

Theology as System and as Science: Proclus and Thomas Aquinas

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The Aristotelian origins of the High Mediaeval doctrine that theology is a science have been thoroughly investigated.¹ Thomas Aquinas perfects the assimilation of Aristotle's teaching on scientific form. There may be some development in the precision with which Thomas uses the technical language, but if his statement of the formal subject of sacred doctrine in his commentary on the *Sentences* be excepted, his views on how theology is a science remain unchanged from his earliest works.² Indeed they are most fully formulated in his early exposition of the *De Trinitate* of Boethius.³ There is then little need to restate Thomas' teaching: a reminder about some crucial points should suffice.

There are two theological sciences: one of them is also called metaphysics or first philosophy and is a part of philosophy. The other is named sacred scripture or sacred doctrine and has its primary source in the divine self-revelation found in the canonical books.⁴ Both sciences treat God but he is the subject of

1. M.-D. Chenu is the special historian of this: his "La théologie comme science au xiii^e siècle", *Arch. d'hist. doct. et lit. du moyen âge*, 2(1927), 31-71 remains useful; the final version of this work is the 3rd revised edition, *Bibliothèque thomiste* 33 (Paris, 1957). Among his many other studies *La théologie au douzième siècle*, *Etudes de phil. médiévale* 45 (Paris, 1957) deserves attention for its seminal treatment of many individual points. G. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology* (Oxford, 1980) is the most recent English book in the area.

2. On the development, see T. Gilby, "Theology as Science", Appendix 6, *St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae*, 60 vol., i. (Blackfriars; London, etc., 1964), p.80; on the subject of theology compare *Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum*, ed. R. P. Mandonnet, 4 vol., i. (Paris, 1929), *prol.*, q. 1, a. 4, pp. 15-16 and *Summa Theologiae*, ed. altera emendata, comm. Piana, 5 vol. (Ottawa, 1953), I, 1, 7; on the doctrine of the earlier works, see L. Ducharme, "L'idée de la métaphysique dans les écrits du premier enseignement parisien de saint Thomas d'Aquin", *Église et Théologie*, 5(1974), 155-169.

3. *Sancti Thomae de Aquino, Expositio Super Librum Boethii De Trinitate*, ed. B. Decker, *Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters* 4, (Leiden, 1959); A. Maurer's translation of questions V and VI of this work in *St. Thomas Aquinas, The Division and Methods of the Sciences* (Toronto, 1963) has a useful introduction and extensive notes.

4. See *In de Trinitate*, II,2;V,1 and V,4; *In I Sent.*, *prol.*, q. 1, a. 1. and *ST I*, 1; cf. G. F. van Ackeren, *Sacra Doctrina: The Subject of the First Question of the*

metaphysical theology as part or principle of its formal subject, being as being; whereas God is the proper subject of sacred doctrine.⁵ The difference between how the subjects of these two theologies are stated originates in the directions from which they approach separate substance. Metaphysical theology stands at the summit of a hierarchy of knowledge which has its starting point in sense experience.⁶ Being as being is not as such a sensible object — this is because some beings are separate from sensible matter — and so there is a congruence between the subject of metaphysics and those beings in which it is principally interested and toward which it directs its demonstrations.⁷ Yet being is given in the first most immediate and confused human apprehension of reality.⁸ On account of the dependence of human knowledge in this life upon sense, neither theology is capable of *propter quid* demonstration, that is a deduction of the content based upon intuitive vision of the essence of the divine subject. Metaphysical theology can give a demonstration *quia* of God, i.e. a proof that he exists. Proceeding from his effects, rather than his essence as properly known, it can

Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas (Romae, 1952); A. Patfoort, "Théorie de la théologie ou réflexion sur le corpus des Écritures?" *Angelicum*, 54(1977), 459-488; J. H. Walgrave, "The Use of Philosophy in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas", *Aquinas and the Problems of His Time*, Mediaevalia Lovaniensis 5(The Hague/Leuven, 1976), pp. 161-193; R. D. Crouse, "St. Thomas, St. Albert, Aristotle: *Philosophia ancilla theologiae*", *Atti del Congresso Internazionale Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo settimo centenario*, 8 vol., i (Napoli, 1975), pp. 181-185. The articles of Fathers Patfoort and Crouse are particularly strong on the interpenetration of the two theologies though they proceed from opposite sides.

