

# GOD, PERSON, AND KNOWLEDGE

## Being as act

The result of this existential metaphysics is double: first, we get to a clear understanding of the nature of the efficient causality and, second, we also get to a distinction between the formal and efficient causalities, distinguishing what beings are from the fact of being. These causalities cannot be deduced from one another. We don't know anything about what things are from the fact of Being; and we cannot induce their real existence from the knowledge of what they are. The efficient cause gives Being to the substance, and the formal cause communicates the substantial Being to the real existence. Existence comes from form only since forms are subjects which receive the existence, or cause of the existence from form. The supplement needed by the form is not of formal order but of existential actuality.

The act of being by which substance exists is added to that act by which form makes it substance, since the act of being is not the form. If form is the most important in the formal order, existence cannot be only the act of essence, as essence.

Christian philosophy not only affirms the numerical individuation within the species but also the principle of individualization. Now there is a place for an own subsistence and concretion in Being that do not come from the accidental matter, because what radically distinguishes one entity from another is its own subsistence. The answer has always been sought in the essence of the species while it should have been sought in the order of the existence, since individuals are beings because of their own act of being. Every being is a distinct individuality since its act of being belongs only to it, while essence is common.

The actual existence is the efficient cause by which essence can in turn become the formal cause that makes an existence being that existence. This can also be expressed by saying that existence reaches substance through form or with the expression *forma dat esse*, ontological principle that sheds light on the formal constitutive of the human person. There is no form of the form but act of the form, since being is the act of the form not as form but as entity.

Form is receptive of the act of being, but the ultimate perfection of Being is not form but the act of being. The Aristotelian act is still a formal act; here, the act of being, even being act, is not formal act but act of being. The metaphysical composition of essence and act of being is the ultimate from a creational view. Existence is the act and the highest perfection since is act of all real things.

The distinction of St. Thomas had accumulated many precedents. Boethius had already distinguished *esse* from *quod est*, ie what an entity is and the fact that it is. Thus we can distinguish between asking ourselves what is an entity (*quid sit*) and asking if an entity is or is not (*an sit*). It is not the same defining what a cat is than affirming that a cat is. Avicenna in turn distinguished the Creator – as necessary being (*necesse esse*) – from the creatures (*possibilia esse et non esse*). And it was finally William of Auvergne who first made the distinction between essence and existence.

Aquinas, following Avicenna, states that “in the creature, the essence of a thing and its Being are not the same” and understands this as a case - unpredicted by Aristotle – of potency and

act. This distinction makes sense of the participation by which creatures are part of God's Being and definitely determines God's Transcendence as first Principle.

The foundation of the divine being as essential Being leads the act-potency composition to a field that was not predicted by Aristotelian philosophy. But it would be equally permissible to say that setting the highest perfection of Being in God – and participated in creatures – would be a Platonic version of the Thomistic distinction. So we can speak about an Aristotelian or Platonic version of the novelty that Aquinas exposed, as long as we observe that Aristotelism and Platonism are, in this case, nothing but known grammars which expressed a metaphysically new element that, additionally, overcame the genuinely Greek horizon of comprehension.

Aquinas did not develop the real distinction between essence and act of being, at least, not in a direct way but always referring to it in terms of simplicity of the Divine Being and composition of the created entity.

All compositions serve him to highlight the real difference between the Divine Being and the creature: if he distinguishes the entity from its existence, he will speak about the composition of essence and act of being; if he distinguishes the entity from its essence, he will speak about the composition of matter and form; and if he distinguishes the entity from its operation he will speak about the composition of potency and act. But all these compositions serve him mainly to distinguish the composite entity from the most simple Being which is God.

The novelty lies neither in the participation nor in the causality thesis, but in the fact that Aquinas pours the core of creational metaphysics in both theses, which is none other than the distinction between essence and act of being. Essence is its own being in God while, in creatures, essence is different from its act of being. The clear distinction consists in the radical difference between the Uncreated being and the created entities, and not between the simple/composited being or its various applications.

It is important not to confuse the fact that the essence of the created entity is not "its" Being with the fact that the essence of the created entity is not "the" Being. In the first case we are facing creational metaphysics, since we place the ontological difference between Him and those creatures which are not "their" being in the identity by which God is "its" being. In the second case, the identity by which God is "the" essential being confuses creation with formal participation, since the meaning of being is here unique for God and the creature, although essential in God and participated in creatures.

## Contingency of the created Being

Aristotle's metaphysics of Being always remained into the substance. In cosmology, Christian philosophers were indebted to Aristotle; but in natural theology, they maintained a strictly theological order and intention. The radical innovation of Christian metaphysics was to consider God as the First. Christian Revelation proposed the believer a faith in a Creator God. This faith led to identify God as the absolute and subsistent Being, Being in essence, the First.

For the believer, convinced that the world was created by God out of nothing, the horizon of understanding has radically changed: God is the First. St. Thomas, like Aristotle, speaks about the act; not the act of the form, of nature, of substance, but the act of Being or existence.

Movement will no longer mean only local or substantial movement, but radical contingency of the existence itself. The first principle – Plato, Aristotle – explains why the universe is what it is, but it does not explain why it is. But now, if God is the absolute Being, everything that it is not God owes its existence to Him.

The multiplicity of both the appearances of Plato and the corruptible beings of Aristotle is nothing compared with the radical Christian contingency in the order of existence itself. Apparently, there is nothing as Greek as the first thomist way: First Mover, movements and movers, moved movers, but in the Greek universe everything is already given, the Being of movement flees from the causality of its First Mover. In St. Thomas everything is different since, even if his argument repeats the same physical structure, it strives to prove in the order of Being. Aristotle's causality is above a world which does not owe its existence to it; it is a starting point, beginning of movement, but not its creator. But now, the Christian God which loves and not only attracts, orders or moves the world, is also creator of it.

Aquinas seems to repeat Aristotle, but he does so in a completely new direction, since Greeks did not go beyond the event and only explained the cause of the exercise of causality. Now, we get to the causality of Being and the order of existence itself. Being a metaphysical thought that consistently assumes the consequences of faith is the innovation of Christian philosophy. And the first consequence was that science of Being became science of the first cause, since God is First Cause and Being par excellence.

This affirmation about God was not in opposition to Greek philosophy; it does not seem to be a conflict between the Greek principles and the conclusions that Christians drew from them. It would be appropriate to say that there was religious novelty without philosophical opposition, so that Greeks did not know a few consequences already implicit in their own principles.

One of the Greek categories that received more modifications was that of the substance. Gilson describes thomistic metaphysics as existential, since Being is substance in Aristotle's philosophy, but substance becomes created in Aquinas' thesis. For a believer, contingency means more than the corruptibility of substances or the finiteness of movement.

