

STUDY MATERIALS: Ancient and Medieval Philosophy

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Lesson 1: In The Beginning

The History of the History of Philosophy

Plato and Aristotle were the first two historians of philosophy. In developing their own thought, they did so with reference to their predecessors, and this led them to pass on

to us information about those predecessors we would not otherwise have had. It can be fairly said that the giving of such information was incidental to Plato's thought, whereas in Aristotle it became a conscious theme, not least because he saw a logic in the sayings in doctrines of his predecessors they themselves might have found surprising.

It is a feature of Aristotle's treatises that he reviews what his predecessors have had to say on the subject under consideration. Thus in the *Physics*, he devotes much of the first book to a review of what the ancients had to say about change and the product of change. Typically, he not only recounts earlier doctrines but he finds in them implications which point the way to the truth of the matter. In doing this, he often has to take note of the fact that earlier thinkers had not distinguished the disciplines as clearly as they might. Thus in *Physics* 1, while he discusses the sayings of Parmenides in his poem, he notes that what Parmenides is saying cannot count as a teaching about natural things, things that come to be as the result of a change, but in its range seems to fall to the comprehensive science which, according to Aristotle, crowns the philosophical quest. So too in the other natural writings he will inform us of what has been said of the particular subject at issue. The whole first book of *On the Soul* is devoted to a review of what his predecessors have had to say about life and the principle of life, soul. So too in the *Metaphysics*, the first book is devoted to a review of philosophical thinking up to Aristotle's time.

It should not, of course, be thought that Aristotle's interests in his predecessors is confined to these overtly historical surveys. Almost at every step of the way, he, like Plato, will find himself prompted and/or inspired what has already been said on a topic. It could be said that Plato is preponderantly interested in what those who are called Sophists had to say, while Aristotle's interests in the past is more far-ranging.

Reference has been made to the poem of Parmenides. We are always in danger of anachronistic understandings in thinking of the beginnings of philosophy. Instinctively, we would contrast poetry and philosophy. Implicit in this would be an understanding of what poetry and non-poetry are. But it is an inescapable fact that those who are accounted philosophers by Plato and Aristotle often expressed their thought in verse. Indeed, it could be said that it is only with time that philosophy comes to be expressed in prose. Thales is by common consent accounted the first of the philosophers, but we have no extant text of his. His teaching is reducible to three major propositions -- all things are water, all things are alive, and all things are divine -- but these are hearsay and we have no way of knowing how Thales himself expressed these thoughts. And if we look ahead to Empedocles, native of present day Agrigento -- the port there is called to this day Porto Empedocle -- a contemporary of Socrates, which places him at the beginning of the fourth century BC, is sometimes summarily said to have taught the doctrine of the four elements, fire, air, earth and water. Yet when we look at the fragments of Empedocles that have come down to us, we may be surprised that these elements are referred to as deities. He thinks of the all as naturally divided into quadrants each of which is identified with one of the elements or deities. Change is then regarded as the trespassing of an element into the territory of another, the result being a mixed being. Such a mixed being, as a result of trespass is seen as a standing injustice,

and its dissolution, that is, the return of its elements to their allotted quadrant, amounts to justice being done. Presiding over this is the deity Moira or fate.

In short, we have a very dramatic portrayal of the changes going on in the world around us. Such an account will often be called a mythos, a story, a dramatic narrative which includes an explanation of what is going on. It is a tribute to Plato's and Aristotle's historical sense, that they see the beginnings of what they themselves were engaged in in thinkers whose writings or saying it would be all too easy to contrast with Plato and Aristotle. The two men are quite content to see the beginnings of philosophizing in what they, too, call myths. The common factor, they say, is wonder. Following Plato, Aristotle says that philosophy begins in wonder, and he holds that myth, too, is linked with, indeed, composed of wonders. Wonder in the obvious sense arises when we observe something and ask why it is has come about as it has. The controlling question here is "Why?" An answer to the question would begin with Because. In their own way the ancients were trying to give a causal account of the happenings around them. A mythical account tells a story incorporating the causal explanation. Aristotle will spend some time on contrasting the causal account of the lovers of myth with the causal accounts of the lover of wisdom, the philosopher. He will sometimes speak of the mythical or poetic theologians, suggesting that the explanations at the outset of what he is willing to call philosophizing are, in terms of divine agents, extrinsic explainers, personifications of the given or natural.

While it is not possible to equate what Aristotle says of the poet in his *Poetics* with the practices of the mythologists, there is indeed a connection. In speaking of what the tragic poet does, Aristotle says that he takes the old stories -- palaoi mythoi -- and imposes a myth of plot on them. Thus the traditional and ancient story accounts of what is going on around us form the material of the poet in the conscious sense. The poet, in the conscious artful sense of the term, provides a causal account of the outcome of human behavior which differs appreciably from that of the ancient mythologists. The mark of the poet is his use of metaphor. The metaphor is a kind of discourse. In likening one thing to another more known thing, the poet seeks to cast a borrowed light on the thing for which he has found a similitude. (This gift of finding a fitting and revealing similitude is the genius of the poet. We respond to what he says with the shock of recognition. While we ourselves might not have thought of the simile, once confronted with it we see its appropriateness and learn from it.) Thus in the metaphor our attention is drawn from one thing to another in ways that has the former cast light on the latter.

In the *Republic*, Plato famously speaks of an ancient quarrel between the philosopher and the poet. In the context, he is about to banish from the ideal commonwealth he is describing poets as teachers of the young. He does this because he thinks that Homer, as preeminent example, attributes to the gods of Olympus modes of behavior we would find reprehensible in ourselves. Plato wants the gods to be spoken in a way that makes clear that they are embodiments of perfections for which we humans strive with varying degrees of success.

A simplistic way of reading Aristotle would be to say that he distinguishes between the metaphorical language of myth and the literal meaning of philosophical prose. This is simplistic because Aristotle speaks of a spectrum of argumentation at one end of which is poetic argumentation, that is, for example, the discourse involved in the metaphor. Aristotle will define what he means by the most forceful kind of argumentation, the demonstrative or apodictic, and then see an array of forms of argument which are weaker than that, but perhaps as strong as one can hope for in dealing with a given subject matter. Even within what he would call philosophical sciences, Aristotle will see demonstrative argument as defining of the discipline but by no means the dominant form of argumentation within it. The notion that the strongest form of argument will be exemplified in a variety of subject matters, not all of which permit sequences of it, as for example Euclidean geometry may seem to do, leads him to see a variety of forms of argument within the philosophical disciplines in the strictest sense, and this leads to a commodious inclusion of forms of discourse which do not exhibit demonstrative argument but which are assimilated to the disciplines that do. Thus probable and rhetorical argumentation is all we can hope for in forensic reasoning and, for the most part, in moral and political philosophy.

This theoretical recognition of the variety of disciplines and the forms of argument that characterize it leads Aristotle to what may seem a very tolerant view of the historical origins of philosophy.

The Origins of Philosophy

Plato, influenced by Socrates who eschewed the study of nature and preferred life in the city and moral and political problems, shows relatively little interest in giving an account of the world attained by our senses. For reasons that we will see, Plato tends to be suspicious of any claim that sensible things can ground anything like true knowledge. Aristotle, on the other hand, holding that our knowledge of material things must be the basis for knowledge we have of any other kind of being, tends to see the earliest thinkers as attempting to give an account of the physical world, that is, of developing inchoative forms of natural science.

The world around us is a world of change, of things coming into being, changing while they are, and ultimately ceasing to be. Thus the Ionian philosophers are seen as providing accounts of nature, *physis*, the coming into being of things. Thales is understood as having said that water is at the source of the things around us. Puzzling over this, it is noted that moisture seems to be a feature of the germination of seeds and that drying up is a sign of decay and ceasing to be. This is, of course, a construction of the meaning of those enigmatic claims attributed to Thales. Anaximenes saw air as basic, and rarefaction and condensation were the processes whereby air took on different forms which in turn it lost. Heraclitus, in this taxonomy, is thought to have cited fire as the nature or source of the things we experience.

These gropings toward a natural science, expressed in dramatic or mythical language -- as witnessed even Empedocles several centuries after Thales -- enable Aristotle to see these thinkers as on the way to the science that he will attempt to articulate. It would, of

course, have been easy for Aristotle simply to dismiss these early attempts as misguided and to ignore them. But this is not his notion of man's quest for knowledge. He persists in seeing earlier attempts as attempts at natural science, and thus accords what may seem to us a surprising respect for views that may seem to have little to commend them. For Aristotle, human thought as it has come down to us is better seen as an effort to give a causal explanation, and if it fails this is because it does not discern the inner or proper bases for change and physical being.

From Religion to Philosophy?

Earlier in the twentieth century it was fashionable to speak of the evolution of philosophical thinking as the emergence from theological thinking to natural science. Philosophy is then understood as the progressive removal of the divine from the sphere of philosophy. Appeal to the divine is taken to be a surpassed phase of thought with philosophy viewed as naturalistic in a latter day sense.

This is clearly wrong. While we can find in, for example, Heraclitus rather rough treatment of those who see everything about us as the direct result of divine intervention, and the description of the gods as pretty obvious anthropocentric thinking, it is emphatically not the case that either Plato or Aristotle were interested in doing away with theology. For both of them, in different ways, theology, knowledge of the divine, is the culminating goal of philosophizing where the ultimate cause of things is contemplated. It is one thing to distinguish between a proximate and remote explanation, and quite another to say that all explanations are proximate or naturalistic.

Barfield and Lewis have suggested an interesting interpretation of this sequence. When the life principle in living things is said to be wind or air -- the etymology of psyche -- we are inclined to see an overt simile. Life is to living things as the wind is to the seemingly animate movement of the grass, for example. But this presupposes that men begin with distinct knowledge of a kind of thing and then consciously draw a simile between it and another quite distinct sort of being. It is far better to suppose, the suggestion is, that at the outset there simply was no distinction made between the living and the nonliving, say, and that when they are eventually distinguished, a language that was common to both is then appropriated to one and the other is seen as similar to it. This accords with the Aristotelian view, on which we will dwell, that human knowledge begins with concepts which gather all kinds of things confusedly within them, and then the distinguishing of what has been gathered into types and species is done, a process that goes until one has hit upon the ultimate kinds of things.

On this view, it could be said that initially there was a confusion of the divine and everything else and that when they were distinguished, it was seen that appeal to the divine cannot be the first way of explaining things. Indeed, unless there is a kind of explanation for physical things which makes use of explainers or causes of the same order, we would have no basis for speaking of the divine. Then knowledge of the divine is distinguished from knowledge of natural things in their proper or proportionate causes. But this does not make appeal to the divine otiose. *Au contraire*. Seeing that

proximate causes are the effects of ultimate causes, and ultimately of God, is the ultimate satisfaction of the question "Why?"

The Dark Twin of Philosophy

If we think of the fourth century BC as the golden age of ancient philosophy -- this is the century when we have the remarkable sequence of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle -- we find that Plato and Aristotle share a concern with a kind of false philosophizing exemplified by those they call Sophists. The Sophist was one who pretended to see the truth and used modes of argumentation not to arrive at knowledge of the way things are but rather as a skill that could be put to a practical purpose, gaining power over others. For both Plato and Aristotle, the first and preeminent Sophist was Protagoras.

One of Plato's dialogues takes its title from this man, and his teaching shows up in other dialogues, for example, the *Theaetetus*. Plato summarizes Protagoras' doctrine in this way: What seems to be so to me is true for me and what seems to be so to you is true for you. In short, all thinking is relativized to a particular thinker. If Protagoras were right, then it would make no sense to claim to know how things truly are, that is, independently of the way they seem to me. The adoption of this view would be the death of philosophy understood as the search for the truth about things.

At first it might surprise us that Plato and Aristotle devoted so much attention to a view they found disruptive. Perhaps we might imagine them leaving the Sophist to practice his craft and teach it to others while they went on about the business of seeking the truth. But unless it could be shown that the assumption of Protagoras could not be made, that it was incoherent, Sophistry would have equal footing with philosophy. Indeed, if the philosopher left the Protagorean dictum unrefuted, his own activity would be seen as simply a personal and subjective quirk. The very nature and future of philosophy depended on confronting the Sophist and refuting him.

Plato did this quite economically in the *Theaetetus*. If the dictum of Protagoras is applied to the doctrine of Protagoras, it loses any public significance. That is, if it just seems to Protagoras that what seems to him is true, and so with anyone else, he must allow that one to whom Protagoras' dictum seems false is as right as Protagoras takes himself to be. That is, the dictum is both true and false. That is, it is nonsense.

This is a very brief summary of the Platonic refutation of Protagoras, but it exemplifies what both he and Aristotle took to be the correct procedure of dealing with someone who would poison the very wells of discourse and knowledge. Such a position is shown to be incoherent. If it is true it is false. Therefore, it is not a possible option to doing philosophy. Sophistry is anti-philosophy because it is anti-reason and it is anti-reason because it is nonsense.

Writing Assignment

Write a brief essay on the position of Protagoras and the way in which Plato and Aristotle address it.

Lesson 2: Appearance and Reality (Parmenides)

The Enigma of Parmenides

The poem of Parmenides as it has come down to us consists of a prologue and then the way of seeming and the way of being. In the prologue Parmenides establishes his credentials as someone to listen to. He tells of being swept up in a chariot to heaven where the way of truth was revealed to him. What is the way of truth? Being is being and not-being is not-being. That seems fairly clear, but what Parmenides takes this to mean is that change and multiplicity are impossible. If there were two beings, A and B, A as being A would not be B, and of course vice versa. But this is to say that what is is not, and that is an abomination, a violation of the way of truth. So, too, with change. That which changes would be what it is but not what it becomes; thus being would become non-being.

On these rather abstract bases, Parmenides denies the reality of multiplicity and change. Being is one and changeless. He likens it to an utterly homogeneous sphere. It is easier to grasp the Parmenidean doctrine in the abstract than to try to visualize it. And, of course, students will soon feel uneasy about the relation between themselves and Being. There would seem to be an inescapable duality between Parmenides talking about it and the being he is talking about. But it is the negative consequences of this austere doctrine that are crystal clear. If it is true it makes nonsense of pre-Parmenidean philosophy which, if Aristotle is right, is characterized by the search for the cause or causes of change.

Parmenides is perhaps the first philosopher to draw a firm line between being and appearance. Of course the world seems to be a place of multiplicity and continual change. In the Way of Seeming, Parmenides sketches a natural philosophy which makes the same assumptions as did his predecessors. But the truth is that the world as it appears to us is not an accurate grasp of what really is. Being is. Non-being is not. Those two propositions sum up the truth of the matter.

The reverence in which Parmenides was held is captured by Plato in the dialogue named for his great predecessor. When Parmenides arrives in Athens he is greeted like the prophet he claims to be. Is this simply dramatic license? It does not seem so when we consider post-Parmenidean philosophers. But before considering the role Parmenides plays in the development of Plato's thought, it is important to see his effect on the development of natural philosophy.

The discussion of Parmenides in the *Physics* does not really belong there, Aristotle tells us, because Parmenides denies the very starting point of natural science -- that there is motion -- and it is not the task of any science to defend its own principles. How could it, since to do so it would have to appeal to those principles. It is the task of metaphysics to deal with denials as sweeping as that of Parmenides.

No one can read the account in Book One of the *Physics* without sensing that Aristotle, like Plato, holds Parmenides in high esteem. He is concerned to show that Parmenides made a rather elementary mistake, but at the same time he says it is a plausible one. Parmenides stands athwart the path of natural philosophy calling a halt to it. Those who have been giving one account or another of the way things come to be are one and all engaged in a pointless exercise. The assumption of these explanations is false, namely that motion exists. Parmenides asserts that motion does not exist because it cannot. Why not? Let us examine the position in the formulation Aristotle gave it.

Motion or change depends upon the assumption that a being comes to be. The question is, is this tenable? There are two possible antecedents to the alleged new being.

Being comes from being.

Being comes from non-being.

These can be converted into:

1. Being becomes being.
2. Non-being becomes being.

As soon as the assumption is spelled out in this way, Parmenides thinks we will see the impossibility of the claim. To say that being becomes being is to say that there is exactly the same thing before the change and after, that is, no change occurs. To say that non-being becomes being is to identify non-being and being, which is clearly absurd. Since these exhaust the possibilities, there is no way in which motion and change can be regarded as real.

Aristotle's Response

Aristotle agrees that 1 and 2 above are on the face of it false. In both propositions, a change is attributed to a subject. If the subject of [1] means the same thing as that which it is said to become, no change occurs, whereas if the being that comes to be is not the being from which it comes, yet the change is attributed to the antecedent being, the claim seems to be that something becomes what it is not. This identification of being and non-being is even more patent in [2] -- non-being is said to become being.

When we are confronted with such an objection, we are sure there is something wrong with it, since if there were not, we would have to deny the evidence of our senses. That

is just what Parmenides advises us to do, of course, but it is advice one is reluctant to follow. What then is to be made of Parmenides' analysis.

Aristotle reminds us of a distinction we frequently make between attributing an activity or attribute to someone essentially or doing so incidentally. For example

The philosopher does the tango

may be a perfectly true proposition but Mario who tangoes does not engage in this wholesome activity precisely as a philosopher. There are, one hears, philosophers who do not tango. It is not part of the job description of the philosopher, so such lead-footed thinkers are not deficient as philosophers. It just happens that Mario is both a philosopher and a tango dancer, so to attribute dancing to him as a philosopher, while true, is only incidentally true.

