II

THE SUBJECT OF METAPHYSICS

1. On Being as Being

Because a science ought to investigate not only its proper subject but also the latter’s essential attributes, Aristotle says that there exists a science which takes as its subject being precisely as such, and “those things which belong to being in virtue of its own nature,” namely, being’s essential attributes.

Aristotle here uses the expression “being in so far as it is being” because the other sciences, which treat of particular beings, do indeed consider being, for all the subjects of sciences are beings, yet they do not consider being as being, but as this sort of being; for example, number, line, fire, or something of the kind.

Aristotle employs the phrase “and those things belonging to being in virtue of its own nature,” not simply “those things which pertain to or exist in being,” in order to point out that it is not the office of a science to consider those things that exist in its subject accidentally but only those that are present in it essentially. Thus, geometry is not concerned with the question whether a triangle is made of copper or of wood, but only with its absolute nature, according to which it has three equal angles. It does not, therefore, pertain to the science whose subject is being to consider all that exists in it accidentally,

1. The following five paragraphs are taken from the Commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, Book IV, lect. 1 (*IV Metaph.*, 1, 529–32).
2. The inseparable accidents appertaining to that subject as such.
3. Geometry deals only with the essential properties of its objects.
since it would then be taking into account accidents which are investigated in all sciences. For although all accidents exist in some being, not all accidents exist in a being inasmuch as it is being. Thus essential accidents of an inferior or a subordinate thing are accidental accidents in relation to the superior; for example, accidents essential to man are not essential to animal. 4

The necessity of this science of metaphysics, which contemplates being and its essential attributes, is manifest; such things ought not to remain unknown because it is upon them that knowledge of other things depends, for on the knowledge of common or universal things hinges the knowledge of proper or individual things.

That this science is not a particular science, Aristotle shows by the following argument. No particular science considers universal being as such, but only some part of being cut off from its other parts, and of this separated part it examines the essential attribute. The mathematical sciences, for instance, investigate a particular kind of being, namely, the quantitative, 5 whereas the common science, metaphysics, considers universal being as being. Therefore it is not to be identified with any particular science.

No particular science treats of being as being, that is, being-in-common, nor does any particular science treat of any particular being, simply as being. For instance, arithmetic does not consider number as being, but as number. It is the office of the metaphysician, however, to consider any and every being, precisely as being. 6

4. E.g., risibility, the capacity for laughter, is an essential accident—an inseparable property or attribute—of man, but in relation to animal nature as such it is, so to speak, only an accidental accident.

5. Thus mathematics, like all the particular sciences, treats of some essential mode of being; it takes a "part" of being and considers it under that aspect or attribute that belongs to it essentially.

6. *VI Metaph.*, 1, 1147. It is for this reason that metaphysics is called the universal science, or the common science. Logic is equally as universal in its scope as metaphysics, for "all beings fall under the consideration of reason" (*IV Metaph.*, 4, 574). But logic and metaphysics differ primarily in this, that while it pertains to meta-

And because it pertains to the same science to consider being as being, "and, concerning being, what it is," namely, its essence (for every thing has actual existence through its essence), so it is that the particular sciences . . . are not concerned with the problem of determining what being is—its quiddity or essence and its definition, which signifies the essence. Rather, from the essence such sciences proceed to other matters, using the presupposed essence, as if it were an already demonstrated principle, in order to prove other things. 7

Just as no particular science determines the essence of its subject, so none of them says regarding its subject, that it is or is not. And understandably so; for it belongs to one and the same science to settle the problem of existence and to discover the essence. . . . It is proper to the philosopher, to him who studies being as being, to consider both problems. But every particular science presupposes concerning its own subject both that it is and what it is, as Aristotle states in the first book of the *Posterior Analytics*. And this shows that no particular science treats of being as such, nor of any being precisely as being. 8

2. The Meaning of Being (ens)

A. In Relation to the Act of Existing (esse)

That which first falls under the intellect's grasp is being (ens). Thus the intellect necessarily attributes being to everything it apprehends. 9 Being means that—which-is, or exists (esse habens). 10

physics to consider every and any being, precisely as existing, actually or possibly, it is the office of logic to treat of any and every being, precisely as known or as knowable, i.e., as existing in the reason actually or possibly. 7. *Ibid.*, n. 1148.


