
UNIT 1 METAPHYSICAL METHOD OF ARISTOTLE AND AQUINAS

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

Aristotle's thirst for knowledge pushes him beyond the phenomenal world. He does not just contemplate on them but arrives at them through causes. At the beginning of metaphysics which he called 'first philosophy' Aristotle had raised the problem of knowledge and wisdom. Aquinas devoted much of his thought to the question 'what does it mean to be'? Many Thomists think that his greatest philosophical ability was shown in the area of metaphysics. In this Unit you are expected to understand:

- The metaphysical method of Aristotle
- The metaphysical method of Aquinas
- The inseparable relation between metaphysics and epistemology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term metaphysics is not of Aristotle, it was of his disciple Andronicus of Rhodes (40 BC) who edited his works. The texts on 'first philosophy' were grouped after those of physics and were called *meta ta physika*. Aristotle defines metaphysics or first philosophy as "a science which investigates being as being". It is the science that studies being as being. Other sciences touch only a portion of the things. They touch on a particular sphere of being and analyse the attributes of being in that particular sphere. Metaphysics, on the contrary, considers being as such, entity as such in the universal manner and in its highest and most general determinations, thus seeking the ultimate causes. Thus metaphysics has for its object the totality of things.

Metaphysics for Aquinas was the effort to understand reality in general (*ens commune*) or being as being to find out an ultimate explanation of the manifold

experience in terms of the highest causes. For Aquinas metaphysics, the first philosophy and the philosophical science of the divine (*scientia divina*) are one and the same.

1.2 ARISTOTELIAN METHOD OF METAPHYSICS

Aristotle's thirst for knowledge pushes him beyond the phenomenal world. He does not just contemplate on them but arrives at them through causes. At the beginning of metaphysics which he called 'first philosophy' Aristotle had raised the problem of knowledge and wisdom. The term metaphysics is not of Aristotle, it was of his disciple Andronicus of Rhodes (40 BC) who edited his works. The texts on 'first philosophy' were grouped after those of physics and were called *meta ta physika*. Aristotle defines metaphysics or first philosophy as "a science which investigates being as being". It is the science that studies being as being. Other sciences touch only a portion of the things. They touch on a particular sphere of being and analyse the attributes of being in that particular sphere. Metaphysics, on the contrary, considers being as such, entity as such in the universal manner and in its highest and most general determinations, thus seeking the ultimate causes. Thus metaphysics has for its object the totality of things.

Metaphysics is the inquiry into the highest principles of being. A principle (*arche*) is that from which "a thing is or comes to be or is known", and "the philosopher must grasp the principles and causes". What is being then? The idea of 'being' is the most abstract of all ideas. Everything that exists or can be thought of as existing is 'being'. There are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting point, i.e., being. Being is thus the most universal idea, for everything of which we form an idea is represented to the mind as something, as being.

The idea of being is transcendental. It is above any kind of classification. We cannot say that spiritual being and corporeal being are different kinds of being as being. However body and spirit are beings in the same manner. 'Being' is said to be analogous. Everything represents being in some manner: a healthy man, a healthy influence, a healthy appetite etc. From the idea of being Aristotle develops certain self-evident principles: 1) the principle of contradiction: something cannot both be and not be in the same place at the same time under the same circumstances. "It is impossible for the same thing to be 'A' and not to be 'A', or 'A' is not 'A'." 2) the principle of identity: everything is what it is. Everything is its own being. A is A, i.e., that which is, is; that which is not, is not. 3) the principle of excluded middle: The formula of the law of excluded middle is 'A is either B or Not-B'. This man is either a fool or not a fool. It is clear that if we accept one of the alternatives we have necessarily to reject the other. The acceptance of one of the alternatives necessarily means the rejection of the other. These are the first principles of the laws of thought and they are self-evident and known immediately.

