Medieval Philosophy

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Introductory Essay

Introduction: Christianity and Medieval Philosophy

During the final stages of Greek philosophy, Christianity made its appearance, affirming and diffusing itself in the Hellenic world as the one true religion, revealed by God and announced to men by Jesus Christ, the God-man.

Christianity indeed has a great history, to which, directly or indirectly, the entire story of humanity is related. Its value, however, is religious, theological, dogmatic, and not philosophical. Still Christianity and philosophy, though moving on different planes -- the former on the plane of revelation and the latter on that of reason -- cannot be foreign to one another.

We know that the supreme purpose of philosophy is to give a solution to the problem of life through the full use of human reason. This solution is present in the content of all those revealed truths which Christianity offers as the object of faith, truths which are made concrete in the dogmas of theism, of creation, of the cause of evil, and of the means by which man can redeem himself from evil and attain happiness. But philosophy, understood as the science which resolves the question of life, is also faced with these same problems, which were confronted and in part resolved by Greek philosophy.

It has been the task of Christian thought to return to these problems and to give a solution to them in accordance with the content of dogma. But it was not possible to carry out this work of rational systematization until Christianity had been promulgated as revealed religion and systematized in dogmas.

Historically and logically the story of Christian thought is divided into three periods: The Period of Evangelization, which occupies the entire first century of the Christian era, during which Christianity is diffused as revealed religion, hence containing truth within itself and having no need of rational justification. The Patristic Period, which runs from the beginning of the second century through the eighth century. During this period Christianity was forced to defend itself against the errors which threaten it from without (paganism) and from within (heresies),

and the Church Fathers worked out the systematization of the dogmas of Christianity. The Scholastic Period, which runs from the ninth to the sixteenth century. Here Christian thought, utilizing Greek speculation, created its own philosophy in harmony with the dogmatic teaching which had been systematized by the Fathers of the Church.

The first and second periods have very great value for an understanding of the Christian religion. This fact, however, does not affect this outline-history of philosophy, which has as its purpose the recounting of the history of thought. Therefore the exposition of these periods will be brief and will have in view the end of placing in relief only those phases which tend to give a solution to the problem of life which is within the scope of philosophy.

Scholasticism, on the other hand, which is the philosophical explanation of Christian thought and one of the most important syntheses in the history of philosophy, will be expounded in its greatest representatives with a fullness consonant with the limits of this outline-history.

An Overview of the Period

The Perfecting of Philosophy in Medieval Times

This essay discusses the rounding of philosophy into full and relatively complete form (perfecting it) in the Scholastic System, the best synthesis that man had been able to achieve up to that time. This was the beginning of the "perennial philosophy" in mature form, ready to serve man in his studies and investigations, to guide his thinking into rich and profitable fields, and to assure the sane advance of true science. This essay looks into the forces and influences that made for the perfecting of philosophy and outlines the work of the more notable philosophers of the Period of Perfection.

Part I: The Factors of Perfection in Philosophy

Factors

By the "factors" of the perfecting of philosophy we mean those facts and circumstances which proved to be strong influences upon the thinking of scholarly men, stirring them to philosophic effort. Of all such factors, -- and there must have been a rather large number of them, -- we choose for mention and brief discussion only three; these we deem the most important of all. They are, first, the intellectual atmosphere in which men of genius went to work; second, the questions that engaged their special attention; third, the equipment with which they undertook their task.

Of course, the men themselves, the thinkers, the philosophers, were the greatest "factors" in the progress they made. But it seems somewhat inaccurate to call them by that name, as though they were but an element in a kind of mechanical process that worked inevitably and automatically. We dare not degrade great gifts of mind, great patience, and tireless labors, by naming them so harshly. Therefore, we shall understand "factors" in the sense explained in the preceding paragraph, not as men or as the gifts of men's minds and spirits, but as things that helped to stir men of great mind and great diligence to the task of bringing philosophy to a perfected state.

Atmosphere

By the "atmosphere" we mean what may be called the spirit of the times, the interests and the temperaments of people. Now, beginning in the late 8th century, and extending through a period of about six hundred years, there was current in Europe a spirit, -- always strong and often widespread, although never, of course, universal, -- for deep study, for living with "the things of the mind"; in a word, for philosophy. Without such an atmosphere, philosophy could not have matured. As a plant requires suitable soil and climate, with a proper amount of light, heat, and moisture, so philosophy, -- considered objectively, -- requires a suitable intellectual climate or atmosphere in which to attain its growth.

In the 8th century a new spirit appeared in Europe; a spirit for learning. This fact was first made manifest in the multiplication and the enlargement of schools, especially of the parish schools and the cathedral schools. The spirit of learning was fostered by Charlemagne who brought to the continent from the British Isles the learned Alcuin and a staff of teachers to take charge of the palace school (the Palatine School) and to make it a proper model for the others. Through the centuries a zeal for learning grew among the people.

The 14th century found the European world furnished with many great universities, -- Cracow, Rome, Bologna, Paris, Cologne, Oxford, Cambridge, and others. All of these were Catholic, for European civilization was Catholic; all were fostered and furthered by ecclesiastical power.

Themes

One of the most important themes of discussion in the age of which we now speak was that of the nature and value of knowledge. This metaphysical question, basic in philosophy, was focussed upon the elements

of human knowledge, our ideas. Now, ideas are, in themselves, universal ideas, and the realities which they represent in our minds are represented there in a universal manner. When, for example, we have the idea or concept of "tree," we have knowledge of what tree means; we can write the definition of tree as such;

the definition is applicable to each and every possible tree, regardless of size, location, botanical class. For, we know an essence, and we know it as abstracted from the circumstances and limitations that mark the individual things which have that essence in the world of things outside the mind. This is what we mean by saying that ideas are universal ideas, and that we know things in universal.

Now, there is no question that the thing known in an idea or concept is present to the mind in an abstract and universal way. But there can be question about the way in which that essence actually exists in the things that have it. How, for example, does the essence "tree," -- which is the object or "thing known" in the idea "tree," -- exist in the actual trees which exist or can exist in the world of reality outside our minds? Does this essence exist "universally" in each individual tree? Or does each tree merely reflect this objectively existing essence as each of a thousand mirrors reflect the same sun?

Our ideas are applicable to things, or are predicable of things, as constituting their essence or as indicating what must be or may be associated with their essence. Of the five modes called the predicables, the most notable are genus and species. If the idea "body" is predicated of trees, grass, flowers, weeds, moss, vines, and stones, it is predicated as their genus, that is, as an essence which is in each of the things named, and yet is not their entire essence; for the plants are more than bodies, they are alive. If, of the first six items mentioned, we predicate the idea "plant," this is their species, for it expresses their entire essence; the points in which the various plants differ are nonessential or accidental.

Now, the question arises: how does the universal "body" (that is, the essence "body," known in universal) exist in all these things, and in all others called "body"? Do genera and species have actual existence in things outside the mind, and if so, what is the character of this existence? This is the famous "Question of Universals" which was hotly debated for more than four centuries, and indeed is sometimes debated among philosophers today.

The idea is a universal idea. The object of a universal idea (that is, the objective essence known in the idea) is called "the universal." What are universals? What are genera and species? These questions are identical in meaning, and they pose the "questions of universals."

There are four doctrines possible in the matter of universals. Three of these are fallacious; one is correct and true. It required the genius of the 13th century to establish the true doctrine, which we list here as the fourth, that is, Moderate Realism.

1. Extreme Realism (called Ultra-Realism and sometimes simply Realism) holds that there are universal essences in the world of reality outside our minds. There is, for example, a universal essence of man, and of this essence individual men either have only a part or share, or each

individual reflects the entire essence as a little mirror reflects the whole sun. This doctrine which comes flatly in conflict with both reason and experience is to be rejected.

2. Conceptualism says that the human mind is built to form ideas, and these have no knowable corresponding reality in the world outside the mind. Individual human minds are like so many Ford motors, all alike, all working the same way. Therefore, universals are really nothing in themselves, they are merely modes of the mind's working. This doctrine which destroys the value of all knowledge and plunges us into the insane contradictions of skepticism is to be wholly rejected.

3. Nominalism says that the mind, faced by a vast and complicated world of individual things, finds it convenient to make groups of these things and to affix a name or label to each group. The basis of the grouping is a "similarity" in things. The names or labels are our ideas. Thus ideas are not representations of essences; they are merely group-names.

There are no truly universal ideas; hence there are no universals. Nominalism is destructive of all knowledge, of all reasoning; it renders science and philosophy impossible; it is full of the contradictions of skepticism, as, for instance, when it affirms a universal grasp of "similarity" even in its detail of the universal grasp of anything. Therefore, nominalism is to be rejected.

4. Moderate Realism (called also Qualified Realism) says that outside the mind only individual things exist. There are no universal essences in the world of creatures. Creatures cannot exist universally, but only individually. But the mind, in forming its universal ideas, follows no mere inner drive of its nature wholly divorced from the things known (as Conceptualism maintains), nor does it merely apply names to groups of "similar" things (as Nominalism teaches).

The mind is able to see wherein a plurality of things are at one. The mind sees, for example, that all trees are trees. It can form the universal idea "tree," and the idea truly represents the reality which makes any tree a tree. In a word, the idea "tree" represents the essence "tree." Only what is present to each tree individually is represented in the mind universally, that is, in a manner abstracted from, or prescinding from, the individual limitations (size, location, botanical kind, number of leaves, etc) which make a tree this individual tree.

The mind knows things really, according to the reality which is their essence, but the mind knows in a mode or manner which is its own. Now, the mind's mode of knowing is the mode called "universality." Hence, the universality of our ideas is in the mind and from the mind, but it is based upon reality inasmuch as the essence which the mind knows universally is actually verified individually in each and every thing which has that essence. Here we see the reason for calling this true doctrine on universals "realism," and at the same time "qualified" or "moderate" realism. For our ideas represent essences really, yet we do not assert that the object of an idea (that is, the essence represented; the "universal") exists as a universal essence outside the mind.

The Question of Universals was not the only theme discussed by the philosophers of the age of the perfecting of philosophy. Far from it. But this is a question of outstanding importance, and it brings with it the study of nearly every important question of metaphysics. For the critical question (which has to do with the nature, value, and extent of human knowledge) is the fundamental question of all philosophy; and the question of universals is the very focus and point of the critical question. Penetrating study of the critical question, and, in special, of the question of universals, could not fail, and did not fail, to bring with it deep interest and active discussion of all other important philosophical questions.

The themes discussed in the Period of Perfection were, therefore, fundamental and all-important themes. They constituted a notable "factor" in making the age what it was, a time of bringing philosophy to rounded completeness.

Equipment

The great philosophers of the age of the perfecting of philosophy brought to their task no certified list of credits from some collegiate agency. Nor had they at ready disposal endless libraries of printed books, in most of which, to steal a phrase from C.E.M. Joad, each author thinks it interesting to present the reasons which have led him to formulate his particular brand of error.

The limitations of the times were, in some sense, a benefit. The philosophers had great writings; they had such a library as their times could boast; it was a library that could be known and mastered, and was worth the effort that mastering required. It was not a babble of voices confusing issues and overwhelming the mind with unlimited digression and unrestrained ineptitude.

From the late 8th century there were available for the studious mind the works of Plato and of Aristotle at least in part (although until the 13th century Aristotle was known in Europe in very defective and even falsified translations). There were also the works of Porphyry, Boethius, Victorinus, Macrobius, Apuleius, Cassiodorus, Trimegistus, Hippocrates, Lucretius, Seneca, Cicero, Galen, Martian Capella, St. Augustine, Origin, St, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Nemesius, Pseudo-Dionysius, St. John Damascene.

Movements

Matthew Arnold says that great creative epochs in literature result from the happy concurrence of two notable powers, -- the power of the man and the power of the moment. It may be truly said that the age of the perfecting of philosophy came from a similar union of powers.

Although we refuse to list the men of the period as mere "factors" of philosophical achievement, we must notice the fact that the age was one of great and gifted teachers. Among these we mention Alcuin, Roscelin, Anselm, William of Champeaux, Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, the doctors of the schools of Chartres and St. Victor, William of Auvergne, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, John Duns Scotus, Raymond Lully, William of Ockham. In

addition to these Christian teachers the Arabians Averroes and Avicenna, and the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides, lent their learning and energy to the philosophical effort of the times.

As for the power of the moment, four items may be mentioned. First, philosophy, ripened by five centuries of intense study, was ready for expression in an orderly and complete synthesis at the opening of the 13th century. Second, the works of oriental philosophy were spread, in Latin translation, through western Europe; these aroused both sympathy and strong controversy, and so proved to be a force in the intellectual movement of the age.

Third, great universities were multiplied and their influence was a strong and steady force for philosophical achievement. Fourth, the religious orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic carried to the common people not only the better knowledge of the Christian Religion but also a great deal of philosophical knowledge; for members of these religious families went everywhere and were often forced to meet on philosophical grounds the thinkers of non-Christian persuasions.

Part II: From Anselm to Albert the Great

Anselm

St. Anselm of Lombardy (1033-1109), Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of Bec in Normandy, and later Archbishop of Canterbury in England, was the foremost philosopher of the 11th century.

One of his chief interests, -- which led to only a partial success in the efforts it engendered, -- was the distinction between theology and philosophy. Anselm disagreed with those philosophers (such as Erigena) who held that these are really one science. But it was left for Thomas Aquinas, in the 13th century, to show with scientific exactness that there is a clear line of demarcation between them, and that theology (that is, supernatural theology) is one science and philosophy another.

Anselm offered reasoned proofs for the existence of God and for the Divine Attributes. He argued cogently in evidence of the truth that the human soul acquires intellectual knowledge by abstracting ideas or concepts from sense-findings, and using these in judging and in reasoning, he inclined to the Platonic doctrine that soul and body are united accidentally and not substantially; in this, of course, he was quite wrong.

The heretics of Anselm's day were fond of dialectics, -- that is, of fine logical reasoning; theirs was rather an abuse, than a proper use of logic. Nevertheless, many pious and learned men were led to see in dialectics a kind of snide trickery, and even a devilish device for the spread of error and the confusing of minds. Anselm stood sanely and firmly against this mistaken view of logic. He employed it himself with telling effect, and so routed the heretics with their own weapon. Thus he saved the good name and the splendid service of dialectics for Christian scholars; he justified for all time the use of sheer reasoning and philosophical argument in the exposition and defense of the Christian Faith.

Yet he clearly declared that the Christian had no need to rationalize is Faith; possessing the Faith, reason can serve to show its truth and glory, and so attract those who have it not. The motto of Anselm was "Credo ut intelligam," that is, "I believe that I may understand": "I find in my Faith a great light which aids me in understanding other things; I do not need to philosophize about creatures to justify myself in believing." Another motto of Anselm was "Fides quaerens intellectum," "Faith seeking to understand": that is, "If you have the Faith to begin with, you have a head-start in the work of philosophy; you need not philosophize yourself into an acceptance of the Faith."

Perhaps Anselm is best remembered in our times for his famous ontological argument for the existence of God. This argument is not a valid one, but it has intrigued the minds of thinkers for nearly a thousand years. Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza were among famous men to study it, reshape it, and present it. Despite its attractiveness it fails to make conclusive proof. Of course, it is in no wise required. The inescapable force of the a posteriori arguments for the existence and attributes of God make other arguments superfluous.

But Anselm, like many another since his day, thought that an a priori argument could be developed from the fact that man inevitably has some notion of Deity. The famous argument ran thus: All men, even unbelievers, have an idea of God -- it is the idea of the most perfect Being thinkable; Now, the idea of the most perfect Being thinkable is the idea of an existing Being (for, if it lack existence, it lacks a most notable perfection and hence is not the most perfect Being thinkable); Therefore, God really exists.

The fallacy in this argument lies in the fact that it "jumps" from the realm of thought (called the logical order) to the realm of reality outside the mind (called the ontological order), and thus leaves a gap in the reasoning. If we restate the argument, observing the strict rules of logic, we shall see that the conclusion is quite different: God is the most perfect Being that can be thought of; Now, the most perfect Being that can be thought of must be thought of as existing; Therefore, God must be thought of as existing.