10. *XII Metaph.*, 1, 2419.
The verb is *consignifies* composition, because it does not signify this principally but secondarily. It signifies primarily that which the intellect apprehends as being absolutely actual, for in the absolute sense is means to be in act, and thus its mode of signification is that of a verb. But, since the actuality which is principally signifies is universally the actuality of every form, whether substantial or accidental, when we wish to signify that any form or any act whatever actually exists in a subject, we express that fact by this verb *is*.

The word *being* (*ens*) is imposed from the very act of existing, as Avicenna remarks, whereas the word *thing* (*res*) is imposed from the essence or quiddity. Being properly signifies: something–existing–in–act. *Being* means that–which–has–existence–in–act. Now, this is substance, which subsists.

The act of existing (*esse*) is that by which substance is given the name of being (*ens*). This act is the actuality of every form or nature.

What I call *esse* is among all principles the most perfect; which is evident from the fact that act is always more perfect than potentiality. Now, any designated form is understood to exist actually only in virtue of the fact that it is held to *be*. Thus, humanity or fire can be considered as existing in the potentiality of matter, or as existing in the active power of an agent, or also as existing in an intellect. But that which *esse* is made actually existent. It is evident, therefore, that what I call *esse* is the actuality of all acts, and for this reason it is the perfection of all perfections. Nor is it to be thought that something is added to what I call *esse* which is more formal than *esse* itself, thus determining it as an act determines a potentiality. For the *esse* I speak of is essentially other than that to which it is added as a certain determining principle.

Now, nothing can be added to *esse* that is extraneous to it, since nothing is extraneous to it except nothing *(non-ens)*... *Esse*, then, is not determined by another as a potentiality is determined by an act, but *esse* is determined as an act by a potentiality... And in this way is one *esse* distinguished from another *esse*, namely, according as it is the *esse* of this nature, or essence, or of that.

*Esse* is what is innermost in each and every thing, and what is deepest in them all, for it is formal in respect of all that is in a thing.

*Esse* itself is act in relation to both composite and simple natures. Composite natures are not made specifically what they are by this act, but rather by the form in them, for specification concerns a thing's essence whereas *esse* evidently pertains to the question whether a thing is. Nor are angelic substances so specified. Rather, their differentiation into species is based on those simple subsisting forms which they themselves are, and which differ specifically according to their own grade of perfection.

Taken absolutely, as including in itself every perfection of being, *esse* is superior to life and to all other subsequent perfections...

11. Viz., the composition of predicate with subject in the judgment.
12. Commentary on Aristotle's work *On Interpretation*, Book I, lect. 5, end (I *Peri Hermeneias*, 5, fin.).
13. Commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, Book I, distinction 8, quest. 1, art. 1 (*I Sent.*, VIII, 1, 1).
15. *XII Metaph.*, 1, 2419.
19. Potentiality basically and primarily means capacity for being-in-act for *esse*.
20. The act of existing is essentially diverse from the essence which it actualizes or determines to be.
21. The basic "potentiality" that determines *esse* is the essence.
22. *ST* I, 8, 1.
23. Disputed Questions *On Spiritual Creatures*, art. 8, reply to 3rd obj. (*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, VIII, 5).
Yet if esse is considered as it is participated in any thing whatever which does not possess the total perfection of being, but has imperfect being—and this is the case with all creatures—then clearly esse in union with the superadded perfection is higher. Accordingly Dionysius says that living things are better than merely existing things, and intelligent things than merely living things. 24

Esse, as such, is nobler than everything that follows upon it. 25 Thus, considered absolutely and in itself, this act is nobler than the act of understanding. . . Indeed, that which excels in being (in esse) is purely and simply nobler than any thing which excels in any perfection consequent upon being. . . 26

B. In Relation to Essence

Being (ens), understood as signifying the entity of a thing (entitas rei), is divided into the ten categories, and thus taken, being (ens) is convertible with thing (res). 27

The name essence is taken from being expressed in the first mode [namely, as it is divided into the ten categories], not from being expressed in the second mode [namely, as it signifies the truth of propositions]. For, as is clear in the case of privations, in the latter mode we call some things beings which do not have an essence. . . Because being said in the first mode is divided into the ten categories, essence must signify something common to all natures, through which di-verse beings are placed in diverse genera and species. For instance, humanity is the essence of man, and so with other things. 28

