

Robert Goczał

Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland

robert.goczal@pwt.wroc.pl

ORCID: 0000-0001-8777-8488

Philosophy and Theology Combined? The Metaphysical Tradition of Western Scholasticism in the Field of Reflection on God Against the Background of St Thomas Aquinas' Approach to the Concept of God

Połączenie filozofii i teologii? Metafizyczna tradycja zachodniej
scholastyki i jej refleksja nad Bogiem na tle podejścia św. Tomasza
z Akwinu wobec pojęcia Boga

ABSTRACT: The paper deals with two seemingly opposing fields pertaining to the relationship between theology and philosophy, in which the pursuit of apprehending Divinity through human experience may have divergent meanings. However, such an assumption only seems apparent in relation to scholastic thought, which turns out to be closely linked to religious thinking, both in the fields of theology and philosophy, which do not diverge from each other in sharp contrast. This is demonstrated in three sections, drawing on the source and supplementary literature, although rather in a general and opinion-forming approach than in the form of a systematic exegesis aimed at justifying this coherence. I also provided a brief introduction and some concluding remarks. In the following research, I examine the obvious links between theology and philosophy that point to the validity of this thesis. I based my thesis on historical and analytical insight into the leading metaphysical trends of medieval Western Scholasticism and Aquinas' concept of *Ipsum Esse*, as well as comparable ideas in the second Latin scholastic thought at the turn of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, otherwise mainly observable in Francisco Suárez of the Jesuit Order. The last issue, I set out more extensively, refers to the Aquinas' *Ipsum Esse*, which is a theory commonly tied to existential metaphysics, less frequently so with theology. Nevertheless, it can be reasonably demonstrated that Aquinas presumably pointed to *Ipsum Esse* as a metaphysical category that may convincingly combine theology with philosophy by thinking of God as a supreme being manifesting Himself in His inner nature within reality. Through this approach, Aquinas seems to fill an important gap

that usually divides these two disciplines. Despite their presumed divergences, they undoubtedly have something in common. In Aquinas and scholastics who followed him to a large extent, God turns out to be the *primum movens* and *Ipsum Esse* and an underlying concept for both theology, which operates on the borders of metaphysics, and metaphysics, which operates on the boundaries of theology, although they are approaching God from different perspectives in their own respective fields. They seem to somehow refer to the same object of knowledge, namely by referring to the concept of God as either a metaphysical foundation, a doctrinal premise for further inquiries, or the ultimate climax of the entire system of knowledge.

KEY WORDS: Latin Scholasticism, Renaissance Scholasticism, medieval metaphysics, God, *Ipsum Esse*, St Thomas Aquinas, Francisco Suárez

ABSTRAKT: W niniejszym artykule przedstawiono zagadnienie relacji dwóch pozornie przeciwnych refleksji: teologii i filozofii, które z założenia w dwojaki sposób dążą do uchwycenia Boskości z perspektywy ludzkiego doświadczenia. Takie założenie wydaje się jednak pozorne w odniesieniu do myśli scholastycznej, która jest ściśle powiązana z myśleniem religijnym, zarówno teologicznym, jak i filozoficznym, które w scholastyce nie są sobie przeciwstawiane, co zostało wykazane w trzech częściach, w oparciu o literaturę źródłową i uzupełniającą, choć raczej w ujęciu ogólnym i opiniotwórczym niż w formie systematycznej egzegezy mającej na celu uzasadnienie tej spójności. Artykuł zawiera również krótkie wprowadzenie i kilka uwag końcowych. W badaniach przedstawiono oczywiste powiązania między teologią a filozofią, które wskazują na zasadność tej tezy. Sama teza została oparta na historycznych i analitycznych analizach wiodących metafizycznych nurtów średniowiecznej scholastyki zachodniej, koncepcji *Ipsum Esse* św. Tomasza z Akwinu, a także analogicznych idei w drugiej łacińskiej myśli scholastycznej na przełomie końca XVI i początku XVII w., skądinąd widoczne głównie u jezuitę Franciszka Suáreza. Ostatnim zagadnieniem w niniejszym artykule jest *Ipsum Esse* św. Tomasza z Akwinu, powszechnie wiązane z metafizyką egzystencjalną, rzadziej z teologią. Niemniej jednak można zasadnie wykazać, że Akwinata przypuszczalnie wskazywał na *Ipsum Esse* jako kategorię metafizyczną, która może przekonująco łączyć teologię z filozofią, rozważając Boga jako najwyższy byt objawiający swoją wewnętrzną naturę w świecie materialnym. Dzięki takiemu podejściu Akwinata wydaje się wypełniać ważną lukę, która zwykle dzieli te dwie dyscypliny. Pomimo pozornych rozbieżności, teologia i filozofia mają ze sobą elementy wspólne. U Akwinaty i scholastyków, którzy w dużej mierze poszli w jego ślady, Bóg okazuje się być *primum movens* i *Ipsum Esse* oraz pojęciem leżącym u podstaw zarówno teologii, która działa na pograniczu metafizyki, jak i metafizyki, która działa na pograniczu teologii, gdyż obie te refleksje traktują o Bogu, choć z różnych perspektyw, odnosząc się do tego samego przedmiotu poznania, a mianowicie pojęcia Boga jako metafizycznego fundamentu, naukowej przesłanki dla dalszych dociekań albo punktu kulminacyjnego całego systemu wiedzy.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: scholastyka łacińska, scholastyka renesansowa, metafizyka średniowieczna, Bóg, *Ipsum Esse*, św. Tomasz z Akwinu, Franciszek Suárez

Introduction

The relationship between theology and philosophy has been a contentious field of study for decades among theologians, philosophers, and Christians alike. With no preconceptions, those interested in medieval thought would not be surprised that it is plausible to find far-reaching analogies between medieval Christian theology and the scholastic philosophy, both in their disputed subject and in the vast frame of references. Such an understanding should come as no surprise because the ideas of Christian spirituality influenced philosophers of Neoplatonic and Aristotelian provenance directly or indirectly, hence many comparative associations can be discerned. This serves merely to indicate the subject of these considerations.

However, while most non-religious contemporary thinkers have focused their efforts on proving or disproving the existence of God, few scholars have ever stopped to ask themselves the question: "Does the relationship between theology and philosophy presuppose only the reference of faith to reason, or is it merely the concept of God alone that constrains the divergence between them?" Presumably, it is not faith alone as a spiritual experience or reason itself as a cognitive experience, but the very concept of God, which is otherwise quite metaphysical in its essence, and constant reference to God that determine a certain connection between these apparently conflicting fields of human cognition (e.g. one appeals to faith, the other to sheer reason). As a result, such a claim may be in tension with a thesis that God is incomprehensible and without any basis in rationality. Nevertheless, the relationship between philosophy and theology cannot be reduced solely to reason or faith; rather, in either field a God-oriented goal ought to be pursued. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that theology should not be deprived of metaphysics, or in other words, natural theology or first philosophy, just as metaphysics should not be deprived of reaching the theological plane, at least in the field of reflection directed at the Divine Being as the ultimate cause of existence. The inclusion of the basic theological premises and truths into the exposition of metaphysical truths supplements such reasoning with knowledge that aims to establish a reason (*ratio*) for all metaphysical doctrine as one that can be genuinely combined with theology. Significantly, commentators, drawing on scholastic doctrines, define such natural theology (first philosophy or metaphysics) as *scientia transcendens*, which applies equally to created and uncreated

beings, or to the supreme genus of being.¹ The fundamental ontological premises of *scientia transcendens* seems to be a fully immanent and infinite being, a cause by itself (*causa sui*) and its essential transcendence; in a word – Divine Being. A supernatural point at the end of metaphysical reflection is presented by Olivia Blanchette in her monograph on “being,” and other eminent scholars who point to the direction in which metaphysics is heading.² Quite a similar position can be observed in Duns Scotus († 1308), for whom the metaphysical science of the transcendentals (*nomina transcendentalia*) was supposed to open the knower to the aspect of Transcendence or, in other words, was supposed to reach the supernatural realm within natural theology: “[...] it is a science that transcends because it deals with transcendentals.”³ In the preface to his edition of Scotus’s collected works, Allan Bernard Wolter emphasizes: “Following the Avicennian interpretation of Aristotelian metaphysics, like Albertus Magnus, Siger of Brabant, Aquinas and most scholastics of his day, Scotus envisioned God as the goal of any rational metaphysics whose subject is being *qua* being.”⁴ This is a noticeable and rather inevitable trend in the Christian philosophical teaching, present recurred in almost all the metaphysical systems of Scholasticism, and especially visible in its Thomistic branch, namely, the combining of the subject of theology with the subject of metaphysics, albeit under certain conditions. What is equally striking is that, although the whole issue seems to be linked to the problems of onto-theology in the Scholastic period, it is a bold attempt to find, to a reasonable extent, a parallel between metaphysical reflection on the being with theology on God.⁵

¹ Cf. Ludger Honnefelder, *La métaphysique comme science transcendante entre le Moyen âge et les temps modernes*, trans. Isabelle Mandrella, Chaire Étienne Gilson (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), esp. 29–30.

² Cf. Olivia Blanchette, *Philosophy of Being: A Reconstructive Essay in Metaphysics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), ch. 18 (“The Necessity of Total Transcendence”), ch. 19 (“Transcendence and Immanence”), esp. subch. 19.3 (“The True Mystery of Being”), 543–51, also subch. 19.4 (“The Necessity of Supernatural”), 551–56. See also Władysław Stróżewski, “Metafizyka jako nauka,” *Studia Mediewistyczne* 27, no. 2 (1990), 3–27.

³ John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, trans., with an introduction, by Allan B. Wolter, Library of Liberal Arts 194 (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 3. See Rolf Darge, “Erste Philosophie als Transzendentalwissenschaft gemäß Duns Scotus: Seinswissenschaft oder ‚Onto-Logik‘?,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 111, no. 1 (2004), 43–61.

⁴ Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 1 (“Preface”); for more, see esp. 1–14 (“Concerning Metaphysics”), 15–36 (“Man’s Natural Knowledge of God”).

⁵ For more on the connections between metaphysics and theology (onto-theology), see Jeffrey W. Robbins, “The Problem of Ontotheology: Complicating the Divide Between Philosophy and Theology,” *The Heythrop Journal* 43, no. 2 (2002), 139–51, <https://doi.org/>

The following considerations, consisting of three main sections, aim to specify this not entirely transparent relationship in the area of human reflection on God, both from the perspective of the scholastic metaphysical tradition and from the perspective of St. Thomas Aquinas, who must rightly be regarded as one of the greatest experts of *sacra doctrina* and scholastic philosophy. Hence, the first two sections appeal to the commonly accepted scholastic thought, mainly medieval Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics, but they also take into account later Renaissance Scholasticism, associated with the intense revival of Latin Aristotelianism and Thomism in the Iberian Peninsula. One can hardly miss here that the obvious nature of medieval and Renaissance Scholasticism pursued by the iconic names (e.g. Aquinas, Duns Scotus, St. Bonaventure, St. Robert Bellarmine, Francisco Suárez) is revealed most evidently in the fact that such a comparison leads to the conclusion that philosophy and theology have apparently overlapped and colluded with each other in the field of reflection on the concept of God. The third section appeals to the concept of God as *Ipsium Esse* in St. Thomas Aquinas († 1274), which was a widespread theory in subsequent centuries and influenced Christian existential reflection on God as the supreme being (*ens supremum*) and source of existence – an idea that probably continued to be accepted until the modern flowering of neo-Thomism and neo-Scholasticism.

If we were to look at the background of most medieval theories, we would likely notice several things that stand out and indicate a fundamental difference between theology and philosophy, at least as regards the doctrinal foundations of these sciences. Unlike the metaphysical tradition of the Latin West, which takes a rationally organized philosophical approach to God as an *extrinsic object* for knowledge (meaning, the science is not constituted by God through supernatural Revelation), for the sacred theology, God is an immediate and

10.1111/1468-2265.00188; Jean-Luc Marion, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'ontothéologie," *Revue Thomiste* 95, no. 1 (1995), 31–66; Jean-Luc Marion, "Thomas Aquinas and Onto-theo-logy," in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 38–75; Adriaan Peperzak, "Religion After Onto-Theology?," in *Religion After Metaphysics*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 104–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511615399.009>; Emmanuel Tourpe, "Différence ontologique et différence ontothéologique," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 93, no. 3 (1995), 331–69, <https://doi.org/10.2143/rpl.93.3.541761>; Michel Gourinat, "La querelle de l'ontothéologie: L'interprétation de la théologie médiévale par Heidegger," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales*, no. 2 (1996), 85–93, <https://doi.org/10.4000/crm.2486>; Robert Goczał, *Onto-teo-logia: Status bytu realnego i myślnego w metafizyce Francisco Suáreza* (Warszawa: Warszawska Firma Wydawnicza, 2011), 218–36.

intrinsic object for knowledge.⁶ This compelling premise flows for theologians from Divine Revelation itself. On the contrary, the overriding point in philosophy, especially in the form of metaphysics, is reason itself, and the concept of God as the ultimate crowning achievement is at most a consequence of the methodical analysis that philosophers pursue without divine support in Revelation, but rather in the nature of being itself. In turn, based on Revelation as its doctrinal foundation, theology defines nature, power, attributes, and inflow of God's grace, and routinely emphasizes the exertion of believers' faith. Accordingly, it worships God directly as a consistent consequence of the Revelation accepted from above. Thanks to God, theology radiates the splendor and sublimity of intellectual science, although it sometimes reflects a mystical form of His presence or supernatural theophany (*Theofania* – derived from "God appears"), or an objectively unverifiable illumination within the inner human nature (*Illuminatio* – derived from "God illuminates").⁷ In such spirituality, medieval Illuminism concerns all doctrines that consider enlightenment or Revelation to be the direct perception or knowledge of eternal truth and God, not due to natural, conceptual or intellectual insight into the essential structure of things, but to the supernatural light provided in the soul, will or intellect by God.⁸ In Illuminism, the Divine intervention in human cognition accompanying faith, or, in other words, the God's supernatural assistance is considered the most important source for further intellectual knowledge of Him, which may also happen on the border of mystical experience.⁹ For

⁶ Cf. John P. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," in *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages*, ed. Kent Emery, Russell Friedman, and Andreas Speer (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 571–72.