Being as Substance

Metaphysics is the science of substance as well. That which gives form is the substance. In Greek 'substance' is *ousia*. In the ordinary language this word means holdings, property, goods, that which is possessed. It is the whole complex of available components of a thing. The word 'substance' also means, something that is *sub-stantia*, that which is underneath, subject, meaning *sub-jectum*,

which is the translation of the Greek word, *hypokeimenon*, which means substratum or subject. Substance is the support or substratum for its accidents: red, square etc supported by the substance 'table'. Accidents are predicated of other things. The table is the table itself, whereas the red is the red of the table.

For Plato, the term 'substance' (*ousia* = that which is) is said first of ideas and forms, separated from the real world. For Aristotle the ideas, the universal, have reality not only in the mind but also in the things. Individuals belonging to the same species are real substances. Thus individuals are true substance (*ousia*). The universals are substances only in a secondary sense.

There are various classes of substances. Substance in the truest and most primary sense is that which is neither predicable of a subject nor present in a subject; for instance, the individual man and horse. But in the secondary sense those things are called substances within which, as species, the primary substances are included, also those which, as genera, include the species. For instance, the individual man is included in the species 'man', and the genus to which the species belongs is animal; these, therefore, the species 'man' and the genus 'animal' are termed secondary substances. Thus Aristotle has two kinds of substances: primary substances and secondary substances. In the former comes 'this man', 'this cow' etc. Primary substances are most properly called substances in virtue of the fact that they are the entities which underlie everything else and that everything else is either predicated of them or present in them. Thus the primary substance is the individual which can neither exist nor be predicated of another. The secondary substance is the universal which as such does not exist in another but may be predicated of another.

Being as Essence

Being in the primary sense is that which is; that which is the thing. Aristotelians called this quiddity and the modern thinkers call this essence. The essence is precisely what something is. There is a slight distinction between the term 'substance' and 'essence'. Essence is expressed in Greek by a strange expression, *to ti en einai*, which is translated into Latin as: *quod quid erat esse*, literally 'what being was'. This expression is in the past tense. Essence is therefore, prior to being. It is what makes it possible, what makes it be. Essence is not a complex of important attributes, rather, it expresses that which makes an entity be what it is. We do not consider man as a composite of animality and rationality. Essence always has a strict ontological significance and it cannot be understood as a mere correlative of a definition.

Matter and Form

Being is conceived as substance. Here Aristotle puts forward the important theory of matter and form. Substance in the primary sense is the individual substance, which is composed of matter and form and the substance in the secondary sense is the formal element that corresponds to the universal concept. By matter Aristotle means something quite different from what we ordinarily mean by it. To Aristotle matter signifies anything physical, mental, moral or spiritual that can contribute to the existence or make-up of anything else. Matter is part of the essential nature. Though it is undifferentiated, it is a constant factor and enters a definition as *materia communis*. Form, the determining principle, makes the particular thing the kind of particular it is; in other words, form is what makes a

thing be what it is. Matter and form are two ontological ingredients in the substance and hence they cannot exist apart from one another. Matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe, eidos*) form a hylemorphic compound. For Aristotle, there is no form without matter and there is no matter without form. Aristotelian theory of matter and form solves the Platonic problem of the relation of ideas and species to individual things. Universals are substances but they are abstract substances and are thus secondary substances. The individuals are truly substances.

Act and Potency

Aristotle's theory of matter and form comes close to that of the potential and the actual. Matter and form denote two different directions in which each particular thing points. Every particular object exists by virtue of realizing new forms and hidden possibilities. Also no particular substance completely exhausts and realizes within itself its own capacities. It is also a matter, out of which other things can be made. It is therefore both form and matter – form relatively to what has made its existence possible; matter relatively to what existence, in its turn, makes possible.

Matter assumes different forms or a series of forms, one form following the other. In order to explain change or growth we must assume a substratum (matter) that persists. Matter is an indeterminate element. Form is a determining element and can thus be conceived as a force, a power, a potency, developing the whole which is virtually contained within the individual – this form is called 'active potency' and matter considered as the complex of these conditions which make possible the activity of the form is called 'passive potency'. Every form since it designates some actual determination of matter is also called act. Thus the analysis of the becoming or development of becoming has given us concepts of matter (substratum), form (determining element), potency (both active and passive) and act.