Until then, substance had existed in its own right, but Christian universe is not like this. This issue marked a radical difference. Aristotle's Being is identical to its own necessity; it is impossible for it not to exist, but substances are contingent in their own essence in Christian philosophy.

When demonstrating the possibility of a creation of the world from eternity, the principle is no longer necessarily understood as beginning of time and movement but as existential causality. Against the Augustinians who argued that the world had a temporary beginning – and it could not be otherwise – Aquinas replies that that while it is true that the world had a temporary beginning, it also could have always existed. Against Averroists, who thought that the world did not have a temporary beginning but was created from eternity, he replies that even if the world could have always existed, we actually know by faith that it began in time, temporarily. In short, the fine analysis of Aquinas refers us to understand creation as a principle which better responds to the existential dependence of the causal action of God rather than to a temporary beginning. "Principle" is no longer a term that designates only the beginning of time but also the ontological dependence, so that the created world is a world of substances that, being indestructible themselves, are contingent in relation to God. Existence is not what makes things being corruptible or not, but what makes them existing, corruptible or not.

Not only the principle of substantiality or the concept of principality were modified, but also the principle of anteriority – which describes how form explains both the rationality and the reality of the real – was subject of such modifications. Aquinas distinguishes between form and act, and discusses about an act, the act of Being, which is not form; contingency becomes the radical contingency of existence itself. Also the analysis of causality suffered this existential modification, since if in any causality the effect depends on the cause, now we have God as the universal Cause of Being, so that God creates, preserves, animates and leads all things to their own aim.

Aquinas poured in pagan philosophy the most radical metaphysical novelty of Christianity: the real difference between Uncreated Being and creature. The radical difference of the thomist Being is much more than the actuality of an essence or the action-potential diversity inside the substance. The thomist distinction does not refer Being to the mere actuality – nor to the opposition to nothingness - but to God. St. Thomas understands Being from God, the First. The opposition between Being and nothingness is not prior to the difference between Creator and creature; what is most diverse to the created is its Creator; hence, God transcends the creature.

## The ontological communication

Christian Revelation on creation originally enlightened the substantial principles or the relation between formality and actuality, reaching conclusions which shed light on both anthropology and noetics. But they also revolutionized causality as expression of the dynamism of Being. Cause “is said in many ways” since causes are not only causes of their effects but also causes between them.

For the sun, which is the active element, the first is to illuminate; in contrast, for air, which is the passive element, the first is to come out from the darkness. Even if both things are simultaneously verified, the formal cause gives Being to the matter, but this can also be called cause since it receives and limits Being, so that we have a mutual or reciprocal causality. The essence of the seed constantly reorganizes and shapes the material components that actually constitute it, so that when the seed develops its genetic code becomes formal cause of the tree.

But we can also say that this process would be impossible without some organically prepared material elements which receive and make possible this growth, so that these material elements are also cause of the tree, although from another point of view. We see then how matter and form, the material and formal causes are causal actions mutually related, just as we saw with the material structuration and the formal dynamism of the substance. The same happens between the efficient and the final causes, since both are cause of the action of the agent, but again from different points of view.

The meaning of these analogies is non other than linking the passage of time with Being. First it is the form and then the matter, since matter is only understood by the form. On the other hand, the movement is said of the end and then of the efficient cause, since end is the cause by which agent moves.

The final cause causes the causality of the efficient cause, but not its entity. The text clearly shows that health is the aim – finality - of the task of the doctor, but it does not make the doctor being doctor, if anything, it makes the doctor to act. On the other hand, the efficient cause causes the entity of the aim, but not of its causality. The doctor achieves health, that is to say, makes health being act, but he does not decide our aim for health. In other words, the efficient cause does not make the aim being aim.

In Christian metaphysics, Aristotle's categorical causality is just the way to express an ontological communication previous to any causal sweeping. In this ontological communication, the relation between the created and the Uncreated is expressed in different ways, depending upon the understanding of it as Foundation, cause and aim.

Christian philosophy emphasizes the dynamism of the act of being in front of the abstract essence that is static. The first thing that Being makes to its own essence is instantly establishing it as entity, but then Being starts to address its own essence towards its own perfection which is the finality - aim. Essence is in the beginning, but not as an already finished thing, since every essence is actually the progress towards the aim, in the sense that the actual perfection of essences is the final cause of the existences, and achieving it requires many operations.

It is then not surprising the failure of the attempt to reduce causality to an analytical, mathematical or formal relation, since an existential efficiency will never arise from a deductible – in the case of Hume – or categorical – in the case of Kant – essence. Being is a fountain which flows effects, and while the relationship between these effects and their causes is unintelligible in a world of abstract essences, it becomes perfectly intelligible in a world in which Being is dynamic. Such existential dynamism of the entity was a radical transformation of Aristotle's formal dynamism. The dynamism of the form was overcome by the dynamism of being, so that each individual receives its own being. Individuals are still determined by forms, but not as automatic realizations of them since formal causality is subordinated to the existential efficient causality.

There is a mediation between God and the world, constituted by the operation that metaphysically becomes the very identity of the entity. The unity of the original ontological communication can not be isolated as an absolute moment in the unity of a formal concept because it expresses a result<sup>1</sup> and is actually a unity of tension movement in which the three main ways of ontological expansion are identified: efficiency, formality and finality – aim.

Considering the entity in a previous moment to this original ontologic communication is considering it in a potentiality state that does not exist, since the intelligibility of the entity is its actuality of being. The act of Being is energetic and expresses movement, a transcendental movement, a movement that affects the entity in its reason of being and refers it to the Transcendental God – as its ultimate foundation. This act is consitutively original even if it is not self-sufficient. Its presence is operant and its persistence is an active self-positioning.

The three causal lines of efficiency, exemplarity and finality are the three basic lines of the ontological communication of Being, and Being can not be ascribed with priority to any of these causal lines. The appearance of dualities that, in the recent history of philosophy, represented

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas., *De natura verbi intellectus*, I, 4

both the existentialist and essentialist versions can be explained by the neglect of this original unity which can only be maintained by the principle of reciprocity of causes.

Instead of an eminent contingency of the origin in a single causality, the effusion of the act of Being – implied in creation – represents the ontological communication in its original identity, as dynamism of Being in the act and immanence of the end in the beginning. Creation itself is an induced dynamism or a response to a vocation<sup>2</sup>.

The transcendental anthropology coming from this primordial ontological unity will have a strong interpersonal character. Intelligence is inserted into a deeper dynamism that comes from the ontic roots of man, who is only satisfied in the act of loving contemplation of God<sup>3</sup>.