5. *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Expositio*, ed. M.-R. Cathala et R. M. Spiazzi, (Taurini/Romae, 1964), *prooemium*, pp. 1-2; I, iii, 64, p. 19; I, iii, 68, p. 20; IV, i, 533, p. 151; IV, ii, 563; p. 156; IX, xi, 1916, p. 458; XI, i, 2146, p. 509; XI, ii, 2175 ff., p. 514; XII, i, 2416, p. 567; *In de Trinitate*, II, 2, pp. 86-87; V, 1, ad 9, pp. 172-173 and V, 4, pp. 195; ST I, 1, 7.

6. *In I Sent.*, *prol.*, pp. 2 ff., *epil.* p. 1092; *Summa contra Gentiles*, *Opera Omnia*, Leonine, xiii-xv (Romae, 1918-1930), II, 4; IV, 1; *In de Trinitate*, *prol.*, p. 46, 1. 22 - p. 46, 1. 10; *In Meta.*, III, i, 344, p. 97.

7. *In Meta.*, *prooem.*, p. 2; IV, i and ii, pp. 150-156; IV, i, 1162-1170, pp. 297-298; XII, i, pp. 567-8; *In de Trinitate*, V, i, ad 7, p. 171.

8. *In Meta.*, I, ii, 46, pp. 13-14; IV, vi, 605, pp. 167-168. It is impossible here to go into the great question which divides the realist and the transcendental Thomists namely how *esse* is known, whether there is an intuition of being as being; compare, J. Maritain, *Challenges and Renewals: Selected Readings*, ed. J. W. Evans and L. W. Ward (London, 1966), p. 121 and E. Gilson, *Réalisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance* (Paris, 1939), p. 215 with K. Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. W. Dych (London, 1968), pp. 25-29 esp. n. 8, p. 25, and J. Metz, introduction, pp. xliii-xlv; E. Coreth, *Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. J. Donceel (New York, 1968), pp. 34-35; B. Lonergan, "Metaphysics as Horizon" in Coreth's *Metaphysics*, pp. 207-209.

demonstrate certain things about what he is, but only God and the blessed possess divine science adequately.⁹ Though it contains definite knowledge of God, is demonstrative, and concludes to proper affirmative predications, our theology is presently only a limited participation in God's science not the true possession of it. Because theology here below proves its subject by a demonstration *quia*, it is, in Aristotle's language, subalternate to the science which has knowledge of its object both *quia* and *propter quid*, namely God's own science of himself and all else in him. Thomas knows and accepts Aristotle's teaching that men possess the science which is wisdom, i.e. theology, only because God shares his own self-knowledge with us and at one point he speaks of the philosophical knowledge of God as a kind of revelation.¹⁰ Moreover, it has recently been shown that Thomas speaks of the relations between sacred doctrine and the other sciences on the basis of the parallel relation between metaphysics and the particular sciences, but definite connections between God's science and the theology subalternate to it are worked out only with respect to sacred doctrine.¹¹ This theology and the metaphysical form the two sides of a circle moving up from the sensible to God and back again.¹² Sacred doctrine presupposes philosophical theology in order that God's revelation be intelligible to it but it is able to start from the God reached by the philosopher as its proper subject matter because of the revelation of itself given by separate substance to the Apostles and Prophets and recorded in Scripture.¹³ Moses and Paul, the first teachers of this revelation to Jew and Gentile respectively, receive this knowledge by a vision of the divine essence while they are still in this present life, and this certainly expresses the principle of theology as sacred doctrine though it is not the ordinary form of revelation.¹⁴ In the case of

9. *In de Trinitate*, II, 2 ad 5, p. 89; V, 1 ad 5, pp. 170-171; V, 1 ad 9; and ST I, 1, 1-8; ST I, 2, 2 and 3.

