix is taken as a dialectical subject of the limit, it differs from absolute ens in the way that what is not at all ens differs from what is absolute ens (objective transcendent limit).

2. *Objective ens*. If objective finite ens is taken as the dialectical subject of limitation, it differs from absolute ens as that which in itself is not ens subjectively differs from what is in itself subjective ens (subjective transcendent limit).

3. *Subjective ens*. Subjectively existing finite ens, if taken as a real subject of limitation, differs from absolute ens in the way that what has being as its base differs from what does not have being as its base. The difference is therefore more than that between ens and ens; it is the difference between an ens which is such through participation and another ens which is such *per se* (*essential limit*).

693. From all this we must conclude that there are three or four supreme genera of real limits. The first concerns being,

[693]

which is *essential limitation*; the second concerns the base of ens, which is both *entitative* and *transcendent limitation*; the third concerns only the appendices of ens, which I call 'secondary limitation'.

Essential limitation excludes being.

Entitative limitation excludes all bases of ens except one, proper to ens.

Transcendent limitation excludes all bases of ens. If it excludes the subjective base, it is subjective; if it excludes the objective base as well, it is objective.

Secondary limitation excludes some appendices of ens, but not the base.

Essential limitation, because it excludes being, removes every real subject of limitation. It is therefore conceived only as applied to a dialectical subject.

Transcendent limitation, which excludes all bases of ens, also leaves only a dialectical subject, not a real subject of limitation.

Entitative limitation leaves a real subject of limitation because it leaves a base that excludes all other bases.

Secondary limitation, which also leaves a real subject of limitation, excludes only appendices.

The first two *dialectical limitations* are negations of ens.

The third limitation removes the *identity* of an ens and makes another exist.

The fourth is the simple limitation of ens only, whose identity it does not destroy.

Article 12

The second class of genera of limits, arising from the different nature of the limits themselves

694. When classifying the subjects of limits, I showed that the different nature of these subjects is susceptible of different limits. Hence, I derived different genera of limits from the different nature of the subjects.

But the nature of limits itself can also be a direct foundation for the classification of their genera. Classification on this foundation is indeed necessary because the same subject can have

[694]

different limits. But the detailed classification of the different nature of limits, which I wish to make, requires me to return to the genera already discussed and repeat myself.

By gathering together the previous considerations we will see better how the nature of limits parallels that of quantities because quantity is 'an entity in so far as contained within limits'. Hence, there are as many genera of quantities as there are genera of limits, and vice versa. So, just as I distinguished quantity, relative to real things, into *ontological*, *cosmological* and *physical*, I must now distinguish three corresponding genera of limits: *ontological*, *cosmological* and *physical*. My discussion of quantity has already dealt with many things relative to these different natures of limits.

What I say now will explain this teaching further. Because the three supreme genera of limits, considered either in their nature or in their different relationship with their subject, pertain equally to the second and third class of genera, I will consider them under the aspect of *relationship*, in which they are predicated with a subject.

Article 13

The third class of genera of limits have their foundation in the different conjunction between the limit and the entity which is the subject of the conjunction

695. This third way of distributing the limits of mentally conceived real things into genera divides them into three genera.

The first genus of limits has as subject of the limits a previously conceived, real individual ens. These are physical limits.

The second genus of limits does not have a previously conceived, real individual ens but only an entity considered as subject of the limits. These are cosmological limits.

The third genus has a subject not previously conceived as an ens or an entity. These are ontological limits.

§1. *The limits whose subject is a previously conceived,
real, individual ens*

696. I called these limits *secondary*. They are the normal object of human attention so that people speak as if no other limits existed.

When the mind conceives a real individual ens prior to these limits, the limits clearly do not form their subject; they are not essential to it.

Although every real individual essentially needs a complete determination, it does not need a *determined determination*. Complete determination of the individual can vary; its concept has no particular determination. This comes about relative to the potentiality of the real individual. The law governing the real individual says that 'it has a complete determination in act, and all the complete determinations of which it is susceptible, in potency'. The real individual, as potency, as cause of its own acts, has in itself all its indistinct acts. Its nature is constituted by the unification of these acts into one principle, cause or power, whether the acts are many or few. But the real individual could not receive existence, that is, subjective being, if among all its determining acts, it had not exhibited those which constitute a determination of some kind. As we saw, any subject lacking determination from any point of view cannot subsist.

697. But why is the concept of *determination*, when understood in a sense that contradicts the concept of *indetermination*, still not the concept of the secondary limits under discussion?

Although a real ens can have a large number of complete determinations, it must have at least one, to which its potentiality extends. These different, possible determinations are more or less perfect, that is, they bring perfection or imperfection to the ens to which they belong. We can therefore conceive a series of *perfect determinations*. The series could begin from the perfect determination which would deteriorate the ens down to the ultimate level of deterioration, and finish with that perfect determination which would give the ens the ultimate level of its perfection. These are the two extremes of such a series. Indeed, if we thought of an ens in its most imperfect state possible and wanted to find a still greater imperfection, we would have

[696–697]

parted from that ens, which has no further potentiality for imperfection, and annihilated it — the ens is annihilated as soon as it has [lost] its identity. Similarly, if we had conceived the ens in its highest possible perfection and wanted to go higher still, we would have parted from the ens because we would have parted from the potentiality constituting its nature. The ens would be annihilated, and at most we would have mentally passed to another ens not identical to the first.

Let us suppose, however, that the determination given to an individual ens brings the ens to the act of its highest possible perfection relative to all the other lower levels of perfection. In this case, all these lower levels are precisely *secondary limits* of the ens; they are the limits we are seeking in so far as they fall short of the supreme level. Secondary limits, therefore, can be defined as a whole as ‘that amount of *perfection* which an individual ens lacks but can naturally receive’.

I say ‘secondary limits defined as a whole’ because very many species of partial secondary limits can be mentally distinguished when the word ‘perfection’ is determined in different ways in the definition. The word can be taken to mean the complex harmony of all the perfections of which an ens is susceptible. Thus, the definition pertains to the *limit as a whole*. But the word can also be taken to mean any partial perfection; for example, in the case of a human being, it can mean his or her beauty, stature, good health, any endowment at all, like outstanding athletic ability. It does not matter what genus, what species of human endowments we are considering, we can always say that ‘the limit is that which the particular perfection under consideration lacks at its highest level’. These are *partial secondary limits* which admit numerous modes and classes but need no further detailed investigation by us.

We have supposed that the whole or special perfection of a given ens has a *maximum level* and that the *secondary limit* is whatever the ens lacks for attaining the ultimate level of perfection. Later, I will discuss whether there is a maximum level in all subjects of secondary limits; for now I will presume this hypothesis.

Granted therefore that there is a maximum or minimum perfection in an ens (the minimum level of perfection is equivalent to maximum deterioration), the secondary limit of this ens

cannot increase *ad infinitum*. Whenever the ens has sunk to maximum deterioration and cannot deteriorate any further without destroying itself, it has received the maximum limit possible. Hence, when philosophers define what is limited as ‘that which can always increase or diminish’, they give a non-universal definition. The definition does not embrace all possible limits because not all limits have an indefinite increase or diminution. Relative to entia which admit a maximum perfection and deterioration, the secondary limits under discussion certainly do not have this indefinite increase or diminution. Consequently, ‘this genus of limited things cannot be increased and diminished *ad infinitum*’ but only to a certain level: ‘the limit itself is limited’.

§2. *Continuation: the source of the indefinite, and
why certain limits can always be diminished
without being annihilated*

698. We must now deal with the question touched upon above: ‘Do all real individuals have a maximum and minimum perfection, between which they always retain their identity?’

First, it is not absurd to conceive entia which have only one complete determination without the possibility of any other. Such entia cannot in themselves be subjects of *secondary limits*, unless other entia share in them to some extent.

Among term-entia, space is one of these. In itself, space has no *secondary limits* because it has, and cannot not have, only one supremely simple and immutable mode of being. But space has this mode only when it is considered as shared in to some extent by bodies. This is true of all entia which have a nature in any way infinite.

Entia of this kind have no secondary limits and are therefore called *unlimited*. If we consider them as shared in by other entia, we have the concept ‘of an indefinite increase and of an indefinite diminution’ because there is no reason why one limit rather than another should be imposed on participation in infinite ens. This gives us a definition of the nature of the indefinite: ‘the indefinite consists in participation in the infinite’. An

indefinite corresponds to the aspect under which the entity shared in is said to be infinite. Hence, the *indefinite* stands midway between the finite and the infinite, or better, unites them. Thus its definition can be expressed as: 'the indefinite is the infinite as shared in'.

699. Indefinite progression exists as soon as we consider any finite ens sharing in some way in the infinite. Thus, because body participates in space which is infinite, it can always receive increase or diminution without the series ever finishing, as I have said. Time can always receive increase because it participates in infinite duration. Similarly, number can receive increase because it participates in abstract possibility which is infinite.

But if we rise to a more sublime order of things, we can explain indefinite human perfectibility. Human perfectibility in knowledge and virtue is, in the abstract, indefinite. Knowledge is obtained by participation in objective being which is infinite; virtue, by participation in the lovability of being, which is also infinite.

In all these cases, where a *maximum* can never be found, how is secondary limit measured? This measure cannot be determined simply by defining it as 'that which ens lacks for attaining its maximum total or partial perfection'. How then is this measure determined and defined?

In two ways, depending on the genera of the indefinite in question:

1. The minimum, if obtainable, can be the measure.
2. If not even the minimum is obtainable, we *suppose* the presence of a *minimum* or *maximum* which remains as a quantity of *direct knowledge*.

700. A minimum is possible in abstract number, which is numerical unity. This minimum, or numerical one, has the *maximum limit* of numbers. Hence, the limit of number increases as number draws closer to unity.

A *minimum* is not possible in either *body* or *time*, which are indefinitely divisible. They differ from *number* because one, an element of number, is so abstract that it has no nature subject to itself which divides; number is formed by repeating one as a whole. Body, on the other hand, participates in the nature of space, participating in a portion of space but not repeating it; time does the same with the nature of duration. Hence, because

body can share in space, and time in eternal duration, space and time always preserve their nature of extension and duration; as long as extension and duration remain, they can be shared in through division. Consequently, while extension and duration remain extension and duration, they can always be shared in through new division; the divisibility is indefinite. No absolute minimum or absolute maximum, can be found in these genera of the *indefinite* because they originate from infinite natures that can be *shared in* through division. Our mind, therefore, takes a supposed maximum or minimum *quantum* and uses them both as measures for determining *limit*, which therefore is only a *relative limit*. Thus, in dealing with indefinites of this kind, we have two measures instead of one. Both are *relative*; neither is absolute.

Let us take a millimetre as a supposed minimum measure: the closer bodies come in their length to this *extremely limited* measure, the more limited we call them. — If we take the axis of the earth or the meridian as a supposed maximum measure, we say that bodies are limited in their length in inverse proportion to their proximity to the length of the earth's axis or to the meridian.

Similarly in the case of time. As a relative measure of the limit of time we can take either a supposed minimum, such as a second, or a supposed maximum, such as a millennium. If time approaches a second considered as the maximum limit, or withdraws from a millennium considered as the minimum limit, we have longer or shorter relative time.

701. These two relative measures are therefore always possible whenever 1. participation in an unlimited nature is limited; 2. this unlimited nature can nevertheless be shared in through division, that is, not all of it together but only in parts. These natures, although unlimited and indivisible in themselves, divide by participation into parts relative to the entia participating in them. They are not such that the participation must be *total* or *not at all* — they do not have a perfect simplicity like abstract one. In themselves they have two infinities, the kinds I have called *unilateral*, that is, they can be considered *infinite* under two aspects: as *qualitative natures* and *quantitative natures*. *Space* and *duration*, as qualitative natures, are infinite, and retain this infinity even when the infinity is shared. If it

were not retained, the natures would be annihilated through loss of their *essential quality*. Space and duration are also infinite as quantitative natures, but lose this infinity when shared in because the participation, as finite, communicates its finiteness to their quantitative nature. The nature of space and that of duration remain in the participated space and duration, but quantitative infinity does not. This explains why they can be shared in; the act with which a given ens shares in them is the act that imposes limits to the quantitative nature. This results from their natures which are not perfectly simple, but have in themselves the duality of qualitative and quantitative nature of which I have spoken.

If, on the other hand, we are dealing with infinities that have a totally simple nature and consequently do not admit of parts, even parts relative to the participator, how can they be shared in? — This is the case of being, whether it is subjective, objective or moral. Being, both abstracted from its forms and with its forms, is perfectly simple and indivisible. But we have seen that participation in being is not brought about through limitation and division but simply through *presence* or, if preferred, *in session*. This relationship arises from the nature of being: thus, presence is proper to being, so that without being we do not even have the concept of presence, as I will show in the relevant place. The real term therefore is *in sessionally* in being, and being is *in sessionally* in the real term. But, as we saw, this reciprocal *in session* always takes place in a mind. Now, if we speak about a real finite term, then being which is *in sessionally* in it and in which the term *in sessionally* is, is pure being, stripped of its infinite terms, that is, it is initial being. Initial being is equal and identical in all finite terms. Consequently, it divides and multiplies only through relationship; in other words, only its relationships multiply as a result of the multiplicity of the finite terms, which are the foundation of the relationships. The infinite is present, therefore, in every real finite term conceived by the mind as an ens. This explains the opinion of some philosophers that ‘the infinite permeates everything; the whole of nature is suffused with the infinite; all meditation on finite things, even the least, will eventually come upon something infinite’. But what is this infinite encountered everywhere?

702. We have seen that this being is *virtual*, precisely because

[702]

it hides its proper terms from our minds and reveals itself only as the starting-point common to all finite realities. By means of its virtuality, being can be shared in by the finite, with finite participation and without dividing or multiplying. The *whole* of being, and always the whole, is shared in, but not *totally*, because it hides in itself the terms proper and essential to it.

Hence, being, because it is not shared in *totally* (although the whole of it is shared in), allows for a limited participation, which can increase through an indefinite series of levels, at least when the thing is considered abstractly.

This increase of participation consists in the unfolding of the *virtuality* of being: participation in being relative to the actuality of its terms increases in proportion to the increase of terms in the human mind (or any other mind whatsoever) which being acquires.

The human mind is formed by the presence of objective virtual being, which contains subjective virtual being. When a real (a feeling) is given to our mind, the mind perceives this real as ens. The expressions 'to be given to our mind' and 'to perceive this finite real as ens' simply indicate the following fact: *subjective virtual being*, present to the mind in objective being, begins as totally virtual being and becomes, for the mind, actually terminated being: the *real*, which is the hidden form, is revealed in being but within certain limits. Consequently, the mind truthfully predicates being of the finite real, and thus recognises the real as an ens because that which feels, feels being in subjective being which it already virtually possesses in objective being and as its term. Thus the finite real in our mind is inessionally in being and being in it as its principle, without confusion, because one is the common principle, the other, term and subject of the finite ens itself. But because the virtuality of being is infinite, the real term can always increase, or at least our mind finds no direct reason to assign a limit to its increase. Thus the finite real shares in the infinite virtual term. We have therefore indefinite increase, conceivable in finite real things.

703. There is also an *indefinite*, that is, the indefinite progress of knowledge, in the finite participation in objective being. Objective being, in passing from virtual to actual being, manifests its terms; knowledge increases in proportion to the extent of this manifestation. But we must note the difference between

this and the previous *indefinite* which pertains to the order of real things, that is, to the order of subjective being. *Finite real things* participate only in that virtuality of subjective being which refers to the finite real — a virtuality that embraces pure reality abstracted from being by limitation. The finite mind, however, shares in that virtuality of being which refers not only to the finite real but to absolute being. Absolute being is the maximum object of knowledge and knowable in varying degree.

Moral being, however, never stops at the finite; every moral virtue supposes love for infinite being.

The *indefinite* which comes from participation in virtual being is therefore of three kinds:

1. The indefinite that arises from the infinite virtuality of finite ens (subjective indefinite).
2. The indefinite that arises from the infinite virtuality of both finite and infinite ens (objective indefinite).
3. The indefinite that arises from the infinite virtuality of infinite ens (moral indefinite).

The limit, therefore, in these three kinds of quantities, which can receive indefinite increase, is always posited by the *virtuality* of being.

704. But how can this limit be measured? Relative to the measure of this increase, there is no *maximum measure* because what is shared in is infinite. There is also no *minimum measure* because even if the minimum of virtue, knowledge and the real were discovered, it could not be applied; the things to be measured would be heterogeneous, and every measure requires some homogeneity between the measure and what is measured. Thus, if we say that the minimum real is the *extrasubjective element*, we must find the minimum of this element but, as we saw in our discussion of body and shared extension, this minimum does not exist. Even if it did exist, how could we take the minimum body or minimum extension as measure of souls?

The nature of the heterogeneity of the things to be measured must also be taken into consideration: the heterogeneity is infinite. In fact, the *virtuality of the finite* is as infinitely distant from the *virtuality of the infinite* as the finite is from the infinite. Hence, participation in the levels of actuality of the finite is infinitely distant from participation in the levels of the infinite.

There are, therefore, some *indefinites* which are infinitely distant from each other.

705. Summing up, we can say: whenever an entity which has limits is constituted by participation in something *infinite*, an *indefinite* increase is present in it.

Limits of this kind of finite thing cannot have a maximum as their measure because what is finite has no maximum in which its increase finishes. These limits therefore, relative to their measure, divide into genera:

1. Some have a *minimum* as their measure when the increase is carried out through *repetition* and not through participative *division*. Discrete quality is an example of this.

2. Some have neither a maximum nor an absolute minimum. They can, however, have two *relative measures*: a supposed minimum and maximum. These measures are proper to entities that participate in something infinite and shareable through division of parts, like body, time and *motion*.

3. Some limits do not have even a relative measure. All we can know is that the entity concerned is *more or less* limited, but without an assignable *quantum*. Limits of this kind are proper to entities constituted by participation in an infinite which cannot be shared in through *division of parts* but through *disclosed virtuality*, whether it is the finite which is disclosed by emerging from its virtuality, or the infinite.

§3. Continuation: the inherence of secondary limit

706. I posited the universal definition of limit as ‘that which is lacking in an entity and is denied to it’. I pointed out that the words ‘is denied to it’ were added to the definition to indicate that ‘that which is lacking in an entity’ is not limit in itself but is referred by the mind to the entity deprived of that which is lacking. But the *relationship* between an entity and what it lacks is not always the same. From this I deduced the third way of dividing limits into genera. I said that secondary limits were the first of the three genera of limits distinguished according to this foundation. We must therefore clarify the relationship between this genus of limits and the ens to which they pertain.

[705–706]

The ens, or subject, of which these limits are predicated exists prior to them. Granted these limits, they have a relationship with the subject which I call 'inherence'. Because limit is always 'something lacking', we need to understand how something lacking can *inhere* in what is.

The explanation is found in the nature of potentiality. We have seen that secondary limit is a limit of potency-cause. Potency-causes are all those entia that could not exist without an actual, complete determination but admit of some kind of development. In addition to their actual, complete determination, they have many potential determinations, of varying degree of perfection. The determination of greatest perfection moves and broadens the limits of the ens. Hence, these limits consist 'in the potentiality for the perfection (partial or total) of ens'. Perfection in potency is a mode of being. Secondary limit is therefore a mode of being and, as such, is not nothing but something which *inheres* in ens, something in ens, because the potency of ens is not nothing. But what we call 'potency' considered as something positive becomes 'limit' considered as a negative, that is, as a lack of actuality or of emergence. This lack is indivisible from something that exists; it is not pure lack. Indeed, the *potency* of ens results precisely from the indivisible union of a positive cause-principle whose effects are virtually present, and a negative principle that consists in the lack of actuality of the effects. Thus, *secondary limit* is a necessary constitutive of the potency of ens.

We need to apply this doctrine to all the lower genera of secondary limits and ascertain the different nature of the inherence of each in ens. To avoid an endless discussion, I will consider solely how secondary limit inheres in entia which, *through division*, are constituted by a *finite participation* in an *infinite* thing. These entia are, as we saw, bodies, which share in space. The parts of space in which bodies share cannot really be divided from all space. These parts are in continuity with the whole of space, because space in itself is indivisible; division is relative only to the participating bodies and not to space itself. We have therefore shared, finite space and non-shared, infinite space. The confines between shared space and space excluded from the participation are surfaces, lines and points. These confines exclude all space not shared by the body. The lack of all this

shared space constitutes the comprehensive limit of the body. But because this lack or exclusion is determined by the confines, these are taken as the *limits* of the bodies, in which they inhere. Strictly speaking, the confines are an indication and determination of the limit but not truly the limit; the *limit* is all the excluded space. The confines of this excluded space are identical with the confines of the shared space, because all the points, lines and surfaces enclosing a body are common to both the shared space and the space excluded from the participation. The confines are therefore the *determination of limit*. They can also be called the *virtual limit* of body, because they cannot be conceived without the implicit concept of unlimited space (AMS, 156–158, 165–166). They indicate to the mind, therefore, all the space excluded by a body contained virtually in its concept. This explains why points, lines and surfaces can be called *limits* inhering in the bodies they circumscribe.

§4. *The limits prior to which some entities, but no real ens, are conceived*

707. I said that secondary limits have as their subject a real ens which is presupposed as existing prior to the limits. This real ens, precisely because it is subject of secondary limits and conceived prior to them, must be limited. Secondary limits are not therefore the first limits, but suppose others prior to them because they suppose something limited which serves as their subject. This is the precisely the property which causes their determination as secondary.

We must therefore investigate the nature of the limits proper to a real ens as conceived prior to its secondary limits. It is clear that the limits proper to an ens do not presuppose another ens prior to them. If they did, they would fall within the genus of secondary limits. Hence, limits exist which constitute the ens itself, because without them the ens could no longer be conceived.

Entitative limits, as I have called them, pertain to this genus. These cosmological limits, as I have also called them, limit the base of an ens just as secondary limits limit the *appendix* of the

[707]

ens. If the secondary limits change, the ens does not perish because secondary limits affect only its appendices. If, however, the entitative limits change, the base changes, and the ens loses its identity.

The limits I have called *transcendent* also pertain to this genus. They exclude the objective and subjective elements that constitute an ens.

The *entity* conceived prior to entitative limits is the *potency* of a real to have another base in addition to the base it has already. The entity conceived prior to transcendent limits is the potency possessed by a real without a base, and is therefore an undetermined real in the mind, susceptible of acquiring a *base* and consequently of becoming an ens.

The presupposed ens existing with its entitative limits is the subject of these limits, a subject contemporary with but not prior to them. This observation already helps to clarify the relationship between these entitative limits and a really existing ens.

708. I said that 'limitation' is taken in two senses, either as *limiting operation* or as *limit*. We see then that relative to this genus of limit, 'taking the word in the first sense, an ens is not the object of limitation'. If an ens were object of the limiting operation, it would have to be presupposed as existing prior to the operation. Rather, it is 'the subject of limitation taken in the second meaning' that is, in the sense of limit which does not require an ens prior to the limit. It requires only that the mind abstract the limit from a limited ens, attribute it to the ens and acknowledge it as indivisible from the ens.

This observation helps to remove a common opinion (which with many others has penetrated philosophy) that *all* limits are applied through *a limiting operation*. This could not be further from the truth. This opinion is true solely of those limits whose concept is separate from that of an ens. Secondary limits are of this kind because an ens is conceived prior to them. The opinion is therefore only true of these limits, but not always, nor necessarily. The limits essential to an ens, however, are not applied through *a limiting operation* but through *the operation with which the ens is produced*, whether this is vegetation, generation or creation.

The *limiting operation* (I mean an operation separate from all

other operations) can apply limits, therefore, only on the following two conditions:

1. The entity to which it applies them must already be something *limited*. In this case, the operation merely restricts some existing limits (without producing new ones) which, by a contrary operation, can also be extended.

2. The thing to which the *limiting operation* is applied admits parts through participation. Thus, a real or imaginary body, a time, a number, anything limited, can be further limited by a limiting operation.

Other limits are not produced by a *limiting operation* but by an operation which at one and the same time produces an ens together with the limit proper to the ens.

709. Let us now return to the limit essential to a given, existent real. Because the limit is conceived together with the real, it is necessary to the thing's constitution. However, although the mind cannot conceive the ens prior to this genus of limits, it can conceive something anterior, a kind of matter, that undergoes limitation. This 'something anterior' is an entity called 'abstract species'.

This relationship, between *entitative limit* and the ens considered as its subject, is not purely one of *inherence* but an essential relationship constituting the ens.

Relative to the limit I have called transcendent, however, *reality*, not the *ens*, is its subject. This *reality*, undetermined as it is, exists only in the mind; the indetermination does not allow it to exist in itself. Hence, the subject of these limits can only be the reality and potentiality found in lower genera hierarchically distributed up to the supreme genus — in short, the subject is the reality enclosed in the generic idea in which the base of the ens is still missing.