## The possibility of theodicy

Creation meant the distinction between the Non-Created and its complete dependance on it. Existential Christian metaphysics studied the radical contingency of reality. Going from the ancient greek substantialism to existential metaphysics meant the alteration of several important notions: science of Being opens to the rational access to God, for God is the first Cause of being. Corruptibility as the main essential feature of substances gives way to other – more radical - metaphysical compositions, while the distinction between the notions of act and form allow to avoid any kind of formalism.

To take account of the intelligibility of beings, i. e. to give sufficient reason of their existence, theodicy was developed as part of a metaphysics that studies God as universal cause of being. The elaboration of the proofs of the existence of God came a long way, which was that of Christian philosophy. On one hand, the Platonic current penetrated the whole Patristic and informed all Platonic scholastics with Boethius, St. Anselm, Abelardo, Hugh of Saint Victor, Richard of Saint Victor, Peter Lombard and Alexander of Hales; on the other hand, the Aristotelian current enjoyed new vitality due to the islamic speculations of Avicenna, Al-Ghazali and Averroes. The XIIIth century represents a haven of peace in which St. Thomas gets the proofs of the existence of God to enter definitively into the history of philosophy.

Theologic agnosticism has always highlighted the impossibility of demonstrating the existence of God. We can point out three main statements of agnosticism: the first one comes from positivism, and consists in refusing God as object of science, for any thing can transcend the order of the phenomena (Locke). The second one denies the idea that a superior cognitive function - different from the pure sensation - exists in the human intellectual activity itself

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<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas., *S. Th.*, I, 103, 1; I, 44, 4; I, 47, 103. Cfra: Hayen, A., *La communication de l'être*, Desclée de Brouwer, 1959, II, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> Bofill, J., *Contemplación y caridad*, Revista de Filosofía. C.S.I.C año IX, Madrid, 1950, n. 33. p. 279-290; Idem., *Contemplación y caridad*, Revista de Filosofía. C.S.I.C año IX, Madrid, 1950, n. 33. p. 279-290

(Hume). Finally, the third one denies the possibility of the rational access to God due the impossibility of a noetic relation between God and human understanding (Kant).

Kant, in his “Critique of pure reason”, relegates existence to a category of Modality. Existence is a pure concept of understanding, logically derived from the second class of modal knowledges. Some pure principles of our understanding – which establish *a priori* as many truths for the objects of knowledge - derive from the application of categories to intuitions. These are the axioms of intuition, the anticipations of perception, the analogies of experience and the postulates of empirical reasoning. The postulate of reality states that objects are real – existing – when they coincide with the material conditions of any objectivity, i.e., when they can be perceived by empiric intuition. Perceptibility will account for the existence. We can’t assert, in any way, the real existence of those things unrelated to perceptibility. Knowledge can’t know the existence of God because God is not capable of experiment. We also can’t use the intuitive mode of reason – neither on its real use nor on its logical use – since intuition is always sensible.

These three statements of agnosticism that we have just discussed arise from nominalism. The contingent composition of created beings expresses an internal tension that nominalism loses when it states that only the concrete individual can be object of science. If intuition is restricted to perception - to the sensible order – then theodicy is invalidated as science.

The central issue is knowing how can an ontological transcendent become noetically immanent. The noetic relation between knowledge and God as object of science can only exist in this way, a possibility that agnosticism has always denied. An ontological transcendent can become noetically immanent by a causal action since, in causality, an entity is immanent on the effects that it causes and to which communicates its perfection. The analysis of creation created a metaphysics that showed God as universal Cause, for being was its own effect.

A relation between an Absolute Being and finite understanding may seem impossible, but if our knowledge can reach God is because the noetic relation between a finite understanding and God as Absolute Being is not to be resolved in a human, finite understanding but in its value as intellect, i.e., in the noetic infinitude that implies having the entity as formal object, in all its generality and fullness. The real path to a rational access to God needs the abstract intellectual knowledge of the common entity, from which one can understand God as First extrinsic Cause. The method followed by theodicy does not differ from that of metaphysics, since the common being is the initial datum of theodicy.

The initial point of any metaphysical reflection about God starts in sensible, perceptible beings. The inductive process starts with the being of sensible and finite things, limited in duration, i.e., starts with recognizing that those entities are structured and composed, and therefore caused. Contrary to the immediate evidency of the existence of God proposed by ontologism, our ideas are resolved, like in their material cause, in sensible things.

It is of primary importance keeping the value of the formal abstraction of human intelligence, without which founding the metaphysical scope of the notion of being and the principle of causality would be impossible. Nominalism meant a disaster from the moment it restricted science to the order of those individuals known by intuition, as if existence and formal abstraction were contradictory. But such contradiction doesn’t exist, since formal abstraction

doesn't unexistentialize what it abstracts; it is in the formal abstraction where the genuine common entity opens to us.

This being is a created being, the being of an effect. The demonstration of the existence of God starts from limited beings, since wherever we find structuration we'll also find diverse elements, and these elements can only become one by an extrinsic principle. One of the main pillars of this demonstration comes from the idea that every composition needs a cause. As St. Thomas states:

“Every compound has a cause, since it is diverse by its very nature, and only forms a whole under the cause that unifies it. But God, as we have seen, has no cause, for God is the first efficient cause”.

In the process of the rational affirmation of God – and once we accept the starting point of the particular structured entity and the validity of the formal abstraction of intelligence - there is also a need to ensure the metaphysical value of the efficient cause, specially since causality is not directly perceived by sensibility but by intelligence. Causality could be expressed by stating that every being which is not its existence – but has existence – demands a cause. In the noetic basis of the process of demonstration of God, the concept of own cause is of great importance, i.e., that cause that can produce the effect by itself and immediately.

The demonstrative process of God as the own Cause of the being of finite entities would be invalidated if the number of causes was infinite. Hence, the analysis of the invalidity of the process towards infinite is central to every way to access God. This process to infinite – in a number of efficient causes, essentially subordinated in being or acting – is impossible by itself. In other words, a number of causes where we only find means is impossible, for it would imply the lack of sufficient cause.

The attempt of a rational access to God as First Cause is as ancient as philosophy itself. Already in pre-socratics we find enough philosophical orientations in reference to the existence of God, specially in relation to the physical evidence; in the metaphysical arguments of the Eleatics and also in the moral of the Pythagorans. But, doubtless, Plato and Aristotle were the ones who redirected the theological thought to vigorous and diverse routes; while the platonic way acquires axiological hints, the aristotelian is purely entitative.