⁷ See Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God. The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae*, Ashgate Studies in the History of Philosophical Theology (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), esp. 18–23 ("Sacred Doctrine and Revelation"); 23–28 ("The Scientia of Sacred Doctrine"); 28–37 ("The Catholic Truth and Philosophy").

⁸ See Timothy Noone, "Divine Illumination," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau and Christina van Dyke, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 369–83.

⁹ On *theologia mystica* and illumination in the philosophical sense, see Roberto Hofmeister Pich and Andreas Speer, eds., *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought: A Tribute to Kent Emery, Jr.*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 125 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), esp. 157–77 (C. Steel, "What a Philosopher May Learn from Theologians. Albert the Great on the Principles of Movement in Humans [*De anima* III, 9–11]"); 216–31 (S. P. Marrone, "Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon and the Magicians on the Power of Words"); 276–90 (B. Goehring, "Henry of Ghent on Knowledge, Remembrance, and the Order of Cognitive Acts: The Problematic Legacy of Thomas Aquinas"); 477–527 (G. R. Smith, "*Esse consecutive cognitum*: A Fourteenth-Century

example, according to Roger Bacon († circa 1292), an English Franciscan, also known as *Doctor Mirabilis* (Miraculous Doctor), true illumination, thanks to God's intervention in the contemplating soul, allows for direct cognition of eternal truths, existing objectively in the mind of God in the form of ideas or exemplary forms (*forma exemplaris*), by means of which God created all things (*entia creata*) and through which He can impart Himself in human knowledge. Bacon distinguished three types of enlightenment: a) natural and primitive enlightenment, which arises as a result of external sensory experience (*illuminatio primitiva*); b) supernatural and extraordinary illumination, which arises as a result of God's internal influence on the soul (*illuminatio specialis*); and c) universal enlightenment, which is available to everyone thanks to Revelation from the Holy Scripture (*revelatio generalis*).¹⁰ These types of illumination presuppose, to some extent, the result of *a priori* acceptance of faith, which, however, does not require rational pursuits.

In this context, the dogmatics of faith, theology, and religion have their own intrinsic value of verification and primarily presuppose Divine Revelation as a substructure for their validity, which consistently constitutes the science of theology. Despite some mystical background, it has a deeply hidden value of verifiability incomparable to any other natural science, which illustrates the testimony of God's power. Theology appears here as transcendent to all philosophical meanings, language, speculative methods, etc., although it also implies metaphysical reasoning and truths within itself. Nevertheless, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, both God and dogmatics, and the entire space of believers, the last mentioned mainly praises the reflection on God's splendor, constitute on a scientific level the first principles (*prima principia*) of sacred theology.¹¹ Accordingly, neither God nor dogmatics (the first principles

Theory of Divine Ideas"); 599–674 (S. M. Metzger, "The *Tractatus de mistica theologia* by Ioannes de Indagine, O. Cart. [†1475]").

¹⁰ See Yael Raizman-Kedar, "The Intellect Naturalized: Roger Bacon on the Existence of Corporeal Species Within the Intellect," in *Evidence and Interpretation in Studies on Early Science and Medicine Essays in Honor of John E. Murdoch*, ed. Edith Dudley Sylla and William Royall Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 131–57; Raoul Carton, *L'expérience mystique de l'illumination intérieure chez Roger Bacon*, Études de philosophie médiévale 3 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1924), 13–14, 15–69; pt. 1 ("L'illumination"), ch. 1 ("Idée générale de l'illumination"); Stanisław Bafia, "Bacon Roger," in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, vol. 1 (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2000), 459.

¹¹ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, "Summa theologiae Ia," in *Pars Prima Summae Theologiae: A quaestione I ad quaestionem XLIX, ad codices manuscriptorum Vaticanos exacta, cum commentariis Thomae de vito Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum S. R. C. Cardinalis*, Opera omnia iussu impensaque Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 4 (Romae: Ex Typographia Polyglotta

of theology) are subject to the verification procedures of lower and external sciences, but directly to God's Revelation.¹²

Quite surprisingly, however, it can be assumed that although theology is thoroughly permeated with mysticism and deep spirituality, Latin Western theology seems to be combined with philosophy, or more precisely, scholastic metaphysics considered in its own way. Through this fusion, philosophy itself seems to resonate, in addition to its intellectual dimension, with the spiritual and theological dimension. For example, Aquinas's concept of *Ipsum Esse* may appear as a path to philosophical theology and at the same time bring the rational philosophical knowledge of God closer to its theological counterpart, although the *Ipsum Esse* is assessed from the perspective of approaching God by reason, both analogously and externally, not as a direct object of faith.¹³ Despite their divergent assumptions regarding the subject matter in their respective fields,

S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1888), q. I, a. 7 [hereafter: Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*]; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, "Super Boetium De Trinitate," in *Super Boetium De Trinitate: Expositio libri Boetii: De ebdomadibus*, Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 50 (Roma: Commissio Leonina; Paris: Éditions Du Cerf, 1992), q. II, a. 2.

¹² Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. I, a. 5, ad secundum dicendum, p. 16: "Non enim accipit sua principia ab aliis scientiis, sed immediate a Deo per revelationem. Et ideo non accipit ab aliis scientiis tanquam a superioribus, sed utitur eis tanquam inferioribus et ancillis; sicut architectonicae utuntur subministrantibus, ut civilis militari"; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super Sententiis magistri Petri Lombardi*, ed. Pierre Mandonnet, vol. 1 (Parisiis: P. Lethielleux, 1929), q. 1 a. 3, qc. 2, ad 2: "Et ex istis principiis, non respuens communia principia, procedit ista scientia; nec habet viam ad ea probanda, sed solum ad defendendum a contradicentibus." See more Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 571–89, esp. 571–73; Yves Congar, "Tradition et Sacra doctrina chez saint Thomas d'Aquin," in *Église et Tradition*, ed. Johannes Betz and Heinrich Fries (Lyon: Éditions Xavier Mappus, 1963), 157–94; Lawrence J. Donohoo, "The Nature and Grace of Sacra Doctrina in St. Thomas's *Super Boetium de Trinitate*," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 63, no. 3 (1999), 343–401, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.1999.0015>; Joseph Clifford Fenton, *The Concept of Sacred Theology* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing, 1941), 26–55 ("The Subject Matter"); 56–70 ("The Light of Sacred Theology"); 231–46 ("The Development of Sacred Theology – The Medieval Period"); 247–56 ("The Development of Sacred Theology – Post-Tridentine Period"); John F. Boyle, "Aquinas' Roman Commentary on Peter Lombard," *Anuario Filosófico* 39, no. 2 (2006), 477–96, <https://doi.org/10.15581/009.39.29302>.

¹³ On the controversies surrounding the definition of God as *ens supremum* in the terms of *primum cognitum*, which has emerged in various philosophical systems, especially against the background of the discrepancies between the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian traditions, see Agnieszka Kijewska, "Bóg jako *Primum Cognitum* – dyskusje i kontrowersje (bł. Duns Szkot, Henryk z Gandawy, św. Tomasz z Akwinu, św. Bonawentura, Mikołaj z Kuzy)," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 67, no. 2 (2019), 5–30, <https://doi.org/10.18290/rf.2019.67.2-1>.

both theology and philosophy seem to be predicated on the same idea of reflection directed towards God or, in other words, towards the supreme principle of knowledge. This means that in some respect, there are noticeable and relevant connections between the two Christian traditions of theology and philosophy of the Latin West, at least in so far as they relate to the intellectual concept of God, who can be perceived or proven by means of intellectual cognition both in the realm of Revelation and in a philosophical sense beyond it.

Philosophy and theology in the metaphysical tradition of Western scholastics

Both the Western tradition of scholastic philosophy and theology differ from Eastern Christian patristic thought, which tends towards greater spirituality than enforced rationalism. Although it is not an evolution of the Eastern schools, and the texts of the Greek Fathers are not quoted in any strict sense, it remains deeply permeated with metaphysical knowledge and reflection on God.¹⁴ In most cases, scholastic authors had drawn on the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian traditions, especially since the 12th century and starting even earlier, reflecting the spirit of theological knowledge. The philosophical topics are almost the same as the theological ones in terms of their subject matter and have a significant impact on the universal and intellectual doctrine of the Church. A systematic exposition of the truths of the Catholic faith based on Aristotelianism and set down very subtly in the 13th century by St. Thomas Aquinas can be envisioned as a philosophical revolution of the Church in opposition to the Neoplatonic tradition of previous centuries. Most Christian thinkers before Aquinas, such as the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Augustine († 430) or John Scotus Eriugena (ci. † 877), were influenced by Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy (Plotinus),

¹⁴ One can find later Latin versions of the interpretation of the Cappadocians' philosophical thought, which are partly derived in the West from writings of medieval thinkers, or at least are a development of theories originating from outside the tradition of the East. Certain inaccuracies or impurities in the reading of the Cappadocian Fathers of Neoplatonic provenance are certainly the result of the external evolution of their concepts and thoughts, which the later Western Scholasticism interpreted mainly through *De Divinis nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and *De fide orthodoxa* of John Damascus († ci. 749). Cf. David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 222–25. See also Fran O'Rourke, "Being and Non-Being in Pseudo-Dionysius," in *The Relationship Between Neoplatonism and Christianity*, ed. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1992), 55–78.

and their thought was considered as an intellectual Christian doctrine.¹⁵ This perspective changed radically in the 13th century when the Western world became acquainted with the thought of Aristotle, as well as Arab thinkers and Jewish philosophy – mainly Moses Maimonides († 1204), Avicenna († ca. 1070), Al-Farabi († 950), Avicenna († 1037), along with the writings and comments by thinkers such as Gerard of Cremona († 1187), Albert of Cologne († 1280) and Robert Grosseteste († 1253). After the 1204 conquest of Constantinople, in parallel with the initiation of commodity exchanges with Byzantium and the organization of the Crusades, Greek texts would arrive in Western Europe practically every year. Even special expeditions to Greece were organized to obtain more manuscripts. Separate translation centers were established in Sicily and Toledo, which also contributed to the further development of education and culture. Medieval cities grew stronger, gaining a sense of their own independence and economic stability, and a specific sense of intellectual values developed among the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, which, to some extent, resulted in the pursuit of rationalization of human behaviour and thinking. The universities of Paris and Oxford also strengthened their positions. New scholastic centers began to emerge on the Iberian Peninsula with the foundation of the University of Salamanca in 1218 by King Alfonso IX, king of Leon (Christian Kingdom), from the Burgundian dynasty. The seven liberal arts (*septem artes liberales*) were also taught there. There was a great flowering of Christian Aristotelianism of the second Scholasticism in Salamanca in the 15th and 16th centuries (*Spanische Barockscholastik* or *Spätscholastik*), which had its origins in the philosophy of Pedro Martínez de Osma († ci. 1480).¹⁶ Quite strikingly, the

¹⁵ See John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th, revised edition (London: A. & C. Black, 1977), 3–6, 41–48, 348–57.

¹⁶ Cf. Tomás Carreras y Artau and Joaquín Carreras y Artau, *Historia de la filosofía española: Filosofía cristiana de los siglos XIII al XV*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Asociación Española para el Progreso de las Ciencias, 1943), 550, 569. On the second Scholasticism, see Karl Eschweiler, “Die Philosophie der spanischen Spätscholastik auf den deutschen Universitäten des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts,” in *Spanische Forschungen der Görres-Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kulturgeschichte Spaniens. Erste Reihe* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1928), 251–325, esp. 262–75 (pt. 2: Die Verbreitung der spanischen Schulphilosophie auf den protestantischen Hochschulen in Holland und Deutschlandpart); 283–89 (pt. 3: Der Vorsprung der Jesuiten in der Entwicklung des philosophischen Unterrichtes am Ende des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts); 302–18 (pt. 5: Die Philosophie der Suárez-Schule als normale Universitätsphilosophie des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts); 318–25 (pt. 6: Philosophiegeschichtliche Probleme in der spanischen Spätscholastik); Ulrich G. Leinsle, *Einführung in die scholastische Theologie*, UTB für Wissenschaft 1865 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1995), 262–342; Paul Richard Blum, *Philosophenphilosophie und Schulphilosophie: Typen des Philosophierens in der Neuzeit*, *Studia Leibnitiana* 27 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), 117–262; Paul Richard Blum

school Scholasticism treated philosophy as a skill of reasoning within which the interpretation of the world takes place, but above all, philosophy played the role of a natural tool in the service of theology (*divinae theologiae ministrum*). Although I argue that the passages on the relationship between metaphysics and sacred doctrine in Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* are consistent with Aquinas' assumptions in the *Summa theologiae*, perhaps nothing in Suárez's work so decisively favors this thesis as the preliminary remark from his most important metaphysical work:

Day by day, however, I saw more clearly how much that divine and supernatural theology longed for and required this human and natural theology, so much so that I did not hesitate to interrupt the work I had begun for a while, in order to give this metaphysical doctrine its place and seat, or rather to restore it... In this work, I act as a philosopher, so that I always keep in mind that our philosophy must be Christian, and that I serve divine theology, which aim I set before myself, not only in the questions to be discussed, but much more in the selection of opinions, tending to those which seemed more subservient to piety and revealed doctrine.¹⁷

and Vilem Mudroch, "Die Schulphilosophie in den katholischen Territorien," in *Das heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation, Nord- und Ostmitteleuropa*, vol. 4 of *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Helmut Holzhey and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie (Basel: Schwabe, 2001), 302–91; Martin William Francis Stone, "Scholastic Schools and Early Modern Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 299–327. On teaching in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, see John Tate Lanning, *Academic Culture in the Spanish Colonies* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), 3–33, 61–92; Kevin White, ed., *Hispanic Philosophy in the Age of Discovery*, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 29 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997); Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 9–32 ("Institutional Setting"); Ignacio Angelelli, "Sobre la 'Restauración' de los textos filosóficos ibéricos," *Documentación Crítica Iberoamericana de Filosofía y Ciencias Afines* 2, no. 4 (1965), 423–46; Ernst Lewalter, *Spanisch-jesuitische und deutsch-lutherische Metaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der iberisch-deutschen Kulturbeziehungen und zur Vorgeschichte des deutschen Idealismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967); Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte 29 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1939).