Form and matter are inseparable yet distinguishable aspects of a single substance. Potentiality and actuality are stages in the development of a substance. Aristotle explains the distinction between potentiality and actuality by the analogy of the materials of a building to the completed structure. Potential (*dunamis*) is that which lies within a thing. Actuality (*energeia*) points to the completed reality.

Actuality and potentiality are the first principles of being in the order of determination. The former is the determining principle of being and the latter is the determinate. While actuality signifies perfection, potentiality is the capacity of perfection. It signifies the capacity to receive the perfection not at present (actually) possessed. An existing being possesses the perfection of its present existence; it is actually what it is. It may be modified to become something else. Towards this something else, towards this new substantial or accidental perfection, the existing being stands in potency. Thus we may say that an existing being is actually what it is, potentially what it may become. Potentiality does not exist in the abstract; potentiality is always a potentiality for a specific actuality. For example, the seed of the oak tree has the potential to be an oak tree, not to be a cow.

Aristotle uses different words to denote actuality: *energeia* and *entelechy*. Though they are used synonymously, they are not same. *Energeia* indicates simple actuality. *Entelechy* means 'that which has arrived at its end' – its *teleos*, and therefore supposes an actualization. It is possible to say that God is pure actuality, who does not either have potentiality or motion, who is then actual, but not

actualized – is *energeia*. God is not *entelechy*. Actual is ontologically prior to the potential. Potential being in order to exist must have certain state of existence although not as actuality.

Causes

Metaphysics or first philosophy is the science of being as being. It considers being as such, in its highest and most general determinations and consequently it is concerned with the highest or ultimate causes. With experience science originates but this science requires that we search for the cause of causes. These characteristics of knowing all things must belong to him who has the highest degree of knowledge. For, he knows in a sense all the instances that fall under the universal. These universals are on the whole the hardest for man to know; for they are farthest from senses. The first principles and causes are most knowable; for by reason of these and from these, all other things come to be known, and not these by means of the things subordinate to them.

For Aristotle, knowledge which is concerned with universals are demonstrative knowledge, a knowing which makes things known by their causes and principles. Aristotle has introduced four causes in the physical sphere: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause and final cause. Of these material and formal are intrinsic constituents of a being, while the other two are extrinsic principles. i) Material cause: It is matter (*hyle*) out of which something is made. Bronze is the material cause of the statue. Matter is the substratum (*hypekeimenon*), indeterminate but capable of having determination. ii) Formal cause: it is form (*eidos, morphe*) which is at the heart of the matter. Form is that into which a thing is made. Without form matter cannot exist. Form is actuality. It is the principle of determination overcoming the indeterminacy of matter. Matter is made for the form. iii) Efficient cause: it is defined as that by which the effect is produced. It is the principle of motion or change. It is what makes the thing that is caused. Matter by itself cannot determine itself. Form by itself cannot determine matter, for it is not a motor. It is act. Thus in the nature neither matter nor form is alone. It is the union of both. Neither hydrogen alone nor oxygen alone generates water. It is the efficient cause which is responsible for becoming water. iv) Final cause: it is the end or that for the sake of which a thing is done, i.e., that on account of which the effect is produced. The final cause is the answer to the question, for what purpose? For Aristotle, final cause is the most important of all four causes.

God

Aristotle's metaphysics culminates in a theology. Thus metaphysics is rightly called the theological science. God is the highest object of metaphysical inquiry.

Aristotle tells that all things that are in motion must be moved by something, i.e., although motion is eternal, there cannot be an infinite series of movers and moved. There must be one, the first in the series, which is unmoved. He speaks about it as supreme intelligence. It is the supreme intelligence which moves everything without being moved by anything, which is one and eternal, invisible, without parts and without magnitude.

There exists a being which is not caused. Since there is something which moves while itself unmoved, existing actually, this can no way be otherwise than as it is.