## The proofs of the existence of God

The philosophical theism or the affirmation of God as First Cause of the being of entities was the main issue of Christian philosophy, along with the existential unity of the human person and the intellectual validity of the access to being – or realistic noetics. The development of the proofs of the existence of God was already a classic issue when thomistic systematisation collected a large part of the previous Christian philosophical heritage.

Following Plato's thought, St. Augustine explicitly formulates the rational access to God through three ways: the proof of eternal truths, the proof of desire for happiness and the so-called deontological argument.

In the proof of eternal truths, St. Augustine states that certain truths have necessity, immutability and eternity, features that they have regardless of contingent beings. These necessary truths are previous to the existence of contingent beings and can not rely on them; therefore, they must rely on the existence of a necessary Substance.

Detractors of this proof claim, justifiably, that it lacks demonstrative value, for necessity and eternity can not be placed in the same order. The argument reaches God in an ideal order, from eternal truths and by inner necessity, and doesn't descend into its real noetic basis in being as such. There is, then, an illegitimate step from the ideal towards the real.

The augustinian proof of the existence of God by the desire for happiness is also known as the eudemonological argument: every natural desire implies the real existence of what is desired; since man has desire for God by natural need, God must exist. It is also necessary here to refuse the apodictic demonstration of the existence of God from the desire for happiness. On one hand, it is not true that every desire implies the existence of what is desired and, on the other, it is also incorrect that man naturally feels desire for God but, in any case, man feels desire for good in general.

Finally, the deontological argument tries to find out if one can correctly understand the existence of God as supreme Legislator from the knowledge of the natural moral law. The argument proceeds as it follows: in human nature there is a knowledge of a natural moral law. This law is necessarily caused, and proceeding towards infinite in the series of legislator causes is impossible; therefore, the existence of a first legislator cause must be accepted, which corresponds to the nominal definition of God.

We call natural law to any necessary and immutable relation given between the natures of things; but this law acquires in man a special classification, for his will aims to universal good and is free from partial goods. The starting point of this proof is correct: the existence of a natural moral law is evident forehand of any demonstration.

Let's focus now on the very *raison d' être* of this moral law. Natural law has the efficacy of ultimate foundation of any legislation, but it does not have its own foundation itself. The natural law - guideline of human acts - is rational, although it is not a product of reason; human nature is the support of this natural law, but not its cause. Natural law manifests as something given to human nature. If the intellect is given, the tendency of will towards good is given, the subordination of partial goods to general goods is given, all this clearly shows that natural moral is given to man by another one. Hence, we must accept the existence of a first Lawgiver cause, which we call eternal law.

Aside this last proof, it is clear that the access ways to God proposed by St. Augustine follow a platonic orientation that often verifies an illegitimate transition from the ideal to reality. Our understanding of the divine essence is not previous to that of its existence. The so-called ontological argument has been developed in diverse ways, being that of St. Anselm the most renowned one. It reads as follows:

In the ontological argument - in almost all its variations – both the ontological basis and its noetic foundation fail. The ontological basis fails because it doesn't caution that the idea of God is an

idea abstracted from sensible things, while the noetic foundation fails because the ontological argument tries to use the principle of non-contradiction as a sole principle, when attributing real essence and existence to an ideal being is contradictory. The biggest possible devised entity only requires ideal existence, but we can not attribute a real existence to it without contradiction.

Until then, most formulations had been philosophically expressed through concepts derived from platonism. St. Thomas assimilated aristotelism to be used by the faith on creation. The possibility of the proof of God is solved by Aquinas by using demonstrations which have their starting point in the being of sensible realities to inductively proceed in search of their own cause. All thomistic ways have four key elements: the starting point – which is a universal effect evident in singular beings in all of them – the principle of efficient causality, the principle of the impossibility of a process towards infinite and the final end of the way, which is always the existence of the First Cause.

The first way starts from the existence of movement, the second one from the subordination of causes, the third from the contingency of beings, the fourth from the grading of perfections and the fifth from the ordering towards an end.

Each way formulates the principle of causality in the manner that best suits the formality of its starting point. In the first one, everything that moves is moved by another; in the second one, every subordinated cause is caused by another; in the third one, the contingent being is caused by a necessary being; in the fourth one, every graded perfection is participated and, therefore, caused; in the fifth one, the ordering towards an end is caused. The impossibility of infinite in causal series – in fact and essentially subordinated – can be noticed in each way. And finally, the conclusions of these ways end in the need of God as Unmoved Mover, non-caused Cause, Highest entity and Supreme ruler of the Universe.

The starting point of the first way is the movement realised in one being. What moves is moved by another one, i.e., whatever moves goes from potenciality to actuality, but anything goes from potenciality to actuality by itself. Movement can only be explained as a transition from being-in-potency to being-in-act. But we can not proceed towards infinite in the series of movers, for it would mean eliminating the First Mover, as well as all other movers and the last moved, when it is its movement what we are trying to explain. We must conclude, then, that God must be understood as First Unmoved Mover. Some authors have indicated that this way would culminate in a sort of soul of the world, but this would only happen if movement is treated in a physical mode, and not metaphysically as the way does.

While the first way starts from the movement as act of the moved, the second one starts from the activity of the mover, i.e., from the existence of efficient causes essentially subordinated to which act for the production of any effect. It is the activity of an order of efficient causes that merge for the production of the effect. But nothing is efficient cause of itself. Causality itself is either non-caused or caused by another one. We are moving from the finite being – as caused causality – towards a First non-caused Cause. It is also impossible proceeding towards infinite in efficient causes. In this case, there wouldn't be a First Cause and, also for this reason, there wouldn't be any. The end of the way is a First efficient Cause that corresponds to the nominal

definition of God. There is a First efficient Cause whose activity is neither caused by itself – since it is impossible – nor by any other cause; it is the Non-caused efficient Cause.

The third way starts with the being of beings which are possible to being and to not-being, i.e., beings that, while existant in act, are indifferent for being and not-being. Such indifference is evident in their generation and corruption. The starting point is, then, the finite being as something limited in duration. The being limited in duration – that is to say, contingent – is caused by a necessary being. If everything is possible of not-being, then nothing existed once, but this is not true since, then, anything would exist now. Therefore, a necessary being must exist. It is not possible proceeding towards infinite in the series of those necessary beings which have the cause of their necessity in another one. It is not about the causes of movement now, like we saw in the first way; nor about the activity, like in the second one, but about the causes of being. There is a being for itself, not subordinated to any other else, neither in the movement, in the causation nor in being. The being Necessary by itself doesn't have existence, but it is its existence itself. It is the *ipsum subsistens*.