I call cosmological limits therefore those which the divine mind applies to the totally undetermined *reality* in the mind. These limits gradually make it fully determined and able to acquire an existence in itself. Mankind finds these limits in genera and species. If we take the totally undetermined reality as supreme genus, it is the entity conceived prior to all these limits which then becomes subject of them all.

But this surely is a limiting operation? It may indeed be carried out sometimes by the mind or sometimes by an exterior,

that is, real action, but this does not cause it to lose its nature of limiting operation.

I reply. By 'limiting operation' I understand an operation whose only effect is to limit. Thus, if we mentally or actually cut away part of a continuous body, the body, now smaller, has had limits applied to it but not lost its nature of body, nor acquired another nature. But if it is necessary to produce something new in order to limit an entity, the operation is *productive*, not limiting, although the productive operation also limits the previous entity. This is precisely what happens when a genus is limited by the production of species, or an abstract species is limited by the production of the full species. This production certainly limits the previous entity but only by producing something new. If we now consider what this new thing is, we find that it divides into three parts and natures:

1. The first is produced by cosmological limits which precede the abstract species. This is the *matter* of the base of the ens, and precedes the base, which does not yet exist.

2. The second is produced by cosmological limits which produce the abstract species. This is the formed *base* of the ens.

3. The third is produced by limits which make the species full and fullest, and also posit the appendices of the ens. This final, produced thing pertains to secondary and physical limits. Because I have already discussed these, we need consider only the first two natures produced by the limits.

The first, produced by limits antecedent to the base of ens, is not ens itself, but still non-ens. The second is ens itself. Hence, some cosmological limits produce a less undetermined matter, a kind of preamble to ens; others produce ens itself. Consequently, these cosmological limits cannot be applied with a *purely limiting operation* but only with a *productive operation* that augments the thing which at the same time receives the limits.

710. The object of limitation — limitation in the sense of an operation which applies limits — is the subject which receives limits. As a result of what has been said above, the distinction I made between this subject and the subject in which limits have already been produced becomes more universal. The subject which receives limits does not yet have them; the subject of limits already produced is another subject precisely because the

limits have produced a new subject which did not previously exist. Thus, the subject of the limits of abstract species is the *base of ens*. Before receiving them, however, the subject was the proximate genus, not the base of ens nor ens, but simply the matter antecedent to ens and its base.

There is, therefore, a twofold effect of the operation which, by its productive action, applies limits: it simultaneously adds and restricts. I will explain this further when I discuss ontological limits, but for the present it is sufficient to note that this fact is conceived as the result of two concurrent causes: 1. an efficient cause, which is the divine mind; and 2. a *potency to receive*, which is undetermined or generic reality. In fact, generic reality is conceived as a potency of species which itself is conceived as an act of generic reality. I said that the potency-cause remains the subject of its own acts. Thus, generic reality, considered as potency-cause, becomes subject of the species, which are its acts, although it is purely a dialectical, antecedent subject. Beyond that, generic reality, as known to human beings, does not of itself have the power to emit its own acts. This is why I called it 'a *potency to receive*'. As long as generic reality is considered as generic, it is something undetermined, and that which is undetermined does not exist in itself. It cannot therefore operate and determine itself, but because it exists solely in the mind, only the mind, as efficient cause, can add the acts that determine it. This efficient cause must act in such a way that the genus, as potency, passes to the act of species. Thus, genus, as genus, that is, as undetermined, is an imperfect potency because it is an imperfect cause; it is a 'potency to receive its acts rather than do them'. But after it has received them, it is a dialectical subject antecedent to the acts.

711. The acts which the genus, that is, generic reality, can receive differ. Each of the complete, determined acts has properties opposite to properties of the other acts. Hence the acts mutually exclude each other, just as we saw in the case of secondary limits and the different complete determinations which the same ens can receive. Granted, therefore, that each of these determinations which produce a species or a lower genus excludes all the others, the genus is obviously limited by the addition of actuality. But the limit is reduced by the *indetermination* of the genus and its *potentiality to receive*. In other

words, the genus, already determined to a mode (species), *can* no longer be determined to other modes; a species, because of its own and necessary identity, cannot simultaneously be other species. When the potency is limited, therefore, the *act* increases. Thus, as we saw, when the extension of ideas is limited, comprehension increases. But potency is not nothing; it is a lack of act. If every act were lacking, there would no longer be anything. Potency, therefore, inexists within an act which, as act, is not potency: 'potency is an act which can be the cause of other acts of which it is either dialectical and antecedent subject or real subject'. If these other acts are appendices of ens, potency is an act which is the real subject of these appendices-acts. But if the acts constitute a new subject, 'potency is an act which can produce other acts of which it is the dialectical, antecedent subject', and as such is in the mind. Cosmological limits, therefore, are posited by adding a potency to such acts, of which the potency remains only a dialectical subject.

If the indetermination and potentiality are something negative and defective, the cosmological *limits* that diminish them must be something positive, not something lacking. They are the lack of what is lacking. This has the dialectical form 'lack' but it is not a true lack.

This would be the case if *potency* itself were not something positive. But it is positive, not relative to the act it lacks, but because it *can* do or have this act: *potency* is an incipient act, root of many acts. Hence, when an act is joined to potency and determines it, an increase and a diminution take place: 1. an *increase* of act, and 2. a *diminution* of potency. The diminution is the *limit* which is applied to it and which consists in the lack of something negative.

This very condition, namely, that potency cannot enrich itself with a greater act without diminishing itself, is a condition that has the nature of *limit*; it is something essential to potency itself.

Cosmological limits are therefore those applied by the mind to an entity prior to ens and its base, that is, to the undetermined reality which exists solely in the mind. They are limits applied through an *operation producing* further actuality, not through a purely limiting operation; the effect called 'limitation' is a consequence of production itself.

§5. *Limits prior to which no ens is conceived
nor any entity which can be subject of limitation*

712. But how did limitation start? What is its origin? Up till now I have supposed it. I passed from something limited to something still more limited but always limited; from the limits of the appendices of ens to the limits proper to the base of ens, then from these to the limits of dialectical matter antecedent to ens, that is, of undetermined and, finally, totally undetermined reality. But this itself is some first limited thing which I have supposed. I must therefore explain it and show how the passage was made not from one limited thing to another, but from the unlimited to the limited. I have of course discussed this already when I described creation and explained the theory of ontological quantity, but I must return to it in order to clarify further the nature and, as it were, birth of limitation.

Various important questions can be asked about these ontological limits. The first two are:

‘1. The cosmological and physical limits I discussed suppose the pre-existence of something which receives limitation, the existence of at least an entity in the idea, an entity which itself is limited. But nothing that can be limited exists prior to ontological limits; only the unlimited pre-exists. How then does this first limited thing originate?’

‘2. Having explained the origin of the first limited thing, that is, the first subject of limits, which themselves are first limits, we still have to see how the limited thing is formed by creative freedom. Does this freedom, in producing the first limited thing, have no determined norm with the result that the limited thing can be made indefinitely larger or smaller?’

I reply to the first question as follows. The divine mind, by means of the operation I have called *divine abstraction*, can draw the limited from the unlimited. The abstracting operation is not carried out on what is in itself subsistent and unlimited which, as a result, undergoes some alteration or division or limitation in itself, but on the *unlimited* as simply *known* to the mind, not as *subsistent* in itself in the divine mind. The abstraction does not diminish this *known unlimited* but simply adds another *known* which is *abstract*. This partial thought does not

destroy the whole thought but presupposes it as present. In this way, the limited is formed in the mind as *known*. The divine mind then wishes it, and wishing it creates it, as I said earlier.

If this *limited*, formed in the mind, can be indefinitely bigger or smaller, how does God's freedom determine it to one quantity rather than another? This is the second question, more difficult than the first.

But first, I will try to put in the fullest light the difficulty involved in such a question.

713. All finite things differ infinitely from the infinite. The finite, therefore, considered abstractly, can be conceived as capable of indefinite increase without approaching the infinite. Hence, no matter how great the increase, the difference always remains infinite. We can never find the finite by diminishing the infinite, nor the infinite by increasing the finite. It seems therefore that the finite cannot be extracted from the infinite. There is an uncrossable abyss between them; they are two concepts that cannot have anything in common.

But let us suppose that the concept of the finite can be extracted from the infinite. Because the finite can be indefinitely increased and diminished, and because it must be given a determined quantity by the mind, this determined quantity must be chosen by the mind from among the indefinite quantities which the finite, considered generically, that is, abstractly, can receive. This, however, is impossible for several reasons.

714. 1. Possible, determined quantities of the finite are indefinite. Hence, they can never be in act but only in potency (the nature of the indefinite is such that it is never totally in act). But quantities in potency are not quantities on which some choice can fall. If we retort that all possible quantities are in act in the divine mind, we fall into another absurdity by admitting an infinite number in act, but an infinite number actually present to the mind is indeed an absurdity. All numbers are either equal or unequal, and by adding one we can change equal into unequal, and vice versa. Moreover, even if we granted that this infinite number of possible *quanta* could be actually present to the divine mind, I do not see how a choice could be made among an infinite number of choices; for a choice to be made, each of the infinite numbers would have to be compared with all

the others. Then, because the comparison of one with all the others involves an infinite number of comparisons, we would have to suppose that an infinite number of comparisons could be made an infinite number of times. But this, too, is absurd. The argument affirms that the number, supposed infinite, can be infinitely increased, but one property of the infinite is that it cannot be increased. Consequently, the supposedly infinite number was not in fact infinite.

But let us take the argument further and suppose that an infinite number of comparisons is made an infinite number of times. If each of the infinite numbers were compared with all the other infinite unities which make up the number (as is supposed), we would have an infinite number of results. We would have to start again and compare these results with each other. Once again the same infinite number of comparisons would be made an infinite number of times. In other words, we would be pursuing a circle of infinite operations without any result whatsoever, an infinite number of operations leading always to another infinite number of operations and so on *ad infinitum*. Clearly, a choice among an infinite number of choices is impossible. Consequently, this reasoning cannot explain how the divine mind extracts from the infinite the concept of a finite determined to a quantum.

2. It would be equally absurd to say that the divine mind, blindly and by chance, takes one of the possible, infinite *limited things*. First this is repugnant to the essentially wise, divine nature. Furthermore, blind action itself requires a sufficient reason for determining the operation to one choice rather than another. As long as the cause is indifferent relative to various effects that exclude one another, it cannot produce one effect rather than another.

3. Finally, this way of explaining the origin, in the divine mind, of the concept of the limited, is defective for another reason: it presupposes the very thing we are looking for, namely, possible, infinite limited things. These would be nothing more than purely infinite acts of the divine mind, with which the divine mind would have found them. But this is precisely what we are seeking. How can the divine mind which has to begin from the unlimited — which is present to and essentially known by the divine mind — find the limited? The question cannot

presuppose possible things because it is concerned with their very origin.

715. These are the difficulties. Let us tackle the question, taking care to avoid them.

The object on which the divine Mind carries out abstraction is *absolute being as known*. In known absolute being the Mind distinguishes *being* from *objective reality*, which is the *term* of subjective being. But this *objective reality*, divided from subjective being, exists only in the mind, because subjective existence, existence in itself, has been separated through abstraction. This is the first *ontological limitation*.

This limitation deprives objective reality of the four properties that proceed from subjective being: 1. existence in itself, 2. duration in this existence, 3. *activity* proper to objective reality, and 4. intelligibility of affirmation. Thus, the *first maximum ontological limit* consists in the lack of these four properties.

By means of this first limit infinite objective being has become, as *known*, a possible objective infinite, which can in some way be called 'idea of God'.

The infinite is still present in this 'possible objective infinite' but it is virtual relative to subsistence. This infinite, known in the idea and separated through abstraction from subsistence, is an essence which has the four elements from which the *objective form* results: 1. quality, 2, objective intelligibility, 3. quantity, and 4, unity.

Granted that these four properties of reality are abstracted from the infinite essence, already discussed, what is the nature of the *known* thing left before the mind? It is simply a possible, totally undetermined essence, an ultimate root of all things (or if preferred, *first matter*), contained in an idea. This is undoubtedly the idea I called the idea of undetermined being, or being in all its universality, or possible being. In short, it is the object of human intuition. Note, when I speak about totally undetermined essence, I have to speak about it as seen in the idea, pre-scinding and abstracting from the idea itself which constitutes objective intelligibility, one of the four elements of the objective form. Note also, that by 'possible being' I mean the term of being, not being itself, to which actuality pertains. The possibility of being pertains solely to the term because the term is that which *can* receive being.

[715]

The divine mind, therefore, with this second abstraction of absolute being as known, places before its thought *possible being* stripped of every determination. This lack of the four objective determinations is the *second maximum ontological limit*.

716. Let us now examine the nature of this *known* thing, formed, as we have seen, by the divine mind through abstraction.

From what has been said, we can define it as 'an undetermined term of being which can receive being'. This undetermined term, as a known thing, retains objective form, that is, it is in the idea. Otherwise, it would not be before the mind — the abstracting mind fixes what is in the idea, not the idea. Another series of operations, therefore, begins here, in which the divine mind, proceeding from the undetermined to the determined, moves in the opposite direction to the previous operations. But does the divine mind do this arbitrarily and, as it were, blindly? Just as the two great abstractions I have described were not carried out blindly and arbitrarily — on the contrary, they stripped the absolute object as known of its subjective and objective determinations — so the divine mind does not proceed haphazardly in the determinations it adds to *possible being*, as I will now explain.

Possible being is 'a term of undetermined being'. But all the determinations of the abstract concept of the term of being reduce to three supreme forms (the supreme categories): the *subjective*, the *objective* and the *moral*. There is no further reduction. Whatever determination the divine mind may want to add 'to the undetermined term' in order to determine it, the determination would have to be present in one of the three categories. The given term would therefore have to be determined either as a *subjective term* or an *objective term* or a *moral term*.

This first determination, however, is not complete because each of the three *terms* remains a universal concept. The subjective term in all its universality is not yet conceived as constituting this or that ens. In the same way, the two other terms are conceived with a universal concept and are therefore called categories, which expresses a maximum universality greater than that of every genus. Other determinations must be added if totally determined ens is to be attained.

What, therefore, is the law of perfectly determined ens? That it must be in every respect *one*. This law is drawn from absolute Ens because, as we saw, this ens, as essentially Ens, first ens, shows in itself that ens must essentially be *one*.

Granted this law, it follows that 'the three universal concepts of subjective, objective and moral term can become entia as often as they can be determined in such a way that they become *one*'. Whenever the mind can give them perfect unity, it can conceive them as either possible entia or entia existing in themselves.

717. Two questions need to be answered:

1. Can all three terms constitute a sole *one*?
2. Can each of them be conceived in such a way that they form *one*?

I answer the first question affirmatively. All three in fact, united in being, constitute infinite, Absolute Ens, whose determination is precisely the totality of Being, with nothing lacking whatsoever. Indeed, when nothing is lacking, indetermination is impossible: the absolute all is the supreme determinant. Hence, determining the three terms in this way and reducing them to perfect unity simply restores what divine abstraction removed, and repositis absolute Being.

The second question deals with the constitution of finite ens. It asked:

'Can each of the three universal concepts of the terms of being be conceived separately from each other as one and thus constitute an ens?'

The concept of the first term, which is the real or subjective term, can be thought of as one without the involvement of the two other terms in the composition of this one. The objective term, however, cannot be thought as one unless it is considered as present to some mind. This form of objectivity implies the existence of a mind which is by nature a real or subjective term. Thus, the objective term perishes and cannot constitute a one really separate from the subjective term of being if considered by itself alone, without its being object of any mind. The case is even stronger relative to the moral term, whose origin is the unconfused compenetration of the other two. Separate from the other two terms it cannot be conceived as one.

Only the concept of the real term, therefore, can be

determined on its own to form one. If all three terms are taken together and determined as 'one', there is only infinite Ens, but if the terms are separated, neither the objective nor moral term can stand. Therefore, the possibility of finite ens must be found solely in the real term which alone can be determined as 'one', separate from the other two.

Consequently, finite entia, if there are any, can be only *real subjects*. As subjects, they cannot be objective or moral, because the subject is the 'container and cause of the unity of ens'.

718. This takes us a great step forward because we have found some essential limitations of finite ens. These are not arbitrary or casual limitations. This ens, as we saw, can be neither an object-ens nor a moral ens; it can certainly share in these forms, but always remains something real.

The divine mind, therefore, has the concept of some possible, fully undetermined real thing as an essence separate from the other two forms. The problem, if we may so speak, which the eternal mind must solve, is the number of modes in which the possible, undetermined real can be determined so that it is a fully determined one. We see straightaway that this real can no longer be determined as an infinite one. For this to happen the real needs the other two forms, as the following reasoning will show.

The real acquires from the other two forms an act of reality, which it does not have without the other two; deprived of these, it lacks a portion of the real and is not therefore an infinite real. This is clear from the doctrine of the mutual insession of the three supreme forms of being. According to this doctrine, the real, besides existing in itself as supreme form and maximum container, exists in the other two forms as contained. But it lacks this mode of in-existence when the mind sees it separate from the other two forms; it is therefore no longer infinite but limited. Furthermore, when it is united to the other two forms, it has them in itself, as its content, but when separate from them, it has lost this content. It has therefore again ceased to be infinite and become finite.

Consequently, the possible, fully determined real in the divine idea, as term of its free thought and root of all finite things (but not root of all things absolutely), is an essence already limited of itself in several modes because: 1. it is merely

possible, that is, deprived of subjective being, 2. it is undetermined because it lacks the unity proper to ens, 3. it lacks the mode of existence it has as content of the other two forms, and 4. it lacks the other two forms as its own content.

719. But before I investigate in what way and how often this reality can be determined by the divine mind so that it becomes one, I must explain its nature more clearly.

Those thinkers who were looking for an ontological doctrine arrived at the concept of prime matter by abstracting solely from external or subjective reality. Very few of them made this investigation intentionally, using their own theories. Instead they all substantially followed Plato and Aristotle. They abstracted species, genera and categories from sensible entia. Consequently, the only matter left for them after all the abstractions was a true *caput mortuum*, an entity deprived of all life and all relationship with intelligence; the matter they had distilled out by abstraction was a term that was the opposite of life and intelligence; it was not total ens.

We must proceed gradually if, in order to obtain the concept of some first, undetermined reality, we intend to abstract from the entia of the world around us; nothing proper to all the finite ens known to us must be omitted, and from it all we must abstract the ultimate common root that we are seeking. For this purpose the entia of the world must be classified in such a way that no genus escapes. The first classification is this: some entia are principle-entia, others term-entia. Principle-entia are either intellective or purely sensible. Term-entia are space and body. Principle-entia and term-entia are, therefore, clearly of opposite natures: term-entia are relative to and exist through principle-entia. A common root, therefore, an ultimate common reality, is obviously impossible; the only common element is the dialectical form of ens. I say 'dialectical' because this form truly fits them in an equivocal sense. However, the mind abstracts from the equivocal meaning and considers ens as if it were a common form. This is precisely what deceived the ancient philosophers: they founded ontology on dialectical forms that cannot be applied in the same sense to principle-entia and term-entia.

If we are looking for a true *first* reality — not purely dialectical, although undetermined — we must leave aside term-entia.

[719]

They are posterior and do not participate in the first reality but result from the determination of this reality. It is this determination which gives reality the unity proper to ens.

Consequently, if we wish to raise our thought and come to an undetermined first reality of finite entia, we must exercise our abstraction solely on principle-entia, which are intellective and sensible. But again, sensible entia are posterior to intellective entia because, as I have demonstrated, the former could not exist entirely alone without an intellective ens; nor are they complete entia because they are not complete subjects ([cf. 562 ss.]).

Finally, the undetermined and possible first reality which must be conceived in the divine mind as root or seed of the world is the reality which can be abstracted only from intellective entia as common to all of these. If we take the constitutives of intellective ens in general, we will have in all these generic (and hence undetermined) constitutives the concept of the first real which we conceive as having been in the divine mind as foundation of the creation of the world.

720. The constitutives of this first matter or reality, which must be the basis of the divine exemplar, are:

First: intellective ens must have an intuition of objective being.

Second: intellective ens must have feeling.

Third: intellective ens must have a will by which, acting out of love, it harmoniously unites its feeling with being.

These are the three constitutives of finite intellective ens in general. This *finite intellective ens in general* is precisely the first possible, undetermined real necessarily present in the divine mind as the first rudiment, so to speak, of finite ens.

It may be objected that the first constitutive (intuition of objective being) does not satisfy the condition already mentioned of separating the real from the objective form. I deny this. Intuited being does not constitute an ingredient of the intelligent subject but differs from this subject to which it stands present. The intelligent subject is thus said to share in it.

The same must be said of the third constitutive. Although the will is certainly an ingredient of the subject, it also terminates in objective being external to the intelligent subject. In this way,

[720]

the intelligent subject shares in the moral form, although this form is not the subject.

It may be further objected that intellective finite ens in general is not the ultimately determined concept among the concepts of the real. This objection repeats the illusion of the dialectical students of ontology, which I have already discussed. I grant that a real can be conceived more undetermined than generic intellective ens, but if that real were indeed more undetermined, it would have to be conceived not only as common to intellective entia but to other entia as well. A real, common to both however, exists only in an equivocal sense. Even if the mind apply only one very abstract form to the real, this real is not one but two reals which have an order of before and after. In fact, whenever a word applied with different meanings to entities is said to be common to them, this is not true commonalty but either a purely verbal commonalty or one of pure dialectical form. Hence, we must stop at intellective ens in general as a first reality in its maximum indetermination.

721. To see, therefore, how the divine mind can proceed from this first undetermined reality to other determinations which give it the unity proper to ens, and how often the reality can be made one, it is sufficient to consider the indetermination of each of its three constitutives.

The intuition of being is undetermined because the amount of actuality of being manifested to the primal, natural intuition of intellective ens has not been determined. The number of times, therefore, that the indetermination can receive the unity proper to ens, corresponds to the number of levels of the manifested actuality of being.

The second constitutive, its own feeling, is determined by the fact that it must have both a feeling element and a felt element. The feeling element already has essentially unity and simplicity, but its fundamental felt element can vary. Hence, the ens resulting from the union of the feeling and felt elements can also vary as often as there are different fundamental feelings. Consequently, this second constitutive can acquire, with the same frequency, the unity proper to ens.

The third constitutive is the will. It follows upon the first two and is already determined as potency at the time the first two are determined. For this reason it adds no other multiplication to

intellective finite entia. It could, however, add a third class of these entia whenever it is considered created with a greater or lesser, permanent actuality.

Intellective entia, conceivable by human thought, are thus divided into three different classes of genera.

These confines enclose both the possibility of the determinations and the first, undetermined reality conceived in the divine mind as foundation of all possible finite entia. There is nothing here that depends on chance or arbitrariness. All these limitations of the infinite, in so far as it is known, flow by means of logical illations from the pure concept of finite ens where knowledge of affirmation and of intuition are found in perfect correspondence, as the problem of ontology demands.

§6. *Continuation: unity, or vague one, is present in the first, undetermined finite reality in the divine mind*

722. This accurate description of first, undetermined reality posited by God as foundation of the creation of the world gives us the following valuable truth: this reality is neither the ancients' 'matter' (*selva*, ὕλη) without form and order, nor Plato's *great and small* (τὸ μέγα καὶ μικρόν), nor the Pythagoreans' *indefinite* (τὸ ἄπειρον); on the contrary, it is *undetermined intellective ens* which alone is what it is in itself (τὸ καθ' αὐτό); all the rest of nature is directed to something else (τὸ πρὸς τι).

Consequently, if this first finite real which appears through logical illation in the creating mind is intellectual finite ens in general, the principle of unity of finite entia must already be found, that is, it is contemporary with the first undetermined real. Intellective ens is principle-ens, and a principle has a perfect simplicity and unity.

In fact that which is principle in ens is not only simple and one through the very concept of principle, but also has the nature of *container* of all the rest: it contains its term and is thus the cause of the unity of its term and of the whole of ens. I have already shown that the feeling principle contains space and body and, in containing them, gives them the continuum (*AMS*, 94–103, 232; *NE*, 2: 1002–1004). I have also shown that the intellective

[722]

principle is contained unified with the feeling principle (*PSY*, 1: 178–180).

This one unifying principle remains undetermined in the way that one remains undetermined. Although, as we saw, the concept ‘one’ is totally determined, one can be repeated, and repeated as a cause of unity for what is added to it. One, as repeatable, is called ‘vague one’. Hence, the principle of ens is essentially simple and one but differently determined according to its terms. These now reduce to the three following categories, as to their supreme classes: 1. objective being, 2. the felt element, and 3. the willed element. The principle constitutes finite ens as one, a purely real subject but determined by the relationship with these categorical terms. The difference of entia, however, arises from the difference of the terms which, united with the real proper principle, constitute ens. Moreover, for entia to be different, the difference must be present from the very first moment in which ens exists, and must be such that it contains in potency the whole of the later development of ens, as I explained in *Psychology* (1: 164–180).