¹⁷ "In dies tamen luce clarius intuebar, quam illa divina ac supernaturalis Theologia hanc humanam et naturalem desideraret ac requireret, adeo ut non dubitaverim illud inchoatum opus paulisper intermittere, quo huic doctrinae metaphysicae suum quasi locum ac sedem darem, vel potius restituerem... Ita vero in hoc opere philosophum ago, ut semper tamen

Suárez's remark testifies to the common scholastic belief and is a characteristic and quite striking aspect of Western Scholasticism, namely, that divine theology was treated by almost all Christian thinkers (and even non-Christian) as the science of sacred things (*rerum divinarum scientia*), while philosophy, and especially the one we define as first philosophy (metaphysics), fulfills only its auxiliary and apologetic function. Philosophy enables insight into the truths of faith through natural reasoning (*ratione naturali*), but only those truths that can be known without any recourse to Revelation.

Divine and supernatural theology, although it rests on divine light and principles revealed by God, since it is truly completed by human discourse and reasoning, it is aided by the truths also known by the light of nature, and uses them to complete its discourses and to illuminate divine truths, as ministers and instruments. But of all the natural sciences, among them the one which is first and has been called the first philosophy, is particularly at the service of sacred and supernatural theology. Both because it comes nearest to the knowledge of divine things, and because it explains and confirms these natural principles which embrace all things and, in a certain way, support and sustain the whole of the science [...]. For these principles and metaphysical truths are so closely connected with theological conclusions and discourses, that if this science and perfect cognition be taken away from them, then their knowledge will also be seriously undermined.¹⁸

prae oculis habeam nostram philosophiam debere christianam esse, ac divinae Theologiae ministram. Quem mihi scopum praefixi, non solum in quaestionibus pertractandis, sed multo magis in sentiis, seu opinionibus seligendis, in eas propendens, quae pietati ac doctrinae revelatae subservire magis viderentur.” (Francisco Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, Editio nova, ed. Carolo Berton, Opera Omnia, 25–26 [Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, Bibliopolam editorem, 1866], “Ad lectorem”). Unless otherwise indicated, all Latin translations in the text are entirely mine.

¹⁸ “Divina et supernaturalis theologia, quamquam divino lumine principiisque a Deo revelatis nitatur, quia vero humano discursu et ratiocinatione perficitur, veritatibus etiam naturae lumine notis iuvatur, eisque ad suos discursus perficiendos, et divinas veritates illustrandas, tamquam ministris et quasi instrumentis utitur. Inter omnes autem naturales scientias, ea, quae prima omnium est, et nomen primae philosophiae obtinuit, sacrae ac supernaturali theologiae praecipue ministrat. Tum quia ad divinarum rerum cognitionem inter omnes proxime accedit, tum etiam quia ea naturalia principia explicat atque confirmat, quae res universas comprehendunt, omnemque doctrinam quodammodo fulciunt atque sustentant. [...] Ita enim haec principia et veritates metaphysicae cum theologicis conclusionibus ac discursibus cohaerent, ut si illorum scientia ac perfecta cognitio auferatur, horum etiam scientiam nimium labefactari necesse sit.” (Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, Prooemium).

The particular nature of this framework stands out in no sharp contrast to the divergence between philosophy and theology when one turns to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in which he rather perceives the former as a specific type of theology. Aristotle, following the strong tendencies of Plato's later writings, understood his "first philosophy" as theology.¹⁹ More than that, in Alexandria and Antioch, the very phenomenon of Judeo-Christian monotheism indicated a certain form of philosophy or a certain type of metaphysical monism. This type of monism was already known in Greek philosophy as a philosophical concept for which the explanation of the Universe was possible by reference to a single substance, which in the era of the Eastern Church Fathers acquired a significant Christological character as *theia ousia* (divine substance or divine essence). In fact, the Greeks encountered the religion of Judaism and the concept of God as early as the 3rd century BC in Alexandria, in the Jewish diaspora. Researchers of that period point out (esp. Werner Jaeger) that shortly after Alexander the Great, Greek writers such as Hecataeus of Abdera (ci. IV/III BC), Megasthenes (ci. III BC) and Clearchus of Soli (ci. IV/III) in Cyprus, a student of Theophrastus of Eresos (ci. IV/III), who passed on to us the first impressions of their encounters with the Jewish people, invariably called the Jews a "nation of philosophers." They meant that the Jews had already possessed the idea of the unity of the divine being and had much earlier proclaimed the first principle of the Universe, which the Greek thinkers had just arrived at. Similarly, Christianity, as it recognized Judaic monotheism within its own theology, and thus faith in the God of Israel, undoubtedly has an aspect of philosophical religiosity, although Christianity is not a philosophy in the strict sense. The same famous philologist, historian of Hellenism and philosopher W. Jaeger puts forward an almost identical idea through comparative studies of the philosophies of the ancient Greeks. He claimed that the form of the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle fits into the pattern of considering religious problems that was indispensable for the Greeks. Jaeger even came to the conclusion that in many respects Aristotle's work has had a form of Christian natural theology, in which we also encounter an element of philosophical thinking (i.e. rationalization). Aristotle himself, not knowing the Judeo-Christian idea of God, claimed that the ancient gods of Greek folk religion were the same as the idea of the "Unmoved Mover" in his theology. The fundamental divergence between the rationalism of Aristotle's metaphysics and the earlier approach by

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, ed. W. D. Ross and J. A. Smith, *The Works of Aristotle* 8 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 1026a 10–19.

Homer and Hesiod was the complete rejection of the mythical pantheon of gods in defining divine origin. Instead, Aristotle outlined his position in the *Metaphysics*, where he argued that his First Mover is one in species and number.²⁰ The First Mover or Unmoved Mover (*ho ou kinoumenon kinei* – ‘that which moves without being moved’) from the “Lambda” book of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* – who is the first of all substances and the first source of eternal motion in the first sphere – moves the world, being not only the primary efficient cause of motion (*poiētikon aition*), but above all its final cause (*telos*), namely “the end for which a thing was created.”²¹ More than that, in his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle concludes in book I that true metaphysical wisdom must focus on the purpose or final cause, especially the final cause of being, while in book XII he attests to the primacy of final causality for all metaphysical knowledge about the first cause of being.²² It can therefore be assumed that there are theoretical premises allowing for a reasonable hypothesis about a coherent connection between theology and philosophy, which had existed long before Christianity, at least with regard to the divine status of the ultimate cause of being, both its beginning and its end.²³

Following these assumptions, one can likely notice a similar tendency to combine philosophy with theology in later medieval tradition. It cannot be denied that this also concerned Arab Aristotelianism mingled with Neoplatonism among the Mutazilites of Baghdad, as well as other thinkers who tended towards the anti-Aristotelian philosophy, which, through such eminent names

²⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1074a 38–b14.

²¹ Aristotle, “Physics,” in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, Modern Library Classics (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), b. II, 194b, 24–30.

²² Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 982b 10; 1072b4.

²³ In this context, it is worth noting one interesting paper concerning Nicholas of Damascus (Nicolaus Peripateticus) – the Syrian Peripatetic scholar and author of a compendium of Aristotle’s philosophy (*Peri tēs Aristotelous filosofias, De philosophia Aristotelis*). There is a surprising but nonetheless convincing hypothesis that, thanks to the Hebrew translation of the lost fragments of the writings of Nicholas of Damascus, recently discovered by Mauro Zonta and discussed by Silvia Fazzo, it is plausibly confirmed that the life of Nicholas of Damascus should be dated to the period ranging between the 3rd and 5th centuries, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Julian (361–363), and not to the 1st century, as has been assumed so far. This hypothesis would be supported by the discovered Hebrew translation of Nicholas’s discourse on the Christian conception of the Holy Trinity, which he explains in terms of the Aristotelian doctrine of causes: God is one, in that He is a single substance, but He is also threefold, in that He is also the efficient, formal and final cause of creation. See Silvia Fazzo and Mauro Zonta, “Aristotle’s Theory of Causes and the Holy Trinity: New Evidence About the Chronology and Religion of Nicolaus ‘of Damascus’,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 64, no. 3 (2009), 681–90, <https://doi.org/10.7202/037699ar>.

as Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Al-Ghazali († 1111), Averroes († 1198), also had a great influence on the Latin schools of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism in its Thomistic version in Europe, through which the vast majority of the Stagirite's writings were made available to the Latin West.²⁴ The significance of the fact that almost all of Aristotle's works were published in Arabic between the 10th and 11th centuries cannot be overestimated. Until the 12th century, only part of his logic had been available in the West in Latin translation (*Categories* and *Hermeneutics*), which, together with Porphyry's *Isagoge* († 305) and some of Boethius's writings († ci. 526), was collectively known as *logica vetus*. It was only between the 12th and 13th centuries that further logical writings by Aristotle emerged: the *First* and *Second Analytics*, the *Topics*, and *On Sophistical Proofs*, and also the translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was finally made available to the Latin world in translation by William of Moerbeke († 1286), books I–XII, and Cardinal John Bessarion († 1472), books XIII, XIV.²⁵

With the reception of Aristotle's thought (known as the *Corpus Aristotelicum*), the first students of his writings were suspected *eo ipso* of the heresy of the doctrine of Averroism, the center of which was the Sorbonne University in Paris. The forerunners of this trend were Siger of Brabant († 1280), who – to avoid life imprisonment by the Inquisition – secretly left Paris and moved to Liège in Belgium, and Boethius of Dacia († 13th century), who went into retreat to Orvieto in Italian Umbria, and then joined the Dominicans. Nevertheless, already in 1277, when Bishop of Paris Étienne Tempier condemned the 219 theses of the Averroists, Siger and Boethius, together with two other supporters of their views (Goswin la Chapelle and Bernier of Nivelles), were condemned for promoting Aristotelianism in Averroes' teachings, which were seen as

²⁴ See Robert Goczał, "Status intelektu czynnego w noetyce Al-Fârâbiego i Awicenny na tle scholastycznego rozumienia iluminacji i abstrakcji," in *Principia Philosophiae Christianae*, ed. Robert Goczał and Piotr Mrzygłód, vol. 3 (Wrocław: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny, 2022), 69–190, esp. 74–98.

²⁵ See Shlomo Pines, "Studies in Christianity and Judaeo-Christianity Based on Arabic Sources," in *Studies in the History of Religion*, vol. 4 of *The Collected Works of Sholomo Pines*, ed. Guy G. Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 334–88. The original edition by William of Moerbeke and Card. Bessarion, see *Aristotelis castigatissime recognitum opus metaphysicum a Clarissimo principe Bessarione Cardinale Niceno latinitate feliciter donatum, xiiii libris distinctum: cum adiecto in xii primos libros Argyropyli Byzantii interpretament, rarum proculdubio et hactenus desideratum opus. Deus optimus qui sub nomine ipsius entis in hoc opere celebratur...* (Parisiis: Apud Henricum Stephanum, 1515); Valentín García Yebra, ed., *Aristotelois ta meta ta physica: Aristotelis metaphysica: Metafisica de Aristóteles*, 2nd revised ed., Biblioteca Hispánica de Filosofía (Madrid: Gredos, 1990).

threatening the integrity of the Church's doctrine.²⁶ Most of the theories of Averroism were in contradiction to the philosophical teachings and dogmatics of the Church, among others: Averroes' theory of the eternity of the world; the mortality of the human soul; the denial of God's foreknowledge and divine Providence; God as Intellect without free will; the theory of the independence of theological and philosophical truths.²⁷ Surprisingly enough, some of the Averroists' theses were also associated with St. Thomas' lectures on Aristotle, to such an extent that from 1282, the Franciscan Order, fearing the errors of Aquinas' teaching, ordered its monks to read *Correctorium Fratris Thomae* by William de la Mare († ca. 1285), an authority in the field of biblical studies and the author of a collection of editorial and linguistic remarks related to the Hebrew version of the Holy Scripture (*Correctio textus bibliae* and *De hebraeis et graecis vocabilis glossarum bibliae*). The criticism of Averroes' opinions spread through the entire Christian world – he was also criticized by St. Bonaventure († 1274), St. Albert the Great († 1280) in *De unitate intellectus contra Averroem* (1256) and St. Thomas in *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* (1270), Giles the Roman († 1316) in *De purificatione intellectus possibilis contra Averroem*,²⁸ Raymond Lull († 1315) in *Liber contra errores Boetii et Sigerii* (1298), or even Roger Bacon, who expressed his profound opposition to Averroes. However, Averroism as a philosophical doctrine (not a school or trend) survived in the views of others, for example the French philosopher John of Janduno († 1328) and Marsilius of Padua († 1342), who both studied liberal arts at the Sorbonne in Paris.

It is quite illustrative, albeit justified at the time, that St. Thomas modified Aristotelianism in order to correctly harmonize it with the teachings of the Church, and based his fundamental theological work on the systematized lectures presented by Aristotle long before Christianity. Aquinas' teaching was

²⁶ See Roland Hissette, *Enquête sur les 219 articles condamnés à Paris le 7 mars 1277*, *Philosophes Médiévaux* 22 (Louvain: Publications Universitaires; Paris: Vander-Oyez, 1977), 7–14 (Introduction).

²⁷ See Martin Grabmann, *Neu aufgefundenen Werke des Siger von Brabant und Boetius von Dacien* (München: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1924); Martin Grabmann, "Neuaufgefundene «Quaestiones» Sigers von Brabant zu den Werken des Aristoteles (Cm. 9559)," in *Per la storia della teologia e della filosofia*, vol. 1 of *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle: Scritti di Storia e Paleografia* (Roma: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1924), 103–47; Daniel J. Lasker, "Averroistic Trends in Jewish-Christian Polemics in the Late Middle Ages," *Speculum* 55, no. 2 (1980), 294–304, esp. 299–300, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2847289>; Zdzisław Kukiewicz, "Średniowieczny awerroizm żydowski," *Studia Judaica* 8, nos. 1–2 (2005), 15–33.