On the other hand

The tango dancer tangoes

is an activity true of the subject as designated. This is something essential to, part of the job description of, a tango dancer. Whereas

The tango dancer is a philosopher

would be, if true, only incidentally true of someone insofar as he is a tango dancer.

There is, of course, nothing at all arcane about this distinction. Once it is articulated we realized we knew it all along and have been employing it since who knows when. It is this commonplace distinction that forms the background of Aristotle's critique of Parmenides.

In [1] and [2] above 'becomes being' is attributed to being and to not-being respectively. Parmenides understands these as essential attributions, or as Thomas will say, *per se* predications. So understood, Parmenides is right to say that they make no sense. What must be done is to see that these are incidental attributions.

Aristotle's Analysis of Change

Aristotle offers his analysis of Parmenides after he has looked into what change entails and what it means to say that something has come to be.

Take the most ordinary change imaginable. Willie is whittling wood. The wood he begins with has a shape but it does not have the shape it has as a result of Willie's whittling. A number of things are involved here: the wood and the shapes it has. Let us say that Willie is whittling an unflattering likeness of his mother-in-law, Sheila. When he begins, the wood does not have the shape of Sheila; when he is done, the wood has the shape of Sheila. Let us call its antecedent shape Block. Then we can formulate these true sentences about the process.

Block shape becomes Sheila shape.

Non-Sheila-shape becomes Sheila shape.

These are both true sentences, but how are they true? These are not essential attributions. The block shape does not become the Sheila shape as if the two then coexisted, with Block shape a constituent of Sheila shape. No more does the privation of Sheila-shape become Sheila-shape as if the latter and its opposite are one. It is because he took these to be essential attributions that Parmenides bristled and quite rightly said that can't be.

Aristotle observes that if Parmenides had recognized these as incidental attributions, his difficulties would have been over. The sentences can be rephrased as follows:

Block shape becomes Sheila shape = Wood insofar as it has the shape of block comes to have the shape of Sheila.

Non-Sheila-shape becomes Sheila shape = Wood that lacks the shape of Sheila comes to have the shape of Sheila.

The change is not attributed essentially to either block shape or non-Sheila-shape; it is attributed essentially to the wood. It is wood that having a given shape and lacking another, comes to have that other shape. It is only incidentally true that block shape becomes Sheila-shape or that non-Sheila-shape becomes Sheila shape.

Aristotle offers this definition of the subject of a change, that is, that to which the change is essentially attributed: the subject of a change is that to which the change is attributed and which is a constituent of the result. The result of Willie's whittling is Sheila-shaped-wood. Clearly neither block-shaped nor non-Sheila-shaped save this account of the subject of a change.

It can also be said that wood when it is actually block-shaped is potentially Sheila-shaped.

Thus it was that Aristotle showed that the roadblock Parmenides had erected can be removed by a simple distinction, one that Parmenides knew as well as anyone else, but which he had not applied here, with unfortunate results.

Writing Assignment

Write a brief essay on one of the following:

1. What, precisely, is the Problem of Parmenides?
2. How, precisely, does Aristotle solve it?

Lesson 3: Plato's Theory of Forms

The Socratic Method

In the early dialogues, Socrates is often shown in the company of someone who professes to know something Socrates himself claims not to know. One of the therapeutic functions of the Socratic method is to bring out the fact that many pretend to knowledge they do not in fact have. Removing a false claim to know clears the way for a humbled pursuit of knowledge.

One who says he knows what virtue is will often reply, when prodded by Socrates, to give instances of virtue. What is virtue? Well, courage is a virtue and so is temperance. And Socrates will reply that he did not ask what things we say are virtues. He wanted to know what these things possess that leads us to call them virtues. In short, Socrates wants a definition, not a list of things to which an undefined term applies.

This insistence (that knowing *what a thing is* is not simply to be able to mention other things that share a name with it) is not made only when it is a question of types of a thing. If for example, in reply to the question "What is virtue?" I should answer, "Well, bravery is a virtue" and Socrates would continue, asking "What is courage?" and I replied by giving examples of courageous acts, he would be equally dissatisfied. What do these instances have that leads us to call them acts of bravery?

We can recognize the individual things around us and notice that some of them share a common term or name. There are lots of acorns on the lawn. What is an acorn? One of those things lying on the lawn. But my mother-in-law is also lying on the lawn, and she and my wife would object to her being classified as a nut. Socrates presses his interlocutor to tell him *what things are*. Not, again, the individuals that share a common term, but what there is about them that earns them the right to be so called.

The Theory of Forms

Knowing is thus revealed as centering on what individuals have in common. It bears on the answer to the question, "What is it?" That question is triggered by experience of the individuals but is not a question about the individuals as individuals. 1,2,3,4,5 etc. are numbers, but when we ask what a number is we don't want to be told that 1,2,3,4,5 etc. are numbers. We already know they're called numbers. But why are they called numbers and other things not?

Reflections such as these led to the notion that since what the individuals are is not simply an enumeration of individuals of the same name, the *What* was other than, apart

from, the individuals. This is reinforced by the recognition that the answer to the question "What is it?" of a present set of individuals will apply to a future set when all the present ones have ceased to be. What is a tube-rose? To know the answer to that question is to know something to which all tube-roses, past, present and yet to be relate. The independence of the What or Form of things from the things themselves seems inescapable.

Yet further reinforcement for the emerging view is had by reflection on what goes on when we are said to learn something. In the *Meno*, Socrates offers to show that an uninstructed servant boy has a head chock full of knowledge. (The reverse of this scene is found in *Remains of the Day* when one of Lord Darlington's haughty guests demonstrates the ignorance of the masses by quizzing the butler Stevens about arcane economic matters.) By a series of questions, Socrates elicits from the boy the fact that the diagonal of the square is incommensurate with any of its sides. How is it possible that the boy seemed already to know this truth though he had never thought of it or uttered it before? Socrates' surprising suggestion is that the boy is remembering what he knew but which has fallen into forgetfulness.

The point is strengthened by another example. If the boy were sent into the yard to fetch two equal sticks and did so, the sticks on examination would be seen to approximate equality, not exhibit perfect equality. Are there any two physical objects that are absolutely equal? It seems easy to agree that all such pairs will only approximate equality. How then did the boy know what to look for when he went into the yard? He is looking for two equal sticks and now we are agreed that neither he nor we have ever seen two perfectly equal sticks. Whence comes the idea of equality? It cannot be derived from the sticks, since they do not exemplify it. So why not say the boy brought to the sticks in his search an idea of equality he already had and which was not derived by experience of any material or sensible things?

This leads Plato to construct a myth explaining human origins. Once the soul lived in proximity to the really real things, the Forms that answer to the question "What is it?" Then the soul knew beauty and truth and other ideals by direct acquaintance. But for reasons unexplained, perhaps some primordial prenatal fault, the soul is placed in a body on this earth. The body darkens the eye of the soul so that it forgets the realities it once had known. Bodily appetites draw it to the things of this world, and thus ever further away from the really real. Only by overcoming this attraction of the passing pleasures and delights of this world and recalling the really real can the soul ready herself to be restored to her original condition at death. No wonder Plato says the the point of philosophizing is learning how to die.

The Human Soul

Such considerations as the foregoing ground Plato's conviction that the human soul is immortal, that it survives death. Since he is committed to the view that the soul pre-existed its placement in the body, it is relatively easy to argue that it cannot cease to be simply because its body does.

The things of this world can trigger off memories of their really real counterparts elsewhere. Growth in knowledge, or toward knowledge, is had when the mind rises above the changeable things with which the senses deal. There is a moral as well as an epistemological dimension to this weaning from the sensible. It is not simply that, because of our senses, our minds are flooded with thoughts of changeable things. These sensible things also promise pleasure and threaten pain. Our attraction to them, our pursuit of them, dulls the appetite for the truly good. Thus, moral virtue, in the sense of the overcoming of our appetitive attachment to the sensible, goes hand in hand with the mind's ability to lift itself to the really real.

On at least one occasion, Plato champions the view that knowledge is virtue, that is, for one to know what he ought to do is to do it. In the text in question, the *Protagoras*, he likens moral knowledge to the art of perspective. If we did not correct for distance, we might think that a lighthouse is smaller than my thumbnail since by lifting my thumb before my eyes I can blot out the lighthouse a mile or so off on the craggy cliff. Of course, I know that as I approach the lighthouse, it will look high above me. The art of perspective then enables us to judge correctly of the relative size of bodies by taking into account their distance from one another and from the observer. A similar art is required for correct action.

Imagine that the moral task comes down to choosing correctly as between pains and pleasures. We have a tendency to rank a present pleasure above any future pain consequent upon its pursuit, and similarly a present pain above any pleasure consequent upon enduring it. The art of moral perspective corrects for time, in the way in which the art of perspective corrects for distance. Such an art enables us, so to speak, to place present pleasure and consequent pain and present pain and consequent pleasure in the same tense, as if they were presently before one. Then, the pleasure associated with wine, women and song would be seen side by side with the discomfort in the morning, the disruption of one's domestic happiness, and so forth. Side by side, there is no contest. Could another pint of Guinness counterbalance all that grief? Similarly, placed side by side, so to say, the discomfort of a visit to the dentist and the robust dental health it insures, make action easy. No pain, no gain, as it were.

Bad action is taken to be the result of not having such knowledge, the art of moral perspective. Thus, bad action is due to ignorance, our not having the means of knowing the true relationship between present pains and pleasures and the future consequent. By contrast, good action is taken to follow on the possession of the art of moral perspective. How could it not? The intellect is what is chief and most powerful in us and it makes no sense to say, as some do, that it could be dragged about by appetite and sense desire.

Aristotle, as we shall see, took exception to this notion that knowledge is virtue -- at least in part. In some sense, it must be so, unless action is just a happening unrelated to knowledge.

Since you as soul existed prior to your existence in the body, the body is not really part of what you are. Humans seem identical with souls in Plato and the soul is united with

body as one thing to another thing. Plato uses the metaphor of the soul as the pilot in a boat. This is another point on which Plato and Aristotle part company.

The Fate of the Ideas

Because Aristotle raised his own philosophical account on the wreckage he made of the Platonic Ideas -- to overstate the case -- we may be tempted to think that the distinctive Platonic doctrine went unquestioned within the Academy. That this is not so is shown dramatically by the opening discussion of Plato's *Parmenides*. Here the youthful Socrates confronts the eminent Parmenides who raises a whole series of difficulties for the doctrine of Ideas. We can assume that Aristotle, like other members of the Academy, would have been familiar with such difficulties. Indeed, it seems to have been one of the exercises in the Academy to confront the difficulties that could be leveled against the central theory. It is not the critique that is new with Aristotle, but the direction he took from it.

As for Plato himself, although he did not diminish the difficulties raised by the Ideas as he had presented them, these difficulties merely stimulated him to search for an uncontroversial version of the Ideas. The effort launched by the *Parmenides* is continued in *The Sophist* and *The Statesman*. He could not give up on the ideas; they were the guarantee of human knowledge. If there were not such fixed unchanging referents of our knowing, we cannot account for the undoubted success of mathematics.

In the early dialogues, in the *Republic*, there is a serene confidence in the Ideas. They enable Plato to sweep away any number of problems. And the theory is universal. "Wherever there is a common name we posit an Idea answering to it." Parmenides would later embarrass Socrates by asking if there is an Idea of mud. At first all the ideas seem to be of equal status, out there, one at a time. This alters slightly in the *Republic* when the Idea of the Good is given status over the others, being like the sun in the light of which the others are seen. The magnificent allegory of the cave conveys the theory at this point in an unforgettable way. In the post-*Parmenides* dialogues, the notion of sharing or participation is transferred from the relation of sensible particulars to their Idea to relations among the Ideas themselves.

Plato and Philosophizing

If Plato and Aristotle are the two most important philosophers of pagan antiquity, the difference between them is first suggested by the writings that have come down to us. We know Aristotle through treatises, that may have been lecture notes, but Plato we know through his dialogues. (There are several letters as well.) While some dialogues are more dialectic than others, the literary genre conveys what Plato took philosophy to be. It was a vital human activity and could not be reduced to a written state (Letter 7). It could only be engaged in by give and take, question and answer, objection and response. Plato spoke of the soul's conversation with itself, thinking of thinking on the model of the verbal exchange between interested inquirers. This is doubtless why the reading of the early dialogues remains the best introduction to philosophizing. The

neophyte is introduced to, and the grizzled elder is reminded of, the ever ongoing character of philosophizing.

Writing Assignment

Write a brief essay on one of the two following:

1. What is Plato's doctrine of Forms or Ideas and what led him to adopt it?
2. Write a review of Plato's *Meno*.

Lesson 4: From Plato to Aristotle

Immanent Essences

If the Platonic Ideas are required in order to have knowledge, knowledge of the things of this world is ambiguous. To know what the things of this world are, the mind must be directed to ideal entities, Forms or nature in virtue of which the things we sense are because they participate in those Ideas which are distinct from them. But if what things are is separate from them, to know what they are is to know something they are not.

We have seen the path by which Plato arrived at this odd position. The things of this world are hardly at all, constantly in change -- in the *Theaetetus* Plato basically accepts the Heraclitean view that sensible things are ever in flux. But knowledge in the strong sense requires something unchanging and necessary if it is to be necessary. The whatness of sensible things, unlike those sensible things themselves, is not subject to change. Aristotle of course accepts the Platonic condition of knowledge, above all necessity, but he came to hold that arguments against the Ideas or Forms -- that is, that the natures of the things around us exist separate and apart in an ideal world. It is not necessary, Aristotle held, to explain knowledge of sensible things by appeal to the Forms or Ideas.

Aristotle's basic charge against Plato is that he identified the way in which we understand with the way in which things are. If I know what daffodils are, the definition expressing it does not change and it is applicable to all daffodils past, present and to come. The characteristics of the nature as known are thus quite different from the characteristics of the things having that nature. But the next move, that the nature must be a separate entity, need not be made if it is the way in which we know the nature that gives it characteristics unlike those of the singular entities whose nature it is.

All our knowledge takes its rise in the senses, but sense perception of things provides a basis from which the mind abstracts the nature of singulars. As abstract, the nature is *something one* which relates to the many singulars. The abstract nature is thus universal in the sense that *it is something one predicable of many*. But the unity of the nature, the nature apart from the individuals, is a feature of our abstractive knowing. As something one over against the individuals it is something conceived by us. The nature does not *exist* apart from the individuals and it is something one only as abstracted by the human intellect. To assert that it exists apart, accordingly, is to confuse the status of the nature as known with the nature as it exists. It exists only in the individuals from which it has been abstracted. They are really similar to one another. In the case of living things, this similarity is established by the fact of generation. Parents have young like themselves, so different individuals. But the nature or similarity is not another existent individual. It is only when that real similarity is formulated in a concept that there is something one that relates to the many from which it has been abstracted.

This is not of course to say that the content of the concept is a mental construct, as if it did not express what is found individually in members of a species, say. But as expressed, it leaves out what belongs to individuals as individuals -- that is what abstracting means. Doubtless it was the relation of cause and effect, generator and generated, parent and young, among the individuals that motivated Aristotle in resisting the notion that appeal had to be made to some beyond in order to explain that similarity. That offspring are really like their parents is a given and when the likeness is isolated by the mind in thinking of the individuals, a nature that exists only in those individuals is considered apart but must not be asserted to exist apart.

This is difficult matter, of course, and we shall return to it. But in order to see the transition from Plato to Aristotle it is well to begin with what Aristotle considered to be his principal difference from his master. Plato, as we have stressed, was aware of the difficulties that confronted the doctrine of Ideas, but these difficulties prompted him to seek a defensible account of the Ideas. Aristotle, having learned those difficulties in the Academy, came to see an alternative to them. And this opened the door to a science of natural things as such.

Natural Philosophy

Our earlier discussion of Parmenides provided us an opportunity to present Aristotle's resolution of the problems Parmenides had put in the way of a science of nature. Plato may be thought of us as developing a modified form of the Parmenidean notion that sense perception is deceptive, giving us a world of appearance that must be contrasted with what really is. Aristotle rejects, for reasons we have given, both the Parmenidean contrast between appearance and reality and the Platonic modification of it.

The *Physics* is the first in a series of works that Aristotle devoted to natural science. How is it first? Aristotle observes that our knowledge proceeds from general more or less confused knowledge to specific and distinct knowledge. He provides this example. You see something afar off and it is just something. As you approach it, or as it approaches you, you discern that it is moving itself and not just being blown along. The

living thing is then seen to be two-footed and then a human male. Too late you see that it is one of your creditors. Aristotle sees here the pattern of our knowledge. We begin with generic truths about the things we sense and proceed to more specific knowledge of them.

Notice that it is the approaching object, something you are sensing, that is grasped under progressively more discriminating concepts. If we should, following Porphyry, see a kind of ladder here, the top rung of which would be substance, the next rung living / non-living, the next having senses / not having senses, the next having reason / not having reason, we would not think that we are knowing a series of things, but knowing a thing with progressively more determination or discrimination. On the Theory of Ideas, these levels of knowing would be taken to answer to levels of reality, a hierarchy of being. But there is no substance that is not either animate or inanimate, no animate thing that is neither animal or not, no animal that is neither rational or not. This is our way of knowing things, not the way in which things exist.

So it is that in our pursuit of a science of nature, we will first seek truths which are common to all natural things and then go on to pursue knowledge of what is peculiar to living things. The assumption is that what has first been established will apply to living things, but not as living things, since it will also apply to the inorganic.