The first mover, then exists of necessity; and in so far as it exists by necessity, its mode of being is good, and it is in this sense a first principle.

There is the order in the world. All are ordered together to one end. Thus the order in the universe is linked in an excellent way to God.

Aristotle argues that the actual is, of its nature, antecedent to the potential. Consequently before all matter and before all composition of actual and potential pure actuality must have existed. Actuality is therefore the cause of all things that exist and since it is pure actuality its life is essentially free from all material and corporeal conditions. It is the thought of thought (*noes is noeseos*).

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the nature of being presented by Aristotle.

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2) Explain matter and form and act and potency in Aristotle.

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1.3 METAPHYSICAL METHOD OF THOMAS AQUINAS

Aquinas distinguishes between the philosophical science (metaphysics or first philosophy) and divine science, which studies God only indirectly. Aquinas is convinced that there can be no real conflict between metaphysics which deals with being as being and theology that has God as its subject and depends on belief in divine revelation for its principles. There can be no conflict between reason and faith because both derive from one and the same ultimate source. On the one hand God viewed as the creative source of human intellect and of the created universe and on the other hand God viewed as the author of revelation.

Aquinas distinguishes between the orders to be followed in philosophy and in the teaching based on faith. In the case of philosophy one considers created reality in itself and moves from an examination of reality to a knowledge of God. One begins with one's discovery of being as being or being in general; in the course of one's effort to understand this, one should ultimately discover the principle or cause of that which falls under it, God. In the teaching based on faith, however, one first turns to a study of God and only thereafter examines created reality insofar as it in some way imitates and represents the divine reality.

Discovery of Being as Being

If metaphysics has as its subject being as being, the very possibility of metaphysics presupposes that one can discover being as being. Aquinas distinguishes two notions and concepts of being. The first is that being is open to every thinking of human being and is implied in our more particular concepts and descriptions of reality. For instance, if we are considering a horse and identifying it as a sensitive-living-corporeal substance, we implicitly also acknowledge and recognize that it is a being. This is the kind of understanding of being that Aquinas seems to have in mind when he writes that “being is that which the intellect first discovers as most known and into which it resolves all its other conceptions”.

Contemporary interpreters disagree over whether Aquinas thinks that this primitive understanding of being is reached by the intellect merely through its first operation (in which it recognizes that something is, without either affirming or denying anything about it), or it requires its second operation – judgement (composition or division) in which the intellect affirms or denies. For Aquinas the notion of being is complex, including both quidditative and existential components – essence and existence. Hence both simple apprehension and some judgement of existence seem to be required for us to formulate the primitive notion of being.

Analogy of Being

Aquinas’ view about the discovery of being as being leads to another closely related issue: what kind of unity must characterize the notion of being if it is to apply to each and every being and to the differences that obtain between beings? Aquinas’ answer to this is that being is predicated analogically rather than purely univocally or purely equivocally. He criticizes Parmenides for having mistakenly thought that ‘being’ or ‘that which is’ is used only in one way. For Aquinas it is used differently. For instance, taken in one sense it means substance, and in another accident, with latter sense allowing for different usages in accord with the various supreme genera or categories of accidents. Or again being may be applied both to substance and accidents.

The problem of analogy arises for Aquinas at two different levels: horizontal level that we may ask how ‘being’ can be applied to substance and to other categories; and vertical or transcendental level where we see how being can be applied not only to created realities but even God himself.

Aquinas says that something is predicated univocally, when it remains the same in name and intelligible content or definition. In this way the term ‘animal’ is predicated to human being and donkey. Something is predicated equivocally when the name remains the same but its meaning differs in different applications. In this word ‘dog’ may be said of ‘a barking creature’ and of ‘a heavenly body’. Finally something may be predicated analogically of different things that differ in definition but that are relevantly related to one and the same thing. The name ‘health’ is said of an animal’s body, of urine or medicinal potion, but not in the same way.