This argument is perfectly legitimate. But the fact that God must be thought of as existing cannot be used as a proof that God actually does exist.

Gaunilo, a critic of Anselm's argument, tried to reduce it to absurdity in some such fashion as this: I have an idea of a most beautiful and perfect floating island; Now, unless it exists, it is not most beautiful and perfect; Therefore, this floating island exists.

This nonsense merely proved the fact that Gaunilo did not understand Anselm's argument. For he was speaking of the Fist, the Infinite, the Necessary Being, not of a creatural and limited thing like a floating island. No limited thing can be limitless in perfection. No creature can be envisioned as most perfect.

The very concept of a creature is the concept of thing perfectible. Anselm spoke only of that Being which we cannot help thinking of (and which even atheists cannot help thinking of, for they must have an idea of what they are denying when they deny God) as absolutely perfect, as limitless in perfection, as infinite. No one needs to think of a floating island or of any limited reality. But the idea of the absolute is inevitable to normal and mature minds. Indeed, if the ontological argument did not unwarrantedly assume a priori the objective validity of thought, it would be a cogent and irrefutable proof of God's existence.

Abelard

Peter Abelard or Abaelard (1079-1142), a native of Brittany, became in early manhood the outstanding teacher of his age. He was universally regarded by his contemporaries as the greatest of living philosophers. In this opinion Peter Abelard wholeheartedly concurred. He was a fiery teacher and speaker, a clever dialectician, a man too intent on triumph in debate.

There were few questions in philosophy upon which he failed to touch; there were few to which he gave thorough and complete treatment. His great service to philosophy is that he stirred up the thinkers; he awoke enthusiasm. Even his errors, championed so earnestly, aroused opposition that led to the clear exposition of many a truth that had been only half understood or but murkily explained.

Abelard rightly maintained that the use of reason is of the greatest value in setting forth the truths of Faith. Yet, despite his tendency to run to

extremes, he did not declare that reason is all-sufficient (rationalism) for the full understanding of every truth. Hence it is not just to call Abelard a Rationalist, as too many have done.

In the matter of universals Abelard came near the right doctrine of Moderate Realism. In his day the terminology of this question had not been finally formulated, and hence there is some obscurity in his position.

Abelard says that God is so far above expression that all our speech about Him is figurative. Here he is wrong. God is infinite, and our minds and our mode of speech are finite. But, for all that, we can have a knowledge of God that is literally true knowledge, not figurative knowledge, even though it is never exhaustive. All that we know of as absolute perfection (that is, pure or unmixed perfection) we attribute to God literally, though in a transcendent or eminent way.

Abelard thought that God is compelled by His goodness to create, and to create the best of all possible worlds (theological necessitarianism and cosmological optimism). Now, compulsion in God is unthinkable, since He is infinite and supremely independent, and, being the Source of all reality, there is nothing outside God which could conceivably work an independent influence upon Him. Nor is there anything within God to compel creation. All that God has, He is. God's Goodness is God Himself eternally subsisting.

Hence the idea of compulsion in or upon God is a self-contradictory notion. God is not obliged in any way to create, nor, freely choosing to create, is He obliged to create the best of all possible worlds. It is sufficient that His work be worthy of Him; that it be splendidly suitable for achieving the end for which it is made.

In his studies upon the ethical question, Abelard rightly holds that God is the Supreme Good towards Which man of necessity tends. God is the ultimate end of man in all human acts. And the possession and enjoyment of this objective End is the subjective last end of man: that is, beatitude in the possession of the Supreme Good. In trying to fix the norm of morality, Abelard hesitates, and finally sets down two opinions, neither of which is correct.

He thinks that the law or line which marks off good from evil (the norm of morality) is either God's will alone, or man's intention. Now, the true norm of morality is God as Eternal Law, that is, God as Divine Understanding and Will, not God as Will alone. God's will is, humanly speaking, consequent upon His knowledge of what is in line, and what is out of line, with Himself.

Man's intention cannot be the norm of morality. It is a determinant of morality in so far as a bad intention can spoil a good act and make it evil; but a good intention cannot save a bad act and make it good. The norm of morality is The Eternal Law; it is applied by human reason judging on the objective right or wrong of a situation here and now to be decided; in this service, human reason is called conscience.

The Arabians

Two notable philosophers among the Mohammedan Arabs of the Middle Ages must be mentioned here. These are Ibn-Sina (more commonly called by the Latinized form of his name Avicenna) and Ibn-Roschd (usually called Averroes).

Avicenna (980-1037) was a native of Bokhara; his parents were Persian-born Arabians. He was a man of intellectual gifts. A physician of renown as well as a philosopher, he is forever memorable for his book, The Canons of Medicine, which served for many years as the standard textbook for students of medical science.

Averroes (d. 1198) was a Spanish=born Arab. He was a notable commentator on Aristotle as well as a distinguished thinker in his own right. The fact that the question of universals was of burning importance in the Middle Ages explains the enduring of these Arab names. For the Arabians were deeply interested in the origin of ideas, and their theories touched the very heart of the controversy on universals.

The true doctrine on ideas may be summed up thus: there are no inborn ideas; man acquires all his knowledge. Ideas result in man's intellect from the action of the mind on the findings of sense. From these ideas others may be worked out by a further process of abstraction. So the mind rises from those ideas immediately formed upon sense-action (physical ideas) to concepts of pure quantity (mathematical ideas) and concepts of being considered apart from all the limitations of materiality (metaphysical ideas).

In a word, ideas have their origin in the native power of the human mind or intellect to abstract understandable essences (called intelligible species) from sense-findings, and to hold these within itself as representations of reality. Each human being has a mind or intellect. The intellect, in so far as it abstracts ideas (or intelligible species) from sense-findings (and from ideas already formed) is called the intellectus agens or active intellect; in so far as it expresses within itself the abstracted essences or intelligible species and holds these as representations of reality (thus knowing reality), it is called the intellectus possibilis or understanding intellect.

Now, the Arabians who followed Avicenna held the strange doctrine that there is a common intellectus agens for all men, jus as there is one sun in the sky to lend light to all eyes. Averroes and his followers went further; they taught that the intellect, both agens and possibilis, is a common possession, a reality outside all individual men.

Individual man has no intellect at all. His knowing-power is merely that of the senses. And, since the senses are organic (that is, dependent on bodily members), there is no justification for the conclusion that man has spiritual element in his make-up. Therefore, man has no spiritual soul; when he dies he perishes utterly. So far Averroes the philosopher.

But Averroes the theologian, holding fast to the Koran, teaches that man has an immortal soul. Here we have the beginning of that most disastrous of all doctrines, against which the mighty Thomas Aquinas was to rise in towering strength: the doctrine of a twofold truth. This pernicious doctrine holds that what is true in philosophy may be false in theology, and vice versa. The twofold-truth doctrine was taught in the 13th century by Siger of

Brabant in the University of Paris. The doctrine is wholly indefensible, and it leads directly into the insane self-contradiction of skepticism. It is ruinous of all knowledge, of all science, of all philosophy.

The doctrine of twofold-truth is no longer defended by theorists; Aquinas put an enduring end to all discussion of the matter. But it endures in practice, especially in the form of a twofold morality. Thus there are people who will justify sharp practice and open savagery by quoting as sound principles the silly clichs, "Business is business," and "All's fair in war," -- as though the businessman and the soldier had a set of moral laws for office hours or term of service, and another set for private life. Truth is one, constant, consistent.

One truth cannot come in conflict with another truth. And the truth of morality is like all other truths. There can be no such thing as a diversity of moral principles to suit diversity of persons or circumstances.

Albert

Albert the Great, known to his contemporaries as Albert of Cologne, and frequently called by the Latin form of his name, Albertus Magnus, was born in Swabia, part of present Germany, in the last years of the 12th century or the first years of the 13th. He died in 1280. Albert was a member of the Order of St. Dominic; he was made Bishop of Ratisbon in 1260. Preeminently a student and teacher, he resigned his bishop's see after three years of office. Most of his teaching was done at the universities of Paris and Cologne.

Albert is called "The Universal Doctor," and the name is justified, for he was a man of enormous capacity for learning and of tireless diligence in study and research. His works are many, and they cover wide and various fields -- philosophy, theology, Scripture, natural science. His genius was analytical; he worked out an amazing amount of scientific knowledge. The synthetical power which collates, integrates, focusses, and refines the fruits of analysis, was not so marked a gift of Albert, although he certainly possessed it in good measure.

Albert was an Aristotelian. He purified the translations of Aristotle of much Arabian interpolation. In his treatise on Aristotle's Physics, as well as in his own studies and experiments, Albert contributed more to the development of physical science than did the much lauded Roger Bacon.

Albert's work was notable and it was nobly done. It stands upon its own merits. But, looking upon it in retrospect, we must judge that Albert's greatest service to philosophy was the fact that he prepared the ground, so to speak, for the work of his illustrious pupil, Thomas Aquinas.

Part III: From Thomas Aquinas to William of Ockham

Aquinas

Thomas of Aquin -- more commonly called Thomas Aquinas, or simply Aquinas -- was born during the young manhood of Albert and died before him. Yet it seems natural for us to think of Aquinas appearing on the intellectual scene after Albert had departed. He was a pupil of Albert, and this enlightened teacher recognized his genius in early student days when fellow pupils considered Aquinas only a dreamy lad of no particular talent.

Aquinas was born between 1224 and 1226 in Roccasecca in Italy. He died March 7, 1274, while on his way to attend the Council of Lyons. Thus he lived, at most, but fifty years. Yet the accomplishments of his comparatively short lifetime were enough, one might suppose, for twenty men of twice his span of years.

If we except Aristotle, and perhaps Augustine, the history of philosophy has no name to offer that deserves to stand in the same line with that of Thomas Aquinas. It may be unfair to compare Aquinas with Aristotle, for Aristotle worked in the night of pagan antiquity while Aquinas labored in the daylight of Christianity. Perhaps it is but just to say that, in point of natural gifts, Aristotle stands alone, and that, in point of natural and supernatural gifts combined, Aquinas far surpasses Aristotle.

Aquinas produced a veritable library of valuable writings. These are remarkable for their scope, their completeness, their clarity. No taint of pride, no vain show of erudition for its own sake, soils any page he wrote. No man ever knew more thoroughly, and more sympathetically, the significant writings of all his predecessors in philosophy, theology, Scripture, and physical science. Thoroughly equipped with an easy mastery of the world's worthwhile knowledge, Aquinas brought to bear upon every question the light of his own mighty and original mind. In him the power of analysis and the power of synthesis seem equal.

Following the lead of Albert, Aquinas purified many doctrines attributed to Aristotle of their Mohammedan accretions, and he induced his friend and fellow-Dominican, William of Moerbeke, an able linguist, to make a Latin translation of Aristotle from the original Greek.

Aquinas settled the perplexing question of the distinction between philosophy and theology by justifying the principle: Sciences are distinguished one from another by their respective formal objects, and ultimately by the method or methods they use.

In the matter of universals, Aquinas offers compelling proof for the truth of the Aristotelian doctrine of Moderate Realism. He devotes full and detailed study to the basic concept or idea of being. This concept is the first idea in every order -- the order of time (chronological order), the order of knowledge (logical order), and the order of understandable reality (metaphysical order). For the very first idea or concept acquired in life (since we are born without any equipment of ideas) is the idea of some thing, that is, of some being, and the notion of some being involves, implicitly, the notion or idea of being as such.

Further, the analysis of every concept takes the mind back to the fundamental notion of being. And, finally, every reality that can be thought of as existing is necessarily understood as some thing, that is, as being. The idea of being is truly transcendental. Other transcendental ideas which extend or specially apply the idea of being are distinct from the idea of being by only a distinction of reason (i.e., logical distinction) not a real distinction. These ideas are: thing, something, reality, the one, the good, the true. Together with being, these are called "the transcendentals."

Aquinas holds the sane Aristotelian doctrine that all human knowledge takes its beginning in the action of the senses on the bodily world around us. He rejects the Augustinian theory that a special divine illumination is required for certain kinds of knowledge -- such as knowledge of first principles, or knowledge of spiritual realities. Our natural knowledge, says Aquinas, is due to the fact that the mind is equipped with a power of abstraction which it employs first upon the findings of the senses, and then upon ideas themselves for their further refinement or elaboration.

Thus the mind arises from the physical order, through the mathematical order, to the metaphysical order of concepts or ideas. Thus there are three grades of abstraction. These are truly grades or degrees; they are not merely kinds; they are like steps in one stairway. Aquinas takes the three grades of abstraction as the basis for the general classification of sciences.

In point of physical philosophy, Aquinas holds with Aristotle that all physical being (that is, all being subject to change) is compounded of actuality and potentiality (actus et potentia). Further, all bodily being (all ens mobile) is composed of matter and form, and, fundamentally, of prime matter and substantial form. Aquinas teaches that, at any given moment, only one substantial form can in-form or actualize the same prime matter; in this point, he differs from the view (Scotistic and Franciscan) of those philosophers who defend the "plurality-of-substantial-forms theory." Spiritual substances are pure forms.

The principle of specification, by which one essential kind of substance is distinguished from every other kind, is substantial form. The principle of individuation, by which individual substances of the same species or kind are distinguished from one another, is in-formed prime matter as quantified.

Aquinas holds that the human soul is, in each man, the substantial form of the living body. The soul does not exist before its union with the body. At one and the same instant each soul is created and infused (i.e., substantially united with the body) by God.

Aquinas rejects the Arabian doctrine of a separate and common intellect serving all men, and offers proofs for the existence of intellect as a faculty of each human individual. He shows that man has freewill, that is, that the human will is endowed with the freedom of choice of means to the necessary (and not free) ultimate end, the Supreme Good.

In point of metaphysical philosophy, Aquinas treats of being in itself, of being as it is in the mind (that is, truth and certitude). He asserts a real distinction (not merely a rational or logical distinction) between the essence and the existence of an existing creature. He extends Aristotle's doctrine of

causes, and deals most profoundly with the effecting or efficient cause, and with its subsidiary, the instrumental cause.

He shows that God is First Effecting Cause, that the divine "effectingness," as act and as power, is identified with the Divine Substance. In creatures "effectingness" (or efficiency) as act and power is something really distinct from their substance; it is something they have, not something which they are; hence, faculties are things really distinct from the creatural substance which possesses and exercises them.

Aquinas shows that God, the Necessary and Self-Subsistent First Being, is the Effecting, the Final, and the Exemplar Cause of all perfection, that is, of all positive being. He shows how God concurs with creatures in their connatural activities, and he maintains that the divine concurrence is not only simultaneous with the actions of creations, but antecedent to such action; yet such antecedent concurrence (called physical premotion) in no wise destroys the nature of the acting creature; even if the creature be free, its freedom is not destroyed or in any sense hindered, for "God moves every being in a manner consonant with its nature."

In point of moral philosophy or ethics, Aquinas shows that man, in every human act (that is in every thought, word, deed, or omission which is done knowingly and freely), tends towards the Supreme Good, the possession of which will constitute man in the state of perfect beatitude. Even the sinner, perversely choosing evil, chooses it under the guise of good, that is, of something that will satisfy. Man is made for God and endless perfect happiness. This end cannot be achieved perfectly this side of heaven, but it can be approximated here on earth by living for God, by knowing, loving, serving God.

Since God has made man for Himself and happiness, He has a plan, an arrangement, a law which man must follow to attain His end. In other words, the Divine Reason (that is, God as Intellect and Will) has established the law which directs all things to their last goal or end. This law is The Eternal Law. Man, when he comes to the use and practice of his mental powers, inevitably becomes aware of "an order in things" which he must not disturb but must conserve; man's awareness of The Eternal Law is "the natural law." And man, in all his human acts, inevitably sees them in their relation to the natural law, and mentally pronounces upon their agreement or disagreement with the natural law. Such a pronouncement is called a judgment of conscience. And thus we notice that the norm of morality is The Eternal Law as applied by conscience.

Aquinas has been called, and with justice, the prince of philosophers and of theologians. His works merit the earnest study of every thoughtful mind.