We can now place in this schema the analysis of change and the product of change that we sketched earlier in discussing Aristotle's response to Parmenides. A particular example of a change is analyzed to find the most general truths about change and the most general description of something that comes about as the result of a change, that is, a physical object, a natural thing. To establish that change involves a subject and contrary states of that subject and that the result of a change is a subject plus a new characteristic is to establish a truth of sweeping generality. It is not a specific statement about any kind of change or product of change. It is the first thing that can be said of any change. The eight books of the *Physics* contain truths about physical things at a similar level of generality. The discussions of motion, time and place and the argument that all movers cannot be moved movers, that there must be a first unmoved mover, indicates the importance of the truths that can be thus gained.

First Philosophy

If the study of the natural world comes first, it does not deal with things which are first. Like Plato, Aristotle assumes that philosophy can attain knowledge of the divine, eternal and unchangeable, but it cannot attain such knowledge in the way Plato attempted to. The pedagogical assumption of Aristotelian philosophy is that we begin with a science of natural things, of things which can be grasped by the senses, because these are unproblematic for us. That there is change and a plurality of changing things is an assumption that is not proved, though its denial can be refuted. What cannot be taken as an unproblematic assumption is that there are existent things beyond or apart from natural things. Mathematics deals with things whose definitions make no reference to matter or change, but mathematical do not exist in the way in which natural things exist. They are idealizations of aspects of natural things. If there is to be knowledge of

immaterial things, we have to prove that there is something to know. This breakthrough is made in the course of natural science.

The Prime Mover

The distinction between the potential and the actual emerges from the analysis of change. A subject that does not have a given characteristic and subsequently has it may be said to move from a state of potentiality with regard to that characteristic to one of actuality, that is, of actually having it. When Aristotle defines motion as "the act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency" he is seeking to express a subject's being actualized. Take as an example a ball that moves from A to B. How to express its movement. At A it is not at B but can be, that is, is potentially at B. When it is in movement it can be said to have actualized the potentiality to be at B but, since it has not yet arrived there, to be still in potentiality. If it stopped, it would actually be at some point between A and B. As moving, it continues to actualize its potentiality to be at B. Aristotle's definition, as stated above, by using act and potency, defines motion without putting some synonym of motion into the definition (as I have in explicating the definition).

Motion, so defined, is the act of a thing that is being moved. The ball must be started on its way by something else, a mover. Of course the mover itself may be moved by some third thing. And so forth. There could not be a series of related moved movers that went on indefinitely, since then, instead of explaining why the motion we began with is taking place, we would simply be putting off an explanation of it. An infinite series is not an explanation but the failure to explain. There cannot be an infinite series of moved movers. From this it follows that the series must be explained by an unmoved mover, a mover whose moving of other things is not explained by its being moved.

Because of what is entailed by being a moved mover, the unmoved mover emerges as something immaterial. I am merely asserting what is shown to be the case in the *Physics* because what I am concerned to show is that this proof is a basis on which it can be said that to be and to be material are not identical, and this is a conclusion that is reached in the course of doing natural science. But if natural science is concerned with material things, it cannot be the science that deals with immaterial things. So another science, and not mathematics, must deal with things that exist apart from matter.

The Immortality of the Soul

When Aristotle begins his study of living substances, he begins with a short work devoted to that principle in living things which distinguishes them from non-living things, namely, the soul. *On the Soul* will thus speak of this principle as the form of living things. Having defined soul, it will discuss the various vital activities, sense perception, the internal senses, and then take up the question of intellection. The activity of sensation rides piggy-back upon a physical change. That is, when I touch something, its temperature affects my hand, and vice versa. But this physical change is a condition of touch, not touch as such, since then any warmed body would be said to feel heat.

Intellection is distinguished from sense perception because it does not intrinsically involve a physical change. Coming to understand what an acorn is does not involve a physical change the way feeling or seeing or hearing or tasting or smelling an acorn does. Intellection is thus seen to be an immaterial process and the soul, capable of such activity, is seen itself to be capable of existing apart from matter. The argument for this is far more complicated than this sketch indicates, but again what I am chiefly concerned with now is the way in which another argument within natural science concludes to the existence of something apart from matter.

The Science of Being as Being

Against this background -- that we can know there are immaterial beings and that mathematics does not deal with things which exist apart from matter -- the need for a science beyond natural science and mathematics is clear. Aristotle's development of this science is found in the work called the *Metaphysics*, which is not what Aristotle himself called it. He called it wisdom -- that is the goal toward which the philosophical quest tends -- first philosophy, as dealing with things which are prior to natural things; theology, as dealing with the divine and changeless and eternal. In the *Metaphysics* it is also often designated as "the science we are seeking" or by references to its subject matter, "the science of being as being."

Natural science deals with being as changeable; mathematics with being as quantified. The science we are seeking is not concerned with a type or kind of being, but with being as being. Why? If the pursuit of this science is generated by proofs that there are things which exist apart from matter, why not call it the science of a kind of being, namely, immaterial being? Because the dependence of our knowledge of the immaterial on our knowledge of the material does not go away when we begin to construct this new science. In order to establish what belongs to being as such, we must consult again and again the kind of being easily accessible to us, natural or physical being.

But why not, on the basis of what was said about the human mode of knowing, why not say that being is the most general term of all, prior to subject since it is predicable of accidents as well as substance, so we can simply ask about the characteristics of being in general and apply it to immaterial beings?

Being as it is first known is inadequate to give any information about immaterial being. If by being we mean "that which exists", the applicability of this to any non-material being is totally uninformative unless we know what "that which" might mean in immaterial things, and consequently what "exists" means in their case.

Aristotle's first move is to point out that "being" is not a genus and thus is not predicated univocally of the things that are. A man and his complexion do not exist in the same sense though they both can be counted among the things that are. The comparison with "healthy" is offered, a term which is said of many things, but with different meanings. As "being" can be rendered "that which exists", so "healthy" can be rendered "that which has health." But an animal has health differently than his diet and urine do, yet we say of all three that they are healthy. It is because we must refer to the health of the animal

to grasp the meaning of healthy as said of food and urine that we recognize a primary and controlling sense of the term. In the case of being, that which has existence in the primary and controlling sense of the term is substance. Thus the science of being as being, can concentrate on substance.

The word 'substance' is applied, if not in more senses, still at least to four main objects; for both the essence and the universal and the genus are thought to be the substance of each thing and fourthly the substratum. (*Metaphysics* 7,3)

As Thomas Aquinas points out in his commentary (lectio 2, n. 1275), it is well to think of this division by comparison with the *Categories* where substance is said to be of two kinds, first substance, that is the individual substance, and second substance, that is, the universal. In the passage just quoted, 'universal' and 'genus' match second substance and the substratum, that is, this thing, first substance. The new element then is essence. "There (in the *Categories*) the what-a-thing-is (essence) is omitted because it does not belong to the order of categories except as their principle. For it is neither a genus nor species nor an individual, but the formal principle of all these." Thus the task before him is seen: we must ask after the individual substance and its essence.

What can surprise, given the fact that we are looking for a science whose subject is not a kind of being, is the immediate turning to material substance in order to grasp the understanding of the relation between essence and individual. To make a long and intriguing story short, reflection on material substance, which is composed of matter and form, makes clear that form is the most important element, that which in the material substance most makes it to be a substance. This is established by a series of painstaking analyses, with the upshot that we can say that if substance is to be applied to a non-material substance, we can understand it as a subsisting form.

Obviously this analogous sense of substance is not common to material and immaterial substance -- the latter cannot be called a subsisting form even though its form is that which is most substance in it. What this analysis shows is the way an analysis of the kind of being most accessible to us, material being, is the basis on which extrapolation is made to the immaterial. Immaterial beings are not given to us immediately as are material substances. We require truths about material substances in order to demonstrate that there are immaterial substances. And we need analyses of material substance to ground any and every assertion about immaterial substance. It is this which makes metaphysics so difficult and oblique a science. When in Book Twelve, Aristotle speaks of God as "thought thinking itself," his statement depends upon an understanding of human intellection and the extrapolation from it of what can be asserted of the activity of a non-material substance. So it is that the *Metaphysics* culminates in such knowledge of the divine as we can acquire and receives the title theology.

Writing Assignment

Write briefly on one of the following:

1. What account of human knowledge lies behind putting the *Physics* first in natural science?
2. Compare and contrast natural philosophy, mathematics and metaphysics.

Lesson 5: Moral Philosophy in Aristotle

The theoretical use of the mind aims at achieving truth about the things that are, whereas the practical use of the mind orders knowledge to an end beyond knowing (*On the Soul*, 3, 10). Practical knowledge can be exemplified by art and morals. In art, the mind directs activities other than thinking -- e.g. the movement of the hands -- to the end of the perfection of some artifact, e.g. a birdhouse. When we think morally, we are concerned to direct our desires and choices to that which is truly perfective of us, our good as human agents.

The human good is the good of individual agents, but a human agent cannot reach his fulfillment in isolation, but only in the society of fellow humans. "Man is by nature a political animal." This does not mean that we have a tendency to decide to live in groups; it means we are born into a community, the family, a community of families, a city. Only when we keep this in mind can we give an account of what is good for us that applies to us as we naturally are. Moral philosophy in a fully adequate sense is political philosophy, the pursuit of the good we share with other members of the community, the common good. There is also the common good of the family which is less extensive than that shared by members of the same city, and our actions must be directed to that lesser common good as well. Of course it is in the family and in our being brought up to regard the common good of the family as a good that takes precedence over goods which are merely our own and not ours as members of the family.

Moving back from the more and less comprehensive goods of the city and the family, Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* discusses the good of personal integrity, the virtues we must possess as individuals before we consider the virtues that enable us to act well in the home and in the city.

The Ultimate End

The objects of moral appraisal are human acts which are voluntary -- that is, one does something both knowingly and willingly. Such acts are undertaken for a purpose. There are as many different purposes as there are acts, of course, and to say that they are all

undertaken for a purpose does not of course mean they are undertaken for the same purpose. But ends can be related among themselves. Some things are sought merely as means to an end, but some ends are sought as means to further ends.

Sometimes many subordinate ends cluster under a dominant end, as the building is the term of the many activities on the building site, each of which has its particular end. So, too, in the military, the various components of the armed forces, each with its special mission, are ordered to the overall end of having an army in the first place. Is there such an overriding end for everything we do, an ultimate end to which each act is ordered? Aristotle says there is.

He provides two kinds of consideration in favor of this claim. One is factual. The law orders all overt acts in a society to the common good of that society which is therefore the ultimate end of all those acts, though fishing is fishing and driving is driving and drilling teeth is drilling teeth. Each of these has its own purpose or end but all are governed by laws which relate them to the common good. Aristotle also notes that we have a word for the purpose behind anything we do: happiness.

The second is an argument, and an argument of a very interesting kind. Aristotle argues that anyone who denies that there is an ultimate end renders human action -- and his denial -- absurd. In any ordered set of actions, there cannot be an infinite series of ends for the sake of which they are undertaken. If an action aims at A, and A at B, and B at C, and so on *ad infinitum*, we are far from giving a reason for action; we are saying there is no reason for what we do. This is counterintuitive, as might be said. The rather amazing upshot of this argument is that the burden of proof is on the shoulders of one who denies there is an ultimate end, not on those of the one who acknowledges it.

But how can we articulate this overall good of the human agent? It must perfect or fulfill him as human, but what marks the human agent off from others is the possession of reason, the conscious directing of his deeds. The good of the human agent must be the good of reason, the perfecting of rational activity. But rational activity is of different kinds, the most notable distinction that between theoretical and practical reasoning. Further, some activities are rational because they come under the sway of reason -- sense desires, for example. Now if the perfection of an activity is its virtue and if the distinctive human activity, rational activity, is of various kinds, there will be a variety of virtues perfective of the human agent. The virtues of sense appetite as it comes under the law of reason, temperance and courage, for example, are moral virtues and virtues in the strong sense, as is justice, which perfects will, the rational appetite. Virtue is defined by Aristotle as that which makes an activity and the agent good. *Good* is the object of appetite, as *true* is the object of cognition, so the virtues which reside in appetite save the definition most obviously. The virtues perfective of practical reasoning are art (the know how to perfect the thing made) and prudence (the know how to perfect the agent). The sciences are examples of virtues of speculative intellect.

Aristotle will distinguish between the happiness that comes from the possession of the moral virtues, but he goes on to speak of a higher happiness, that of contemplation, which orders all the virtues to the end of philosophizing itself, the divine. Book Ten of

the *Nicomachean Ethics* indicates how Aristotle unifies the whole philosophical enterprise. The quest for knowledge is made by an agent whose moral acts must be virtuous. Like Plato, he feels that the moral virtues remove impediments to a proper understanding of the divine. But the ordering of that speculative knowledge to the overall end of human life, the contemplation of the divine, the convergence of all activities on this culminating and most fulfilling one -- that is Aristotle's understanding of the point of human life.

Of course, being of flesh and blood, needing eight hours sleep, having to provide for ourselves and families, we cannot devote ourselves non-stop to such an exalted activity. But insofar as whatever we do is seen as conducive to or necessary for that activity, however episodically engaged in, one will have achieved the ultimate end of human life.

Writing Assignment

Write briefly on one of the following:

1. How does one go about establishing man's ultimate end?
2. Discuss the range of virtues: what kind is first and why?

Lesson 6: After Aristotle and Plato

One way to think of what happens to philosophy after Plato and Aristotle, in what can be called the Hellenistic Age, is to divide it into four major moments, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Skepticism and Neoplatonism.

The Epicureans

Epicurus flourished in the century after Plato and Aristotle, coming to Athens from his native island of Samos. He had studied under Platonists and Aristotelians, but later denied it, acquiring a reputation for arrogance. His school was still in existence in the third century of the Christian era.

Epicurus divided philosophy into three parts: Canonic, Physics, Ethics, to each of which he devoted at least one treatise.

Canonic deals with sensations, preconceptions and feelings as standards of truth. Simple sensations are devoid of error nor is one sense more authoritative than another. Reason depends on sensations, not vice versa. All sensory reports are true, but not all

judgments based on them are. When I am dreaming I am truly dreaming but to judge that what I dream is really happening is something again. Preconceptions sound a good deal like Platonic Ideas. "We should not have given anything a name, if we had not first learnt its form by way of preconception." Call them innate ideas. Feelings -- pleasure and pain -- are also standards, and it is here that we find the source of the popular notion of Epicureanism.

Physics -- the natural doctrine of Epicureanism is summarized in a letter to Herodotus. He begins with the difficulty posed by Parmenides. "To begin with, nothing comes into being out of what is non-existent." A thing comes into being out of particular antecedents. Nor can anything be destroyed and become non-existent. The sum total of things has always been what it is now, for there is nothing into which it might change, there being nothing apart from the sum total of things. Epicurus' positive doctrine is a version of the atomism of Democritus. There are only bodies and space. Composite bodies are made up of indivisible and indestructible elements of which there is an infinite number. Soul like body is composed of them. Atoms possess only shape, weight and size. Mind automatically receives the data of sensation but then goes on to judge and assess, and in the latter error is possible.

Ethics -- this is the term of Epicurus' philosophy. Death is neither good nor evil, and should hold no terror for us anymore than life should.

Pleasure is the beginning and fulfillment of a happy life, but there is a calculus of pleasures and pains in the ethical life. This is hedonism but of a minimalist kind: we should be content with a minimum. Sensual pleasure is discounted -- so much for the popular notion of Epicure. Nature as he understands it, is for Epicurus the guide in ethics. Despite his atomism, his view is not fatalistic. The ultimate value is life, but death should not be feared. Epicurus would prefer the myths about the gods rather than a philosophical view that all is determined. The role of Physics is to remove the causes of man's fear.

The influence of Epicurus extended for centuries. Mention should be made of Lucretius and his *De rerum natura (On the nature of things)* published in 54 B.C. The final assault on Epicureanism came from Christianity which eventually brought to an end the school that had the longest and greatest impact on ancient times.

The Stoics

The school was founded on Cyprus by Zeno of Citium. Zeno was born in the middle of the 4th century and he came to Athens shortly after the death of Aristotle and was associated with Crates the Cynic. The school is named for the porch where Zeno taught. Most of our knowledge of Zeno is conjectural and secondhand. Cleanthes was succeeded as head of the school by Chrysippus, born in 280 BC, often called the second founder of Stoicism. He died in 206 BC. Eventually Stoicism was introduced into the Roman world.

The Stoics too divided philosophy in to three parts: Logic, Ethics and Physics. They are usually thought to have subordinated the other parts to ethics and to have opposed the Platonic and Aristotelian notion of contemplation. With interest in the logic of the Stoics in recent years, this picture has been altered somewhat. Since there were so many Stoics, it is not easy to formulate a common doctrine. Cicero gives a graphic description of Zeno's account of knowledge. Extending his right hand palm upwards, fingers extended, Zeno said: this is representation; bending the fingers, he said this is assent; making a fist, he said, this is comprehension; then smashing the fist into the palm of his other hand, he said, that is science. The comprehensive representation is produced by a real object and a real object is that gained by comprehensive representation. In a species of nominalism, the Stoics held that there are only individual facts and only statements with singular subjects can correspond with them. Logic is the study of the links and connectives between singular propositions.

The goal of ethics is harmony with nature. Happiness is gained by rational activity or virtue. Only virtue is good, only vice is evil. Virtue is in accord with the recognized course of the world, vice is disharmony. The gifts and blows of fortune must be risen above and happiness is immune to such influences. The Stoic ethics is thus an austere one. It was meant to arm a man in an unsure world by a kind of inner withdrawal from what might affect his equanimity. The link of Stoicism with suicide is noteworthy. The school cited various good reasons for ending one's own life -- poverty, illness, the weakening of the mind. Oddly such things should be, on the Stoic account, matters of indifference.