The fourth way focuses on participations or gradations. The starting point is the observation that certain perfections realised in diverse grades exist in things, like the essential or the specific ones. Those perfections not realised in grades must be excluded; furthermore, St. Thomas doesn't take into account all perfections, but only those of truth, goodness and nobleness. In our experience, we find things with greater or lesser entity, unity, truth, etc. The pure transcendental perfections which appear participated in things are received by subjects, i.e., are effectuated and, for this reason, caused by something external. A perfection is possessed in a greater or lesser degree in conformity with its proximity or remoteness from the source from which it comes. In short, limited perfections are always participated. And we can not proceed towards infinite, but rather to conclude in the existence of something Maximum in perfection. Only the Maximum entity is by essence, all other beings exist by participation. There exists then a Maximum entity which causes being, goodness and any other perfection of things, since in God we find the absolute identification of its existence and its essence.

The fifth way starts from the dynamic finite being, but not in the formality of movement or activity, but in that of the direction or ordination towards an end. Every moved's movement has a direction towards an end. There is certainly an ordination towards an end in the activity of living beings; this is evident since they act in the same way and all tend towards what is good for them. There is a relation between the agent, its action and the end of this action. Chance, then, must be excluded. The direction or ordination towards an end of the movement or operations of living beings is efficiently caused by an intelligent being. When we deal with Natural Science, we don't look further than immediate causes, and every fact is explained by the nature of the being from which it comes from. But, when dealing with metaphysics, we are asking for the first cause and its first principle. We must demonstrate that the direction towards an end is caused, not by the nature of the being to move, but by someone else. We have either beings that don't have rational knowledge and others that move towards their end by themselves. But all agents need to be directed by something that knows the reason of that end. It is curious that neither the human act, regarding this ordination to an end, can be explained in all its metaphysical range by just appealing to freedom, for the question here is who is directing the knowledge towards its respective object, so that also those acts of beings gifted with knowledge are claiming from

an intelligent being which explains their ordination. We can not proceed towards infinite in the series of intelligent beings, but we'll have to reach an intelligent being whose acts don't need to be regulated by anybody. The way concludes in a highly intelligent being, Supreme ruler of all movements, actions and operations of all natural beings.

In all ways, the starting point has a physical tonality, although it should be noticed that physical entities are not understood from their quality of being physical but from their essenceness. Knowing that all perfections of things are caused, we can state that they are a reflex of those persisting in the cause. From the basic definition of God – achieved at the end of the demonstration of the thomistic ways – we can deduce some attributes and properties of the divine essence. The resemblance between the essence of the effect and the nature of the cause makes possible for us to know something about God, although due its transcendence, any concept will be able to correctly express the divine essence. As St. Thomas says, we don't know God by its own form, but by the form of the creatures as an effect of the Absolute Cause.

This doesn't mean that our knowledge of God's essence is merely negative, but that the essence of God is accessible to a positive human knowledge. We know something about God's essence, but imperfectly, since known perfections must be distinguished from the way in which they are signified.

In all his writings, St. Thomas notes the existence of a triple way for the natural theological knowledge of the divine essence: the way of the affirmation or the causality, the way of negation and the way of the eminence. The perfection of the finite must be affirmed by God as its cause by the first way; every finite mode must be eliminated in God by the way of negation; and, finally, every perfection must be placed in God infinitely by the way of the eminence.

At the end of these ways we find the *Ipsum esse subsistens*, i.e., the formal constitutive of God or the metaphysical essence of God. Indeed, the First Unmoved Mover, the First Uncaused Cause, the Being necessary by Itself, Maximum Entity and First ruler Intelligence, lead us to the *Ipsum esse subsistens* as an attribute exclusively applicable to God, ontologically original and noetically originary; the first and deepest distinctive note between God and the rest of beings.

The path of christian philosophy passed through the elaboration of the proofs of the existence of God until that last thomistic systematisation. The radical novelty of christian philosophy – understanding God as the First – highlighted being as an act and an original ontological communication, that made possible not only concluding the principles already found in Aristotle's thought about the priority of the act, but also discovering the proof of the creation of the entities in the existential contingency. In this hard path, a philosophical profit that – as we will see – enlightened the person and its unity (as well as the realism of its intelligence) was achieved. But, before that, let's see other transformations that christian philosophy added to the understanding of space and time as essential characteristics of the created universe.

## The formal status of christian philosophy

A first distinction that must be taken into account when determining the formal status of christian philosophy is that existing between the wise character of every philosophy and the proposal of truth that Christian Revelation offers the believer. Aristotle, from an early age, had already discovered that our knowledge about God comes, on one hand, through the phenomena that take place in the soul and, on the other hand, through the phenomena that take place in heights, i.e., in the beauty and movement of the stars; this way, he conceives metaphysics as the spiritual path of the search for a First Principle.

The statements of the XII Book of his Metaphysics – when he states the existence of an infinite and substantial Mover – confirm the religious admiration he had since his younger days.

It is not enough judging the possibility of a christian philosophy from its wise character, but we'll have to take into account the meeting of rationality with christian Revelation in the history. The attitude of greek philosophy regarding the search for principles and fundamental laws greatly differs from the dialogical conscience that every christian finds regarding revelation as historical manifestation of God.

Revelation means the historical manifestation of a God that is open to the dialog with the believer. This dialogical conscience is present in the Scriptures. "Yahvé talked to us face to face about the mountain, in the midst of the fire". All the history of salvation is the history of a personal God that wants to communicate with mankind and establish with it a relation based on friendship. The search for the first principles of the universe, besides manifesting rationality in its wise aspect, is far away from this personal and historical dialogue between the believer and God.

This historical meeting with revelation will make some important differences regarding the use of reason before and after believing. Before believing – or apart from believing – the believer uses reason as the only light that allows him to understand the world. After believing – if he does so – he will also trust reason to understand the world, since believing doesn't mean shading reason. But now, moreover, he is in front of a number of revealed propositions – freely accepted – for which his reason acts in a different way than when facing those truths which are strictly fruit of his reflection.

The first consequence of the meeting with Revelation is that the mysteries of faith are not accepted for their intrinsic evidence but as a result of a free assent. While the greek attitude highlights the noetic aspect of intellectual adhesion, faith highlights the existential aspect in which personal adhesion is a key element. The wisdom with which greeks find the First Mover is quite different from the personal meeting with the God of history.

The second consequence implied in the meeting of man with Revelation is the conviction of the believer that, although the truths of faith overcome his natural capacity, at the same time he believes that these truths have a great intelligibility themselves. It is therefore not surprising that, after believing, the believer has a great desire to find and deepen the sense of the truths that he has believed.