10. *In Meta.*, I, iii, 61-68, pp. 19-20; ST I-II, 169, ad 3 see J. H. Walgrave, *art. cit.*; *In Librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus Expositio*, ed. C. Pera (Taurini/Romae, 1950), I, i, 32 and I, i, 36, pp. 9-10; *Sententia Libri Ethicorum, Opera Omnia* (Leonine), xlvii(2), (Romae, 1969), X, ii, pp. 587-588.

11. R. D. Crouse, *art. cit.*

12. ScG IV, 1: "*Quia vero naturalis ratio per creaturas in Dei cognitionem ascendit, fidei vero cognitio a Deo in nos e converso divina revelatione descendit; est autem eadem via ascensus et discensus.*" Also *In de Trinitate* V, 4 and V, 1, ad 9.

13. ST I, 8 ad 2.

14. ST I, 12, 11 ad 2; ST I-II, 175, 3 ad 1; *De Veritate*, X, 11, ad 1 but compare with what is said about the usual mode of revelation in the same question.

sacred doctrine, faith provides the knowledge of principles, which in diverse ways all sciences presuppose, and its demonstrations are of the consequences of these presuppositions.¹⁵ The first direction of sacred doctrine is thus downward from God — the second is a return to him — and on the basis of what is known about him it endeavours to treat other things in relation to him.¹⁶ It is this motion which carries us away from a conception of theology philosophically comprehensible in Aristotelian terms.

Besides the Hellenic theological tradition for which theology is a treatment of the gods, their names and attributes, which Aristotle made scientific,¹⁷ there is another tradition necessary for understanding why Aquinas conceives theology as he does. The Hellenistic philosophies, most profoundly and synthetically developed by the Neoplatonists upon whom Proclus is dependent when he creates the first unified formally explicit systematic theology, have not been adequately related by scholars to Thomas' notion of theology. Yet the Hellenistic developments explain many systematic features of his works which cannot be traced to Aristotle. The reasons for this neglect are diverse: partly it is a result of the purposes and spirit of the Thomistic revival of the last century, partly such scholarship depends upon a development of Neoplatonic studies only recently achieved.¹⁸

Abstracting from the manifold doctrinal influences of the Proclan theology upon St. Thomas, there are a number of outstanding features common to their systems. Both theologies unite in a single explicitly organized system what Aristotle divides between separate sciences theoretical and practical.¹⁹ One of the features of

15. *ST I*, 1, 8; *In I Sent.*, *prol.*, q. 1, a. 3, s. 2, ad 3, p. 14; *In de Trinitate*, II, 2, ad 5.

16. *ST I*, 2, *prol.* and I-II, *prol.*

17. Herodotus, *Histories*, II, 53; for the difference of the Classical Greek theology from what is subsequent see E. Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, trans. N. D. Smith (London, 1967).

18. See my "Pope Leo's Purposes and St. Thomas' Platonism," *S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero, Atti dell' Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, VIII, Studi Tomistici 17, (Citta del Vaticano, 1982), pp. 39-52 and my "Aquinas' First Principle: Being or Unity?" *Dionysius*, 4(1980), 133-172 especially 133-139.

19. On Proclus see J. Lowry, *The Logical Principles of Proclus' Elements of Theology as Systematic Ground of the Cosmos*, *Elementa*, Schriften zum Philosophie und ihrer Problemgeschichte (Amsterdam, 1980): on Aristotle see M. L. Minio-Paluello, "La tradition aristotélicienne dans l'histoire des idées", *Actes du Congrès de Lyon, Association Guillaume Budé*, (Paris, 1960), pp. 166-185; on the consciousness of form in the Neoplatonists and their medieval followers see my "The Place of the Psychological Image of the Trinity in the Arguments of Augustine's *de Trinitate*, Anselm's *Monologion*, and Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*", *Dionysius*, 3(1979), 99-110.