The Roman Stoics extended the influence of the school. Seneca was born about 4 BC in Cordoba, Spain, came to Rome and died by his own hand at the command of Nero in 65 AD. The discrepancy between the Stoic precepts he espoused and his own life has fascinated students of Seneca. He has been called the favorite pagan of the Christian Church and was alleged to have been a correspondent of St. Paul. Epictetus (50-138 AD) and Marcus Aurelius, Emperor from 161-180 AD, concentrated on ethics, Marcus Aurelius writing his *Meditations* in Greek. Mind is the spark of divinity in us but it will be consumed in the conflagration that ends the cosmos.

The Sceptics

Pyrrho of Elis, born about 365 BC, is said to have accompanied Alexander the Great on his campaigns. He founded his school at Elis in 330 BC when he was thirty-five (he died in 275 BC). He wrote nothing. His approach was to doubt everything, to withdraw from all assertions into apathy and a suspension of judgment and commitment. Pyrrho thus taught an attitude which is summed up in *ataraxy* -- expect nothing and you will not be disappointed. The term Sceptic acquired its negative meaning slowly, much as the term Sophist had.

With Carneades, skepticism entered the Academy. On a visit to Rome, he is said to have presented the Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic conceptions of justice, and then refuted them all. It sounds like Philosophy 101. There is no certain knowledge, there is no criterion of truth, judgment is to be suspended in a *epoche*. But Sceptics had a

theory of probability and indeed of degrees of probability. The main target of Carneades was Stoicism because of its influential positive doctrine. With Carneades, the decline of the Academy from the golden period under its founder Plato is well under way.

An influential Skeptic was Sextus Empiricus whose works are attacks and refutations. His *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Mathematicians* have come down to us.

Neoplatonism

There is a vast number of thinkers to which the label Neoplatonist is applied. None is more important than Plotinus who was born in Egypt in the third century of the Christian era, studied at Alexandria and came to Rome at the age of forty, where his teaching knew phenomenal success. Porphyry became his student when Plotinus was sixty, and it is to Porphyry that we owe the edition of Plotinus' *Enneads*. The writings of the master are divided into six groups each containing nine tractates (from which the work takes its name). There is no reference to Christianity in Plotinus but Porphyry became a dedicated foe of the new religion.

In the *Enneads*, Plotinus sets forth the structure of the world and our place in that structure, the manner in which all things proceed from the One and return once more to it. The unity of reality follows from its emanation from the One and its destiny to return whence it came. The procession of all things from the One is both necessary and graded -- the One, *Nous* and Soul. The *Nous* or Mind receives the light of the One and passes it on to Soul. These are the three so-called *hypostases* that form the hierarchy of the universe, and the human task is to retrace that order to the source of all. Thus we begin with Soul, go on to *Nous* and then to the One.

Soul is the nexus of the world with *Nous*, organizing it. The Soul's connection with bodies, from which we are urged to turn away, forms a tension. Soul is not for Plotinus, as it is for Aristotle, the entelechy or form of bodies, however. "The substantial existence of the soul, then, does not depend upon its serving as form to anything: it is an essence which does not come into being by finding a seat in body; it exists before it becomes the soul of some particular..." The downward motion of soul produces the different powers. Soul has at least four meanings for Plotinus. It is one of the hypostases, there is also the soul of the visible world which in its totality is a living creature. The human soul has a superior and an inferior part. The soul is by nature divine, and evil is the effect of the corporeal on it. It is by reflecting on itself that soul discovers the order of the universe. If the One is the good, then *Nous* may be called beauty as the reflection of the One. The One is beyond, ineffable while *Nous* is its articulation into Ideas. *Nous* is a god but not the highest god, being an offspring of the One.

The One is the most important element in Plotinus' teaching and the most difficult to grasp. It is described in terms of the lower, as being beyond them and their source. Oddly, the One is said to be above Being. Strictly speaking it cannot be named, it is ineffable. It eludes our knowledge and is at best approximated from what emanates from it. The ultimate stage for us is a vision of the One that goes beyond understanding

and speech. Porphyry said that the whole of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is to be found compressed in the *Enneads*. The One is identical with its essence and its existence.

The detail of the *Enneads* is such that it is impossible to resume it. The overall effect of Plotinus' thought is to urge on us what might be called a spiritual life, a striving for union with that from which we and all things have come. God is the term of human striving but he must be approached via the intermediate stages. Matter is the ultimate emanation from the One, most distant from it, but Plotinus does not regard matter itself as evil. The sensible world shares in goodness and beauty and is thus a sign of what lies beyond. The striving is guided more by love than knowledge and thus the ultimate task cannot really be conveyed by a philosophical doctrine. It is not a matter of knowing as terminal, but knowing triggering off an ascent on the wings of love. The ultimate goal is ecstasy and union.

The Neoplatonic school extends well into the Christian era. Blending and altering elements from Plato and Aristotle, it was both the alternative to Christianity and an influence on it. The school at Alexandria, where Boethius may have studied, represents the last great stage of Greek philosophy.

Writing Assignment

Briefly compare the Sceptics and Plotinus.

Midterm Paper

Write a five page paper comparing Plato and Aristotle on the role of sensible things in human knowledge.

Lesson 7: Into the Christian Era

A Disturbance in Palestine

In its beginnings Christianity hardly registers in the records of the then mighty of the world. Scholars have found a few references to early Christians in Roman literature, but of course there was no sense at all that something had begun that would alter the course of history. Pope John Paul II cites these references in *Toward the Third Millennium*. Christianity turned ordinary human criteria of importance upside down. The humble of this world were chosen to disseminate through the world a commission they could scarcely have understood when they were given it. The Incarnate God neither

flaunted his divinity nor took on the pomp and panoply of worldly importance. But Christianity was destined to transform the culture as well as the lives of its adherents. The confrontation of philosophy with the Gospel was not initially promising.

Porphyry, the student and biographer of Plotinus, editor of the *Enneads*, was a vocal foe of the new religion, championing in its stead the paganism that was losing its hold. Gnosticism, the notion that there is an esoteric doctrine of salvation knowable only by a few, may seem a reaction to Christianity's universal embrace of humanity. Nero was one of the first to find Christians a convenient scapegoat. Later, during Augustine's lifetime (354-430), the Christians were accused of bringing disaster on the empire because of their abandonment of the traditional gods. The sprawling *City of God* was a response to this.

Philosophy and the Faith

Figuring out its relationship to philosophy and vice versa was not high on the agenda of Christians at the outset. To believe is to respond, under the influence of grace, to the good news preached by Jesus, to live accordingly and in the confidence that one possesses the truth, not by any personal merit or effort, but as a revelation from God. But already in St. Paul we find references to the natural human effort to know God. In Romans 1, 19-20, addressing the pagan Romans and enumerating their many sins, Paul tells them they are inexcusable. Why? Because from the things that are made they can come to knowledge of the invisible things of God. Such knowledge has moral import and, accordingly, the misbehavior of the pagans is inexcusable. It is also true that, in Colossians, Paul warns Christians to beware lest they be led astray by philosophy. These two passages may be taken to sum up the tension that has, does, and will always exist between Christianity and a secularized philosophy. This tension is felt acutely today, but one of the advantages of studying the history of philosophy, not least of medieval philosophy, is that one understands the origins and betrayals of modern philosophy. Philosophy as it is engaged in today stands willy-nilly in a tradition that stretches back to the Greeks and which cannot be understood if one bypasses -- as many historians have sought to do -- the philosophy of the Middle Ages.

Reflection on the relationship between the truths they accept on faith and those attainable by them and anyone else by the use of reason almost characterizes a certain kind of believer. Perhaps in some form it is a factor in the thinking of any believer, but those aware of the more sophisticated efforts of human reason can scarcely avoid comparing such knowledge with their faith.

The Fathers of the Church

The rapid spread of Christianity during the first century, thanks to the heroic efforts of the Apostles, has rightly been seen as a sign of the divine institution of the Church. Moving toward Alexandria on the south coast of the Mediterranean, the main thrust was along the northern coast to Greece and on to Rome. Nero's persecution of the Christians dates from 64 A.D. Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome in 67, and

imperial persecution becomes a tradition as emperor follows emperor. Under Marcus Aurelius, 161 A.D., Christians were persecuted by a philosopher.

The Apostolic Fathers -- The *Didache*, the teaching of the apostles, dates from 60 A.D. It is a precious source of information on the doctrine and liturgy of the early Church. St. Clement of Rome, third successor to Peter, lived in Rome during the last decade of the first century. The soon-to-be-martyred bishop Ignatius of Antioch, in a series of seven letters written during the journey when he was taken in chains from Syria to Rome, dispenses pastoral care and counsel. The role of the bishop in the community is stressed and dissension lamented.

Tertullian (c. 160 - c. 240) was one of the first Christians to present his thought in Latin, and what he thought on our issue is that philosophy is the locus of error and Christianity the summation of truth. Their relationship, consequently, was one of opposition. A more irenic attitude was expressed by Eusebius (c. 265 - c. 339) when he referred to the pagan philosophical effort as a *praeparatio evangelica*, a preparation for the gospel. The idea is that philosophy is an effort to attain a truth that can only be found in its fullness in Christian revelation. Already in the second century, St. Justin Martyr (c. 100 - 164) espoused this view; St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 219) was another. St. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335 - c. 395) was yet another. Of course, while expressive of a genuine interest in philosophy, this attitude suggests that the philosophical efforts of the Greeks occupied an historical moment that has been surpassed by Christian revelation.

Those who adopted this view can be grouped as follows:

The Greek Apologists -- Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus (born about 126) and Hippolytus, who died about 236. These writers sought to explain the faith to critics and defend it against attack. Irenaeus a native of Smyrna, was bishop of Lyon where terrible persecutions took place and where he confronted the threat of Gnosticism, a spiritual movement among Christians that posed a great threat to Christianity. Gnostics saw the soul as having been put into the body as punishment for some primordial fault; the human task is to return to the soul's original state by rejecting the body and the material world. Gnosticism seems to mimic Christianity -- the need for salvation, the mission of the Savior, the function of the community. Humans were divided into the pneumatics (the elect), the hylics (those destined to be damned), and the psychics, an intermediary group. The Savior comes, not for all, but for a few; his incarnation is apparent not real, and the truth is passed on secretly and is distinct from apostolic teaching. It was against these heresies that Irenaeus wrote. Of interest here is Irenaeus' judgment that heresy is the corruption of the Christian message by the influence of pagan philosophy.

The Catechetical School of Alexandria -- Clement of Alexandria is the most important personage here, with Origen (c. 185 - 254) runner-up. Alexandria was the second most important city of the empire, after Rome, and it gave birth to Gnosticism and, in response, to the *Didaskaleion* or school, whose function was to state and defend the truth. Clement, probably an Athenian, born about 150, had acquired human culture and knowledge in all its amplitude. After his conversion, he undertook to put his learning at the service of evangelizing the pagan world of Alexandria, beginning with its

intellectuals. Origen's *Against Celsus* is an extended response to the criticisms of a philosopher.

The Latin Apologists -- Besides Tertullian, there was Arnobius (c. 260 - c. 327) and Lactantius (c. 250 - c. 325).

Of the later Fathers, we should at least mention St. Athanasius (+373), St. Gregory of Nazianzus (+390), St. John Chrysostom (+407).

Salient features

Justin Martyr is in a sense the historical process writ small. As a young man he went to the philosophers in the hope that they would speak to him of God, and he was disappointed by the Stoic, Pythagorean and Peripatetic he encountered. When he came into contact with a Platonist he felt for the first time that he was being introduced to immaterial things, and when he concentrated on the Ideas he half expected to see God. Then he met a Christian who cast doubt on features of Platonism -- the nature of creation, the soul and its immortality -- and spoke with such assurance that Justin wondered whence came this knowledge. He was directed to the Scriptures. This inflamed his soul and he thought he had finally reached the philosophy he sought. He goes on to point out certain agreements between Plato and Scripture. The reason for this convergence, he felt, was that the Platonist had borrowed from the Jews.

Clement of Alexandria held that philosophers were influenced by the divine Logos in somewhat the same way as Moses and the prophets had been in the Old Law. Given this common origin, philosophy may provide an instrument for throwing light on the faith. It is not that the mysteries can be understood by such arguments; their role is rather oblique and negative.

Certain themes which will characterize Christian thinking on such matters are thus opened by the Fathers. Without doing them injustice, we can view them all as precursors of Augustine of Hippo, to whom we now turn.

Writing Assignment

On the basis of the account in one of the general histories listed above, or an encyclopedia article, write a summary paragraph or two on St. John Chrysostom or St. Gregory of Nyssa.

Lesson 8: Augustine

"Late have I loved thee..."

Augustine's *Confessions* are addressed to God but for centuries others have been listening in, as of course Augustine intended them to do. The powerful narrative of his life stirs the reader and presents Christian faith in the context of the sinful human's desire for it, resistance to it, and final acceptance.

Augustine was born in Tagaste, Numidia, in 354. His father, Patricius, was a pagan (who was, however, baptized before he died). Monica, his sainted mother, was already a Christian. Since infant baptism was not yet a custom, Monica enrolled her son as a catechumen and endeavored to instill in him a love of Christ. But if Augustine's home-schooling was Christian, his official education was another matter. Not that Augustine paints a flattering picture of himself as a student -- he says he was giddy, lazy, and a hater of Greek. Having studied grammar in Tagaste, he continued his studies at Madaura, where his morals declined. Despite this, he did well; his father determined to send him to Carthage, but only after the lapse of a year. Augustine spent a year of idleness at home, and when he went to Carthage to study rhetoric, his moral downfall was completed. At the age of 18 he fathered a son, Adeodatus, by a woman with whom Augustine lived until his thirty-third year.

A turning point came in his life when he read the *Hortensius* of Cicero, a dialogue which exhorts to immortal wisdom. "That book transformed my feelings, turned my prayers to you, Lord, changed my hopes and desires. Suddenly I despised every vain hope and desired with an unbelievable fervor of heart the immortality of wisdom, and I began then to rise and return to thee" (*Conf.* III, iv).

But when he began to teach rhetoric the next year in Tagaste and later in Carthage, it was to Manicheism, not Christianity, that he turned. Manicheism professed to be based on reason alone, no faith necessary, and delighted in pointing out supposed contradictions in the Scriptures. But it was the Manichean approach to moral evil that attracted Augustine. It answered to something he had already been doing. "For before then it had seemed to me that it is not we who sin, but some unknown nature within us, and it soothed my pride to be guiltless and, having done something evil, not to have to confess I did it in order to excuse myself and accuse that unknown something in me that was not I" (V,x). Augustine remained a Manichean for nine years, until 383. Eventually, his study of the doctrines produced difficulties, and he was told that when Bishop Faustus came he would resolve them all. This proved untrue and Augustine left the Manichean sect.

At the age of twenty-nine Augustine went to Rome to teach but, disappointed in his students, continued on to Milan. There he studied Platonic philosophy, but then he met Ambrose, began to attend his sermons in the cathedral and became once more a

catechumen. He was stirred by reading Plotinus; he decided to form a community that would be devoted to the pursuit of truth. And then he turned to Scripture. Stories of conversion to Christianity had stirred him, but then came the famous scene recounted in the *Confessions*. A child's voice beyond the wall cried "Take and read, take and read." Augustine picked up the Scriptures and read from the Epistle to the Romans, 13, 13: "not in revelry and drunkenness, not in debauchery and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh, take no thought of its lusts." All his doubt and hesitation were swept away. The year was 386. He was thirty-three years old.

He stopped teaching and retired to a country place at Cassiciacum with his mother, son, and a few friends, to prepare himself for baptism. This happened on Holy Saturday, 387, at the hands of St. Ambrose. As the party returned to Africa, Monica, her lifelong prayer answered, died at Ostia. (Her tomb is in St. Augustine's church in Rome.) At home in Tagaste, Augustine set up what amounted to a monastic community. After a few years, in 391, he was ordained priest after a popular petition, and moved to Hippo, where he set up another community. His preaching and writing were directed against enemies of the faith. Thus began a literary effort that would continue throughout his long life. In 396 he became coadjutor bishop of Hippo, and succeeded the following year. There, in this obscure diocese, he spent his life, but his influence radiated out of Africa to the continent and has continued down the centuries. By common consent Augustine is one of the giants of the Latin Church. He died on August 28, 430, at the age of 76.

Augustine and Plato

There is doubt whether Augustine actually read Plato, but from various sources he became knowledgeable in Platonism and, like many others before and since, felt there was a great affinity between Platonism and Christianity. Indeed, with respect to the central Platonic doctrine, the Ideas, Augustine in a famous text (*83 Diverse Questions*, q. 46), gave an interpretation of the Ideas, which, while not original with him, was because of his statement of it vastly influential. On this view, the Ideas are the creative patterns according to which God produces creatures. The analogy is of the artisan who realized in matter the form he has imagined. If God did not create according to an Idea, the impious conclusion would be that he acts without knowing what he is doing. The Word, the Logos, that was with God from the beginning, is the second person of the Trinity and the locus of the Ideas.

All this may seem a far cry from what we actually have in Plato, but this was the Platonism that defined the intellectual life of the Christian West for centuries. Not that Augustine, or others, were uncritical followers of Platonism. The suggestion that the soul had pre-existed the body, for example, had to be rejected by Christians. And the account of learning took a new turn.