Moreover, 29 since that by which a thing is constituted in its proper genus and species is what is signified by the definition indicating what the thing is, philosophers have taken to using the name quiddity for the name essence. The Philosopher frequently calls this the quod quid erat esse: 30 that by which a thing is a what. It is also called form inasmuch as form signifies the complete essential determination of each thing. . . Also, it is called nature . . . according as nature is said to be that which can be grasped by the intellect in any way; for a thing is intelligible only by its definition and essence. . . But “nature” also seems to signify the essence of the thing as ordered to its proper operation, for nothing is without its proper operation. The name quiddity, on the other hand, is derived from that which is signified by the definition, whereas essence means that through which and in which a thing has its act of existing.

24. ST I-II, 2, 5, ad 2.
25. Ibid.
26. I Sent., XVII, 1, 2, ad 3.
27. ST I, 48, 2, ad 2. It is crucially important to note that it is being as essence, and not as in act of being, which is distributed among the categories. “Nothing,” says St. Thomas (De Pot., VII, 3), “is placed in a category according to its act of existing (esse) but only by reason of its quiddity.”

28. On Being and Essence, Ch. I (De Ente et Ensennia, I).
29. Ibid.
30. St. Thomas’ literal translation of Aristotle’s τὸ τί ἐίναι Post. Anal., I, 22 (82b 38); De Anima, III, 6 (430b 28); Metaph., VII, 3 (1028b 34)—a phrase untranslatable literally into clear English.
31. The meaning of the Avicennian word “certitude,” which St. Thomas uses here, is not conveyed in English by “certitude” or “fixity” or by any such single word. “Form” in this statement signifies the whole essence.
does not participate in the genus,\textsuperscript{14} is outside the essence of the
genus. But nothing can be outside the essence of being so as to
constitute some species of being by addition to being; for what is
outside being is nothing. . . . Hence the Philosopher had proved in
the third book of his Metaphysics\textsuperscript{15} that being cannot be a genus.

Therefore\textsuperscript{16} being must be limited to diverse genera in accor-
dance with diverse modes of predication—which themselves follow
upon diverse modes of existing, because in as many ways as some-
thing is predicated, in just so many ways is something signified to
be. And for this reason those things into which being is first divided
are called predicaments, because they are distinguished according to
the various modes of predicating.

There\textsuperscript{17} are indeed some predications in which the verb \textit{is} does
not explicitly occur. Let it not be supposed that in such cases (e.g.,
in “the man walks”) \textit{being} is not predicated. Denying such a false
inference, the Philosopher lays it down that in all such predications
something is signified to \textit{be}. In fact, every verb is reduced to this
verb \textit{is}, and its participial form \textit{be-ing}. There is, then, no
difference between saying that a man is convalescing and that he
convalesces; and so in all other cases. It is therefore evident that in
as many modes as predication is made, in just so many ways is be-
ing spoken of.

2. The Division of Being by Potency and Act

The primary simple principles cannot be defined, for in definitions
there can be no infinite regress. \textit{Act} is such a principle. Therefore it

\textsuperscript{14} Put in logical terms, the concept of the difference is not included in the con-
cept of the genus.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Metaph.}, III (B), 3 (998b 18–26).
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{V Metaph.}, 9, 890.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, n. 893.

\textit{Potency\textsuperscript{19}} is spoken of in relation to \textit{act}. But \textit{act} is twofold: first
\textit{act}, which is \textit{form}, and second \textit{act}, which is \textit{operation}. As the
common understanding of the term indicates, \textit{act} was attributed first
of all to \textit{action}; almost everyone understands \textit{act} to mean this.
However, from this meaning the term \textit{act} was transferred to signify
the \textit{form}, seeing that \textit{form} is a principle of \textit{action}, and an end.
\textit{Potency}, then, is likewise twofold: \textit{active potency}, to which the \textit{act}
that is \textit{operation} corresponds—and to this the term \textit{potency}\textsuperscript{20} seems
to have been attributed primarily—and \textit{passive potency}, to which
first \textit{act}, namely the \textit{form}, corresponds—and to this the term \textit{potency}
was likewise, it seems, attributed secondarily.

