Preamble of the Book

Here begins the text, to the exposition whereof I add this clarification, showing that this philosophy most truly and properly possesses the notion of a science that is veridical, most certain, and, following from this, that it is the highest science.

EVERY MULTITUDE etc.

The author, who is portrayed most skilfully in the title as a most learned man, when setting out his theology in detail, first demonstrates the One as such and the Good as such, and then proceeds to treat the properties of this One and Good in element 8. Now, “one” has the notion of a principle and “good” that of a cause. But since a principle is found in more things than a cause, it is prior according to definition. Therefore, this philosopher first establishes that the One exists and then, in element 7, that the Good exists.

To establish the One's thatness or its existence, he uses a certain complex principle, namely, “there is multitude”. Similarly, when establishing the thatness of the Good, he uses another principle, “there is the productive”. He assumes these two principles, upon which the edifice of this entire philosophy depends as upon its own foundations, as if they are grasped [nota] through the reception of the senses and in no way are intelected, known [sciita], or apprehended [apprehensa] by any other scientific habit, but only are believed, just as the theology that concerns the divine Good according to the order of voluntary providence is founded upon principles that are believed, which are the articles of the Christian faith.

For this reason, many have tended to doubt whether either theology, the sapiential and the divinising, is a science in the true sense of the word.

To address this doubt, I will do three things. First, I present certain preliminaries regarding the principles from which the sciences proceed in general, and upon which they are founded in their considerations and in the demonstrations of their conclusions. Secondly, I discuss the three kinds of principles

found in the sciences in particular, as well as their properties and notions. Thirdly, I demonstrate from the foregoing that in this divinising wisdom or sapiential theology there is truly and properly a scientific mode and procedure that begins from its proper principles, as they are enumerated in the second part.

[A] As to the first point, one should know that every science uses its rules and principles as its own foundations, and from these one acquires the knowledge [scientia] of conclusions. »For every science considers causes and principles proportionate to its subject, as we know from Book VI of Aristotle’s Metaphysics, chapter 1. For all knowledge begins from things that are already known [praecognitis], as Aristotle states in Book VI of the Ethics, chapter 4 and Book I of the Posterior Analytics, chapter 1, saying that “every instruction and intellective discipline begins from pre-existing cognition”. Now, the knowledge of conclusions is had through a demonstrative syllogism. But those things, from which syllogisms proceed, are either principles as such or are principles relative to the conclusion. Therefore, since all knowledge proceeds through syllogisms, every science [scientia] must possess certain things that are already understood, and these are the principles. For unless there are some propositions that are most certain and received from common teachings, from which the syllogisms would proceed, it would be impossible to demonstrate anything at all.

Although the name “principle” is common to every proposition that is already understood in any science, nevertheless, one assigns different names to them in different cases depending on the characteristic of the designations, as we saw already in the Exposition of the Title from the prologue to the treatise On Ecclesiastical Rules. Now, by a common name the principles are called “terms”, according to what Aristotle says in Book VI of the Ethics, chapter 9: “intellect” is “of terms, about which there is no reasoning”. On this the Commentator writes: “All principles are terms, because we, who seek to know more specifically how many principles there are, ascend towards them

3 Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysica, vi.1, 1025b3-10.
5 Aristotle, Analytica posteriora, eds L. Minio-Paluello, B.G. Dod (Brugge / Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1968), i.1, 71a1-2, p. 5, 1.3-4.
8 Eustratius, In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius, lib. vi, c. 9 (ms Vaticano [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2171, f. 119vb).
by analysis and come to rest; about these terms there is no reasoning, ... essential definition, designation of the cause, or syllogism”, as Aristotle says in the same place.

Now, there are three kinds of principles, according to the Commentator in chapter 8 of the same text: “axioms [dignitates], hypotheses [suppositiones], and postulates [petitiones]”. Now, “axioms are whatever things are understood by the student that are both believed intrinsically and, perhaps, only need to be presented, which happens when they are spoken” – for example, “things equal to the same thing are equal to one another”. “However, when the auditor does not have an inherently credible understanding of what is said, but still posits and concedes it to the one who assumes it, this is a hypothesis; for example, we do not presuppose the proposition ‘this figure is a circle’ on the basis of a common understanding or concept without instruction, but we listen and concede it without a demonstration. When, on the contrary, what is said is not understood and is not conceded, but is assumed for the sake of the argument, then we call it a postulate.”