These two aspects of the meeting between reason and revelation are often taken into account by the Christian theologian when determining theology as the exercise of applying reason to the contents of faith. On one hand, he will stress the special character of the free and responsible acceptance of a number of contents of which he doesn't have intrinsic evidence; on the other hand, he will highlight that these unreachable mysteries – to reason – have an intelligibility by themselves that overcomes him. The Christian theologian is someone who, after believing, tries to better understand his beliefs.

Staying at this point would justify a theological discourse on the act of faith, in which we would find valuable elements about the noetics of faith, the reasons to believe, the freedom of faith as personal adhesion, the rationality of the mystery and many other contributions that would help us articulating reason and faith in both the personal life of the believer and in the rational exercise of theology. Even so, not only faith arises from the meeting of man and revelation – by which he becomes a believer – but also a whole new configuration of his mental universe. If the basis of a true Christian philosophy has to be found, we'll do it in this new mental configuration. Faith produces a change in the mental categories in which he moved before believing – or if/when not believing – and this change implies a number of consequences that form the core of Christian philosophy, understood as the exercise of reason enlightened by faith.

Troughout history, the work of Christian theologians had major consequences, affecting the status of philosophy itself. The rational exercise applied to faith questions the very limits of the philosophical reason, specially regarding its autonomy. It will be said that philosophy is – or should be – a science autonomus from temporal realities, presented with a rational method. While this is true, it could also be said – without contradiction – at the same time that the certainties of faith, that the believer is trying to clarify, lead him into a mystery zone, unreachable in itself by his natural reason, but in accordance with that wise vocation of totality that we mentioned before regarding the Greek thought. There is no true statement about reality that doesn't affect the philosopher, wherever it comes from, even if this statement comes from Revelation or is a religious claim.

The relation between the Christian theologian and revelation is different from that between the Christian philosopher and the objectivity of his speculative content. While the theologian reflects about the contents of faith by the inner coherence of the Christian mysteries and his fidelity to the sources of Revelation, the Christian philosopher has the world as object of reflection, using the rational method to investigate those aspects of the Christian mystery compatible with reason. Christian philosophy theoretically justifies itself like any other type of philosophy, since it maintains its formal specific character on the strenght of evidence and argumentation. If there is a difference from the others, it would probably be assuming revelation as a guide, for it allows the Christian philosopher to enter a zone that invites him to think about something that, intrinsically, is beyond his own forces.

The distinction of orders is the key element that allows us to distinguish without separating, and uniting without misleading the use of reason from the theologian when rationally speaking about God, with the use of reason from the Christian philosopher when speaking about the world. As St. Thomas states, there is a generic difference between theology and philosophy:

Although theology and philosophical theodicy have God itself as material object, they have different formal objects, since theology reaches God regarding his deity while theodicy tries to reach God from the formal object of the reason of entity; while theology does it in the light of revelation, philosophy does it from natural reason. The distinction between the philosophical and the theological field is such that it is impossible that a single subject can know and at the same time believe the same truth.

The distinction between orders is another aspect of the subordination of sciences, a key element to be able to understand that the limits between the different rational accesses to reality allow areas of mutual help and meeting. They are not produced by discontinued leaps but create common areas in which the conclusions of a superior knowledge are the principles of an inferior knowledge. In catholic theology we distinguish three different orders of the divine knowledge: first, the one achieved by the vital experience of God, which is that of the mystics and the blessed ones; second, the one that we have of God himself as object of reflection of the revealed theology and, third, the knowledge of God as first cause of the being of things, which has a marked metaphysical formality.

These three orders are subordinated, so that the theological knowledge of God imperfectly participates of the perfect vision of God achieved by the saint; and the rational statements about God benefit from the light of the faith with which the theologian reflects. The motives are also different in this distinction of orders, for the motivation of the philosopher lies in the intrinsic truth of things, while the motivation of the theologian is the authority of the God that reveals.

The Church has always sustained that the affirmation of faith doesn't come from the intrinsic evidence of things. As the I Vatican Council states:

Due, precisely, to the common areas that arise at the confluence of subordinated sciences, there are common truths to both orders which relation should be deeply studied. On one hand, Revelation contains certain truths which can be discovered by reason itself:

"The Holy Catholic Church itself states and teaches that God, the beginning and the end of all things, can be understood by the natural law of the human reason, starting from the created things."

On the other hand, Revelation includes some truths that, while being accessible to human reason themselves, can be better known thanks to it.

In practical exercise of Christian philosophy there is still another great distinction between the subject and the object. On one side, the subject – the Christian philosopher – is convinced that faith enlightens his thought, so he won't seek the autonomy of reason but pursue the truth, wherever it comes from. On the other side, from the point of view of the object, the Christian philosopher will try to demonstrate that the dimension of faith have contents which are strictly rational.

One of the main reservations on the acceptance of the status of Christian philosophy comes from the identification between thought and autonomy of thought. The Christian philosopher knows that he is rationally researching in an area in which he doesn't enter by the intrinsic

evidence of things, but there is no reason to negate the progress of reason in a new field, that is indeed beyond its limits, by simply stating the loss of autonomy that this would imply.

Beyond the evolution of Christian philosophy from the historical point of view, we want to clarify the content itself of this Christian philosophy as something different from theology as knowledge of salvation. Stating the distinction between the natural and the supernatural orders is not enough if, at the same time, we don't clarify their mutual integration. The rational efforts to harmonically integrate this double order – with coherence and integrity – sketches one of the areas in which the philosophical thought may achieve significant progress. The peculiar formality in which the Christian philosopher assumes his task, and specially the autonomy that he maintains in respect to theology, caused in history a large number of statements that deepen in the necessary integration and balance between these two orders.

The resistance to accept a rational area, formally autonomous and dependant on theology at once comes from the idea that mankind never existed in a state of pure nature. Christian theology points out three stages in the creation of the human person; first, elevation towards grace and friendship with God from the very moment of its creation; second, falling into sin and distance from the creator; and third, the moment of redemption worked by Jesus Christ.

There is no situation, at any of these stages, in which man could have existed in an assumed state of pure nature. The position by which "pure" reason could access the contents of faith is essentially unreal, since the assumption in which it lies remains unknown, and is not other than the existence of pure nature apart from its elevation, falling and elevation towards grace. The existence of these three unique stages of the creation of man would invalidate the defence of a non-theological formal object for the reason of Christian philosophy, for there would not be any reason to maintain a merely natural thought about the world.