²⁸ Giles also criticized Muslim Averroism and numerous errors of Aristotle in his *Errorum Philosophorum*.

recognized centuries later by Pope Leo XIII († 1903) as a classic philosophical exposition of Catholic intellectual doctrine. It is not without significance for the history of philosophy that Aquinas also relied on Arabic interpretations of Aristotle, especially those of Al-Farabi and Avicenna, and to a critical extent on Averroes. He rejected the Arabic understanding of the relationship of the soul to the Active Intellect (*intellectus agens*). Despite the clear criticism he expressed, he was well acquainted with the medieval thought of Aristotelianism, Neoplatonism, emanationism and Arabic Plotinism,²⁹ as reflected in his frequent references to the theory of the soul and intellectual cognition in Al-Farabi and Avicenna, especially in his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* and on Averroes in *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*.³⁰

Scholastic metaphysics as *Scientia Divina*: The concept of God

In the Thomistic tradition, the formal subject of theology (God as ultimate existence and Truth) assumes a division into the subject understood *in esse rei obiectum quod* (through the primary reason of knowledge) and *in esse cognoscibilis obiectum quo* (the reason for knowledge through the cognitive medium).³¹ This position recognizes the knowability of God through the cognitive medium

²⁹ See Arthur Little, "The Platonic Heritage of Thomism," *Review of Metaphysics* 8 (1954), 105–24; Robert John Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism: A Study of the Plato and Platonici Texts in the Writings of Saint Thomas* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1970); Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas and the Platonists," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, ed. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 279–324, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110908497.279>; Fran O'Rourke, "Aquinas and Platonism," in *Contemplating Aquinas*, ed. Fergus Kerr (London: SCM Press, 2003), 247–79; Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Fran O'Rourke, "Virtus Essendi: Intensive Being in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas," *Dionysius* 15 (1991), 55–78.

³⁰ Sancti Thomas Aquinatis, "Commentum in quatuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi," in *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Ordinis Praedicatorum*, Opera Omnia 7.2 (Parmae: Typis Petri Fiaccadori, 1857), d. 49, q. 2, a. 1; Sancti Thomas Aquinatis, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, ed. L.W. Keeler, trans. Roberto Busa (Turini, 1954); or Ralph M. McInerny, *Aquinas Against the Averroists: On There Being Only One Intellect* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993).

³¹ Suárez similarly addresses the issue in Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. VII, prol., where he points to the cognitive order of *secundum esse* and *secundum rationem*.

in esse cognoscibilis and the reason for being *in esse rei*.³² This knowledge is ontological in nature and determines the intrinsic, transcendental essence of God as a real and Supreme Being. It is not without significance that in his philosophical writings, St. Thomas made repeated insertions of the Arabic philosophy (e.g. in his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*), much more than of the philosophical tradition of Eastern theologians. He referred, by far, most often to Avicenna's position on many philosophical issues. For Aquinas, setting up an adequate subject of knowledge in theology, despite the unquestionable value of Revelation, is paradoxically also relevant in the whole context of sacred theology (*sacra doctrina*), so that theology can be envisioned by the specific meaning of being a science, as Aquinas emphasizes in the *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, in the *Compendium theologiae*, and in his famed the *Summa theologiae*.³³ This approach is inherent in the writings of most commentators of medieval Thomism, including those from the Iberian school,

³² "Duplex solet distingui objectum formale in potentiis vel habitibus, praesertim cognoscitivis, scilicet, in esse rei, et in esse cognoscibilis [...]. Ratio ergo formalis objecti in esse rei, est ratio principaliter cognita; unde vocari solet objectum quod, seu terminativum. Ratio autem formalis in esse cognoscibilis, est ratio seu medium cognoscendi, et ideo vocatur objectum quo. Unde fit ut, comparando illas duas rationes inter se, illa quae pertinet ad esse rei, in objecto materiali comprehendatur; quare de illa hic non tractamus, nam in praecedenti disputatione explicata est. Agimus ergo de ratione formali motiva quae solet etiam vocari ratio sub qua" (Francisco Suárez, *Opus de triplici virtute theologica. Fide, spe, et charitate. In tres Tractatus, pro ipsarum virtutum numero distributum* [Moguntiae: Hermann Mylius Birckmann, 1622], 20 ["Tractatus primi de fide theologica"], disp. III De objecto formali fidei: & quomodo ad illud fiat ultima fidei resolutio, prol.).

³³ "Inter ea vero quae de Deo secundum seipsum considerata sunt, praemittendum est, quasi totius operis necessarium fundamentum, consideratio qua demonstratur Deum esse. Quo non habito, omnis consideratio de rebus divinis necessario tollitur" (Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles: Ad codices manuscriptos praesertim sancti doctoris autographata exacta et Summo Pontifici Benedicto XV dedicata: Cum commentariis Francisci de Sylvestris Ferrariensis*, 3 vols., Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. Edita, 13–15 [Romae: Typis Riccardi Garroni: Apud sedem commissionis leoninae, 1918], lib. I, cap. 9). See also Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, vol. 1. Fasc. 2, QQ 1–7, Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 22 (Romae: ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1970), q. 1, a. 1, a. 12, ad 10; Avicenna, *Tractatus I–IV*, vol. 1 of *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, ed. and trans. Simone van Riet, with an introduction by Gérard Verbeke, Avicenna Latinus (Louvain: E. Peeters; Leiden: Brill, 1977), tr. I, cap. 5. See also Étienne Gilson, "Avicenne et les origines de la notion de cause efficiente," in *Atti del XII Congresso Internazionale die Filosofia, Società Filosofica Italiana*, vol. 9 (Firenze: Sansoni, 1960), 121–30. Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 574.

such as Domingo Báñez († 1604) and Francisco Suárez.³⁴ The later Jesuit, who undoubtedly stands out as one of the last representatives of Scholasticism in its final stage, draws insightfully from medieval thinkers and efficiently combines philosophy with theology at the end of the Latin *Christianitas*, seeming to purposefully expose the significance of a metaphysics of God. He might be, without exception, a good example of philosophical syncretism in engaging the theological and philosophical reasoning *ad mentem Divi Thomae*, and occasionally *ad mentem Scoti*, as well as the Arabic heritage. On the other hand, he is also considered a thinker who breaks with the commenting method of the Aristotelian tradition.³⁵

Aquinas and other recognized scholastics, especially of the second Scholasticism of the 16th and 17th centuries, were convinced that it is impossible to autonomously separate the truth of Revelation from the existence of God. At the same time, they assumed that it was impossible to exclude theology as a science from the field of study of Revelation because theology always assumes the existence of God and wants to justify His mystery based on the scientific point of view, and thus prove the existence of God as a separate subject of its knowledge. Hence, along with the dogmas and attributes of the Divine in the *sacra doctrina*, St. Thomas discerned the need to prove the existence of God not only in philosophy but also in theology, without going beyond the rational scope. This is the source of one of his most original thoughts: to maintain the relationship between religious consciousness and rational, truthful knowledge, St. Thomas will carry out his proof in theology in an identical way and by using the same arguments of metaphysical cognition that prove the existence of

³⁴ Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. XXVII, sec. 3, a. 15: “[...] ens uno conceptu dici de omnibus sub illo contentis, ideoque posse esse medium demonstrationis, et rationem entis in creatures inventam posse esse initium inveniendi similem rationem altiori modo in creatore existentem.” See also Dominici Bañes, *Scholastica commentaria in Primam partem Angelici Doctoris D. Thomae, Usque ad sexagesimam quartum Quaestionum complectentia* (Rome: Iacobum Ruffinellum, 1584), 2–13; q. I (“De sacra doctrina. Qualis sit, et ad quae se extendat”), a. 1.

³⁵ Cf. “L’importance de Suárez provient justement du fait qu’il a été le premier à ériger un ensemble métaphysique en un temps où l’on ressentait la nécessité de disposer d’autre chose que d’une série de commentaires aristotéliens, ou d’une philosophie rhétoricienne à la Pierre Ramus, ou d’une vague théorie sceptique” (José Ferrater Mora, “Suarez et la philosophie moderne,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 68, no. 1 [1963], 59); “Die *Disputationes metaphysicae* des Suárez bedeuten den Uebergang von den Metaphysikkomentaren zu den selbständigen Metaphysiklehrbüchern” (Martin Grabmann, “Die *Disputationes Metaphysicae* der Franz Suárez in ihrer methodischen Eigenart und Fortwirkung,” in *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben. Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Scholastik und Mystik*, Martin Grabmann, vol. 1 [München: Max Hueber Verlag, 1926], 539; more 525–60).

God in philosophy (*doctrina philosophorum*).³⁶ Beginning with created things and moving his arguments gradually upwards, that is, to God as the external cause of being (*supra ens*) and the highest metaphysical principle – not shying away from theological terminology and spiritual records, which only confirms his subtle religious intuition – he presents the proof of God's existence with a clarity and pure reason proper to philosophical inquiries. Nevertheless, the entire process takes place within theology. He proves this in a strictly metaphysical way using the philosophy of being (created and uncreated), which in turn reveals theology as a metaphysical doctrine that even functions as a literal metaphysical science on the pattern of philosophy.

Having said that, metaphysics seems to have, in addition to its intellectual dimension, a spiritual and theological dimension. We see the same thing in the later tradition of Renaissance Scholasticism. For instance, Suárez – who was called an “outstanding and pious doctor” as well as “the pope and the prince of metaphysicians” (*Doctor eximius ac pius* and *omnium metaphysicorum princeps ac papa*)³⁷ – points out (identically to Aquinas) that God is the utmost principle, the most fundamental, metaphysical principle of everything knowable in a theoretical way, within the limits of human capabilities, and in a way adapted to our recognition. This is possible in relation to the order of the real world in which we live, which we get to know, which does not precede God's will and creation. Hence, creation as a whole is a possible being (*ens possibile*) or a dependent entity in relation to God because the possibilities of the world and creation are fully conditioned by God's power (*a potentia Dei* or *a potentia agente*).³⁸ Due to a specific dependence on the existence of the Creator, the order of created beings is characterized by a certain hypothetical necessity, that is, a recognized order of internally consistent, transcendental principles inherent

³⁶ Cf. Doyle, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth,” 574.

³⁷ The treatise entitled *De immunitate ecclesiastica a Venetis violata* (*On the Ecclesiastical Immunity Violated by the Venetians*), written by Suárez on the order of Pope Paul V in 1607, consisting of 150 pages in folio format, earned him a great respect among the most eminent theologians and the recognition of the pope himself, who in one of his letters presents Suárez as an “eminent and pious doctor.” He will go down in history known under this honorable title as an outstanding theologian and a pious Christian. The treatise *De immunitate* was not published at that time. It was published in Brussels and Paris in 1859 by Mgr. Malou under the changed title *Francisco Suárezii opuscula sex inedita*. Cf. Raúl de Scorraille, *El P. Francisco Suárez, de la Compañía de Jesús, según sus cartas, sus demás escritos inéditos y crecido número de documentos nuevos*, trans. Pablo José Hernández, 2 vols. (Barcelona: E. Subirana, 1917), 122, 126–27. See also Raúl de Scorraille, “Les écrits inédits de Suárez,” *Etudes Religieuses* 64 (1894), 151–76.

³⁸ Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. XXXI, sec. 2, a. 2; disp. XLIII, prol.

in being (*prima principia essendi*), which are reflected in the order of rational principles of the intellect (*prima principia cognoscendi*).³⁹ The same order is also expressed in the most primary, transcendental principle of being, which is reality and existence itself because the concept of real being is common to God and creation.⁴⁰ Similarly, the transcendental order is common to the concepts of substance and attributes although in a different dimension.⁴¹ Therefore, being the highest and most perfect being, God is not only a transcendent cause, but also, due to the fact of His reality, the transcendental principle of all being, He is the source of being and reality. In Suárez, identical to St. Thomas, God is called Creator (*Deus Creator, Creatoris*) in reference to His creation,⁴² the Mover or Cause of creation (*Causa*),⁴³ and finally its Lord (*Domini*).⁴⁴ Cognizing God takes place within the limits of the metaphysical knowledge of His attributes, as well as ideas and actions, which are multiplied by the diversity of creation.⁴⁵

³⁹ Suárez, disp. XLVII, sec. 3, a. 2, 11–13, 18.

⁴⁰ “Prior autem propositio facile a nobis fundari potest, quia, si aliquis conceptus esse potest communis Deo et creaturis, certe maxime ens, quod facile ex supra dictis de analogia entis ostendi potest; nam ratio in ente facta habet locum in substantia et in quolibet alio praedicato communi; quod si, ea non obstante, daretur aliquod genus univocum, etiam ens esset univocum Deo et creaturis” (Suárez, disp. XXX, sec. 4, a. 33). See also Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. XXVIII, sec. 3, a. 1–22. On the analogy of being (*analogia entis*) and the analogy of reality (*analogia realis*) in Suárez, see José Hellín, “Necesidad de la analogía del ser según Suárez,” *Pensamiento* 1 (1945), 447–70; José Hellín, “De la analogía del ser y los posibles en Suárez,” *Pensamiento* 2 (1946), 267–94; John P. Doyle, “Suarez on the Analogy of Being,” *The Modern Schoolman* 46, no. 3 (1969), 219–49, <https://doi.org/10.5840/schoolman196946364>; John P. Doyle and, “Suarez on the Analogy of Being,” *The Modern Schoolman* 46, no. 4 (1969), 323–41, <https://doi.org/10.5840/schoolman196946480>; John P. Doyle, “The Suarezian Proof for God’s Existence,” in *History of Philosophy in the Making: A Symposium of Essays to Honor Professor James D. Collins on his 65th Birthday*, ed. Linus J. Thro (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 105–17. Earline Jennifer Ashworth, “Suárez on the Analogy of Being: Some Historical Background,” *Vivarium* 33, no. 1 (1995), 50–75, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568534952579768>. On the cognitive analogy in relation to God, see Kazimierz Gryżenia, *Analogia w scholastyce nowożytnej: Studium z metafizyki Franciszka Suáreza* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2019), 201–47.

⁴¹ Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. XXXII, sec. 2, a. 1–16, esp. a. 11.

⁴² Suárez, disp. XXXIX, sec. 2, a. 7; disp. 47, sec. 15, a. 26.

⁴³ Suárez, disp. XLVIII, sec. 4, a. 9.

⁴⁴ Suárez, disp. XXX, sec. 5, a. 5; disp. XLVII, sec. 15, a. 26.