In Book 1 of the Posterior Analytics, Aristotle says that the principle of a demonstration is the immediate proposition, which is subdivided into axioms and theses. Theses are subdivided into hypotheses and definitions. An axiom is the greatest proposition, »which anyone accepts as soon as they hear it«. A thesis, as Aristotle says in Book 1 of the Topics, is an unfamiliar opinion coming from someone who is renowned for their philosophy. A hypothesis, according to Aristotle in Book 1 of the Posterior Analytics, chapter 2, is what can assume either part of a contradiction, by which I say that something is or is not. But a definition assumes neither existence nor non-existence, for a definition as such is neither affirmative nor negative; thus, it does not predicate the definition of something else, that is, it does not predicate the notion of the definition to the thing defined.

In chapter 9 of the same text, Aristotle states that an axiom is not a hypothesis or a postulate, because an axiom is a principle that is intrinsically and immediately apparent, and does not stand in need of any reasoning or a

9 Cf. Eustratius, In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius, lib. vi, c. 7 (MS Vaticano [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 2171, f. 112va).
10 Cf. Aristotle, Analytica posterioria, 1.2, 72a7 and 72a14-24.
12 Cf. Aristotle, Topica, 1.11, 104b19-20.
syllogism to demonstrate or explain it. It requires only the reason that exists in the soul (just as a visible luminous body requires nothing for it to be seen except sight falling upon it from without), for it is understood [cognoscitur] when it is seen. The truth of an axiomatic proposition is understood in this way, when the identity of the predicate and subject in the substance is seen. The necessity of a syllogism is understood when the identity of both extremes with the middle term is seen. Because an axiom requires no exterior reasoning, it does not inherently depend on reasoning, for it is accepted by all. However, when something is demonstrable in a higher science, and if it is accepted by the student and seems probable to them, then to them it is a hypothesis; I say, “to them”, because a hypothesis as such is what is not demonstrable nor is it accepted by everyone. Now, if something is demonstrable in a higher subalternating science, and it does not seem probable to the student, then it follows that the teacher begs it of the student, and this is a postulate. Nevertheless, one commonly calls a “postulate” everything that is accepted without demonstration when it is in fact demonstrable, whether it seems probable to the student or not. Definitions, which are put forward at the beginnings of demonstrations, are not hypotheses, because every hypothesis predicates something of something else or from something else, and is a proposition that brings two notions into an ordered relation (the subject and the predicate), either in one subject or from one subject. A definition does not do this, but merely exemplifies a simple thing; intellect, when it apprehends the definition [intellectus] falling upon one thing that has been unfolded.

Furthermore, one should know that all indemonstrable principles of any discipline are comprehended under a general name: “a common concept of the mind”. According to Boethius in On the Hebdomads, there are two kinds of common concepts: those accepted by everyone and those accepted only by the learned.

So much for the first part.

Now, regarding the properties, proper modes, and notions of the principles of the sciences, [one should know that] there are three different kinds of principles: some are most-common, others are less common, and are intrinsically proper to particular sciences.

The first are and are called most-common because, by their universal power, they descend into all sciences. For example, “it is impossible that the same
thing at the same time is and is not”, or “it is impossible that the affirmation and the negation of something is true”, or “names have determinate meanings”. Aristotle discusses these Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, stating that they are grasped by reason or by the experience gained from the mere judgement of things in everyday life, as is clear from that text. The modes or conditions of any most-common principle, as we read in the same place, are that it is “most certain of all”, that “one cannot lie about it”, that it is “best known”, one cannot be deceived about it or err, that it is not “conditional” or hypothetical, («such that it would be true only here or now or henceforth, but it is true to everyone, always, and everywhere»), and, finally, that it necessarily “comes to the one who has it” by nature, not by instruction. Now, these principles are most-common in this way because they concern being as being, which is the most universal of all formal intentions according to Aristotle – but for Plato it is otherwise, as will be clear later.

There are also principles that are less common than these. They are, nevertheless, common by virtue of their power and the extent of their universality. For even if they do not descend into every science, they still descend into some, insofar as their commonality is taken up proportionately by different sciences. This is clear in the case of those principles that are called “common concepts of the mind” and posited at the beginning of Euclid; for example, “if you take equals from equals”, and so on, and “every whole is greater than its part”. These are said to be less common than the principles of the first kind insofar as they are found only in discrete or continuous quantities.