Scotus

John Duns Scotus (1266/74-1308), a member of the Franciscan Order, was a philosopher of extraordinary gifts and of wondrous accomplishment. He studied at Oxford, and later taught there and at the University of Paris. He wrote commentaries on Aristotle and on other philosophers, and he produced a notable treatise on theology.

He also wrote Quaestiones Quodlibetales, a discussion of a variety of questions. Many other works are attributed to Scotus. The scholarly

researches of the Franciscan Friars in our own day have shown beyond doubt or question that some of these works are spurious, and that some theories long attributed to Scotus are not truly his.

Scotus is known as "the Subtle Doctor." He had a mind of marvelous acuteness, and an untiring zeal for intricacies of discussion in which none but the keenest and most devoted students could keep pace with him. In some points he disagrees with Thomas Aquinas. For instance, he has small reliance on the unaided human reason as the basis of certitude, and requires Faith and Revelation for the solution of some problems of philosophy.

He does not agree with Aquinas in point of "the principle of individuation" which he holds to be, not quantified matter, but a positive reality added to a being fully constituted in its specific nature; he calls this positive individuating reality by the name of haecceitas, which might be clumsily translated as the "thisness" of the being in question.

Again, Scotus teaches that in a created being there is not a real distinction between existence and essence, nor is there merely a rational or logical distinction; the distinction in this instance is an actual formal distinction arising from the nature of the reality in which the distinction is found. This distinction (usually called "the Scotistic formal distinction") is, therefore, something less than real distinction, and something more than logical distinction.

Again, in point of universals, Scotus accepts Moderate Realism, but his expression is involved, and some critics interpret him in such wise as to make him an Ultra-Realist.

Again, Scotus defends the "plurality-of-forms-theory"; he holds that in man, in addition to the spiritual soul which is the substantial form of living man, there is a substantial body-form or "a form of corporeity."

Scotus holds that man is not moved, in his freewill acts, by the ultimate practical judgment of the mind (the ultimum judicium practicum), but that this judgment is only a condition requisite for the will's uninfluenced action.

Scotus holds with unwavering certitude to the spirituality and immortality of the human soul, yet he teaches that is immortality is proved by an appeal to Revelation, and not by unaided reason.

A man of the highest gifts, Scotus has had, and has today, a mighty influence among Scholastic philosophers. He was the great luminary of the Franciscans as Aquinas was the light and oracle of the Dominicans. The Thomist and the Scotist schools are in lively existence at the present time, especially in the realm of speculative theology.

Ockham

William of Ockham was a notable Franciscan philosopher of the 14th century. He was born about 1280 and died in 1348. The name by which this philosopher is most commonly known is that of his home town, Ockham or Ockam, of Surrey in England.

William was of impulsive and even stormy temperament, and his life was not without troubles. He wrote commentaries on the philosophy of Aristotle, on the famous "Sentences" (that is, doctrines) of Peter the Lombard, and on the writings of Porphyry.

His contemporaries hailed William as "the Venerable Inceptor" of a theory of knowledge called Terminism. But this was really no new theory; it was merely Nominalism in a new dress and with a new name.

William of Ockham is memorable for one valuable rule for philosophers, Entia non sunt multiplicanda sine necessitate, which, translated literally, means, "Things are not to be multiplied without need"; the force of the rule might be given in this fashion, "Explanations are to be made in the simplest and most direct fashion which the facts allow, without needless complications and distinctions." This dictum came to be known as "Ockham's Razor," for it was formulated to cut away wasted verbiage and needless involvement of reasoning.

It is a good rule, but William himself used it without nice discernment of when "multiplication of things" is actually necessary. He sometimes used the "razor," not only to remove extraneous matters, but to level off the features of his subject. Like all impatient men who want to make complicated matters simple, he sometimes turned simplification into falsification.

This note of impatience, this eagerness to make the deepest and most complicated questions as simple as A-B-C, was -- as is always the case when it appears in the works of men of influence -- a sign of decadence in philosophy. For any impatience with multitudinous detail indicates a loss of the philosophic temper which must be tirelessly patient.

Ockham is the symbol and mark of a turning-point in philosophy. He is the last great figure in the age of perfection; some make him the first great figure in the age of transition, even when they try to hide the fact that the transition was also a retrogression. The cord of strong philosophic thought which had begun to fray under the friction of Thomistic-Scotistic argument, snapped asunder under the impatient dicta of William of Ockham. It was literally cut by "Ockham's Razor."

The Period of Evangelization

I. PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Christianity is essentially religion; that is the basis of its distinction from philosophy. Philosophy is the work of rational speculation. It is reason which, starting from a few rational principles, tries to solve the supreme metaphysical problems regarding God, the world and man.

Religion does not demonstrate, but affirms. It presents itself as a proposition of wisdom, as a positive assertion expressed in the form of dogma, and does not appeal to the intellect but to the will, whose assent it requests. Religion does not require the affirmation of the will on the basis of the intrinsic rationality which appears to the intellect but because of extrinsic motives -- that is, the authority presenting the assertion.

Religion, therefore, is distinguished from philosophy in that the former works on the will, the latter on the intellect. And the assent of the will, which in philosophy is justified only by reason, in religion is justified by authority.

Although Christianity does not present itself as a philosophy, it presupposes a specific conception of the world and life, so that its dogmas include, on religious grounds, the solution of the greatest metaphysical problems that range from God to matter.

Moreover, while Christianity is distinct from philosophy, it does not follow that the two are opposed; in fact, the indirect solution which religion gives to paramount questions in metaphysics is to be maintained as valid help to reason in its speculations. Christianity has truly integrated philosophy.

Greek philosophy failed to resolve the problem of the origin of matter and that of the presence of evil. Christianity solved the first question by introducing the concept of creation: matter does not exist from eternity, but is created by God as is the whole universe.

Christianity solved also the question of the presence of evil through the mysteries of the first fall of man, of the Incarnation and the Redemption. The doctrine of the first fall teaches that the first begotten man was not only exempt from physical and moral evil, but was elevated to a supernatural order with an abundant equipment of preternatural gifts. But because of the sin of pride committed by the first man, mankind was subjected to physical and moral evil.

The mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption teach that the Word of God became flesh and died upon the cross not only to pay the debt of sin contracted by mankind, but also to give God the complete satisfaction and glory of which He is worthy.

Physical and moral evil still remain after the sacrifice of the cross, because everyone by suffering may take part in this sacrifice and give to God expiation for sin, and the glory of which He is worthy.

Thus, Christianity claims to have solved the problems which human reason is unable to solve by itself. This is the backdrop for an understanding of medieval philosophy.

The Period Of Patristic Philosophy

The Patristic Period extends from the second century through the eighth century. The numerous writers of this age are called Church Fathers because they are sure guides in the interpretation of Christian truths.

The Fathers of the Church were also philosophers, but with the exception of St. Augustine, not one of them was overly preoccupied with philosophy. Hence the Patristic Age may be divided into three periods: Pre-Augustinian Augustinian Post-Augustinian.

I. THE PRE-AUGUSTINIAN PERIOD

This period includes the second and the third century, and the first half of the fourth century.

Second Century

The Church Fathers of the second century are classified as apologists and controversialists. By apologists are meant writers who proposed the truth of Christianity and defended them against the calumnious reports of pagans. Such are Aristides of Athens, Athenagoras, Minucius Felix, and Justin Martyr. Justin Martyr tried to prove that everything that is true and great in Greek philosophy is Christian. Other writers are called controversialists because they tried to refute the various heresies which appeared in the second century. Among these heresies the most important was Gnosticism which, although presented in different forms, is always basically the same in the attempt to empty religion of its supernatural content and to reduce the dogmas of Christianity to physical events.

Third Century

The third century is important because of the Christian School of Alexandria (the Didascalion) and also because of great apologies by writers of Western Africa. The Didascalion was founded by Pantaenus to prepare neophytes to receive baptism. But because of the attacks of the Neo-Platonic philosophers, who taught in the same city, the Didascalion became the seat of a hotly philosophical culture.

The most representative thinkers are: Clement of Alexandria (c.150-220 A.D.), who tried to show how Greek philosophy contributed to making the Christian more convinced of the truths of religion; Origin (c. 185-254 A.D.), a voluminous writer, considered to be the first systematizer of theology, who enjoyed a very wide fame; but because of latent errors about the creation of the world, the human soul, and the nature of evil, his fame gradually declined.

The Latin Apologists

The Fathers of Latin Africa, concentrated in Carthage, had a predilection for practical problems. Their attitude toward philosophy is not only one of negligence, but at times is even hostile, since they see in philosophy the danger of heresy. The most outstanding of them is Tertullian: The Gospel and the Academy have nothing in common; truth is given to us by the former, while the latter loses itself in empty rationalizations.

The First Half of the Fourth Century

During the first half of the fourth century there were many heresies regarding the divinity of Christ. In defense of Catholic truth, there arose a numerous host of Fathers, among them St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil and many others. It is the function of Church history to expose the various heresies and to justify their condemnation. According to Church authorities, in the matter of the heresies the authority of the Fathers is very great. In regard to philosophy, we may say that the Fathers were concerned with it only occasionally.

II. The Augustian Period: Reason and Faith

St. Augustine (354 - 430)

The basic characteristic of Augustine's thought is that man needs reason and faith to find truth. Augustine (picture) was led to this conclusion by his personal experience. Another basic characteristic consists in his "interiority." Augustine never ceases to look inside his soul; for in the soul he finds the fundamental principles of knowledge. How do we reach these principles? Illumination is the answer of Augustine. The human soul sees the intelligibles in a certain incorporeal light as the corporeal eye sees material objects in a corporeal light.

Augustine's Doctrines

Augustine even after his conversion to Catholic Christianity remained a Platonist. This adherence does not signify mere acceptance; but, just as Thomas Aquinas presented the doctrine of Aristotle as the rational basis of religion, so Augustine established the teaching of Plato and the Platonists. Philosophy is considered by Augustine as the science for the solution of the problem of life; hence he is more concerned with religious and moral problems than with those of pure speculation.

Theory of Knowledge

For Augustine the question of knowledge involves two problems: one regarding the existence of the subject, the other regarding the origin of concepts. He resolves the first question with the famous argument: "If I doubt, I exist"; he resolves the second by appealing to illumination, i.e., the belief that the eternal truths are imparted to our soul by the Word of God. Augustine, as a Platonist, underrates sense knowledge. More about St. Augustine's Illumination.

Metaphysics

God: The existence of God is proved: (1) a priori, by the presence of eternal truths, which take their origin from the Eternal and Necessary Being; (2) a posteriori, by the imperfection and change of beings, a fact which presupposes a perfect and unchangeable being. Regarding the nature of God, Augustine holds that God is being, knowledge and love, the three attributes which are revealed also in every created being.

Cosmology

The world was created by God from nothing. With regard to the manner in which creation was effected, Augustine is inclined ti admit that in the

beginning there were created a few species of beings, which, by virtue of the rationes seminales, gave origin to the other species down to the present state of the world. For Augustine "time" is founded in movement, and its reality is in the intellective memory.

Psychology

Augustine, as a Platonist, considers the union of the soul with the body rather extrinsic. Regarding the origin of the soul, he hesitated between creationism and traducianism, but inclined toward the latter for controversial reasons. The faculties of the soul are three: memory, intellect and will; the will is free and superior to the intellect. Along with the question of liberty, there is the problem of the presence of evil. For Augustine, evil is essentially a "privation"; the privation of a due physical perfection makes physical evil, and the privation of moral perfection makes moral evil. The cause of moral evil is neither God nor matter, but the free will, which as such is able to deviate from the right order. Suffering, whether physical or moral, is the consequence of evil.

Liberty and Grace

Augustine sustained a long debate against Pelagianism. Pelagius held that human nature has not been corrupted by original sin and therefore is able of itself to attain the supernatural perfection due to it. Against this heresy, Augustine defended the absolute necessity of grace in order to attain the perfection due to man. How the efficacy of grace is to be reconciled with liberty is a question which disturbed the mind of Augustine, who at times neglected liberty to uphold the necessity and efficacy of grace.

Ethics

Besides what has been said of free will and moral evil, it must be noted that Augustine holds the primacy of the will over the intellect. Every good work is an action of love.

Politics: "The City of God"

"The City of God" is a philosophical classic by which Augustine shows the history of good and evil working among mankind as a consequence of original sin and the Redemption through Jesus Christ. He wrote it while the Roman empire was falling into ruin under the barbarian invasions and the Church was rising from the imperial remains. In The Radical Academy Bookstore Books by and about St. Augustine On the Internet "Confessions" by St. Augustine "City of God" by St. Augustine

The positive contributions of St. Augustine to the Perennial Philosophy

St. Augustine affirms that the world was created by God from nothing, through a free act of His will. Time is a being of reason ("rens rationis") with a foundation in things which through becoming offer to the mind the concept of time as past, present, and future. Augustine affirms the absolute unity and the spirituality of the human soul. In regard to the nature of the soul he affirms that the soul is simple and immortal. Then sensitive soul, besides having the five senses, is endowed also with a sensitive cognition which is common to animals and which judges the proper object of each of

the senses. The intellective soul has three functions: being, understanding, and loving, corresponding to three faculties: intellective memory, intelligence, and will. The primary among these three faculties is given to the will, which in man signifies love. The will of man is free.

Three kinds of evil can be distinguished: metaphysical, physical, and moral, and each of them consists in a deficiency in being, a descent toward non-being. Metaphysical evil is the lack of a perfection not due to a given nature and hence is not actually an evil. Under this aspect, all creatures are evil because they fall short of full perfection, which is God alone. Physical evil consists in the privation of a perfection due to nature, e.g., blindness is the privation of sight in a being which ought to have sight according to the exigencies of its nature. The only true evil is moral evil; sin, an action contrary to the will of God.

The cause of moral evil is not God, who is infinite holiness, nor is it matter, as the Platonists would have it, for matter is a creature of God and hence good. Neither is the will as a faculty of the soul evil, for it too has been created by God. The cause of moral evil is the faculty of free will, by which man is able to deviate from the right order, to oppose himself to the will of God. Such opposition gives moral evil reality -- negative, metaphysical reality in the sense of decadence of the order established by God, and hence decadence of being or descent toward non-being. Sin, from the very fact it is decadence of being, carries in itself its own punishment. By sinning man injures himself in his being, for he falls from what he ought to be. As a result of this fall there exist the sufferings which he must bear, such as remorse in the present life.

III. The Post-Augustian Period

The period which runs from the death of Augustine to the beginning of the ninth century is of no special interest in philosophy. The cause of this decadence can be summed up thus: The fall of the Roman empire and the consequent barbarian domination; The engagement of the Church in the works of the apostolate and charity and not in the field of speculation. Nevertheless, several men are worthy of mention: Severinus Boethius, who wrote commentaries on some works of Aristotle, which were widely used as textbooks during the Middle Ages; Cassiodorus, who worked unsuccessfully for the unification of the barbarians and Latins; Above all, St. Benedict of Nursia, the founder of monasticism in Western Europe.

The Order of St. Benedict spread throughout Europe and helped immensely to save Western culture from complete destruction.

THE PERIOD OF SCHOLASTIC PHILOSOPHY

I. INTRODUCTION

The period of Christian thought extending from the beginning of the ninth century to the end of the fifteenth has come to be known as Scholasticism, a name taken from the school of philosophy of the University of Paris.

Background

Patristic philosophy reached its climax in the system of Augustine; it was the last great product of classical-Christian civilization. When the Roman empire fell, the only institution that was capable of standing for law and order was the Church. The Goths sacked Rome but respected the Church and offered it protection. The literature and culture of Greece and Rome became almost extinct; the barbarous tribes initiated the Dark Ages. The only philosophy that survived was that which filtered through the writings of the Church Fathers. From Augustine to the ninth century learning consisted of an ecclesiastical dogmatism which was spiritually lifeless and it did little better than preserve the traditions of past; Plato and Aristotle were only partially known.