Aquinas distinguishes different causal orders that may ground analogical predication. Such predication may be based, first, on the fact that different secondary analogates are ordered to one and the same end, as in the example of health. Or second, it may be based on the fact that the secondary analogates are ordered or related

to one and the same agent (efficient cause). For instance, the term 'medical' may be applied to a physician who possesses and works by means of the art of medicine, to another person who works without possessing this art but who has an aptitude for it, and finally, even to an instrument used in the practice of medicine, but in each case by reason of a relevant relationship to one agent, the art of medicine. Or third, it may be that the analogical predication rests on the fact that different secondary analogates are ordered and related to one and the same subject. In this third way 'being' is said of substance, quality, quantity and other accidents. The accidents are named by 'being' because they are relevantly related to, i.e., inherent in a subject: substance.

Frequently Aquinas makes the point that the intelligible content (*Ratio*) corresponding to an analogical term is "partly the same and partly diverse", in its various analogical usages. He means that because each of the secondary things to which a term such as 'being' is applied is differently related to the primary analogate (substance in the case of being), the intelligible content of each of them will differ. But because the various secondary analogates are relevantly related to some one thing (to substance, in the case of being), their intelligible contents are also partly the same. In other words, Aquinas's theory of analogical predication is grounded on sameness and difference that obtain in reality.

Participation

Reference to Aquinas' hierarchy of being naturally leads to the consideration of his metaphysics of participation. His theories of analogy of being and participation in being are closely connected. The first addresses itself to the unity and diversity involved in our understanding and predication of 'being' and the second is concerned with the ontological situation that gives rise to such unity and diversity. Aquinas' theory of participation of beings in being also lies at the heart of his answer to the problem of the One and Many in the order of reality.

'Participation' comes from the Latin words *partem capere* which literally mean 'to seize a part' or *partim capere* meaning 'to seize partly'. So when something receives particularly that which belongs to another universally (totally), the former is said to participate in the latter. Aquinas distinguishes a number of ways in which participation may occur. 1) Human being is said to participate in animal because human being does not possess the total intelligible content of animal. In like fashion an individual (Socrates) is said to participate in human being. In these cases a less extended intelligible content is said to participate in a more extended intelligible content either as species in a genus or an individual in a species. Since intelligible contents are at issue this kind of participation may be described as 'logical'. 2) So too a subject participates in an accident and a matter participates in form. Both are described as instances of participation because the forms in question whether accidental or substantial, while not restricted to any given subject when considered in themselves, are now limited to this or that particular subject. Since in both a real composition results it may be described as a 'real' or 'ontological' participation. 3) Finally, an effect is said to participate in its cause, especially when it is not equal to the power of its cause. To this kind of participation Aquinas gives greatest interest.

Aquinas speaks of entities other than God as participating in existence in general (*esse commune*). Among them there are certain pure forms that do not exist in

matter. They do not identify existence (*esse*), but they have existence. They participate in it. Similarly Aristotelian separate substances or Christian angels participate in *esse commune*. How are caused or created beings participate in divine existence (*esse subsistens*)? Aquinas is of opinion that all things participate in God as their first exemplar cause and he identifies three differences in the way *esse commune* stands in relationship to God and to other existents. 1) while other existents depend on *esse commune*, God does not. Rather, *esse commune* itself depends on God. 2) While all other existents fall under *esse commune*, God does not; rather, *esse commune* falls under the power of God. Aquinas explains this by noting that God's power extends beyond (actually) created beings, presumably to all that could possibly be created. 3) All other existents participate in *esse*, but God does not. *Esse* is a certain participation in God and likeness of him. *Esse commune* participates in God and if other existents depend on *esse commune*, they too participate in God.

Essence and Existence

Aquinas defends a composition of essence and act of being (*esse*) in all finite substantial entities. He does not also describe essence and existence as something independent. They are not being in their own right. According to Thomas existence comes from God, the cause of existence. In God alone are essence and existence identical. God exists necessarily because His essence is existence. All other beings receive or participate in existence. They have only a 'derived or received' existence.