§7. *Continuation: ‘Is the number of possible finite entia finite or infinite?’*

723. We have found the origin of the unity of finite ens: it consists in the nature of an intellectual principle which is a pure real without its being the other two categorical forms, in which it only participates. We must now investigate the other generic and specific determinations of entia:

1. The number of ways in which objective being can become the term of the intellectual principle without its becoming one with it.

2. The number of possible fundamental felt elements which can virtually comprise all the partial felt elements embraced by the feeling activity of the principle.

3. The number of wills which can have a different level of primal, permanent and fundamental actuality, and contain in potency all accidental volitions.

The first question that comes to mind is: ‘Must we believe that

[723]

these lower determinations constituting finite entia are infinite or finite in number; in other words, are possible finite entia infinite or finite?’

I say that they cannot be infinite, for the following reasons:

1. If the number of possible limitations were infinite, the creator would have to make a choice because not all of them could be created. Such a choice however is impossible, as I have shown, because the case concerns an infinite number. Consequently, the very nature of finite ens means that only a finite number of possible individuals is possible.

2. If the number of possible finite entia [were infinite], not all of them could be created because the existence of an infinite number of entia is repugnant. Consequently, God’s potency would be limited and overwhelmed by the sphere of the possibility of things.

3. Furthermore, not even the entia in mental concepts could exist in infinite number because an infinite number is in itself repugnant.

4. Another proof can be added which is no less effective and more intrinsic. The first proof is taken from the impossibility of choice on the part of the creator if possible finite entia are infinite. The second and third proofs are taken from the abstract concept of number which excludes actual infinity. The proof I wish to add comes from the nature of what is ontologically limited, as follows.

We have seen that ‘ontologically limited’, because it refers to what is first limited, has nothing limited prior to it. Furthermore, prior to the ontological limit, neither an ens nor an entity can be thought which might receive limit. If such an ens or entity existed, it could not be finite; it would have to be infinite. But the infinite receives no limits of any kind which can change it into a finite; between infinite and finite there is an essential difference so that they have nothing in common (*PSY*, 2: 1381–1395). And although the divine mind in its thought passes from the known infinite to the finite, it considers the real term of the former stripped of being and hence of the other two forms in which being finds itself. In this transition, however, no modification of the known infinite takes place; it is an absolute transition from a known thing to another that is essentially and totally different from the first. In fact, after the transition, the

real which remains as object of the divine mind is no longer being, but the first finite, which differs from the infinite as non-being differs from being. Clearly, non-being is not a modification or limit of being, but something totally other to the exclusion of the latter. As a result of this doctrine, the prime substance, the dough as it were, from which all possible finite entia must be drawn, is a first finite. If therefore, by means of other determining limitations, all possible finite entia are drawn from some first finite matter conceived in the divine mind, possible finite entia must obviously be finite in number, not infinite — the finite can give rise only to the finite. This does not violate divine omnipotence, which consists in the ability to do all that is possible, not the impossible and the contradictory such as making the finite consist of infinite matter, and infinite entia be formed of some finite matter. Consequently, all possible finite entia consist of a finite matter. Their number is therefore finite.

§8. *Continuation: the composite of possible finite entia is as such ordered*

724. I have shown that the number of possible entia is finite. They are therefore ordered.

If their number were infinite, there could be no order among them because the differences and separations between them would be infinite. The differences would not be reciprocally measurable, nor could all entia be bound together to form a unity. In fact none of them could extend its potencies to the others because, as finite, none of them could have any real connections with an infinite number of entia. If we invoked pantheism (a system I have already refuted) and said that the substance of all finite entia is the divine substance itself, we would finish with absurd infinities: either 1. finite entia would no longer exist because all entia would be infinite, but many infinite entia is an absurdity, and it would be an even greater absurdity if infinite entia were posited infinitely, or 2. infinite being would be the real subject of modifications and limits, which totally destroys the notion of the infinite. Consequently, finite entia which were infinite in number could have neither infinite differences of

[724]

reality among them, nor infinite potencies, nor infinite real connections; they would be deprived of every container and of all order. This constitutes a fifth argument demonstrating the total error and impossibility of the hypothesis that possible entia can be infinite in number.

On the other hand, granted a finite number, it follows that possible entia not only can receive an order and form a unity, but also that they are in themselves ordered, through their very nature and generation.

In fact we have seen that the first complete finite entia are intellective entia, to which all other entia are posterior and relative, that is, they are determined and contained by intellective entia, as terms are contained by principles.

Moreover, intellective entia have three bases of classification and hence three classes of genera. The three bases are: *fundamental participation in objective being*, the *fundamental felt element* and the *fundamental actuality of the will*.

If their number can be only finite, there will be a finite number of differences in the fundamental participation in objective being, in the fundamental felt element and in the fundamental actuality of the volitive potency.

This finite number of differences can result only from what is greater or what is less, that is, from a finite gradation of participation in the object, in feeling and in volitive actuality. All these gradations establish a hierarchical order whether each of the three series is considered separately, or two are considered, or all three at once.

The three series themselves of gradation also have an order. The first in fact is the principal in the constitution of ens. Hence, granted a *quantum* of fundamental participation in objective being, which constitutes genus, the gradation of the fundamental feeling will constitute lower genera, and finally, granted a quantum of fundamental feeling, the possible gradation of the fundamental volitive actualities will constitute another genus lower and subordinate to the previous gradation. The first base of classification, therefore, will be the supreme classification and the container of all the others.

725. Now while this explains how genera and species are ordered and how they are interconnected through continuous subordination, we must not think that there is no explanation

for the natural ordering of individual entia — I say ‘natural’ because I must now leave aside acquired perfection, which pertains to secondary limits. The series of levels of reality of entia are finite, and the first series governing the other two is formed by levels of participation in objective being. I will therefore take the first level of the series, that is, the maximum possible level of participation, and determine to the maximum degree both the feeling and the fundamental volitive actuality. These determinations will give us the type of a *maximum finite ens* of which there can be only one, rather, like a fullest species. It will be the apex of finite entia, which will reduce their composite to a perfect unity. Certainly I said that the divine mind applies limits not by *simple intuition of the object* but by the operation I called *affirmation*. But affirmation, although naturally a repeatable operation, cannot be repeated if a new object is lacking. This is the case here because nothing limited can be greater than the maximum. But I will deal with this matter at greater length in cosmology.

Here it is sufficient to summarise the conclusion which satisfactorily answers our question: ‘Does the divine mind find the limitations and determinations of finite entia arbitrarily and without determinant reasons?’ The conclusion, resulting from my entire argument, is: ‘The whole complex of possible limitations and determinations which give unity and form to finite entia are finite in number and are ordered. Consequently, all possible finite entia are found in the divine mind through reasons intrinsic to the concept of finite ens itself, not through an arbitrary act devoid of reason.’

Article 14

The quiddity of finite ens is constituted by its limits,
not by what it has positively

726. My teaching about limits gives this corollary: ‘The quiddity of finite ens is constituted by its limits, not by what it has positively.’

‘Quiddity’ means ‘what a thing is’. We have seen that there is an essential, maximum difference between the finite and the

[726]

infinite. Because of this difference, which is the infinite itself whole and entire, the finite is not part of the infinite from which it differs through limits that make finite ens what it is. Properly speaking, therefore, limits constitute the quiddity of the finite, and on them depends the *nature* of what the finite has positively.

Thus, we saw that there are limits prior to which no ens exists, so that determined ens cannot be conceived without its limits. If limits are not thought, the ens is not thought (transcendent limit). If thought changes the limits, the ens is changed and loses its identity; it is replaced by another, present to thought (entitative limits). Limit, therefore, constitutes what finite ens is as genus or species or individual. Hence, 'limit constitutes the quiddity of finite ens', and the identity of limit constitutes the identity of ens. *Secondary limits* alone, however, do not constitute finite ens; they originate from it.

Because ens has to be one, that is, has to be determined, only two kinds of determination can be conceived as capable of making it one: infinite determinations and finite determinations. The all-embracing determination of infinite one is therefore its *own infinity*; nothing is more determined than infinity complete in every respect. But if this determination, consisting in absolute infinity (whose concept contains supreme simplicity and unity), is lacking, all that is left to constitute one are limits, determined and fixed in every respect, which cannot in any way be removed from the total activity of ens. This activity, therefore, can have the nature of principle embracing a given determined sphere of acts. Thus, we have both one and finite ens.

These limits, which enclose in a sphere, so to speak, the activity or potentiality of ens in every respect, constitute the *quiddity* of ens; they make it this ens and not another.

From this we can draw the following formula, summarising what I have said: 'The quiddity of infinite ens is constituted by entity, and is positive; the quiddity [of finite ens] is constituted by the limits of entity, and is negative.' Hence, there is an entity even in finite ens. However, it does not constitute ens but is in ens as matter whose constitutive limits are form. On the other hand, in infinite ens, entity itself is pure form without matter.

Article 15

Does the primal finite reality, before receiving existence in itself, need to be determined by a constant series of generic and specific determinations, or can it obtain a full determination with a number (sometimes greater, sometimes smaller) of successive differences?

727. Our mind distributes the entia of the world into genera and species. I will leave aside purely mental and dialectical genera which do not pertain to the question under discussion. Considering only real genera, we conceive the things of the world by starting from a first genus and, by adding some difference to it, come to a second, lower genus. Eventually we reach abstract species, both full and fullest, of which only the last gives us one. This one is the complete determination necessary for an entity if it is to acquire subjective being and exist in itself as real ens.

The question arises therefore: 'Can the divine mind immediately find the fullest species, that is, completely determined ens, without having to pass through the whole scale of generic and specific differences?'

The same question presented itself to the Scholastics when they asked: 'Can genus be immediately individuated?'

A general answer is sufficient here. In fact, it is not really an answer but a principle for finding the answer. The principle is:

'Whenever the supreme finite reality can (by means of complete determination) be constituted one, it is an individual ens which can exist in itself.'

Thus, when a long series of generic and specific differences are needed to constitute a *given one*, the whole series is necessary to attain the *one*. But nothing indicates that such a long series is necessary in the case of some other one. Provided that the series attained the one, it could be shorter or longer.

If we consider subordinate genera, such as extrasubjective entia, we find that space is an ens determined by its unilateral infinity. Space, which has no species below it, has no real genera above it, but only some mental or dialectical genera, such as the genus of extrasubjective entia and the genus of undetermined reality. Hence, space cannot be called a real genus or an abstract species, but a supremely full species and a real individual.

727a. The question ‘whether genus can be individuated directly’ must be distinguished therefore as follows. If we accept that genus must essentially have species under it, it is repugnant to say that genus can be individuated directly; this would in fact remove species. If, however, by ‘genus’ we mean ‘an entity which, without species, has no other real genera of the same order above it’, it is not repugnant to say that it can be individuated. Finally, if the question asks whether the entity which admits species under it can also subsist in itself, then the entity is no longer genus in so far as it subsists, but solely in so far as it has species below it. However, it cannot have them in so far as it is subsistent because as such it is an individual ens. It can only have them as in so far as it is conceived by the mind, that is, as *common* in all the species. The genus ‘animal’ is a good example of how this is possible. As genus, it is applied to human beings and beasts, yet subsists in beasts. However, the meaning of *common* in such cases is equivocal because *animal entity* is not identical in both human beings and beasts. Animality changes its nature in human beings through being assumed by the intellective principle, and in the species loses the identity proper to the genus.

Finally, as I said earlier (cf. 695–725), I see no intrinsic absurdity in thinking that maximum finite reality could subsist totally in a single maximum ens. This would not exclude lesser finite entia from the ens, and the mind could extract from it a supreme genus of all the other lower finite entia.

This observation on the question is also of great help in understanding how *indetermination* can be a *relative* concept so that the thing is in itself determined but, relative to something else, undetermined. Thus, *animality* can be determined in itself but considered in relationship to man always remains something undetermined in the mind of the person conceiving it. Again, considered in relationship to finite entia, many properties appropriate to the Absolute and determined in it (which are rather the Absolute itself) appear totally undetermined; they are deprived of the limits which are the determinants relative to finite entia. For this reason, St. Thomas observes correctly that the most universal concepts of all, such as being, are concepts which are more appropriate to God.

CHAPTER 10

Recapitulation and Conclusion

728. At this point, we can review the argument. I proposed to consider being in so far as one in relationship with all entia and entities that can be present in human thought.

First, I determined the language appropriate to such an abstract investigation, where reasoning can easily deviate from the right path and even plunge into the abyss. I then considered being as principle and container of all knowable things. From this I deduced a *system of dialectical identity* and substituted it for Schelling's system of absolute unity. This also explained a constant fact proffered by the history of philosophy: speculative intellects feel an irresistible need for unity, but when unable to grasp the truth, satisfy their needs by fabricating ingenious but erroneous systems.

After this, I considered being as unique in the three forms, relative to both infinite ens and finite entia. Relative to infinite ens, I found that a relationship of identity exists between being and each of its three forms; relative to finite entia, I found a relationship of difference.

I subjected this relationship of difference to analysis and found both the properties of being which are incommunicable to finite real things, and the properties communicated to these real things by the presence of being itself.

But being, because it is identical to its three forms, receives the titles subjective being, objective being and moral being.

I then examined the properties communicated by subjective being to finite real things, and reduced them to four. Next, I investigated the properties communicated by objective being to these finite real things and reduced them also to four. These properties are communicated in the divine mind to the real things before these receive the subjective being that makes them exist in themselves.

These investigations enabled me to develop gradually the intimate constitution and intrinsic order of finite ens. This threw some light on the creative process through which the

Universe came into existence. Finally, I was obliged to present the universal doctrine of limitation, which constitutes the quiddity of finite entia.

I did not investigate in detail what *moral being* confers on finite real things. I was content to note that intellective entia participate in it by means of their will. I did this because being, in the moral form, does not constitute the finite entia known to us in their nature. Rather the moral form results from their constitution, and bestows on them the principal element of their perfection. I have therefore reserved fuller and direct discussion of this argument, the most noble of all, for another place.

Appendix

1. (163)

[The Neoplatonists' teaching about images]

‘Whatever is already perfect generates something. What is eternally perfect always generates what is eternal, although WHAT IS GENERATED IS LESS THAN THE GENITOR. What must we say about the most perfect? Surely it does not produce nothing; on the contrary, it must produce those things which, after it, are the greatest of all? But the greatest after it is the intellect, which comes second; it gazes on the most perfect and needs nothing more. On the other hand, the most perfect and first does not need the intellect. Indeed that necessarily is mind which is the offspring of something better than mind. However, the intellect is better than everything made, because all other things come after it. Indeed, the soul is both word and a certain act of the mind, just as the mind is the word of God’* (*Ennead.*, 6, bk.1, c. 6). The Neoplatonists’ emanations arose from the erroneous understanding of the teaching about images. They believed that knowledge was always obtained by means of images: the image of a thing, not the thing itself, was the proximate object of knowledge. Hence, Plotinus’ thought proceeded in this way: the one understands itself and thus produces the image of itself (the image is necessary for the knowledge of itself). This image is the word of the one, the first intellect. But this image or intellect also knows itself, and thus produces the image of itself in which it knows itself, a word, and this word is the first soul, the soul of everything. These are the three principles. The second is less than the first; the third, less than the second, granted that an image is less than the thing it represents.

The error of this reasoning is evident. The word ‘image’ or ‘representation’, like all things that fall under our senses, is certainly less than the thing it indicates or represents; in fact a pure image contains nothing of the reality of the thing which it

[*App.*, 1]

indicates. But this is not the case for human knowledge, for the following reasons:

1. The immediate object of knowledge is, strictly speaking, the thing in itself. 'Image' means solely the relationship of the thing with the intellect, that is, it is not the *thing* itself but the *thing as known*. Hence, it is more than a sensible image which, because not the thing itself, is less than it.

2. If by abstraction the thing is divided from its knowableness (the idea of the thing), this knowableness or idea is the essential thing and is greater than pure reality. However, this distinction does not apply to God in whom reality itself is *per se* knowable. Consequently, God is known through his own essence, not by means of an image which is less than himself.

3. Finally, Plotinus is forced to grant life and activity to the *image*, which in the case of pure image is absurd. He says: 'In so far as (the soul) is the IMAGE OF THE MIND, it must look towards the mind. For the same reason, the MIND, IMAGE OF GOD, receives God so that it may be intellect' (*Ennead* 5, bk. 1, c. 6).

With the same ease, that is, by means of inferior images, Plotinus makes all the entia of the universe emanate from the soul of the world, and he includes matter among these entia, although it is quite incapable of having an image of itself.

Another basic error of Plotinus' system is that in which he confuses the intellect as potency with the object by calling the latter 'intellect'. Yet another error lies in confusing the *pronounced object* (the word) with the simple object (the idea). This source of Plotinus' erroneous system indicates the importance of ideology because the system of emanations and all unitarian systems resulted from errors in ideology.

2. (304)

[Subsistent being in St. Thomas and Cajetan]

This demonstration is substantially the same as that of St. Thomas, except that I deduce it from *initial being* while he deduces it from *absolute being*, which is God. He says: 'God is subsistent being itself. And it has been shown that subsistent

[*App.*, 2]

being can only be one. If, for instance, whiteness were subsistent, there could be only one whiteness, since whitenesses are multiplied according to the recipients. It remains, therefore, that all things other than God are not his being, but participants of being. It follows that all things which are differentiated according to their different share in being — which makes them more or less perfect — are caused by one first ens which *is* in the most perfect manner'* (S. T., I, q. 44, art. 1). Because the pantheists abused this argument, it was necessary to investigate the foundation from which they deduced their system. This led me to distinguish *initial being* from *absolute being*. I showed that God is indeed the latter, but not the former, although initial being is a divine appurtenance. Creatures share in *initial being*, not in God's own being, which is *ipsum esse subsistens* [subsistent being itself], as St. Thomas so aptly defines it. It *is*, therefore, being in its forms and above all in the form of subsistence. Now, it is indubitable that created things have no share in being in so far as it is subsistent, that is, in so far as it is God. They share only in that being which is conceived prior to the *per se* subsistence which being has as God. This is also St. Thomas' true view on the matter, although he lacked the philosophical language necessary to express it directly. This becomes clear not only from all those places where he totally rejects any shadow of pantheism, but also from the quotation above where he takes *whiteness* as an example. *Whiteness* is an abstract, not a subsistent entity.

Cardinal De Vio, a very acute commentator, writes this about St. Thomas' words: 'Because being, according to its order, can be received in something else — the same can be said about wisdom, goodness, and so on, and for Plato sensible quiddities were receivable in matter — it follows that IF one of these SUBSISTS, it is essentially being; IF it does NOT SUBSIST, it is 'being' by participation. The text [of St. Thomas] gives us as an example 'whiteness' which is obviously a form receivable in something other. And because TO SUBSIST naturally INCLUDES NON-RECEPTIBILITY, and NOT TO SUBSIST INCLUDES BEING RECEIVED IN SOMETHING OTHER, the text moves down from subsistence to received being when it says that whiteness is multiplied only in accordance with things that receive it.'* These extremely wise words show that this great man, De Vio, was well aware that

[App., 2]

subsistence had to be removed from being if there were to be some shareable being. But if we take subsistence away from being, we are left with what I have called *initial being*, which is no longer God because God is *per se subsistent being*. If the argument in favour of creation is restated in this way it becomes more stringent and philosophical; it needs only *being, intuited* naturally and observed in what has been perceived. At the same time, the argument no longer contains that little extra something which, although useless for its own purposes, served as a lever for pantheists. It is also immune from the objections thrown against it by Duns Scotus (In *Dist.* I, d. 2, q. 3, ad 3um princip.).

3. (379)

[Aristotle's definition of potency]

My definition of potency differs from Aristotle's. According to him, potency 'is a principle of movement or transmutation into something else, or in so far as it is something else'* (*Metaphysics*, 4 (5): 12). First, this definition does not include the potency proper to the immanent act. Moreover, it defines a cause rather than a potency. It does not define that potency which is the opposite of act. Aristotle himself, when he comes to consider ens in its two concepts of ens in potency and ens in act, realises that the definition he has given of potency is of little use to him ('And first about potency in the sense which is most proper to the word, but not most useful for our present purpose — for potency and actuality extend beyond those things which are spoken of only in relation to movement'* (*Metaphysics*, 8 (9): 1). He says: 'Potency and act extend beyond those things which are spoken of only in relation to movement'* (*ibid.*). But clinging to common language, which is suitable for expressing finite, contingent things, not metaphysical matters, Aristotle insists that the proper meaning of potency is that 'of a principle of movement into something else, or in so far as it is something else', and wants this word 'potency' used in a transferred meaning when we say: 'This is possible, this is impossible, as geometers do' ('some [senses] are used by analogy, as in geometry,

[App., 3]

and we call things possible or impossible because they “are” or “are not” in some particular way”*) (*Metaphysics*, 8 (9): 1; 4 (5): 12). But sciences should employ their own language where possible and not have recourse to metaphors. Furthermore, it is false that the effect of a potency must always be produced in something else. Anyone who acts produces an effect in himself (because he puts himself in act) before producing it in another. Nor is the addition of ‘in so far as it is other’ of any use. The subject which modifies itself by acting can be identical. The only difference, as Aristotle himself says, is the relationship of active and passive possessed by the act itself (‘Clearly, then, in one sense the potency for acting and being acted upon is one’*) (*Metaphysics*, 8 (9): 1). Moreover, it is a prejudice that there is no action without passion. I have shown that the opposite is true (*Rinnovamento*, 486, fn.). Finally, it is necessary that science should distinguish the *potentiality* in an ens (which does not leave the ens) from the *cause* which can be referred to an effect produced outside the cause. The second concept, which is the genus, must not be confused with the first, which is the species. Consequently, I have preferred to give *potency* its proper definition.

4. (463)

[Ideas and real entia in Aristotle and Plato]

This teaching explains and reconciles the incessant, unending struggle in ages past between two schools of philosophy, represented by the great names of Plato and Aristotle. Plato’s name is used to indicate the enduring school of those who, like their representative, are dedicated to the contemplation of ideas and their sublime prerogatives, and maintain that these ideas are eternal, independent of finite things, the only true entia, of which the finite, sensible things of this world are merely an imitation. Aristotle, however, finds the connection between sensible, real entia and ideas so close, intimate and necessary that he wants ideas to exist in real, sensible entia. According to him, only the mind separates ideas and renders them its object of knowledge. Ideas do not exist separate in themselves. St.

[*App.*, 4]

Thomas finds this correct in the sense that Aristotle does not want an absolute separation between *ideas* and *real things*, as though real things were *accidents* of an ens, and ideas alone were the true ens. 'Plato is admonished for this reason: he maintained that natural forms, according to their own nature, were outside matter, as though matter were accidentally related to natural species'* (*De Verit.*, q. 4, art. 6, contr. ad 2um). But from what I have said about creation (to which the teaching on human understanding corresponds, as we shall see), the following two propositions result: 1. the essences of finite entia would not be, unless real things were drawn into existence. In fact, these essences result from an intellectual relationship between the real and initial being, the principle of the real. This explains and justifies the repugnance felt by Aristotle and St. Thomas for admitting *ideas* or *essences* as totally independent from the existence of real things corresponding to them; 2. ideas and essences have a sublimity of nature infinitely superior to finite, real entia because a) they are *initial being* which receives certain determinations from the mind which brings finite, real entia to initial being, and b) because initial being is an appurtenance of God himself. They also have certain divine qualities, such as eternity, which are participated in directly by God himself. This explains and justifies all that Plato said about the sublime nature of ideas. But as Plato seems not to have meditated sufficiently upon the necessary connection between ideas and real things, so Aristotle seems not to have understood clearly the sublime nature of ideas. Instead of establishing a *necessary relationship* between ideas and real things, he fell into the mistake of immersing ideas in the nature itself of real things, as though reality as reality contained their germ, or they were an act of reality.

5. (464)

[Aristotle: the mind is in some way all things]

Aristotle's concept — that the mind is in some way all things — comes near this concept [of the creature imitating God] and moreover attributes the act of entia to the mind (ποιεῖ τὰ δυνάμει ὄντα ἐνεργείᾳ). What are 'entia in potency' (δυνάμει ὄντα)? Real

[App., 5]

things. But that which makes them *entia in act* (ἐνεργεία) is, according to Aristotle, the mind. Note, however, that Aristotle does not want the name 'entia' applied to ideas separate from things, as Plato did. When he says that entia are rendered entia in act by the mind, he understands ens to be composed of the real and the ideal — at least, if we assume that he is speaking coherently. Thus he says expressly that the mind is act: 'Mind in this sense is separable, impassive and unmixed, since it is essentially an activity'* (*De Anima*, 3: 5).