Scholastic philosophy means an organized system of truths which are distinct from the dogmas of faith but not opposed to them. This separation and coordination of reason and faith is not found in all Scholastic philosophy, but only during the period of its greatest splendor achieved under Thomas Aquinas. Scholastic philosophy, then, may be divided into: The formative period, extending from the beginning of the ninth century to the middle of the thirteenth; The period of maturity, extending a little more than half a century and covering Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus; The period of decadence, extending from the death of Scotus to the end of the fifteenth century.

The Carolingian Revival of Learning

During the period of decadence, following the fall of the Roman empire, culture was restricted to ecclesiastical schools. There were of three types: Monastic schools, whose purpose was the formation of monks; Episcopal schools, whose purpose was the formation of priests, and occasionally of laymen; Parish schools, which were for the instruction of the faithful in respect to the reception of the sacraments.

It is to Charlemagne's credit to have undertaken the program for the establishment of schools. He summoned the monk Alcuin and entrusted him with the work of organizing the schools. Alcuin reformed the program of studies by establishing the divisions known as the trivium (comprising grammar, rhetoric and dialectic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). He established the "scola palatina." Other schools following the program of Alcuin were opened at Tours, Laon, Orleans and Fulda. This cultural movement had no development of any importance after the death of Charlemagne.

On the Internet Texts and Archives of Scholasticism

II. The Formative Period Of Scholastcism

The formative period of Scholasticism (the ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth centuries and the first half of the thirteenth century) developed under the influence of St. Augustine's thought. During this period, because of the prejudice of illumination, it was impossible to have a complete separation of reason from faith. Both mystics and dialecticians consider the intellect as unable to reason without being enlightened by God. With the help of illumination the intellect will be able to penetrate the content of the mysteries of faith. This period can be divided as follows: The ninth and the tenth century (John Scotus Erigena and the problem of universals); The eleventh and twelfth century (mystics and dialecticians); The first half of the thirteenth century (the question concerning the works of Aristotle).

a. The Ninth and Tenth Centuries

1. John Scotus Erigena (815? - 877): Scotus Erigena wrote "De Divisione Naturae," a Neo-Platonic work. According to Erigena, Unity (God) descends into multiplicity, and multiplicity returns to Unity. The degrees of reality are the following: (1) creating, non-created Nature -- God, the Father; (2) created and creating Nature -- the Son; (3) created and non-creating Nature -- the sensible world informed by the Holy Spirit; (4) non-created and non-creating Nature -- God Himself as final cause. The first and fourth degrees coincide with God.

2. The Problem of the Universals: What is the value of concepts, which are universal, in relation to real things, which are particular? Four solutions were attempted: Transcendent realism (the Platonic solution); Immanent realism (the Aristotelian solution); Conceptualism (the concepts are mental signs without basis in reality); Nominalism (the concepts are names, speech).

See also Dr. Jonathan Dolhenty's essay on The World of Universals.

b. The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

At the beginning of the eleventh century the Churchmen showed a renewed interest in a better understanding of the truths of religion. The thinkers of that time are divided into mystics and dialecticians. Both feel the influence of illumination, and hence consider knowledge a gift of God. Faith is thus presupposed and is considered superior to reason. Nevertheless thinkers disagree in determining what is the contribution that reason can make to faith. The mystics see in philosophy a remnant of paganism and the danger of heresy. St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the Victorines are mystics. The dialecticians, on the contrary, think that once the understanding of religious truths is required reason can be invoked to penetrate the very content of the mysteries of the faith. St. Anselm and Peter Abelard are dialecticians.

St. Anselm (picture) is well known for this ontological argument for the existence of God, as presented in the "Proslogium": The concept which everyone has of God is that of a most perfect being; Greater being cannot be conceived; Consequently, God must also really exist; otherwise He would no longer be that most perfect being, for He would lack real existence.

This argument, however, marks an illicit passage from the concept to reality. But, granted the doctrine of illumination, it would be valid. Abelard is the most complex personality of this time. He attempted to penetrate the mysteries of faith through reason, and found in St. Bernard his strongest opponent. In the question of universals, Abelard is considered a nominalist; but he possibly may not be such, as his vocabulary is not absolutely clear.

On the Internet "Proslogium" by Anselm Anselm: Philosophers' Criticisms of Anselm's Ontological Argument for the Being of God More about Peter Abelard "History of My Calamities" by Peter Abelard.

c. The First Half of the Thirteenth Century

1. The Establishing of Universities: As a consequence of the interest in studies, some ecclesiastical schools were reinvigorated and rose to great fame. This is the origin of many universities; the most celebrated of them is the University of Paris, then Oxford University. While the universities were being organized, two religious Orders -- namely, the Franciscans and Dominicans -- obtained the faculty to teach in them, and made a large contribution to the development of Scholastic philosophy.

2. The Discovery of the Works of Aristotle: The major factor in the development of Scholastic was the discovery of the works of Aristotle, which happened during the first half of the thirteenth century. These works first reached the universities through the commentaries of Jewish and Arabian philosophers.

Among the famous commentators on Aristotle in Spain were two Jewish philosophers, Avicebron (died about 1058), and Maimonides (died 1204) (picture). The Arabian physician Avicenna (picture) enjoyed greater fame. He attempted to reconciled Aristotle with the religion of Islam, and hence affirmed the immortality of the soul.

The most famous commentator was the Spanish-Arabian philosopher Averroes (1126-1198) (picture). He too was a physician and Thomas Aquinas gave him the designation "The Commentator."

Later what was called the "translatio nova" of Aristotle, made directly from the Greek, was attempted. The attitude of thinkers in regard to the works of Aristotle was threefold: Some thinkers advocated the integral acceptance of the system of Aristotle -- the most representative of this group was Siger of Brabant; Others accepted Aristotle's opinions when these were not opposed to St. Augustine -- the most representative of this group is St. Bonaventure; Yet others -- among them, Thomas Aquinas, who accepted the system of Aristotle critically -- discarded the theories of the philosopher in those points which were not in accord with Christianity.

Siger of Brabant (died about 1281) in his work "De Anima Intellectiva" holds the theory that the world is eternal, denies providence, and admits the existence of the acting intellect as something separate and the same for all men. Siger defended himself by having recourse to the principle of the double truth.

III. The Godlden Age Of Scholastic Philosophy

St. Bonaventure (1221 - 1274)

St. Bonaventure (picture) wished to theorize on the life of St. Francis, and to build it into a perfect system of the Christian life. Bonaventure, therefore, is not opposed to the doctrine of Aristotle; but his preference is for St. Augustine, in whose doctrine, as in the practical life of St. Francis, the external and the internal world speak to us of God.

Doctrine

1. Theory of Knowledge: Bonaventure admits three degrees of knowledge: Knowledge of the particular, of sensitive objects; Knowledge of ideas, which come from illumination; Contemplation, the understanding of divine things.

2. Metaphysics: Bonaventure accepts the Aristotelian principle of matter and form, but wanders far afield in the interpretation of both. Matter has its own form, and contains the seeds of all determinations; there is corporeal matter as well as incorporeal matter. The existence of God is proved a priori (argument of St. Anselm). In every finite being there is a plurality of forms. In cosmology, Bonaventure holds that creation "ab aeterno" is contradictory; God, when He created matter, placed in it the seeds of all determinations. In psychology, Bonaventure's thesis is that the union of the soul with the body is extrinsic, because the soul is a complete substance in itself. In ethics, Bonaventure defends the priority of the will over the intellect.

On the Internet More about Bonaventure

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274)

For a more advanced & comprehensive discussion, see: The Philosophical System of Thomas Aquinas, by Maurice de Wulf.

Philosophy and Theology

Thomas Aquinas (picture) does not accept the Averroist principle of the double truth. Philosophy and theology are distinct but not opposed, and what reason shows to be true is absolutely true in theology also. Moreover, Aquinas does not accept Augustinian illumination, the belief that the eternal truths are imparted to our soul by the Word of God. For Aquinas the intellect is able to reach concepts through abstraction. The proper object of the human intellect is this visible world; our intellect cannot penetrate the mysteries of faith. Nevertheless, the most important religious truths, such as the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, are both the object of reason and the object of faith.

Theory of Knowledge

Knowledge is obtained through two stages of operations, sensitive and intellective, which are intimately related to one another. The object of sensitive knowledge is the particular thing, while the object of the intellect is the "intelligible," which is arrived at from the particular by abstraction. The intellect has three operations: abstraction, judgment and reasoning.

General Metaphysics: Aquinas accepts the general principles of Aristotle's metaphysics, in which being is a created composite of potency and act. The general principle of potency and act, applied to those beings in

which it is already existent, is specified in a second principle, the principle of matter and form. The principle of individuation is "matter signed by quantity."

Theodicy

Aquinas does not admit supernatural Augustinian illumination, and hence refuses to accept any proof a priori of the existence of God (argument of St. Anselm). The arguments for the existence of God must be a posterior, and they are solidly certain. Aquinas has presented five different ways in which the intellect can prove the existence of God; each of them consists in a fact of experience, which can be justified only by the existence of the transcendent Being (God). Thus: The fact of motion induces the mind to affirm the existence of the immovable Mover; The fact of the production of a new reality demands the existence of the uncaused reality; The fact of a contingent being implies the existence of a necessary Being; The fact of the existence in things, to a greater or lesser degree, of the good, the true, and the noble, implies the existence of "absolute perfection"; The Fact of the order of the whole universe implies the necessity of an Intelligence which is the cause of this order.

Cosmology

In cosmology, Aquinas departs from the dualism of Aristotle; matter is created by God. The whole universe was created by an act of the free will of God, and what happens in the universe finds its counterpart in the wisdom of God.

The Soul: When the form in matter is the origin of immanent actions, it is called soul. Hence there is a vegetative soul, a sensitive soul, and an intellective soul. The human soul is directly created by God, and it is the true form of the body; it therefore performs both organic and inorganic activities. The intellect is an inorganic power of the individual soul. The agent intellect is not one and the same for all but is the human soul itself in so far as the soul is intellectual in nature. As such it is able to abstract the intelligibles from material conditions. Since the human soul is able to perform inorganic operations, it is immaterial, spiritual and immortal.

Ethics and Politics

In opposition to the voluntarism of St. Augustine, Aquinas upholds the primacy of the intellect over the will. Aquinas extends this law even to God; the foundation of creation is the Divine Essence, which is rational; the present order of creation has been willed by God because it was rational. All created beings must follow the natural law, and for rational beings, including man, it is the law of reason. Man is free, and he can abuse his freedom; but every abuse of freedom is an irrational act.

Aquinas

departs from Augustinianism also in his doctrine on the state; society is natural to man, and not a consequence of the original fall, as the Augustinians believed. The first step to society is the family and the end of society is the common material good of men. Civil society, therefore, must

recognize another superior society, that is, the Church, to which has been entrusted the spiritual good citizens.

John Duns Scotus (1265 - 1308) "The Subtle Doctor"

John Duns Scotus (picture) is the champion of Franciscan Augustinianism. Nevertheless he abandons certain theses of the Augustinian tradition, in favor of the new contributions of Aristotelianism.

Theory of Knowledge

Scotus does not admit Augustinian illumination. He distinguishes between the "proper" object of the intellect, and the object in "state of act." The immediate object of the intellect is the quiddity (essence) abstracted from material conditions; but the "proper" object is "being as being." In regard to abstraction, Scotus holds that the phantasm (sense image) concurs as a concause in the formation of the concept.

General Metaphysics

Scotus accepts the Aristotelian principles of matter and form, but to these two elements he gives a different interpretation. Prime matter as such can exist; moreover, matter is a constitutive element of every being, even of those of spiritual nature, such as the angels. The principle of individuation, instead of being matter, as Thomas Aquinas taught, is form, in the opinion of Scotus. The determination of the form in the act of individuation is called "haecceitas." Moreover, the concept of being is not analogical, as Aquinas held, but univocal.

Theodicy

Scotus holds, in opposition to traditional Augustianism, that there is no intuition of God. His existence must be proved and Scotus proves the existence of God first a posteriori, by the traditional argument of change. But he admits also the validity of the ontological argument of St. Anselm, to which he gives a new interpretation by introducing into it another principle; that is, that the concept of infinite being is not contradictory, and hence the infinite Being exists. For Scotus the fundamental attribute of God is His infinity.

Cosmology

In this field Scotus accepts the common doctrine of Scholastic tradition. However, according to his principle of the primacy of the will over the intellect, he holds that creation is first an act of will. In consequence of this voluntaristic doctrine, many truths which for Thomas are demonstrable with certainty, are not so for Scotus.

Psychology

In psychology Scotus admits that in every individual there is a multiplicity of forms. The human soul is a complete being in itself. The proper object of the intellect is being in its entire extension. The proof of the immortality of the human soul rests upon faith rather than upon reason. According to Scotus' principle of the primacy of the will, opposites in the field of contingency do not imply contradiction.

Ethics

Scotus reaffirms his voluntarist doctrine in his ethics; this means that God finds within His will the motives for realizing one series of possibles rather than another. The will of God does not act capriciously, however, for God's will is at the same time the most intelligent act. Thus, all that is essentially bound up with the essence of God is also essentially bound up with the divine will, as, for example, the principle of contradiction and the first three commandments of the Decalogue. What is not necessarily bound up with the Divine Essence is dependent upon the free choice of God. Scotus, with St. Augustine, affirms that virtue is an act of love which directs us to God.

Summary

Dogmas, according to Scotus, are beyond dispute; faith is basic to truth; love is the fundamental virtue; faith and love are based on the will; will is superior to the intellect. Universals exist before things, as forms in the mind of God; and after things, as abstract concepts in the human mind. Universal nature (or essence) is supplemented by individual nature and the principle of difference is individuation. General concepts (universals) finally bring us to individuals (nominals, particulars). Duns Scotus agrees with Aquinas in many points; his major difference is in his emphasis on the will, discounting the supreme importance of the intellect in Aquinas' philosophy; Scotus made the will supreme. This difference between the two concepts of the will led to the Thomist-Scotist controversy.

The positive contributions of John Duns Scotus to the Perennial Philosophy

Theory of Knowledge. Scotus distinguishes between the proper object of the intellect and its de facto object. The proper object of this faculty is "being" -- the entire field of being without restriction ("ens in quantum ens") -- through which the intellect can know immaterial essences, even without the aid of sensations. In the field of fact or in actual conditions and as a consequence of original sin, what moves the intellect is only those things that are presented to sensation ("quidditas rei sensibilis").

Metaphysics.There is a difference between Thomas Aquinas and Scotus regarding the principle of individuation. Aquinas had affirmed that the reason for the contraction of the form to the individual depends upon matter signed with quantity. Scotus does not accpet this solution, but observes that quantity is an accident, that therefore in Aquinas' system individuality would be reduced to the level of an accident. Thus, according to Scotus, individuality must be derived from the form, which is the basis of being. This new entitative perfection, which comes to the species (forma) and which indicates the passage from specific difference to individual determination, Scotus calls "thisness."

IV. The Decadence Of Scholastic Philosophy

During the Middle Ages there two celebrated centers of culture: the University of Paris and Oxford University. While at Paris interest in metaphysics prevailed, at Oxford there was an interest in the sciences, with empirical tendencies. This interest was to give origin to the rise of the positive sciences. But at the same time it was to be one of the motives for neglecting metaphysics and returning to the ancient position of nominalism already disproved in the more advanced teachings of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.

a. Roger Bacon (1214 - 1294)

Roger Bacon (picture) was a Franciscan monk at Oxford, a student of mathematics and languages; he regarded these subjects as indispensable to theology and philosophy. Bacon wrote an important book entitled "Opus Major" which initiated the modern scientific movement. According to Bacon, there are three ways in which we acquire knowledge: authority, reason, and experience. The last is the most perfect. Bacon distinguishes a twofold experience: external perception, which brings us knowledge of the sensible world; and internal perception, by which is meant "illumination." Bacon combined Augustinian-Platonic philosophy with Arabic speculations and emphasized the need of observation.

b. William of Ockham (1300 - 1349)

For Ockham concepts do not have objective reality; they exist only in our intellect as a "term" or "sign" of the similarity of many experienced objects. The denial of concepts as a reality bears within itself the denial of metaphysics. Moreover, Ockham defends an absolute predomination of the divine will: The Principle of contradiction is under the free will of God, and, if God wished, it would be a meritorious act to hate Him. Furthermore, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are objects of faith and not of reason. Thus, when faith became weaker, these truths were denied, which is exactly what modern philosophy has done.