There is no essence without existence and no existence without essence; two are created together. Created existence and essence arise together and although the two constitutive principles are objectively distinct, existence is more fundamental. Existence is the principle of perfection and essence is the principle of limitation we find in every being. Each being is one and multiple at the same time. This experience of the multiple modes of reality leads to the discovery that each such being is composed of a constitutive co-principle of perfection (*esse; quo est*) 'in virtue of which a substance is called a being' and a constitutive co-principle of limitation (essential; *quo est tale*) 'in virtue of which it is such-and-such a being'. These principles of being are objectively distinct and yet they are incapable of existing apart.

Substance and Accidents

Aquinas develops the theory of substance and accidents basing himself on the theory of Aristotle. For both Aristotle and Aquinas substances are beings in the primary and principal sense. Substance has a stronger claim on being than negations, privations, sensations, corruptions, motions and various accidents. This is because substance exists in its own right and *per se*. Aquinas refers to substance as the particular or individual substance of which all else is predicated. According to Aquinas substance serves as the ultimate subject of propositions and it subsists in itself and is distinct or separate from other things.

Substance subsists in itself and stands under accidents or serves as their foundation and support. It is similar to the diverse way of predication, which is the different ways of the realization of being (*diverse modi essendi*). Accidents can be characteristics of a substance that is not essential to the substance. Aquinas presents one substance and nine supreme kinds of accidents – thus ten categories.

In it substance is the individual substance of which everything is predicated; e.g., Socrates is an animal. Here 'Socrates' signifies the substance. The nine categories of accidents are the following: 1) quantity, as following from the matter; 2) quality as following from its form; 3) relation, in so far as subject is related something else; 4) time, measurement of subject in terms of movement; 5) space, the predicate measures the subject in terms of space; 6) position, where the subject is measured in terms of the way the parts of the body are ordered; 7) state, the form in which the predicate is taken as entirely outside the subject and does not in any way measure the subject; 8) action, the predicate is taken as partly external and partly internal to the subject as the principle of action; 9) passion, as the subject which receives the action.

Matter and Form

Aquinas speaks about the constitution of material being. When the cow eats grass, it becomes through assimilation, something else, i.e., flesh. It is a substantial change because the grass itself is changed, not merely its colour or size. The analysis of substantial change leads the mind to discern two elements: one element which is common to the grass and to the flesh which grass becomes, another element which confers on that something its determination, its substantial character, making it to be first grass and then flesh. The first element is prime matter, the indeterminate substratum of substantial change; the second element is the substantial form, which makes the substance what it is. Every material substance is composed in this way of matter and form.

Thomas accepts Aristotelian doctrine of the hylomorphic composition of material substances, defining prime matter as pure potentiality and substantial form as the first act of a physical body, which determines its essence. However prime matter cannot exist by itself, for to speak of a being actually existing without form would be contradictory. Thomas is thus quite clear that only concrete substances (composition of matter and form) actually exists in the material world.

The form needs to be individuated. The form is the universal element, being that places an object in its species making it to be horse, iron, or coconut tree. The principle of individuation is matter, which it receives from union with the form. Substantial change cannot take place except in bodies and it is only matter, the substratum of change, which makes it possible. On the principle which Thomas adopted from Aristotle that what is changed or moved is changed or moved by another one might argue at once from the changes in the corporeal world to the existence of an unmoved mover, with the aid of the principle that an infinite regress in the order of dependence is impossible.

God

One of the important attempts to demonstrate the reality of God was that of St Thomas Aquinas, who offers five ways of proving divine existence. Unlike the ontological argument which focuses attention upon the idea of God and proceeds to unfold its inner implications, Aquinas' proofs start from some general feature of the world around us and argue that there could not be world with this particular characteristic unless there were also ultimate reality which we call God. Since these theistic arguments proceed from the world to God it is described as cosmological. In this sense they are called 'a posteriori' arguments as well.

These arguments are called ‘ways’, because, the same point is reached along different paths or ways.

All these arguments hinge upon the ‘principle of sufficient reason’. The first way argues from the fact of change to a prime mover, the second from causation to a first cause; the third from contingent beings to a necessary being; the fourth from degrees of value to absolute value; and the fifth from evidences of purposive-ness in a nature to a divine designer.