⁴⁵ Cf. Francisco Suárez, *De Divina Substantia*, Editio nova, ed. Carolo Berton, Opera Omnia 1 (Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, Bibliopolam editorem, 1856), I, cap. 13, a. 2, 3, 5; Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. XXX, sec. 6, a. 14–16. Cf. also: “Sic distinguimus in Deo iustitiam a misericordia, quia non concipimus simplicissimam virtutem Dei, prout in se est et secundum totam vim suam, sed eam conceptibus partimur in ordine ad diversos

In other words, God is the most perfect being and, simultaneously, the core foundation of being. He justifies the unity of metaphysical and theological science and truth-knowledge. Considering the above, in metaphysics it is plausible to refer to two metaphysical tenets that direct our knowledge towards God, towards the highest cause (i.e. primary efficient and final cause). These are: 1) The principle of cause-and-effect determinism (ontological determinism); and 2) The principle of finality (ontological teleologism). Both the first one, which is the assumption of knowledge in relation to the first principles of being and true knowledge, and the second one, which is the point that must be headed in knowledge, point to the divine and Supreme Being. The presence of these principles, which bind the system of metaphysics from within, is also implicit in all metaphysical arguments. At the same time, these principles determine the legitimacy of the claims of metaphysics as a system that is fulfilled not only through the methodological or content criteria of scientificity, but also through the interconnection of metaphysics with theology, which complements metaphysics.

This issue resonates with the theory of final causality. As for the question of finality or final cause, which Aristotle discusses in *Physics* in book II (194b 23–35), it does not contradict the assumption devoted to the efficient cause that God reveals Himself to be in relation to creation. Aquinas indicates this when in the *Principles of Nature* he even defines the final cause as “the cause of all causes”: *unde dicitur quod finis est causa causarum, quia est causa causalitatis in omnibus causis* (*De principiis naturae*, §4, sec. 18–36, esp. sec. 30–33). Both Aristotle in *Physics* and Aquinas in *De principiis naturae* understood causes as *principia*. In §3 of *De principiis naturae* Aquinas claimed that every cause is a principle and every principle is a cause. In this sense, God is both the principle and the supreme cause. Aquinas did, however, exclude the principle of privation (*privatio*) as essential to understanding causality. Instead, he defined

effectus quorum est principium illa eminens virtus, vel per proportionem ad diversas virtutes quas in homine invenimus distinctas et eminentissimo modo reperiuntur unitae in simplicissima virtute Dei” (Suárez, disp. VII, sec. 1, a. 5); “Si vero sit sermo de rebus prout distincte et expresse concipiuntur a nobis, sic illae locutiones falsae sunt; nam mens nostra per inadaequatos conceptus partitur rem in se omnino indivisibilem, et tunc, quamvis res in se omnino sit eadem, tamen non cadit sub singulis conceptibus secundum totam adaequatam rationem suam, et ideo, si reduplicatio fiat in ordine ad conceptus nostros, non potest uni attribui quod attribuitur alteri, quia non concipitur idem et sub eadem expressa habitudine per unum et per alium conceptum. Et ob eandem causam eae locutiones in omni rigore falsae sunt: Deus per iustitiam miseretur, Pater per voluntatem generat” (Suárez, disp. XXX, sec. 6, a. 13). See also Alfred J. Freddoso, “God’s General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Pitfalls and Prospects,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (1994), 131–56, <https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq199468224>.

privation as a *quasi*-principle, but denied it the status of a cause. *Privatio* can be considered as a “beginning of a beginning,” from which something comes into being by virtue of another external cause, but *privatio* itself is not in any way the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*). The theory of causes in a broader framework, that is, referring to the teleology of the whole creation, namely the final or eschatological destiny, leads to the conclusion that only God can be perceived as both the efficient and final cause, and hence everything comes down to dependence on His efficient power, and everything exists in being thanks to His providence. God as an efficient cause (*causa efficiens*) is understood by Aquinas *per modum dantis esse*, that is, as an agent who gives existence and sustains in being rather than merely creates *per modum moventis et alternatis*. He makes this clear in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (*In IV Met.*, lect. 3). Thus, in metaphysics we necessarily appeal to two regulative principles, which through created things direct our knowledge to the first cause, which is to be understood as God, and thus the ultimate cause of all things. It is from this that the principle of cause-and-effect determinism (ontological determinism) and the principle of finality (ontological teleologism) follow. They connect the elements of the entire system of metaphysical knowledge from within.

In exactly the same way as in the *Summa theologiae* by St. Thomas, God is constantly present in Suárez’s *Disputationes metaphysicae*. Of the 54 disputationes, it is impossible to point out even one in which Suárez, as a philosopher and theologian, did not refer to the existence of the Creator. He constantly reflects on and explains individual problems of metaphysics in the context of the most perfect knowledge relating to God (*perfecta scientia de Deo*).⁴⁶ We can therefore assume that God, an uncreated being and the goal of metaphysical science, meets one of the criteria for the true knowledge, along with the transcendental truth of being because metaphysics does not contradict God’s existence. Actually, it finds justification in it. Although God is the indirect cause of the pursuit of knowledge (teleological or concerning purposefulness), especially through created being, He is the guarantor of meaningfulness and the goal of metaphysics itself. He is nevertheless a certain extra-logical, transcendent value and goal which metaphysics only approaches in the cognitive aspect of natural reason (*ratione naturali*). Given the above connection with the divine knowledge, metaphysics in almost all scholastics is the highest and most perfect science in the order of natural knowledge (*suprema omnium scientiarum naturalium*).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. I, sec. 3, a. 2.

⁴⁷ Suárez, disp. I, sec. 3, a. 2, 8.

It is noticeable that metaphysics is the most noble and general science (*dignissima et universalissima*), princely and imperious (*princeps et domina*), going beyond the differentiation of individual properties of beings, the adequate subject of which is real being abstracted in the intellect *secundum esse* (with respect to existence).⁴⁸ Metaphysics, however, by considering being in its fullest, total aspect (*ad totum ens eodem modo cognoscendum*), provides cognitive unity to science from the perspective of the principles of being (*unum scientiae habitum*).⁴⁹ It rises above all matter, above physics,⁵⁰ focusing on the consideration of being understood as reality conceptually taken, which is the fundamental transcendental principle of being, namely the reason for entire real being (*ratio entis realis*). Metaphysics, therefore, treats existence with an objective concept (*ens obiectivum*, intentionally) and examines it not only in terms of pure cognitive principles, but above all in terms of principles relating to existence (*secundum rationem et secundum esse*).⁵¹ It examines being in two main aspects: created and uncreated.⁵² To be more precise, it does this on the plane of *rebus materialibus*, in which it considers the characteristic essences of being (categories of being, substance, transcendentals, knowability of being,

⁴⁸ “Ad secundum responderetur quod aliter ens est obiectum Metaphysicae et aliter intellectus. Metaphysicae enim est obiectum prout significat rationem quamdam abstrahentem a materia secundum esse, unde praescindit a rationibus materialibus; ens vero est obiectum intellectus ut omnia comprehendit. Unde ens, ut obiectum est Metaphysicae, distinguitur ab ente mobili; ens vero ut est obiectum intellectus omnia ambit” (Francisco Suárez, *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in libros Aristotelis De Anima*, ed., with an introduction, by Salvador Castellote, vol. 3 [Madrid: Fundación Xavier Zubiri, 1991], disp. VIII, sec. 2, a. 9).

⁴⁹ Suárez, disp. VIII, sec. 2, a. 14.

⁵⁰ Suárez, disp. VIII, sec. 2, a. 15. Cf. “«metaphysica» dicta est, quasi post physicam, seu ultra physicam constituta; post (inquam) non dignitate, aut naturae ordine, sed acquisitionis, generationis, seu inventionis; vel, si ex parte obiecti illud intelligamus, res de quibus haec scientia tractat dicuntur esse post physica seu naturalia entia, quia eorum ordinem superant, et in altiori rerum gradu constitutae sunt. Ex quo tandem appellata est haec scientia aliarum «princeps et domina»” (Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. I, sec. 1, a. 1).

⁵¹ “Metaphysica vero dicitur abstrahere a materia sensibili et intelligibili, et non solum secundum rationem, sed etiam secundum esse, quia rationes entis quas considerat, in re ipsa inveniuntur sine materia; et ideo in proprio et obiectivo conceptu suo per se non includit materiam” (Suárez, disp. I, sec. 2, a. 13).

⁵² “[...] huiusmodi sunt ratio entis creati vel increati, substantiae finitae aut infinitae, et similiter accidentis absoluti vel respectivi, qualitatis, actionis, operationis aut dependentiae et similia. De quibus observandum est plures posse abstrahi rationes communes rebus materialibus et immaterialibus, quarum consideratio iuxta principium positum in rigore deberet ad hanc scientiam spectare, ut est communis ratio viventis, quae abstrahi potest a rebus materialibus et immaterialibus; [...]” (Suárez, disp. I, sec. 2, a. 15).

goodness, truthfulness, oneness),⁵³ and on the plane of *rebus immaterialibus*, immaterial and *supra*-sensible, supernatural (having as its object God, angelic beings or other spiritual beings that do not belong to the order of physical nature).⁵⁴ Metaphysics is therefore a science whose subject is the most general concept of being, which is captured at the highest level of intellectual abstraction in a final and complete way, and which also refers to God and angels.⁵⁵ Metaphysics, by being the knowledge of created and uncreated realm, is thus the most perfect science in the order of natural knowledge.⁵⁶ It can be emphasized that for philosophical theology in Scholasticism, which can legitimately be called metaphysics, God is the external and final cause. God, in fact, is the ultimate goal for metaphysics to the same extent that He is the ultimate cause for all creation. Such a philosophical theology introduces man to the knowledge of

⁵³ “Unde, sicut philosophia considerans de variis speciebus substantiarum materialium, considerat subinde communem rationem materialis substantiae, et adaequata principia, et proprietates eius; rursusque agens de variis speciebus viventium, considerat communem rationem viventis ut sic, et propria principia, et proprietates eius; ita scientia humana (ut sic dicam) considerans varios gradus et rationes entium, necesse est ut consideret communem rationem entis. Item, cum varias substantias speculetur, et varia accidentia, necesse est ut consideret communes rationes substantiae et accidentis; hoc autem non praestat, nisi per hanc universalem et principem scientiam” (Suárez, disp. I, sec. 2, a. 14).

⁵⁴ “[...] atque hoc modo, quia haec scientia considerat de Deo, consequenter in eo considerat rationem primae causae finalis, efficientis, et exemplaris, et considerans de angelis, inquit quam virtutem causandi habeant in reliqua entia, [...]” (Suárez, disp. I, sec. 2, a. 18); “Itaque metaphysica humana (de qua tractamus) de his demonstrat et disserit, quantum humanum ingenium naturali lumine potest. In rebus autem quae sensibilem aut intelligibilem materiam seu quantitatem concernunt, non est id simpliciter verum, etiam ex parte ipsius scientiae, sed quatenus in eis reperiuntur transcendentalia praedicata, vel eis aliquo modo applicantur metaphysicae rationes et media abstrahentia a materia, ut per ea aliquid de eis demonstretur. Tertio addere possumus, hanc scientiam agere de omnibus non in se, sed in causis suis, quia disputat de universalissimis causis rerum omnium, et praesertim de Deo” (Suárez, disp. I, sec. 3, a. 14).

⁵⁵ “Nam, licet Deus et intelligentiae secundum se consideratae, videantur altiori quodam gradu et ordine esse constitutae, tamen prout in nostram considerationem cadunt, non possunt a consideratione transcendentium attributorum seiungi. Unde etiam confirmatur, nam perfecta scientia de Deo et aliis substantiis separatis tradit cognitionem omnium praedicatorum quae in eis insunt; ergo etiam praedicatorum communium et transcendentium” (Suárez, disp. I, sec. 3, a. 10).

⁵⁶ “At vero scientia de Deo et intelligentiis est suprema omnium naturalium; et ideo nihil supponit cognitum per altiore scientiam, sed in se includit quidquid necessarium est ad sui obiecti cognitionem perfectam, quantum per naturale lumen haberi potest; eadem ergo scientia, quae de his specialibus obiectis tractat, simul considerat omnia praedicata quae illis sunt cum aliis rebus communia, et haec est tota metaphysica doctrina; est ergo una scientia” (Suárez, disp. I, sec. 3, a. 10).

something that is eternal and absolute, and at the same time, in the further order of arguments, brings him closer to that which is the subject of the highest knowledge, i.e. supernatural theology (*supranaturalis theologiae*).

Within the framework of this specific metaphysical structure and most of all, the principles of natural cognition, the so-called principle of efficient causality involves moving from effects to causes. This is a special principle related to proving the existence of God in metaphysical knowledge. It resembles the Alexandrian scheme of metaphysics (the upward path); from lower beings to higher beings, up to the most perfect being of God at the end. The format of this proof, having a systemic character, lies at the basis of the argumentation of the Aquinas' five ways (*quinquae viae*), in which the proof of God's existence is based both on act and potency, and on the concept of motion and the relations of dependency (internal and external) between cause and effect.⁵⁷ This reasoning comes close to proving the existence of God as the supreme cause of being, which is in accordance with Aquinas' formula of arguing for the existence of God as *ens supremum* and efficient cause by means of five ways in the scope of cosmological and ontological frameworks. Nevertheless, despite its five stages, the demonstrative methods, otherwise taken from Aristotle's *Organon*, are in fact two-part pertaining to those that assume a sequence of subordinate causes (first and secondary) and their emerging effects: (1) *demonstratio quia* and (2) *demonstratio propter quid*. *Quia* – from effects to causes (*a posteriori*) and *propter quid* – from cause to effects (*a priori*). Aquinas proves it in *Summa theologiae* I^a, q. 2, a. 3; *Summa contra gentiles*, III, cap. 65–66, 70; *Commentum in quatuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2; *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, q. 5, a. 1.⁵⁸ These particular

⁵⁷ The philosophical argument for the existence of God includes both cosmological and anthropological investigations. Medieval theism referred mainly to knowledge about the material structure of the Universe. These theories were based on terminology related to Aristotelian physics. The vast majority of medieval philosophical concepts of God had the character of cosmological arguments (with exceptions in St. Anselm, St. Augustine, Henry of Ghent). Aquinas' argumentation was reduced to the "five ways": from motion (*ex motu*), from efficient causality (*ex ratione causae efficientis*), from what is possible and what is necessary (*ex possibili et necessario*), from degrees of being (*ex gradibus perfectionis*), from universal expediency (*ex gubernatione rerum*). See Velde, *Aquinas on God. The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae*, 37–65 ("The First Thing to Know: Does God Exist? On the Five Ways").