Now,\textsuperscript{21} in any two things whatever, if one of them completes
the other, then the relation between them is that of \textit{act} to potential-
ity; for nothing is brought to completion, fulfilled, except by its own
act. . . . But it is the \textit{act} of existing itself which completes,
fulfills, the existing substance; each and every being is in \textit{act} as a
result of having the \textit{act} of existing. It follows that in every one of the
aforesaid substances\textsuperscript{22} there is a composition of \textit{act} and potentiality.

Moreover, in a thing that which is derived from an agent must be \textit{act}; for an agent’s \textit{office} is to make something \textit{actual}. But it was

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{IX Metaph.}, 5, 1826 ff.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{De Pot.}, I, 1.
\textsuperscript{20} St. Thomas is using the one word, \textit{potentia}, to signify \textit{potency} in any mode;
whereas in English “power” is almost always used to designate \textit{active potentia} alone.
Let us use “potentiality” to signify \textit{passive potentia}.
\textsuperscript{21} The following four paragraphs are found in \textit{CG} II, 53. Cf. \textit{ST} I, 77, 1:
Potentiality and \textit{act} divide every \textit{being} and every \textit{genus} of \textit{being}.
\textsuperscript{22} i.e., created intellectual ones; but the argument applies to all other \textit{created sub-
stances} as well.
proved earlier that all substances except the first have existence from it. In every case it is because they receive their existence from something else that caused substances themselves are. This very existence, then, is present in caused substances as their act. That in which an act is present is a potentiality. Indeed act as such is referred to potentiality. Hence, in every created substance there is potentiality and act.

Again. Whatever participates in something is related to that which is participated as potentiality to act. For, through that which is participated [received] the participator is actualized in such and such a manner. But it was shown previously that God alone is being in virtue of His own essence, while all other things participate in the act of existing. Every created substance therefore, is related to its own existence as potentiality to act.

Further. It is through an act that a thing becomes like its efficient cause; for an agent produces its like so far as it is in act. But every created substance attains likeness to God through the very act of existing \((ipsum \ esse)\), as was proved earlier. Therefore, existence itself \((ipsum \ esse)\) has this status with respect to all created substances: it is their act. Thus, in every created substance there is composition of act and potentiality.

In every composite being there must be act and potentiality. Indeed no plurality can become one in an absolute sense unless in it something be act and something else potentiality. [Complete]

23. The participator is the receiver of the participated and as such is potential with respect to the latter.
24. They exist and are not the existence they have.
25. As subject of an existence which it itself is not, every creature is but a certain receptive capacity—a potentiality—for that act \((esse)\) which purely and simply makes it to be.
26. CG I, 18.
27. And, as we have seen, such is every creature. Cf. ST I, 3, 7: “In every composite, there must be potentiality and act . . . , for either one of the parts actualizes

entities actually existing do not form a unit, except, as it were, by way of conjunction or aggregation; and thus united they are not one in an absolute sense. But even in such wholes, the parts themselves are potential with respect to their unification, since they are unified actually after having been unified potentially. . . . Moreover, every composite, precisely as composite, is potentially dissolved, although in certain things something is present that resists dissolution. But what is dissolveable is in potentiality with respect to non-existence.

Every thing other than God has being participatively; so that in it substance [or essence], sharing the act of existence, is other than this act itself which is shared. But every participator is related to that which is participated in it as potentiality to act. Hence, the substance of every created thing whatever is to its own existence as potentiality to act. So it is that every created substance is composed of potentiality and act, or, as Boethius says, of what-it-is \((quod \ est)\) and act of existing \((esse)\).

3. The Real Composition of Essence and Act of Existing

It is clear from what has been said already that in every created thing essence is distinct from existence and is compared to the latter as potentiality to act. Every created being participates in the act of existing. God alone is His act of existing. The act of existing of every finite thing is participated, because no thing outside God is its own act of existing.

29. ST I, 54, 3.
30. Possesses esse without being one with it.
32. CG III, 65.
Whatever is participated is related to the participator as its act. But participated act of existing is limited by the [receptive] capacity of the participator. Hence God alone, who is His own act of existing, is pure and infinite act. In intellectual substances, indeed, there is a composition of act and potentiality; not, however, of matter and form, but of form and participated act of existing.