Knowledge of God

Aquinas maintains that we can know that God is and what he is not but not what he is. In other words, quidditative knowledge of God is not possible for human beings in this life either as a result of philosophical investigation or as based on divine revelation.

This does not mean that we cannot apply certain attributes which stand for pure perfections cannot be applied to God. They are predicated of God substantially. But as regards the way in which they signify (*modus significandi*), they are not properly of God, they retain a mode of signifying that pertains to creatures.

Aquinas rejects univocal predication of any names of God and creatures. He refuses to acknowledge that all names are predicated of God and creatures in purely equivocal fashion, and instead defends analogical predication. The names applied to God are also applied to men. Therefore, the terms such as Being, Cause, Truth, Wisdom, Goodness, Love, Benevolence, Providence, Actuality, Perfection Unity, Immanence etc are applied to God and men, but they are not applied in the same sense and order.

1.4 METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Formerly epistemology was considered as a part of metaphysics. Knowledge and being were not seen separately. The pre-Socratic philosophers did not give any attention to this branch of philosophy, for they were primarily concerned with the nature and possibility of change. They took it for granted that the knowledge of nature was possible. Thus Heraclitus emphasised the use of senses and Parmenides in effect stressed the role of reason. But none of them doubted that knowledge of reality is impossible. It was not until 5th century B.C. that such doubts began to emerge and the Sophists were generally responsible for them. In fifth century B.C. human practices and institutions came under critical examination for the first time. Numerous things, which had previously been thought to be part of nature, were seen not to be. Thus a general antithesis was drawn between nature and human convention.

All men have a global knowledge about reality, acquired through the light of natural reason. They know what they mean when they talk about ‘being’, ‘truth’, or ‘good’. They have some knowledge regarding human nature and the difference between ‘substantial’ and ‘accidental’ realities. Moreover they know God as the First Cause of the universe, who sustains and guides all things towards their end. This kind of knowledge which we can call spontaneous, deals with the same issues or topics studied by metaphysics. This should not prove surprising, for man has a natural tendency to know the world, his place in it, the origin of the universe, and other related matters. The course of his life depends largely on the

knowledge he has of these questions. Hence, it is understandable that this knowledge has been called *spontaneous metaphysics or natural metaphysics of the human intelligence*. But there is the need for a metaphysics developed as a science. Human mind is frequently imperfect or imprecise. It is subject to certain ideologies prevailing in certain cultures. Moral convictions have a decisive influence on his or her knowledge about metaphysical question. Experience shows that as individuals lose their moral uprightness, they also lose their basic intellectual convictions, thereby falling into a skeptic attitude towards the truth.

We find that there is an intimate relationship between 'knowing' and 'being'. Our knowledge is only a reproduction on the mental plane of the real world outside of us. There is a close relation between knowledge and the real world. It is for this reason that we say that epistemology passes over to ontology and the line of demarcation is very thin. By gradual and imperceptible stage the theory of knowledge develops into the theory of being.

But reason operates only within the relational scheme of things. Human thinking at its highest is dissatisfied with the relational scheme of things. Just as thought cannot rest in the negative but points to the affirmative that is beyond, thought cannot rest in the relative but points to a reality that is non-relational. Bradley says that thought commits suicide at this stage. It willingly makes place for another approach, called 'intuition' or 'integral experience'. There is no rivalry between intellectual thinking and intuition. The crown of intellective thinking is intuition. Such experience is a communion with the Supreme Being. The laws of thought point to the reality which is beyond all relations and which is beyond reason too.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the notions of analogy and participation in Thomas.

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2) Explain essence and existence, substance and accidents in Thomas Aquinas.