⁵⁸ The following works are worth recommending, to name just a few of the vast literature on the subject in question: Owen Bennett, *The Nature of Demonstrative Proof According to the Principles of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1943); Owen Bennett, "St. Thomas' Theory of Demonstrative Proof," *Proceedings and*

dependencies and convergences between philosophy (*doctrina philosophorum*) and theology (*sacra doctrina*) in Aquinas indicate that the metaphysical principle of efficient causality – encompassing *a priori* and *a posteriori* procedures, consistent with the norms expounded by Aristotle in the *Second Analytics* – is the most adequate, fundamental method for investigating the nature of the supreme metaphysical being, which is God. Moreover, the same method can also be applied to a theological framework. Thus, the philosophical aspect penetrates into theology. Nevertheless, this does not deprive theology of its holiness, nor does it ultimately discredit or undermine the mystery of God.

Since we have already defined God as the subject of both Western metaphysical and theological traditions, we can say that in terms of philosophy or metaphysics, God is an *extrinsic* and *indirect* cause and principle of knowledge, while for sacred theology He is an *intrinsic* and *direct* cause and principle of the entire doctrine. Nevertheless, both sciences overlap and work together in this field.

Ultimately, the essence of God defies philosophical conceptualization. However, in the aspect of the metaphysical analysis of Aquinas' *Ipsium Esse* combined with the faith of sacred theology, philosophy seems to bring the human mind closer to the deepest meaning of intellectual, knowable form of God. This intentional form indicated by Aquinas offers insight into the principle of transcendence in a metaphysical sense. It brings intellectual knowledge (non-intuitive) closer to knowledge in an almost mystical dimension (*theologia mystica*), which St. Thomas called *cognitio Dei experimentalis* – the experience of the Divine obtained from a specific knowledge of God. Aquinas supplements this philosophical and theological union with God with an additional conditional concept, introducing into the terminology the qualitative form of the soul (*forma accidentalis*), which, although it is something lower than the form of sacramental union with God (*gratia gratum faciens*), nevertheless acts in the soul as a mystical inspiration. It flows from the power of grace (*pre-suppositio primo afflatu Divino*), or is activated in the soul as God's presence, accompanying the soul in spiritual and intellectual cognition (*coadiutores Dei*).⁵⁹ In this metaphysical-mystical union, meaning the state of subjective and

Addresses of the American Philosophical Association 17 (1941), 76–88; Michael T. Ferejohn, "Definition and the Two Stages of Aristotelian Demonstration," *Review of Metaphysics* 36, no. 2 (1982), 375–95.

⁵⁹ Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae: Cura et Studio Instituti Studiorum Medieevalium Ottaviensis ad textum S. Pii Pp. V Iussu Confectum Recognita: Edidit Commissio Piana*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Dominican College of Ottawa, 1941), q. 110, a. 2. See more Tomás de Vallgornera, *Mystica Theologia Divi Thomae: Utriusque Theologiae Scholasticae et Mysticae Principis*, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier, vol. 2 (Augustae Taurinorum: Marietti,

objective obviousness of God, as interpreted by Jean Gerson († 1429) who based his theories on the Thomistic tradition, the soul does not achieve knowledge of God through pure intellectual or intuitive cognition, nor through a simple apprehension of the intellect (*simplex apprehensio*), and even less so as a result of axiomatic or deductive argumentation. Only by combining both the activity of the will – which is filled with the fear of God, purity of thought, faith, truly pious love for God (*per amorem affectionis* or *per voluntatis amorem*) – and intelligence (*raptus mentis* or *raptus rationis*) into one cognitive stream does the soul achieve a meaningful glimpse of the mystical unity with God.⁶⁰ This proper light of intellectual knowledge and will along with the internal union with God (*unio mystica*), which is more of a metaphysical-mystical union, cannot be achieved by the soul by means of its own nature, but needs an external *Mover*. The necessary condition for the fulfillment of the cognitive act is, on the one hand, the graciousness of God to make His presence known, and on the other (on the human side) the intellect united in the love of the human heart with the will for a sincere enquiry for God. On this plane of mutual relationship between God and man, the soul gains real insight into the meaning of the Divine and perceives the ultimate reason for being (its *ratio entis*), through which the soul reflects the deepest source of harmonious unity and absolute existence – the God Himself. Similarly, Duns Scotus expresses this state of extraordinary metaphysical cognition bordering on theological mysticism with

1911); Thomas de Vallgornera, *Mystica Theologia Divi Thomae VI* (1890), Kessinger Legacy Reprints (Kessinger Publishing, 2010); Hans Geybels, *Cognitio Dei experimentalis: A Theological Genealogy of Christian Religious Experience* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007); John F. Dedek, “Quasi Experimentalis Cognitio: A Historical Approach to the Meaning of St. Thomas,” *Theological Studies* 22, no. 3 (1961), 363–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056396102200301>.

⁶⁰ André Combes, ed., *Ioannis Carlerii de Gerson De mystica theologia*, Thesaurus Mundi. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Latinorum Mediae et Recentioris Aetatis (Lucani: Thesaurus Mundi, 1958), “De Mystica Theologia Speculativa,” prol., 125.34ff; 41, 106.23ff; 41, 110.79ff; 35, 39.21ff; 36, 98.48ff; esp. 36, 96.12ff; 37, 99.4ff; 38, 100.3ff; 39, 101.3: “Raptus mentis supra potentias inferiores fit per affectionis scintillam menti cognatam vel appropriatam, que amor extaticus vel excessus mentis nominatur”; 40, 103.10f: “[...] unio non corporalis sed spiritualis est.” See also Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, 10 vols. (Paris: Desclée, 1960–1973), esp. vol. 7, 965–79; Jean Gerson, *Selections from A Deo exivit, Contra curiositatem studentium, and De mystica theologia speculativa*, ed., trans., and annot., with an introduction, by Steven E. Ozment, Textus Minores 38 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 46–73 (“De Mystica Theologia: Tractatus Primus Speculativus”); Steven E. Ozment, *Homo spiritualis: A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther (1509–1516) in the Context of their Theological Thought*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 6 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 72–84.

the term *conceptus perfectissimus* or *inquisitio metaphysica* (metaphysical quest), and Ockham with *notitia abstractiva deitatis*.⁶¹

Aquinas's concept of God as *Ipsium Esse*

In Aquinas' metaphysical arguments that frame the primary being as the source and cause of existence, assuming a theory of efficient causality (*quia*), the middle term of demonstration is obtained by means of the method separating causes from effects, through which we learn about causes.⁶² In this case, the middle term is *esse* (existence or being), contingently contained in a maximal way in

⁶¹ See Paul Vignaux, *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: An Introduction*, trans. E. C. Hall (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 146–79 (“John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham”), esp. 150–56; Efreem Bettoni, *Duns Scotus: The Basic Principles of His Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Bernardine Bonansea (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1961), pp. 39–46, esp. 40–44; Philotheus Böhner, “Zu Ockhams Beweis der Existanz Gottes,” *Franziskanische Studien* 32 (1950), 50–69, or Philotheus Böhner, “Zu Ockhams Beweis der Existenz Gottes: Texte und Erklärungen,” in *Collected Articles on Ockham*, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute; Louvain: Nauwelaerts; Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958), 399–420.

⁶² Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2: “[...] cum demonstratur causa per effectum, necesse est uti effectum loco definitionis causae, ad probandum causam esse, et hoc maxime contingit in Deo. Quia ad probandum aliquid esse, necesse est accipere pro medio quid significet nomen non autem quod quid est, quia quaestio quid est, sequitur ad quaestionem an est. Nomina autem Dei imponuntur ab effectibus, ut postea ostendetur, unde, demonstrando Deum esse per effectum, accipere possumus pro medio quid significet hoc nomen Deus.” See also Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 1, a. 3, a. 4; q. 4, a. 2; q. 13, a. 11; Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, lib. I, cap. 12, 4; lib. I, cap. 22; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum super Sententiis magistri Petri Lombardi*, lib. I, dis. 34, q. 1, a. 1; Sancti Thomae de Aquino, “De ente et essentia,” in *De principiis naturae: De aeternitate mundi: De motu cordis: De mixtione elementorum: De operationibus occultis naturae: De iudiciis astrorum: De sortibus: De unitate intellectus: De ente et essentia: De fallaciis: De propositionibus modalibus*, Sancti Thomae de Aquino, Opera omnia iussu impensaque Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 43 (Roma: Roma: Editori di San Tommaso, 1976), cap. 4; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, vol. 2 of *Quaestiones disputatae*, 10th ed., ed. Paulus M. Pession (Taurini-Romae: Marietti, 1965), q. 7, a. 2; Sancti Thomae de Aquino, “Compendium theologiae seu Brevis compilatio theologiae ad fratrem Raynaldum,” in *Compendium theologiae: De articulis fidei et ecclesiae sacramentis: Responsio de 108 articulis: Responsio de 43 articulis: Responsio de 36 articulis: Responsio de 6 articulis: Epistola ad ducissam Brabantiae: De emptione et venditione ad tempus: Epistola ad Bernardum abbatem cassinensem: De regno ad regem Cyprum: De secreto*, Sancti Thomae de Aquino, Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 42 (Roma: Editori di San Tommaso, 1979), “De fide (De essentie divine unitate),” cap. 3–35, esp. 11 (“Quod Dei essentia non est aliud quam suum esse”). Cf. Doyle, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth,” 574–75.

God as the supreme being (*ens supremum*).⁶³ Beginning with the existence that is contained in the beings of the natural world, Aquinas goes on to demonstrate that God is the absolute cause of creation, its *Mover* and the highest category of existence, a being with essential identity and unity, and, for this reason, identified with God as the supreme cause.⁶⁴ This philosophical term related to the eternal dimension of God, which embraces all perfect attributes of the Divine in one category, is defined by Aquinas with the phrase: *Deus est ipsum esse subsistens*.⁶⁵ The method of demonstrating God as “pure existence” using the middle term *esse* is adopted by almost all philosophical schools of a metaphysical nature. A similar path is followed by Norberto del Prado and Suárez, who – although he turned metaphysics towards essentialism, towards modern ontology⁶⁶ – in *Disputationes* speaks of existence as *esse medium demonstrationis*.⁶⁷

⁶³ Cf. Doyle, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth,” 575.

⁶⁴ It is not without significance for the history of philosophy that St. Augustine’s theory of God’s perfection in Divine *Unity* (i.e. the unification of *essentia* with *esse* into one nature), which was one of the first Christian philosophical concepts of this type, was also recognized in the writings of Aquinas, although Aquinas’ philosophy undoubtedly contrasts with the teaching of Augustine both in methodological and conceptual terms. Cf. Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, vol. 2, QQ 13–20, Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 22 (Romae: ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1972), q. XIII, a. 2; Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, lib. III, cap. 47, 2–3, 51; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. XII; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, “Summa theologiae I^a–II^aae,” in *Prima secundae Summae theologiae: A quaestione I ad quaestionem LXX, ad codices manuscriptos Vaticanos exacta, cum commentariis Thomae de vito Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum S.R.C. Cardinalis*, Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 6 (Romae: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1891), q. 175. Cf. Doyle, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth,” 575–76.

⁶⁵ Comparatively, Nicholas of Cusa uses the term *Possest* or *Posse Ipsum* as the category most appropriate for the name of God. Both concepts are intended to express the actualization of all possibilities, including contingent ones, i.e. an absolute fullness. The word *Possest* comes from the contraction of *posse* and *est*. Cf. Nicolai de Cusa, “De apice theoriae,” in *De venatione sapientiae: De apice theoriae*, Nicolai de Cusa, ed. Raymond Klibansky and Hans Gerhard Senger, Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia 12 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982), 123. See also Peter J. Casarella, “Nicholas of Cusa and the Power of the Possible,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (1990), 7–34, esp. 9–10, <https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq199064141>.

⁶⁶ Victor Salas, and before him Stanisław Ziemieński, both argue that the core of Suárez’s approach is existential, not essentialist, which most scholars ignore in favor of reducing Suárez to a metaphysician of essence, as this might be generally understood. Cf. Stanisław Ziemieński, “Was Suárez Essentialist?,” *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric* 15, no. 28 (2009), 9–23; Victor Salas, *Immanent Transcendence: Francisco Suárez’s Doctrine of Being* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022).

⁶⁷ Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. XXVIII, sec. 3, a. 15; Norberto del Prado, *De veritate fundamentali philosophiae christianae* (Friburgi Helvetiorum: Ex Typis Consociationis

Therefore, it seems that the point of reference for both theology and metaphysics is the “medium of demonstration,” namely a cognitive medium allowing for the intellectual and existential grasp of God, whose existence must comparably be expressed in absolute existence. In such a framework, God is defined as *Ipsum Esse* – pure existence.⁶⁸ The *Ipsum Esse*, the most glorious category or metaphysical name given to God, is not, however, a hypostatic personification of God or His essence, nor is it His final definition. We do not know God directly on the basis of evidence expressing His perfection in its full essence. We only know what is ultimately contained in created beings (in analogical beings), through the existence of which, applying the principle of efficient causality and demonstration of *esse*, we can only prove the truth of the statement that “God exists.”⁶⁹ While knowledge arising from the deepest reflection of

Sancti Pauli, 1911), 215–16 (Liber Tertius “De ente per essentiam, quod est Deus,” Prol.), esp. 217–35 (par. “Ratio suprema, quae praedicatur de Deo, et ratio Esse subsistentiis”; Caput Primum “Deum esse quinque viis probari potest”); 240–53 (Caput Secundum “Hoc quod et Ee, est substantia vel natura Dei”); 255–82 (Caput Tertium “Ex identitate essentiae et esse in Deo assumit D. Thomas praecipua argumenta ad divinas perfectiones demonstrandas”).