Now, act of existing, as such, cannot be diverse; yet it can be diversified by something extrinsic to itself; for instance, a stone’s act of existing is other than that of a man.

God’s act of existing is distinguished and set apart from every other act of existing by the fact that it is self-subsistent, and does not come to a nature [or an essence] other than itself. Every other act of existing, being non-subsisting, must be individuated by the nature and substance which subsists in that act of existing. And regarding these things [namely all creatures] it is true to say that the act of existing of this one is other than the act of existing of that one, inasmuch as it belongs to another nature. So, if there were one color existing in itself, without matter, or without a subject, by this very fact it would be distinguished from every other color; since colors existing in subjects are distinguished only through those subjects.

Because the quiddity of an intelligence is that very intelligence itself, its quiddity or essence is that which it itself is, and its existence, received from God, is that by which it subsists in the nature of things. Some therefore have said that substances of this kind are composed of that-by-which-they-are (the quo est) and that-which-they-are (the quod est), or of that-by-which-they-are and essence. . .

Whatever does not belong to the concept of essence or quiddity comes from without and enters into composition with the essence, for no essence can be understood without its essential parts. But every essence or quiddity can be understood without anything being known of its actual existence. For example, I can understand what a man or a phoenix is and yet be ignorant whether either one exists in reality. It is evident, then, that act of existing is other than essence or quiddity—unless, perhaps, there exists a reality whose quiddity is its very act of existing. And there can be only one such reality: the First Being. . . .

The act of existing belongs to the first agent, God, through His own nature; for God’s act of existing is His substance. . . . But that which belongs to something according to its own nature, appertains to other things only by participation. . . . Thus the act of existing is possessed by other things, from the First Agent, through a certain participation. But that which a thing has by participation is not its very own substance. Therefore it is impossible that the substance of anything except the first agent should be the act of existing itself.

Now, the composition of matter and form is not of the same nature as the composition of substance and act of existing, though both compositions are of potentiality and act. This is so, first of all,
because matter is not the very substance of a thing. If it were, then all forms would be accidents, as the ancient Naturalists\textsuperscript{46} thought. Rather, matter is a part of the substance. Secondly, this is so because the act of existing itself is not the proper act of the matter, but of the whole substance. For \textit{esse} is the act of that whereof we can say: it is; \textit{esse} is not said of the matter, but of the whole. Matter, therefore, cannot be termed that-which-is. On the contrary, the substance itself is that-which-is. Thirdly, the aforesaid compositions are diverse, because the form is not the act of existing, though between the two there exists a certain order. Form is compared to the act of existing as light to the act of illuminating, for instance, or as whiteness to the act of being white. Finally, there is this consideration: existence is act even in relation to the form itself. For in things composed of matter and form, the form is said to be a principle of existing because it is what completes the substance, whose act is \textit{esse} itself; just as the air's transparency is the principle of illumination because it makes the air a proper subject [or receiver] of light.

To sum up: in things composed of matter and form, neither the matter nor the form can be designated as that-which-is, nor even can the act of existing be so designated. However, form can be called that-by-which-a-thing-is, or exists, (\textit{quo est}), inasmuch as it is a principle of existing. Nevertheless, it is the whole substance which is that-which-is (\textit{quod est}), and the act of existing is that by which the substance is denominated a \textit{being}.

In intellectual substances (which . . . are not composed of matter and form, but form in them is itself a subsisting substance) form is that-which-is (\textit{quod est}), whereas \textit{esse} is act and that-by-which the form is (\textit{quo est}). So in them there is but one composition of act and potentiality, namely, the composition of substance and act of existing, which by some is called a composition of that-which-is (\textit{quod est}) and act of existing (\textit{esse}), or of that-which-is (\textit{quod est}) and that-by-which-it-is (\textit{quo est}).

\textsuperscript{46} The pre-Socratic philosophers of nature.
3. THE WHOLE OF METAPHYSICS IS ORDERED TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Now since all creatures, even those devoid of intelligence, are directed to God as their last end and all reach this end so far as they have some share of likeness to Him, the intellectual creature attains to Him in a special way through its proper operation, namely, by understanding Him. This then must be the end of the intellectual creature: to know God.