Thomas' commentaries on Aristotle's books, which often make them clearer than the Philosopher could ever be, is Thomas' very definite conception of an Aristotelian system containing logical, substantially theoretical and practical sciences hierarchically arranged. Thomas uses this to flesh out Aristotle's vague cross references. Not only does Thomas differ from Aristotle in his conception of some parts of the system, for example, in Thomas logic is contentless in a way unknown to Aristotle, but also Thomas understands the Philosopher in terms of a notion of philosophical organization Aristotle never made explicit.²⁰ Common to Proclus and Aquinas and necessarily absent from Aristotle is the idea that all knowledge is comprehensible within theology. It is true that for Aristotle the science of the wise man is a ruling science — though there are the difficulties about the relation between the sciences of the wise and of the politician.²¹ It is also the case that being as being is not a particular form of what is and that this creates part of the great difficulty experienced in beginning the *Metaphysics*, for instance the confusion between first philosophy and the way of looking at knowledge in general which is found in the *Analytics*. Still, the reduction of philosophy, theoretical and practical, to theology is a development of the Neoplatonists carrying further the work of the Stoics which presupposes views of both subjectivity and external reality quite different from Aristotle's.²² This systematic theology is found in Proclus' *Elements of Theology* which considers all reality from the divine perspective. It begins with the One and treats all else until it reaches the last element of

20. See for example Thomas' *prooemium* to his *In libros Posteriorum Analyticorum Expositio* in *In Aristotelis libros Peri Hermeneias et Posteriorum Analyticorum Expositio*, ed. R. M. Spiazzi (Torino, 1955), pp. 147-148; compare Thomas' commentary with Aristotle's text at *In Post. Anal.*, I, xv, 133, p. 198; I, xvii, 145-146, pp. 203-204; I, xviii, 152, p. 207; I, xx, 171-172, pp. 214-215. On the nature of logic see his comparisons of it with metaphysics at *In Post. Anal.*, I, xx, 171-172 and *In Meta.*, IV, iv, 574, p. 160; in the latter he sets logic, as considering "*ens rationis*", against philosophy, which treats "*ens naturae*".

21. Compare *Metaphysics*, I, 2 with *Ethica Nico.*, I, 2 and VI, 7.

22. See E. R. Dodds' introduction to his edition of Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1963), pp. xviii ff, and P. Hadot, "Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'Antiquité", *Museum Helveticum*, 36(1979), 201-223. Treatments of Dionysius and Eriugena which bring out the synthetic character of later Neoplatonic systems are I. P. Sheldon-Williams in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 459 ff.; *idem*, "Eriugena's Greek Sources", *The Mind of Eriugena*, ed. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler, (Dublin, 1973), pp. 1-15 and A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 162 ff.

the spiritual world, the soul totally descended into the temporal process. His *Platonic Theology* also involved such a systematically total examination of reality in relation to the graduated forms of divinity.²³

Finally, both Proclan and Thomistic theology, as opposed to the Aristotelian, make God their starting point. Indeed, both begin from simplicity or goodness as the first characteristic of divinity. This is rather the conclusion of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. That God is for Aristotle the good as final cause and that He is not also given his place at the beginning of theology as the self-diffusive source and principle of all is a criticism of metaphysical theology made by both Proclus and Aquinas.²⁵ Though *exitus* and *reditus* is the movement of all reality except the One and provides its relation to the One, this pattern is not actually explicit in the overall organization of Proclus' theology. It is found rather in Christian works subsequent to it and influenced by it. The *Theological Tractates* of Boethius, the works of pseudo-Dionysius, as well as the *De Divisione Naturae* of Eriugena, which were all at least partly known to Thomas, have this pattern. Christianity is able to find in Christ's union of God and man a point upon which to move the universe, which fulcrum is lacking to the Neoplatonism supplying the philosophical logic for the development.²⁶

The Aristotelian and Proclan theologies seem to fit neatly together so as to constitute Thomas' unification of theology as science of the first principle and as *summa* or systematic treatment of reality as a whole. Each contributed what the other lacked. Aristotle had not shown how what is other than the first emerged from it and is related to it. Proclus elevated the first into absolutely ineffable transcendence and so could not manifest what in the character of the principle makes it the intelligible source of reality.

23. See Introduction, Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, ed. H. D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink, Collection des Universités de France, 3 vol. of 6, i (Paris, 1968), pp. 1x-1xxv.

24. See *In de div. nom.*, II, 2, 135, p. 45 and *ibid.*, 143, p. 46: "unum habet rationem principii"; ST I, 3 and my "Aquinas' First Principle".