On the Teacher

The dialogue *On the Teacher* was one of the works Augustine completed at Cassiciacum. In it, in dialogue with his son, Adeodatus, he asks what teaching and

learning require. Can one human being teach another? It is a fascinating exchange and, in the *Retractationes*, Augustine insists with paternal pride that the words attributed to his son were indeed his son's words. Adeodatus died young and there is sorrow as well as pride involved in this tribute.

Augustine establishes that words alone cannot generate knowledge, yet words are the instruments of the teacher. Furthermore, the learner does not want to know what the teacher knows, he wants to know it himself. But what is the cause of the activity of learning if it cannot be the teacher? The human teacher, that is. "You have but one teacher, Christ." This verse from Matthew is the motto of the dialogue. Sensible things cannot be the adequate causes of ideas, which are not sensible. Words too are sensible things. There must be a commensurate cause of thinking, of learning, and that cause is Christ the teacher teaching within the soul.

Difficulties were raised with this argument, and Augustine spent a good deal of time explaining to inquirers what he had not meant. He did not, of course, mean that Christ literally conveys knowledge to the soul, since then it would be difficult to distinguish between natural knowledge such as arithmetic, on the one hand, and the revealed mysteries of the Christian faith, on the other. The positive doctrine was that there is in the human soul a spark of divinity, that in virtue of which we are said to be made in the image and likeness of God, and it is this that makes intellectual knowledge possible. Augustine is driven to this as Plato was driven to the doctrine of Ideas. Sensible singulars are not sufficient causes of the activity of thinking which is not itself a sensible or material process. The transcendent Ideas supplied the adequate object, and cause, of human intellectual knowledge. Augustine had lodged the Ideas in the second person of the Trinity who is incarnate in Christ. Our affinity with the ideas is a light in the soul which is a share in or participation in the light that is the Word. In the 13th century both those who held an illuminationist theory of human knowledge and those who held an abstractionist view aligned themselves with Augustine.

God and the Soul

In the *Soliloquies* Augustine confessed that there were only two things he really wished to know, God and the soul. As for God, it was Augustine's view that the majority of men are aware of His existence, although this knowledge contains many errors and confusions. The civic theology and the theology of the poets is decried by Augustine. But it is possible from a consideration of the things of this world to get some intimation of God. The order and proportion of the things around us is what is grasped by the senses and the mind. The hierarchy of things leads us upward to their source. "But if you can find creatures other than those which exist without life, those which exist and have life, but not understanding, and those which have existence, life, and understanding, then you might dare affirm that there is some good which does not come from God. These three types can be designated by two names: body and life. The name 'life' applies properly either to those beings having only life without intelligence, like the animals, or to those having intelligence, like men. But these two, namely body and life, insofar as they pertain to creatures (for the creator, too, has life and that is life

supreme), these two creatures, then, body and life, being perfectible, as we have seen above, and such that they would fall into nothingness if they should completely lose their perfection, sufficiently indicate that they derive their existence from that which exists ever the same" (*On the Trinity, II, 17, 46*). "God is known more truly than he is spoken of, and he is more truly than he is known" (VII,4,7). Augustine's favored way of arriving at God does not consist of looking at things around us, but retiring within the soul. "Go not abroad but enter into yourself: truth dwells in the inner man; and if you should find your nature mutable, transcend yourself" (*On true religion, 39, 72*).

As for the soul, the mark of its immortality is found in its capacity to know in a way that transcends the material order. Not being material, it is not subject to the corruption that is the destiny of bodily things. The soul must be as lasting as the truth of its object, and truth is eternal. Early in his career, Augustine flirted with the idea that the soul antedated the body, but he came to reject this, as well as the notion that knowing is remembering, which seems to suggest such an antecedent state.

In his massive work *On the Trinity*, Augustine finds in the soul many suggestions of the Trinity of divine persons.

The City of God

We return to the work that we first mentioned, the huge twenty-book tome that Augustine composed in response to the charge that turning from the pagan religion had brought disaster on Rome. In 410 A.D. Rome was sacked by Alaric the Goth, who as it happens was a Christian. The unthinkable had happened. Rome, the center of the civilized world, had been subdued by barbarians from the North. Was this a punishment because the new religion had made such gains in the empire?

"The polytheistic worshipers of false gods, whom we commonly call pagans, endeavored to bring this overthrow home to the Christian religion, and began to blaspheme the true God with unusual sharpness and bitterness. This set me on fire with zeal for the house of God, and I commenced to write the books *Of the City of God* against their blasphemies and errors" (*Retractions*).

But if that was the inspiration of the work, it became an *omnium gatherum*, including in Book Eight Augustine's account of the history of philosophy. But the unifying theme is that there are two cities, the City of Man and the City of God. Augustine tells us that the first ten books are the refutation of attacks against the Christian religion. They are followed by twelve books in which the accent is on the positive account of Christianity. It is there that we are told of the origin of the two cities, and the course of their respective histories and how they will end.

The origin of the City of Man is self-love, contempt of God, whereas the origin of the City of God is love of God in contempt of oneself. The first seeks the glory of men, the second the glory of God. Cain and Abel represent the opposition of the sons of flesh and the sons of promise. Membership in the one city or the other, while the criterion of each choice is clear, is not written in stone in this life. Augustine is not saying that here

and now, it is simply a matter of observation as to where the two cities and their citizens are. The final sorting out will not be made in time but only at the end of the world at the final judgment.

Simply to acquire an acquaintance with the vast literary output of Augustine is a huge task, but to comprehend his works can occupy a lifetime. So much of what he wrote is in response to an occasion -- a heresy, a charge, an inquiry. For all his productivity, his works do not seem to be the product of reflective leisure. But this vast evangelizing task proceeded from the inner life, into which we get a glimpse in the *Confessions*, the inner life that is the source of all his work and the reason why we call him Saint Augustine.

Writing Assignment

Give an outline of *The City of God* in a page or two. This could be a memo to yourself, the result of just paging through the text to see what it contains and consulting one of the histories.

Lesson 9: Boethius and Beyond

The Last of the Romans

When Augustine died in 430, the barbarians were bearing down on his episcopal city. When Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius was born, the Ostrogoths were in control of the city, although the king lived in Ravenna. Theodoric favored the continuation of Roman customs -- the senate, the consuls, and so forth -- and welcomed men like Boethius of distinguished Roman birth into his administration. Before his political career, Boethius was educated in the works of classical philosophy, perhaps at Alexandria. Theodoric was an Arian -- a member of the heretical sect that denied the divinity of Christ -- while Boethius was a Catholic. Eventually Boethius, whose life had been successful in every way, fell afoul of the Ostrogothic king who accused him of conspiring against him with the emperor in Constantinople. Boethius was executed in Pavia in 524. It is thanks to the elements of his life that the literary effort of Boethius can be divided into three quite distinct parts.

First, there is the great project, inspired by his philosophical education, to turn into Latin the writings of Plato and Aristotle.

Second, there are the theological tractates which deal with the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Catholic faith in all its sweep.

Finally, there is the work Boethius wrote in prison while awaiting execution, *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

Any one of these efforts alone would have earned Boethius the gratitude of subsequent generations, but the combination of them in so short a lifetime gives us a sense of the depth of his talents.

The Translation Project

When Boethius tells us that he intended to translate all of Plato and all of Aristotle into Latin and then go on to show the compatibility of the two thinkers, our reaction must be one of disbelief. This task would have taken the focused concentration of a long life, and Boethius was active in political life as well as in the affairs of the Church. But the goal involved more than simply putting these authors into Latin. Boethius proposed to accompany each work with a commentary, sometimes with two, in order to make it intelligible. Needless to say, Boethius did not complete the project. He did however make an important and impressive start on it.

He translated Porphyry's *Eisagoge* or introduction to the *Categories* of Aristotle and produced two commentaries on Porphyry. He translated and commented on the *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, and commented on some rhetorical works of Cicero as well. This is as far as he got, and it is clear that this concentration on logical works is not accidental, but incorporates a view as to how one should get into philosophy. Boethius also composed a work on Arithmetic and on Music. All of these translations and commentaries were to have a significant impact on medieval education.

The Theological Tractates

Five theological treatises by Boethius have come down to us, and it is thanks to these that he has been called the first of the Scholastics, putting faith and reason into relationship to one another. The work *On the Trinity* is heavily influenced by Augustine's great work. Boethius investigates the way in which things are predicated of God, and of the three divine persons taken singly; he asks if God falls into one of the categories; he locates the subject in terms of Aristotle's division of theoretical inquiry into three kinds, with the suggestion that the work falls into the discipline Aristotle called theology. Throughout, there is a Platonic cast to the discussion, despite the many references to Aristotelian doctrine. In this amalgamation, Boethius shows his affinity with the Neoplatonists who, like himself, were intent on overcoming the opposition between Plato and Aristotle. In discussing the Incarnation against certain heretical views, in the work called *De duabus naturis* (*On the two natures*) by medievals, he distinguishes nature and person and individual, and correlates Greek and Latin terminology, establishing in Latin meanings for *essentia*, *subsistentia*, and *substantia* that would influence later discussions.

A work that is not specifically Christian, the *De hebdomadibus*, asks whether everything is good just insofar as it exists and proceeds *more geometrico*, first setting down axioms and then addressing the question in their light. It would seem that either answer to the

titular question lands one in difficulties, so distinctions are introduced which lead to a satisfactory conclusion. The methodological elegance of this short work is most impressive. Among the axioms is found *diversum est esse et id quod est* (existence and that which exists are diverse) which would have a long history. This was the case because the tractates of Boethius became themselves the subjects of later commentaries. Thomas Aquinas, for example, commented on both *On the Trinity* and the *De hebdomadibus*, the former incomplete, the latter complete.

The Consolation of Philosophy

The work that Boethius composed in his death cell in Pavia awaiting execution is prompted by the injustice of the accusation. Why do such terrible things happen? Why do the just suffer and the wicked prosper? It is difficult not to phrase the question in biblical terms, but the five books of the *Consolation* -- alternating prose and verse sections -- make no overt appeal to the religious faith of the author. Rather, the question is treated using only the resources of reason, of philosophy.

So rich and various a work cannot be adequately summarized. A grieving Boethius is consoled by a shocked Dame Philosophy at the outset, and then the restoration of the knowledge Boethius' misfortune has obscured begins. In what does human happiness consist? There is the familiar consideration and dismissal of fame, and wealth and power and pleasure as causes of human well-being. The wisdom that is happiness is described in purely philosophical terms. The introduction of providence into the discussion is not a counter-example, since providence was a component of Neoplatonic philosophical discussions. The troublesome problem of the compatibility of the necessity of God's knowledge and human freedom is a central issue in the later books.

The question of the distinction between philosophy and theology thus receives an impressive answer in Boethius. Some of his works are theological, that is, bring to bear on mysteries of the faith philosophical truths; the *Consolation* is philosophical, severely eschewing any appeal to the faith. So marked is this distinction that for a long time it was doubted that the author of the tractates and of the *Consolation* could be the same. Since there was no doubt about Boethius's authorship of the latter, the tractates were thought to be wrongly attributed to Boethius. But contemporary mention of both as by Boethius removed all doubt and we are left with the mystery of why a Christian believer in Boethius' plight would have written such a work, which suggests, as Doctor Johnson observed to Boswell, that he was *magis philosophus quam Christianus*.

Monastic Education

Boethius's translation project succeeded in getting into Latin some logical works and he himself composed works on arithmetic and music. When we turn to the work of Cassiodorus Senator, Boethius's contemporary who, a layman like Boethius, nonetheless founded a monastery at Vivarium, we find in the *Institutiones* a comparison of sacred and secular learning that would define medieval education in monasteries and, later, in cathedral schools.

Cassiodorus was of course speaking of the education of monks. Scripture is sacred learning and the monks would be familiar with it from the liturgy and from the daily recitation of the Psalms. Study of Scripture outside the church was meant to enhance the services within the church. And what is secular learning?

Cassiodorus gathers all secular learning into the seven liberal arts. These arts fall into two groupings: the *trivium*, or threefold way, and the *quadrivium*, or fourfold way. The first group included grammar, rhetoric and logic; the second group included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. In Augustine, the arts have not been reduced to seven, but with Cassiodorus this number becomes standard.

Each liberal art was associated with a book, an author (*auctor*) who was the authority (*auctoritas*) in that discipline. The logical works Boethius had translated became text books in the trivium and *On Music* made him an authority in the quadrivium. The assumption of Cassiodorus is that there is a complementarity, not a conflict, between sacred and secular learning, and that the latter is propaedeutic to the former. That is, the arts enable one to interpret scripture and perform other monastic and clerical tasks better.

Over the course of the next centuries, this conception of education prevailed and, when Charlemagne turned his attention to the education of the diocesan clergy, the liberal arts curriculum was installed at the cathedral school each bishop was to have for the training of his priests. By the twelfth century, the division into liberal arts is beginning to show strain. Some schools emphasized logic almost to the exclusion of the other arts, and some schools expanded the study of grammar into the study of the ancient classics and other literature. But a crisis was to come at the end of the 12th century which spelled the end of the notion that the seven liberal arts were an adequate summation of secular learning.

Writing Assignment

Outline the procedure and content of Boethius's *De hebdomadibus* (*whether everything is good just insofar as it is*). More perhaps than any other work this is the basis for calling Boethius the first of the Scholastics. You should be able to do this in fewer than five pages. The text can be found, with translation, in the Loeb Classica Library edition of Boethius, edited by H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand and S. J. Tester, London: Heinemann, 1978. A translation can be found in the medieval reader edited by Hyman and Walsh.

Lesson 10: The Twelfth Century

It used to be said that the 12th century had the misfortune of being followed by the 13th century which all but eclipsed it. This is no longer the case and scholars have devoted deep and abiding attention to the 12th century. The term "renaissance" gets overworked by historians, but that there was a genuine rebirth of learning in the 12th century seems undeniable.

Anselm of Canterbury

Anselm is a man of the 11th century, but he lived into the next century and is a figure of such importance that it is fitting that we let him stand as a kind of port of entry to the 12th century.

Anselm was born in Aosta in 1033 where he was educated in the local monastery. After the death of his mother, Anselm knew a period of profound grief. In 1060 he became a monk at Bec in Normandy and came under the influence of the prior Lanfranc, who was in charge of educating young monks. Lanfranc would go on to become Archbishop of Canterbury: Anselm followed in Lanfranc's footsteps, first as prior at Bec, then as archbishop of Canterbury in 1093. He died in 1109.

For our purposes, Anselm is identical to his writings. At Bec, in middle life, he wrote a number of short treatises whose sophistication and subtlety continue to impress students of them. It is in some ways unfortunate that he has been all but identified with an argument on behalf of the existence of God that he fashioned in a work he called *Proslogion*. In it he begins with the Psalmist's remark that "The fool has said in his heart there is no God," and proceeds to spell out the implications of the verse. That one who denies God's existence is a fool implies that his denial is absurd. Anselm proceeds to show why this is the case. Anyone who knows what is meant by God is prevented by that fact alone from denying his existence. Why?

Anselm begins with preliminaries. When a carpenter is about to make a dog house he has in mind what he is going to do. Once he has done it, we distinguish the doghouse he had in mind from the doghouse in reality. The thought of a doghouse is not nothing, so give it a value of 1. The existent doghouse also gets a value of 1. The two together have greater value than one alone.

All right. By God we shall mean "that than which nothing greater can be thought." One refusing to admit the existence of God at least admits that this is what the term means. But, having admitted that, he cannot coherently deny that God exists. The thought in his mind, the definition of the term, gets the value of 1. If something in reality corresponded to that idea -- as the artifact corresponds to the artisan's idea -- the result would be something greater than the idea alone. But if God existed only in the mind and not in reality he would not be what we take the term to mean, namely, that than which nothing greater can be thought. If 'that than which nothing greater can be thought' had no

existent counterpart it would not be 'that than which nothing greater can be thought' since adding existence would produce something greater, viz. Idea + existence.

That is the barebones statement of Anselm's argument in chapter 2 of the *Proslogion*. It is safe to say that there are few medieval texts that have drawn and continue to draw more attention than this one. Some dismiss it as based on a confusion of conception and judgment; others defend it by appeal to modal terms. Some say that it is philosophical, others say that it is not an effort to prove, but simply to explicate the faith of the author. Not only has this proposed proof eclipsed Anselm's other writings, it has thrown the work in which it occurs into shadow.

Anselm also wrote a *Monologion*, in which we find a more traditional effort to prove God's existence from his effect. He wrote a dialogue *On truth* and another on the *Grammarian*. He wrote on the fall of the devil, on free will, on why God became man. Good editions of the original texts as well as translations of the body of his work into modern languages have expanded Anselm's influence. One can lament his appointment to Canterbury since in that post he came into conflict with the king and spent much time in exile from his see. Anselm tried unsuccessfully to resign, but the pope refused his request.

Peter Abelard

Peter, like Anselm, spans the divide between the 11th and 12th century. He was born in Brittany in 1079 into a family that seemed to destine him for a military life, but from an early age he showed a predilection for the life of the mind. It may have been in 1094 that he studied with Roscelin and shortly thereafter with Thierry of Chartres. Then he arrived in Paris and studied with William of Champeaux. Soon he was quarreling with his master and rivaling him in his own classroom. Then he set up his own school, at Melun in 1104, then at Corbeil, closer to Paris, since he meant to attract students away from Parisian masters. Suddenly, in 1106, he fell ill and returned home. In 1108 he returned to Paris and the classroom of William of Champeaux, who was now teaching at the monastery of St. Victor, where he had become a monk and was teaching rhetoric. Soon Peter convinced William to change his views on the nature of universals and, with this triumph, set up his own school on Mount Ste.-Genevieve on the Left Bank. But soon his mother summoned him home. Peter's father had joined a religious order; his mother wished to become a nun, and she wanted Peter home before she took the big step. Peter returned to Paris in 1113, age thirty-four, and decided to take up the study of theology, so he went to Laon to study with Anselm [of Laon] and his brother Ralph. Almost immediately Peter fell into his old ways and was criticizing his supposedly eminent professors. On a dare, he offered to interpret Ezechiel. By his own account, he was a great hit. Off he went to Paris then, taking the students with him. In Paris he had a chair at Notre Dame in theology. Everything was rosy, and then Peter fell in love with Heloise.