For, as was shown above, God is the end of each thing, and hence each thing, to the greatest extent possible to it, intends to be united to God as its last end. But a thing is more closely united to God by attaining in some way to His very substance (and this occurs when it has some cognition of that substance) than by simply attaining some likeness of Him. Therefore the intellectual substance tends to the knowledge of God as its last end.

Again. The operation proper to a thing is its end, for it is the thing's second perfection. Thus, that which is well conditioned for its proper operation is said to be fit and good. Now intellection (intelligere) is the proper operation of the intellectual substance, and consequently is its end. Therefore, whatever is most perfect in this operation is its last end; especially so in those operations, such as understanding and sensing, which are not directed to some product. And since operations of this kind are specified by their objects, being known also through them, it follows necessarily that the more perfect the object of any such operation, the more perfect is the operation itself. Consequently the act of intellecting the most

30. This section comprises the whole of Chapter XXV in Book III of the Summa Contra Gentiles: "That to Know God Is the End of Every Intellectual Substance."
31. Chap. XVII.
32. I.e., in immanent operations, which do not issue in effects outside their efficient causes but remain in those causes and perfect them.
perfect intelligible object, namely God, is the most perfect act in the
genius of the operation called “understanding” (intelligere). Therefore
to know God by an act of intellection is the last end of every intel-
lectual substance.

Someone might however say that the last end of an intellectual
substance consists indeed in intellecting the best intelligible object,
but that what is the best intelligible object for this or that intellectual
substance is not absolutely the best intelligible, and that the higher the
intellectual substance, the higher is its best intelligible. So that per-
haps the highest created intellectual substance has for its best intelli-
gible object that which is best absolutely, and its happiness will consist
in knowing God, whereas the happiness of any lower intellectual
substance will consist in knowing some lower intelligible object, which
however will be the highest reality known by it. And above all, in view of the weakness of the human intellect, it would seem not
to be in its power to apprehend that which is absolutely the best in-
telligible thing; the human intellect being as well adapted for knowing the supremely intelligible “as the owl's eye for seeing the sun.”

It is evident nevertheless that the end of any intellectual
substance, even the lowest, is to know God. For it was shown above34 that God is the last end toward which all things tend. And although it is the lowest in the order of intellectual substances, the human intellect is superior to all things devoid of intellect. Since then a more noble substance has not a less noble end, God Himself will be the end also of the human intellect. Now, as we have shown, every intelligent being attains to its last end by understanding it. Therefore the human intellect attains to God as its end by understanding Him.

Again. Just as things devoid of intellect tend to God as their end
by way of assimilation, so do intellectual substances by way of
knowledge, as is evident from what has been said. Now, although things lacking intellect tend toward a likeness to their proximate

agent causes, the intention of nature does not rest there but has for
its end a likeness to the highest good, as we have proved.35 Yet such things are able to attain to this likeness in a most imperfect manner.
Therefore, however little be the knowledge of God to which the intellect is able to attain, this will be the intellect's last end, rather
than a perfect knowledge of lower intelligibles.

Moreover. Everything desires most of all its last end. But the hu-
man intellect desires, loves and enjoys the knowledge of divine things, though it can grasp but little about them, more than the per-
fect knowledge which it has of the lowest things. Man's last end therefore is to understand God in some way.

Further. Everything tends to a likeness of God as its own end.
Therefore that whereby a thing is most of all likened to God is its
last end. Now the intellectual creature is especially likened to God
in that it is intellectual, for this likeness belongs to it above other creatures, and this includes all other likenesses. And in this particu-
lar kind of likeness it is more like God in understanding actually
than in understanding “habitually” (in habitu), or in understanding
potentially. For God is always understanding actually, as was proved
in the First Book.36 And as regards what the intellect understands
actually, it is by apprehending God Himself that it is in the highest
mode likened to Him; for God Himself, in knowing Himself,
knows all other things, as was proved also in the First Book.37 To
understand God is then the last end of every intellectual substance.