25. See Proclus, *In Timaeum*, I, 267, 4 and Dodds' comment *Elements*, p. 198; for Thomas see n. 6 above.

26. See my "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius and the Structure of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas", *Atti Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani, Pavia, 5-8 ottobre, 1980*, ed. L. Obertello (Roma, 1981), pp. 367-375 and "The Place of the Proof for God's Existence in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas", *The Thomist*, 46(1982), 370-393, R. D. Crouse, "Semina Rationum: St. Augustine and Boethius", *Dionysius* 4(1980), 75-85 and P. Rorem, "The Place of *The Mystical Theology* in the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus", *Dionysius*, 4(1980), 87-98.

In fact it does belong to the character of Thomas' Aristotelianism to unite the opposed Proclan logics of the infinite and finite, i.e. of unity and *exitus* and *reditus*. So the form of the *de deo* of the *Summa Theologiae* involves both a development from divine simplicity, the first predicate under which Thomas considers what God is, and a series of circular exit and return motions. This structure is present in the content as well.²⁷ Aristotle's notion of pure act is modified by understanding it in terms of exit and return and yet is predicated of God.²⁸ For Thomas, the being of God is a return upon itself. It is equally good to call God's knowing and willing Platonic motionless motions involving complete return as it is to regard the divine as unmoved after the manner of Aristotle.²⁹ Thomas' unification of the two logics of the Proclan divinity and his bonding of Proclus and Aristotle is greatly assisted by his assimilation of the Porphyrian philosophy of εἶναι or *esse* — previously by mistake thought to be the philosophy of Exodus 3,14. In the tradition of thinkers like Boethius and Avicenna, who also drew together Porphyry's identification of the One and the act of being with Proclus' opposing system in which the One is utterly beyond being, Thomas identifies essence and existence in God's simplicity.³⁰

Thomas' thought is grandly synthetic and part of the inspiration for his endeavour he no doubt found in Aristotle's conception of the highest science, or theology, as the science of wisdom. For it is discursive and demonstrative thought about the highest objects of intellectual intuition.³¹ When Thomas' system is compared to

27. See my "Aquinas' First Principle", 163 ff.

28. *Ibid* and M. Jordan, "The Grammar of *Esse*", *The Thomist*, 44(1980), 1-26.

29. Thomas' doctrine here varies according to its context; compare *In de Trinitate*, V. 4, ad 2, pp. 196-197 and *In Aristotelis librum De Anima*, ed. A. M. Pirotta, 4th ed. (Torino, 1959), I, iv, 82, p. 25 with *In de Anima*, III, xii, 766, p. 182; ScG I, 13; ST I, 18, 1; ST I, 18, 3 ad 1; ST I, 19, 1 ad 3; ST I, 9, 1 ad 1 et ad 2. Thomas' view of Plato derives from Aristotle's reports — *De Anima*, I, 4; *Metaphysica*, XI, 6. He reads both through later Neoplatonic developments see *In de div. nom.*, IV, vii, 369, p. 121; IV, x, 439, pp. 143-144; IV, xi, 444, p. 145; *Super Librum de Causis Expositio*, ed. H. D. Saffrey, *Textus Philosophici Friburgensis* 4/5 (Fribourg/Louvain, 1954), Prop. 15 and comment pp. 88-92.

30. See my "Aquinas' First Principle", P. Hadot, "Forma Essendi: Interpretation philologique et interpretation philosophique d'une formule de Boèce", *Les études classiques*, 38(1970), 143-156 and *Dieu et l'Être: Exégèses d'Exode 3,14 et de Coran 20, 11-24*, ed. Centre d'Etudes des religions du livre, CNRS, *Etudes augustinienne* (Paris, 1978).