⁶⁸ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 11, a. 4; Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, lib. I, cap. 21: “[...] divina essentia est per se singulariter existens”; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, vol. 3, Fasc. 1, QQ 21–29, Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita 22 (Romae: ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1973), q. 22, a. 14. On the *Ipsum Esse*, see Stephen L. Brock, “On Whether Aquinas’s *Ipsum Esse* Is ‘Platonism,’” *The Review of Metaphysics* 60, no. 2 (2006), 269–303; Velde, *Aquinas on God. The ‘Divine Science’ of the Summa Theologiae*, 65–95; John Cheng Wai-Leung, “The Meaning and Challenge of St. Thomas’s Metaphysical Concept of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* Today,” *Fu Jen International Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007), 149–70; John Cheng Wai-Leung, *A Comparative Study between St. Thomas Aquinas’s Concept of Ipsum Esse Subsistens and the Concept of Qi in the Guanzi’s Four Daoist Chapters* (Toronto, Ont.: Grace Institute Press, 2009); John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, Monographs of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy 1 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000); John P. Doyle, “*Ipsum Esse* as God-Surrogate: The Point of Convergence of Faith and Reason for St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Modern Schoolman* 50, no. 3 (1973), 293–96, <https://doi.org/10.5840/schoolman197350328>; Doyle, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth,” 571–89; Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *Realistyczna interpretacja rzeczywistości*, vol. 3 of *Zeszyty z metafizyki* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 1999), 77–83 (“Odkrycie Absolutu jako *Ipsum Esse*”), Robert Goczał, “Sacra Doctrina vs. Doctrina Philosophorum – Jeden Bóg i dwie teologie,” in *Wiara teologów a rozum filozofów: Rozważania naukowe z teologii i filozofii chrześcijańskiej*, ed. Robert Goczał (Wrocław: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny, 2015), 107–65, esp. 149–63.

⁶⁹ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 3, a. 2: “Ad secundum dicendum quod esse dupliciter dicitur, uno modo, significat actum essendi; alio modo, significat compositionem propositionis, quam anima adinvenit coniungens praedicatum subiecto. Primo

reason will never reach the perfection of God's essence, knowing Him can take place in many analogous ways, in various ways in which existence manifests itself in created beings. For God is the absolute cause of existence.⁷⁰ *Ipsium Esse* concentrates the highest content of the divine name (or names expressing all perfections), without separating philosophy from theology, without depriving theology of its religious value. Some philosophical questions, especially metaphysical ones, in reflection on the *Ipsium Esse*, seem as if they were designed not to divert man from his proper path of knowledge leading to God, but to direct him to his culmination of which should be something that at the first moment seems unbelievable to the human mind. Most likely, this should also be the goal of philosophy, at least one that deals with causes, especially the ultimate and final cause of existence.

John P. Doyle, following Aquinas, also takes up this issue more precisely and enumerates the individual essential properties (*quidditas*) subjectified in God, which emerge from the analysis of *Ipsium Esse*.⁷¹ Therefore, from the universal category of existence (*esse*), we conclude that God is the first cause and an independently existing *Supreme Being*. Then, from motion and efficient causality, we understand God as the absolute cause of motion and hence call Him the *First Mover* of all motion. Then, from the path of first and secondary causes, we define God as the first *Absolute Cause* of all causes and effects. Then from the *Ipsium Esse* we conclude that God must be the most perfect⁷² and good.⁷³

igitur modo accipiendo esse, non possumus scire esse Dei, sicut nec eius essentiam, sed solum secundo modo. Scimus enim quod haec propositio quam formamus de Deo, cum dicimus Deus est, vera est. Et hoc scimus ex eius effectibus, ut supra dictum est." Cf. also Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, q. 3, a. 5: "[...] omnia quae sunt in genere uno, communicant in quidditate vel essentia generis [...]. Differunt autem secundum esse: non enim idem est esse hominis et equi, nec huius hominis et illius hominis." Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 575–76.

⁷⁰ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, q. 13, a. 5: "Et hoc modo aliqua dicuntur de Deo et creaturis analogice, et non aequivoce pure, neque univoce [...]. Et sic, quicquid dicitur de Deo et creaturis, dicitur secundum quod est aliquis ordo creaturae ad Deum ut ad principium et causam in qua praeexistunt omnes rerum perfectiones." See also Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, lib. I, cap. 22; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 3, a. 4.

⁷¹ Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 579. In the following paragraphs, in analysing *quidditas* I rely textually on Aquinas and comparatively on J. P. Doyle's enumeration. For this reason, I provide references to Aquinas in favor of reliable indications of the relevant passages in his own texts.

⁷² Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 4, a. 2.

⁷³ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, q. 6, a. 3.

In this way we conclude that He is infinite,⁷⁴ almighty,⁷⁵ eternal,⁷⁶ in absolute unity and only one.⁷⁷ As the final cause of being, God is defined as the final cause of all existing beings, thus making the *Ipsum Esse* more understandable.⁷⁸ Thanks to the *Ipsum Esse*, we learn more about God's attributes (*annitas*), which determine His essential structure (*quidditas*) in the ontological dimension. This cognition takes place through an analogical approach with respect to existence (*secundum esse*), not an unequivocal one.⁷⁹ The latter is impossible. Existence is therefore the necessary essence of God (*qui sum*), although God does not create existence due to the necessity of His nature, as Spinoza († 1677) claimed – meaning *ex necessitate Divinae naturae* (*Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*, *propositio XVI*) – but in a completely free and independent way. God is a Being whose existence is preceded by nothing, nothing limits Him, and His essence is pure existence which has no cause beyond itself. In God the existence and essence are inseparable and necessarily related within Him. God cannot not exist.

In contrast to created beings, whose essence is not equated with existence (they do not necessarily exist by their nature), God has neither species nor genus, nor material composition, and therefore remains a being of the highest unity and the most transcendental act (an absolutely simple act). All created beings can only participate in existence itself (*participatio in esse*). God, however, as the first Being and final cause of all beings – as infinite and indivisible in His essence and as pure existence – is an inexpressible being, directly opaque and indistinct in divine nature. After all, existence itself is something inexpressible, especially through discursive cognition. *Ipsum Esse* exceeds the limits of linguistic expression. It belongs to a different sphere of meaning, and it even goes far beyond the sphere of allegorical meanings. However, everything that is revealed in created reality has a typological character and points to God in His most hidden aspect, i.e. in His existence that can be perceived reflectively (the second level of the judgment operation which is an objectifying reflection). However,

⁷⁴ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, q. 7, a. 1–2.

⁷⁵ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, q. 8, a. 1.

⁷⁶ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, q. 10, a. 2.

⁷⁷ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, q. 11, a. 4.

⁷⁸ Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, lib. I, cap. 22; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 3, a. 4.

⁷⁹ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 13, a. 5: “Et hoc modo aliqua dicuntur de Deo et creaturis analogice, et non aequivoce pure, neque univoce [...]. Et sic, quicquid dicitur de Deo et creaturis, dicitur secundum quod est aliquis ordo creaturae ad Deum ut ad principium et causam in qua praexistunt omnes rerum perfectiones.”

even in such a knowledge of such a perfectly existing Being, when the soul is equipped with an act structure that can be formulated, the soul does not have any final expression to grasp the mystery of the true transcendentality of God, namely the intrinsic source of the essence of His real existence. Nonetheless, from the existence of created things emerges another divine reality, without which the analysis of His existence would remain hidden. God's intelligent creatures do not have to deny Him in reflection. It is through *Ipsum Esse* that we can glimpse the mystery of the Deity itself, completely unapproachable until the very end, yet deduced *per analogiam* from created beings and through the abstraction of *esse*. In a way, this approach highlights metaphysical cognition as the deeper meaning of the first cause of everything. In *Ipsum esse*, it becomes an almost tangible experience of God's presence.

What is more, since God is the first and absolute cause of existence, He must be a living and life-giving God (*vivus et animare*). Through direct reflection of the accompanying acts of the intellect (*in actu exercito*), the soul intellectually realizes that coming into existence requires overcoming the distance between non-existence and being, or more precisely, overcoming nothingness (this path has been known since the philosophy of Parmenides). In this metaphysical sphere, we see that, paradoxically, the interpretation of existence shows a direct relationship connecting the Creator with the creature, the infinite with the finite, even though there is no ontic comparison between them. However, we also realize that only God as *Ipsum Esse* is able to overcome nothingness and bring something into existence. Ultimately, the essence of God eludes philosophical conceptualization and only in the aspect of the metaphysical analysis of *Ipsum Esse* combined with the faith of holy theology does the soul approach the deepest intellectual form of God, which allows for a mirror-like insight into the principle of His transcendence (i.e. *esse subsistens*).

Ipsum Esse as a philosophical and theological phenomenon is much broader than just a simple assertion of the fact of existence. In Thomistic metaphysics, God's attributes are designations of the divine substance.⁸⁰ They point to a number of essential characteristics, including that God has a spiritual and immaterial nature (*spiritualis et immaterialis*) or that He is a pure act (*actus purus*), which means that He is not potency (*potentia*). What is absolutely simple has absolute perfection and self-existence. God is the cause of Himself and a being that exists independently (*causa sui et subsistens*), which then means that

⁸⁰ See Harry Austryn Wolfson, "St. Thomas on Divine Attributes," in *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson, de l'Académie française* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies; Paris: J. Vrin, 1959), 673–700.

He is not part of something, but exists by Himself (*per se*). God is indivisible and unchangeable (*indivisibilis et inalterabilis*), which in turn means that He is not a multiplicity, nor a plurality among created things. Therefore, as a simple act, He is uncreated wisdom (*sapientia increata*). He is not subject to change because in God there is no differentiation between feelings and sensations (*passio*). And since there is no spiritual-corporeal composition in Him, He has no species and genus limitations (*species et genus*). Being an indivisible Supreme Being, He does not contain an accidental plane, and thus He remains forever unchanged and identical. As an infinite being (*infinitus*), He does not have a closed and determining definition, so the range of denotations of His essence and referents is also infinite. And since He is an infinite being, He is beyond time (*semper praesens*). Finally, externally undetermined in the divine essence, which identifies itself with existence, He has no cause of existence outside Himself, and this form of being is a special expression of God's perfection and His undeniable power (*actus essendi* or *potentia Dei*).

As the final cause of being, God should be defined as the final cause of all existing beings, that is, the *Ipsium Esse*. And since we conclude from *Ipsium Esse* that in God there is no distinction between essence and existence, between what God is and the fact that He is, then *Ipsium Esse*, in the essential concepts of this doctrine, reveals the authentic value of *negation* as a method of auxiliary proof (apophatic), not a direct proof as opposed to a direct proof. This is justified by the fact that St. Thomas brings the so-called negative theology (indirect) to the theological level.⁸¹ In book I, chapter 13 of *Summa contra gentiles*, St. Thomas continues to remain in the space of proving the existence of God directly by using a philosophical method. Even so, in the next chapter, he states that in order to get to know God, it is also necessary to use the way of removal (*via remotionis*).⁸² In other words, metaphysics cannot know God and prove His

⁸¹ Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 577–78.

⁸² Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, lib. I, cap. 14: "*Quod ad cognitionem Dei oportet uti via remotionis*"; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, "In libros Posteriorum Analyticorum expositio," in *Commentaria in Aristotelis libros Peri hermeneias et Posteriorum analyticorum*, Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, ed. Tommaso Maria Zigliara, Opera omnia iussu impensaque Leonis XIII P.M. Edita 1 (Romae: ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1882), lib. 1, lect. 1, a. 363: "Sed per scientias speculativas potest sciri de eis an sint, et quid non sint, et aliquid secundum similitudinem in rebus inferioribus inventam. Et tunc utimur posterioribus ut prioribus ad earum cognitionem: quia quae sunt posteriora secundum naturam, sunt priora et notiora quoad nos [...]. Quaecumque vero cognoscuntur per posteriora, quae sunt prima quoad nos, etsi in seipsis sint simplicia, secundum tamen quod in nostra cognitione accipiuntur, componuntur ex aliquibus primis quoad nos." See also Velde, *Aquinas on God. The 'Divine Science' of the Summa Theologiae*,

existence directly. Similarly, it is not plausible to fully know God *a posteriori* from created things because God is an immaterial, most perfect, infinite and transcending being (*supra ens*).⁸³ Accessible knowledge of God is possible, however, by analyzing the abstracted transcendental principles of real being, including its existence (*esse*), which in intellectual cognition is a medium of God's demonstration (*medium demonstrationis*), even for Suárez.⁸⁴ Hence, we do not understand God in a positive way through a direct concept referring to the essence of God (*ad quidditatem Dei*) known *in se*, but in a negative way through the analogy of attribution.⁸⁵ Therefore, God is not the direct object

72–77 (“Knowing what God is Not: Negative theology?”); Doyle, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth,” 577.

⁸³ Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Super librum de causis expositio, a lectione I ad lectionem XXXII*, ed. Henri-Dominique Saffrey, Textus Philosophici Friburgenses. Seriem Moderatur 4–5 (Fribourg: Société Philosophique; Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1954), I, lec. 6: “Et per hunc modum inducit hanc rationem Dionysius I capitulo de divinis nominibus, sic dicens: si cognitiones omnes existentium sunt, et si existentia finem habent, in quantum scilicet finite participant esse, qui est supra omnem substantiam ab omni cognitione est segregatus. Tertio ostendit quomodo causa prima cognoscitur per effectum. Et dicit quod causa prima non significatur in his quae de ipsa dicuntur, nisi ex causa secunda quae est intelligentia: sic enim loquimur de Deo quasi de quadam substantia intelligente; et hoc ideo quia intelligentia est suum causatum primum, unde est Deo simillima et per ipsam maxime cognosci potest.”

⁸⁴ Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, disp. I, sec. 2, a. 29: “Deus enim est obiectum scibile, et de eo demonstrantur attributa, non solum a posteriori, et ab effectibus, sed etiam a priori, unum ex alio colligendo, ut immortalitatem ex immaterialitate, et esse agens liberum, quia intelligens est. Alio modo dicitur principium seu causa, id quod est ratio alterius, secundum quod obiective concipiuntur et distinguuntur; et hoc genus principii sufficit ut sit medium demonstrationis; nam sufficit ad reddendam veluti rationem formalem, ob quam talis proprietas rei convenit. Quamvis ergo demus ens in quantum ens non habere causas proprie et in rigore sumptas priori modo, habet tamen rationem aliquam suarum proprietatum; et hoc modo etiam in Deo possunt huiusmodi rationes reperiri, nam ex Dei perfectione infinita reddimus causam, cur unus tantum sit, et sic de aliis.”