He also says that the mind in act (and he certainly means the objective mind which corresponds to initial being) is the 'principle of matter' (καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ὕλης) (*ibid.*). These are highly significant words, and mean that the mind gives to *matter* the principle of matter — what I call its *beginning*, or act of being. But because matter cannot be without its principle, it cannot be without the mind that gives it the principle and thus makes it ens in act. That explains why Aristotle also says that 'knowledge in act is the same as the thing' (τὸ αὐτὸ δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ κατ'ἐνέργειαν ἐπιστήμη τῷ πράγματι) (*ibid.*), where by 'thing' he certainly means a real ens informed by the mind that knows the real ens. Matter certainly does not enter the mind, nor does the mind provide matter, but it gives matter its act of being. Hence, the proper object of the mind is the being of the thing without matter ('For in the case of things without matter that which thinks and that which is thought are the same'*) (*ibid.*, 4). Consequently, he distinguishes real size (τὸ μέγεθος) from the *being of size* (τὸ μέγεθαι εἶναι), real water (ὕδωρ) from the *being of water* (τὸ ὕδατι εἶναι), real flesh (σάρξ) from the *being of flesh* (τὸ σαρκὶ εἶναι) and so on for other things. He attributes the *being* of all things to the mind when he recognises that the being of all these things is without matter and says: 'And speaking generally, as objects are separable from their matter so also are the corresponding faculties of the mind'* (*ibid.*).

Initial being (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ὕλης) is therefore the act that is given to things by the mind, and it is given to them at the moment the mind conceives and understands them. Hence, Aristotle himself says that the mind, prior to knowing things, is none of them (οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια τῶν ὄντων πρὶν νοεῖν) (*ibid.*, 4). Then, when it understands them, initial being is joined in such a way to matter, that is, with the real, that it constitutes a single ens in which the

[*App.*, 5]

two elements cannot be separated except through abstraction. He likens this conjunction to a *pug-nose* from which the *curve* cannot be separated except through abstraction, which destroys the ens (ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τὸ σιμόν τοῦδε ἐν τῷδε) (*ibid.*). Mathematics deals with these abstracts which are referred to real things. As a result, Aristotle denies Plato's assertion that the *essences* of sensible things are separate from sensible things because the mind has them only in the act in which it joins them to real things. Before this act, the mind has only undetermined being which is indeed all those essences, but only virtually. As a result, the mind, before exiting to its act of perception, is not 'the place of forms' (τόπον εἰδῶν) but 'the forms occupy it not actually but only potentially' (ὅυτε ἐντελεχεία ἀλλά δυνάμει τὰ εἶδη) (*ibid.*). But although the mind, after perceiving real things, finds that they are entia whose composite elements (*being* and *matter*, that is, reality) cannot be separated, these two elements nevertheless pertain to two distinct potencies of the soul: 'Therefore we judge it by another faculty, or by the same faculty in a different relation' (ἐτέρῳ ᾧρα, ἢ ἐτέρως ἔχοντι κρίνει) (*ibid.*). This, I think, is how we should understand Aristotle in accordance with his way of expressing himself. St. Thomas also, in referring to this teaching, says: 'The likeness of the creature is in some way the creature itself — in the way that we say that the soul is in some way all things'* (*De Verit.*, q. 4, art. 8).

6. (470)

[St. Thomas on ideas in God]

St. Thomas proves that ideas must be admitted in the divine mind in the following way: 1. he defines ideas as *formae aliarum rerum praeter ipsas res existentes* [the forms of other things beyond the existing things themselves]; 2. he says that the form has two functions: it serves as exemplar, and thus is the guide of practical reason, and it is the principle of knowledge in so far as it is said to be in the one who knows, and thus is the principle of speculative reason. 'The form of anything beyond the existing thing itself serves two purposes: either it is the exemplar of that of which it is the form, or it is the principle of knowledge in so

[App., 6]

far as the forms of what are knowable are said to be in that which knows"; 3. he says that in both modes, ideas have to be admitted in God: *et quantum ad utrumque necesse est ponere ideas* [and it is necessary to posit ideas relative to both], and here I note that St. Thomas admits ideas in God as *principle of knowledge* also, provided of course that we understand 'principle of knowledge' as the understood object; 4. he concludes that because Almighty God has, like a craftsman, made the world intelligently, he must have had in himself the form to whose likeness the world was made *et in hoc consistit ratio ideae* [and in this consists the notion of idea] (*S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 1). This, however, does not mean that the already formed and explicit Exemplar is anterior to the act by which the real is created. As far as I can see, only initial being, which is the *implicit exemplar*, is logically anterior. Indeed, the *principium cognitionis* [principle of cognition] is only initial being because ideas are initial being itself, applied for the sake of knowing the things that determine it.

7. (471)

[St. Thomas on God's understanding in creation]

St. Thomas distinguishes 1. God's understanding of the idea united to the real and 2. his understanding of the same idea abstracted from the real. St. Thomas attributes this second knowledge to a reflection that abstracts the idea while leaving the real: 'The artisan, when he understands the form of a house in its matter, is said to understand the house. When he understands the form of the house as seen by himself, because he understands that he understands it, he understands the idea or the notion of the house.'* But what is 'the form of the house in its matter'? It is the *house* itself, says Aquinas. Consequently *intelligere formam domus in materiam* [to understand the form of the house in its matter] is *intelligere domum* [to understand the house]. Understanding the form or idea together with the matter corresponds, therefore, to those functions which in human beings are called 'perception' and 'imagination'. But St. Thomas posits an analogous function in God in the divine

[*App.*, 7]

intellect. He makes this function precede the other function which considers the *idea* separate from the matter. We can see that this is logically posterior in that it requires the understanding of understanding, that is, a reflection on the first function (*ex eo quod intelligit se intelligere*).

Aquinas then continues to apply the analogy of the artisan to God in the following way: 'God not only understands many THINGS through his essence, but also understands that he understands many things through his essence. But this means understanding many notions of things, or that many ideas are in his intellect as understood'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, ad 2um). According to St. Thomas, therefore, God first knows the *things* that he creates (their form in the matter), and then through reflection abstracts and knows the *pure ideas*, that is, the forms separate from the matter. This is the same process as that which I described in the divine intelligence.

If, therefore, by *exemplar*, we mean the composite of pure ideas separated from matter, which I call 'explicit Exemplar', we are dealing with an Exemplar which follows the act of creation. In this case, God does not need it in order to create, and to this extent I accept Cajetan's opinion that God has no need of these ideas to know and create things. They are the consequence rather of perfection in the divine intellect. ('This shows that ideal views are not posited as necessary here in order that God may understand creatures distinctly — but they are posited as necessary in so far as necessarily constituted from the perfection of divine intellection'*). But if we mean by Exemplar the implicit exemplar in *initial being*, and the ideas that God, in creating, forms in the very act with which he *imagines* real, subsistent things and thus creates ideas with these subsistent things, then the Exemplar logically precedes the creative act. I think that this is St. Thomas' true feeling, although from certain places it appears that he favours the opposite. However, I think we can clearly infer his position from his constant teaching that the different views of divine intelligence are those which multiply ideas, and that these views are not real but purely rational ('They are not real aspects, however, like those by which persons are distinguished, but aspects understood by God'* (*S.T.*, I, q. 15, art. 2, ad 4um)). These aspects, or gazes, require an object. *Multiple ideas* cannot be this object because the aspects

produce the ideas. The aspects, therefore, must be *finite real things* which, because they are many, constitute many relationships with the divine essence. These relationships, looked at by God, are determined ideas.

8. (472)

[The generation of the divine Word]

I have said that 'the Word is absolute Being understood *per se* as subsistent *act* of the Father who says or affirms himself'. This needs some explanation. In us, the object, the *thing understood*, can always stand before the mind in two modes: 1. as pure object (idea), 2. as *affirmed* object (word) (*NE*, 2: 531–534, fn. 33; 3: fn. 228). Hence, there is in us a twofold knowledge: of *intuition*, and of *affirmation*, that is, predication. But in God, there cannot be, relative to himself, any real distinction between these two ways of knowledge such that they import two acts. The reason why this twofold knowledge is present in us is that we cannot with our act create or generate the object. This object is given to us from outside because it is *initial being* — we can only receive it. All that remains for human activity is to join the essential object which we are given to sensible things, and thus perceive them intellectually. This *intellective perception* is the first word that we pronounce. But God constitutes himself with his own activity as object with the very act with which he affirms himself. This is the divine Word coming forth from the Father.

Second, the *act* with which we affirm the intuited *object* necessarily remains distinct both from ourselves as affirming because it is an accidental act, and from the *affirmed object* because the object, not coming forth from ourselves but being received from outside, cannot be the very act of ourselves as human beings. This is not the case in God when the Father affirms himself because the object, coming forth from the intelligent subject through a necessary, not accidental act, is both the act itself come forth and the object of the Father as he affirms the whole of himself. Hence, there is no *operation* really distinct from pronouncer and pronounced as though it were something

[*App.*, 8]

between them. The sole distinction is between pronouncer or generator, and pronounced or generated, which is the object and the act finalised in itself.

It may be objected here that the operation does not differ in God from the divine essence. This would seem to mean that it is the essence, not the Father, that generates. Moreover, the objection would seem to be confirmed by St. Thomas' words: 'This name "operation", which without doubt implies something proceeding from the operator. Nevertheless (in God) this process comes about only according to reason. Hence operation in divine matters is said to be essential, not personal, because in God power and operation do not essentially differ'* (*De Verit.*, q. 4, art. 2). — My reply is this: the *divine essence* as generating is the Father.

Third, the human intellectual act can be conceived at two moments: 1. in the very act of being done, and 2. when as already done. This arises precisely because this act is accidental in us, and we conceive a moment in which it passes from non-being to being. At this moment, it is not complete, according to the Scholastic tag: *in actu actus nondum est actus* [in act, an act is not yet act]. I reply that this middle state between non-being and completed being cannot truly be conceived except in those acts which need time for completion, not in those which stand outside time, as is the case with divine acts (*Logica*, 51). But even without this, the act of generation of the Word is always complete from eternity. It is never incipient, nor can it be conceived as incipient, without the concept being falsified. The Word, therefore, never passes from non-being to being, but is always *object understood and affirmed in act*. Moreover, just as he is the Word of the Father, so he is subsistent act in himself and eternal object of the Father,^(‡) as well as complete act in himself, because he is *per se* and *in se* essentially understood and affirmed, and as such, subsistent person.

^(‡) The intellectual act with which (*quo*) the Father generates the Son pertains to the divine nature, and is therefore common to Father and Son. But this divine, actually intelligent nature, not taken in the abstract but as generating, is the Father, while this same divine nature, identical in number, in so far as it is actual, expressed information, that is, affirmed object, subsisting in itself, is the Son. Hence St. Thomas says (*S.T.*, I, q. 45, art. 5): 'THAT BY WHICH THE FATHER generates is the divine nature, in which the Son is assimilated to

himself. This is why Damascene says (Bk. 1, *De Fide Orth.*, 8) that “generation is a work of nature, not of the generator but of that by which the generator generates”. That by which the generator generates is common to generated and generator.* — Cf. Gio. Lami, *De recta Nicenorum fide*, c. 33: 12 where he shows that the Council, which defined that *essentia non est generans* [the essence is not the generator] understood the essence taken absolutely (abstracting from the persons) not as subsisting in the person of the Father and endowed with a special property.

9. (489)

[Act and relationships in the Blessed Trinity]

[Divine intellection] is dealt with by Charles Witasse in his *De Ss. Trinit.* q. 5, art. 4, where he says that with the exception of Henry of Ghent and Durandus, “The rest think that essential and notional [acts] are not to be distinguished as acts clearly distinct of themselves. Notional acts are simply essential acts in so far as they denote relationships proper to themselves. Generation, therefore, is virtual intellection itself in that it has fatherhood joined to it. In this case, notional intellection does not differ entirely from essential intellection, but only in so far as that which includes differs from that which is included. The notional intellection is the essential intellection, therefore, and moreover embraces something else, in this case, relationship.”* He then goes on to defend the thesis: ‘Notional intellection and volition do not differ from notional essentials as acts differ from acts, but only as what is included differs from what includes.’* He proves this from the absurdities that would have to be sustained if *understanding* and *affirming* (pronouncing) were two distinct acts of the divine intellect. He then makes the following objection: if *understanding* and *pronouncing* were a single act, the Word too and the Holy Spirit, who have the act of understanding would also *pronounce* and *generate*. He then replies: ‘If it is the same from all points of view, I grant this; if it is the same only in the notion of act, I deny this. For “to pronounce” and “to understand” are indeed one and the same act of the intellect. “To pronounce”, however, has something added, namely, fatherhood, which prevents “pronouncing” from being applied to the Son or to the Holy Spirit.’* The way I expressed

[*App.*, 9]

myself seems to make the reply clearer. *Relationship* cannot be conceived prior to generation except as something *potential*; it is finalised with generation. Hence, when we say that in the Father there is a single act of intelligence but with three terms, the first of which, the foundation of the others, is itself, it is clear that such an act of the Father, in so far as it has itself as affirmed as its term, is notional, that is generative of the Word and constitutive of the relationships of fatherhood and sonship. But as generative of the Word, this act cannot be communicated because the Word is the term of that act, while principle and term stand as opposites. Nor can it be communicated to the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit comes forth from the Father through the Son, and is therefore the term of the breathing of one and the other and cannot be the breathing, for the same reason. Now there is no doubt that *understanding* and *affirming* are a single act in God, but this act has several terms relative to one of which, that is, initial being, it lacks affirmation, and presents understanding alone. The difference, however, is on the part of the term and not of the act which, as one only, produces several terms connected together in the Word.

10. (593)

[St. Thomas on division and unity]

[St. Thomas says:] ‘First, *ENS* occurs in the intellect; secondly this *ens* is not another *ens*, and so we apprehend secondly division, thirdly one, fourthly multitude.’* He also says: ‘Division is prior to unity not simply but according to the nature of our apprehension’* (*S.T.*, I, q. 11, art. 2, ad 4.m). The distinction between *simpliciter* [simply] and *secundum apprehensionem nostram* [according to our apprehension] needs to be explained. Unity, or one as abstract, means the quality through which *ens* is one, as I have said. This quality appears to our mind as separate from *ens*, and in this separation does not exist in *ens*. Unity is therefore an object which pertains solely to dianoetic being. But doesn’t *ens* itself have the quality of one? And isn’t this quality in *ens*? I reply that the quality is in *ens* but not separate or divided from all the rest of *ens*. If however all separation

[*App.*, 10]

between ens and the quality of one is removed, the thought of one and the word itself disappear, leaving only the thought of ens. One cannot in any way be predicated of ens either by thought or by words if it is not separated in some way from the other elements of ens. This would seem to cancel St. Thomas' distinction, and unity would never be *simpliciter* but solely in the mind's apprehension. Nevertheless we must consider that when unity has been found by abstraction, the mind can consider it dialectically as ens. However, this is impossible without a preceding concept of division. But granted that the mind has already achieved this, a new order of thoughts begins: the mind first thinks one, and then the division of one, that is, of ens-as-one. In this order we can say that one precedes division *simpliciter*, that is, as a matter of fact, because one must be present before any division can be made.

Original Language References

The numbers are footnote numbers and refer to the translation found either in the footnote itself or where the footnote number is appended in the text . References to the Appendix are indicated at the end by the number of the Appendix

1. *Alii doctiores ac minus occupati civilibus negotiis rem perficiant: nostrum namque institutum fuit, ut potius aliis praesciberemus quonam pacto disciplinarum omnium facile princeps philosophia, scilicet haec prima, seu sapientiam appellare malueris, tractari debeat, quam ut nostro labore id fieret, cui impares nos esse sentimus, maiusque otium poscit, quam nobis inter tot bellorum procellas, atque publicas occupationes, hinc indeque occursantes in hoc legationis munere, quo fungimur, praestari possit.*
12. *Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich, und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig.*
14. *Est enim philosophia paucis contenta iudiciis, multitudinem consulto ipsa fugiens, eique et suspecta et invisita.*
15. *Haec ego non multis sed tibi; satis enim magnum alter alteri theatrum sumus.*
16. *Considera itaque circumspectans, ne quis profanus audiat. Profani vero sunt, qui nihil aliud esse putant, quam quod manibus comprehendere possint; actiones vero, generationesque, et quidquid invisibile est, in eorum quae sunt numero nequaquam habent.*
19. *Pondus meum, amor meus, eo feror quocumque feror.*
Animus quippe, velut pondere, amore fertur quocumque fertur.
23. *Communia absolute dicta, secundum ordinem intellectus nostri, sunt priora quam propria, quia includuntur in intellectu priorum, sed non e converso.*

26. *Sponte id fieri dicitur, cuius principium et causam continet is qui agit.*
27. *Deus sua voluntate libere amat seipsum, licet de necessitate amat seipsum.*
Voluntas divina necessario vult bonitatem suam, et tamen in volendo est libera.
32. *Nulla enim res naturae est, quae sit extra essentiam entis universlis.*
Enti non potest addi aliquid quasi extranea natura per modum, quo differentia additur generi, vel accidens subiecto, quia QUAELIBET NATURA ESSENTIALITER EST ENS.
33. Ὁ παρὰ Πλάτωνι Παρμενίδης, ἀκριβεστέρον λέγων διαίρει ἀπ' ἀλλήλων τὸ πρῶτον ἐν, καὶ δεύτερον ἐν πολλὰ λέγων, καὶ τρίτον ἐν καὶ πολλὰ, καὶ σύμφωνος οὗτο αὐτός ἐστι ταῖς φύσεσι τρισίν.
34. *Hanc minime admonitionem Plotini spreverim; quin ad obscurum et difficilem Platonis Dialogum, quem Parmenidem inscripsit, reserandum vix aliquid opportunius hoc inveniri posse, arbitror.*
42. *Ens communissime sumptum, ut est transcendens et obiectum Metaphysicae vel intellectus, abstrahit a completo et incompleto.*
48. τοσαυταχῶς δὲ λεγομένου τοῦ ὄντος φανερόν, ὅτι τούτων ὅν, τὸ τί ἐστίν, ὅπερ σημαίνει τὴν οὐσίαν ἢ τὰ δὲ ἄλλα λέγεται ὄντα, τῷ τοῦ οὕτως ὄντος, τὰ μὲν ποσότητας, τὰ δὲ πάθη, τὰ δὲ ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτος.
51. Γένη δὲ τινὰ οὗτοι εἰρήχασιν.
55. *Secundum Platonem formae non sunt aequivocae iis quae ad sui exemplar efficiuntur.*
57. Φαίνονται δὲ τινες καὶ τῶν λεγόντων στοιχεῖα τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἐν ἢ τὸ ὄν ἢ τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρόν.
60. οὐ τὰ ὄντα ἐξαριθμοῦνται, ἀλλ' ἀρχὰς τῶν ὄντων ζητοῦσι.
62. ὅ, τε γὰρ θεὸς δοκεῖ τῶν αἰτίων πᾶσιν εἶναι καὶ ἀρχή τις.
63. *Principium communius est quam causa, sicut causa communior quam elementum.*
68. *Principium nihil aliud significat quam id, a quo aliquid*

procedit. Omne enim a quo aliquid procedit quocumque modo, dicimus esse principium.

Principium communius est quam causa: sicuti causa communior quam elementum. Primus enim terminus, vel etiam prima pars rei dicitur principium sed non causa. — Unde hoc nomen causa, videtur importare diversitatem substantiae, et dependentiam alicuius ab altero, quam non importat nomen principii. In omnibus enim causae generibus semper invenitur distantia inter causam, et id cuius est causa, secundum aliquam perfectionem aut virtutem. Sed nomine principii utimur etiam in his, quae nullam huiusmodi differentiam habent, sed solum secundum quemdam ordinem. Sicut cum dicimus, punctum esse principium lineae, vel etiam cum dicimus, frontem lineae, esse principium lineae.

71. *Profecto si ens uniuscuiusque multitudo quaedam est, ipsum vero unum esse multitudo non potest, procul dubio diversum inter se erit utrumque. Homo igitur est et animal et rationale, partesque multae, multaeque in eo uno quodam conglutinantur. Aliud igitur homo est, aliud unum: siquidem homo quidem dividiuus est, unum vero penitus individuum. Atqui et totum ens cuncta in se omnia continens magis etiam existit multa et ab uno diversum, participatione tamen possidet unum. Praeterea ens vitam habet et mentem. Nefas enim est, vita vacuum id opinari. Ens igitur est et multa.*
72. *Quando vero ad informe aliquid fertur animus, cum comprehendere nequeat, propterea quod non determinetur, neque velut figuretur vario quopiam figurante, protinus inde prolabitur, metuens ne forte nihil ibi reportet.*
73. *Quamobrem quod intellectu superius est, non est intellectus, sed ante intellectum extat. Intellectus enim est aliquid entium: illud vero (unum) non aliquid, sed uno quoque superius. Neque est ens: nam ens velut formam ipsam entis habet. Sed illud est prorsus informe, et ab intelligibili etiam forma secretum. Unius namque natura cum sit genitrix omnium, merito nullum existit illorum: igitur neque quid existit, neque quale, neque quantum. Praeterea non est intellectus, non anima, non movetur, non quiescit, non est in loco, non est in tempore: sed ipsum secundum se uniforme,*

imo vero INFORME *super omnem existens formam, super motum super statum. Haec enim circa ens versantur, quae quidem ipsum multa conficiunt.*

77. *Sin autem ipsum esse inde auferens illud apprehenderis, protinus obstupesces, et dirigens te in illud, et assequens, atque in ipsius sedibus conquiescens* UNO POTISSIMUM SIMPLICIQUE *iam conspicias.*
78. *Omnia entia* IPSO UNO *sunt entia, tum quae primo entia sunt, tum etiam quae quoquomodo in rerum ordine numerantur.*
79. *Ille autem intra se aequae per totum quasi perfertur, tamquam seipsum amans, puram lucem,* IPSE HOC IPSUM QUOD AMAT *EXISTENS, idest autem in* SUBSISTENTIAM *SE PRODUCENS; siquidem actus est permanens, et quod ibi amabilissimum est velut intellectus existit. Intellectus autem ipsius est opificium: quapropter opificium ipse est. Cum vero non sit opus alterius,* SEQUITUR UT IPSIUS IPSE SIT OPUS. *Quam ob rem non ita est ut contigit, sed potius ut ipse agit.*
80. *Non igitur est ut contigit, sed ut ipse vult neque voluntas ibi temeraria est et vana, neque sic accidit. Cum enim optimi sit voluntas, non est inanis atque fortuita. — Esse igitur hoc ipsum quod existit, est actio ad seipsum: hoc autem atque ipse est unum. Ille igitur sibimet exhibet subsistentiam, una cum ipso eius actione collata. Si ergo facta non est eius actio, sed semper extitit quasi vigilantia quaedam, nec aliud ibi vigilans est, aliud vigilantia, quae quidem super intelligentia quaedam est semper vicens, profecto sic est, sicut et vigilavit. Vigilantia vero super essentiam intellectumque et vitam sapientem extat: id autem ipse est. Ille igitur actus est super intellectum et sapientiam atque vitam: ex eo autem haec sunt, nec ab alio quopiam. Ab illo igitur et ex illo suum esse producit. Non ergo sicut contigit, sed ut ipse voluit, sic prorsus existit.*
81. *Quod si ita se habet, constat iterum Deum seipsum efficere, suique existere dominum, neque sic esse factum, ut aliud quidquam voluerit,* SED QUEMADMODUM IPSE VULT. *Proinde ubi Deum dicimus nec quidquam in te accipere, nec ab alio capi, hac quoque ratione eum ab ea conditione longius segregamus, per quam sorte quadam talis evasisse dicatur,*

non solum ex eo quod agat, seu reddat se unicum, et (ut ita dixerim) solitarium, purumque conservet ab omnibus, verum etiam quoniam si quando et nos in nobis naturam eiusmodi quandam inspiciamus, aliorum nihil habentem, quocumque nobis adhaerent per quae nobis accidere solet quicquid contigerit perpeti, casuque vivere, LIBERTATEM prorsus experiemur. Alia enim quaecumque nostra dicuntur, serviunt, fortunaeque exposita sunt, et quasi fortuito nobis accidunt. In hoc autem solo consistit SUI IPSIUS DOMINIUM LIBERUMQUE EXISTERE, per actum videlicet quemdam luminis boniformis, et boni exuperantis mentem, actum, inquam, vim non adventitiam in se habentem, quae omnem excedat intelligentiam.

Est enim radix quaedam rationis suapte natura: atque huc tandem omnia desinunt. Est et tamquam ingentis cuiusdam arboris ratione viventis principium atque fundamentum in se ipso quidem permanens, tradens vero esse arbori per rationem inde susceptam.