31. *Metaphysics* is established as wisdom (*Metaphysica*, I, 2) and as science (*Metaphysica*, IV, 1). Wisdom is science and intuitive reason; demonstra-

those of other Mediaeval Aristotelians also under Neoplatonic influence like Avicenna and Averroes, Aquinas' determination to unite the extremes of the contrary directions of thought within the bond of theology becomes apparent. Like Averroes criticizing Avicenna, Thomas begins his proof of the existence of the ultimate object of metaphysics, God, with the moving sensible.³² With Avicenna in contrast he is also firm that theology should have a beginning free from dependence upon the contingent sensible. This independence is provided in one way because theology as sacred doctrine has its object from God's self-revelation. Thus the five ways to God's existence occur under the authority of Exodus 3,14: "But on the contrary there is what God in his own person says . . . 'I am who I am'."³³ The ways demonstrate an object already given for faith. But further, like Avicenna and Aristotle, Thomas permits the subject of metaphysical theology both to be given and to be demonstrated.³⁴ The subject, being as being, is assumed. What primarily interests wisdom as the most intelligible³⁵ (thus the highest fulfillment of knowledge and the appropriate object of the highest science) and as the most real being³⁶ (thus the principle of the subject, being as being) namely God, is himself the object of demonstration. For Thomas the proof provided by Avicenna or Anselm is not a real demonstration because it is not adequately grounded in the sensible where human knowledge of God must begin.³⁷ So Thomas turns to Averroes to

tion about the highest things (*Ethica Nico.*, VI, 7); see *In Ethica* VI, v especially 1177 and 1181-3, pp. 322-323.

32. Averroes, *Commentaria in I Physicorum* in *Aristotelis, Opera* IV (Venetiis apud Juntas), pp. 47rF8-47vH. For a summary of Averroes' doctrine and further references cf. E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London, 1955), n. 21, p. 644. For Thomas see *ScG* I, 13; *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 3; *ST* I, 2, 3.

33. *ST* I, 2, 3 *sed contra*, see my "The Place of the Proof".

34. For Aristotle metaphysics is both the consideration of being as being (*Meta.*, IV, 1) and of separate substance (*Meta.*, XII). Neither W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (Berlin, 1923) nor J. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto, 1951) is compelling unless one already grant the philosophical impossibility of uniting ontology and a genuine knowledge of separate substance. A nice critique of Owens is J. Beach, "Separate Entity as Subject of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*", *The Thomist*, 20(1957), 75-95. For Avicenna see Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de Philosophia Prima sive Scientia Divina*, I-IV, ed. crit. par van Riet (Louvain/Leiden, 1977), I, 1 and 2.

35. *In Meta.*, prooemium, p. 1: "oportet illa esse maxime intelligibilia, quae sunt maxime a materia separata". See also *ST* I, 12, 1.

36. *In de Trinitate*, V, 4, p. 194: "quod est principium essendi omnibus, oportet esse maxime ens".

37. *ST* I, 2, 1 *ad 2* and *ST* I, 2, 2.

correct Avicenna; the proof must begin with the sensible physical. On the other hand, the opposing demand for a recognition of the freedom of theology is conceded by drawing the physical into theology.³⁸

The immense scope of Thomas' theological comprehension and its difficulties appears when one attempts to apply the Aristotelian and Thomistic idea of theology as science of wisdom to the Proclan theology. Theology for both Proclus and Thomas encompasses science, ἐπιστήμη, and intellectual intuition, νοῦς.³⁹ Science would seem to have its own in theology with Proclus because ἐπιστήμη is turned toward those beings among the graduated levels of spiritual existence to which it is appropriate, rather than in Aristotle towards the highest and most simple, where its discursive mode seems out of place. Moreover, Thomas uses a notion belonging to Proclus and foreign to Aristotle. That is, Thomas speaks of our being joined to God as to an object unknown because of the deficiency of both cognitive habits for the adequate knowledge of God in this present life.⁴⁰ But for Thomas, as opposed to Proclus, the first is not unknown in principle, rather the opposite; his essence will be the object of vision in beatitude.⁴¹ For Proclus, science, intellectual intuition and union are more successive states of the soul rising from the lower levels of deity toward the summit than they are varied directions of mind held together in the sapiential science of theology.⁴² This divides Proclus from Aristotle. Moreover, the tension between the Aristotelian and Proclan psychologies and descriptions of reality creates tensions within the Thomistic synthesis.