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

With Aristotle metaphysics gets an organized form. It becomes *meta ta physika*. Aristotle describes metaphysics as the study of being as being. Philosophers

should study from which a thing comes to be. Therefore the idea of being is most abstract and transcendental. Metaphysics is the study of substances which give form. There are different classes of substances: primary and secondary. Being is essence – which makes a being possible. Substance in the primary sense is composed of matter and form. Every particular object is constituted of matter and form – potency and actuality are the stages of the development of a substance. Metaphysics is the study of the highest causes and Aristotle explains four kinds of causes – material, formal, efficient and final. Aristotelian metaphysics culminates in theology.

According to Thomas metaphysics is the study of reality in general. Metaphysics culminates in the study of the divine. Aquinas distinguishes two ways of the study of the being: being as capable of being understood by the mind and being is understood through the operations of the mind. Understanding of being differs in different cases, therefore the analogical understanding of being is proposed. Every being participates in *esse commune* / *esse subsistens*. Existence and essence are co-principles except in God. There are substance and accidents, matter and form in the corporeal beings. To prove God Thomas uses ‘a posteriori’ methods. Knowledge of God is not connatural to man.

Metaphysics and epistemology were not two distinct disciplines in the beginning. The distinction came when there began doubt about human capacity of knowledge. Men are natural metaphysicians. Human capacity of knowledge becomes ineffective in knowing the infinite being.

1.6 KEY WORDS

Metaphysics

- : The texts on ‘first philosophy’ were grouped after those of physics and were called *meta ta physika*. Metaphysics or first philosophy is “a science which investigates being as being”. It is the science that studies being as being. Other sciences touch only a portion of the things. They touch on a particular sphere of being and analyse the attributes of being in that particular sphere. Metaphysics, on the contrary, considers being as such, entity as such in the universal manner and in its highest and most general determinations, thus seeking the ultimate causes. Thus metaphysics has for its object the totality of things.

Substance

- : The word ‘substance’ means, something that is *sub-stantia*, that which is underneath, subject, meaning *sub-jectum*, which is the translation of the Greek word, *hypokeimenon*, which means substratum or subject. Substance is the support or substratum for its accidents: red, square etc supported by the substance ‘table’. Accidents are predicated of other things.

The table is the table itself, whereas the red is the red of the table.

Act and Potency

- : Actuality and potentiality are the first principles of being in the order of determination. The former is the determining principle of being and the latter is the determinate. While actuality signifies perfection, potentiality is the capacity of perfection.

Existence and Essence

- : Existence is the principle of perfection and essence is the principle of limitation we find in every being. Each being is one and multiple at the same time. This experience of the multiple modes of reality leads to the discovery that each such being is composed of a constitutive co-principle of perfection (*esse*; *quo est*) ‘in virtue of which a substance is called a being’ and a constitutive co-principle of limitation (essential; *quo est tale*) ‘in virtue of which it is such-and-such a being’.

1.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) Metaphysics is the principle of being. A principle is that from which “a thing is or comes to be or is known”, and “the philosopher must grasp the principles

of causes. The idea of being is the most abstract of all ideas. Everything that exists or can be thought of as existing is being. Being is the most universal idea. The idea of being is transcendental. Being is analogous. Being is substance - that which gives form. It is substance, that which is underneath - subject - *sub-jectum*. Individuals are true substances. Substance are of various classes - individual, species. Being as essence - that which a thing is - quiddity - that which makes a being possible.

- 2) Substance is composed of matter and form. Matter is anything physical, mental, moral or spiritual which will go to the existence of a thing. Form determines a thing. There is the hylemorphic union.

Act and potency - every object exists by virtue of realizing new forms and hidden possibilities - potency: active potency and passive potency; potentiality which lies within - actuality is the completed reality - entelechy - *energeia*.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) The concept of being is analogical - difference between univocal, equivocal and analogical use. Analogy - horizontal and vertical.

Meaning of participation - ways of participation - *esse commune* and *esse subsistens* - difference.

- 2) Two co-principles - existence and essence - But God is existence - pure existence. Existence is the principle of perfection and essence is the principle of limitation.

Substance as particular and individual of which everything is predicated. Accidents are characteristics of substance. There are one substance and nine categories of accidents.