Her uncle Fulbert, a canon of Notre Dame, hired Abelard to tutor his niece in logic. Heloise was a very gifted young woman. To facilitate instruction, Abelard moved into the canon's house. His theology teaching suffered. He began to write poetry. Heloise

became pregnant. Peter, while a cleric, was not a priest, and he wished to marry Heloise. She demurred for self-effacing reasons: marriage would have ended his teaching career. Finally she agreed to a clandestine marriage. But Fulbert got the news out; Peter took Heloise to a nunnery for safe-keeping. A furious Fulbert hired a gang to attack and emasculate the perfidious tutor.

This is the tale that is told in *The Story of my Calamities* by Peter, and in Heloise's letters to him. The maimed Abelard became a monk at St. Denys near Paris around 1118, but soon became a critic of the monastery. Bernard of Clairvaux also was critical of St. Denys. In any case, students from Paris came to Abelard. He wrote his first theological work and found himself accused of heresy. He had no license to teach theology; his book was burnt and after a time he was sent back to St. Denys. Eventually Abelard received permission to set up his own community, but students continued to seek him out. He was made abbot of St Gildas in 1125, but in 1132 he had to flee for his life. Thus it was that John of Salisbury heard Abelard lecture in 1136. Abelard had made a foe of Bernard of Clairvaux, and at the Council of Sens in 1140 he was again accused of heterodox views. He was condemned and excommunicated. He set off to Rome to appeal the sentence, but on his way he stopped at Cluny and was persuaded to stay. He died there on April 21, 1142.

For many Abelard's lurid life is a sufficient reason for interest in him. But he was a thinker of note, often facile and seemingly wanting to raise the ire of his listeners. We have his commentaries on logical works and his own *Dialectica*. In logic, Abelard is surprisingly old-fashioned, contenting himself with glossing the texts that had formed the basis of the trivium for centuries. Such occasional works as the *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian* and his ethics *Scito teipsum: Know thyself* show a far more innovative Abelard. His *Sic et non (Yes and no)*, a compilation of seemingly conflicting statements from Scripture and the Fathers as problems for the theologian, had an effect on the development of Scholastic theology.

In his *Ethics*, Abelard concentrates on the motivation of the act rather than its actual performance and consequences. Typically, he takes an important truth to an extreme where it ceases to be true. Since it is the intention to act that gives the act its moral character, Abelard held that the actual performance of the act was irrelevant to moral appraisal. He contrasts a man who intends to build houses for the poor with another who both intends to build and actually builds, and says there is no moral difference between them. The merit of Abelard's approach is that he guards against a completely extrinsic appraisal of action, with intention or motivation ignored. But in seeing the importance of intention Abelard overlooks the other "fonts of morality" (recently recalled by John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor*) that are also important for the moral appraisal of the act. Abelard was writing before the *Ethics* of Aristotle became known and, viewed in that perspective, the *Scito teipsum* is a remarkable work.

The School of Chartres

The cathedral school at Chartres was an important intellectual center in the 12th century. Its importance actually dates from Fulbert (c. 960-1028), who as bishop of

Chartres brought to his own school what he had learned at Rheims. The cathedral school was meant to prepare young men for the clerical life and was not dedicated to the pursuit of culture as such, though secular learning was represented by the liberal arts. Bernard of Chartres, who died sometime before 1130, was written about by John of Salisbury, the perceptive English wandering scholar who left a circumstanced account of the schools he had visited on the continent. Bernard set forth four things as the object of philosophy: reading, doctrine, meditation and good works. There follows an interesting portrait of how the arts were taught. Bernard refers to Plato's *Timaeus* in speaking of the coming into being of things, thus alerting us to the fact that a partial Latin translation of that dialogue was in circulation. Platonism is said to characterize the school in the 12th century, derived from the Fathers, chiefly Augustine, Boethius, the *Timaeus*, and Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*. The spirit of the school can be sensed in Bernard's remark, reported by John of Salisbury, "We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants; we see more things and more distant things than did they, not because our sight is keener nor because we are taller than they, but because they lift us up and add their giant stature to our height" (*Metalogicon*, III, 4).

For others who figure in the school of Chartres, I refer you to Chapter IV of my history of medieval philosophy cited earlier.

Monastic Thought

The Victorines -- The Parisian monastery of St. Victor of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, produced a series of remarkable thinkers during the twelfth century. Perhaps the most notable is Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141), who became head of the school in 1133. His *Didascalicon* is an introduction to the arts. He has a work on grammar, on the sacraments and various commentaries on Scripture and on Denys the Areopagite. The *Didascalicon* is noteworthy for its effort to put before the student a unified view of the intellectual effort. Learning relates to both the temporal and eternal, and philosophy is the comprehensive knowledge of both human and divine things. Thus he lists a companion series of mechanical arts to complement the liberal arts.

Richard of St. Victor, a Scot by birth, came to Paris around 1162 and became master of theology at St. Victor in 1162. His concern was the contemplative life.

Bernard of Clairvaux -- the great reformer of the monastic life exercised a wide influence on the church of the 12th century. He was born in 1090 and at the age of twenty-two entered the monastery of Citeaux where the Rule of St. Benedict was rigorously adhered to. It was characteristic of Bernard that when he sought monastic solitude he brought thirty-two others with him. He became abbot of Clairvaux at the age of twenty-five, and it was from this post that he exerted his influence far and wide. He had left the world, but he was constantly drawn into disputes. He preached the Second Crusade. He died in 1153 and was canonized twenty-one years later. His writing consists largely of sermons and letters; he also wrote on the degrees of humility, on loving God, on conversion, on meditation, and on the errors of Abelard.

Peter the Venerable (1092-1147) as abbot of Cluny welcomed Abelard into the community and after the death of the stormy petrel wrote of his edifying death at Cluny. He and Bernard had different views of the proper application of the Rule of St. Benedict. Peter visited Toledo and was instrumental in having the Koran translated into Latin. He then wrote a refutation of Islam.

William of St. Thierry (1080-1148) became a monk and then abbot of St. Thierry but eventually resigned to become a Cistercian. He had nothing but contempt for secular learning and considered it a waste of a monk's time to devote himself to it at all. He stressed love rather than knowledge. The point of life is union with God. He was a resolute opponent of Abelard whom he may have met when they were both students in Laon.

See Chapter VI of my history of medieval philosophy.

Writing Assignment

What are the major differences, and similarities, of Anselm, Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux. Maximum five pages.

Lesson 11: The Thirteenth Century

Three Innovations

The rise of the university -- When we read John of Salisbury's description of 12th-century Paris we are given a picture of a very lively and various intellectual scene. On the left bank of the Seine any number of masters and students were clustered in different institutions. This was called the Latin Quarter because that was the language of scholarship, and the international body of masters and students communicated in it as well. There were schools situated at the monastery of St. Victor and on Mont Ste.-Genevieve. There was as well the cathedral school of Notre Dame located on the Ile de la Cité. At the beginning of the 13th century, for a number of reasons, many of them entirely non-academic, the masters and students of Paris formed into a legal entity called *universitas magistrorum et scholarum*.

The university thus was a natural outgrowth of the liberal arts schools and the theology schools already in existence. By unifying, the masters came under the chancellor of the diocese, and they initiated a graded apprenticeship whereby students could become full members of the guild: the courses to be taken, the writing to be done, the public

manifestation of one's competence -- features that have descended to present day institutions had their rise in Paris.

There were several faculties making up the university. The Faculty of Arts was entered by boys in their early teens and led after some eight or nine years to their recognition as having mastered the arts -- *Magister artium*. This degree equipped them for possible entry into other faculties -- theology, law, medicine. If a Master of Arts began the study of theology in his early twenties, he could expect to finish the course in his early thirties.

Aristotle's second coming -- We have seen that some logical works of Aristotle had figured in the arts curriculum from the beginning, thanks to the translations by Boethius. Late in the 12th century, a translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* appeared in Latin. And then the flood began. At such centers as Toledo -- remember that Peter the Venerable had visited there to commission a translation of the Koran into Latin -- Christian, Muslim and Jewish scholars got together and began to put texts of Aristotle into Latin. Aristotle's text had mysteriously disappeared, been resurrected and edited, and then, thanks to translations into Syrian and then into Arabic, exercised an influence in the Muslim world. Spain was where Islam, having been driven back from France, now coexisted in uneasy truce with Christendom. However unstable the political conditions, scholars came into contact with one another, the vast treasury house of Greek learning that existed in Arabic excited interest, and the translations began, often under the patronage of the bishop, as at Toledo. Within a relatively short time, a quarter century, the traditional notion that the seven liberal arts adequately summed up secular learning was, as they say, blown out of the water. These texts arrived in Paris just as the educational system was being reorganized, and of course they influenced the new organization.

In the Faculty of Arts -- whose title indicates its continuity with the earlier situation -- philosophy would soon include such works as Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *On the Soul*, and many, many more. Moreover, these translations were accompanied by translations of Islamic scholars who had pored over them, figures whose names would be latinized to Avicenna and Averroes. What this meant was that the tradition of complementarity between secular and sacred learning had to be rethought. And for some, the arrival of Aristotle threatened not only the traditional curriculum, but the faith as well. If Aristotle taught things in conflict with the faith, he could hardly be thought of as complementary to it.

The mendicant orders -- When St. Francis of Assisi founded his order and St. Dominic founded his, they were at once a rebuke to the clergy of the time and men with a special mission. The Franciscans set out to live the vows of religion unequivocally -- poverty, chastity, obedience -- but it was poverty that most characterized their lives. They were mendicants, beggars, who depended on the charity of others for their survival. Quarrels over how literally owning nothing was to be taken finally brought, under Bonaventure, an interpretation that ensured the continuance of the Franciscans. Domingo Guzman, appalled by heretical distortions of the faith, formed a band of preachers to counter them. This required an educated group, and early on Dominicans were a feature in

Paris through their convent of Saint Jacques on the left bank. When some masters joined the Franciscan order, there were Franciscan masters as well.

The presence of mendicant masters did not sit well with the diocesan priests, or non-mendicant religious, masters. There were theological attacks on the very concept of the new orders and concerted efforts to keep them from becoming masters. These efforts failed, and brought little credit on those who fought the mendicants. In the end, the most famous masters of thirteenth century Paris were either Dominicans or Franciscans.

We have concentrated on Paris as the proto-university. Soon universities were scattered across the map of Europe; masters had gone from Paris to England, and Cambridge and Oxford were founded. The phenomenon continued into Scotland where St. Andrews was founded in 1412.

Early Masters

William of Auvergne (c. 1180-1249) -- A master of theology who eventually became bishop of Paris, William was a member of the papal commission appointed to study the works of Aristotle to see if they could become the basis for university teaching. How does William regard Aristotle? He seems to blend Aristotle with the Islamic interpreters whose commentaries accompanied the text into Latin. Thus, he criticizes the Neoplatonic emanationist theory of creation as if it were Aristotle's. Gerard of Cremona translated the so-called *Liber de causis* and called it a work of Aristotle's when it is actually comments on selected propositions of Proclus. William took it to be Aristotelian. This is not to say that all William's criticisms of Aristotle miss the mark.

Here is his procedure. [1] Is a doctrine in conflict with the faith? If it is it is false. [2] But he then goes on to argue that the philosophical doctrine is false or ill-founded. In the case of the teaching that there is only one human soul -- Avicenna's and Averroes' misreading of Aristotle -- William thought that steel and torment should also be used to counter it. William also takes up the question of the eternity of the world, something Aristotle did hold. His treatment of this is subtle and impressive. Indeed, William is a master of great talent and accomplishment whose discussions of Aristotle and Aristotle's errors give a good sense of the difficulties confronting any easy assimilation of the "new" philosophical writings.

Alexander of Hales (c. 1185-1245) -- An Englishman who became a master of arts at Paris and then master of theology, perhaps around 1220, he spent some time in his native land but returned to Paris in 1232 and joined the Franciscans in 1236. He is noteworthy as being the first master to employ the text of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* as the basis of his teaching. In explaining the text, Alexander uses Scripture and Augustine, but also Aristotle, and he is often seen as the first to pursue speculative theology with reference to Aristotle. And while tentative, he is sympathetic. Among his fateful interpretations was to apply the Aristotelian teaching on hylomorphism to the soul itself as if it had a matter and a form.

Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253) -- Robert gives us a sense of the reaction to Aristotle at Oxford. The eventual bishop of Lincoln is well versed in the writings of Aristotle, and drew nothing but praise from Roger Bacon, who held Parisian masters in contempt. Robert's works are noteworthy for the number of mathematical and scientific writings, and he developed what might be called a metaphysics of light as the first body out of which emerges everything else. He wrote treatises on the relation of God to creatures, asking if God is the form of all things, and on creation. There is a good deal of Augustine in Robert, and perhaps a tension between the Augustinian tradition and the emerging influence of Aristotle.

The Giants

Albert the Great (1206-1280) -- A Bavarian by birth, Albert's career covers the most exciting and controversial years of the thirteenth century. After some study in Italy he joined the Dominicans in 1223 and was sent to the convent in Cologne. From 1228 to 1240 he taught in various German Dominican houses, but in 1140 he was sent to Paris where he studied for two years and then, from 1242 to 1248, occupied one of the two Dominican chairs. Then he was sent to Cologne to set up a Dominican *studium generale*, the equivalent of a university. He was provincial of his order in Germany for three years, taught again, and then was made bishop of Ratisbon in 1260, a post he resigned after two years and returned to teaching and writing, carrying on until his death in 1280.

Theologian as well as philosopher, Albert showed an experimental bit, often adding to an account of some physical claim "I have tested this" or "I have not tested this." His first writings were theological (*On the nature of the good, Summa on Creatures, Exposition of Sentences of Peter Lombard*). He went on to comment on the works of (pseudo-)Denis the Areopagite. His so-called Aristotelian period extends from 1254 to 1270. He produced paraphrases on the Aristotelian *corpus* as well as on Boethius. In narrating these works, Albert draws on other commentators, so 'paraphrase' seems inadequate to describe them. He does insist that what he is writing is not his own opinion, a demur that some have mistakenly taken to be true of all medieval commentaries. In the last decade of his life, Albert composed a *Summa theologiae*.

In his *Summa*, as in his commentary on Peter Lombard, Albert applies to theology as a science the methodology of Aristotle. For example, What kind of science is it? What is its subject matter? Is it wisdom as well as science? The subject of theology can be understood in various ways, he tells us. God is the subject of metaphysics as that about which knowledge is chiefly sought, but being is the subject in the sense of that whose properties and causes are sought. So too God is the subject of theology because knowledge of God is what is principally sought, but Christ and the Church, or the Incarnate Word and all the sacraments with which he perfects the Church, are its subject in the sense of that whose properties and causes are sought. That is, he says, the subject of theology is the work of reparation. But how do metaphysics and theology differ? Metaphysics is concerned with God insofar as he has the properties of the first being, insofar as he is the first being; God is the subject of theology insofar as he has

the attributes which are attributed to him by faith. In metaphysics, God is known in terms of being and its properties because he is the first being, whereas in theology he is known as the subject of properties that have been revealed.

Albert's lengthy attention to the works of Aristotle did not prevent him from acquiring a predilection for aspects of Neoplatonism. He seems to have picked this up from the Arabic commentators he favored in his so-called paraphrases of Aristotle.

Roger Bacon (1219-1292) -- An Englishman who began his teaching career in the faculty of arts at Paris, he took pride in the number of times he commented on the works of Aristotle. In 1247 he returned to England, where, at Oxford, he came into contact with Robert Grosseteste and decided to devote himself to scientific studies. This involved a large dose of magic and astrology. He became a great critic of the academic world, particularly of theologians who knew no philosophy. In 1257 he joined the Franciscan Order. There followed a period of silence, but then Roger wrote the pope to ask for his patronage while he wrote a work on how education must be reformed. The result was the *Opus majus*, which was followed by the *Opus minus* and the *Opus tertium*. The pope received these in 1267, the year before he died. This venture put Roger under a cloud, and the Franciscans imprisoned him, for how long is unknown. In 1292 he wrote a *Compendium of Theological Studies*. He died that same year.