On the Internet More About William of Ockham

V. Philosophical and Mystical Knowledge

The proper object of philosophy is the essence of material beings, and the philosopher conceives these essences by means of abstraction from data obtained by the senses, from external objects. Any method of knowledge which bypasses sense experience and is based on intuition is not necessarily false, but it is not philosophical: it is true if based on an actual supernatural gift but it is beyond the means of natural knowledge. Therefore, all theories based on illumination are philosophically excluded because they are beyond philosophy, even though they may lead to deeper truths. Such men as St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure were so used to the supernatural method that they accepted it by mistake as a natural means of acquiring knowledge, not noticing that such method was a personal favor of God and could not be followed by the philosopher who was left to reason alone.

Conclusion

Scholastic philosophy grew step by step as a harmonious accord of reason and faith, which met on the same summit: God, the Creator of man. Such metaphysics does not know decadence. The decadence occurs in men, when their culture indicates a retrogression to past errors, such as Ockham did with his return to nominalism. Thus in later schools these same errors were to appear again; reason was to take the place of faith and man the place of God.

The positive contributions of Scholastic Philosophy to the Perennial Philosophy Scholastic philosophy, in its laborious ascent to Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, utilized the best elements of Greek and Patristic philosophy, and succeeded in constructing a weighty metaphysics, in which a rational solution is found to the two problems at the basis of philosophy as well as theology: God and man.

Scholastic metaphysics is a harmonious accord of science and faith, between philosophy and theology, which, although treading different paths, meet on the same summit: God, the Creator of man. Such a metaphysics does not know decadence, and for this reason Scholasticism has justly been included in the "philosophia perennis," the Perennial Philosophy, the philosophy of all times and of all places.

The Philosophy of Bonaventure

I. Life and Works

Bonaventure (born Giovanni di Fidanza) (picture) was born at Bagnorea in 1221 and entered the Franciscan Order probably about the year 1243. He studied at the University of Paris, where he was a disciple of Alexander of Hales, the first Franciscan master of that university; Bonaventure later succeeded his master in the chair of philosophy. He taught at the university from 1248 to 1255 and took part, along with Thomas Aquinas, in the debate against William of Saint Amour, adversary of the Mendicants.

In October of 1257 the degree of Doctor was bestowed on Bonaventure at the university. Nominated General of the Order in the same year, he left his studies to devote himself to the affairs of the Franciscans. At this time he wrote the new Constitutions of the Order and the biography of St. Francis of Assisi which helped to pacify the various Franciscan currents.

In 1273 he was named Cardinal and Bishop of Alvano. He died in Lyons in 1274 while the Council being held in that city was still in session. Bonaventure has been honored with the title "Doctor Seraphicus." His principal works are: Commentaries on the Four Books of Sentences of Peter Lombard; Itinerarium mentis in Deum; De reductione artium ad theologiam; and Breviloquium.

II. Doctrine: General Notions

Bonaventure is the theorist of what, in a practical way, was mirrored in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. Francis had been entirely consumed by love of God and of Christ crucified; and the sacred stigmata, visible in his body, were the manifestation of what had already been verified within the very depths of his saintly spirit. In this mystical union with God and with Christ, St. Francis had found the basis of brotherhood not only with men but also with all beings, and the human and physical world was revealed before his eyes as a sanctuary in which all things spoke to him of God.

Bonaventure wished to theorize on the life of the Poverello and to build it into a perfect system of the Christian life. For this purpose he did not borrow the teachings of the speculative rationalism of Aristotle, but looked to Augustinianism, which already boasted a long tradition in the Church. Its voluntarism, which placed love of God at the center of every activity; its theory of illumination, which made God present to the soul; its analogism, which revealed an image of God and of His attributes in each and every creature -- all of these motives which, outside all speculation, speak to us most vividly of what should be the ideal of the Christian life.

It is understood, then, why Bonaventure is not opposed to the doctrine of Aristotle, why he even accepts it in part. But his preference is for St. Augustine, and he again works out all the motives of Augustinianism, in which all things, the external and the internal world, matter and spirit, speak to us of God; following Augustine he holds that the apex of all human activity is contemplation or mystical union with God.

In brief, Bonaventure shows the Christian what kind of life he should live if he wishes to attain his destiny. This is the historical function of the

mysticism of Bonaventure, which is as important in the spiritual order as the Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas in the order of rational philosophy.

III. Theory of Knowledge

Bonaventure admits three degrees of knowledge: The first degree is knowledge of the particular, of the individual. For this first degree of knowledge, sensible experience, corresponding to the physical senses, is indispensable; The second degree consists in knowledge of the universal, of ideas, and of all that we acquire by reflecting upon ourselves. This knowledge does not come from abstraction as suggested by Aristotle and Aquinas, but from illumination. This illumination is for Bonaventure the result of an immediate cooperation of God. The intellect needs this cooperation or illumination in order to know the intelligible.

The third degree is the understanding of things superior to ourselves -- God. This kind of knowledge can be obtained through the eye of contemplation. "The eye of contemplation cannot function perfectly except in the state of glory, which man loses through sin and recovers through grace, faith and the understanding of the Scriptures. By these the human mind is purified, illumined, and brought to the contemplation of heavenly things. These are beyond the reach of fallen man unless he first recognizes his own defects and darknesses. But this he can only do by considering the fall of human nature." (Breviloguium, II, 12.)

IV. General Metaphysics

Bonaventure accepts the Aristotelian principle of matter and form, but he wanders far afield in the interpretation of both. Matter, created by God, has its proper form, distinct from all other forms or determinations which may come to it. Moreover, it contains the seeds of all these determinations (the doctrine of "rationes seminales" of St. Augustine).

Nevertheless, it is an essential constituent of every creature, even of those which are said to be incorporeal, such as human souls and angels. The matter of incorporeal substances, on account of the form which it receives, is spiritual matter ("materia spiritualis"), which expresses what is contingent and limited in every finite being. Bonaventure admits in every body a plurality of forms. Thus, besides the form which is proper to the matter, in every body there are as many forms as there are essential properties, all placed in hierarchical order; that is, the inferior forms are subordinate to the superior ones.

V. Cosmology

In his cosmology, Bonaventure does not accept the Aristotelian concepts of the eternity of the world and of matter as co-eternal with God. The world has its origin in the creative act in time; creation "ab aeterno" is contradictory. God, who has created matter, has placed in it the seeds or reasons of all the determinations which it can assume ("rationes seminales").

VI. Psychology

In psychology, Bonaventure departs from Aristotelianism not only in the fact of knowledge, as we have already seen, but also in judging the relationship between the soul and the body and between the soul and its

faculties. For Bonaventure the soul is of its very nature form and matter (spiritual matter), and as a consequence is a complete substance, independent of the body. The body in turn is composed of matter and form (vegetative and sensitive form), but it aspires to being informed by the rational form. In this aspiration and coordination the unity of the individual consists.

Without doubt, the unity of the person is not as intimately welded as in Aristotelianism; but Bonaventure's teaching avoids the danger into which Aristotelianism entered with its theory of immanent form, of making the soul dependent on the body even in its destiny. Such a danger cannot exist in Bonaventure, for whom the soul is a substance complete in itself and not indissolubly united to the body.

With regard to the faculties of the soul, Bonaventure, in accord with St. Augustine, distinguishes three -- the will, the understanding and the intellective memory. For Bonaventure the faculties are expressions of one and the same soul, which is endowed with three diverse activities; between the soul and its faculties there is merely a logical distinction. In Aristotelianism the faculties are qualities of the soul and really distinct from it. Bonaventure holds that among the faculties of the soul the will has primacy over the other faculties; therefore it is necessary to love in order to understand.

This law is applied also to our knowledge of God: it is necessary to be united to God through faith and grace in order to know Him and His attributes. The process of this knowledge is described in the Itinerarium mentis in Deum. There are three grades or steps through which the soul ascends to God. The first grade is called "vestigium," which is the imprint of Himself that God has stamped on material things outside ourselves. The second grade is "imago," or the reflection of the soul upon itself, by which, seeing the threefold faculties of the soul -- will, intellect, and memory -- man discerns the image of God. The third grade is "similitudo," or the consideration of God Himself. By considering the idea of the most perfect being, we can conceive the unity of God (the ontological argument of Anselm, which Bonaventure admits as valid); and from the concept of infinite goodness we can reach the consideration of the Trinity. In "similitudo" the soul attains to mystical union, the supreme degree of love between the creature and his Creator.

The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas

For a more advanced & comprehensive discussion, see: The Philosophical System of Thomas Aquinas, by Maurice de Wulf

I. The Life of Thomas Aquinas --1225-1274

The "Angelic Doctor" Thomas Aquinas (picture), born of a noble family in Rocca Secca, near Aquino in 1225, was to complete the magnificent synthesis of Scholasticism. As a very young boy, he went to Monte Cassino, the celebrated Benedictine monastery which at the time was headed by one of his uncles. He displayed such brilliance that the monks advised his father to send him to the University of Naples, where he could receive a more advanced education. While in Naples, he entered the Dominican Order. His mother, far from favorable to this move, hastened to Naples; but the Dominicans, fearing her opposition, had already send Thomas to Rome in the hope that he would eventually be able to reach Paris or Cologne.

His brothers captured him on the road and held him prisoner in the fortress of San Giovanni at Rocca Secca, where he remained almost two years while his family tried to dissuade him from following his vocation.

Finally released, he was sent to Rome, then to Paris and Cologne where he studied in the school of Albertus Magnus. There he was introduced to the study of Aristotelianism and completed his theological studies. In 1252, Thomas Aquinas was sent to Paris to further his studies and then to teach, which he continued to do until 1260. In that year he returned to the Roman province of his Order, where he was given various offices of administration and education in the province.

In 1269 he was again in Paris, where he carried on the controversy against the Averroism of Siger of Brabant. In 1272 he went to Naples to assume the chair of theology at the university there. At the beginning of 1274 he set out with a companion for the Council of Lyons, but died en route, at the Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova near Terracina, on March 7, at the early age of forty-nine. He was proclaimed a saint by the Church, and by posterity has been acclaimed as the Angelic Doctor.

II. The Works of Thomas Aquinas

The works of Thomas Aquinas may be conveniently divided into four groups:

1. COMMENTARIES on the Logic, Physics, Metaphysics, and Ethics of Aristotle; on the Scriptures; on Dionysius the Areopagite; on the Four Books of Sentences of Peter Lombard.

2. SUMMAE The Summa contra Gentiles (A Summary Against the Gentiles), founded substantially on rational demonstration; The Summa Theologica (A Summary of Theology), begun in 1265, and remaining incomplete because of Thomas' early death.

3. QUESTIONS Quaestiones Disputatae (Disputed Questions): De Veritate (On Truth), De Anima (On the Soul), De Potentia (On Power), De Malo (On Evil), etc.; Quaestiones Quodlibetales (Questions About Any Subject).

4. OPUSCULA (selected examples) De Ente et Essentia (On Being and Essence); De Unitate Intellectus (On the Unity of the Intellect), written against the Averroists; De Regimine Principum (On the Rule of Princes).

III. An Introduction to His Doctrine

Thomas Aquinas was the first to recognize the fact that Aristotelian intellectualism would be of great help for the study of philosophy as well as theology. But the introduction of Aristotle's works involved the solution of the disputed question of the relationship between philosophy and theology.

At the time of Aquinas, besides the Averroist theory of the double truth, by virtue of which philosophy and theology were not only separate but opposed, there was also Augustinianism, which was largely accepted in the School and held that no real distinction between philosophy and theology was possible.

This confusion between philosophy and theology was a necessary consequence of the theory of illumination, according to which the human intellect was considered incapable of abstracting intelligibles from the data of experience, but rather received them from the Divine Teacher. This Teacher communicated to the intellect the intelligibles regarding the material things of the surrounding world as well as those concerning the invisible and supernatural world. Thus the human intellect was capable of understanding not only material things but also the mysteries of religion. Hence no distinction between philosophy and theology was possible.

Thomas Aquinas sharply opposed both Averroism and Augustinianism. He did not accept the theory of the double truth, not only because of its irreligious consequences regarding the mortality of the human soul, but because he was convinced of the falsity of such a theory.

For Aquinas, what reason shows to be true is absolutely true, so that the opposite is absolutely false and impossible. [1] If religion, therefore, teaches something that is opposed to reason, as the Averroists maintained it does, it would teach what is absolutely false and impossible.

Two contradictory truths cannot be admitted; truth is one, either in the field of reason or of religion. The two fields are separate but not opposed. There are religious truths -- such as the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation -- which the human intellect cannot penetrate; and these truths must accepted on the authority of revelation.

Parallel to them, there are natural truths concerning this visible world which are intelligible to the human mind and are the object of philosophy and science.

To the question whether there also some truths which at the same time are revealed and open to rational demonstration, Aquinas answers yes. Such truths are the existence of God and the immortality of the human soul, which are demonstrable by reason. God revealed them, however, in order to make these truths accessible to the minds of those who cannot attain philosophical investigation. [2]

But Aquinas also opposed Augustinian illumination. Granting that the human soul is intellectual by nature, he maintains that the human intellect by its natural power is able to draw the intelligibles from material objects.

Besides its own natural power, the human intellect does not need any special divine assistance in abstracting the intelligibles from the data of experience.

Indeed, if Aristotle, a pagan philosopher, could establish a systematic and rational interpretation of the visible world, we must admit that the human intellect has the power of knowing some fundamental principles and is capable of drawing therefrom a perfect science without divine assistance.

Moreover, since with Aristotle we know what rational demonstration means, we can see how vain is the assumption of the Augustinians that the mysteries of faith can be demonstrated "by means of necessity." The truths of faith are above human understanding. They are the object of faith and not of science. Hence philosophy and theology are distinct and this distinction must be retained.

Although distinct, they are related. Philosophy shows the necessity of faith by demonstrating the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Theology on the other hand helps philosophy to reflect more deeply and to correct itself if some philosophical conclusion is contrary to the mysteries of faith. [3]

IV. Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology)

To explain the process of knowledge, Thomas Aquinas has recourse neither to the innate ideas of Platonism nor to the illumination of Augustine. Instead, he postulates a cognitive faculty naturally capable of acquiring knowledge of the object, in proportion to that faculty. Agreeing with Aristotle, he admits that knowledge is obtained through two stages of operation, sensitive and intellective, which are intimately related to one another. The proper object of the sensitive faculty is the particular thing, the individual; the proper object of the intellect is the universal, the idea, the intelligible.

But the intellect does not attain any idea unless the material for that idea is presented to it by the senses: "Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu." The two cognitive faculties, sense and intellect, are naturally capable of acquiring knowledge of their proper object, since both are in potency -- the sense, toward the individual form; and the intellect, toward the form of the universal.

The obtaining of the universal presupposes that the sensible knowledge of the object which lies outside us comes through the impression of the form of the object upon the sensitive faculty. This is likened to the impression of the seal upon wax. Upon this material impression the soul reacts according to its nature, that is, psychically, producing knowledge of that particular object whose form had been impressed upon the senses. Thus the faculty which was in potency is actuated with relation to that object, and knows and expresses within itself knowledge of that particular object.

But how is the passage made from sensitive cognition to that which is intellective? Or, rather, how is the individual form which is now offered by sensible cognition condensed into an idea and thus made the proportionate object of the intellect?

To understand the solution to the problem, it is necessary to recall the theory of Aristotle which Aquinas makes his own; that is, that the individual form is universal in potentia. It is the matter which makes the form

individual. Hence if the form can be liberated from the individualizing matter, or dematerialized, it assumes the character of universality.

According to Thomas Aquinas, this is just what happens through the action of a special power of the intellect, i.e., the power by which the phantasm (sense image) is illuminated. Under the influence of this illumination, the form loses its materiality; that is, it becomes the essence or intelligible species (species intelligibilis). Thomas call this faculty the intellectus agens (agent intellect), and it is to be noted that for Thomas the "intellectus agens" is not, as the Averroists held, a separate intellect which is common to all men.