83. *Quoniam ex aliis disputationibus nobis constat ipsius boni naturam esse simplicem atque primam: nisi enim prima esset, simplex esse non posset: constitit et IN SE IPSA NIHIL HABERE, SED UNUM ESSE DUMTAXAT, atque etiam ipsius quod dicitur unum, eandem esse naturam: etiam haec non prius quidem aliud quiddam est, deinde insuper unum: neque ipsum bonum aliud quiddam est et praeterea bonum.*
84. *Quod igitur inde gignitur dicendum est, superiore non agitato gigni: alioquin si moto illo aliquid generetur, certe id quod gignitur, non secundum, sed tertium erit ab illo post motum. Quamobrem necessarium est, cum illud sit prorsus immobile, si quid secundum post ipsum nascitur, id profecto illo NEQUE ANNUENTE, NEQUE VOLUNTATE DECERNENTE, neque ullo pacto commoto subsistere. — Numquid nihil prodit ab eo, an potius ab eo prodeunt, quae omnium maxima sunt post ipsum? Maximum vero post ipsum est intellectus atque secundum. Inspicit enim intellectus illud soloque illo indiget: illud vero primum hoc minime indiget. Oportet profecto quod sit ab eo, quod est mente melius, esse mentem: melius vero omnium quae fiunt est intellectus, quoniam alia sunt post ipsum.*

85. *Iam vero et anima mentis est verbum et actus quidam, sicut mens est Dei verbum — Est enim sicut est intellectus eodem modo, semper in actu stabili constitutus: motus autem vel ad ipsum, vel circa ipsum iam animae est officium. Atqui et ratio ab intellectu in animam usque procedens animam reddit intellectualem, neque aliam quamdam adducit naturam intellectus et animae mediam.*
86. *S'il est vrai qu' être signifie produire son image, la perfection de l'être réside dans la production parfaite, l'image de l'être parfait est une parfaite image, c'est-à-dire une image égale au modèle, ce qui nous conduit non point à la série décroissante des émanations de Plotin, mais à de la trinité d'Athanase.*
88. *Quid ergo est? Profecto potestas omnium: quae quidem nisi esset, neque caetera forent.*
91. *Lumen undique circumfusum ex ipso dependens, ex ipso, inquam, penitus quiescente, ceu fulgorem circa solem, quasi circumcurrentem, ex ipso semper manente progenitum. Iam vero res omnes quatenus naturaliter perseverant, ex ipsa sui essentia praesenteque virtute necessarium circa se foras naturam producunt, ab ipsis dependentem, quae quidem imago sic velut exemplaris scilicet virtutis illius unde manavit. Ignis quidem ex se foras emittit calorem, nix quoque frigus non intrinsecus tantum cohibet sed et aliis exhibet: praecipue vero id res odoratae testantur. Quamdiu enim sunt, nonnihil ab eis circum effunditur: cuius inde fit particeps quod est propinquum.*
92. *Certe (Unum) nihil horum est, quorum est principium: est et tale, ut de ipso nihil praedicare queat, non ens, non essentia, non vita: propterea quod super haec omnia sit. Sin autem ipsum esse inde auferens illud apprehenderis, protinus obstupesces, et dirigens te in illud, et assequens, atque in ipsius sedibus conquiescens uno potissimum simplici que intuitu iam conspicias; conspiciatus autem, magnitudinem eius auspicaberis per illa quae post ipsum sunt, atque per ipsum.*
93. *Quatenus enim (anima) est imago mentis, hoc ipso ei aspiciendum est in mentem: eadem ratione Deum suspicit*

mens imago Dei, ut ita sit intellectus: videt vero Deum MINIME INDESEPARATA: sed quoniam est post ipsum, nihilque est medium, quemadmodum nihil medium est inter animam atque mentem. Omne vero genitum appetit genitorem, in cuius consecutione sit contentum, praecipue autem quando soli sunt genitor atque genitus. At ubi quod genuit est omnium optimum, necessario genitum ipsi cohaeret usque adeo, ut ALTERITATE (ut ita dixerim) quadam solum videatur inde secretum.

99. *nihil prohibet aliquam creaturam esse secundum quid infinitam.*
101. *Nemo cognoscit Patrem nisi Filius, etc.*
103. Οὐ φθάνω τὸ ἐν νοῆσαι, καὶ τοῖς τρισὶ περιλαμβάνομαι, οὐ φθάνω τὰ τρία διελεῖν καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐν ἀναφέρομαι.
110. *Nam sicut ab eo quod est, verbi gratia, sapere et intelligere, sapientiam et intelligentiam nominamus: regulariter et AB EO QUID EST, essentiam non tacemus.*
120. *Dasjenige dessen Seyn blos darin besteht, dass es sich selbst als seyend setzt, ist das Ich als absolutes Subject.*
124. εἰς δὲ τινες οἱ περὶ τοῦ παντὸς ὡς ἂν μιᾶς οὔσης φύσεως ἀπεφύγαντο.
125. *Omne ens in quantum est ens, est in actu, et quodammodo perfectum, quia omnis actus perfectio quaedam est.*
126. *Illud autem quod est maxime formale omnium est ipsum esse.*
127. τὰ γὰρ εἶδη τοῦ τί ἐστίν, αἷτια τοῖς ἄλλοις, τοῖς δ'εἶδεσι τὸ ἐν.
128. *Transcendens est terminus universalissimam communitatum omnium rerum communitatem significans; proptereaque in oratione praedicabilis immediate de omnibus generibus in quid analogum, ut ens, verum, bonum, et unum.*
130. *Primum — quod cadit in imaginatione intellectus est ens, SINE QUO NIHIL POTEST APPREHENDI AB INTELLECTU, sicut primum quod cadit in credulitate intellectus sunt dignitates et praecipue ista: 'contradictoria non esse simul vera'. Unde OMNIA ALIA INCLUDUNTUR QUODAMMODO IN ENTE UNITE ET*

INDISTINCTE sicut in PRINCIPIO, ex quo etiam habet quandam decentiam, ut sit propriissimum divinum nomen.

132. *Potest autem cognosci (Deus) non solum secundum quod in se est, sed secundum quod est participabilis secundum aliquem modum similitudinis a creaturis. — Sic igitur in quantum Deus cognoscit suam essentiam, ut sic imitabilem a tali creatura, cognoscit eam, ut propriam rationem et ideam hujus creaturae.*

133. *Unde ad hujus notitiam sciendum est, quod verbum intellectus nostri, secundum cujus similitudinem loqui possumus de Verbo in Divinis etc.*

136. *Aliqua propositio est per se nota, quod praedicatum includitur in ratione subjecti.*

137. *Nominibus res significantur ut conceptae, verbis autem ut exercitae.*

Unde ista enuntiatio 'existentia non est', non implicat contradictoria: ista autem: 'quod existit, non est', implicat contradictoria.

138. *Nihil habet esse, nisi in quantum participat divinum esse, quia ipsum est primum ens, QUARE CAUSA OMNIS ENTIS; sed omne quod est participatum in aliquo, est in eo per modum participantis, quia nihil potest recipere ultra mensuram suam: cum igitur modus cuiuslibet rei creatae sit finitus, quaelibet res creata recipit esse finitum et inferius divino esse, quod est perfectissimum. Ergo constat quod esse creaturae, quo est formaliter, non est divinum esse.*

140. *Illam dicuntur esse per se notum, quae statim cognitae terminis cognoscuntur.*

141. *Quia nos non scimus de Deo quid est, non est nobis per se nota, sed indiget demonstrari per ea quae sunt magis nota quoad nos, et minus nota quoad naturam scilicet per effectus.*

142. *Bene verum est apud Sanctum Thomam quod omnis propositio, cuius praedicatum cadit in ratione subiecti est per se nota, sed non e converso. Quoniam cum unum generalissimum negatur de alio, et cum prima passio praedicatur de primo subiecto, fiunt propositiones immediatae secundum*

se, et consequenter secundum se per se notae. Si tamen alicubi sic definita reperitur, glossetur ly esse in ratione subiecti formaliter, vel VIRTUALITER proxime.

143. *Si enim omnis propositio per se nota est habens praedicatum in ratione subiecti, oportet ut semper ly per se excludat medium a priori. Sed quoniam contingit, quod interea inter quae nullum est secundum se medium, ut sunt cognita nobis, sit medium, ideo non semper excludit medium a posteriori.*
144. *Veritatem esse in communi, est per se notum: sed primam veritatem esse, hoc non est per se notum quoad nos.*
Deum esse in aliquo communi, sub quadam confusione est nobis naturaliter insertum, in quantum scilicet Deus est hominis beatitudo.
148. *Nec omnino esse, nec omnino non esse... Esse quidem, quoniam abs te sunt: non esse autem, quoniam id, quod es, non sunt. Id enim vere est, quod incommutabiliter manet.*
149. *Je ne suis pas, o mon Dieu, ce qui est: hélas! Je suis presque ce qui n'est pas. Je me vois comme un milieu incompréhensible entre le néant et l'être etc.*
156. *Platonem ipsum dialecticae duo genera, quorum alterum formam, alterum argumentum summae scientiae exponeret, distinxisse.*
157. *Nulla forma vel natura creata est suum esse.*
159. *Τὸ δὲ εἶναι ἄλλο τι ἐστὶν ἢ μέθεξις οὐσίας μετὰ χρόνου τοῦ παρόντος.*
162. *Forma autem non perficitur per materiam, sed magis per eam eius amplitudo contrahitur.*
166. *Mutari proprie dicitur per remotionem a termino a quo: fieri autem per accessum ad terminum. Sicut etiam sciens, quando considerat non mutatur, proprie loquendo, sed perficitur, ut dicit Philosophus in II bk. 2 (tex. c. 57, 58) de Anima.*
170. *Omnis res cognoscitur per suam formam.*
186. *Quid sunt ideae? Respondetur: esse repraesentationes rerum aut extantium aut possibilium. Ergo ideis divinis*

*possibilium debet respondere objectum: aliter omnino chim-
ericae forent; immo forent, zero, seu nihil.*

187. *Omne relativum versatur inter duo, quorum alterum
vocatur fundamentum a quo oritur relatio. Terminus est res,
ad quam ordinata est relatio. Inter haec relatio est ipsa
applicatio seu ordo fundamenti ad terminum.*
190. *Deus dat ESSE, aliae vero causae determinant illud.*
193. *Quandocumque aliqua duo sic se habent ad invicem, quod
unum dependet ab altero, et non e converso, in eo quod
dependet ab altero est realis relatio, sed in eo a quo de-
pendet, non est relatio nisi rationis tantum, pro ut scilicet
non potest intelligi aliquid referri ad alterum, quin intelli-
gatur etiam respectus oppositus ex parte alterius, ut patet in
scientia quae dependet a scibili, et non e converso. Unde
cum creaturae omnes a Deo dependeant, sed non e converso,
in creaturis sunt relationes reales, quibus referuntur ad
Deum, sed in Deo sunt relationes oppositae secundum
rationem tantum.*
194. *Intellectus humani proprium objectum est quidditas rei
materialis, quae sub sensu et imaginatione cadit.*
197. *Potest autem cognosci non solum secundum quod in se est
sed etiam secundum quod est participabilis secundum
aliquem modum similitudinis A CREATURIS.*
199. *Non est autem contra simplicitatem divini intellectus quod
multa intelligat, sed contra simplicitatem eius esset, si per
plures species eius intellectus formaretur.*
200. *Oportet autem ad hoc quod potentia perfecte compleatur
per formam, quod omnia contineantur sub forma ad quae
potentia se extendit.*
202. *Cum illud (fundamentum imitabilitatis) sit omnino unum
in omnibus ideis, quia est ipsa simplicissima essentia divina,
in qua non potest distingui absolutum imitabile a lapide ab
absoluto imitabili a leone, non posset sustineri pluralitas
idearum in Deo. Plures enim ideas intelligere est impossibile
nisi significatum ideae plurificatum intelligatur.*
203. *Respectus isti distinguentes ideas, cum sint etiam
constitutivi earum, non consequuntur actum intellectus di-
vini intelligentis ideas, sed fiunt per actum intellectus divini
intelligentis essentiam suam comparative.*

203. *Ratio autem alicuius totius haberi non potest, nisi habeantur propriae rationes eorum, ex quibus totum constituitur.*
204. *Hoc patet non convenire divinae essentiae secundum quod est mere naturaliter, sed secundum quod est obiecta divinae menti.*
Licet esse obiectivum in communi non sit reale: esse tamen obiectivum apud intellectum divinum est reale.
207. *Uno eodemque Verbo dicit seipsum et omnem creaturam.*
209. *Verbum differt ab idea. Idea enim nominat formam exemplarem absolute, sed Verbum creaturae in Deo nominat formam exemplarem ab alio deductam. Et ideo idea in Deo ad essentiam pertinet; sed Verbum ad personam.*
210. *Apparet alia differentia inter ideam et verbum, quia idea directe respicit creaturam, et ideo plurimum creaturarum sunt plures ideae; sed Verbum respicit directe Deum, qui primo per Verbum exprimitur, et ex consequenti creaturam, et quia creaturae, secundum quod in Deo sunt, unum sunt, creaturarum omnium est unum verbum.*
211. *Quando mens intelligit seipsam eius conceptio non est ipsa mens, sed aliquid expressum a notitia mentis.*
213. *Non est autem contra simplicitatem divini intellectus quod multa intelligat: sed contra simplicitatem eius esset, si per plures species eius intellectus formaretur.*
214. *Ipsa enim essentiam suam perfecte cognoscit: unde cognoscit eam secundum omnem modum quo cognoscibilis est. Potest autem cognosci non solum secundum quod in se est, sed etiam secundum quod est participabilis, secundum aliquem modum similitudinis a creaturis.*
215. *Sic igitur oportet quod quidquid in scientia Patris continetur, totum hoc per unum ipsius verbum exprimat et hoc modo, quo in scientia continetur, ut sit verum Verbum suo principio correspondens per scientiam; et Verbum ipsius exprimat ipsum Patrem principaliter, et consequenter omnia alia, quae cognoscit Pater cognoscendo se ipsum, et sic Filius, ex hoc ipso quod est Verbum perfecte exprimens Patrem, exprimit omnem creaturam, et hic ordo ostenditur in verbis*

Anselmi (Monol., 32) qui dicit, quod dicendo se, dicit omnem creaturam.

216. *Nulla natura habet esse nisi in supposito suo.*

217. *Notitia quae ponitur in definitione Verbi, est intelligenda notitia expressa ab alio; quae est in nobis notitia actualis.*

219. *Quod voluntas eius fundamentum sit universorum, et propter eum adhuc mundus hic maneat.*

220. *Cum ergo quaeritur utrum res verius sint in se ipsis, quam in Verbo, distinguendum est, quia 'verius' potest designare vel veritatem rei, vel veritatem praedicationis. Si designet veritatem rei sic procul dubio maior est veritas rerum in Verbo, quam in se ipsis. Si autem designetur veritas praedicationis, sic est e converso. Verius enim praedicatur homo de re prout est in propria natura, quam de ea secundum quod est in Verbo.*

221. *Universalis non sunt res subsistentes, sed habent esse solum in singularibus, ut probatur 7, 2 Metaphysicorum.*

234. *Unum nihil aliud significat quam ens indivisum. Et ex hoc ipso apparet quod unum convertitur cum ente.*

237. *In formis separabilibus, unitatem superare multitudinem et in Diis adeo superare ut illorum esse sit unitas quaedam, dico autem quaedam, quia primum principium est ipsa simpliciter UNITAS.*

240. (ὅλον) πρὸ τῶν μερῶν μὲν, ἐκεῖνα τὰ εἶδη, ὅτι πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν ἕκαστον ἐκεῖνων ὑφέστηκεν, ἃ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο γέγονεν, ἀπλούστατα ὄντα, καὶ ἄϋλα.

242. ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἄνευ ὕλης τὸ αὐτό ἐστὶ τὸ νοοῦν, καὶ τὸ νοούμενον.

243. *Idea non nominat divinam essentiam in quantum est essentia, sed in quantum est similitudo, vel ratio huius vel illius rei. Unde secundum quod sunt plures rationes intellectae ex una essentia, secundum hoc dicuntur plures ideae.*

244. *Huiusmodi respectus, quibus multiplicantur ideae non causantur a rebus, sed ab intellectu divino, comparante essentiam suam ad res.*

245. *Respectus multiplicantes ideas non sunt in rebus creatis sed*

in Deo: non tamen sunt reales respectus, sicut illi quibus distinguuntur personae, sed respectus intellecti a Deo.

246. *Non est autem contra simplicitatem divini intellectus, quod multa intelligat: sed contra simplicitatem eius esset si per plures species intellectus formaretur. Unde plures ideae sunt in mente divina ut intellectae ab ipso.*

247. *Sed numquid Deus Pater, de quo natum est Verbum de Deo Deus; numquid ergo Deus Pater in illa sapientia quod est ipse sibi, alia didicit per sensum corporis sui, alia per seipsum? — Numquid Deus Pater ea ipsa, quae non per corpus, quod est ei nullum, sed per se ipsum scit, aliunde ab aliquo didicit, aut nuntiis vel testibus ut ea sciret, indiguit?*

248. *Universas autem creaturas suas, et spirituales et corporales, non quia sunt ideo novit; sed ideo sunt quia novit.*

249. *Non enim eius sapientiae aliquid accessit ex eis; sed illis existentibus sicut oportebat, et quando oportebat, illa mansit ut erat.*

251. *Si materia dicatur omne illud quod est in potentia quocumque modo, et forma dicatur omnis actus, necesse est ponere, quod anima humana et quaelibet substantia creata sit composita ex materia et forma. — Si vero materia proprie accipiat pro illo quod est potentia tantum, sic impossibile est quod anima humana sit composita ex materia et forma.*

254. *Esse idem contingit dupliciter, scilicet positive et negative. Unum autem formaliter est idem enti negative: quia non aliam naturam significat, sed eandem alio modo, ut dicitur IV Metaphysicorum.*

258. Ὁ δὲ παρὰ Πλάτωνι Παρμενίδης, ἀκριβέστερον λέγων, διαίρει ἀπ' ἀλλήλων τὸ πρῶτον ἓν, ὃ κυριώτερον ἓν, καὶ δεύτερον ἓν πολλὰ λέγων, καὶ τρίτον ἓν καὶ πολλά.

264. *Et substantia mea tanquam nihilum ante te.*

References to the Appendixes:

1. *Atqui quaecumque perfecta iam sunt, aliquid generant. Quod autem semper est perfectum, semper gignit et*

sempiternum, MINUS AUTEM GENITUM GENITORE. Quidnam igitur de perfectissimo est dicendum? Numquid nihil prodit ab eo, an potius ab eo prodeunt, quae omnium maxima sunt post ipsum? Maximum vero post ipsum est intellectus atque secundum. Inspicit enim intellectus illud, soloque illo indiget: illud vero primum hoc minime indiget. Oportet profecto quod sit ab eo quod est mente melius, esse mentem: melius vero omnium quae fiunt est intellectus, quoniam alia sunt post ipsum. Iam vero et anima mentis est verbum et actus quidam, sicut mens est Dei verbum.

Quatenus enim (anima) est IMAGO MENTIS, hoc ipso ei aspiciendum est in mentem: eadem ratione Deum suspicit MENS IMAGO DEI, ut ita sit intellectus.

2. *Deus est ipsum esse per se subsistens. Et ostensum est, quod esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum, sicut si albedo esset subsistens, non posset esse nisi una, cum albedines multiplicentur secundum recipientia. Relinquitur ergo, quod omnia alia a Deo non sint suum esse, sed participant esse. Necesse est igitur, omnia quae diversificantur secundum diversam participationem essendi, ut sint perfectius vel minus perfecte, causari ab uno primo ente, quod perfectissime est.*

Quia esse secundum suum ordinem est receptibile in alio (et similiter, sapientia, bonitas, etc. et apud Platonem quidditates sensibiles receptibiles erant in materia); ideo, quodcumque horum SI SUBSISTAT est tale per essentiam et SI NON SUBSISTAT, per participationem. Et propterea in litera datur exemplum de albedine, quam constat esse formam receptibilem in alio. Et quoniam naturaliter SUBSISTERE INCLUDIT IRRECEPTIBILITATEM, et NON SUBSISTERE RECEPTIONEM IN ALIO propterea in litera a subsistentia ad recipi declinatur, dum dicitur, quod albedo non multiplicatur nisi secundum recipientia.

3. *δύναμις λέγεται, ἡ μὲν ἀρχὴ κίνησεως ἢ μεταβολῆς ἢ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἢ ἑτέρῳ.*

καὶ πρῶτον περὶ δυνάμεως ἡ λέγεται μὲν μάλιστα κυρίως, οὐ μὴν χρησίμη γε ἐστὶ πρὸς τὸ βουλόμεθα νῦν· ἐπὶ πλέον γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια τῶν μόνον λεγομένων κατὰ κίνησιν.

ἐπὶ πλεόν γάρ ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἐνέργεια τῶν μόνον λεγομένων κατὰ κίνησιν.

εἶναι γὰρ ὁμοιότητί τινι λέγονται, καθάπερ ἐν γεωμετρία· καὶ δυνατὰ καὶ ἀδύνατα λέγομεν τῷ εἶναι πῶς, ἢ μὴ εἶναι.

φανερὸν οὖν ὅτι ἔστι μὲν ὡς μία δύναμις τοῦ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν.

4. *Plato in hoc reprehenditur, quod posuit formas naturales secundum propriam rationem esse praeter materiam, ac si materia accidentaliter se haberet ad species naturales.*

5. καὶ οὗτος ὁ νοῦς χωριστὸς, καὶ ἀμιγῆς, καὶ ἀπαθὴς τῇ οὐσίᾳ ὧν ἐνέργεια.

τὸ αὐτὸ δὲ ἐστιν ἡ κατ'ἐνέργειαν ἐπιστήμη τῷ πράγματι.

ἐπὶ μὲν γάρ τῶν ἄνευ ὕλης τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστι, τὸ νοοῦν, καὶ τὸ νοούμενον.

καὶ ὅλως ἄρα ὡς χωριστὰ τὰ πράγματα τῆς ὕλης, οὕτω καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν νοῦν.

Similitudo creaturae est quodammodo ipsa creatura per modum illum, quo dicitur, quod anima est quodammodo omnia.

6. *Forma autem alicuius rei praeter ipsam existens ad duo esse potest, vel ut sit exemplar eius cuius dicitur forma, vel ut sit principium cognitionis secundum quod formae cognoscibilium dicuntur esse in cognoscente.*

7. *Artifex, dum intelligit formam domus in materia, dicitur intelligere domum: dum tamen intelligit formam domus ut a se speculatam, ex eo quod intelligit se intelligere eam, intelligit ideam, vel rationem domus.*

Deus autem non solum intelligit multas res per essentiam suam sed etiam intelligit se intelligere multa per essentiam suam. Sed hoc est intelligere plures rationes rerum, vel plures ideas esse in intellectu eius ut intellectus.

Ex hoc autem habes quod respectus ideales non ponuntur necessarii ad hoc, ut Deus distincte intelligat creaturas — sed ponuntur necessarii ut necessario constituti ex perfectione intellectionis divinae.

Non tamen sunt reales respectus sicut illi quibus distinguuntur personae, sed respectus intellecti a Deo.

8. *Hoc nomen operatio, quae procul dubio importat aliquid procedens ab operante, tamen (in Deo) iste processus non est nisi secundum rationem tantum: unde operatio in divinis non personaliter sed essentialiter dicitur, quia in Deo non differt essentia virtus et operatio.*

ID QUO PATER generat est natura divina, in qua sibi Filius assimilatur, et secundum hoc Damascenus dicit (L. I. De fid. Ort. 8) quod 'generatio est opus naturae non sicut generantis, sed sicut eius, quo generans generat' (ad 1^{um}). Id quo generans generat est commune genito et generanti.

9. *Caeteri vero existimant essentielles et notionales non distingui ut actus a se plane diversos; sed notionales actus nihil aliud esse quam ipsosmet essentielles, quatenus connotant relationes sibi proprias. Itaque generationem esse ipsammet divinam intellectionem quatenus adjunctam habet paternitatem, adeo ut intellectio notionalis ab essentiali se tota non differat, sed tantum ut includens ab inclusa: quia scilicet notionalis est ipsamet essentialis, et praeterea aliud quidpiam complectitur, nempe relationem.*

Intellectio et volitio notionales ab essentialibus non discrepant, ut actus ab actibus, sed dumtaxat ut includens et inclusum.

Si idem est ex omni parte, concedo: si idem est tantum in ratione actus, nego. Porro dicere et intelligere, sunt quidem unus et idem intellectus actus: sed dicere relationem habet adiunctam, nempe paternitatis, quae impedit quominus dicere Filio conveniat aut Spiritui Sancto.

10. *Primo cadit in intellectu ENS; secundo quod hoc ens non est illud ens, et sic secundo apprehendimus divisionem; tertio unum, quarto multitudinem.*

Quod divisio sit prius unitate non simpliciter, sed secundum rationem nostrae apprehensionis.