For all his quirky and cantankerous nature, Roger's critique of a bookish academe has merit. It may have been his personality rather than his ideas that led others to ignore him. The *Opus majus* was written swiftly but when Roger was at the height of his powers. It is a program for reform rather than a finished work. It begins with a discussion of the causes of human ignorance. They are four: subjection to unworthy authority; influence of habit; popular prejudice; and the false conceit of wisdom. A champion of Aristotle, Roger observes that on some points Aristotle can lead us astray. The greatest of the four, that from which Roger clearly thought he himself had suffered most, was popular prejudice. The great of yesterday have flaws that are clear to a youngster today; what is known is as nothing to what has yet to be learned. He tells the pope that it is not so much that what is being taught is false as that it is assumed that everything is already known. The search for truth has three paths: Scripture, canon law, and philosophy. But wisdom is one. Canon law and philosophy are articulations of what is contained in Scripture. This seems to mean that no truth can be incompatible with Scripture. He sides with Avicenna in taking Aristotle's agent intellect to be, not a faculty of the soul, but something divine and apart. Philosophers, like the prophets, were recipients of revelation. What then is the distinction between philosophy and theology? They are parts of a whole, and philosophy is meant to lead us to theology, but philosophy is not to be gotten through hastily. Bacon's conception of theology owes little to Aristotelian methodology: all human knowledge serves to illustrate the truths God has revealed in Scripture. Bacon's comparison of philosophy and theology is indistinct and blurred. This great sprawling work gives us a sense of Bacon's enthusiasms, not least of which is knowledge of languages, Greek and Hebrew. He then goes on to treat of mathematics, optics, and experimental science. Mathematics is the key to the other sciences. In order to understand Scripture, the spiritual meaning is gotten through the

literal meaning, and mathematics is necessary to grasp the literal meaning of the text. The *Opus majus* culminates in a discussion of moral philosophy which has a threefold task: duties to God, duties to neighbor, duties to ourselves. This section most shows the influence of Aristotle, and it ends with a discussion of the sacraments, the Mass, and the Eucharist.

Roger Bacon is a kind of patron for the unclubbable academic, the man convinced everyone else is wasting his time and he alone pursuing the truth. But the *Opus majus* should not be seen as one of those mad works produced in solitude in which some wild-eyed would-be prophet offers a solution to the ills of the world. It is an authentic work of genius, a mixture of the traditional and innovative, opinionated, on the mark, off the mark, proof positive that common sources and points of reference did not end in uniformity of thought.

Saint Bonaventure (1217-1274) -- John Fidenza was born near Viterbo, studied the arts in Paris from 1236 to 1242 and in 1243 entered the Franciscan Order. He studied theology under Alexander of Hales, completed his studies in 1253, and then taught in the Franciscan house in Paris until 1257, when, along with Thomas Aquinas, he was reluctantly acknowledged as a university master. Some months later he was elected Master General of the Franciscan Order, but he continued to lecture and preach in Paris. He was named cardinal in 1273 and was attending the ecumenical council in Lyon when he died in 1274 at the age of fifty-seven.

Among his writings are his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, disputed questions on Christ's knowledge, the Trinity, and evangelical perfection.

The *Breviloquium* has been called a resume of Bonaventure's commentary on Peter Lombard. Furthermore, he wrote *On the reduction of the arts to theology* and *The mind's road to God*. He also delivered famous series of sermons in Paris when he was head of his Order: on the ten commandments (1267), on the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1268) and on the work of the six days (1273). His misgivings about the influence of Aristotle is expressed in these sermons.

Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas were near contemporaries, often in the same city, but they were not close friends. Nonetheless, they complement one another as the two greatest thinkers of the thirteenth century. There has been much controversy over what Bonaventure meant by philosophy as opposed to theology, and the debate is fueled by the fact that Bonaventure wrote only theological works. Is his philosophy contained in and inseparable from its theological setting, or can it be extracted and granted a separate status Bonaventure himself did not give it? Discussions of the nature of Christian Philosophy in the twentieth century often turn on that question. In his *Sentences* commentary, Bonaventure distinguished four kinds of knowledge: first, purely speculative knowledge founded on the principles of reason, which is the science of human philosophy; second, knowledge that is in the intellect insofar as it is inclined by appetite: when founded on faith such knowledge is the science of Sacred Scripture; third, knowledge which inclines to action, founded on the principles of natural law;

fourth, knowledge founded on faith which has its source in grace: this is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

The first and third kinds would seem to be philosophy as distinct from theology, the second and fourth kinds. In both philosophy and theology, there is a distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge. Generally speaking, philosophy is based on the principles of reason and theology on principles of faith. In this same commentary, speaking of the subject of theology, Bonaventure distinguishes three senses of subject of science. That to which all else is referred as to its radical principle; that to which all else is referred as to an integral whole; that to which all else is referred as to a universal whole. Applied to grammar, these would be exemplified by the alphabet, by perfect and correct speech, and by articulated sound capable of signifying. In theology these three senses are represented by God, Christ, and by either sacrament or the credible. The comparison of philosophy and theology in Bonaventure can be summarized thus:

- Philosophy is based on principles of reason, theology on principles of faith.
- Philosophy sees things in an inborn light belonging to the nature of the rational creature; theology is dependent on an infused light, the gift of faith.
- The subject of philosophy is the naturally knowable; the subject of theology is the credible.
- Philosophy begins with creatures and arrives at knowledge of God as its term; theology begins with God and considered everything else in the light of what God was revealed about himself.

The reader of this commentary by Bonaventure is not prepared for the distinctively Bonaventurian style of the later works. While his views are distinctively his own, they are arrived at in precise scholastic way with reference to commonly agreed upon sources. This is helpful when we consider two distinctively Bonaventurian tenets. Is it possible to believe and know the same truth at the same time? Bonaventure answers in the affirmative. This may sound like claiming that we can see and not see the same object at the same time. In explaining his perhaps surprising contention, Bonaventure asks what the objects of belief and knowledge are and of kinds of knowledge. If we speak of the knowledge of the blessed, this excludes faith. But in this life, knowledge is arrived at by reasoning. Is such knowledge incompatible with faith? It seems so since in the one case one assents on the basis of an argument, and in the other on the basis of faith. Can one have knowledge on the basis of reasoning and faith about the same truth? An affirmative answer is based on the fact that, in this life, with respect to a truth common to knowledge and faith, reasoning grounds some evidence and certainty about divine things but is not in every way clear knowledge in this life. Well, what about the conclusion of a proof of God's existence? God exists. God is one. Can such truths be simultaneously known and believed? Bonaventure says yes and explains by saying that our knowledge of this existent one does not comprise the plurality of persons. It seems clear that what Bonaventure means is that the same truth, differently understood, can be the simultaneous object of faith and reason.

This suggests the weakness of philosophy with regard to its ultimate aim, knowledge of God. In his sermons on the work of the six days (*Hexameron*), Bonaventure expresses his misgivings about philosophy and provides us with a catalogue of philosophical errors: Philosophical teaching about virtue is unsatisfactory; it cannot heal our wayward affections. Moral philosophy fails to recognize man's true end, which is supernatural. It is not of course that philosophers failed to do what they could do, but that there is more than is dreamt of in philosophy. In speaking of creation, he stresses the need for Ideas, notes Aristotle's denial of them, and takes the definition of God as thought thinking itself in *Metaphysics* 12 to mean that God could not know particular things. This leads Aristotle to reject providence and to a fatalistic view of happenings in the world. The eternity of the world, that there is but one intellect for all men -- these too follow from rejection of the Ideas. Thus Bonaventure both opts for Platonism in its Augustinian form -- the Ideas are the divine exemplars of creatures -- and accepts the Averroistic and Avicennian interpretations of Aristotle as accurate. Of course it was the acceptance of these interpretations by masters of arts at Paris that precipitated the crisis to which Bonaventure is responding. Accepting these interpretations as accurate must then lead to putting Aristotle under a cloud.

In such works as *The Mind's Road to God* and *Reduction of the arts to theology*, Bonaventure provides a view of the whole in charged and mystical terms, so that the reader is carried along by a desire to share the vision of this learned and saintly man. His preference for Plato, as interpreted by Augustine, leads him to see Aristotle's account of intellectual knowledge as inadequate. Aristotle held that thanks to our agent intellect we are able to grasp or abstract from the sense image of things their nature or essence. But can knowledge of God be an abstractive knowledge? Better to think of it as the product of an illumination. Aristotle's account may work for knowledge of the things of our sense experience, but it will not do when it is a matter of the divine.

Bonaventure argues against Aristotle's claim that the world is eternal not by saying that by faith we know it is not eternal. This would simply mean that Aristotle did not have either faith or revelation. But does his contention make sense? Is it conceivable that the world has always existed? Bonaventure offers arguments to show that this is an incoherent claim. Thus Aristotle is wrong on philosophical grounds and not simply because faith gives an answer to the question that reason could not attain.

Bonaventure says much about philosophy, but only in the context of theological writings. He himself felt no impulse to engage in philosophical speculation as such. As for the "errors of Aristotle", despite the wide and deep acquaintance with Aristotle his commentary on the *Sentences* reveals, when controversy erupted between the arts masters and theologians, Bonaventure accepted the artists' understanding of Aristotle, derived from the Arabs, and inveighed against it. He does argue against these views but did not undertake the close reading of the text of Aristotle to appraise these views. But his argument against the eternity of the world is a philosophical argument and will be accepted or rejected on the bases Bonaventure provides for it.

It has been mentioned that Bonaventure died in 1274 while taking part in the council at Lyon. Thomas Aquinas was on his way to that same council when he fell ill and died. No wonder that Dante put the two men together in the *Paradiso*, in the circle of the sun. There are deep and undeniable differences between Bonaventure and Aquinas, but in many ways they are complementary, each man the greatest thinker produced by his respective order.

Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) -- It is not without reason that Thomas is looked upon as a culminating point of Christian and philosophical thought. For one thing, he gives us a clear distinction between philosophy and theology, one that is based first of all on the difference between their starting points or principles. Philosophy is natural reason at work and is discourse that takes its rise from principles within the grasp of any person with standard cognitive equipment. It is not that these principles are first articulated as quasi-axioms and then deductions made from them in the manner of Euclidean geometry. The kind of thinking that characterizes geometry has a datable beginning point in our lives; we may have the memory of first hearing or seeing the axioms formulated, the theorems stated and proofs constructed. But thinking is something we are engaged in from the dim origins of childhood and its principles seem rather to be discovered by driving discourse back to its fundamental assumptions. Thus there can be a sense of novelty when they are first formulated, but what is formulated has been operative in our thinking all along. "It is impossible for a thing to be and not to be at the same time and in the same respect." The first time we hear that it has the sound of a tongue-twister, yet it is latent in all our discourse. That something either *is* or *is not* is not something we derive from other knowledge; all our thinking presupposes and is dependent upon it. We do not learn it in any strong sense of learn -- deriving it from other more knowable and obvious things. Such principles are the presupposition of thinking and are definitive of philosophical discourse. Any philosophical claim has to be driven back to such common principles in order to gain our assent.

Theology presupposes faith, that is the acceptance of truth on the basis of a divine revelation. Methodologically it looks very similar to philosophy, but its characteristic arguments are driven back to truths of faith such that conclusions are true for one who holds the premises to be true. In that sense, theology unlike philosophy is "in-house" -- it works for those who have the gift of faith. Theology also uses truths of a natural sort, of course, but they do not characterize its discourse. The adage that philosophy is the handmaiden of theology means that theological discourse -- though not faith -- presupposes and puts to use truths gained by the use of natural reason. But the water of philosophy is changed into wine by this theological use of it. The very first article of the first question of the first part of the *Summa theologiae* asks if there is any need for a discipline beyond those which make up philosophy. Beginners in theology are supposed to have learned philosophy already, and the arrangement of the medieval university institutionalizes this. The faculty of arts must be passed through to get to the faculty of theology.

The division of philosophy -- We use our mind either simply to find out what is the case, to attain truth, or we use it to find truths which we can put to a use beyond mere knowing, that is, making or doing. The sciences based on the first use of our mind are called speculative sciences, those based on the second are called practical sciences. One speculative science is distinguished from others on the basis of its subject matter. To understand this we must recall the basic structure of discourse, the syllogism. A syllogism is discourse in which from the fact that certain things are true it follows that something else is true. In its simplest form this has the following look:

A is C

C is B

A is B.

C stands for the middle term which links A and B. In a science in the strongest sense, C is the definition of A, and B is a property of A which follows on its being what it is. This is formally true of any strong theoretical proof. But it is instantiated in different ways, and the difference between formally different sciences is seen in the mode of defining C. In natural science, definitions include sensible matter, that thanks to which things are subject to change. Since the definition is the definition of A, we say that different ways of defining the subject of the conclusion yield different kinds of science. The subject of the conclusion is the subject of the science. The definitions of mathematics do not include sensible matter, yet there are individuals of a type, e.g. many circles of the same diameter. Circle A does not differ from circle B in being a circle, so something like the discriminating accidents of material individuals is operative in mathematics. A third science called metaphysics does not include matter in either of these senses -- sensible or imaginative -- in its definitions. Natural science is concerned with being as changeable or mobile; mathematics is concerned with being as quantified; metaphysics is concerned with being as being.

The natural beginning of philosophy -- The activity of the human intellect presupposes the activities of the senses, external and internal. From the unified image of what is sensed, the mind grasps the nature common to many material individuals. This grasping is called abstraction because the formulation of what the nature is, its definition, does not include the peculiarities of this or that instance of it. What is peculiar to Peter or Paul is not mentioned in the definition of human nature which is common to them. It is not that the nature thus considered exists outside the mind as another sort of individual; it owes its unity to the mind, but that unity is possible because of the real similarity between individuals of the same kind. In living things this is due to the fact that some of them are parents of others who in turn become parents, and so on. The kin of kinds are kindred to them. We are not surprised when cats have kittens. Given the origin of our ideas and reasoning in our sense perception of material individuals, our thinking may seem limited to knowing the natures and properties and so on of material things. That this is not the case is something that has to be proved.

The structure of the natural things -- The things that we sense have come into being, change constantly in several ways while they endure, and eventually undergo that change after which they are no more. The account given above of abstraction might seem to suggest that the human mind right off the bat forms an idea of the specific nature of a range of individuals. Of course this is not so. Our first intellectual grasp of sensible things is wildly general: "it is something, a being." Further reflection leads on to the realization of different kinds of things, say, living and non-living; and some living things have senses and others do not, and those that do are divided between those that have reason and those that do not. In this step-wise fashion we move from general and confused -- many kinds are confused in one general grasp -- to more and more specific understanding of nature until we arrive at kinds that are no longer divisible into further kinds; we call them species.

Earlier, in treating of Parmenides, we saw the analysis that Aristotle gives of change and of the thing that is the result of change. Change minimally involves a subject and two contrary states of the subject. The product of change is the subject plus a characteristic: matter and form. This analysis is clear enough but it does not inform us of the different kinds of changeable things. Advance in natural philosophy is had by striving for more and more precise knowledge of things that come to be as the result of a change.

One of the marks of Thomas's philosophy, something he learned from Aristotle, is that the names of the elements of the original analysis are retained as knowledge progresses, with their meaning altering as progress is made, thus creating a chain of related but not identical meanings. Such a language is a powerful propaedeutic device, a kind of Ariadne's thread we can follow backward when the forward progress grows confusing. Change, as Aristotle and Thomas first analyze it, is most obviously exemplified in a thing or substance's altering, or moving, or growing. But what about the change whereby the substance begins to be or ceases to be -- not begins to be white, or here, or tall, but begins to be *sans phrase*? If this is indeed a change it involves a subject, but the subject cannot be a thing, since then the change would be only incidental, the modification of an enduring thing of a given kind, and not the coming into being of the substance itself. Aristotle says that we discern the subject of such radical or substantial change on an analogy with the subject of incidental or accidental changes of substances. When he negates of that subject the notes of the subject of incidental change, he calls it prime matter. Of course this is not to prove that substantial changes occur. We already know that there are substances and that they come into being and pass away. We are accounting for what we already know, not deducing it.

This first extension of the meanings of matter and form inaugurates a procedure that continues throughout philosophy. The substantial form of the living will be differentiated from that of the non-living by calling it soul. It is thanks to soul that living things perform those activities we call vital -- moving themselves about, taking nourishment, sensing, desiring, and so on. These activities are related to the living thing, body and soul, as forms to matter. In speaking of perception, we analyze activities, operations, changes such as coming-to-see, coming-to-hear, coming-to-taste and the like. These changes are analyzed by asking how their elements are distinguished from the kinds of change

already analyzed. Thus 'matter' and 'form' take on new but related meanings. When Thomas tells us that to know is to have the form of another as other, he invites us to distinguish between the way in which the apple becomes red and the way in which we come to see red. Seeing red is not productive of another instance of the kind.

As one looks back over the procedure of natural philosophy he will see key terms acquiring new and related meanings, the later ones quite distant from the earlier, but nonetheless related in such a way that the very procedure is illuminating. Aristotle will call such terms deliberately, as opposed to accidentally, equivocal terms; Thomas will call them analogous terms.

In the course of the study of nature, Aristotle fashioned two proofs that establish that natural things do not exhaust reality. That reality cannot consist of moved movers, but requires a first unmoved mover, points the mind beyond the physical realm, but it is the physical realm that provides the premises of the proof. So too the argument that human intellection involves a change that is not of itself a physical change grounds the realization that the human soul is not corruptible.

Metaphysics -- If to be and to be material are not identical, a science of being as such, being as being, as opposed to being as material, becomes a possibility. Mathematics is not that science since the way we define mathematical does not commit us to the judgment that they exist as they are defined. In that sense, numbers and lines and figures are ideal entities. But the prime mover and the human soul have been shown to exist without matter.