Again. That which is lovable only because of another thing is for
the sake of that which is lovable solely on its own account; for it is
impossible to go on indefinitely in the appetite of nature since
nature’s desire would then be in vain, and it is impossible to pass
through an infinite number of things. But all sciences, arts, and
powers of a practical nature are lovable only for the sake of

33. Cf. Aristotle, Metaph., II (a), 1 (993b 9).
34. Chap. XVII.
35. Chap. XIX.
37. Ibid., chap. 49.
something else, because their end is not to know but to operate. Speculative sciences, on the other hand, are lovable for their own sake, since their end is the very act of knowing. Nor, with the exception of speculative thought, is there any action in human life that is not directed to some other end than knowledge as such. Even playful actions, seemingly done without purpose, have a certain end due to them, namely, to provide mental relaxation somehow or other, so that afterwards we may become more fit for studious occupations; were play desirable for its own sake, then it would always be in order, which is incongruous. So the practical arts are ordered to the speculative arts, and likewise every human operation to intellectual, speculative operation as its end. Now in all sciences and arts that are mutually ordered the last end seems to belong to the one from which the others derive their rules and principles. Thus the art of sailing (to which the ship’s purpose, namely its use, pertains) provides rules and principles to the art of ship building. And such is the relation of first philosophy to other speculative sciences, since all others depend on it inasmuch as they derive their principles from it and are directed by it in defending those principles. Moreover, first philosophy itself, as a whole, is ordered to the knowledge of God as its last end, and for this reason is given the name also of “divine science.” Therefore the last end of all human knowledge and activity is the knowledge of God.

Further. In all mutually ordered agents and movers, the end of the first agent and mover must be the end of all, just as the end of the commander-in-chief is the end of all who are soldiering under him. Now, of all the parts of man the intellect is the highest mover, for it moves the appetite by proposing its object to it; and the intellective appetite, or the will, moves the sensitive appetites, namely, the irascible and the concupiscible. And so it is that we do not obey concupiscence unless the will commands, while the sensitive appetite, when the will has given its consent, moves the body. Therefore the end of the intellect is the end of all human actions. Now “truth is the intellect’s end and its good,” and consequently its last end is the First Truth. Therefore the last end of the whole man, and of all his deeds and desires, is to know the First Truth, which is God.

Moreover. The desire to know the causes of the things they see is naturally present in all men; and so through wondering at the things they saw, whose causes were hidden from them, men first began to philosophize, and when they had discovered the cause they were at rest. Nor does inquiry cease until the first cause is attained: “Then do we deem ourselves to know perfectly, when we know the first cause.” Therefore man naturally desires as his last end to know the first cause. But God is the first cause of all things. Therefore man’s last end is to know God.

Again. Man naturally desires to know the cause of any known effect. But the human intellect knows universal being. Therefore it naturally desires to know its cause, which is God alone, as was proved in the Second Book. Now one has not attained to one’s last end until the natural desire is at rest. Hence for man’s happiness, which is his last end, no intellectual knowledge whatever suffices except the knowledge of God, which terminates his natural desire as his last end. The knowledge of God is itself therefore man’s ultimate end.

Further. A body that tends by its natural appetite to its proper place is moved all the more vehemently and rapidly the nearer it approaches its end. Hence Aristotle proves that a natural straight movement cannot be toward an indefinite point, because it then would not be moved afterward more than before. Consequently that which tends more vehemently to a thing afterward than before is not moved toward an indefinite point but toward something

38. Aristotle, Metaph., I (A), 2 (983a 6).
fixed. Now this we find in the desire of knowledge, for the more one knows, the greater is one's desire to know. Hence man's natural desire for knowledge tends to a definite end. This, however, can be none other than the highest thing knowable, which is God. Therefore the knowledge of God is man's last end.

Now the last end of man and of any intellectual substance is called happiness or beatitude, for it is this which every intellectual substance desires as its last end and for its own sake alone. Therefore the ultimate beatitude or happiness of every intellectual substance is to know God.

Wherefore it is said (Matt. 5:8): "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God"; and (Jo. 17:3): "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God." Aristotle agrees with this judgment also when he says that man's ultimate happiness is speculative, and this with regard to the highest object of speculation.\(^{43}\)

\(^{42}\) Cf. De Coelo, 1, 8 (277a 18ff.).