Index of Persons

*Numbers in roman indicate paragraphs or, where stated, the appendix (app.);
numbers in italic indicate footnotes*

- Alexandrines, 69, 585
 Ambrose (St.), 219
 Anaxagoras, 68
 Anselm (St.), 471; 149, 264
 Aphrodisias, Alexander, 55
 Aristotle, 1, 34 (titles), 35, 68, 94, 118–122, 124, 137, 139–141, 180, 203, 244, 324, 350, 354, 369, 373, 393a, 394a, 477, 499a, 520, 546, 553, 602, 616, 656 3, 719; 45, 48, 59, 61–63, 67, 116, 124, 127, 159, 182, 188, 221, 237, 250, 261; *App.*, nos. 3–5
 Athanasius (St.), 101, 139
 Augustine (St.), 2–3, 35, 307; 61, 247–249
 Avicenna, 58

 Bacon, Francis, 33
 Boeckh, 282
 Brown, Robert, 663
 Buddha (Sakyamuni), 33

 Caesar, 13
 Cajetan, 254; *App.*, no. 2
 Caluso, 131
 Campanella, T., 128
 Canova, 594
 Chalybaeus, 245
 Cicero, 33; 35
 Contarini, Gaspare, 1
 Cousin, Victor, 22
 Cudworth, Rudolf, 69; 258

 Damascius of Damascus, 156
 De Vio, Thomas, 469; 137, 142–143; *App.*, no. 2
 Democritus, 68
 Descartes, 74, 273
 Dionysius the Areopagite, 104
 Druids, 33
 Duns Scotus, John, 421; 27, 204–205, 253; *App.*, no. 2
 Durandus, *App.*, no. 9
 Eustratius, 240

 Fathers of the Church, 307; 139, 192
 Fénelon, 149
 Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 75, 245–246, 253, 256, 260–264, 273, 286, 363; 115
 Ficinus, 232
 Fieschi, Catherine, 4

 Galluppi, 99
 German ontologists, 167
 Gioberti, 310; 131
 Greek theologians, 61
 Greeks, 94, 592, 647 VI; 61
 Gregory (St.), 196

 Hegel, Georg, 8, 10, 19–20, 75, 78, 157, 161, 164–165, 246–247, 249, 253, 256, 274–275, 286, 288, 306, 324–325, 334, 355, 411, 646, 669
 Hegelians, 640–641, 647, 661, 665
 Henry of Ghent, *App.*, no. 9

 Jamblicus, 237
 John Damascene (St.), 51; *App.*, no. 8
 Justin (St.), 139

 Kant, 241, 245, 253, 260, 286, 673
 Kuehn, Charles, 153, 156

 Lami, G., *App.*, no. 8
 Leibniz, 556; 177
 Leucippus, 68
 Lysis, 33, 35

 Mamiani, Terenzio, 97, 99
 Manzoni, 42 VI
 Mela, Pomponius, 13
 Melanchthon, Philip, 187

 Neoplatonists, 585, 593; *App.*, no. 1
 Oberrauch, Ercolano (Fr.), 185

 Parchetti (Fr.), 423
 Parmenides, 67, 118, 243; 45, 64, 78

- Philolaus, 282
 Plato, 11, 33, 67–69, 118, 122, 128, 137, 182, 198, 203, 235, 244, 303, 311–312, 324–325, 346–355, 373, 466b, 467, 510, 516, 575, 719, 722; 45, 55, 57–58, 64, 66, 127, 262–263; *App.*, no. 4–5
 Platonists, 137; 57
 Plotinus, 69, 116–117, 119, 121, 156–161, 163–166; 50, 60, 77–78, 258; *App.*, no. 1
 Plutarch, 149
 Porphyry, 126; 59
 Proclus, 156
 Pythagoras, 33
 Pythagoreans, 119, 122, 137, 393, 722; 57, 67, 127, 232
 Reinholt, 260
 Schelling, 8, 10, 246–264, 272–273, 275, 286, 288, 278; 29
 Scholastics, 24, 28, 94, 284, 411, 580, 588, 616, 634, 727; 23, 97, 182–183, 222
 Scotists, 634
 Secrétan, Charles, 82, 86, 95
 Seneca, 12, 33
 Sensists, 466b
 Sepulveda, 55
 Sidonius Apollinaris, 110
 Simon, Jules, 78
 Socrates, 124
 Suarez, 42, 234
 Tennemann, Wilhelm, 69
 Tertullian, 139
 Thomas Aquinas (St.), 58, 192, 301, 466b, 468–472, 488–489 1, 593, 604–605, 616, 646, 655, 727a; 23, 27, 31, 61, 63, 98–99, 125–126, 129–130, 132–133, 136, 138, 140–141, 157, 162, 166, 168–170, 181, 192–193, 197, 210–213, 215–218, 220–221, 234, 237–238, 241, 246; *App.*, nos. 2, 4–8, 10
 Trendelenburg, 55, 250
 Unitarians, 156–157, 163, 165
 Van Heusde, 12
 Witasse, Charles, *App.*, no. 9
 Wolf, 70
 Zabarella, Giacomo, 41

General Index

*Numbers in roman indicate paragraphs or, where stated, an appendix (App.);
numbers in italic indicate footnotes*

Absolute Being

accidents and, 339
actuating being, 376, 503
all entia, entities and, 112–112a, 131, 432
appurtenance of God and, 490
as act, 342, 363, 431, 438
as light, 423, 461b–461c
as potency of being, 431–432
beginning of all things, 467
being and, 171, 206, 214, 216, 217 no. 4
bodies and, 484
classification and, 136
common determinant, 282–284a, 292
contingent ens and, 292–293, 304
creating mind and, 363
creation and, 467
determinant being, 503
dialectical object, 132
dialectical subject, 220, 281
diversity of entities and, 409
divine (the) and, 461c
divine intellection and, 489
divine Mind and, 461–461b, 463, 484, 488, 490
divine Word and, 471
ens and, 290–292
essence as, 423, 443a
existence as, 288
finite ens and, 348, 376, 438, 463
first determinable, 503
forms and, 463
God and, 289
genus and, 145
idea and, 286, 423, 443a; *App.*, no. 6
ideal being and, 508
intelligence and, 464
limitable being, 145
man and, 441a, 484, 490, 462
mind of Father and, 490
multiplication and, 701
necessary ens and, 293–298

number and, 289
points of view of, 423
possibility in, 420, 438
potency of, 431–432
principle of cognition and, *App.*, no. 6
principles of reason and, 468
real ens and, 443a, 475, 491, 586; *App.*, no. 4
realities, real things and, 286, 302, 458
substances and, 339
terms and, 144, 267–268, 274, 339, 431, 442, 505, 512
the knowable and, 286–287
three concepts and, 512
ultimate determination, 283–284a, 292
undetermined being as, 311, 315
unity of, 144
universality and, 332
virtual being and, 267–271, 276–277, 286, 292, 332–333, 335–336
virtuality of, 414
see also God

Abstract

concept of, 461
initial being as, 461

Abstraction(s)

ancient philosophy and, 35
being and, 157, 161, 165, 241, 267
concept and, 235
creation and divine, 342, 461–462, 465, 467; 213
entia and, 581
full, specific species and, 385–386
human, 347, 461, 461c, 520
hypothetical, 381, 510, 512
knowledge and, 35
mind and, 226
object and, 488 1
specific ideas and, 370
thetical, 172

- Accident(s)**
 animals and, 343
 as appendices, 622 B
 being and, 344, 358
 characteristic of, 342–344
 classification and, 137, 139–141
 concept of, 343
 initial being and, 339
 substance and, 390, 543, 622 B, 644, 4
 the real and, 543
- Act(s)**
 as act, 431
 ‘being done’, 411–412
 concept of, 379
 creative, 51, 308–310
 immanent and transient, 147
 intellectual, *App.*, no. 8
 of God, 466
 potency and, 711
 quantity of, 571, 573
 subject and, 309 1
 succession and, 411
 the indefinite and, 714
see also **Potency**
- Action**
 of finite, real ens, 356–359
 real being and, 262
 relationship of, 359
 sufficient reason for blind, 714 no. 2
- Active**
 passive and, 183
- Actuality**
 ego and, 288
 ens and, 546–548
 genus, species and, 536–544
 Infinite Ens and, 340
 principle-ens and, 568, 573
 subject and, 218, 547
 the finite real and, 356–357, 370, 535
- Affirmation**
 being and, 499–501
 creative, 491
 divine, 488, 492, 522; 265
 human, 522
 intelligibility of, 521–522
 intuition and, 490, 522
 knowledge and, 485, 521; 169
 limitation and, 518
 mind and, 545
 repeatability of, 725
- Analogy**
 initial being and, 289
- proportion and, 289
- Animal(s)**
 excitation and, 662–663
 human body and, 621
 intelligence and concept of, 631
 kinds of life of, 567
 multiplication of, 620 2
 quantity of nature of, 567
 species and genus of, 567
 thought, and identity of, 639 a)
 unity of, 343
- Annihilation**
 negation and, 683
- Antinomy**
 dialectical ens and, 615
 existence and, 55
 in real, moral and ideal worlds, 62–66
 knowledge and, 55
 number and, 56
 sufficient reason and, 55
see also **Contradiction**
- Arithmetic**
 discrete quantity and, 529
- Art**
 forms and works of, 374
- Atheists**
 God and, 300
- Atom(s)**
 identity of aggregate of, 657
 life of, 569
 living, 657
 sensitive principle and, 649 no. III
- Authority**
 reasoning and, 193
- Becoming**
 being and, 246, 275, 334
 common speech and, 646
 concept of, 640–671
 finite real entia and, 643–664
 form and, 275
 ideal beings and, 665–669
 mental entia and, 670–671
 one ens becoming another, 641–642, 661
 subject and, 306
- Being**
 abstract, 190, 215–217, 220, 267
 abstraction and, 157, 161, 165, 241

- accidental entia and, 358
- act of, 84, 106, 112, 136, 159, 218, 228, 281–282, 284a, 332, 334–335, 349, 362, 410–411, 415–416, 431–432, 559
- actuating, 373, 504, 518–519, 521–522
- affirmation and, 499–501
- antecedent to things, 306
- anterior and posterior, 284a
- as cause, 292–293, 402
- as divine, 363, 371
- as first determinable, 282–284a, 292, 318, 393a, 403–406, 413, 430, 439–449a
- as measure, 533
- as one, 197; 221
- as potency, 408–413, 415–418–419
- as ultimate determination, 283–284a, 292, 318, 408, 413, 502
- as universal determinant, 282–284a, 292, 318, 408–413
- as universal matter, 439–440
- becoming and, 246, 275, 334
- Being and, 460
- being and, 177b
- bliss and, 144
- cause of all things, 284a
- classification and, 111–115
- common, 97
- constitution of unlimited, 150
- container, contained and, 182, 525
- contingent entia and, 292–293, 295, 307, 336
- creation and instinct of, 462–462a, 466
- definition of, 211, 314
- determinations and terms of, 89
- dialectical subject, 494
- difference in, 474
- divine being and, 495; 138
- duality in, 166
- elementary concepts of, 528
- ens, entia and, 43, 213, 218–221, 229, 277a, 402, 494, 587, 728; 522 108, 221
- entities and, 112–112a, 213–214, 277
- essence of, 174–176, 177a, 303, 436, 441, 586
- essence(s) and, 38, 229–236, 296–297, 311, 318, 362, 368, 370, 375, 503
- essentially determined and simple, 503
- existence and, 288, 334 (b)
- faculties and, 241
- felt being, 500
- finite, 434, 452, 461, 474, 495b, 497, 562, 581
- finite ens and, 668 3–669
- finite real and, 510, 522
- finite real terms of, 441a
- finiteness and infinity of, 474
- first distinction in, 127, 138, 144, 146–147
- forms and, 29, 38–39a, 51, 53, 133–135a, 100, 104a, 146, 169–176, 190, 319, 426, 497–498, 512, 581, 688, 716, 728; 59
- forms of finite ens and, 328–331
- forms (primal/ three/trinity) of, 10, 55, 146–149, 199–200, 244, 166–166a, 172–173, 199–200, 451
- genera, 142–143
- God and, 288–289, 362, 632
- goodness and, 165a
- human beings' conception of, 340
- human beings, the real and, 366
- human mind and, 84, 89, 93–94, 166, 242, 270, 393a; 168
- idea and, 104a
- identity of, 148
- ideology and, 25
- incommunicability of, 327–335
- initial being and divine, 467
- infinite, 166a
- intellective and volitive, 495–495b
- intellective ens and, 499a
- intelligence and, 213
- intelligibility of, 10, 173, 242, 371, 375, 426, 441, 499
- intuition of, 159, 170–171, 174, 213, 217, 309, 361–362, 720–721
- knowledge and, 35, 165, 197
- knowledge of undetermined, 83–86
- known *per se*, 166
- limited, 150, 436–437
- love and, 177b, 330
- loved *per se*, 166a
- meaning of, 212–217, 229, 313–314
- modes and, 43, 148
- moral, 51, 177b, 564, 689, 703, 728
- multiplicity and, 105–106, 162, 166, 197–202, 205–210, 270, 315, 674
- nature of, 242
- necessity of, 426–427, 430
- non-being and, 306, 680, 724
- objective, 166, 342, 363, 436, 444a, 445 5, 459, 463
- ontology and, 100–102, 128, 197
- ordering principle of, 190
- participation in, 701–702
- passions and, 170
- perception and, 370
- perfection and, 165a, 177b
- possible, 132, 403, 415–422, 715–716; 97
- potency of, 431–432

predicated whole but not wholly, 279, 441a
 predicates and, 132, 271
 problem of first, 162–163
 properties from subjective, 715
 properties of, 329, 331–335
 pure, 112a–114, 135a, 376, 415–416
 quantity, quality and, 548
 real subject and, 494
 realities and, 303, 309 3, 311
 relative, 144
 self-subsistent species, 386
 soul and, 363
 subject and, 166, 271
 subject-being, 342
 subjective form of, 443a
 subsistence of, 340, 394a
 synthesisism of, 199, 202
 term(s) of, 115, 266, 280, 321–323, 333, 417, 433, 508, 587, 639 d), 666
 term and reality of, 665
 the real and, 340, 344–345, 348–349, 359, 366, 368, 370–371, 499
 theory and, 104a–104b
 theosophy and, 1, 10, 31–32
 thought and, 27, 170
 trine, 316, 172, 463
 undetermined, 404 B1–2, 439–440, 441a–442, 444a, 449a, 548, 667–669, 673–674, 688, 689
 unitary, 190
 unity and plurality of, 162 ss., 242 ss., 673
 universal possibility of, 87
 unlimitedness of, 451
 varieties of, 105, 108, 132, 142, 144, 146, 150, 190
 virtuality of, 434
 word of Being and, 559
see also **Absolute Being, Ens, Form, Idea of Being, Ideal Being, Initial Being, Terms, Virtual Being**

Blindness

colour and, 632

Bliss

being and, 144

Body, Bodies

full species of, 396a
 identity of, 639 a), 648, 655
 inertia and, 255
 intellectual principle and, 648, 656 4
 limits and, 706
 minimum and, 700
 movement and, 255

possibility of increase in, 699
 soul and, 384a, 621
 space and, 706
 substantial form of living, 658
 two modes of, 650
 unity of, 384

Categories

categorical forms and, 689
 characteristics of, 155
 determination of being and, 715
 five species of, 134
 forms of being and, 689
 meaning of, 123–125, 128–130
 problem of, 106, 108, 122, 132
 rational entia and, 178
 terms of being, 266
 three, 190, 199
 three forms and, 155, 167, 170, 179, 199
 transcendent predicate, 284a
 ultimate classes, 106–107

Cause, Causes

act-cause and subject-cause, 342, 507
 being as, 292–293
 classification and, 135–135a
 concept of, 379
 first, 153, 447
 non-potency-cause, 381–381a, 438
 possibility and its efficient, 447
 potency and cause-principle, 706
 potency-cause, 381–381a, 430, 438, 706
 principle and, 61, 68
 relationship of effect and, 425
 virtuality, effects and, 434

Change

ens and, 643–645
 entic, 643
 identity and accidental, 664
 substantial, 643

Children, *see* Offspring

Christ

unity, multiplicity and, 166

Christianity

arcane and common sciences of, 33
 being and, 394a
 unity and three persons in, 163

Circle (of thought)

not vicious, 28–29, 210

- Classes**
 common quality of, 109–112, 114, 124
 knowledge of, 177
 supreme, 133–134
 unique subject of, 109–113, 124
- Classification**
 ancient philosophers and, 116–122
 bonds of entities and, 133
 causes and, 135
 difficulties of, 109–115
 initial being and, 136
 negative and positive quality and, 135
 order of thought and, 662
 pure, absolute being and,
 term and, 125, 127
 two things of, 124
- Cognition**
 consciousness and, 260
 negative, 513
 principle of, 242
- Common**
 concept of, 588–591
 meaning of, 589
- Common Sense**
 philosophical teaching and, 156
 three categories and, 167
 two worlds distinguished by, 251
- Composition, Composite**
 concepts of, 597
 dialectical, 597–598, 609, 612
 dianoetical, 610–612
 ens and, 599–600
 in real things, 597–598, 612–617
 objective, 597–598, 601–608, 612
see also **Simple, Unity**
- Conceivable, The**
 existence of, 451–452
- Concepts**
 dialectical order of, 440
 positive and negative, 667, 671 6
- Conjunction**
 entifying, 345, 348
 identification as, 345
- Consciousness**
 cognition and, 260
 feeling and, 343, 473–474
 of self, 263, 363
 things and, 474
- Container and Content**
 being and, 182, 581
 essence and, 598, 601, 602a
 form and, 254–258
 mind and, 510, 601, 602a
 notion of, 183
 object as, 185, 598, 608
 philosophy and, 249–258
 rule of, 181
 three ways of, 184–187
- Contingency**
 concept of, 427, 455
- Contingent**
 meaning of, 145
- Contingent Things**
 being and, 292–293, 295, 307, 336
 creative act and, 310
 essence and, 303, 337; 32
 possibility of, 427
see also **Creation, Entity**
- Contradiction**
 being and, 426
 knowledge and, 44, 46–47
 principle of, 173, 334
see also **Antinomy**
- Cosmology**
 investigation of, 36, 343
 ontology and, 37
 part of theosophy, 30
- Creation**
a priori demonstration of, 302–304
 action of the real and, 358
 change and, 411
 completing, 466a
 conservation of, 305
 defined, 304
 description of, 458–464
 divine abstraction and, 342; 213
 divine affirmation and, 488
 divine will and, 555, 557
 divine wisdom and, 51
 entification and, 358
 freedom of, 436, 452–454, 518
 God and, 51, 368, 436, 452–454
 initial being and, 467, 503
 instantaneous passage of, 305–307
 limitation and, 518, 583
 mystery of, 462a
 principle of determination in, 506
 real term and, 462
 recapitulation of, 464
 relationship of, 360

- subjective and objective forms in, 460, 463–464, 473, 481, 483
 - supreme genera and, 551
 - Word (divine) and, 361, 363
see also **Creative Act, God**
- Creative Act**
 - divine Word and, 476
 - eternity of, 438; 197
 - finite entia and, 474–485
 - finite reality and, 679
 - free will and, 436
 - God/Absolute Being and, 361–370, 372, 412, 443, 462, 437
 - intellectual perception and, 308–309
 - intelligence and objective being in, 441
 - light in, 466 3
 - logical order in, 367–370, 372, 466 5
 - love as, 460, 462, 466 3
 - of human beings, 466b
 - order of, 505
 - reality and, 497, 606
 - understanding of, 309–310
 - unity of, 463, 466 3
 - volitive, loving principle in, 439
- Death**
 - soul and, 231
- Determination(s)**
 - complete, 696–698
 - determined, 696
 - finite ens and, 519
 - idea and, 667
 - indetermination and, 727a
 - perfect, 697
 - principle of, 506, 508
- Development**
 - of human intelligence, 42
- Dialectical**
 - defined, 609
- Dianoetical,**
 - explained, 609
- Difference**
 - categorical, 541
 - concept of, 623 a)
 - identity and, 623
- Distinction**
 - real, 610–611
- Divine Word**
 - absolute objective Being, 471
 - appurtenance of divine essence, 461c
 - creation and, 361, 363–365, 368–369, 372, 439, 461c, 466 5
 - divine affirmation and, 488
 - divine essence and, 470, 681
 - divine knowledge and, 489
 - divine mind and, 502
 - exemplar and, 468, 471, 477, 492, 502
 - Father and, 471–472, 476–478, 480–481, 489–490; 215
 - finite ens and, 366, 459, 468, 492
 - finite reality and, 477
 - generation of, 476, 488 2, 489, 495, 602; 265; *App.*, no. 8–9
 - God and, 10, 289, 361, 363–364, 368, 372, 398, 436, 461c, 470, 476; *App.*, no. 8
 - ideal being and, 213
 - initial being and, 297, 461c, 468, 489
 - reality and, 681
 - undetermined being and, 436
 - will of God and, 468
 - world and, 365, 398, 465, 477–483, 485–487
- Division**
 - concept of, 593–594
- Doubt**
 - mind and, 24
- Duration**
 - existence and, 377
 - infinite, 699, 701
 - sensation and, 396
see also **Time**
- Effect**
 - concept of, 379
see also **Cause**
- Efficiency**
 - moral, 406
 - real ens and, 381 III
- Ego**
 - absolute, 264, 272
 - realities, the knowable and, 261–264
 - pantheism and, 288
 - personhood and, 288
- Elements**
 - essential and other, 139
 - classification and, 136–137, 154
 - genera and, 137–139
 - meaning of, 136
- Emanatism**
 - erroneous system, 456
 - first finite reality and, 223

Ens, Entia

- absolute, 145–147
- abstract, 690
- activity of finite, real, 356–359
- antinomies and, 62
- appendices of, 617–622, 636, 643–649, 677–678, 691
- as subject, 495b, 612
- base of, 617–622, 636, 643–648, 655
- bases and species of, 656 3
- beginning, middle, end of, 349
- being and, 43, 213–214, 218–219, 277a, 402, 494
- classes of, 144–146, 374; 105
- complete entities, 133
- determinately determined, 690
- determination of, 503
- definition of, 211, 218, 314, 321, 630
- definition of real, 329
- dialectical, 615, 622 B
- dialectical passions of, 57–61
- diversity of, 409
- divine and created, 473
- efficiency and, 381 III
- elements of finite, 444a
- essence of, 174
- existent entia and, 494
- extrasubjective, 343, 562
- first, complete, 724
- forms of, 28, 329–331, 374
- genera of, 138–143
- God, finite being and, 497
- human thought and, 638
- identity of living, 662
- in itself, 314
- infinite, 37, 321–323, 329, 569
- initial being and, 292–293, 464, 475
- intellective, 364–375, 499a, 566, 569, 639 c), 719–721, 724: 167
- intelligent and non-intelligent, 464
- intelligibility of, 463
- light and, 499
- limited, relative, 145–146
- maximum, 727a
- meaning of, 131, 212, 218–223, 229, 497–498
- metaphysics and, 2
- mind and, 28
- modes of, 690
- nature of, 494
- non-ens and, 67–69, 351, 497–498, 564, 647
- non-intellective, 364–375, 501, 719; 167
- of reason, 468
- one and, 157, 580, 584, 634
- operation of subjective, 496
- opposite properties of, 329
- order among, 724–725
- other sciences and, 13–14
- passions of, 59
- perception and, 462b
- perfectible, 357
- perfection and (real), 697
- plurality of, 583
- principle of knowledge, 17
- possibility of, 83, 418–419, 435
- rational, 178
- reality and, 83
- rendered intelligent, 492
- richness and dignity of, 672
- sensitive, 719
- simplicity of, 596
- subjective force and, 497
- subjective real, 562
- substantial form of living, 658
- sufficient reason for, 44–52a, 71
- term, being and infinite, 669
- terms and difference of, 722
- the one and, 157
- theosophy and, 11–15
- thought and, 639 c)
- union of elements of, 119
- unity, multiplicity and, 104b; *App.*, no. 10
- unity of corporeal, extrasubjective, 343
- universal, 70, 196
- unlimited, 151
- vague individual, 690
- virtuality of, 434, 437
- see also* **Being, Finite Ens, Principle-Entia, Term-Entia, Entity**

Entification

- being and, 358
- conjunction as, 345
- direct or indirect, 362
- human beings and, 367
- relationship of, 359
- relative, 363, 365
- subject-causes of, 365
- the real and, 367

Entity, Entities

- being and, 112–112a, 213–214, 277, 332, 338
- classification of, 135–137; 105
- definition of, 211, 224
- meaning of, 112, 131, 212, 224–226
- order of, 107
- principles or causes of, 135–135a
- quiddity and, 726
- simple, 396
- things called, 106

Entozoa

animal life and, 663

Error

source of, 25

Essence(s)

as act, 378 ss.
being and, 38, 229–236, 293, 296–297, 311, 318, 362, 368, 370, 375, 503
conceived by the mind, 276
contingent things and, 337
definition of, 211, 227–228, 230
ens and, 174
existence and, 288, 347a, 446
generic, 468
human mind arriving at, 512
idea and, 38, 297, 311, 463; 32
identity and, 624
initial being as, 423, 443a
knowledge of, 53–54, 63–64
meaning of, 212, 227–236
object and multiplicity of, 603 ss.
one and, 510
possibility and, 425–428, 431, 441
possible and subsistent, 39a
reality and, 452
the real and, 443b–444a, 466b
three persons and divine, 489
totally undetermined, 715
unity of, 296
universality and, 163