When it is said that the subject of metaphysics is being as being and that a science seeks to know the properties of its subject, the project of metaphysics seems to put a premium on generality. But we have seen that progress in knowledge is from the general to the particular. Yet to know something as a being would seem to be the least particular and the most general thing that could be said of it. That is hardly an accomplishment. The metaphysical enterprise is best seen as the effort to gain less inadequate knowledge of immaterial being, pre-eminently of God, rather than common truths about everything in general. This is clear from its central move. Being is said in many ways but principally of substance, secondarily of the accidents of substance. This justifies concentrating on substance. But substance first means material substance. What the metaphysician then does is to reflect on the meaning of substance in this unarguable instance of it and note that in a substance composed of matter and form, form is what is "most substance" in it. This is the basis for speaking of immaterial substances and substances that are subsisting forms. The form of a natural thing does not subsist; the natural thing does. So "subsisting form", while it is a meaning of substance gleaned from an analysis of natural substance, does not apply to it. Nor of course does this analysis establish that there are any immaterial substances. The realization that there are immaterial existents comes prior to metaphysics. Metaphysics is the analysis of that realization and the fashioning of concepts and a language that will be less inadequate to such beings. This, again, demands the extension of names of

natural things and a refinement of their meaning so they can be applied to immaterial things.

There can be any subsistent forms, so each of them exists to the extent of its nature or essence. Each is a kind of being. But whatever is a being of a kind has a nature distinct from its existence. This means that it is caused by another, since nothing can bring itself into existence. Here Thomas makes the ultimate metaphysical move to a description of God. If caused immaterial substances have a nature distinct from existence, God can be thought of as subsistent existence. This does not mean that he is featureless existence. Rather his existence is the fullness and summation of the perfections found in a diminished and participated form in his effects. Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, fashions a concept of God as subsistent thinking, moving from the most exalted activity in creatures to a way of thinking of it that requires distinguishing and separating it from everything in created thinking that makes it less than perfect.

Ethics and contemplation -- Speculative knowing culminates in metaphysics, in such knowledge as we can attain of God. Practical knowing can be exemplified by the know-how that goes into building a dog house as well as by the thinking that is embedded in our actions, our choices and decisions. The latter is called moral. The former aims at the perfection of the thing made; moral knowledge is concerned with the good or perfection of the agent as such.

Human actions are deliberate and voluntary. That is, we must both know and will what we are doing. Any defect in either of those elements opens the possibility that what seemed to be a voluntary act really was not. Not every activity of a human person is voluntary -- the circulation of the blood, respiration, digestion, fear and desire. Thomas reserves the term 'human actions' for voluntary and thus moral acts; the others he calls 'acts of a man.' Voluntary acts are undertaken for some end which is the fulfillment or good of the act. Since there are zillions of human acts, there are zillions of ends for which humans act. If we say the good is that which is aimed at by an act, it looks as if we cannot discriminate between good acts and bad. We can so discriminate, because while everyone acts for the good, desires what he desires under the aspect of good, it may be only apparently his good, so that to choose it is defective action. How can we tell which of the goods pursued are real goods and which only apparent?

If someone hits himself over the head with a hammer he is wrong to do so because his action implies that this is good for him. If he keeps it up he will crack his skull, fall unconscious, perhaps die. None of these things can be a fitting aim of an agent who seeks to do what is fulfilling of him, that is, what is really good or perfective of him. How can we develop the notion of the human good?

Practical knowledge, like speculative, begins with the comprehensive and inclusive. The human good is that which is our comprehensive good, not the good of our foot or earlobe or scalp, but our integral good. We begin by getting a purchase on this and then proceed to more informative guidance. Guidance, because the point of such discussions as these is not simply to get clear about what is the case, but to acquire knowledge that can guide our actions.

To ask what the human good *is* is unlike asking what the good of kangaroos or ground squirrels might be. So too, as the distinction between human acts and acts of man indicates, it is unlike asking what the good of those activities of ours that can be found in plants and squirrel and the like might be. If the good of an activity is success in achieving the end of that activity, we can say that the human good is the success or perfection of the distinctively human activity. This is not digesting or breathing and the like. It is rational activity. (We are back at the notion of voluntary acts). The good or perfection of rational activity will be the good of the human agent. Now it is not nothing to establish this, but immediately we are struck by the fact that 'rational activity' is of all kinds, and there does not seem to be a generic meaning we could give and then proceed to specific meanings. That is because 'rational activity' is analogously common to many things.

In the most obvious sense, rational activity is the activity of reason. But we can distinguish between the theoretical and the practical use of reason, and the good of the one is not the same as the good of the other. Furthermore, those desires and fears are common to men and animals; such emotions can come under the sway of reason and can then be called rational. We may desire or fear willy-nilly, but how we cope with such emotions is up to us: there is a human way of fearing (courage) and a human way of desiring (moderation). When the pursuit or avoidance of the objects of such spontaneous emotions is related to the overall good of the human agent, they become moral because rational.

The perfection of an activity is called its virtue. Therefore, since rational activity has many senses, there will be many senses of virtue. Virtue is that which makes an activity and an agent good. The good is the object of desire, and so it is that those instances of rational activity which involve will and appetite are called virtues in the strongest sense: the good they pursue is the overall good of the agent. The good of intellectual activities is the perfection of the mind, which is a good, but not the good of the whole individual -- that is why it too must come under a moral appraisal, not as to its inner workings, but as to its use. Thus the human good consists of a plurality of virtues which are virtues in an analogous sense.

Although the perfection of the mind is a virtue in a lesser sense, it is a more noble activity, and thus the perfection of intellect can be said to be the perfection of that which is highest in us. The philosophical life is the moral orientation of other activities to the end of intellect. Thus it is that Aristotle and Thomas can speak of contemplation of the truth, of God, as the ultimate end of the human agent. So it is that the aim of metaphysics, wisdom, knowledge of God, fuses with the end of the moral life. The culminating discussion of Aristotle's *Ethics* is *theoria*, contemplation.

Natural and supernatural end -- It is possible to formulate the human good or end simply in terms of what a human agent is. But through faith we know that we are called to an end which exceeds our nature, a supernatural end. Does the supernatural end cancel out and replace the natural end? From the point of view of the supernatural end -- eventual union with God in heaven -- the natural end is imperfect and this-worldly, but it

relates to the supernatural, not as its opposite or contradictory, but as imperfect to perfect. It is subsumed into the moral life of the believer and for the non-believer will be the sole measure of action. Moral philosophy is not false, but its truths are, from the point of view of our supernatural end, inadequate. In much the same way, in the theoretical order, the truths that can be naturally known about God -- what Thomas calls the preambles of faith -- are not false but inadequate when compared to what God has revealed to us about himself, the mysteries of faith.

Thomas's adoption of Aristotle put him in bad odor with those who were rightly concerned about what masters in the faculty of arts were doing with Aristotle. The crisis of Latin Averroism arose essentially because some masters accepted the bad interpretations of Aristotle they found in Averroes. Thomas showed that the so-called "errors of Aristotle" were either misreadings of the text or views that could only be excluded by revelation, e.g. the eternity of the world. God could have created an eternal world, Thomas argued, and we know that he did not, not because of argument, but thanks to Genesis. Thomas's practice clearly implied that, correctly understood, Aristotle is by and large a massive achievement of natural reason and compatible with, indeed supportive of, the faith. This was not arrived at by twisting the text of Aristotle but by reading it carefully. Toward the end of his life, in response to this crisis, Thomas wrote word-by-word commentaries on a dozen works of Aristotle. These enable anyone to determine the value of his readings of Aristotle's texts.

Writing Assignment

Compare Bonaventure and Aquinas on Aristotle. No more than five pages.

Lesson 12: Decline and Fall

Thomas's robust confidence in the range of natural reason is not fully appreciated by many of his present-day admirers. Nor did this confidence prove catching among his contemporaries. While wariness about Aristotle was justified if Aristotle taught what Latin Averroists attributed to him, such a bad rap should not have defined the attitude toward philosophy. Many came to see Aristotle as a threat rather than a blessing. In 1270 some sixteen propositions were condemned, and in 1277, just three years after the death of Aquinas, over two hundred propositions were condemned, among them some Thomistic tenets. The Franciscan school declared war on Thomas, and a list of his supposed errors in his commentary on Peter Lombard, the *Correctoria*, was published. Furious Dominicans corrected the corrective, and there was enmity between the two mendicant orders. Two Franciscans dominate the scene in the 14th century. The

trajectory described is a narrowing of the range of reason and a tendency toward fideism.

John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308) -- As his name indicates, John was a Scot from the town of Duns, and there being no universities yet in Scotland he went south to Cambridge and Oxford. Whether he became a Franciscan before leaving Scotland or became one in England is uncertain. From Oxford he went to Paris to study (1293-1296), then returned to Oxford to teach from 1297 to 1301. In 1302 he went on to Cologne but returned to teach theology in Paris; in 1307 he was sent to Cologne where he died and lies buried. If the facts of his brief life are difficult to attain, his writings, too, were subject to a confusing history. We have *Quodlibetal Questions* of his and *Questions most subtle on the Metaphysics*, logical commentaries on Porphyry and Aristotle, and a *Treatise on the First Principle*. He seems to have commented on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard at Oxford and at Paris, the latter being the continuation and reworking of the Oxford comments. After his death, fellow Franciscans edited this work in a way that provided scholars with lengthy gainful employment trying to extract what is genuinely of Scotus.

Scotus was known as the Subtle Doctor, and no one reading him will wonder at the appellation. He has an unquenchable appetite for distinctions and subdistinctions, so that any discussion ramifies incredibly. Yet one can outline the argument and find it is perfectly coherent, however subtle and difficult to follow without a pencil in hand.

The univocity of being -- In conscious opposition to Thomas Aquinas, Scotus held that being is univocal. He held this because he understood analogy to mean that a common term had two quite distinct meanings. But imagine that 'being' is analogous in that sense. Its meaning as applied to creatures could not be applied to God and vice versa. But the whole point of having a science of being is to gain knowledge of the supreme being. Since we move philosophically from creature to God, there must be the same meaning of 'being' as applied to both, or a proof for the existence of God will be guilty of the fallacy of equivocation. So it was that Scotus held that 'being' has a meaning which abstracts from the difference between substantial and accidental being, and also from the difference between created and uncreated being.

But what would that meaning be? Existence? But for God to exist and for a creature to exist is for them to exist as God and as creature, respectively. As soon as 'exists' is predicated -- the same is true of substance and accident -- the impossibility of expressing the supposed common meaning of the term becomes apparent. Perhaps Scotus was thinking of "_____ exists" where we concentrate on the verb and forget the blank or consider it unfilled. And what would 'exists' mean such that the meaning is exactly the same as applied to any being? To be actual? But for a body to be actual means that its matter is informed in a definite way. That is not what it means for an angel to be actual. And of course God is actuality and existence.

Scotus is misled here by his understanding of analogy. An analogous term has a plurality of meanings but they are not entirely different. In 'healthy' as analogous we have such meanings as 'subject of health' and 'cause of health.'" The second meaning of

healthy is parasitic on the first, so there is an order of priority in the meanings. When a term is common to creature and God, the controlling meaning is the one fashioned to speak of creatures. If both man and God are called wise, we turn first to what 'wise' means when applied to Socrates. This will be a knowledge which has been acquired and can be lost and is thus incidental to Socrates, i.e. not part of what he is. But those are the modes of wisdom as we first encounter it. In thinking of the features of wisdom in Socrates, we can see it as restricted and diminished as he has it, and we can think of an unrestricted wisdom. Call this the reality signified, the perfection meant by the term, as opposed to the way in which the perfection is had by Socrates. But isn't this to concede Scotus's point? If I can think of wisdom apart from the created mode, I seem to have the basis for univocal predication if I just restrict myself to the perfection and ignore its mode. The difficulty with this is that 'health' is not predicable of a substance, as if we were to say "Fido is health" or "Socrates is wisdom." We move toward the form "_____ is wisdom", but this is not a meaning which enables us to predicate the term, and univocity involves such predication. ('Wisdom' can be predicated obliquely of individuals, as in 'wisdom is that where wise things are wise' but then we are back to the realization of complexity in the concrete term.)

Analogical extension of 'wise' to God points toward the divine mode of wisdom which we can only approximate by denying the created mode. What creatures have in a partial and diminished way exists untrammelled in the cause of their wisdom, God. It is only in this extrapolative and extending way that we can get any conception of God and his perfections from creatures. "God exists" has to be equivalent to some proposition that contains a descriptive phrase drawn from our knowledge of creatures -- first mover, first efficient cause, etc.

The formal distinction -- We can form concepts of a thing in descending order of generality. Wimpy is a substance, is a living thing, is an animal, is Irish therefore a man. It is because Wimpy shares characteristics with rocks and trees and other things that we express those common features as *substance*; he has other things in common with cows and trees and the like, and we express those as *living thing*; he has things in common with brutes and we use the term *animal* to signify that. Is there something in the singular substance that answers to the concepts and progressively less general terms? Scotus' answer is a qualified Yes. There is a formal distinction in the thing between what is grasped in it under these different concepts. A formal distinction is not a real distinction: he does not want to say that a thing is really made up of all those forms. Nor would he agree that the thing allows the mind to form this cascade of abstractions but that is all -- along the lines suggested above: there are similarities between the things called substance, but of course they are all substances of a quite specific kind, and this abstract grasp of it is due to our way of knowing. Scotus objects to that because, as Gilson puts it, then we would be unable to distinguish between logic and metaphysics. Logic is concerned with relations established by our mind in knowing: genus, subalternate genera, species. Scotus would not be satisfied with saying that the specific substance permits our understanding it generally but there is no distinction at all in it between its being a substance and its being alive. He wants there to be a formal difference between these levels. Does he perhaps think that to consider substance as

such is to consider a universal? We do not include in the definition of substance generality -- or individuality either, but neither do we exclude it. The content of the concept of substance is really found in Wimpy but, this grasp of what he really *is* is inadequate and requires more precision.

These two teachings of Scotus are famous, and I am going to let them stand for my account of him here. You are urged to read more comprehensive accounts of Scotistic doctrine to supplement this most inadequate account.

William Ockham (b. between 1280 and 1290 - died 1349) -- Ockham was an Englishman and a Franciscan who studied at Oxford and became a master of theology sometime prior to 1320. In 1324 he was summoned to Avignon, then residence of the popes, to answer a charge of heresy. He was not condemned. His visit brought him into contact with the Master General of his Order, Michael Cesena, who was also under a papal cloud. During his four years at the papal court, Ockham continued to teach and to write. The Master General, with whom Ockham sided, was at odds with the pope, John XXII, on the matter of Franciscan poverty. The dissenting theologians fled Avignon and sought the protection the German Emperor, Louis the Bavarian. Ockham held that the pope was contradicting previous papal decisions on the matter under dispute. Going to the emperor politicized a theological dispute. In 1323 the Pope demanded that the Franciscans elect a new Master General. Ockham and Cesena were excommunicated both by the pope and by their fellow Franciscans. Ockham settled in Munich and after John XXII's death in 1334 continued his opposition. But after Louis the Bavarian died in 1349, Ockham sought reconciliation with the pope. He died in 1349, apparently before being reconciled.

Ockham's quarrel with the pope prompted him to write on political themes; our interest is in his philosophy and theology.

Ockham is identified with the *Via Moderna*, that is, with nominalism.

It all turns on the question of universals. Thomas had held that universals are relations among the concept we abstract from things. Thus universality, being a genus, being a species, is something that is attributed to a nature as known by us. The basic claim of Ockham is that everything that exists outside the mind is singular. We have intuition of singulars thanks to sense perception, and generality conferred by the mind, not discovered in things. Individual things are utterly separate from one another and have nothing really in common. The universals applied to them are owed entirely to the mind. The concept, a natural sign, is predicated of many things, but the universality is again something produced by the mind. It is a singular act of the mind that is referred to many things, but it does not signify anything that is not singular.

How does this account differ from that of Thomas Aquinas? Thomas no more than Ockham would predicate universality of individually existing things. The difference seems to lie in the fact that Ockham does not allow for a real similarity among singular existents. The concept of the nature or essence is abstracted from the sense image formed on the basis of experience of sensible singulars. That nature or essence is really

in each of them. When "man" is predicated of Socrates it functions differently than when "Socrates" is predicated of Socrates. Ockham wants these terms to stand for (*suppose for* is the medieval term) the singular as singular. But man is not said of Socrates because of the singular characteristics peculiar to him, but thanks to fact that he is an individual of a given sort. The nature is not universal in the individuals, but as abstracted it stands for something real in each of them. This is the foundation of universality as a logical relation.

Ockham is a man with a mission: to sweep away the clutter created by his predecessors' attempts to understand. Since he sees no need to posit what they did, he cuts it away. Ideas in the sense of concepts? There is no need of them: understanding relates directly to its object without any such intermediate. For the same reason he denies the divine Ideas -- God does not need them in order to create. He denies that theology is a science, seeming thereby to separate faith and knowledge in such a way that there is no room for the rational reflection on the faith that had characterized theology hitherto.

Ockham's more lasting interest lies in logic, and here he may seem to prefigure the turn logic has taken into formalism. We conclude by emphasizing the mood of Ockham's thought. Both practically and theoretically he was the man who could be counted on to oppose whatever was proposed by others. Ockham's razor hacked its way across the countenance of a century of theology and left it bleeding from a thousand cuts.

In these lectures and lessons on ancient and medieval thought, I have concentrated on a handful of thinkers and given inadequate and impressionistic accounts of them. The history of philosophy as narrative can never substitute for the close analysis of particular positions. The story gives us a sense of historical sweep, of the kind of influence and reaction that often characterizes one generation and sets it off from those who have gone before. Such a sketch as this is best thought of as a map. The terrain it covers includes many, many things we have not so much as mentioned. Those we have mentioned have been reduced to a few key positions. The usefulness of such a course is not in any fixed and finished understanding it provides so much as in the stimulus it gives to pursue a more particular and philosophical knowledge.

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