For Aquinas, the agent intellect is a special activity of the cognitive soul, and it is individual and immanent in every intellective soul. The "species intelligibilis" is then received by the intellect, which is called passive since it receives its proper object, and become intelligible in act. Note that according to Aquinas the form, both intelligible and individual, is not that which the mind grasps or understands (this would reduce knowledge to mere phenomenalism), but is the means through which the mind understands the object (individual form) and the essence of the object ("forma intelligibilis").

Knowledge thus has its foundation in reality, in the metaphysical.

Furthermore, since the cognitive faculty is in potency, when it becomes actuated, it becomes one with the form which actuates. Thus it may be said, in a certain sense, that the intellect is identified with the determined form which it knows.

For Aquinas all the data of sense knowledge and all intelligible things are essentially true. Truth consists in the equality of the intellect with its object, and such concordance is always found, both in sensitive cognition and in the idea. Error may exist in the judgment, since it can happen that a predicate may be attributed to a subject to which it does not really belong.

Besides the faculty of judgment, Aquinas also admits the faculty of discursive reasoning, which consists in the derivation of the knowledge of particulars from the universal. Deductive, syllogistic demonstration must be carried out according to the logical relationships which exist between two judgments. In this process consists the science which the human intellect can construct by itself, without recourse either to innate ideas or to any particular illumination.

V. General Metaphysics

Aquinas accepts the general principles of the metaphysics of Aristotle, for whom there are two principles of being, potency and act. Act signifies being, reality, perfection; potency is non-being, non-reality, imperfection. Potency does not, however, mean absolute non-being, but rather the capacity to receive some perfection, the capacity to exist, as Aristotle taught.

The transition from potential to actual existence is becoming, that is, the passage from potency to act. Outside of becoming there exists Pure Act, the absolute reality and perfection upon which all becoming depends. The general principle of metaphysics, potency and act, applied to that part of becoming in which matter is already existent, is specified in a second principle, the principle of matter and form.

Matter which in potency is not be understood as pure nothingness, but is as a being having in itself no determination. Thus matter is to be conceived of as the substratum of form. The form which is in act gives to the matter specific determination, reality, perfection -- that which we mean when we ask what is such and such a thing.

The union of matter and form constitutes or gives place to the substance, to the "totum," the individual. Relative to the question of the principle of individuation, or the question of how it happens that a determined specific form can give place to a multiplicity of individuals of the same species, Aquinas affirms that the principle of individuation is matter -- not matter considered abstractly, pure matter, but matter signed by quantity, or that concrete matter in which the new form is produced.

If prime matter and substantial form are sufficient to constitute the "totum" (the substance), then this latter, to be perfect, can and must receive other or secondary forms, i.e., accidental forms which give new determination to the substance (quantity, quality, etc.). The accidents, since they are determinations of the substance, are ordained to the substance and depend on it.

The concept of matter and form gives us an explanation of how a thing becomes, but does not tell why it becomes. To present us with the why of becoming, it is necessary to have recourse to a third concept -- that of efficient cause -- which produces such a determination of form in matter and is the reason why this particular form arises in the matter.

Finally, to give us the reason why the efficient or acting cause or agent is made to bring about the union of this form in this matter, we need a fourth element, the concept of end. End (finis) indicates the purpose the agent has in mind when he acts, or gives actuation to this form in this matter.

Final cause hence indicates the end, and also the order according to which the agent is determined to act: First in intention, the purpose or end is last in execution -- the purpose of the agent is achieved only when the entity is completed in its material element and its substantial and accidental forms. Thus for Aquinas, as for Aristotle, the concepts explaining reality are reduced to the concepts of the four causes -- material, formal, efficient, and final.

VI. The Existence of God (Theodicy)

The Five Ways

The search for God and His relationship with the world was as fundamental in the Middle Ages as it was at any time during the history of Christian thought. At the time of Aquinas, Augustinianism was the most appreciated doctrine in the school of philosophy at the University of Paris. In virtue of illumination, which is the central point of Augustinianism, the human soul could have an intuitive knowledge of God. Indeed the intellect had only to reflect upon itself to find the presence of the Divine Teacher.

Thus the existence of God was proved a priori by means of necessary reason. Obviously, if the presence of the ideas of absolute truth and good in our mind must be explained by the direct suggestion of God, we do not need any other proof of God's existence.

But, according to Aquinas, any natural intuitive knowledge of God is precluded to man. For us, only the visible world, which is capable of impressing our senses, is the object of natural intuitive knowledge. Thus any argument a priori for the existence of God is devoid of validity. For Aquinas, the existence of God needs to be demonstrated, and demonstration must start from the sensible world without any prejudice. 4 Such demonstrations are possible and are accommodated to anyone who is simply capable of reflecting. There are five ways in which the human intellect can prove the existence of God. All have a common point of resemblance. The starting point is a consideration of the sensible world known by immediate experience. Such a consideration of the sensible world would remain incomprehensible unless it was related to God as author of the world.

So each argument might be reduced to a syllogism whose major premise is a fact of experience, and whose minor premise is a principle of reason, which brings to light the intelligibility of the major premise.

It is interesting to note that Aquinas uses the Aristotelian principle of the priority of act over potency for the first three arguments. Where there is a being in change, i.e., passing from potency to actuality, there must be another being actually existent, outside the series in change, whether this series is considered to be finite or infinite.

Aquinas formulates this principle in three different ways according to the three aspects of reality taken into consideration. For the first way the formulation is: What is moved, is moved by another; for the second way: It is impossible for something to be the efficient cause of itself; for the third way: What is not, cannot begin to be, unless by force of something which is. The fourth way takes into consideration many aspects of reality, which, when compared with one another, show that they are more or less perfect. The principle of intelligibility is the following: What is said to be the greatest in any order of perfection is also the cause of all that exists in that order.

The fifth way takes into consideration the order of nature: Where there is a tendency of many to the same end, there must be an intellectual being causing such an order. Let us set forth the schematic structure of the five ways: Our senses attest to the existence of movement or motion. But every motion presupposes a mover which produces that movement. To have recourse to an infinite series of motions is not possible, for such an infinite series does not and cannot solve the question of the origin of the movement. Hence there exists a first mover that moves and is not itself moved. This is God.

Some new thing is produced. But every new production includes the concept of cause. Thus there exists a first cause which is itself not caused. This is God. Everything in the world is contingent; that is, it may or may not exist. We know from experience that all things change in one way or another. But that which is contingent does not have the reason of its existence in itself, but in another, that is, in something which is not contingent.

Hence there exists the necessary being, God. The fourth way takes into consideration the transcendental qualities of reality, "the good, the true, the

noble," and so forth, which we find in things to a greater or lesser degree. But transcendental qualities are nothing other than being, expressed through one of its attributes; hence things under our experience are beings to a greater or lesser degree. But the greater and lesser are not intelligible unless they are related to that which is the highest in that order; and what is the highest is also the cause of all that exists in that order. Therefore there exists the highest degree of being and it is the cause of all limited being. This is God. Order exists in the world about us. Hence there must exist an intelligence responsible for the order of the universe. This is God.

Thus, in brief, we have Aquinas' five proofs for the existence of God; proofs from the notion of motion, cause, contingency, perfection, and order. The proofs for the existence of God are also means of knowing something of God's essence. This knowledge, however, remains always essentially inadequate and incomplete.

One way of knowing God is the way of negative theology, that is, by removing from the concept of God all that implies imperfection, potentiality, materiality. In other words, by this method we arrive at a knowledge of God through considering what He is not.

A second method is that of analogy. God is the cause of the world. Now every object reflects some perfection of the cause from which it proceeds. Hence it is possible for the human mind to rise to the perfections of God from the consideration of the perfection it finds in creatures. This it does, naturally, by removing all imperfection and potentiality from the creatures considered. The resultant idea of the nature of God is thus had through analogy with the perfections of the created universe.

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1. Contra Gent., I, 7.

2. Summa. Theol., Part I, q. I, a.1.

3. Summa Theol., Part I, q 1, a. 1; q. 12, a. 4; q. 32, a. 1; In Primum Librum Sent., q. 1, a. 1 and 2.

4. Summa Theol., Part I, q. 2, a.1; Contra Gent., I, 11.

VII. The World (Cosmology)

In determining or defining the relationship of God with the world, Aquinas departs not only from the doctrine of the Averroist Aristotelians, but also from the teaching of Aristotle himself. For Aristotle matter was uncreated and co-eternal with God, limiting the divinity itself (Greek dualism). Aquinas denies this dualism. The world was produced by God through His creative act, i.e., the world was produced from nothing.

Besides, all becoming in matter is connected with God, since He is the uncaused Cause and the immovable Mover of all that takes place in created nature. God has created the world from nothingness through a free act of His will; hence any necessity in the nature of God is excluded. Again, we know that Aristotle did not admit providence: the world was in motion toward God, as toward a point of attraction; but God did not know of this process of change, nor was He its ordinator.

For Aquinas, on the contrary, God is providence: creation was a knowing act of His will; God, the cause and mover of all the perfections of beings, is also the intelligent ordinator of them" all that happens in the world finds its counterpart in the wisdom of God. Now, how the providence and the wisdom of God are to be reconciled with the liberty of man is a problem which surpasses our understanding. It is not an absurdity, however, if we keep in mind that the action of Divine Providence is absolutely distinct and can be reconciled with the liberty of man without diminishing or minimizing this latter.

VIII. The Human Soul (Rational Psychology)

Besides God, the spiritual substances are the angels and human souls. Angels are not destined to inform any matter; the human soul, on the contrary, is ordered to be the form of the body. Hence the question arises as to the nature of the soul and its relations with the body. In regard to the first question, at the time of Aquinas, the Averroists held that "the agent intellect" was a form existent per se and that it was separated from human souls, in which, however, it made its appearance occasionally in order to impress the intelligibles on the passive intellect. The logical conclusion in this theory is that the human soul will perish when the conditions of the body make impossible the presence of the Unique Intellect.

Aquinas was always a strong opponent of Averroism. He rejected the unity and transcendence of the agent intellect not only for theological but for philosophical reasons.

As Aquinas observes 1, he who receives an intelligible form does not thereby become an "intelligent being." For instance, a house which receives the intelligible form of the idea of the artist, is intelligible but not intelligent.

Man not only is intelligible but also intelligent; he is intelligent, because he make intelligent operations. The principle of these intelligent operations, therefore, must be the soul itself and not a separate intellect. 2 The second question deals with the relationship of the human soul to the body. In man there are many operations -- vegetative, sensitive, and intellective. Now, unquestionably the intellective operations are performed by the rational soul. But who performs the others? Platonic-Augustinian philosophy solved

the question by admitting a multiplicity of inferior forms which are subordinated to the rational soul. Thus there was a sensitive form as well as a vegetative form.

Aquinas, following Aristotle in this matter, denies any multiplicity of substantial forms in the same individual. The form for man is one as is the form for any individual thing; in man this form is the rational soul. It is the principle of all operations, whether material or spiritual. We know that the one soul understands and performs all the operations. We express this identity of the subject when we say: "I understand and I feel, and I see."

Proper to the human soul is the understanding, which does not need the cooperation of any organ in its operations. But the human soul is also the "form of the body"; and just as every form is the principle of all the operations of the informed matter, so also the human soul is the principle of all operations performed by the body through its various organs. 3 The doctrine that "the soul is the form of the body" gives rise to another difficulty, which seems to spring from the same principle of matter and form taken from Aristotelian metaphysics.

According to Aristotle, the forms of natural bodies depend on the conditions of matter, so that when these conditions become unfit the permanence of the form is no longer possible; then it will be corrupted and another form will take its place. Hence the doctrine of the soul as the unique form of the body seems to lead logically to the mortality of the human soul. Aquinas overcomes the difficulty with the same Aristotelian principles. The operations of any being follow from its nature; thus any form leading only to organic operations is bound to matter and follows the conditions of matter, as, for instance, the animal soul, which is corrupted with the organism. But the human soul has superorganic operations.

The intellect does not need any organ in its understanding; hence the human soul is a superorganic substance, not dependent for its being upon any matter. And despite the fact that the human soul is the form of the body, it will last as a separate substance of intellectual nature, even when the conditions of the body render impossible the functioning of the soul as the form of the body. [4]

Thus the doctrine of Aquinas concerning the soul in general and the human soul in particular, may be summed us as follows:

When the form in matter is the origin of immanent actions, it gives origin to life and as such is more particularly called the "soul." There is a vegetative soul, such as the principle of plants, whose activity is fulfilled in nutrition, growth, and reproduction. Superior to the vegetative is the sensitive soul, which is present in animals; besides the processes of nutrition, growth and reproduction the sensitive soul is capable of sensitive knowledge and appetition. Superior still to the sensitive soul is the rational soul.

The rational soul is created directly by God; it is distinct for each man; it is the true form of the body. The human soul performs the functions of the vegetative and sensitive life, but besides these functions it has activities which do not depend upon the body, i.e., understanding and volition.

The intellect and the will are the faculties of the soul, the means through which it operates. The intellect has for its object the knowledge of the universal, and operates by judging and reasoning. The will is free; that is, it is not determined by any particular good, but it determines itself.

From an analysis of the intellect and the will, Aquinas proves the spirituality, the simplicity, and the immortality of the soul. The intellect has, in fact, for its proportionate object the universal, the understanding of which is a simple and spiritual act. Hence the soul from which the act of understanding proceeds is itself simple and spiritual. Since it is simple and spiritual, it is by nature also immortal.

The same conclusion is reached through an analysis of the will, which, as we have said, is free, i.e., not determined by any cause outside itself. In the physical world everything is determined by causal necessity, and hence there is no liberty. The faculty which is not determined by causal motives declares its independence of these causes and hence is an immaterial faculty. The soul upon which such a faculty depends must be of the same nature as the faculty; that is, the soul must be immaterial.

The human soul, since it is immaterial and performs acts which are not absolutely dependent upon the bodily organs, does not perish with the body -- although, as Aquinas says, the soul separated from the body is not entirely complete but has an inclination to the body as the necessary instrument for its complete and full activity.

IX. Ethics and Politics

In opposition to the voluntarism of Augustinian thought, Aquinas holds the primacy of the intellect over the will. Reason precedes volition. Aquinas extends this law even to God. Creation is founded upon the essence of God in so far as this essence is known by God's intellect and can be produced through the creative act. The divine will freely selects from among the possibilities in the divine essence. Thus even in God this present order of creation has been willed because it was reasonable, and not vice versa, reasonable because willed. Analogously, in man the act of understanding precedes the movement of the will. Nevertheless the will is free and hence is not constrained to select necessarily what the intellect presents to it as reasonable.

In order to demonstrate the freedom of our will, Aquinas goes to the very root of the will. The will is determined by good as is the intellect by truth. Thus if the will were presented with an object which is essentially good -- good under every aspect (God) -- the will in this case would not be free, because it would find itself confronted with the adequate object of its nature.

But our will is dependent on the intellect, and the intellect, as we know, is dependent upon sensations, i.e., upon particular goods, which may be good from one standpoint and evil from another. In this case the will is free to select from among the various objects presented to it by the intellect.

But all of this is not yet sufficient to form the moral act in its entirety. Freedom of the will and the free volitional act are the subjective part of morality. To complete the moral act, it is necessary to have also the objective part, or the conformity of volition to the supreme norm of morality. This supreme norm is called by Aquinas the eternal law; it resides

in God and is the norm of the order established by God in the creature. The eternal law, in so far as it is manifested and recognized by the intelligence, constitutes the natural law. This latter, then, is none other than the eternal law in so far as it is manifested to our conscience.

The morality of an act depends upon its conformity to the law of conscience and hence to the eternal law; nonconformity brings about moral evil, sin. The more regularly moral law is observed, the easier such observance becomes; hence, virtue consists in the habitual and conscious conformity of action to the moral law. The natural virtues, for Aquinas as for Aristotle, are four: prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice. In opposition to Augustinian teaching, which affirmed that society is not natural but is the consequence of original sin, and in conformity with Aristotle, Aquinas discovers the necessity of society by analyzing human nature.