Nonetheless, the consideration of possibilities in the rational area is never useless, even if they haven't actually occurred. Raising what could have happened, even if it never happened, allows us to highlight a number of virtues in the facts that otherwise would remain unperceived. The consideration of the possibility of a state of pure nature that actually never existed allows us to better appreciate the gratuitousness of grace, i.e. is the theoretical element that allows us to state that grace is something freely added to nature and, therefore, different from it. In this way, the accidental nature of the elevation towards grace is properly highlighted, so we can clearly affirm that human nature does not enjoy a title for which God should communicate with it. Considering the possibility of pure nature also implies insisting on the idea that grace acts suddenly, inappropriately with regard to the natural assumption itself.

The formal status of Christian philosophy as something different from theological thought contributes to a better understanding of the Christian mystery. Precisely because there has never been a state of pure nature, Aquinas prefers a passive definition of the condition of human nature in respect to grace. In his doctrine of the obediencial potency it is not the human nature who elevates towards God but it is God who elevates it; human nature is the created natural assumption capable of being elevated towards grace.

In this doctrine we notice one of the aspects in which God's transcendence and the creature's capacity harmonically merge, since faith not only doesn't destroy but actually elevates the

capacities of the human nature. The passive character of human nature in regard with the elevating action of God by the grace not only arises in the doctrine of the obediencial potency but also in the negation of those arguments that intended to affirm the existence of God from the creature's desire for happiness. Some theologians thought that the natural desire to see God – the natural desire of human nature to pursue happiness – proved the existence of God as the object that quenches this desire. The argument claimed that any natural appetite is useless or empty, corresponding with the principles of Greek philosophy, which affirmed that there is no potency that isn't actuated by its own act.

Aquinas – consistent with his doctrine about the obediencial potency – always opposed at the validity of such argument. Asking God to be the object that quenches the desire of human nature is lacking probative value, since, firstly, this universal desire is referred to happiness and not to the object in which this happiness is scrambled, whether it is God or not; and secondly, this universal appetite only demonstrates the desire towards infinite, it does not demonstrate that it actually exists.

In the argument of the existence of God by the desire for happiness, any natural demand for grace from a previous state of pure nature is refused. But the lack of an existence autonomous from nature does not imply that the divine object is inadequate or excessive to it, once this nature is elevated. Although revelation communicates a light to discover an intellectual object that is actually beyond our reach, the fact that we desire to know it is driven by our own ontological structure.

We should distinguish – while not separating – this double natural and supernatural order. On one hand, the creature has a receptive capacity towards the supernatural gift of grace, so that the supernatural presupposes the same nature that, on the other hand, it elevates and perfects. The harmony and balance between both orders found one of the key elements of its cohesion in the subalternization of human sciences in relation to the science of God. Those issues that could be known from natural reason receive now new light with which we can discover new and original aspects of our own existence. The efforts of Christian philosophers in an area that is, at the same time, formally different from both the theological and the natural philosophical fields, incrementally brought veritable progress throughout the history, specially regarding the gradual precision of the concepts of nature and person, the application of causality to the creation of the world, or the doctrine of the substance.

In philosophy, God is measured by the creature while in theology is just the opposite. Both acts and contents are different since in philosophy God is only known as cause and not in Himself; but Christian philosophy has its own space since, alongside a pure philosophy - understood as reason that reflects about a strictly rational truth – and a theology – as faith that reflects about Revelation - there is a Christian philosophy wherever the truth enlightened by the light of Revelation is penetrated by a reason that reflects enlightened by faith. Faith allows us to re-organize the immanent categories of the world, so that – without negating their own content – they point a direction towards a transcendent First. Knowledge does not remain limited on the borders of its own nature but is capable of thinking the Beginning, the basis of all things.

Not only was this a religious benefit, but Christian faith – in reflecting about the origin – obtained a clearly metaphysical progress. Thinking of Being from creation, accepting the existence as free

gift from God, implies that reason must break the immanent circle and start radically thinking the origin. Stating that God is the First and that the world has been created by God caused a variation on the philosophical horizon of understanding of the world, since the complete comprehension of things shouldn't be pursued in the horizon of their nature, but in the horizon of their being; and this philosophical progress substantially modified most metaphysical concepts known to date.

## Space and time in Christian philosophy: history and city

The consequences of Christian Revelation – which established a contingent metaphysical understanding of the world – also affected the meaning of time and history, as well as the temporary organisation of the city and the government. Continuous creation and original communication could only establish a very different foundation from that of Greek philosophers.

The experience of time psychologically produces in us a unique experience, since we believe that is the old what ends in us, and the new what begins in us. In every age, man has thought that having the sense of history or going in the same direction than history is the same as surviving throughout the development of history. Neither what has happened nor what has to happen is of importance anymore. All this is truth, but a truth which is relative to the subject, to the subjective knower. Every temporary being, every single one of us, only exists in that part of the time which we call present. As subjective knowers, we find ourselves at the center of our own thought, what is the same as being at the center of time.

This subject – placed at the center of time – locates every event in the same past. This subjective way of understanding things does not match with the objective reality of the history. In the subjective point of view, things are situated in time in relation to the subjective knower, losing their own emphasis. We should ask ourselves about the objective sense of history. Answering that Greeks had a cyclical interpretation of history is topical, and stating that they did not make historical science is unfair, since thanks to their humanism they tried to apprehend permanent essences. The cyclical scheme is universalized on the basis of a permanent essence that varies depending on each historian. For Thucydides it was the *polis*, for Titus Livius the Roman imperialism, and for Polibius it was the type of government.

But the understanding of an intra-historical essence was insufficient. History did not act as the biological cycle that philosophers knew so deeply, from its origin until its end. The cyclical theory of the eternal recurrence meant the negation of history, since it is a happening throughout the history and both the “origin” and the “destination” must be known. Greeks did not know anything about the origins and end of the history. The sense of history is found in the so-called meta-historical conceptions of history, understood as totalizer explanations of the world. Only if there is an objective center of the history can a philosophy of history exist, a philosophy capable of apprehending its total signification.

We can either succumb to evil as absurd and understand history as something irrational or formulate necessary and inexorable laws of historical evolution, but in both cases encompassing at a glance what has happened, what happens and what has to happen is necessary, in other words, one should be God. Christians thought that they were completely aware of the beginning, center and end of the human history. But such knowledge came from religious sources, not philosophical, therefore only a theology can give answers on the transcendental beginning and end of history.