Ethics

virtue and, 6

Excitation

animal and, 662–663
life of,

Exemplar

being and idea-Exemplar, 444a
created Wisdom as, 468
creative act and, *App.*, no. 7
divine Word and, 468, 471
of the world, 398, 458–460, 465–466b, 467–468, 471, 477, 485, 487, 492, 552, 556, 651

Existence

accidental, 376
actuality and, 375
being and, 288, 334 (b), 375
conscious, 500
dialectical, 365
duration and, 377
eminent, 399, 477, 480
ens and, 376, 453; 134

God and, 288, 376, 453, 475
objective, 441a, 443
one and, 581
relative, 475
subjective, 441a, 443, 500
sufficient reason and, 55
time and, 377

Extension

bodies and, 277a
hybrid genus, 516
limited and unlimited, 391
minimum of, 700, 704
unity of, 384

Extrasubjective

feeling and the, 343
felt element as, 566
form as, 148
God as, 495b
knowledge of, 513 4
nature of, 517
real ens as, 562
subjectivity and, 65
supreme genera of, 517

Faculties

being and, 241

Father

absolute Being, 464, 471
act of intelligence and, 489; *App.*, no. 9
Exemplar and, 471
initial being and, 490
intellection of, 489
object and, *App.*, no. 8
other persons and, 489
principle of divine intellect, 470
Word and, 471–472, 476–478, 480, 489; 215
see also Trinity

Feeling

ego and, 263
consciousness and, 343, 473–474
corporeal, extrasubjective entia and, 343
fundamental, 396a, 513 4, 567
ideal being and, 177a
intellective, 363, 513 4, 564–565
intuition and, 499a
knowledge and, 74, 174
mind and the sentient, 565
non-intellective things and, 501
object-being and, 500
potency of reflection and, 500
potential thought of, 632

- principle-ens as, 564
- quality, quantity and, 523
- reality and, 174, 367, 473, 565, 720–721
- understanding as, 174
- see also* Sensitive Principle
- Feeling Principle, *see* Sensitive Principle**
- Felt Element**
 - extrasubjective, 566
 - genera and, 517
 - God and, 491
 - intellective principle and, 565–566
 - matter as, 576
 - nature of, 569
- Finite Ens, Finite Entia**
 - ‘all’ and, 678
 - base of, 691
 - being and, 322–323, 329, 331, 504, 668 3
 - conception of, 340, 350
 - defined, 321, 329, 346
 - determinations and, 519
 - elements constituting, 502
 - essence, real and, 348–351
 - existing in itself, 545
 - finite number of, 723–724
 - finite real and, 519, 562
 - first duality of, 394–394a
 - form of, 499a
 - forms and, 689
 - genera and, 398
 - generation of, 616, 647 IV–VI
 - God and, 358, 474–475
 - infinite and, 399, 436, 473
 - intellective and non-intellective, 364
 - limitations of, 691–692, 718
 - maximum, 725
 - modes of, 692
 - moral form of, 330
 - objective and subjective forms of, 330, 558
 - ontology and, 37
 - ordered composite of, 724–725, 728
 - origin of unity of, 723
 - properties of, 329, 502
 - quantity and, 550
 - quiddity of, 726
 - reality and, 657
 - subjective and objective, 692
 - terms of, 564, 717
 - thinkability and knowability of, 610
 - thought and, 346
 - virtuality and, 399
 - see also* Ens, Finite Reality
- Finite, The**
 - gradation and, 275
 - knowledge of, 488 1
 - the infinite and, 668 3, 713–714, 726
- Finite Reality, The Finite Real**
 - act and, 429
 - being and, 87, 171, 332, 344, 473, 439–440, 442, 502, 504, 506–507, 510, 526, 559
 - determinations and, 368, 502–503, 507, 513
 - determined, 545
 - diversity of, 409
 - divine essence and, 474
 - divine mind and, 502
 - existence of, 475, 678
 - finite ens and, 519, 562
 - forms in, 518–518a
 - God and, 475, 680
 - human beings and, 559
 - ideal (idea of) being and, 508–514
 - indefinite increase in, 702–703
 - infinite and, 37, 509, 511, 526
 - infinite ens and, 680
 - knowledge of, 37
 - mind and, 502
 - objective form and, 559
 - possibility of, 422, 441
 - properties of, 679, 692
 - quantity and, 554–576
 - subject and, 496
 - subjective form and, , 473, 559
 - three forms of, 678
 - unity and, 519
 - universal, total being and, 673
 - virtuality of, 399
 - Word (divine) and, 477, 480–483
 - see also* Ens, Finite Ens
- Foetus**
 - mother and, 663
- Force**
 - composition and, 597
 - corporeal, 172
 - matter and, 253
 - sensitive principle and, 253
 - subjective, 494, 497
- Form, Forms**
 - becoming and, 275
 - categories and, 155, 167, 179
 - content and, 254–258
 - dignity and fullness of, 189
 - distinction of, 181
 - diversity and, 498
 - elements and, 138, 148

ens and, 28, 31, 150, 328
 entities and, 155, 179
 essence and, 59
 extrasubjective, 148
 insession of the three, 181–182, 718
 intelligibility of, 373
 knowledge and, 11, 77
 matter and, 613–616, 620
 moral, 148, 168, 405 C, 728; 95
 objective, 104a, 148, 181–181b, 192, 404 A, 486
 of the finite real, 368–369
 primal, 10, 55, 146–149
 quantity and, 549–550–
 real, 404 B, 718
 subjective, 148, 181–181b, 192
 thought and, 93
 trinity of, 166–166a, 168–169, 172, 188, 498
 universal, dialectical, 269, 282, 284
 works of art and, 374
see also **Being**

Freedom

creation and divine, 453–454
 divine, 455
 moral form and, 95

Full Species

abstract species and, 543–544
 being and, 545
 class of identity, 650
 concept of ens as, 223
 corporeal entia and, 651
 determinations and, 519
 determined quantity and, 554–558
 finite ens and, 395, 398
 fixed, 557, 559, 561
 fullest and, 651
 genus, genera and, 395, 522
 God and, 397–399
 ideation and, 392
 individual and, 545
 of external bodies and, 396–396a
 of *myself*, 397
 of own body, 396a
 perfection in, 568
 separate intelligences and, 397
 souls and, 397
 space as, 727
 subsistent ens and, 383 C

Fullest Species

class of identity, 650
 corporeal entia and, 652
 divine mind and, 727
 full and, 651
 identity and, 657

individual and, 590, 652
 ‘one’ and, 727

Genera, Genus

abstract species and, 544
 abstraction and, 386
 being and, 142–146
 classification of, 120–122, 154; 228
 dialectical, 228
 elements and, 137–139
 entia and, 138–143
 felt elements and, 517
 foundation of, 394a
 intellective entia and, 724
 lower, 535–537, 539–540, 544, 553
 nominal, 228
 quality and, 145
 reality and, 543–544
 sensible, 396
 species and, 177a, 724–725, 727a; 222
see also **Supreme Genera**

Generation

excitation and, 663
 virtual existence in, 384a

Geometry

quantity of geometrical figures, 575
 the measurable and, 393a

German School

absoluteness and, 11
 ego and, 363
 ontological problem and, 241
 philosophy and, 167, 253, 285
 Platonic dialectic and, 312
 sensism and, 19

God, Absolute Being, Absolute Ens, Infinite Being, Infinite Ens, Subsistent Being,

absolute virtuality and, 435
 abstraction and, 461–462, 465, 467
 accidents, substance and, 387
 act of intelligence in, 488 1
 acts of, 466
 affirmation in, 488; *App.*, no. 9
 base of, 691
 beginning, middle, end and, 349
 being predicated of, 669
 choice (as Creator) in, 515
 communicated to human beings, 688
 comprehension seen in, 525–526
 determinations and, 519, 727a
 determined, 503, 512
 discovery of, 39–39a
 divine imagination and, 462b
 divine Mind and, 400

- divine subject, 495b
 divine synthesis and, 463–464
 duality and, 347, 436
ego of, 264; 272
 exemplar of the World and, 363, 365, 368–369, 441, 454, 473
 existence and, 288, 348, 376, 453
 existence of, 196, 298–301, 446
 extension seen in, 525–526
 Father and, 464; *App.*, no. 8
 feeling in, 491, 517, 565
 finite ens, finite being and, 358, 360–361, 366, 439, 446, 473–479, 492, 494, 497, 727a
 finite reality and, 680
 finite terms and objective, 448 3
 free will of, 51, 435–436, 452, 454, 468, 526
 gaze, 441–442, 461b–462, 465, 467, 469–470, 476, 477, 488–489
 Hegelianism and, 168
 human mind and, 309–310, 376; 168
 idea of, 715
 ideas in, 372, 471, 487; 197, 205
 ideas predicated of, 400
 identification in, 345
 identity in, 340, 638
 imitability and, 682
 initial being and, 269, 288–289, 339–340, 363, 376, 461; 138; *App.*, no. 1
 intelligence and will in, 495–495b, 405–406
 intuition in, 681
 knowledge of, 3–4, 36, 191, 299, 400; *App.*, no. 1
 loveliness of, 51
 love and, 51, 368
 moral being and, 564
 multiplicity in, 606, 609, 671 6
 multitude and, 604–605, 607
 nature and, 494; 225
 necessary act and free act in, 362
 number in, 549
 object in, 472
 object-being in, 230
 objective absolute Being and subjective, 470
 objective and subjective being in, 204
 objective ens and, 638
 objective form of, 104a, 192, 436, 441–442, 449, 451, 459–461, 464–465, 526
 objectivity of, 453
 ‘one’ and, 581, 583–584, 716
 operative Mind and Intelligence of, 447, 449–449a, 452, 462
 our personhood and, 474
 personality and, 461c; 225
 persons and, 225
 possibility of, 404 B1, 420, 497
 potency (potentiality) and, 438, 447
 quality of, 548
 quantity and, 549–550
 quiddity of, 726
 reality produced by, 497
 soul (human) and, 363
 space and, 99
 subject-Being, 342
 subjective and extrasubjective ens and, 495b
 subjective form of, 441–442, 448–449, 452, 460, 462, 465, 526
 subjective, objective and moral terms and, 717
 succession and, 460
 sufficient reason of creation, 52a
 the divine and, 461c
 theology and, 6
 thought of being and, 632
 ultimate cause, 342; 62
 understood *per se*, 499
 universal being and, 196
 universe and knowledge of, 400 2
 virtual being and, 269; 138
 virtuality in, 398–400
 word of, 559
 words applied to, 462a
 world and, 363–365, 368–369, 441, 454, 473, 476, 498
see also **Creation, Creative Act, Divine Word, Mind (divine), Object (absolute)**
- Good**
 human, 5, 8
- Goodness**
 being and, 165a
- Grace**
 absolute object and, 490
- Habit**
 cause and, 381 II
 quantity of, 570
- Harmony**
 life of,
- Holiness**
 category of being, 190
 universe and, 406 b)
- Holy Spirit**
 divine essence and, 470

Father and, *App.*, no. 9
 infinite knowledge and, 489
see also **Trinity**

Human Being(s)

being, the real and, 366
 conception of being and infinite Ens,
 340
 creative act of, 466b
 defined, 35
 genera of potency in, 569
 imitating Creator, 464
 intellectual soul and, 621
 non-intellective things and, 501
 origin of notions in, 345
 perfection in nature of, 568
 perfection of knowledge and virtue
 in, 569
 primal modes and, 158
 unity of, 384a
see also **Man**

Human Nature

the intelligible and, 10

Human Subject

full species of, 396a

Idea of Being, Ideal Being

abstract species, 528
 appurtenance of divine essence, 490
 being and, 170–176
 common being and, 97
 divine understanding and, 213
 essence of Being and, 177a
 finite intelligences and, 369
 initial being and, 508
 limits and, 689
 meaning of, 217
 objectivity of, 369; 97
 principle of determination and, 508
 principles and, 94
 self-evident, 74
 the real and, 177a–177b, 508–514
 the undetermined real and, 508
 truth and, 34
 undetermined, 131, 171, 213, 318
 wisdom and, 467
 world and, 532
finite being and, 514
 ideas and, 552
 ideology and, 38
 initial being as, 423
 ‘one’ and, 586–587
 philosophy and, 22
see also **Being, Ideal Being**

Idea(s)

abstract specific, 344; 189
 being and 104a, 368
 classes of, 22
 container and content of, 38
 creature and, 472
 divine, 470
 divine essence and multitude of, 605
 divine Word and, 471
 essence and, 38, 297, 311, 463; 32
 full, specific, 384b–385
 generic, 514; 189
 idea of being and, 552
 ideas comprised in, 393
 in God, 471, 487; 197, 205
 infinity and universality of, 523
 initial being and, 423; *App.*, no. 6
 intelligibility and, 423
 light and, 10, 38, 297
 most universal, 468
 of God, 715
 possible and real things and, 423
 principle of knowledge, 17
 reasoning and, 311
 specific, 370, 514
 subsistent object and, 9
 sufficient reason of, 52a
 the knowable and, 252
 the real and, 466b; *App.*, no. 4
see also **Being**

Ideal, The

the moral and, 168
 the real and, 167, 173–174, 177b

Ideality

category of being, 190
 incomplete form, 217
 knowledge and, 286

Ideation

accidental, 387–393
 entific, 387, 394
 explained, 387, 392
 full, specific species and, 385

Identical

individual differs from, 588

Identification

absolute Being and, 39a, 345
 being and, 245, 277, 340
 conjunction and, 345
 perfect, 323

Identity

absolute, 633
 abstract thought and, 639

- appendices and, 636, 643
 - base and, 636, 643–644, 691
 - being, its terms and, 278–279, 281
 - change in appendices and, 664, 691
 - classes of, 650–652
 - common speech and, 660 3
 - concept of, 341
 - dialectical, 633–634, 728
 - difference and, 623
 - different modes of thought and, 628
 - identical element and, 629–631, 650
 - intrinsic variation and, 635–639
 - multiplicity of acts and, 727
 - object and, 625, 629
 - of aggregate of atoms, 657–660
 - of intellective ens, 658
 - of living ens, 649, 662
 - of sensitive ens, 657–658
 - partial, 633–634
 - perfection and, 698–705
 - reason and, 633
 - relationship of, 359
 - seat of, 624
 - steps to, 623
 - theory of, 623–678
 - two kinds of, 625
- Ideology**
 - being and, 26
 - ontology and, 38, 75, 196
 - theosophy and, 27
- Ignorance**
 - methodical, 24
- Image, *see* Phantasm**
- Imagination**
 - divine, 462–462b, 465 485; 197
 - human, intellective, 462a–462b
- Imitability**
- Indefinite**
 - act and, 714
 - defined, 698
 - human perfectibility as, 699
 - measure of, 700
 - progression, 699
 - subjective, objective and moral, 703
- Individual**
 - concept of, 588
 - full species and, 545
 - identical differs from, 588
 - vague, 588
- Inexistence**
 - of entities, 182
 - of the three forms, 188
 - see also* **Insession**
- Infinite**
 - succession and the, 348
 - the finite and the, 713–714, 726
 - two species of, 538
- Infinite Being, Infinite Ens, *see* God**
- Infinite Real, Infinite Reality**
 - divine mind and, 671 2
 - limitability of, 682
- Infinity**
 - absolute, 538, 726
 - finiteness and, 474
 - omnipresence of, 701
 - participation in, 704–705
 - proper to essence. 538–539
 - supreme genera and, 523
 - unilateral or lateral, 560 1, 701
 - virtual being and, 702
- Inherence**
 - limits and, 706, 709
- Initial Being**
 - Absolute Being and, 145
 - accidents and, 339
 - actuating being, 376, 503
 - all entia, entities and, 112–112a, 131, 432
 - appurtenance of God and, 490
 - as act, 342, 363, 431, 438
 - as light, 423, 461b–461c
 - as potency of being, 431–432
 - beginning of all things, 467
 - being and, 171, 206, 214, 216, 217 4
 - bodies and, 484
 - classification and, 136
 - common determinant, 282–284a, 292
 - concepts of idea, real and loved, 512
 - contingent ens and, 292–293, 304
 - creating mind and, 363
 - creation and, 467
 - determinant being, 503
 - dialectical object, 132
 - dialectical subject, 220, 281
 - diversity of entities and, 409
 - divine (the) and, 461c
 - divine intellection and, 489
 - divine Mind and, 461–461b, 463, 484, 488, 490
 - divine Word and, 471
 - ens and, 290–292

- essence as, 423, 443a
 - existence as, 288
 - finite ens and, 348, 376, 438, 463
 - first determinable, 503
 - forms and, 463
 - God and, 289
 - idea and, 286, 423, 443a, 512
 - ideal being and, 508
 - intelligence/intelligible and, 464, 512
 - limitable being, 145
 - man and, 441a, 484, 490, 462
 - mind of Father and, 490
 - multiplication and, 701
 - necessary ens and, 293–298
 - number and, 289
 - points of view of, 423
 - possibility in, 420, 438
 - potency of, 431–432
 - principles of reason and, 468
 - real ens and, 443a, 475, 491, 586
 - realities, real things and, 286, 302, 458
 - substances and, 339
 - terms and, 144, 267–268, 274, 339, 431, 442, 505, 512
 - the knowable and, 286–287
 - ultimate determination, 283–284a, 292
 - undetermined being as, 311, 315
 - unity of, 144
 - universality and, 332
 - virtual being and, 267–271, 276–277, 286, 292, 332–333, 335–336
 - virtuality of, 414
- Insession**
- being and, 701
 - containership and, 182
 - of the three forms, 181–181b, 188
 - see also* **Inexistence**
- Instinct**
- absolute Being and loving, 462, 466 3, 467
 - sensuous, 570
- Intellection**
- divine, 489
- Intelligence (human)**
- being and, 213, 441a, 451
 - concept of animal and, 631
 - development of, 42
 - divine and, 490
 - finite reality and, 443
 - ideal being and, 177b
 - initial being and, 464
 - objective form of finite ens and, 330
 - real being and, 177b
 - unity and, 242
 - see also* **Separate Intelligences**
- Intelligent**
- understood object and, 602a
- Intelligibility**
- idea and, 423
 - non-intellective things and, 501
 - objective, 518a, 521–522
 - of affirmation, 521
 - of being, 10, 173, 242, 371, 375, 426, 499–500
 - of finite and infinite real, 519
 - of intuition, 521
 - subjective, 521–522
- Intelligible, The**
- being and, 10, 173, 242, 500, 512
 - human nature and, 10
 - necessity of, 10
 - the mind, the sensible and, 117
 - the intelligent and, 499a
- Intuition**
- act of, 602
 - affirmation and, 490
 - basic mode of thought, 629
 - feeling and, 499a
 - human, 265
 - in God, 681; 265
 - intelligibility of, 521
 - undetermined being and, 528
 - see also* **Being**
- Italy**
- philosophy and, 1
- Judgments**
- being and, 158
- Knowable, The**
- ego* and, 262–264
 - form, content and, 250
 - idea and, 252
 - initial being and, 286–287
- Knowledge**
- absolute, 11
 - affirmation and, 485, 521; 169
 - antinomy and, 55
 - being and, 165, 197–198
 - confused and distinct, 94
 - contradiction and, 44, 46–47
 - direct, 24–25,
 - human infinite, 177a
 - ideality and, 286
 - increase of, 703
 - intuitive, 53–54, 71
 - love and, 35
 - natural, 5, 34–35

- observation and, 25
 - of essence, 53–54, 63–64
 - of God, 3–4
 - of ourselves, 3
 - of predication, 169
 - of undetermined being, 83–86
 - ontology and, 79
 - ordinary, 24
 - popular, 24, 42 IV
 - potencies and, 26
 - practical, 3, 5–6
 - predicative, 53–54, 63–64, 71, 130
 - principle(s) of, 17–18, 157, 199
 - reflection and, 76
 - scientific, 94
 - speculative, 5
 - sufficient reason and, 44–48
 - supernatural, 5; 3
 - synthesism of, 199
 - systematic, 251–252
 - the real and, 176
 - twofold nature of human, 53, 499
 - Word (divine) and divine, 489
 - world and divine, 485
- Language**
 - ontological, 203
 - thought and, 203
- Life**
 - elementary, 569
 - matter and, 648
 - of atom, 569
 - of continuity, 567, 569, 648–649, 656 3, 662–663
 - of excitation (stimulation), 567, 648, 656 3, 662–663
 - of harmony, 567, 648, 656 3, 663
 - see also* **Sensitive Principle**
- Light**
 - being as, 499
 - created, 461b
 - creative act and, 466 3
 - idea and, 10, 38, 297
 - initial being as, 423, 461b
 - object of reason, 490
 - objective being and, 342
 - uncreated, 461c
- Limitation, Limitability, Limit(s)**
 - absolute, 685–686
 - active, 683
 - being and, 436–437, 454
 - concept and definition of, 683–684, 686, 706
 - concepts similar to, 683
 - cosmological, 694–695, 707, 709, 711
 - creation and, 518, 583
 - determined, 488 2
 - difference between limited and unlimited, 680
 - entia prior to, 726
 - entitative, 691, 693, 707
 - entities conceived prior to, 707–711
 - essential, 691–693, 709
 - finite entia and, 726
 - finite real and, 526
 - genera of, 686–725
 - genera, species and, 709–711
 - Intelligence of God and, 468, 517
 - limiting operation and, 708–709
 - limits of relationship, 688
 - of being, 688
 - of categorical form and mental entia, 689
 - of entia, 690
 - ontological, 694–695, 715, 723
 - origin of, 681, 712–721
 - physical, 694–695
 - productive operation of, 709–711
 - quantity and, 694
 - relative, 685–686
 - secondary, 693, 696–698, 706–708, 726
 - speculative, 683
 - transcendent, 691–693, 707, 709
 - subject and, 487
 - subtraction, 517
 - the real and, 468
 - undetermined, 488 1
- Logic**
 - classification and laws of, 109, 117
 - identity and, 633
 - theosophy and, 27
- Lovableness**
 - absolute Being and, 437, 439, 441, 460, 462
 - being and, 330
 - God and, 51
- Love**
 - being and, 177b, 467
 - blind, 467
 - knowledge and, 35
- Loved**
 - initial being and, 512
- Man**
 - being intuited by, 441a
 - entia and, 441a
 - felt term and, 566
 - modifications in reality and, 494

- subjective force of, 497
 - see also* **Human Being**
- Many, *see* One**
- Mathematicians**
 - whole and parts and, 594
- Matter**
 - aggregate and, 257
 - body and, 42
 - defined, 518
 - dialectical or ideal, 269, 282, 284, 310, 317, 344, 440, 516
 - first, prime, 367, 511, 518a, 639, 715, 719, 722; 172
 - force and, 253
 - form and, 613–616, 620
 - living principle of corporeal, 656 3
 - motion and, 576
 - non-intelligibility of, 373
 - real ens and, 646–647
 - sensitive principle and, 257
 - space and, 574
 - substantial form and, 653
 - supreme genera of, 515–517
 - threefold ens, 576
 - uninformed, 467
 - universal, dialectical, 269, 282, 282, 342, 511
 - virtual being and, 269
 - world and, 518
- Maximum**
 - minimum and, 699–705
- Measure**
 - concept of determined, 393 2
 - direct knowledge and, 542, 544
 - number and, 544
 - of the indefinite, 700
 - one as, 530
 - quantity and, 560 4
 - three kinds of, 533
 - unit of, 391, 560 5
- Metaphysics**
 - author and, 35
 - ens and, 2
 - first thinkers in, 118
 - theosophy and, 3
 - two parts of, 2
- Mind (divine)**
 - absolute being and, 508
 - absolute Object and, 485
 - all entities and, 468
 - elements of being in, 528
 - exemplar and, 369,
 - first reality and, 718–722
 - genera and, 517, 520
 - ideal being and, 508
 - initial being and, 363, 484, 488 1
 - limitation and, 372–373, 712
 - number and, 583
 - number of entia and, 723
 - object and, 602, 681
 - principle of determination and, 508
 - real things and, 365, 368
 - reality and abstract one in, 589 3
 - the real and, 514
 - unity and, 722
 - Universe and, 447
 - virtual being and, 367
- Mind (human)**
 - absolute being and, 158 1
 - abstraction and, 226
 - act of relationship, 602
 - being and, 84, 89, 93–94, 142–142, 166, 204, 242, 270, 393a, 484, 528; 168
 - ens and, 28, 139, 157
 - essences and, 512
 - existence and, 453
 - existence of God and, 196, 446
 - finite, infinite and, 618, 634
 - gaze of, 382, 388, 445 6, 446, 461–461a, 500, 509, 681
 - God attained by, 376
 - ideation and, 387–389
 - indetermination and, 509
 - number and, 583
 - object and, 499a, 602–602a, 681
 - origin of notions in, 445
 - plurality in, 584
 - possibility and human, 449a
 - potency and, 610
 - principle of determination and, 508
 - reason for things and, 197
 - supreme genera and, 520
 - term, undetermined being and, 668 4
 - the finite real and, 477, 514
 - the intelligible, the sensible and, 117
 - the one, the many and, 198–199
 - the sentient and, 565
 - truth and, 274
 - ultimate reasons and, 15
 - unity and, 242, 265–271
 - virtual being and, 702
 - virtuality of object and, 382–384b
 - see also* **Thought**
- Modes**
 - being and, 43, 177–177b, 179
 - one and, 158 5
 - philosophy and, 43
 - understanding of, 25

- Moral, The**
 ens and, 174
 moral act, 174, 181b
 moral bond as container, 186
 moral form of ens, 181a–181b
 philosophers and, 168
 the ideal, real and, 168
- Morality**
 category of being, 190
 human being and, 181a
 moral form of finite entia, 330
 moral necessity, 51
 moral order and, 286
 moral quantity, 525
 possibility of moral entia, 405 C–407
- Movement, Motion**
 body and, 255
 harmonious order and, 255
 living principle of, 656 3
 matter and, 576
 quantity of, 576
- Multiplication**
 identity of entia in their, 649
 origin of, 586
- Multiplicity, Multitude**
 being and, 105–106, 166, 197–202, 205–210, 270, 315, 674, 676
 ens, unity and, 104a, 596, 599–608
 foundation of, 349
 one and, 158, 603 ss.
 quantity of the real and, 559
see also **One**
- Myself**
 accident, substance and, 343
 full species and, 396a–397
 fully determined, 513 4
 human being and, 181–181b
 soul and, 363
- Nature**
 principle-ens and quantity of, 566–567
 truth and, 34
- Necessity**
 contingent and, 173
 fittingness as, 51
 moral, 51
 physical, 51
 possibility and, 101
- Negation**
 concept of, 683
- Nouns**
 abstract and common, 579
- Number**
 abstract, 530, 549, 560 5, 583
 as quantity, 530
 collection and, 225
 divine mind and, 583
 full species and, 555–557
 increase in, 699
 infinite (indefinite), 348
 initial being and, 289
 limit of, 700
 measure and, 544, 560 4
 mind and, 583
 nature of, 393a
 real individuals and, 555
 subject and, 549
- Object (absolute)**
 as God, 461c
 creatures and, 490
 divine Mind and, 461a–462, 604
 essence and, 607
 infinite Real and, 467
 initial being and, 461b
 loving instinct and, 467
 mode of existing, 472
 the determined infinite, 512
 the Word, 461c
see also **Objective (Absolute) Being**
- Object (of mind)**
 as container, 185, 598, 608
 considered in two ways, 598, 601, 602a
 identity and, 625
 mind (eternal) and, 602–602a, 605–607
 mind (human) and, 499a, 602–602a, 606–608; *App.*, no. 8
 mind (in general) and, 681
 multiplicity and simplicity of, 603–608
- Objective (Absolute) Being,**
 as light, 449a, 461a
 ens in itself, 461
 essentially intelligible, 436–437
 creative act and, 443
 finite entia and, 476–477, 479–480
 God and, 462
 initial being and, 461–461b
 mind and, 448
 subjective absolute Being and, 439, 441, 461, 470–471
 Word as, 471

Objectivity

category of being, 190

Observation

knowledge and, 25

Offspring

bicephalic, 663
foetus and mother, 663

One

abstract, 585
abstraction and, 157, 161, 165
as measure, 530
common, 580–581
definition of, 478, 592
doctrine of, 678
ens and, 157, 580, 584, 634
essence and, 510
existence and, 581
fullest species and, 727
God and, 581, 583–584
infinite, 726
limits and, 726
many and, 198–201
other and, 675–677
reality and, 347a, 586
subject and, 582, 585
vague, 722
various meanings of, 479
whole and, 592

Ontology

being and, 100–102, 128, 197
cosmology and, 37
defined, 104a
division of, 97–104
ens and, 618
existence of entia and, 453
German school and, 167, 320
ideology and, 38, 75, 196
investigation of, 36
knowledge and, 79
language of, 203
material aspect of, 594
method of, 320
mind and, 158 1
ontosology, 93
part of theosophy, 30
problem of, 40–41, 42 VI, 43, 62–66, 70–72, 167–169
purpose of, 40
reflection and, 76–78
start of, 73–79
structure of, 80–90
theology and, 36–37, 39–39a, 104b
universal and special, 104a–104b

Ontosophy, see Ontology**Order**

entia and, 724
logical and chronological, 478, 489
moral, 286
of entities, 491
of knowledge, 286, 491
of real things, 286
possibility and, 421–422
supernatural, 490

Other

concept of, 674

Pantheism

being, finite real things and, 342
concepts and, 270
dialectical subject and, 131
ego and, 288
erroneous system, 457
finite entia and, 724
first finite reality and, 223
theology and, 36
theosopher and, 32

Part(s)

concept of, 593–594, 674

Passions

being and, 170
dialectical, 57–61

Passive

active and, 183

Perception

act of, 545
being and, 370
intellective/ intellectual, 308–309, 446, 462b; *App.*, no. 8
ens and, 462b
essences and the real in, 466a
finite real and, 559
God's imagination and, 466a
identity and, 698–705
intelligibility of, 375
knowledge and, 75, 491
knowledge of God and, 36
mind, being and, 666
objective being and, 493
objects distinguished by, 42 II
order in intellective, 466a–466b
things and, 36–37
thought and, 629

Perfect

imperfect and, 656 3

- Perfectibility**
human, 699
- Perfection**
being and, 165a
ens and, 697
moral, 689
quantity of acquired, 572–573
- Person(s)**
God and three, 192, 196, 549
simple substance and, 621
unity and, 163
- Personhood**
ego and, 288
God and our, 474
- Phantasm, Image**
full species and, 555
spiritual ens and, 555
thing represented and, *App.*, no. 1
- Philosophers**
space, time and, 180
- Philosophising**
reflection and, 42 V
- Philosophy**
aim of, 43
ancient, 35, 68–69
author's, 191, 346
content and, 249–258
examining system of, 247
ideological investigations and, 252
middle, 16
other sciences and, 12
principle of, 252–256, 258
probability and, 10
human errors and, 346
regressive and progressive, 16, 22, 24
revelation and, 193
scepticism and, 24
starting point of, 19–24, 74
subject and, 262
theological sphere and, 193
theosophy and, 1, 16
- Plurality**
mind and, 589 1
of entia, 582–585
- Positivity**
of finite entia, 423–428
- Possibility**
absolute, 437
concept of, 437, 440
divine Intelligence and, 447
essence and, 425–428, 431, 441
finite entia and, 83–86
hypothetical, 97
necessity and, 101
of anything, 183
of concepts or objects, 404 A,
406–407
of finite entia, 426–428
of moral entia, 405 C–407
of real entia, 404 B, 406–407, 428
ontological, 433
order in, 421–422
meaning of 'possible', 418, 424
middle, 422, 441, 443–443b, 444a, 445
5, 447
potency and, 407
supreme, 422, 441–442, 443a, 444a,
447–449a, 466 4
ultimate, 422
- Postulates**
being and, 195
- Potency, Potencies, Potentiality**
absolute Being and, 438
act and, 711
active and receptive, 88
being (first determinable) as, 415 ss.
being (first determinant) as, 408–412
being (ultimate determination) as,
408, 413
classification of, 401
concept of, 379, 401, 417
dialectical, 401–407, 417, 430
divine, 433, 438, 447, 497
finite entia, act and, 447
for being made, 429
for having being, 429
for receiving being, 429
habit and, 570, 573
human soul and, 622 A
inherence and, 706
knowledge and, 25
minds and, 610
object and, 199
of being, 431–432
of ens, 419
opiniative dialectical, 430–431
possibility and, 407
quantity of natural, 569, 573
supreme, 448 2, 449
unity and, 165
- Predicables, Predicates**
being and, 132, 146, 271
categories and, 155

classification and, 124–127, 134
 meaning of, 240

Predication

intelligibility of, 375
 knowledge by, 130
 modes of, 126
 quality and, 124

Presentiality

being and, 701

Principle(s)

abstract, 256
 acquiring more excellent term, 662
 base and higher, 657
 being and, 135a, 147, 149, 153, 467, 499–499a
 cause and, 61, 68
 concept of, 165
 corporeal, 576
 duality of, 114
 four living, 656 3
 intellective, 564–566, 621, 657–658
 intuition of being and first, 192
 of cognition, 242; *App.*, no. 6
 of entia, 119–120, 655
 of entities, 133–135
 of philosophy, 252–256, 258
 rational, 622 A, 631, , 644, 663
 sensitive, 657–658, 663; 257
 space and living, 656 1
 subsistent ens, 656 1
 term and change in, 629
see also **Sensitive Principle**

Principle-Entia

feeling and, 565–567, 569
 finite, 562, 569
 fixed full species, 557,
 genera, 517
 identity of, 655–656
 intellective, 566, 569, 722
myself and, 397
 quantity of, 563–564, 568
 real roots and, 591
 reality of, 516–517
 separate intelligences as, 397
 term-entia and, 719

Privation

concept, 683

Probability

philosophy and, 10

Problem

of first being, 162–163
 one person solving, 244

Procession

from infinity to the real, 523

Production

virtual existence and, 384a

Proportion

analogy and, 289

Proposition

composition of, 252
 idea and, 252
 identity in, 633
 known *per se*, 299–301
 mystery in, 462a
 sciences and, 252
 the real, ideal and, 665

Psychology

metaphysics and, 2
 theosophy and, 27

Quality, Qualities

being and, 277a
 classes and common, 109–112, 114 , 124
 concept of, 546–553
 defined, 546
 dialectical, 546, 547–548
 genus and, 145
 of absolute Ens, 548
 quantity and, 547–548, 550–551, 553
 something predicable, 124
 supreme generic, 520
 thing indicated by, 634
 undetermined being and, 548

Quantity

abstract one and, 529
 abstract ontological, 528, 531
 abstractly determined, 560 5
 actuality of the real and, 538
 as an abstract, 547
 being in, 657
 comparative, 560–561, 563, 573–
 continuous, 393a, 575
 cosmological, 528, 531–545, 561
 definition of, 524, 560
 determined, 523–545
 dimensive, 594
 discrete, 529–530, 549
 divine mental, 552
 entitative, 544
 extension and, 538
 full species as, 554–558
 God's freedom and, 712, 714
 ideal, 525, 552
 lateral, 560 1

- measured or measurable, 560 4
 - moral, 525
 - of actuality, 540–542, 544
 - of being, 528
 - of direct comparison, 544
 - of direct knowledge, 542, 544, 560 2, 575
 - of geometrical figures, 575
 - of lower genera and species, 553
 - of more or less, 534, 541, 560 3, 575
 - of motion, 576
 - of principle-entia, 563–573
 - of proportion, 527, 530
 - of relationship, 574
 - ontological, 525–528, 535, 552, 574
 - physical, 554–576
 - quality and, 547–548, 550–551, 553
 - real, 525
 - supreme genera of, 560
 - the real and, 518a
 - transcendent, 527
- Quiddity**
- essence and, 466b
- Rational Principle:**
- consciousness of other principles, 663
 - soul as, 662
- Rationalism**
- divinised, 160
- Real Ens/Entia**
- action and, 381
 - being and, 442–443a, 444a, 449a
 - classes of, 613–614
 - composition of, 610
 - conception of, 350
 - definition of, 329, 350
 - deterioration of, 357 3
 - determination of, 409
 - divine real ens and created, 473
 - essence, 443b–446
 - existence of, 441a, 610
 - extrasubjective, 562
 - forms and, 175, 179
 - human intelligence and, 443
 - ideal entia and, 121
 - identity of, 543, 654
 - indefinite (infinite) number and, 348, 444
 - infinite Being (God, Ens) and, 36, 360, 363, 398, 454
 - knowledge of, 54, 362
 - matter and, 646–647
 - modifications and, 357–358
 - philosophy and, 35
 - possibility of, 404 B–405, 407, 428, 444, 491
 - simplicity and composition of, 610–617
 - subject and, 184, 238–239, 357, 361
 - subsistence of, 557
 - thought and, 610
 - unity and, 384–384b
- Real, The Real**
- being and, 38, 340, 344–345, 348–349, 359, 366, 368, 370–372, 499, 545
 - complete and incomplete, 598
 - determined infinite, 512
 - divine mind and, 514
 - essence and, 443b–444a, 466b
 - existence of, 356, 367
 - feeling and, 367
 - form of, 368
 - God and, 365
 - idea and, 466b, 518a; *App.*, no. 4
 - ideal and, 167, 173–174, 177b, 370
 - infinite and finite, 509, 511, 519, 526
 - initial being and, 286–287, 458, 491–492
 - knowability of, 372
 - knowledge and, 176
 - modifications of, 357
 - moral, 168
 - nature of, 356
 - potency of, 367
 - quantity of, 518a
 - sign and, 6
 - succession and, 377
 - three forms and, 718
 - time and, 443b
 - undetermined, 508
 - virtual-real and, 38
 - see also* Ens, Entia
- Realists**
- ideological, 160
- Reality, Realities**
- absolute, 552
 - abstract, 367
 - actuality and virtual, 540
 - being and, 303, 309 3, 311, 327, 409
 - category of being, 190
 - corporeal, 394a, 396
 - ego, the knowable and, 262–264
 - essence and, 452
 - feeling and, 174, 367, 473, 565
 - first, 719–722
 - generic, 543
 - infinite essence and properties of, 715
 - infinite real and, 540
 - maximum finite, 727a

non-reality, 562
 order of, 286
 supreme genera of, 520
 unity and, 347a, 586

Reason

abstracting, 256
 act and object of, 490
 animal, 394a
 antinomy and, 55
 entia of, 468
 existence and, 55
 ideas and, 52–52a
 identity and, 633
 initial being and principles of, 468
 ontological, 451
 ultimate, 50–52a
see also **Sufficient Reason**

Reasoning

authority and, 193
 circular movement of, 91–96
 ideas and, 311
 notions necessary for, 93
 principles of, 300
 regress of, 41
 theosophy and, 7
 whole and parts in, 94

Reflection

intuition and, 217
 knowledge and, 76,
 non-freedom of, 208
 ontology and, 76–78
 orders of, 42 III–VI
 philosophical, 27
 potency of, 500
 reasoning and observal, 25
 thought and, 629

Relationship

mind and, 597
 of action, 359
 of creation, 360
 of entification, 359
 of identity, 359
 opposites and, 316
 origin and nature of, 449
 terms and, 257
 two entities and, 424–425

Revelation

philosophy and, 193

Root

antecedent and, 662
 principle-entia and, 591
 real, 661
 sensitive entia and, 659–660

Scepticism

philosophy and, 24

Science(s)

arcane, 33
 common, 33
 propositions and, 252
 society and, 33
 theosophy and, 3–7, 33

Sensation

body and, 97

Sense-perception

multiplicity and, 606–607

Sensible, The

the mind, the intelligible and, 117

Sensiferous Element

matter as, 576

Sensitive/Sentient Principle

accidents and, 343
 continuum and, 722
 division of, 384a–384b, 620 2
 force and, 253
 intellectual principle and, 644–645,
 722
 matter and, 257
 of continuity, 649 III, 656 3, 658–659,
 662–663
 space and, 393a, 557, 722
 unity and, 384
see also **Feeling, Life**

Sensory

simplicity of feeling of, 396

Separate Intelligences

full species and, 396a–397

Shapes

mathematical, 575

Signs

ideas and, 6
 things and, 42 V

Simple, Simplicity

being and, 508
 concept of, 595–617
 dialectical composition and, 609, 612
 entia and, 596
 idea and, 601
 in real things, 612–617
 objective, 601–608, 612
 of absolute being, 673–674
 of ens, 672

- of undetermined (ideal) being, 673–674
 - see also* **Composition**
- Son (divine)**
 - divine essence and, 470
 - infinite knowledge and, 489
 - see also* **Trinity**
- Soul**
 - being and, 363
 - body and, 384a, 621
 - death and, 231
 - generation of human, 646
 - identity of separated, 644
 - potencies and human, 622 A
 - principle of knowledge, 17
 - intellective, 363
- Space**
 - as infinite measurable,
 - as term-entia, 574, 698
 - bodies and, 574, 706, 722
 - feeling principle and, 557
 - genus, species and, 574, 727; 222
 - idea of, and, 557
 - identity and, 651–653
 - infinite, 699, 701
 - infinity of God and of, 99
 - limited spaces and, 177
 - living principle and, 656 3, 656 a
 - mathematical shapes and, 575
 - matter and, 574
 - most limited ens, 683
 - no accidents in, 387
 - no action of, 356
 - not substance, 387; 165
 - ontological quantity, 574
 - ontology and, 180
 - relationship and, 574
 - secondary limits and, 698
 - sensitive principle and, 393a, 722; 179
 - something real, 99
- Species**
 - abstract, 386, 539–540, 543–544, 568, 709
 - classification of, 120–122
 - genera and, 724–725
 - genus and, 177a, 540, 727a; 222
 - intelligibility of, 522
 - lower genera and abstract, 537
 - quantity and quality of, 553
 - vague full, 557
 - see also* **Full Species, Fullest Species**
- Speculation**
 - immoderate, 8–10
- Spirit (human)**
 - corporeal things and, 180
 - ideal being and, 97
 - operation of finite, 496
- Subject**
 - act and, 309 1
 - actuality and, 218, 547
 - being and, 271, 402
 - cogitative or surrogate, 239
 - definition of, 211–212, 518a
 - dialectical, 221–220, 222, 342, 361, 609
 - divine, 495b
 - ens and, 218–219, 230, 495b
 - finite, 495b
 - meaning of, 218, 237–239
 - multiplicity and, 608
 - one and, 582–583
 - philosophy and, 262
 - predicate and, 240
- Subject (in real ens)**
 - as container, 184, 237
 - classes and unique, 109–113, 124
 - dialectical and real, 665
 - habit in, 570
 - number and, 549
- Subjectivity**
 - category of being, 190
- Subsistent Being, *see* God**
- Substance**
 - accidents and, 390,, 543, 622 B, 644 4
 - as base, 622 B
 - being and,
 - characteristic of, 342–344
 - classification and, 137, 139–141
 - concept of, 343
 - dialectical, 622 B
 - increase of, 643–644
 - initial being and, 339
 - knowledge of, 390
 - person and, 621
 - unity and, 343–344
- Succession**
 - time and, 377
- Sufficient Reason**
 - blind action and, 714 2
 - knowledge and, 42 VI
 - meaning of, 53
 - of entia, 44–52a, 63

- three categories (forms) and, 170–176
see also **Reason**
- Supernatural Order**
God, human beings and, 688
- Supreme Genera**
entities and, 551
creation and, 551
infinity of, 530
limits and, 538
lower and, 544
measure and, 534, 537
number of, 533
procession and, 523
quality in, 520
quantity and, 523, 525
reality and, 512–518a, 522–523, 540,
551–552
reduced to one, 562
- Syllogism**
identity in, 633
- Synthesis**
divine, 463–465
- Synthesism**
of being, 199, 202
of knowledge, 199
ontological, 199
- System(s)**
examining philosophical, 247
unitary, 114
- Term(s)**
being and, 442, 448, 715–717
change relative to, 664
difference of entia and, 722
entia and, 664
ideal, real, and moral, 421
of classification, 125, 127
‘one’ and subjective, objective and
moral, 716–717
subject and, 280
- Term-Entia**
principle-entia and, 557, 562–563, 719
quantity of, 574
real entia and, 591, 612
reality of, 516
space as, 574, 698
- Theology**
God and, 6, 289, 296, 682
investigation of, 36
ontology and, 36–37, 39–39a, 104b
- part of theosophy, 30, 296
- Theory**
being and, 104a
- Theosophy**
author and, 1, 32–33, 96
being and, 1, 10, 31–32
division of, 98, 151
ens and, 11–12
foundation of, 190–196
ideology and, 27
independence of, 11–12
metaphysics and, 3
parts of, 30–32, 342
philosophy and, 1, 16, 28–29
pure science, 3–7
sciences and, 13–15, 33
student of, 32
thinkers and, 32
trinity and, 190–196
- Thing(s)**
meaning of, 225–226
- Thought**
absolute, 78, 609
classification and order of, 662
complete, 170
dialectical element in, 609
entia and, 638
form of, 93
formality of, 94
ideal being and, 170
identity and abstract, 639
language and, 203
modes of, 628–632
object and term of, 632
ontological law of, 474
partial, 14, 215, 226, 256, 673
perception and, 629
real ens and, 610
strengthening one’s, 468
term of, 436
total, 14, 673
ultimate reasons and, 15
virtual and actual, 632
see also **Mind**
- Time**
existence and, 377
identity and, 651–653
increase in, 699
minimum and, 700
ontology and, 180
quantity of acts and, 571
see also **Duration**

- Trinity**
 act and relationship in, *App.*, no. 9
 divine, 191–196
 divine essence and, 489
 of forms, 166–166a, 168–169, 172, 188
 procession in, 323
 unity and, 188, 549–550
- Truth**
 human subject and, 20, 24
 mind and, 274
 nature and, 34
- Type**
 being and, 444a
- Understanding (divine)**
 finite things and, 213
- Understanding (human)**
 as feeling, 174
 intelligent ens and, 500
 mind and, 602a
 requirements of, 44–48
- Union**
 entifying, 347
 lateral, synthesising, 345
- Unity**
 absolute, dialectical, 276
 definition of, 478
 dialectical, 383 A, 384
 ens, multiplicity and, 104a; *App.*, no. 10
 erroneous systems and, 728
 finite ens and, 577–591, 728
 ideal, 383 B
 ideal object and, 383 C
 mind, intelligence and, 242, 265–271
 of being, God and world, 296
 of body, 384
 of essence, 296
 of human beings, 384a
 of real ens, 384–384b
 philosopher, common sense and, 156
 potency and, 165
 real object and, 383 C
 reality and, 347a, 586
 sentient principle and, 384
 subjective existence and, 583
 trinity and, 188, 549–550
- Universalisation**
 supreme genera and, 520
- Universality**
 being and, 332
 essences and, 163
- supreme genera and, 523
- Universe**
 being and, 302 2, 303, 458
 corporeal and incorporeal entia and, 177
 divine Mind and, 447
 finite real and, 367, 441a
 holiness in, 406 b)
 knowledge of God and, 400 2
 loving principle and, 439
 objective intelligibility of, 522
see also **World**
- Variation**
 extrinsic, external, 626, 638
 intrinsic, 627, 640
 two species of, 637
see also **Identity**
- Varieties**
 being and, 105, 108, 132, 142, 144, 146, 150, 190
 categorical, 107
 entities and, 106, 132
- Verb**
 ideas and, 252
 non-expression of ‘is’, 140
- Virtual Being**
 absolute being and, 505, 511
 act as, 284 2
 act of God and, 362
 as predicate, 271, 278, 281
 being as, 213–214, 216, 276, 282
 contingent entia and, 293, 304, 333
 divine mind and, 367
 first determinable, 282–284a, 292
 form and, 255
 genus and, 142
 initial being and, 286, 332–333, 335–336
 intuition and, 217
 matter and, 269
 mental entity, 277a.
 mind and objective and subjective, 702
 necessary ens and, 294–298
 realities and, 302
 terms of being and, 206 2, 267, 277–281, 587
 the indefinite and, 703
 the infinite and, 702
 undetermined being as, 311, 315
 unity and, 268, 270, 276, 278, 280; 173
- Virtuality**
 absolute, 435–437

abstract, 383 A
 cause, effects and, 381, 434
 concept of, 379–380, 437
 defined, 380, 383
 dialectical, 383 A, 384
 full species and, 386, 394–397
 ideation and, 387–394a
 infinite Ens and, 398–400
 myself and, 397
 numbers and, 393a
 object and, 382–385
 of being, 434
 of finite ens, 434
 sense and, 396–396a

Virtual-Real
 real and, 38

Virtue
 ethics and, 6
 signs and, 6

Whole
 concept of, 592
 definition of, 592
 one and, 592
 parts and, 593–594

Will
 bilateral, 51
 constitutive of reality, 720–721

Theosophy

intelligent subject and, 720–721
 meritorious act of, 51
 moral being and, 728

Wisdom
 created, 468
 ideal being and, 467
 infinite, 488
 parts of, 5–6
 the finite and, 488

Word, *see* Divine Word

World
 as ens, 498
 being and, 498, 503
 creating intelligence and, 479
 divine knowledge of, 485, 489
 elements of, 476, 491
 idea of, 503
 links binding, 531
 necessity in, 515
 object and existence of, 486
 subjective existence of, 497
 supreme genera composing the,
 516–517
 the finite real and, 441a
 three forms of finite ens and, 531
see also **Divine Word, Exemplar,
 God, Universe**