Society is necessary for the perfection to which man by his nature has been destined. Man is hence a political animal. The first form of society is the family, an imperfect society because it is destined by nature solely for the propagation of the species.

Society has for its end the common good, and man does not exist for society, but society exists for man. The duties of society are of a positive and a negative nature; i.e., the state not only must provide for the defense of its citizens and for their free exercise (negative duties), but must also provide educative and formative measures for the elevation of the members of society.

Since the end of the state is the common good of material nature, the state must recognize another society, the Church, to which has been entrusted the spiritual good of the same citizens; and since the material must be coordinated with the spiritual, the state, although complete in itself, must recognize the rights of the Church in matters of morality and religion.

The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus

1265 or 66-1308 "The Subtle Doctor"

I. Life and Works

John Duns Scotus (picture) was born in Scotland, probably in the village of Maxton (now Littledean), in 1265 or 1266. While very young, he entered the Franciscan Order. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1291, he was sent to Paris to study at the famous university there, and on his return to England he taught at Oxford. In 1303, as a student at the University of Paris, he wrote his commentary on the Book of Sentences. He returned to Oxford but by 1304 was teaching in Paris. Here he propounded his celebrated thesis on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. In 1308 Scotus was in Cologne as lector in the Franciscan Scholasticate, and there on the eighth of November of the same year he died.

His principal works are: Opus Oxoniense (named so from Oxford), his great commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard (this work contains the better part of Scotus' thought); Quaestiones subtilissimae in metaphysicam Aristotelis; Reportata Parisiensia, which are new notations on his commentary on the Sentences; Quaestiones quodlibetales, which contains twenty-one questions; De primo principio, which contains a profound exposition of Scotist theodicy.

General Note on the Thought of Scotus

Scotus is the greatest champion of Franciscan Augustianianism. The reconstruction of Augustinianism by St. Bonaventure, likewise the reconstruction of Aristotelianism by St. Thomas had already been made before Scotus began to teach. But Scotus was not a mechanical repeater of either of them. A serious and constructive thinker, he was convinced that truth may shine more brightly as a result of profound investigation: "In progressu generationis humanae semper crevit notitia veritatis." Endowed with extraordinary subtle penetration of mind, Scotus became the faithful servant of truth by undertaking the task of criticism in regard to his predecessors' work. In his teachings he abandons certain theses which were dear to the Augustinian tradition, while he interprets others in the light of the new contribution of Aristotelianism. From this treatment flows a new and original view of the major philosophical problems which has come to be known as Scotism or Scotist thought.

II. Theory of Knowledge

Scotus does not accept Augustinian illumination. Instead, he bolds that intellectual cognition takes its origin from sensation through the process of abstraction. He distinguishes, however, between the proper object of the intellect and its de facto object. The proper object of this faculty is "being" -- the entire field of being without restriction ("ens in quantum ens") -- through which the intellect can know immaterial essences, even without the aid of sensations. In the field of fact (Scotus' "objectum de facto") or in actual conditions and as a consequence of original sin, what moves the intellect is only those things that are presented to sensation ("quidditas rei

sensibilis"). The passage between sensation and intellectual cognition (ideas, concepts) is abstraction.

Now, for St. Thomas abstraction consists in an act on the part of the active intellect which illuminates the phantasm (sense image). But for Scotus the universal concept is the result of causality by which the phantasm itself supplies the physical universal. The intellect, determined in a certain causal way by the physical universal, gives it intentional being -- or in other words, makes it a real concept predicable of many. From this mutual causality comes the logical universal which exists in the intellect; the objectivity of this logical universal is founded upon the physical universal that exists in individuals outside the mind.

III. Metaphysics

General Metaphysics

As a general metaphysics Scotus accepts the Aristotelian principle of matter and form, but to these two elements he gives a different interpretation than St. Thomas does. For St. Thomas prime matter takes its act of existence from the form. For Scotus existence belongs to the matter, independent of the form, because one cannot conceive of a being constituted outside its cause without the act of existence. Consequently, according to Scotus, prime matter can exist as such, separate from the form. Furthermore, there is no real distinction between essence and existence. Matter, then, is a constitutive element of every being, even of the separate forms, such as angels, in whom spiritual matter is present.

Regarding the concept of being, Scotus holds that it is univocal, as against St. Thomas, who teaches that it is an analogous concept. Still, the division of the univocal concept of being into "ens a se" and "ens ab alio," into substance and accident, is not to be conceived of as a reduction of the genus to its specific differences. "Ens a se" and ens ab alio" are not specific differences but transcendental notes which clothe the entire essence of being under difference aspects.

More profound is the difference between St. Thomas and Scotus regarding the principle of individuation. St. Thomas had affirmed that the reason for the contraction of the form to the individual depends upon "materia quantitate signata" -- matter signed with quantity. Scotus does not accept this solution, but observes that quantity is an accident, that therefore in St. Thomas' system individuality would be reduced to the level of an accident. Thus, according to the Subtle Doctor, individuality must be derived from the form, which is the basis of being. This new entitative perfection, which comes to the species (forma) and which indicates the passage from specific difference to individual determination, Scotus calls "haecceitas" or "thisness." This "haecceitas" is the ultimate step of the form (and hence of the entire composite) toward real existence. "This reality of the individual is never meant as a new form, but precisely as the ultimate reality of the form."

Theodicy

Scotus, in opposition to the Augustinian doctrine and in accord with Thomism, holds that the existence of God is not intuitive, but is only

demonstrable a posteriori. The proofs for the existence of God adopted by Scotus can be reduced to two processes.

The first is entirely an a posteriori process. The objects of our experience are changing realities, or beings in the course of "becoming." Now that which changes possesses in itself neither the sufficient reason for its existence nor for its activity. Hence we are led to admit the existence of a being that is outside the chain of succession and change, and that justifies the existence and action of beings in various stages of becoming. Substantially, this process had its philosophical development in the first three ways of St. Thomas.

The second process consists in a development of the argument of St. Anselm. To give validity to this, Scotus inserts a posteriori elements, i.e., the analysis of the possibility (contingency) that is affirmed by our experience. For Scotus, to say that God is "Id quo majus cogitari non potest" is to say that God is infinite. Now, according to Scotus, the weakness of St. Anselm's argument does not rest with the transition from possibility to real existence, but in this: that St. Anselm did not prove that the concept of the infinite is possible. Scotus proves this possibility negatively by showing that the concepts of an "ens infinitum" involves no contradiction.

If it did involve a contradiction, our mind, which has for its object "ens in quantum ens," would notice it. Positively, Scotus begins with the data of experience, which tells us that many things are possible. But all possible series of beings are related to the Uncaused Being, which, since it is uncaused, is infinite Perfection. Hence an infinite being not only is possible, but actually exists. "Thus, absolutely speaking, the primary efficient cause can exist in its own right; hence it exists by itself." (Opus Oxoniense, n. 16.)

Regarding the attributes of God, Scotus holds that the essential attribute is His infinity. In regard to the other attributes, Scotus does not differ from the common opinion of the Scholastics, i.e., that God is one, uncaused, the Creator, and so forth.

The World: Cosmological Doctrine

In determining the relationship between the world and God, Scotus accepts the common doctrine of Scholastic tradition. On certain points, however, he withdraws from tradition and gives us a new and personal contribution.

First of all, he is not in accord with St. Thomas on the foundation of the essences of created and creatable things. Certainly God knows the essences of real and possible beings; but what is their foundation? St. Thomas had said that the essences, the "rationes aeternae," drew their origin from the divine essence, which is by nature imitable in an infinite manner; the divine intellect took cognizance of this imitability. This manner of explaining the origin of essences is snot accepted by Scotus for the simple motive that if it were accepted the divine intellect would lose the dignity of its independence. Hence it seems to Scotus that the origin of the possibles must be placed in the very intellect of God, which, in knowing the divine nature, produces such essences in their intelligible "esse"; as a consequence of this, possibles are imitable "ad extra." The eternal ideal existence of things is not distinct from the act by which God conceives them.

Furthermore, in opposition to Thomistic intellectualism, Scotus, at one with the whole Augustinian tradition, affirms the primacy of the will, a primacy which he extends also to God. God has created the world through an act of His will. For Scotus there could not be free essences in secondary causes (man) if these did not proceed from a free cause, i.e., from the divine will.

This Scotist voluntarism profoundly affects not only Scotus' cosmology but also his theory of knowledge and psychology. Everything becomes radically contingent. Thus God in creating has assigned to every thing its own nature: to fire that of heating, to water that of being cold, to the air that of being lighter than earth, and so forth. But since God is free, His will cannot be bound to any object. Hence it is not absurd that fire be cold, water hot, earth lighter than air -- in other words, that the universe be ruled by laws opposite to those which presently govern it.

Of Scotus' psychology we shall speak in a moment. Concerning the theory of knowledge, Scotus' voluntarist doctrine reveals that many metaphysical and theological truths which are for St. Thomas demonstrable by reason are not so for Scotus once he advances the principle that the passage or transition from effect to cause is not always legitimate.

The Human Soul

Scotus, led by his doctrine that prime matter has a complete essence, separate and distinct from that of form, admits that in every individual there is a multiplicity of forms. In man there would be the form of the body and that of the soul, and the unity of the person would result from this: that the form of the body is coordinated with that of the soul. The soul is complete in itself and hence can exist even without the body; and granted, as we have said, that the proportionate object of the intellect is "ens in quantum ens," the human soul can know the essences of things even when the soul is separated from the body.

Concerning the immortality of the soul, the argument of St. Thomas and of the entire Scholastic tradition is that the immaterial nature and hence the spirituality and immortality of the soul are deduced from the fact that the object of the intellect is the immaterial essences of things. For Scotus this argument has the value only of possibility, of non-repugnance. Since the will of God is not bound to any contingent thing, and is free to do anything that does not imply contradiction, Scotus concludes that the alternative is also possible; namely, that the soul can perish with the body. Hence Scotus affirms that we must rely upon faith for the truth of the immortality of the soul. It is faith which gives us the assurance that the immortality of the soul has real foundation.

Thus in Scotus we find a resurgence of the Augustinian doctrine that there is no clear distinction between reason and faith, and that reason needs the assistance of faith in many of the conclusions which for St. Thomas are simply rational truths. Let us note that the voluntarism of Scotus does not destroy the principle of contradiction but holds that God is free to choose any alternative only in the field of the contingent and provided the opposite is not contradictory; the will of God is therefore not bound to one side more securely than to the other. (Thus, for example, it would not be contradictory

for fire to have a different action, so that would not burn.) The absolute truths, which are over and above the field of contingency, and whose opposite would be contradictory, do not depend upon the will of God but upon His essence; such truths are always valid, and their opposite is certainly false -- for example, the statement "Being is."

IV. Ethics

In his ethics, Scotus reaffirms the voluntarist doctrine against the intellectualism of St. Thomas. However, Scotist voluntarism does not, as has often been falsely charged, give place to moral positivism in which the just and the unjust depend on the exclusive will of God. Indeed, this mild voluntarism leads to principles and conclusions that are common Church doctrine.

In God, as in man, the will has primacy over the intellect. This does not mean that the will of God is blind and directed by caprice: God, Scotus declares, is "intelligentissime et ordinatissime volens." This means that the will of God is illumined by the divine intellect and that the primacy of the will of God does not negate this natural order, which is valid also in God.

Presupposing the action of the intellect, which points out to the will all the possible modes of the divine essence, the actual realization of one series of possibles rather than another depends not on the intellect but on the divine will. God finds within His will the motives for self-determination. But even in determining itself to the realization of one series of possibles rather than another, the will of God does not act capriciously.

First of all, says Scotus, "the will of God of necessity loves God's goodness." Consequently, all that is essentially bound up with the essence of God is also willed necessarily by the divine will -- as, for example, the first three commandments of the Decalogue. Regarding the rest of the entire field of possibles which forms, as we have noted, the field of pure contingency, the will of God is free; but this is not to say that it acts indeliberately.

From the moment God is "intelligentissime et ordinatissime volens," He chooses that order in which His goodness is more greatly manifest, without being necessarily bound to this particular order of contingency (God is bound only to will His own essence). Hence He is always free to will the opposite when this change contributes more greatly to His goodness. Scotist voluntarism therefore contains nothing that contradicts Church orthodoxy.

The moral act for Scotus is the result of due proportion between the potency (the will which must be free), the object (which must be good in itself), and the end (which must tend toward God in place, time, and manner). While for St. Thomas an object which in itself is evil, but which through ignorance is apprehended as good, is the object of a morally good act, Scotus denies that this can be so: the object also must be good. This is the basis for another point of divergence from St. Thomas; in other words, for Scotus there is a third class lying between morally good and evil acts: indifferent acts, that is, acts which have nothing to do with progress or retrogression in the matter of attaining the ultimate end.

Furthermore, Scotus, along with St. Augustine and in opposition to Aristotle and St. Thomas, affirms that virtue is an act of love which directs us to God. And finally he holds that the essence of eternal life does not

consist, as St. Thomas states, in the beatific vision of God, but in love of God. There is no contradiction here, for love and knowledge are not of the same order. Distinct acts of distinct faculties cannot be opposed in such a way. In all created beings, the act of loving is really distinct from the act of knowledge. One and the same thing can be the object of knowledge and of love, but the viewpoint is different; for as regards knowledge, the thing is "truth," and as regards will, or love, it is "good."

So the question: Is God Truth before Goodness or Goodness before Truth, does not make any sense. Considered as the object of love, God is Goodness. Considered as the object of knowledge, God is Truth. Which comes first? Again this question makes no sense. Considering the rational subject in the act of his intelligence, he knows God as Truth. Considering him in his act of love, he adheres to God as Goodness. There is no priority, but merely a difference in viewpoint. The Beatific Vision is an act of possession of the unity of God by the soul, in the highest degree of its own unity.

To put the same thing in other words, do we know in order to love, or do we love in order to know? Both these questions are wrongly directed. We are, in order to possess. By being men, we have both rational intellectual and rational appetitive faculties; these are coexisting and simultaneous. By our knowledge we are informed of the object of our love. By our love, we are attracted to the object of our knowledge. We can love only what we know. We can know only what we are affectively in contact with. Whenever we possess an object, we do so both through our intellect, by understanding the object, and through our will, by reacting affectively to it.

Notes

1. Contra Gent., II, 76).
2. Summa Theol., Part I, q. 79, a. 4 and 5).
3. Summa Theol., Part I, q. 76, a. 1; Contra Gent., II, 57 and 58).
4. Summa Theol., Part I, q. 75, a. 6' Contra Gent., II, 78, 79 and 82).

The Philosophy of St. Augustine

I. Life and Works

Aurelius Augustinus (picture) was born at Tagaste in preconsular Numidia in 354. His father, Patricius, was a pagan; his mother, Monica, a Christian. After his first studies in his native city, he went to Carthage, with the financial aid of Romanianus, to complete his studies in rhetoric. At the same time, however, he fell a slave to his youthful passions and even became connected with the Manichaean religious sect. After completing his studies, he first established his school at Tagaste, and later at Carthage, where he taught rhetoric for eight years, at the same time studying philosophy and the natural sciences.

In 383, desirous of honors and a more disciplined group of students, he evaded his mother's vigilance, abandoned Carthage, and went to Rome. He did not find there, however, the satisfaction he sought; nor did his students bring him any remuneration. He therefore sought the directorship of rhetoric in Milan. This he obtained, and transferred to that city in 384. There his saintly mother joined him.

The Bishop of Milan at that time was Ambrose, and the prayers of Augustine's mother, together with the eloquence of Ambrose, reportedly triumphed over the tormented spirit of the young Augustine. In 387 he asked to receive baptism. The sacrament was conferred by Ambrose on Easter of that year.