The historical interpretation by Christian philosophers was progressive and linear. It can be said that St. Augustine founded the theology of history, or at least led this reflection beyond the usual limits reached until then. The ordination of time is not made on the basis of an initial fact but on Incarnation as the central axis of terrestrial events. The Christian sense of history is Christian in a very different way from Christian philosophy, since Christian philosophy was constituted on the basis of a natural philosophy of the world, the being and God. It exists by itself, even if it receives the light of faith from Revelation. But things are different regarding the sense of history; such a natural sense of history – purified by Revelation – did not exist. On the contrary, the Christian sense of history is completely brought by Revelation; it is religious, supernatural and theological.

St. Augustine did not write history but theology of history. He asserts the presence of evil in history. In 410 A.D. Alaric invaded Rome with his Goth army; such event was absolutely significant and outstanding. St. Augustine began to write *The City of God* in 412 A.D., finishing it fifteen years later. He presents Christian theology of history in the second part of this work. He didn't talk about historical realities, but meta-historical. Two loves created two cities; the terrestrial city was built by the love for oneself and the oblivion of God, while the celestial city was created by the love for God and the oblivion of oneself.

These two cities are not identified with the Church or the state. Understanding them as the two swords of the medieval order would be anachronistic. The time itself is judged from eternity. St. Augustine tells us about an original time previous to sin, a time of falling and redemption. We only have two options: evading Christ, destroying ourselves, or accepting Him and exist. This is the ambivalence of the Augustinian conception of time. By its own nature, time is erosion; by grace, it is progress and ascension. This ambivalence only occurs in those spiritual beings whose time is free, thus evading the fatalism which is often associated with the Greek conception of time.

St. Augustine refuses both the Greek cyclical conception – that means evading time – and the stance of the esthetic man, who seeks eternity in time; he suggests directing time towards eternity. Such position comes from the understanding of the beginning and the end of time, and also from the conviction that eternity is determined by the temporal option in favour of God, or against Him. Our time has an eternal fruit. Christian Revelation in itself was revelation of the sense of history, so that history is history of salvation. The temporary dies, but there is something in history that does not grow old: the growth in plenitude of the City of God.

For its part, Christian philosophy solved in a very different way the natural psychological perception of time. Certainly, the profane century is the only empirical reality, since both cities are trans-historical. In any case, it can be said that it is formed by the citizens of both cities while

they are mixed. For the Christians, the sense of history consists in explaining the temporary from the eternal, for the temporary is actually made for the eternal.

The light of Revelation also illuminated the political order. What we call common good is named temporary peace by St. Augustine. In other words, peace and order in any society are the task of man. Terrestrial goods must be understood as a piece of wood in the sea, used to reach the beach. The relationship between man and this mediums is never profane, but it will be good or bad depending on whether it is born from the love towards God or the love towards oneself.

Just as happened with the sense of time, the novelty of faith also illuminated the constitution of the terrestrial city itself. St. Thomas, in political philosophy, gathers the accomplishments of the aristotelian and stoic ethics; the patristic contributions and those of St. Augustine; several scholastic works previous to him like the *Summa de virtutibus et Vittis* and the *Summa de Bono* or St. Albert the Great's ethics, although giving a new insight into all of them.

His ethics come from the being, so ontology is understood teleologically. We could state the basic principle of his political contributions by affirming that the goodness of every being consists in behaving according to its nature.

"Virtue directly denotes a certain disposal by the subject, who is conveniently endowed according to the requirements of his nature. That's why the philosopher said that "virtue is the disposal of a perfect being to the best", understanding as perfect what is endowed in accordance with the exigencies of its nature. Therefore, we can conclude that virtue is goodness of the being, for the goodness of a certain thing consists in being endowed with what its nature demands. The good act is the one to which virtue is ordained, as we previously clarified".

Both the terms *synderesis* – used by Philip the Chancellor – and *scintilla animae* reflect the value's natural basic conscience, since *synderesis* becomes right reason. Thanks to the light of Revelation, we discover now that the ethical principles can be neither demonstrated nor deducted, for they are printed in the being of man. Human good means that every particular individual is and acts according to its essence. Human nature constitutes in the ontic principle of morality.

All this led St. Thomas to grade the different applications of freedom, to consider the influence of circumstances, desire, to consider the finality and intention of moral acts. The mechanistic understands nature as a group of positive relations and does not explain what is nature, but assumes its existence. On the contrary, in the finalistic conception nature is an intrinsic principle of perfection, in such a way that the natural law is not something unrelated to man, but a group of principles that regulate an activity as appropriate to the being itself.

The origin of the State is in the very nature of man, since man is a natural social being and the goal of political coexistence is the human wellbeing, always conducted in the manner in which a life in community demands. Human good becomes common good. Society is constituted for the man himself, to help him to achieve his natural happiness. Common good is not a mere um of particular goods, but it is comprehensive of private goods and also different from them.

St. Thomas does not propose a precise concept of the term common good. In any case, it is present in the political literature of the XVI and XVII centuries. Common good is often

understood as synonymous of public good, general wellbeing, good for all. It is precisely what Aquinas tries to tell us when he states that the common good of the political community and the particular good of the person are not only different in regard with their lower or higher quantity, but also by a formal difference. This formal difference, based on the being of nature, is not only an ideal or utopian difference but - being a dynamic and internal principle owned by each man – it is much richer than the positivism of the necessary explanation.

First of all, common good is not only the condition of existence for the particular goals but also the way of being of the human good in social life, so that it allows to sort the way in which particular goods must be increased and distributed. Secondly, the fact that man is subordinated to community is nothing but a single aspect of this relation, since the subordination of every man to the common good is not according to it all. Thirdly, the political common good is the goal of any law and object of political prudence, although not as unequivocal sum of partial goods but as a human and organic whole. Common good belongs to all, but not equally; it is like the soul, which is inside the whole body but not with plentitude of virtue.

Peace is *tranquilitas libertas* or *tranquilitas ordinis*, tranquility in the order. The order of the law is not in the area of the exercise of personal freedom but in something previous to it, meta-juridical, of the metaphysical and anthropological order. Stating that the right is a pre-moral relation must be correctly understood. The subsistence, perfectibility and responsibility of man defines the internal ordination of man to fulfill himself, to act according to its full potential. Is (in) this metaphysical level, which we call pre-moral, the basis of the transcendental relations of the human behaviour.

This self-perfective inclination becomes moral or responsible, and thus moral arises above the anthropological and good above the being. The perfective dynamism of human life in the personal, familiar and politic spheres comes then from the natural duty of perfecting, from the step from the being towards the good. The State is neither the materialisation of an *a priori* nor a product from arbitrariness. Centuries later, Machiavelli focused political philosophy on a factual issue: that of power and men management. Since then, the mechanistic approach replaces the finalistic, but this time without the fertility and spontaneity of an internal principle; sanction replaces law, force replaces right and fear replaces the desire for goodness.

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