Since theology became systematic with the elevation of the One as absolute principle above νοῦς so that the Aristotelian God appears only as an instance of the manifestation of the One, it is unclear that it is genuinely compatible with Aristotle's scientific

38. Physics does not prove the existence of separate substance as a proper part of its subject see *In de Trinitate*, V, 2 ad 3, p. 177. This is a consequence of the facts that physics cannot treat things separate from matter, rather they belong to first philosophy: *In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis Expositio*, ed. P. M. Maggiolo (Taurini/Romae, 1965), II, iv, 175, p. 88; II, xi, 243, p. 118 and that for Thomas, against Averroes, the proof in the physics concerns the source of motion absolutely, of creation, and the "principium totius esse": *In Physicorum*, VIII, i, 966, pp. 499-500; VIII, ii, 972-975, pp. 505-506.

39. *Theo. plat.*, I, 3, pp. 12 ff.

40. *ST I*, 12, 13, ad 1.

41. *ST I*, 12.

42. *Theo. plat.*, I, 3; *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vol., i (Lipsiae, 1903) B92D-93A, pp. 301-303.

wisdom. There is no science of the One in itself either for Proclus or for those Christians like Dionysius or Eriugena who remain faithful to him.⁴³ The knowledge of the first is the learned ignorance which both knows him in all which is subsequent to him and recognizes the difference between the One and that through which he is manifest. Proclan theology is systematic science just because the unknowability of the One forces intellect and reason to turn from the first in order to know it and to begin man's fuller possession by and of God.⁴⁴ Thus, Thomas is forced to elevate the simplicity of the divine substance above the intellectual life of God, which life circumscribes and founds his activities, so that he can unite Aristotle and Proclus, theology as science and as system. This unAristotelian separation of substance and act reflects a division of intellect and reason in which Thomas follows the Neoplatonists more than the Philosopher. The priority given to God's simplicity and unity and the fact that man does not properly possess the intellectual intuition by which it might be known produces the grave problems Thomas has in reconciling proper predication of God and the multiplicity of his names with the simplicity of the divine being. Further, because the activities of God are distinguished by being different forms of self-relation, it becomes unintelligible how they can be real and yet altogether simplified in the divine unity. The incoherence between the rationality of our knowledge of God as one and the different basis of the treatment of him as three also has its source in the primacy given to simplicity as the distinguishing divine characteristic.⁴⁵

Questions as to whether the great Thomistic synthesis can hold together what it comprehends cannot be adequately treated here. It will suffice if Thomas' relation to his sources is a little clearer and if, in consequence, the limitation of some contemporary interpretations is indicated. The unity in distinction of the forms of theology for Thomas as well as the positive content of metaphysics for him reveals that for better or worse his *summae* are onto-theo-logy. Moreover, by embracing and mutually modifying both Aristotle's first philosophy as science of being as being and

43. *De Mystica Theologica*, I(PG3) and see Ch. A Barnard, "Les formes de la théologie chez Denys l'Aréopagite", *Gregorianum* 59(1978), 39-69; Iohannis Scotti Eriugena, *Periphyseon de divisione naturae*, ed. I. P. Sheldon-Williams with L. Bieler, *Script. lat. Hiberniae* 7, 9, 2 vol., i, (Dublin, 1968), I, 3 (PL122, 443A-B), p. 38, 19-25. Eriugena cites Dionysius as an authority at this point.

44. See my "Aquinas' First Principle", 144-154 and "The Place of the Proof".

45. "Aquinas' First Principle", 139 ff.

the Proclan theology descending from the One above being, Thomas shows no inclination to choose between being and unity as ultimate designations of God. The interpretation of Aquinas as strict ontologist was one-sided and those who in opposition would choose henology against ontology should heed his endeavour to do better or at least more. Since both these alternatives taken extremely are adopted in order to avoid Heidegger's criticism of onto-theo-logy and since the endeavour to find in Aquinas the separation of theology as metaphysics and as sacred doctrine has sometimes the same motive, theology would perhaps be more truly served by a more honest confrontation between Heideggerian existentialism and the tradition.⁴⁶

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46. For references to contemporary interpreters see "Aquinas' First Principle", 133-139 and "Pope Leo's Purposes and Saint Thomas' Platonism". A recent article judging Thomas from a Heideggerian perspective is J. D. Jones, "The Ontological Difference for St. Thomas and Pseudo-Dionysius", *Dionysius*, 4(1980), 119-132.