Augustine's spiritual conversion had been preceded by an intellectual one. Dissatisfied with the doctrinal vanity of Manichaeism, he abandoned the sect. After a brief period in the Skeptic Academy, he had given himself to the study of Neo-Platonism, in which he grasped the idea of the spirituality of God and the concept of evil as the privation of good. Thus his baptism signalized the complete and absolute conversion of Augustine to Christianity.

Augustine had already renounced his teaching office, and now he left Milan to return to Tagaste and live in solitude. He undertook the journey home in company with his son, Adeodatus, Monica, and some friends, and stopped en route at Ostia, where his mother died. After her death, he resumed his journey toward Africa and arrived ultimately at Tagaste, where he sold his worldly goods, distributed the proceeds to the poor, and attempted to live the life of perfection according to the standard of the Gospel.

In 391 Augustine went to Hippo, probably to select a suitable place for himself and his friends who had been living a common life of study and devotion at Tagaste in a monastery built by Augustine. In Hippo, at the will of the people, Augustine was ordained a priest. The newly ordained priest, while continuing his monastic life, entered into the mission of the apostolate, preaching against vice and voicing his formidable opposition to the heresies which at that time were harassing Africa.

Consecrated coadjutor Bishop of Hippo in 395 and titular Bishop of the same city in the following year, Augustine transformed his episcopal residence into a monastery, in which he lived together with his clerics, who

assisted him in giving religious instructions and carrying on all forms of charitable works.

Always ready to argue on theological, philosophical and moral questions, he took part in all the difficult theological disputes which disturbed the Church in Africa. He opposed Donatism, which denied the validity of sacraments administered by ecclesiastics in the state of sin, and advocated a church of pure and perfect men, withdrawn entirely from the life of the world. He vigorously argued against Pelagianism, which exalted the absolute liberty of the human will and denied original sin and the necessity of divine grace. He fought against Manichaeism, the doctrine which he has formerly espoused, and the Skepticism of the Academicians whom he had once joined when his mind was assailed by doubt.

A fatal illness overtook Augustine in the year 430, at a time when the Vandals, barbarians of exceptional ferocity, were laying siege to the city of Hippo. Augustine was seventy-five years old, and had spent thirty-four years as Bishop of Hippo.

The literary output of St. Augustine was prodigious. The prevalent purpose of his writings is dogmatic and moral; i.e., he dwells on the problems which most directly concern the answer to the question of life. But because of his particular tendency to consider the problems of life in connection with speculative knowledge, he treats philosophical problems to some extent in every one of his works.

From the point of view of philosophy the most important are: the Confessions in thirteen books, a profound and suggestive autobiography; Soliloquia, in two books; De immortalitate animae; De libero arbitrio; Contra Academicos; De beata vita; De magistro. His two masterpieces are De civitate Dei (City of God) and De Trinitate (On the Trinity), and despite the prevalent dogmatic and apologetic character of these works, they are very rich in philosophical considerations. Augustine's style is human and provocative, thus rendering his books suitable for all times.

II. Doctrine: General Ideas

Neo-Platonic

philosophy was the field of exercise for the mind of Augustine previous to his conversion, and it was the same philosophy which prepared him for conversion. Even after his conversion, he remained a Platonist, and for the solution of major problems he appealed to the Platonic concept. But such adherence does not signify merely simple acceptance; rather, it involves interpretation and a transformation of the very principles of Platonism within the limits of the needs of Christian thought. In this work of adapting ancient thought to Christianity, Augustine precedes Thomas Aquinas, for just as Aquinas undertook to lay down the thought of Aristotle as the rational basis of religion, so Augustine did the same with the teaching of Plato and Platonism.

The central point of Platonism was the participation of the soul in a supra-sensible world (Ideas, Nous). Through this participation the intellect acquired the notion of the intelligible and hence was made participant of wisdom. Augustine accepts this participation, but the one who grants or

imparts these intelligible notions to the soul is God, the Truth of God, the Word of God, to whom are transferred all Platonic Ideas. In the Word of God exist the eternal truths, the species, the formal principles of things, which are the models of created beings. In the intellectual light imparted to us by the Word of God we know both the eternal truths and the ideas of real beings. This the famous illumination to which Augustine makes appeal, as we shall see, in the solution of major problems.

Furthermore, we observe that philosophy is considered by Augustine as the science for the solution of the problem of life; hence his thought mainly revolves around God and the soul, and consequently also around the problem of evil, which must be solved in order that one may know the nature of the soul. In a word, the thought of Augustine is more concerned with the solution of religious, ethical and moral problems than with those of pure speculation.

III. Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology)

Augustine, who during his formation in philosophy had made contact with the Skepticism of the Academicians, knew that the problem of knowledge involved two difficulties, one regarding the existence of the knowing subject (which fact was denied by the Academicians), and the other regarding the origin of knowledge itself. As for the first question, Augustine overcame the Skepticism of the Academy and arrived at the affirmation of the existence of the knowing subject with the famous argument: "If I doubt, I exist -- Si fallor, sum."

Regarding the second question, i.e., the origin of knowledge, Augustine as a Platonist underrates sensitive cognition, which he does not make the foundation of intellective knowledge. (Thus he differs radically from Aristotle and Aquinas in this important question.)

Whence, then, does intellective cognition draw its origin? From illumination. As the eyes have need of the light of the sun in order to see sensible objects, so the intellect needs the light of God to know the world of intelligible beings. Eternal truths, ideas, species, formal principles are imparted to our intelligence by Wisdom, the Word of God. Intellectual knowledge is not the result of the acquisitive operation of the intellect, but a participation or grant of God. It is in this participation that Augustine's innatism with regard to ideas consists.

It follows from this that the intellect, considered in itself, is incapable of acquiring knowledge of intelligible beings, but is made capable of such knowledge through illumination. The mystic schools of the Middle Ages were to appeal to this natural inability of the intellect in order to affirm that humility and prayer are the best means to acquiring wisdom.

IV. Metaphysics

Theodicy

Augustine proves the existence of God through a priori and a posteriori arguments. However, if we keep in mind what has been said about illumination, the more convincing arguments for Augustine will be those a priori proofs drawn from the presence within us of this special illumination. In fact, the presence of this illumination is proof of the existence of God.

Such a priori arguments can be reduced to the following formula: We are conscious of possessing within ourselves ideas and formal principles which are by nature universal and necessary, outside the confines of time and space, eternal.

But such universal and necessary principles cannot take their origin from the external world nor from us, who, as contingent beings, are devoid of these characteristics of universality and necessity. Therefore, such universal principles presuppose God, who is a necessary being, unlimited by space and time. The universal principles are communicated to us by Him, by the Wisdom of God, the Word of God. As we said above, Augustine also appeals to a posteriori arguments, when, for instance, from change and the imperfections of beings he rises to the perfect being, the being above all change, God.

Regarding the nature of God, Augustine assumes a position opposed to all the errors of Platonism. For Augustine, God is immutable, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, absolutely devoid of potentiality or composition, a pure spirit, a personal, intelligent being. The mystery of the Trinity of God induces Augustine to consider God as being, knowledge, and love; and since the world has been created by God, it reveals a reflection of these three attributes of God: every creature should consist essentially of being, knowledge, and volition.

Cosmology

Against the dualism of Plato and against the pantheism of the Stoics and the Neo-Platonists, for whom the world was a physical derivation or emanation of God, Augustine affirms that the world was created by God from nothing, through a free act of His will. With regard to the manner in which creation was effected by God, Augustine is inclined to admit that the creation of the world was instantaneous, but not entirely as it exists at present.

In the beginning there were created a few species of beings which, by virtue of intrinsic principles of reproduction, gave origin to the other species down to the present state of the existing world. Thus it seems that Augustine is not contrary to a moderate evolution, but that such a moderate evolution has nothing in common with modern materialistic evolutionist teaching.

Connected with the creation of the world is the problem of time, for time has its beginning with creation. But what is time? What is its real nature? Augustine observes that time is essentially constituted of a past, a present, and a future; without this division it would be impossible to speak of time. But the past is not existent, for it has passed; nor does the future exist, for it has yet to come; the present is the moment which joins the past with the future.

Now it would be foolish to deny the reality of time. We speak of time as long or short, and that which has no reality cannot be either long or short. To solve the difficulty Augustine has recourse to the intellective memory, which records the past and foresees the future. Thus both the past and the future are made present to the memory, and here time finds its reality of length and brevity. For Augustine, then, as the Scholastics were to say later,

time is a being of reason with a foundation in things which through becoming offer to the mind the concept of time as past, present, and future.

Psychology

Augustine affirms the absolute unity and the spirituality of the human soul. And yet, considering Augustine's Platonic tendency, the union of the soul with the body is somewhat extrinsic. In regard to the origin of the soul, Augustine's teaching varies from creationism to traducianism. According to creationism, the soul of each man is created immediately by God in the very moment it comes to animate the body. On the other hand, according to traducianism the soul of every man proceeds from the souls of the parents. Augustine, for polemical motives in his controversy with Pelagius (who denied original sin), leans toward traducianism.

In regard to the nature of the soul he affirms that the soul is simple and immortal. The sensitive soul, besides having the five senses, is endowed also with a sensitive cognition which is common to animals and which judges the proper object of each of the senses. The intellective soul has three functions: being, understanding, and loving, corresponding to three faculties: intellective memory, intelligence, and will. The primacy among these three faculties is given to the will, which in man signifies love.

The will of man is free. United to the question of the liberty of man is the problem of evil, which for many years tormented the mind of Augustine. Three kinds of evil can be distinguished: metaphysical, physical, and moral, and each of them consists in a deficiency in being, a descent toward non-being.

Metaphysical evil is the lacking of a perfection not due to a given nature and hence is not actually an evil. Under this aspect, all creatures are evil because they fall short of full perfection, which is God alone.

Physical evil consists in the privation of a perfection due to nature; e.g., blindness is the privation of sight in a being which ought to have sight according to the exigencies of its nature. Augustine, under Platonic and Stoic influence, justifies the presence of physical evil in the general order of nature, in which dissonance serves to greater accentuate the general harmony. The solution, certainly, is not very pleasant.

The only true evil is moral evil; sin, an action contrary to the will of God. The cause of moral evil is not God, who is infinite holiness, nor is it matter, as the Platonists would have it, for matter is a creature of God and hence good. Neither is the will as a faculty of the soul evil, for it too has been created by God. The cause of moral evil is the faculty of free will, by which man is able to deviate from the right order, to oppose himself to the will of God.

Such opposition gives moral evil reality -- negative, metaphysical reality in the sense of decadence of the order established by God, and hence decadence of being or descent toward non-being. Sin, from the very fact that it is a decadence of being, carries in itself its own punishment. By sinning man injures himself in his being; for he falls from what he ought to be. As a result of this fall there exist the sufferings which he must bear, such as remorse in the present life, and the sufferings which God has established in the life to come for those who violate the laws laid down by His will.

V. Liberty and Grace

Augustine sustained a long debate against Pelagianism. Pelagius, who gave origin to the heresy which bore his name, held that the freedom of the human will is a gift of God, a grace of God. But from the moment he has received free will man no longer has need of further graces to attain his moral perfection: the powers of his nature are sufficient for this. Human nature has not been corrupted by original sin, but remains integral, and is able of itself to attain the perfection that is due to it.

Augustine hence found it necessary to defend orthodox doctrine regarding both the redemptive work of Christ and the necessity of grace for attaining moral perfection. The teaching of Augustine is summarized in the following points: Adam was created by God in integrity of nature, and was further enriched with preternatural and supernatural gifts. Although more inclined to good than to evil, there remained in Adam the possibility of committing sin. Adam abused this power and sinned, and since in him were the beginnings of all mankind, all humanity has sinned with him. Thus evil took its beginning with original sin.

As a consequence of original sin, the human race has not only been deprived of preternatural and supernatural gifts, but the whole of nature has been upset, so that after original sin man is naturally unable not to sin. Christ, by his death on the cross, has remedied this disorder. But if the Redemption worked by Christ has given us once more the possibility of regaining supernatural goods, still it has not restored to us the preternatural gifts. It has left human nature unchanged from what it was a consequence of sin; all the sufferings which entered the world with original sin remain as a means of purification and mortification.

Hence, granted this natural weakness of human nature, the will, in order to attain moral perfection, needs grace. Now grace comes from God and is external to the will. How is grace to be reconciled with liberty? This was one of the problems which disturbed the mind of Augustine, and he, in order to uphold the efficacy of grace, neglected the second element, liberty.

VI. Ethics

We have already had occasion to explain certain basic points of Augustine's moral or ethical doctrine when we spoke of the human will as the sole cause of moral evil. Augustine's theory concerning evil is his greatest philosophico-theological discovery -- particularly his distinction between metaphysical evil, which is a deficiency or lack of being, and moral evil, which is a deficiency or lack of good.

Another important point in Augustine's moral teaching is his doctrine of voluntarism, or the primacy of the will over the intellect. The will is love, and according to Augustine it is necessary to love in order to know, and not vice versa. The primacy of the will is the intrinsic law of being, which finds its first actuation in God, who has created out of love.

This love or desire reaches down even to inferior beings, in which it is manifested as instinct and blind appetition or appetite. Since the first love must be love of God, and all other loves must be subordinated to this first love, Augustine teaches that love signifies order. Action is activity

according to love. Any sin is an act of hatred, for sin is separation (aversion) from the order or love which has its center in God.

Because sin is an act of hate, the man who sins, not being able to destroy the order established by God, harms himself and falls from his being. Every good action is an action according to love: "Love," says Augustine, "and do what you wish -- Ama et fac quod vis."

The voluntarism of Augustine indicates the clear separation of the Latin ethical concept from the Greek. Greek genius, theoretical, speculative, creator of philosophy, makes the intellect -- conscience -- the basis of morality; theory takes precedence over practice. Augustine, representing the genius of Rome, which loved the practical and active life, and created law, defends the greater value of activity over speculation, prefers fact to theory, and hence the primacy of the will over the intellect. The voluntarism of Augustine found in the Middle Ages great champions in the mystics and in the Franciscan School.

VII. Politics: The City of God

Augustine wrote his masterpiece, The City of God, while the Roman empire was falling into ruin under the barbarian invasions and the Church was rising from the imperial remains. There was need of justifying these two events, which disturbed the spirits not only of pagans but of believers as well. With this purpose in mind, Augustine undertook his work, which can be considered the first in the philosophy of history.

Augustine's view of the history of humanity is organic and unified, but it is also ascetic and Christian. Christ is the very soul of history. The coming of Christ presupposes another truth of Christianity, original sin. In consequence of original sin, men are divided into two distinct cities: one of God, the other earthly. Both, however, are at the service of Christ.

The city of God, prior to the coming of Christ, was represented by the people of Israel; the earthly city was represented by the Roman empire. The two cities had a different purpose, the one religious and the other political. The first had the task of preparing for the coming of Christ with prophecies; the second was to prepare for his coming politically.

After the coming of Christ and the founding of the Church, the purpose of the Roman empire had been fulfilled, and hence it fell under the assaults of the barbarians. If in the Christian era the Church represents the city of God, moral evil, wherever it be found, will be the representative of the earthly, the satanic city.

These two cities now are politically unseparated and only religiously diverse, for the Church has a universal task and must embrace the elect and the predestined of all times and of all races. The complete division will be made on the Great Sabbath, when the good will be made eternal citizens of the city of God, the eternal Jerusalem, and the evil will be confined forever to the city of Satan, hell. But who are those who will end in glory and who will end in torment? This, too, was one of the many problems that tortured the mind of Augustine. The answer to this is among the secrets of God.

VIII. Summary

St. Augustine affirms that the world was created by God from nothing, through a free act of His will. Time is a being of reason ("rens rationis") with a foundation in things which through becoming offer to the mind the concept of time as past, present, and future. Augustine affirms the absolute unity and the spirituality of the human soul. In regard to the nature of the soul he affirms that the soul is simple and immortal. Then sensitive soul, besides having the five senses, is endowed also with a sensitive cognition which is common to animals and which judges the proper object of each of the senses. The intellective soul has three functions: being, understanding, and loving, corresponding to three faculties: intellective memory, intelligence, and will. The primary among these three faculties is given to the will, which in man signifies love. The will of man is free.

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