⁸⁵ Suárez, disp. XXX, sec. 12, a. 11: “Respondetur negando primam consequentiam, quia, licet non concipiamus Deum distincte et secundum propriam repraesentationem eius, nihilominus vere concipimus ipsum conceptu directe et immediate repraesentante ipsum, vel perfectionem aliquam ut propriam eius. Hic tamen conceptus, si sit positivus et absolutus, est valde confusus, non prout confusum dicitur de universali seu communi, quod vocant totum potenziale, sed prout opponitur conceptui proprie et clare repraesentanti rem prout in se est. Si vero in illo conceptu includatur negatio, quamvis illa non pertineat ad quidditatem Dei, sub illa tamen intelligimus fundamentum seu radicem eius, quae est propria quidditas Dei et non ratio aliqua communis vel analogae; ut, cum concipimus Deum ut ens infinitum, non intelligimus substratum illi negationi esse ens ut sic, sed quoddam singulare ens, tantam habens perfectionem, ut terminis non claudatur.”

of metaphysics, even for Aquinas. In this respect, the cognition of God takes place exclusively through the metaphysical knowledge of the transcendental principles of being, which are abstracted from the matter of being and included in the objective plane of knowledge as universal reasons or tenets of real being as such (*ens reale*), and therefore of God as well. Hence, in Aquinas, only “negative theology,” which is an extension of Aristotelian metaphysics, proves itself as the last stage of metaphysical knowledge and opens the way in philosophy to a faith strengthened by intellect and metaphysical premises, constituting a certain form of cognitive attitude towards what is immaterial and beyond reason, towards the transcendence of God.

The most important point of the Thomistic doctrine regarding the knowledge of God seems to be that *Ipsum Esse* (Existence Itself), the absolute unity of essence and existence in God, turns out to be an abolition, denial, or negation of the difference between essence and existence that occurs in created beings.⁸⁶ Negation, which does not mean anything pejorative here, is in God the negation of the fundamental difference between His existence (*esse*) and essence (*essentia*). In contrast, in all created beings, which are composite substances (*substantia composita*) and in which there is a distinction between essence and existence, a real difference (*distinctio realis*) is part of the make-up of all beings of this type. Aquinas’ understanding of God in terms of the indivisible unity of essence and existence also indicates that He is above all beings (*supra ens*) and infinitely transcends all creation.⁸⁷ No created being can have such an indivisible nature, much less can it have insight into the essence of God Himself. God derives existence from His true being, namely from *Ipsum Esse*, and His essence turns out to be a mystery to human beings. Therefore, Aquinas also claims that in fact, the only thing we can know about God through our natural cognition is that God in Himself and in the essence of the Divine is a completely unknowable Being.⁸⁸ Moreover, for a complete exposition of metaphysics combined with supernatural theology, Aquinas methodically inserts *Ipsum Esse* into the Mystery

⁸⁶ Cf. Doyle, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth,” 577–78.

⁸⁷ Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, lib. I, cap. 14: “Nam divina substantia omnem formam quam intellectus noster attingit, sua immensitate excedit: et sic ipsam apprehendere non possumus cognoscendo quid est. Sed aliqualem eius habemus notitiam cognoscendo quid non est.”

⁸⁸ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, q. 7, a. 5, ad 14: “Ad decimumquartum dicendum, quod ex quo intellectus noster divinam substantiam non adaequat, hoc ipsum quod est Dei substantia remanet, nostrum intellectum excedens, et ita a nobis ignoratur: et propter hoc illud est ultimum cognitionis humanae de Deo quod sciat se Deum nescire, in quantum cognoscit, illud quod Deus est, omne ipsum quod de eo intelligimus, excedere; In omnes S. Pauli Apostoli epistolas commentaria, Ad Romanos,

of the Holy Trinity, which strengthens the metaphysical argument of sacred theology.⁸⁹ Since *Ipsum Esse* expresses in God the lack of difference between essence and existence, it also expresses the lack of difference between Divine Intelligence (the Word or Son of God) and Divine Substance (His essence).⁹⁰ It follows that the Divine Word (the Son) has the same essence, nature and substance as the Father.⁹¹ All attributes that we derive from the being of the Father belong to the being of the Son (*consubstantialem* or *homooúsios* in the Eastern theology). The reason why the Divine Persons can share the Divine Nature in an essential unity without splitting into a plurality of gods is precisely because in God understood as *Ipsum Esse* (Existence Itself), essence and existence are not differentiated.⁹² The Divine Persons have a common essence which is the very *Ipsum Esse*, therefore they have one and the same absolute existence and substance.⁹³ For God's existence, we only know what is ultimately contained in created beings (in analogical beings). Taking their existence (*esse*) as a medium of God's demonstration and using the principle of efficient causality, we can rather prove the truth of the proposition that "God exists" than definitely prove or determine His essence.⁹⁴ While knowledge arising from the deepest reflection of the intellect will never approach the perfection of God's essence, knowing God can take place in many analogous ways, in the various ways

cap. 1, lect. 6: Sciendum est ergo quod aliquid circa Deum est omnino ignotum homini in hac vita." Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 579–80.

⁸⁹ Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 581. Aquinas' understanding of the Holy Trinity was thoroughly discussed by Gilles Emery, see Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 14, a. 4. Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 581.

⁹¹ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 27, a. 2; q. 34, a. 2, ad 1. Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 581.

⁹² Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 582 sqq.

⁹³ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*, q. 2, a. 1.

⁹⁴ Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae I^a*, q. 3, a. 2: "Ad secundum dicendum quod esse dupliciter dicitur, uno modo, significat actum essendi; alio modo, significat compositionem propositionis, quam anima adinvenit coniungens praedicatum subiecto. Primo igitur modo accipiendum esse, non possumus scire esse Dei, sicut nec eius essentiam, sed solum secundo modo. Scimus enim quod haec propositio quam formamus de Deo, cum dicimus Deus est, vera est. Et hoc scimus ex eius effectibus, ut supra dictum est"; q. 3, a. 5: "[...] omnia quae sunt in genere uno, communicant in quidditate vel essentia generis [...]. Differunt autem secundum esse: non enim idem est esse hominis et equi, nec huius hominis et illius hominis." Cf. Doyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth," 575–76; Doyle, "*Ipsum Esse* as God-Surrogate," 293–96.

in which existence manifests itself in created beings. Unlike created beings, God is a unique Being, a simple act and absolute cause of existence. There is no composition of act and potency in His substance, neither a conjugation of form and matter nor of essence and existence within Him.

Conclusions

From Aristotle's natural theology (first philosophy) to Renaissance Scholastics, that is, the continuity of metaphysical reflection on the concept of God as the supreme cause or being seems to be obvious. The propositions and previous arguments I have already explained prove this. The metaphysical tradition of the Latin West turns out to be reasoning that is not divorced from theology. Already in ancient times, one can observe the outline of a certain connection, concurrence, and even a certain kind of dependence of one or the other (e.g. *philosophia ancilla theologiae*), e.g. in Philo of Alexandria († c. 40) and his allegorical interpretation of 'De congressu quaerendae eruditionis gratia' from Genesis (16:1–6). Such a motif of general education as *enkyklios paideia*, which combined natural sciences, theological and philosophical viewed together, was of great importance for the later idea of *artes liberales* and *humaniora* throughout the Middle Ages, in Modern times up to the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer.⁹⁵ Without theology, not only would there be no proper context of practicing metaphysics of God in the Scholastic schools, but above all there would

⁹⁵ The phrase "*philosophia ancilla theologiae*" has been used since the time of St. Peter Damian († 1072). Damian was an opponent of Aristotelian dialectics. He questioned secular sciences, including logic and philosophy. He placed faith above reason. For more on the connections and differences between Scholastic philosophy and theology, as an example for further studies, see Hent de Vries, "Philosophia Ancilla Theologiae: Allegory and Ascension in Philo's on Mating with the Preliminary Studies (*De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia*)," *Bible and Critical Theory* 5, no. 3 (2009), 41.1–41.19. See also Dirk Krausmüller, "Philosophia Ancilla Theologiae: Plotinus' Definition of Sensible Substance and its Adaptation in John Philoponus' *Arbiter*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 73, no. 2 (2019), 149–58, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700720-12341385>; Andrzej Maryniarczyk, "Metafizyka jako *ancilla scientiae* (nauki przyrodnicze: metafizyka – wiara)," *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej* 11, no. 1 (2012), 59–76; Gyula Klima, "Ancilla theologiae vs. domina philosophorum. Thomas Aquinas, Latin Averroism and the Autonomy of Philosophy," in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter? Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für Mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société Internationale pour l'Etude de la Philosophie Médiévale*, 25. bis 30. August 1997 in Erfurt, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 393–402; David Berger, "Offenbarung und Glaube: Eine fundamentaltheologische Untersuchung," *Una Voce-Korrespondenz* 30, no. 4 (2000),

be no unifying basis for knowledge, in accordance with the previously accepted formula that *theologia est princeps scientiae*. It seems that if it were separated from theology – which is not overly emphasized by most metaphysicians, such as Aquinas or Suárez, who was called “the head of the metaphysicians of his time” and even “the prince and pope of all metaphysicians”⁹⁶ – philosophical knowledge of God would not be satisfactorily completed.

As in medieval theology, in which Scholasticism becomes the binding intellectual doctrine for Christendom, so too in Scholastic metaphysics shaped by both the Franciscan (St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus) and Dominican (St. Thomas) schools we can find convergent applications to theology. Philosophy is being conceived as a field of knowledge on first causes and principles (*scientia transcendens*) and the supreme cause and principle (*Ens Supremum*), such as God Himself. Considering natural philosophy, it largely becomes complementary knowledge to theology. Philosophy becomes the handy skill of reasoning through which nature is interpreted, but above all philosophy plays a key role as a natural science in the service of theology (*divinae theologiae ministrum*). In many scholastic schools, theology was treated as the science of sacred things (*rerum Divinarum scientia*), while philosophy fulfilled its auxiliary and apologetic function. Theology as a separate science, as a symbol of revealed knowledge, therefore takes the lead where purely rational knowledge is not enough and where transcendence and mystery appear.

For St. Thomas, it can be said that metaphysics opens the way to natural theology and, at the same time, the so-called “negative theology,” which seems to reach the ultimate knowledge of the supreme being, i.e. to the religious and revealed aspects of *Ipsium Esse*. Moreover, it can be said that metaphysics proves the consistency between faith and rational knowledge. It indicates an additional perspective for supernatural science, which is foremost based on Revelation.

195–214, esp. 202–6 (“Die Definition der göttlichen Offenbarung nach den vier Ursachen der scholastischen Philosophie”).

⁹⁶ “Omnium metaphysicorum princeps ac papa,” “caput huius saeculi in scholasticis” – these names were given by Grotius. Cf. Raúl de Scorraile, *François Suárez de la Compagnie de Jésus, d’après ses lettres, ses autres écrits inédits et un grand nombre de documents nouveaux*, vol. 1 (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1911), 437. Karl Werner pointed out that if Suárez was not the first theologian and metaphysician of his time, he was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding. Cf. Karl Werner, *Franz Suarez und die Scholastik der letzten Jahrhunderte*, vol. 1 (Regensburg: Manz, 1861), 90. In turn, Alfred Freddoso considers Suárez second only to St. Thomas among Christian scholastics: “Suárez is a brilliant, technically proficient, and profound metaphysician; to my mind, among the medieval Christian scholastics he ranks second only to Aquinas.” Cf. Alfred J. Freddoso, “A Suárezian Model of Efficient Causality,” 6, accessed February 24, 2025, <https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddoso/papers/effcause.htm>.

Metaphysics does this by recognizing the finitude of natural knowledge within the limits of the existence of created things. Upon closer examination, this allows us to conclude that it is no longer possible to replace supernatural theology with another form of knowledge, which would involve a further need to appeal to empirical or entirely different doctrines. In other words, only theology, or more precisely apophatic theology or “negative theology,” which is, as it were, an extension of metaphysics, opens the way to faith, which here is understood intellectually (*intellectus fidei*).

Metaphysics, being also a certain form of cognitive attitude towards the transcendence of God, while referring to natural means of cognition, also conditions the possibility of applying supernatural theology within the limits of natural knowledge. It seems very justified to say that these are two convergent sciences, or at least they both assume the possibility of knowing God, although they are different in their assumption and teaching method. It turns out, therefore, that classical metaphysics is an attempt to create a synthesis of objective knowledge about human cognition within the existing realm, which could be reduced to metaphysical, intellectual, purely rational (logic), volitional-affective and spiritual activity. It should be noted, however, that metaphysics is not limited to referring to supernatural factors or purely rational knowledge, but in fact tries to take into account all areas of human epistemic activity, from intellectual (including noetic) to spiritual. In this respect, almost the entire metaphysical tradition comes close to theology, especially that of St. Thomas, who in his *Commentary on Metaphysics* seems to acknowledge that metaphysics (first philosophy) in its objective goal and destiny (final cause) does not differ significantly from the primary object (efficient cause) of theology:

[...] since this science is a science about first causes and principles, then it follows that it is also about God [...], because God is understood by everyone in such a way that He exists in the number of causes and that He is in a certain way the principle of things (*principium rerum*). Therefore, a science that deals with God and first principles speaks either of God Himself, or, if not only of God, then of Himself in the highest degree.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ “[...] cum haec scientia sit de primis causis et principiis, oportet quod est de Deo; quia Deus hoc modo intelligitur ab omnibus, ut de numero causarum existens, et ut quoddam principium rerum. Item talem scientiam, que est de Deo et de primis causis, aut solus Deus habet, aut si non solus, ipse tamen maxime habet” (Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *In metaphysicam Aristotelis commentaria*, ed. Marie-Raymond Cathala [Taurini: Marietti, 1926], 21–22; I, lec. III, n. 64).

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ROBERT GOCZAŁ (DR.) – philosopher, graduate of the University of Wrocław; currently a research and didactic employee of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław and assistant professor in the Department of Metaphilosophy at the Institute of Christian Philosophy and Social Sciences. His research covers the Middle Ages and Renaissance philosophy, with particular emphasis on the so-called Iberian Renaissance scholasticism of the 16th and 17th centuries and its influence on the development of modern rationalism. Collaborates with Universidade de Lisboa, Universidade de Coimbra, Harvard University, Fordham University New York, Saint Louis University, Loyola University Chicago, University of Notre Dame, KU Leuven, as well as Polskie Towarzystwo Filozofii Nowożytnej [the Polish Society of Modern Philosophy] at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Member of numerous associations and international organizations in Europe and the USA, including The American Catholic Philosophical Association, The Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy, Society of Christian Philosophers, Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics.