Analogy and the Transcendental Properties of Being as the Key to Metaphysical Science

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Metaphysics, as it was first thought of by Aristotle, has to be conceived as a science, but as one that distinguishes itself from all the particular sciences, first by raising the question of the first and most universal causes and secondly by taking as its subject of consideration being simply as being in its most universal and in its most concrete sense as present in experience. This implies that being must be taken as analogous from the very beginning of the investigation, not in the sense that it would diffuse the unity of this science into a mere difference of differences, but in the sense that it would raise this science to a higher kind of unity according to an order of different degrees of being as they relate to a primary analogate as the one to which all relate more or less distantly. To enter more deeply into this analogous subject of consideration one must further distinguish transcendental properties that follow being in its analogous and transcendental sense. In the end, when the question of a first, universal cause of being as being, or of a summit of being that would be totally transcendent, is finally raised, all of this a priori conception of being as analogous according to different degrees with its corresponding degrees of oneness, activity, truth and goodness must be brought into play in relation to things as they come under sense experience as moved, caused, contingent and exhibiting different degrees of perfection in being such as living, sensing and rational consciousness, in order to conclude to the truth of the proposition "God is."

Aristotle was the first to start thinking of metaphysics as a science in the proper sense of the term, that is, as an inquiry into causes, much as the various parts of his physics had been, but as an inquiry that would have to take him a step further than anything his physics had taken him. He begins his discourse on metaphysics by defining a science whose function it would be to inquire into first causes and principles. This remains a question for him at the end of the physical sciences, which include the study of the rational soul, because we still do not know what would be the first causes and principles, whether they would be some of the causes we already know of in the physics or whether they would be something else still. Even if it were to turn out that the first causes are in fact causes we already know of in the physical discourses, it would still be the function of a higher science, as first philosophy or wisdom, to figure that out and not that of a philosophy of nature or of what we could call a phenomenology in the postmodern sense of the term.

Aristotle did not, however, presuppose that the first causes in question had to be something higher than the causes he had already discovered in the order of nature or of human experience. In other words, what we could think of as a theology in the sense of coming to know ultimate causes as something divine at the end of metaphysics should not be thought as the equal of a theology Aquinas has in mind when he speaks of one based on a knowledge of what God is in himself taken from faith in a revelation from God. Only the latter kind of theology can have God as its subject in the strict sense of the term science. The former, namely metaphysical

science, cannot, unless we include God in its subject, which is precisely what is in question at the beginning of this science. What Aristotle had to figure out was a new way of questioning about the entire order of nature and of experience to see what would come out as first cause or principle, which is how the question of being came to the fore for him, or more precisely the question of being simply as being, as he puts it at the beginning of the fourth book of the *Metaphysics* when he comes to determine what the subject will be for this new science after the physics, *ta meta ta physika*

Aristotle states what is to be the beginning of this new science rather matter-of-factly: "there is a science that considers (*theorei* or *speculatur*) being as being and whatever pertains to it according to itself" (1003a18-19). But there is a logic implied in the statement that has to be understood. It is a statement of what this science has to be about, if it is going to be a science at all. It is a way of saying what this science will have to be about in contradistinction from all the other sciences we already have in mind as we approach it.

Let us listen to the way Aristotle elaborates on this statement, keeping in mind what he has already said in the *Posterior Analytics* about scientific discourse having to determine its subject and thereby its value or its necessity as an inquiry. "This science," namely the science of being as being, "is not the same as any of those spoken of as partial (*en merei*). For none of the others looks universally to being as being, but cut off a part of it and consider what goes with this (*to sumbebekos*), as the mathematical sciences do" (1003a23-27). The thing to note here is what particular sciences are said to be about, being, but not simply as being. What they consider is only a part of being, and there can be as many of them as we can think of parts of being to inquire into, like physical being, biological being or economic being. None of them considers being as being. They all presuppose being and go on to render an account of some aspect of being they have determined to inquire about. What remains to be done after these sciences is to render an account of being simply as being, for that too must not go unexamined or unaccounted for.

The idea of there having to be a science of being as being is not stated arbitrarily and merely as a matter of fact, which remained dubious for him at the beginning of this inquiry. It is given as an answer to the question about determining the subject of the science we are already talking about as an inquiry into the first and most universal causes. Aristotle is in fact arguing that the subject of the science he is seeking has to be being precisely or simply as being. "Because it is the first and ultimate causes we are seeking, clearly they must be of some nature according to itself" (1003a 27-28). This is the way we can put it in terms of any science inquiring into first and ultimate causes, but when it comes to inquiring into first and ultimate causes, "some nature according to itself" must be understood with reference to being simply as being or as the *genus subjectum* of this science. You can think of the earlier philosophers who sought the elements of beings as seeking these first causes, Aristotle remarks, but you would have to think of those elements as being the elements of being not incidentally, but as being. "Hence for us as well it is necessary to fasten on the first causes of being as being" (1003a 31-32).

It is not said that the subject for this intellectual inquiry is being as substance, even though it is later said that this science will focus primarily on substance. As the subject of this inquiry, "being" is left wide open in its most universal sense. Nor is it said that it is the *be* of beings, the way Heidegger wants to understand the question of being. To want to talk about be as different from being would be like wanting to talk prematurely about the elements or the causes of being as being when we are only trying to determine the subject of our reconsideration of being at a new and higher level of questioning. When we say that there is or has to be a science of being as being, we are expressing a new conception of science that we arrive at through the mediation of our conception of the particular sciences by way of a negation of their negation as particular. We are expressing another kind of wonder than any that has given rise to all the particular sciences and we must not be too hasty in closing down that wonder into any of the categories we may already have in mind from any particular science or any similar phenomena we might be tempted to conjure up.

We should note, moreover, that in determining the subject of metaphysical inquiry in terms of being as being, we have not restricted it to any particular kind of being, not even to any sort of immaterial or divine being, as Aristotle and Aquinas will both aver when the idea of calling first philosophy theology comes up later on in book VI of the *Metaphysics*. We have only determined that there is another avenue of inquiring into being than any that we can think of as physical or even as phenomenological with regard to the *Lebenswelt*. We are not in any way referring to being in the abstract way Parmenides did as absolute sameness with itself or even Plato did as the really real, *to ontos on*, somewhere separate from the world of becoming. We are referring to being as it is present concretely in experience.

At the same time, however, we should understand that what we are referring to is no longer anything that can be determined univocally in being, as in any of the particular sciences. What we are now wondering about is being in its most universal sense, which has to include all the differences through which being presents itself. For, as Aristotle goes on to say, "being is spoken of in many ways," *pollachos legetai*. As a concept, "being" gathers many things together and leads us to the thought of analogy in the very conception of what is now to be the subject of inquiry. Analogy is thus the opening in the conception of being that can lead us into the metaphysical science of being as being.

Besides analogy, there are also what Aristotle calls "those things that pertain to being as being according to itself" that can lead us further into this science, which I shall refer to as the transcendental properties of being. What I would like to do here is show how these two, the analogy of being and the properties of being, are the necessary avenues for entering into metaphysical science, starting from being as it is known in experience. Then I would like to show how they both come into play at the end of metaphysics as *a priori* conceptions in proofs for the existence of the first and universal cause of being as totally transcendent to the entire order of being as we know it in experience, where we find St. Thomas taking issue with St. Anselm on how we get to the end of metaphysics.

I: Analogy as the First Step into Metaphysics

Aristotle's allusion to the analogy of being at the beginning of book four of the *Metaphysics* comes immediately after speaking of being as the subject of the new science we are approaching and is important for this new science we are about to enter into. He gives a very brief indication of how an analogous term, such as health, is used and then shows how the term "being" is used similarly with reference in the first instance to substance or essence (*ousia*) as being in itself, and then to accidents as being *in* substance or to other matters of process as leading up to substance or as falling away from substance, all of which imply some relation to being in the primary sense of substance. From that he quickly infers that first philosophy will have to deal primarily, or in the first instance, with substance or essence, and then only secondarily with the other aspects of being that are only accidental to being in this first sense.

From these elliptical statements many have jumped to the conclusion that for Aristotle metaphysics has to do only with substance and not with being as analogous, which brings in accidents and even with a diversity of substances, all of which have to be included under the common notion of being, in short, what is analogous in the first place at the same time as it is the subject of inquiry for this science. The conclusion that metaphysics is only about substance, which is a univocal term, is contrary to both the truth concerning the subject of this science and to the intention of Aristotle, who is trying to explain how first philosophy can be about many things, unlike any particular science, and still be only one science. For, as he says, "there is theorizing of one science not only about things spoken of according to one (*kath hen*), but also of things spoken of in relation to one nature (*pros mian phusin*); for even the latter are also spoken of in a certain way according to one (*kath hen*) (1003b 13-15).

This is anything but a simple transposition from a concept of being simply as being to a concept of substance or essence for the subject of this science, as Gilson and others have claimed about Aristotle. Nor is it simply a transposition to a concept of existence as different or as distinct from essence or substance as some Thomists would have it. Nor is it a switch to a second question of being of the kind Heidegger comes to with his ontological difference. In all of these transpositions, that of contemporary existential Thomists and that of Heidegger as well as that which reduces the subject of metaphysics to substance, what is being ignored is the analogy of being, which is the only way of understanding how being simply as being can be the subject of a scientific inquiry in the proper sense of the term.

If we ignore the analogy of being from the very beginning of this science, there is no way of going forward in it as a science. Heidegger learned about the analogy of being from Brentano, but his failure to take it seriously at the beginning of *Sein und Zeit* led him away from the question of being as being into a weird sort of essentialism about *be* or *Sein* as different from being or *Seiende*, calling for a deconstruction of what he took to be the essentialism of the metaphysical tradition. Thomists, of course, do not ignore the analogy of being, although there is some question as to whether it is really an analogy of being and not just an analogy of names, but their failure to see it as the very beginning of metaphysical inquiry, as it was in ancient thought

beginning with Aristotle, leads to a sort of modern dogmatism about existence, supposedly grasped in judgment independently of essence, or in separation from it. This is not the way the ancients, including Aquinas who was a true disciple of Aristotle in this regard, entered into metaphysics. Nor is it a way modern philosophy has been able to enter into, as Kant was able to show in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. What I would like to show here is how analogy remains the key to metaphysical inquiry even for modern science in a postmodern way, where the thought of difference takes on a life of its own even apart from the thought of being.

The problem of analogy begins the moment we try to think of being concretely with its differences. It didn't arise for Parmenides because he didn't allow for differences in being, whether of change or of plurality. It didn't arise for modern metaphysics after Suarez either because being had been reduced to a generic notion or to the predicamental order in the exercise of judgment. It was no longer understood concretely according to a transcendental order, but only abstractly as a matter of possibles, an abstraction that prescinded perfectly from all differences given in experience. Kant is the one who recognized the emptiness of this conception of being, reduced by Wolff to a conception of the possible as possible, and declared it purely dogmatic, empty of any content. He argued that being could not be used simply as a predicate in so-called existential judgments, but he did not return to the fuller conception of being the ancients had started with. Whatever understanding he had of a transcendental order he applied only to knowing and not to being. For him being meant nothing more than the simple positing expressed in the subject of judgment, a *this* or a *that*, in keeping with the vivid impression of Hume who had awakened him from his dogmatic slumber. The question of being in a broader sense remained forgotten for him as well as for the earlier modern metaphysics he was criticizing, the question that arises only when we recognize that being has to be understood with its differences according to some transcendental order over and above any predicamental or categorical order we can conceive.

This can be seen most concretely when we try to think of being with its differences as differences of being. You can't think of differences as outside of being, because outside of being there is only nothing. If differences are real, they have to be in being or else they are not. Nor can you think of being as outside differences or as abstracting perfectly from differences in some generic sense, for if you do not include differences in your conception of being you will not be able to think of the difference as real or as difference in being. Now there are many differences and many different kinds of differences that have to be taken into account in our accounting for being as it is given in experience, but we don't have to go through all of them to begin to see how analogy has to come into play from the very beginning of our metaphysical inquiry. It is simply a question of logic that Aristotle illustrated in the way we use terms as predicates in the exercise of judgment.

We can think of terms as univocal in the sense that they are associated with one meaning that we can predicate of many things always with the same meaning. Then we know of terms that are equivocal in the sense that they are associated with more than one meaning that have no relation to one another and that therefore cannot be predicated of even one thing, let alone of

many, according to one and the same meaning, unless we bring them down to only one meaning and leave out all other meanings. Such terms are said to be equivocal by historical accident or *a casu*, as the Scholastics used to say, in the sense that it just happens to be the case that one and the same term has come to be associated with two different meanings, like the term "bank" or "bank" in English, which can give rise to equivocation if there is no way of telling which one of the two meanings is intended. A lot of the work in analytical philosophy has gone into clearing up equivocation that can creep into ordinary language and even into scientific language in order to make all language as univocal as possible.

But equivocation remains an important part of our language for all sorts of purposes, political as well as commercial. This is equivocation *a consilio* or by design, not just to hide our clear intentions, if we have any, but also to associate our meaning, a product we might be selling or a candidate we might be pushing, with another meaning, some other thing altogether that might bring some aura of attractiveness that our product or our candidate does not have according to their univocal meanings. Think of the way automobile commercials are constructed, for example. That is equivocation *a consilio* for the purpose of selling and it is by design, as the whole advertising industry will attest. Think also of the way candidates present themselves in political campaigns when you can't get a straight answer from them as they wrap themselves up in the mantle of patriotism or of war hero or even of a clear expression of intention when it is most unclear as to what we can expect from them.

We see all this as a corruption of language not in the interest of truth and we would welcome a good bit of analytical philosophy to set the record straight. But there is another kind of equivocation *a consilio* that we need in the interest of truth and science. That is the kind of equivocation we need for metaphysics and that we must not let analytical philosophy take it away from us, for it is only through such equivocation that we can come to a proper conception of being with its differences. This is the equivocation we call analogy and that we design in order to get more deeply into our subject as determined in terms of being and to encompass the diversity of meaning that it contains concretely and actually.

What we need, according to some definitions of analogy, is an understanding of terms that can be predicated of many things according to a meaning that is *partially* the same and *partially* different. But in saying that, we have hardly touched on the proper logic of analogy and how it functions in language about being. We are only combining univocity (partially the same) and equivocity (partially different) in a way that remains extrinsic to the analogous term, as if analogy were to be situated somewhere between univocity and equivocity. That hardly gets to where we want to be in our attempt to break out of categorical univocality in the interest of the broader truth of being as being. Actually, truly analogical thinking reaches out beyond univocity, not on the side of equivocity, which is still only a state of confusion, but on the side of the greater intelligibility and clarity of being itself in its universality. What it sees is the necessity of speaking in terms that are at once universal and concrete, expressing sameness and difference at one and the same time. As such, an analogous term will have to be more universal than any

univocal term could be and at the same time encompass all univocal terms that express real differences in being according to some order among them.

In this regard, it is important to understand how analogous terms differ from univocal terms in the way we predicate them of many. When we predicate the univocal term "human" of many individuals, we understand all of them as equally human, or as the same with respect to humanity, without consideration of any order that might obtain among them. With regard to an analogous notion, not all the things of which it is predicated come under it in the same way or absolutely. They do so according to a proportion or to different degrees in relation to other things that come under the same notion or, ultimately, to one thing that is at the center of the analogical order and gives it its focal meaning, what we call the primary analogate in this order of analogates. This is the *one* to which reference is made in the relation *pros hen*, and it is with reference to this one that every analogate has its meaning, insofar as each is referred to *it* according to the way it is, as Aquinas puts it, *prout unumquodque secundum suam habitudinem ad illud unum refertur* (In IV *Metaph*, 1, #535).

Aristotle's illustration of this sort of analogical predication in relation to a healthy organism is well known. We speak of many things as healthy, but in many senses and for different reasons. What we mean by health primarily is a certain disposition of a living organism, say of a human being. But other things are also brought into the orbit of that idea as causes of health, as signs of health or as effects of health. We speak not only of Socrates as healthy but also of a medication or a diet as healthy, or of a complexion as healthy, or of urine as healthy, using the same term, healthy, in different senses but always with reference to its primary meaning as a certain disposition in the living organism, even though the term healthy in its secondary meanings is not predicated of a living organism as such or according to the way it is as a living organism.

This is all very rational, as it enables us to build up what we call the practical science or the art of medicine, which has developed from analogy to analogy in so many different directions. But the question for us is to see how it is relevant to developing a speculative science of being as being or a proper intellectual consideration of this subject. Other speculative sciences can develop around the univocal meaning of what they determine to be their subject of inquiry. Why can't metaphysics develop in the same way? Why must it resort to a unity of order and analogy even in determining its very subject as analogous, keeping in mind that it has to start from experience like all the other sciences?

The young Aquinas had a very interesting dialectic to answer this question and to bring us to the necessity of thinking of being itself as analogous from the start in a properly metaphysical science. He distinguished between three kinds of analogous terms, those that are analogous according to meaning (*secundum intentionem*) but not according to be (*secundum esse*), those that are analogous according to be (*secundum esse*) but not according to meaning (*secundum intentionem*), and those that are analogous according to both meaning and be (*secundum intentionem et secundum esse*). The text, from the *Commentary on the Sentences* (I,

19, 5, 2, ad.), has been noted by authors like Klubertanz[1], McInerney[2] and Knasas[3], not to mention Cajetan, who had used it long before to develop his own theory of analogy as proper proportionality, but its import for launching metaphysics in its scientific path has not been duly understood, except perhaps by Maurer in an article on the analogy of genus in St. Thomas.[4]

In the *Commentary* Aquinas begins by talking about analogy as it is used in medicine or with reference to health. That is analogy only according to meaning and not according to be. As it is predicated primarily and properly of a certain kind of being, *secundum esse*, "health" is a univocal term, referring to a certain disposition in a living organism. It is understood as analogous *secundum intentionem* only when it is predicated of other sorts of things in so far as they are seen as having some relation to health in its primary univocal sense. Then there is analogy according to be but not according to meaning. To illustrate this kind of analogy Aquinas uses the term "body" which is predicated of many different bodies in a univocal sense, *secundum intentionem*, but is not understood as realized in being, *secundum esse*, in one and the same way, but rather according to some order or proportion among them.

This is analogy that comes as a surprise, so to speak, to logic or to ordinary philosophy of science, but it is one that must be taken seriously by both the philosopher of nature, the one Aquinas refers to as the *physicus*, and the *metaphysicus*. Aquinas focuses on the term "body" to illustrate this kind of analogy because he found in Aristotelian physics a most striking example of how an otherwise univocal term ends up being used analogically in a science with reference to being or *secundum esse*. This is the analogy between bodies here below, which are a matter of direct experience, and the heavenly bodies, which were thought of as being of a totally different essence, a quintessence of a totally different nature than any other essence symbolized by the four elements that are subject to transmutation. Heavenly bodies were not thought of as subject to transmutation or change, except in terms of local motion, but they were still thought of as bodies that could be seen if not observed as closely or manipulated as experimentally as other bodies here below. Now we know that the difference posited in Aristotelian physics between heavenly bodies and bodies here below is no longer seen as relevant to being or *secundum esse*. This has led certain Thomists, like Klubertanz, to dismiss this second kind of analogy, *secundum esse* but not *secundum intentionem*, as obsolete and relevant only to an outdated kind of physical science. But I think that is a mistake and a serious omission in the consideration of any science, modern or ancient. Analogy *secundum esse* and not *secumdum intentionem* can be illustrated in terms of any science that has to do with bodies or substances of any kind. We all know that "body" or "substance" can be defined in a univocal way, as it is for example in physics, but we also know that bodies are of different kinds in being or *secundum esse*, whether as non-living or living, non-sentient and sentient and so on, not to mention human. The same can be said of the

[1] cf. George Klubertanz, S.J., *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy: A Textual Analysis and Systematic Physics* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), pp.100-103.
[2] cf. Ralph McInerney, "The Logic of Analogy," *The New Scholasticism* 31 (1957), 149-71.
[3] John F.X. Knasas, *Being and Some Twentieth Century Thomists* (New York: Fordnam University Press, 2003), pp. 157-60.
[4] cf. Armand Maurer, C.S.B., "St. Thomas and the Analogy of Genus," *New Scholasticism*, XXIX (1955), 127-44.

term "substance," which logically is understood as univocal according to meaning, but in reality or *secundum esse* entails many different kinds of substance not only in the material order, but even in an immaterial order, if there is such an order to be considered *secundum esse*.

Now I am not interested in affirming at this point that there is an order of immaterial substances any more than I am interested in affirming that the heavenly bodies are unchanging material substances. All I want to say, with Aquinas, is that in the order of beings we know in experience there is an order of analogy that we understand *secundum esse* even though we can define each type of being in a univocal sense in contradistinction from other types of being according to what we can call our scientific categories or even our phenomenological apprehensions *secundum intentionem*. To say anything less would be to reduce all the different kinds of science to one science, as in physicalism or vitalism or even anthropomorphism. The need for a diversity of sciences, social as well as natural, to inquire into the full scope of being as it presents itself in experience suggests another view of science, one that entails an order among the sciences each of which has to be in relation to other sciences inasmuch as all are purportedly concerned with the real or with being in one way or another.

What we are talking about here is an analogy not just among the sciences as having to name or to specify that they are about, which would still only be according meaning or *secundum intentionem*, but an analogy among things themselves, to use the expression of Kant, or an analogy *secumdum esse* among a diversity of substances that we can identify in experience as having different degrees of perfection in being, such as the living in contrast to the non-living, the sentient in contrast to living non-sentient, and the rational in contrast to non-rational sentient. Being does not present itself in experience according to some lowest common denominator that abstracts perfectly for all differences. It presents itself according to an order of higher and lower kinds of being that is intelligible to us by the analogy among them.

In his reference to analogy immediately after determining the subject of metaphysical science in terms of being as being, Aristotle does not mention this analogy *secundum esse* in an order of different substances. He mentions only the analogy *secundum intentionem* in the order of different accidents and processes with reference to substance as such. This is the analogy that justifies the priority he gives to the discussion of substance, or of the composite of form and matter, where he actually begins the inquiry into being at the beginning of book VII of the *Metaphysics*. The importance of the second kind of analogy comes up only later on in book IX of the *Metaphysics*, where the discussion switches into a broader conception of the division between potency and act in being that will enable us to conceive of different degrees of perfection in being or different kinds of substance in the order of being as a whole, whether material or immaterial. The idea of analogy *secundum esse sed non secundum intentionem* brings us to a new way of focusing on being as act, not as if it were some noumenal object by itself, but as composing with different degrees of substance or essence in the order of being, *esse cum ordine*, an order that is otherwise unrecognizable in any or all the particular sciences, an order in the very subject of metaphysical inquiry itself. Such an order can be illustrated by the diversity of what were called the physical sciences, which included the study of the rational soul as well as

living and non-living things, but it is more properly the domain for metaphysical investigations as distinct from any of the particular sciences.

Indeed, the very need for a diversity of particular sciences in the study of being even as it is given in experience must be seen as coming from being as it presents itself, which can only be understood as analogous in the most radical sense, that is, as analogous according to both meaning and be at the same time, *et secundum intentionem et secundum esse.* This is the third kind of analogy to which Aquinas' dialectic has been leading and the one that leaves us with a fuller understanding of the subject of metaphysical science as analogous according to both meaning and be at the same time. This understanding has been mediated by the understanding of the particular sciences in the way they relate to one another as sciences of being, but as an understanding it now gives rise to a new way of questioning about being in its totality or as a whole that is not found in any particular science or in any phenomenology of the *Lebenswelt* based on the very analogy that underlies all the particular sciences as sciences of being.

This is not to say that metaphysical science or inquiry will lack unity as a science. It is rather to say that it will have to rise to a higher conception of unity in the order or in the analogy of being itself. It will have to recognize diversity or difference in its subject matter as real or *secundum esse* and find a way of unifying it not just according to a specific conception *secundum intentionem*, but more according to an order of different conceptions that can all be understood in some relation to one or to a first in that order, for it is still true that in analogy many things are spoken of intelligibly as one insofar as they all relate to a primary analogate according to some order of priority and posteriority, *secundum prius et posterius*. If we think of the primary analogate as having a certain perfection, we shall have to understand all the other analogates as having the same perfection according to different degrees, some closer to the first and some more distant from the first. All this is implied in the very concept of predication by analogy and it will have to be applied most rigorously in the elaboration of our conception of being as being.

Note that I am not talking about the disclosure of being in its analogy with reference to God or to what we might think of as an absolutely first. Analogy is not just a matter of onto-theology, as Thomists frequently make it out to be. It is first of all a matter of ontology with reference to the different degrees of being that we come to understand in the way being presents itself in experience. In the discovery of analogy *secundum esse* as well as *secundum intentionem* at the beginning of metaphysical science, we do not yet have any idea of God or of an absolutely first to work with *secundum esse*. All we have is different degrees of perfection *secundum esse* that we have to order with respect to some one that has that perfection in some degree that we can use as a norm for ordering *secundum esse* what have been called the different "faces that existence" by John Post,[5] a physicalist in metaphysics who wants to avoid reductionism by recognizing what I call different degrees of perfection in the order of being as such.

[5] John F. Post, *The Faces of Existence: An Essay in Non-Reductive Metaphysics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987).

In other words, at the beginning of metaphysics we have to focus on some kind of being, some ”face of existence,” that will stand for us as the primary analogate, in the light of which we shall try to order all the other different kinds of being that present themselves in experience. Non-reductionist physicalism, which recognizes the analogy of being or of the different faces of existence, focuses first on “the basic entities and processes” as defined in the most advanced, cutting-edge physics as its primary analogate, but I think that is a mistake for a metaphysics that wants to go forward in its own proper ordering as a science. For even if it does not amount to a reduction of the analogical order of being to one univocal category as defined by the particular science of physics, it starts off with only an abstract least common denominator that is hardly a clear “face of existence” in the concrete or one that represents a high degree of intelligibility in being for us. It is difficult to find a norm for ordering in such an abstruse conception that remains problematic on the level of analogy *secundum esse* but not *secundum intentionem*. It is better to start off with the kind of being that we know first and that we know best in our experience, one that is more intelligible to us and that is usually taken to be a higher kind of being, one that exhibits a higher degree in the perfection of being than most, if not all the other kinds of being given in our experience. In this respect, I think Heidegger with his analysis of *Dasein* and Levinas with his ethical conception of the other are much closer to a proper beginning in metaphysical science than Post or any other physicalist who leaves so much perfection in being out of consideration that we already know of in experience in the initial judgment of what it is for something to be.

II: The Transcendental Properties of Being as Progression into Metaphysics

I have taken a long time just to get to what I think has to be the proper beginning for metaphysical science in the analogy of being. I would like now to speak more briefly about how this science has to proceed in its own transcendental way from what is better known to us to what is less well known to us. Even if we take human being, a particular kind of being, as our primary analogate, there is a lot that we can say is *per se* known about being simply as being in its analogical or transcendental sense, namely, what are referred to as the transcendental properties of being, without denying the radical differences of being we find in experience. We can speak of being as one, active, true and good as a further elaboration of what goes with being *per se* or as properties that are convertible with being in all the degrees of being that we may find in experience. These properties are not discovered through sense experience as such or purely *a posteriori*, so to speak, not any more than being itself is in its analogy, but are derived intellectually from the way we come to know being in the exercise of judgment, or *a priori*, so to speak, as following *per se* from being as we first come to understand it in its analogy.

It is important to understand how these transcendental properties of being follow necessarily from our first conception of being, not only because they pertain to the very intelligibility of being itself, into which we are inquiring, but also because that opens up for us a further access into this intelligibility or into the truth of being itself in all its dimensions. Kant failed to get into metaphysics not just because he had no proper conception of being in its transcendentality, but also because he could think of what the Schoolmen had spoken of as these

properties of being simply as being, namely, the one, the true and the good, only as "pure concepts of the understanding" or as "*a priori* concepts of objects" (KrV B113), empty of any intelligible content, like any other category of the understanding separated from sense intuition, which alone supposedly brings content into the categories. In fact, Kant discusses these "pure concepts of the understanding which, though not enumerated among the categories, must, on [the Schoolmen's] view, be ranked as *a priori* concepts of objects" only in the context of his own elaboration of the categories of the understanding. What he takes from them, concerning the one or unity, for example, he reduces to one or the other of his categories in the predicamental order, the category of quantity, for example, in the case of unity. That was the only way Kant could think of "*a priori* concepts of objects." Unable to conceive being in its transcendentality as anything more than a bare positing, he was also unable to think of any *per se* properties of being as anything else than abstract categories in the univocal predicamental order and, because it was for him impossible to increase the number of categories, there was only one thing for him to do, which was to dismiss them as irrelevant in any scientific investigation except for what could be reduced to the scheme of the categories already established for scientific investigation, a scheme that could accommodate all sorts of physical or empirical sciences, that is, particular sciences, but not a more universal science of being as being, even as given in experience.

Since it is precisely with this sort of universal science of being that we are concerned here, it is all the more important to develop the concept of these transcendental properties of being as a further articulation of being in its transcendentality or as analogous in a diversity of beings. How then do we come to think of being as one in its transcendental sense to begin with? What we affirm in experience or, as I prefer to say, in the direct exercise of judgment, where we express or signify our first conception of being, is *something* in composition with be or an act of being, something that is at once a *this* and a *kind* of being, for example, this man Socrates who is, or you or I. What we add to our first conception of being by saying one, as Aquinas points out long before Hegel, is negation, a negation of dividedness where we experience difference and diffusion. What we think of as being we think of as undivided in itself, as not another, or as divided from any other. We think of it as having an identity of its own, as one in itself, not in isolation from any other but as divided from every other in its identity.

In the experience or the dialectic of mutual recognition among selves, for example, I think of myself as being one in my identity, and not you, while you think of yourself as being one in your identity, and not me. Thus for each one of us to think of ourselves as being is at the same time *a priori* or *per se* to think of ourselves as one in our respective identities at the same time as in relation to one another. Note also that in thinking of each being as one in this way, we are also thinking of being as many. Conceptually we go from thinking of being as one in itself in relation to any other to thinking of it as many in the recognition of the other as other or as one in its identity.

What we speak of as identity or oneness here is not to be confused with simplicity. We are not talking about some Leibnizian monad here or some subatomic particle that is beyond the pale of our experience. What we are talking about are identities that we experience and recognize

much more concretely in being and that are in fact quite complex in their very oneness, the identities of human beings, which are in fact the first identities we come to distinguish from one another in being. This is the identity Aristotle has in mind when he wants to illustrate how being, *to on*, and the one, *to hen*, is the same in book IV of the *Metaphysics* right after talking about substance as primary analogate, although he also throws in another instantiation as well, that of the horse, which is another kind of substance. Complexity or complexification, as Teilhard would say, is not a negation of oneness or identity in a being. In fact, it can be seen as a mark of greater oneness, at least for the beings we experience in the world, so that the more complex ones, like human beings, appear as more perfectly one in their identity and the less complex ones, like the elements of the periodic chart, are less perfectly one. In other words, the transcendental concept of being, allows for different degrees of perfection in oneness or identity, and invites us to think of the one as analogous, starting not from monads or sub atomic particles, but from human beings as our primary analogate. Metaphysically speaking, we understand oneness or identity in being as well as radical otherness among a plurality of beings much better on the level of human being than we do on lower levels of being, especially if we try to think of the lowest levels of subatomic entities that are barely discernible in any identity and that can only be defined in abstract mathematical terms.

Needless to say, the transcendental one we are talking about here is not the mathematical one or the one Kant was thinking about in the category of discrete quantity. The one there pertains to only one category. The one we are speaking of here cuts across all categories, including that of quality and of substance. It allows for different degrees of composition within substances as well as different degrees of interdependence among substances or different kinds of being. Whatever is not perfectly undivided in itself is not perfectly divided from every other. With the idea of composition in the identity of one being comes also the idea of a dependence on an other, and so on. We can see here different avenues opening up for metaphysical inquiry starting from the human being as our primary analogate.

But there is more to be understood about being in its transcendentality before we can pursue these avenues of inquiry effectively. We must understand also how we have to think of being as active. This, too, is a transcendental property of being to be considered, especially in the context of modern philosophy with its focus on subjectivity in being, even though it was not listed among the transcendentals along with one, true, and good in the earlier metaphysical tradition. My point here is to show how we have to think of every being as active, not just in some accidental fashion as in some particular action or other, but in a way that is *per se* necessary according to some activity that is proper to any being as being. We cannot think of any being except as having some proper activity through which we come to know it in its being or in its substance. In other words, we have to think of things themselves as acting, or as active, each according to its own way of being. And, conversely, we must think of each way or mode of being, each degree of being, not only as determined in an essence but *also* as giving rise to its own proportionate way of acting. The Schoolmen spoke of this as an inclination to act that follows from any form. *Quamlibet formam sequitur aliqua inclinatio*, from which they derived such adages as *agere sequitur esse* or *unumquodque agit in quantum est actu*, meaning "acting

follows from being" or "each being acts inasmuch as it is in act." Such adages have a sweeping connotation in the context of the different degrees of being that are recognized in experience, higher and lower, and they imply a certain convertibility at each degree between the level of being and the level of activity or action.

That active is a property of being at every level of being, even the lowest and seemingly the least active, can be shown in the way we come to know our own being in its essence, which is for us the primary analogate not only of being but also of activity. It is not by any direct intuition, whether sensible or intellectual, that we come to know ourselves in our essence, but by reflection upon the activity that defines us as human beings, so to speak, the activity or the activities that enable us to affirm ourselves as rational and as animal. We find ourselves exercising judgment and exercising choice in our action and through that we come to find ourselves in some degree of being with an identity of its own, or what the Scholastics would have called a certain *dignity*. At the same time, however, what we discover is not some static identity or essence, but one that is dynamic or active, that is, inclined to seek its further perfection in action and interaction with other selves and with other beings in the universe.

In other words, the being we come to know first in the exercise of judgment and of choice is a being that we cannot but think of as active. It is not as if we first discovered ourselves in our essence and then discovered that we are active. We do not discover ourselves except in our action and, to complete the other side of the picture, we do not discover other selves and other beings of different kinds except through their action. Where we find similar kinds of action to our own, we discover other human beings. Where we find lesser kinds of action, such as sentient without reasoning, or living with sensing, or even force without life, we discover lesser beings in dignity or in essence. And at the limit of what we could call this order of analogy in being, in the realm of what are called the basic entities and processes of cutting-edge physics, we find ourselves wondering whether we are still talking about actions and interactions among beings with an identity of their own, or about essences or substances with any proper activity of their own. In any event, what we know *a priori* or *per se* in this entire order of disclosure of beings is that for every degree of being there is a proper degree of activity through which being is disclosing itself in the order of these different kinds of being.

Insistence on activity as a transcendental property of being is often thought of as introducing an existential dimension into metaphysics, which is then connected to *be* or to the act of being in what is called the existential Thomism, but I would not agree that this connection should be made at all. I agree that there is a certain priority of existence over essence in the way we come to know being in experience, but that is not the priority of *esse* or the act of being over essence in the composition of a finite being. The priority of existence over essence in experience is a priority of activity or of action in bringing finite essences to their own completion. As such it is something that remains in the order of essence, or of different essences in the order of being; and, far from illustrating the distinction of *esse* from essence, it presupposes the composition of the two in a single substantial identity. The act of being is not an action that flows from any essence, not even as a proper activity of that essence.

The only connection I would see between activity or the inclination to act in any finite being and its act of being would be in trying to account for the necessity of an inclination to act in any finite being as such. In the relation between an essence and its act of being, there is a relation of something finite to an act that is of itself infinite or at least common to a diversity and plurality of finite essences, an *esse commune*. In its composition with the different finite essences this *esse commune* is not just absorbed in each finite essence, but retains some thing of its commonality and its ordering with other finite essences and so stirs each finite essence out of its finitude, so to speak, to transcend itself and to seek its fuller actualization in relation to other finite essences, if not to some infinite Act in itself. I see this as making eminent sense for human existence, where there is a capacity not only for recognizing the other as other but also for grasping at the truly Infinite. I see it as making sense for lesser beings as well where there is some such capacity, in an analogous sense of course, in the potency to move other beings and to be moved by others, and thereby also transcending their own given finitude and bringing themselves to a fuller actualization. All this would be done by second acts, existential acts, flowing from an actualized essence in composition with its act of being, which, albeit conceived as an act, is not in any way an existential act.

Concerning true and good as transcendental properties of being, let me be brief. Let me refer you to the way Aquinas comes at them in *De Veritate* q. 1, a. 1. After speaking of *one* as a mode of expressing being generally that follows every being in itself, in the sense that every being is undivided in itself, he goes on to speak of other such modes of expressing being generally in accordance with how every being is ordered to another. One way is according to how one being is divided from an other, as when we speak of *something*, *aliquid*, in the sense of something else than another, *aliud quid*. We spoke of this mode of expressing being generally earlier as the flip side of speaking of it as one. Something and another, or as Hegel puts it, *etwas und ein anderes*, is an expression for speaking of being as many.

Another way of expressing being generally in accordance with how every being is ordered to another, however, is according to some coming together (*convenientiam*) of one being with another, which, he says, cannot happen unless we take something, *aliquid*, whose function it is to come together (*convenire*) with every being. And that, he says, is the soul, "which is somehow everything as it is said in book III of *de Anima*." From the soul as so ordered to everything, by its nature, we then come to two more ways of expressing being generally in accordance with how things can relate to the soul, for the soul has two powers, a cognitive power and an appetitive power. The coming together of all being with appetite is expressed in the name *good*, while the coming together of all being with the intellect is expressed in the name *true*.

In this way of elaborating the properties of being *true* and *good*, one has to think of all beings as somehow coming together in relation to one being with a twofold power of intelligence and appetite. As a theologian, Aquinas might have focused on God as the being with the twofold power of intelligence and appetite around whom to gather all being as true and good, as Thomists frequently do in an onto-theological perspective. But that is not what he does. He proceeds more as a metaphysician, starting from the way we experience being, with human being

itself as primary analogate, not only of being, but also of truth or intelligibility and of goodness. What we experience most fundamentally is not a being in isolation from any other, but rather a being in communication with other beings through a twofold power of intelligence and appetite, including first of all other beings with a twofold power of intelligence and appetite of their own in mutual recognition of one another's truth and mutual respect for one another's own good, each with its own degree of intelligibility and goodness.

Now we also know that not all other beings share in this same degree of intelligibility and goodness in their being. We know of lesser beings with lesser degrees of activity, such as non-rational animals, or non-sentient living things, and even non-living things. This we know *a posteriori* from experience. But what we know about all of them *a priori* in metaphysics is that each is intelligible as being and good as being according to the degree of its being. Just as the conception of being is analogous and transcendental, so also is the conception truth and goodness as these two follow from being itself in its relating to intelligence and appetite. This is so not only on the level of human beings, but also for other levels of being in nature that come together as beings in relation to the being with the twofold power of intellect and appetite. It is from this metaphysical supposition that we proceed to inquire into the intelligibility of beings that we can define univocally in the particular sciences at lower levels of being as well as into the possibility of higher levels of being. It is also from this same metaphysical supposition that we come to acknowledge lower kinds of being as good or as perfect in their own order or according to their nature.

In metaphysics what results from this consideration of the transcendental properties of being, not just of true and of good, but also of one and active, is a conception of being as a universe of beings, in which we distinguish different kinds of being and different individuals of the different kinds, each with an identity of its own and yet interdependent with others, in interaction with one another as each actualizes itself through its proper activity, at once active in relation to others as well as passive in receiving influences, each with its own degree of intelligibility to be sought and goodness to be acknowledged. There is a principle of analogy that cuts vertically into the varying degrees of being as one, active, true and good, which assures the unity of this metaphysical science. But there is also a principle of homology that assures the convertibility of the transcendental properties of being with being itself at the different levels of being so that each being in its difference can always be said to be one, active, true, and good in the degree that it is. Far from being flat or abstract in its conception according to both meaning and be, *being* is most concrete in its universality, including the widest diversity of ontological differences as well as a great multiplicity of individuals acting and interacting with one another in conjunction with human beings at the center.

III: The Question of God at the End of Metaphysics

Part of the task of metaphysics is to explore the differences of being and the structure of being that accounts for these differences as differences of being. It is also to explore how being is communicated among diverse and multiple beings and how they are constituted as a universe in

a historical as well as in a natural order. But we cannot go into all that here. I would like to skip over all that to deal with the final question that comes up for consideration at the end of this exploration of being as universe, namely the question of a summit of being that would be the principle and cause of this entire order of being, in other words, the question of the existence of God, a question that was not taken for granted at the beginning of our metaphysical inquiry, but which must be entertained at the end of the inquiry. In a way, St. Anselm made a significant contribution to metaphysical science in answer to that question and, since we are in a place that honors his memory, I would like to give that contribution its due here.

It is often said that the Anselmian argument doesn't work, especially since Kant, and that Aquinas did not accept it as a philosopher. But we must keep in mind that Kant had a very inadequate conception of being, if he had one at all. If there ever was a forgetfulness of being in the metaphysical tradition, as Heidegger claimed, it was in Kant, who was Heidegger's mentor in approaching this question, whether of being simply as being or of a summit of being that would be the first universal cause of being as being. Aquinas, on the other hand, had a much more elaborate conception of being that was not only transcendental in itself but also included transcendental properties as going *per se* with being, such as one, active, true and good. In his consideration of the question whether God is, he does not forget this more ample conception of being, nor does he set it aside for a moment. On the contrary he brings it fully into play and begins precisely with where Anselm stood on the question. The first question he asks is whether the proposition that God is is *per se* known or not, a question that Anselm would seem to have answered in the affirmative by his argument about "that than which nothing greater can be thought," in that it has to include actual existence or be as the perfection of any perfection in being.

In his answer to this first question about God, Aquinas does not say that the proposition is not *per se* known. On the contrary, he insists that it is *per se* known, even though it is not *per se* known to everyone. He distinguishes between things that are *per se* known only to the wise and those that are *per se* known to everyone having the use of intelligence. His example for the latter is the proposition that the whole is greater than anyone of its parts. Anyone who knows *what* whole and part is all about knows that the proposition is true. The example he gives for the former, that is, things that are *per se* known only to the wise, is one he cites from Boethius, namely, that non-bodily things are not in any one place, as some people suppose when they ask about how many angels can fit on the head of a pin. Concerning the proposition "God is," as far as God himself is concerned, Aquinas says that it is *per se* known "because the predicate is identified with the subject, for God is his own be, as will be shown later on" (ST I, q.2, a.1.c). The reason why we have to say that it is not *per se* known to us is that we do not know about God *what* God is, which requires that the proposition be demonstrated through things that are better known to us although less known in their nature, namely, through effects.

Having said all of this about whether the proposition "God is" is *per se* known or not, Aquinas goes on to show how its truth can be demonstrated for those for whom that is necessary, that is, for those for whom it is not *per se* known or, as he says in response to those who would

rest their case on Anselm's argument, for "the one who hears this name 'God' and does not understand that it signifies something than which nothing greater can be thought, since some have thought God is a body" (ST I, 2, 1 ad 2), or, we could add, something in the immanent order of being. Even if we grant that one understands that the name signifies what the formula says, Aquinas goes on to say, it does not follow that one would understand that which is signified by the name to be in the nature of things, *esse in rerum natura*, but only that it is in the apprehension of the intellect. "Nor could it be argued that it is in reality, *in re*, unless it were granted that there is something *in re* than which nothing greater can be thought, which is not granted by those who posit that God is not" (Ibid.). In other words, those who deny that God is do not see themselves as going against something that is *per se* known, as they would if they were denying that the whole is greater than any one of its parts.

In a sense, then, to pick up on Anselm's expression, the atheist is not a complete fool, as he would be and could be shown to be if he were denying *per se* principles that are known to all who have the use of intelligence, such as the principle of non-contradiction as well as the principle of whole being greater than anyone of its parts. He is nevertheless a fool in denying something that is *per se* known absolutely or *quoad naturam*. He would realize that, if he knew *what* God is or that He is his own *esse*, as Aquinas is willing to grant. What he needs to be shown is that the proposition "God is" is indeed *per se* known. And this cannot be done by a simple reflection on one's own act of intelligence, as is done, by retort, for anyone who attempts to deny principles that are *per se* known to everyone. Something else has to be brought into play for the atheist denying that God is or for anyone who believes God is a body or something in the immanent order of being, something that the atheist will grant is *in rerum natura* and from which we can proceed to demonstrate to this denier of the truth of a proposition that is indeed *per se* known to the wise or *quoad naturan*, even though it is not *per se* known to one who has not yet begun to inquire into being as being or into the first and most universal causes of being.

We see here why Aquinas turns to the Aristotelian or metaphysical science of being as being in answer to what remains a question even for those who have understood the Anselmian argument. It is not because he rejects the argument, far from it. It is because it needs to be understood in the context of where we are coming from as intellectual beings and how we have to learn from things as given in experience. Metaphysics itself is a science that we have to learn from experience, at the summit of which may be the truth of the proposition "God is," once we have come to know what the first and most universal cause is, or at least that there is such a cause of being as known in experience. What we spoke of from the beginning as defining the new problematic for a science concerned with the first and ultimate causes comes back at the end as having to be conceived in a new way on the basis of what we learn about the causes of being as given in experience and how we have to come to the question of a first and most universal cause in our rational account of being as being.

If we were to ask Aquinas who are the wise to whom the proposition "God is" is *per se* known, I am sure he would begin by answering God himself and the blessed in heaven, but I think he would also include the philosopher who has come to some positive conclusion in the

quest for the first universal Cause of all being as being. Such a philosopher would know not only that God is but also that such a proposition is indeed *per se* known. The difference between the philosopher in this case and the theologian like Anselm is that the philosopher has a way of demonstrating for human intelligence a proposition that is *per se* known *quoad se* even though it is not *per se* known *quoad nos* as we begin to use our intelligence in experience. If we push reason or the inquiry into causes as far as it will go in metaphysical science, we can come to some understanding of propositions such as that of Anselm or of other theologians, including Aquinas, about God as *per se* known. Aquinas did think we could arrive at the truth of such a proposition through demonstration and, even as a theologian, he thought it enlightening and necessary to use such a philosophical demonstration in making more manifest to us the truths revealed in articles of faith, including that of the proposition "God is" and all that follows from that, as he does, for example, in questions two through eleven in Part One of the *Summa Theologiae*.

Questions two, on whether God is, and three, on the simplicity of God, are excellent examples of how Aquinas requires metaphysical science to make manifest to human intelligence truths otherwise made known by revelation. They are excellent examples of how he proceeds *a posteriori* to make known truths that are *a priori* or *per se* known, not only as revealed, but also as disclosed through human reasoning, which has its own *per se* known principles to go by in any process of demonstration. Too often, in thinking of demonstrations *a posteriori* such as the five ways to prove that the proposition "God is" is true, we think of them as purely *a posteriori*, as if there were nothing *a priori* about them, when in fact they proceed for the most part on metaphysical principles that are *a priori* and *per se* known once sense data are taken for granted or conceded as being in the nature of things.

Concerning proofs for the existence of God, Kant made two crucial points. Without any proper conception of being as transcendental and analogical, and taking *Sein* as mere positing of *this* or *that*, he rejected everything about the ontological argument. He could not see how there could be anything *per se* known about it in keeping with his rejection of anything having to do with metaphysical science. Then he argued that no *a posteriori* proof, whether physical or cosmological, could work without invoking the ontological or *a priori* proof.

After Kant there have been those, like Hegel or some transcendental Thomists, who have defended the validity of the ontological argument sometimes independently of how it relates to any cosmological argument, and there have been those who have fallen back on the cosmological argument, as if it had nothing to do with any ontological argument, in other words, as if it were purely a matter of sense data. Each of these two sides has in a sense accepted Kant's definition of the *status quaestionis* of a seeming opposition between *a priori* knowledge and *a posteriori* knowledge or, as Aquinas might have said, knowledge *per se* and knowledge *per aliud*. But there was no such opposition for Aquinas in his approach to ways for demonstrating the truth of the proposition "God is," nor should there be any for a properly understood metaphysical science that culminates in such demonstrations. It cannot be a question of either/or, either *a priori* or *a posteriori*, but only of both/and, both *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Kant was quite right in trying to

bring the two sides together in his Critique of Pure Reason. In this he was quite Aristotelian in his solution to the problem of knowledge. What was lacking in him and for him was a proper conception of metaphysics which tied the two together, the *a posteriori* or the *per aliud* known and the *a priori* or the *per se* known, in an exercise of metaphysical judgment or critical reflection on the question of being as being understood as analogous and transcendental.

Now this is a lot to say all at once about ways to demonstrate that God is at the end of metaphysics. Let me illustrate it in terms of some of the ways Aquinas proposes, beginning with the fourth way, which is not the easiest but which is the most obviously metaphysical in its structure. We find in things, Aquinas writes, *invenitur in rebus*, something more and something less, *aliquid magis et minus*, in terms of good and true and noble, and similarly of other attributes of this sort, *bonum, et verum, et nobile et sic de aliis huiusmodi*, all of which are known *per se* as transcendental properties of being in metaphysics. In more Heideggerian terms, we could say that being discloses itself through these properties according to an order of more and less or an analogy of greater and lesser perfection in being. Aquinas takes this to be a matter of fact in experience, something that presumably any atheist would concede to begin with in a demonstration that God is. But clearly it is not merely a matter of sense datum, sense intuition, or as Hume puts it, of vivid impression. It is much more a matter of metaphysical interpretation through reflection on the analogy of being as it discloses itself to our intelligence, something we have to learn through reflection *a posteriori* but that nevertheless is *per se* known even in that reflection. Usually when it is said that the proof does not work, it is because these presuppositions of transcendence and analogy in metaphysical reflection upon being as being have not been understood, another case of something *per se* known to the wise, but not to everyone. Proofs for the existence of God have to begin at a fairly high level of reasoning that not everyone has reached, a level that is nevertheless *per se notum*.

But the demonstration does not end with the high level of reasoning about causes or more precisely about the Cause of the varying degrees of perfection in the order of being. It uses it as a middle term for concluding that there is or has to be a maximum or a highest degree of perfection, a most true, most good and most noble, all of which would be convertible with a highest degree of being. It goes from something *per se* known to the metaphysician starting from experience to what was not yet *per se* known to the atheist due to his fixation on the comparative goods and truths of experience without reference to the supreme good and truth in relation to which all comparative goods and truths are measured in a transcendental order of beings as being. Through an affirmation of comparative goods and truths we rise to an affirmation of the supreme good and truth in being. Again, this is all through something known *a priori* or *per se*, but not in the sense that Anselm claimed for his proof based on the mere idea of perfection we have, which, in any event, is not equal to what the highest being is in itself. What we know *a priori* is that we have to interpret being according to its varying degrees of perfection and that this implies reference to some highest degree of perfection as cause of all of them.

We started distinguishing different degrees of being at the beginning of metaphysics, with human being as our primary analogate. But in the end, when we recognize that human being

is still only a comparative good and truth in the order of being as a whole, we are led to affirm, not so much relatively higher forms of being such as separate intelligences, but more precisely an absolutely highest form that would coincide with being perfectly and universally or, to put it in Anselm's terms, a being than which nothing greater can be thought. What we know of that being is not *what* it is in its own perfection, but only that it is or that it has to be *a priori* or *per se* as the cause of all the varying degrees of perfection in being we do know according to what they are in our experience. All this follows from principles that are *per se* known when we speak of being as analogous with its transcendental properties. One could hardly say that the demonstration is reducible to anything purely *a posteriori* as a sense datum.

Would it be the same for a demonstration that starts more patently from a sense experience, like the first way, which Aquinas says is more manifest and is taken from motion, *ex parte motus*? "For it is certain and sensibly obvious, *sensu constat*, that some things are moved in this world" (ST I, 2, 3, c). That's about as direct as one can get for starting from sense data. But watch what happens immediately when one tries to go somewhere intellectually or scientifically with this observation. We have to understand that we are talking about things in motion and not just as fixed data in the senses. We also have to understand that whatever is moved is moved by another, which is clearly not a given of sense experience as such or a matter of vivid impression *a posteriori*, as Hume would say. It is something we know *a priori* that we bring to the demonstration from a reflection on the principle of an absolute priority of act over potency in any coming to be. If one does not understand this metaphysical reflection on the principle of priority of act over potency, as the defenders of absolute sense data appear to do at times, one cannot follow or enter into the demonstration being offered. One can only say the demonstration isn't working or leading anywhere scientifically. That is not because the metaphysical principles being invoked are not *per se* known, but rather that they are not known to the one who cannot follow the reasoning, one who has not yet advanced far enough into metaphysical science to recognize this principle of the absolute priority of act over potency, which entails the idea that whatever is moved is moved by another already in act. In my own reconstruction of metaphysical science I take a long time getting to this principle of an extrinsic/efficient cause for anything that comes to be.

But there is more in the metaphysical reasoning that we must come to if we wish to demonstrate that God is. In the universe we find that there is an order of things moved by other things that are also moved by yet other things and so on, not just accidentally as in a mere succession of individuals in motion or coming to be or ceasing to be, but *per se* as in an order where one thing does not move another unless it is itself moved at one and the same time by another, which in turn is moved by yet another, and so on. In an order of *per se* order subordinated causes, which is often referred to as a chain, as in a chain of command or a food chain, or in metaphysics as the chain of being, nothing would be moved unless there were an unmoved mover, nothing would come to be or cease to be unless there were one thing that does not come to be or cease to be. If the atheist accepts that there is motion and if he accepts that there is an actual chain or a *per se* subordinated order of movers and moved in the universe, he should conclude that there is and has to be a first unmoved mover, which is what people name

God. But that presupposes a whole lot of metaphysical reasoning, not only about the principle that whatever is moved is moved by another, but also about a *per se* order of different degrees of moving in a chain of movers and moved that is not unlike the different degrees of perfection in which being discloses itself in the universe. Once again the validity of the reasoning and the force of the conclusion as true depend on a knowledge of principles that are *per se* known and made manifest by reflection on how being makes itself known or discloses itself in metaphysical science.

The same case about *per se* known metaphysical presuppositions should be made for the third way, which is even more puzzling metaphysically speaking than the fourth or the first, but which nevertheless brings a similar metaphysical structure into play for demonstrating that God is. Aquinas says this way is taken "from the possible and the necessary." Even his way of starting the demonstration here is fraught with a metaphysics of the possible or the contingent that probably would have been clear to ancient Peripatetics but that remains unclear to many modern interpreters of how this demonstration is supposed to work. The metaphysical *a priori* in this cosmological demonstration is much more up front than the *a posteriori,* which seems to be a simple observation that there are things that come to be and cease to be. Aquinas takes this to mean immediately that such things *can be* and *can not be* and then goes to work on that with a metaphysics of potency or contingency to show that not all things can be of the kind that *can be* and *can not be*, in order to get us to the necessity of positing some necessary being, that is, some being that *cannot not be*, such as heavenly bodies were thought to be along with separate intelligences in Aristotelian cosmology. The argument presupposes that we can recognize a certain priority of necessity over contingency much as we have to recognize a certain priority of act over potency in the first and the second way. But this alone does not give us the conclusion that we are looking for concerning the existence of God, for it is still possible to think of necessary beings as caused, as Kant would have been the first to point out and as any immanentist or atheist would be willing to concede while recognizing necessity in the universe.

One more step is needed in the argument, an ontological step further one might say, but not in the sense Anselm or Kant were thinking of it. We cannot settle for some necessity that is caused, which would still be a kind of contingency within the necessary. We must rise to an uncaused necessary Being, where we find ourselves having to affirm that God is, not only as the unmoved Mover or the uncaused Cause, but also as the uncaused necessary Being as well as the very Summit of being as pure Act unmixed with any potency whatsoever.

This is how Aquinas proposes to deliver on the promise to bring someone to a proposition that is *per se* known but that nevertheless requires a demonstration *per aliud* on our part, namely, through an effect that is posterior to the uncaused Cause but that presumably is accepted as being by the atheist. This is how he shows we must rise from the lower beings of different degrees of perfection we know in experience to the highest degree of or the most perfect Being, than which nothing greater can be thought, a being that must be thought of as absolutely pure Act without any admixture of potency whatsoever. I have tried to show how *a*

priori metaphysical principles come into play every step of the way in these demonstrations, which is why they yield a new way of thinking about God as absolute Spirit.

In conclusion I would like to reiterate how knowledge of these *per se* known principles originates, not in any sense observation of data as such, but in an exercise of intelligence occasioned by such observation, that is, in the way being discloses itself to us as intellectual beings. It all begins with the analogy of being as it first discloses itself to different human beings, our primary analogate of being, in mutual recognition of one another both as being and as different from one another. That is where we begin to sort out the transcendental properties of being that make it possible to expand our initial conception of being in its analogy into the conception of an ordered universe of communication and participation in causing as well as being caused. It is from this sorting out of metaphysical principles in the very being we experience as a universe that we come to some knowledge that God is by a demonstration that rises from *ens commune* as universal effect to the first universal uncaused Cause of all that is other than itself.

All of that entails much, much more than a mere matter of fact or sense datum, or a matter of pure immanence in the universe. Anselm and Aquinas both had the same idea of God as something absolutely perfect *per se quoad naturam*. They differed only on how to use metaphysical science to get to the idea or, as Aquinas preferred to say, on how to make it manifest to anyone who might think that God was some bodily thing or some finite spirit. Aquinas thought it better to use our entire conception of the universe as an order of *per se* subordinated effects and causes to show not only that God is but also that his perfection is such that it transcends the entire perfection of the universe and of everything in it, including any supposedly separate intelligence or world spirit as well as human being itself.