There are also principles of a third kind, which are intrinsically proper to particular sciences. They are not taken up by different sciences according to proportional or analogical commonality; rather, each principle stands according to its own notion. If it descends from a higher science into a determinate science, or even if it is used in some other science, nevertheless, this kind of principle will always stand according to its proper and determinate notion and nature, and is not taken from here to another determinate intention by way of any analogical commonality. For example, in geometry, there is the definition

---

22 Euclid, *Elementa*, vol. 1, lib. 1, common concept 8, p. 6, l. 4; id., *Opera a Campano*, f. 4v.
of the circle\textsuperscript{23} or the principle “all right angles are equal”;\textsuperscript{24} in optics, the principle “colour moves sight”, and so on; in physics, “there is motion in nature”.

Having now outlined the different kinds of scientific principles, let us now consider their mode of certitude and the way their truth is apprehended.

> It is evident that, in most-common principles and in those we have called “common”, the truth is apprehended from the notion of the terms. Since, as Aristotle says in Book VI of the \textit{Ethics}, chapter 4,\textsuperscript{25} the cognitive habits “by which the soul says” or apprehends “what is true” are five, namely, art, demonstrative knowledge [\textit{scientia}], prudence, wisdom, and intellect – for it belongs to suspicion and opinion to say what is false, as he writes there\textsuperscript{26} – it follows, as Aristotle concludes in chapter 7,\textsuperscript{27} that there will be no demonstrative knowledge, art, prudence, or wisdom concerning the principle of the knowable [\textit{scibilis}] or of the sciences [\textit{scientiarum}]. It remains, therefore, that intellect relates to the principle or the kind of principles mentioned above. According to the Commentator,\textsuperscript{28} intellect is “that, according to which we take cognition of the principles” and through which we come to cognise them. For intellect alone has the principles of the sciences as its subject. For this reason, as the Commentator says at the beginning of chapter 8,\textsuperscript{29} “concerning the common conceptions, which we call axioms, our intellect, through its intellectual activity, shows the simple and actual proximity between the objects of knowledge, which is immediate and cannot be reached through a syllogism, in that it does not require a mediating definition in order to comprehend the things intellect”. Aristotle says the same in the final chapter of Book I of the \textit{Posterior Analytics}.\textsuperscript{30,31}

From the foregoing it is clear that most-common and common principles are apprehended from the notion of the terms or through the habit called “intellect” which, as is said in chapter 8 of \textit{On Fate and Providence},\textsuperscript{32} is greater than all scientific knowledge in us and is that by which we understand the terms

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{24} Euclid, \textit{Elementa}, vol. 1, lib. 1, postulate 4, p. 5, l. 3; id., \textit{Opera a Campano}, f. 4v.
\bibitem{27} Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Ethica Nicomachea}, vi.6, 1140b33-1141a8.
\bibitem{28} Cf. Eustratius, \textit{In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius}, lib. vi, c. 6 (MS Vaticano [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2171, f. 111v).
\bibitem{29} Eustratius, \textit{In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius}, lib. vi, c. 7 (MS Vaticano [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2171, f. 112v).
\bibitem{30} Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Analytica posterioria}, i.34, 89b10-15.
\bibitem{31} Cf. Thomas of York, \textit{Sapientiale}, lib. 111, c. 23 (F f. 167vb).
\bibitem{32} Cf. Proclus, \textit{De providentia et fato}, c. 8, §30, p. 139, l. 7-10.
\end{thebibliography}
or principles. This apprehension does not occur in any way through another habit or through the experiential apprehension [experimentalem notitiam] of the senses, as becomes obvious if one examines these principles case by case.

However, if we speak about the certitude of apprehended truth with regard to proper principles, then a distinction must be made: some proper principles belong to purely mathematical sciences, others do not, and if not, they belong to physical sciences or those related to the physical sciences.

For purely mathematical sciences, let us take as examples the principles of arithmetic and geometry. The principles of these sciences have the same mode of certitude as common and most-common principles; that is, such proper principles are grasped through the habit of intellect or according to the reason of the terms, and not through the experiential apprehension [notitiam] of the senses. Admittedly, sometimes we already possess some cognition of the substance of the things signified by the terms through the apprehension [apprehensionem] of the senses (for example, the number four, the number six, the circle, the triangle, and so on). In the case of non-mathematical sciences, however, the principles themselves are received through the senses or the experiential apprehension of the senses, and not through intellect or any cognitive habit besides intellect.

The reason for this is as follows. We apprehend the proper principles of the mathematical sciences, which concern things abstracted by our consideration of them, at the outset of our entry into these sciences, and we apprehend them by intellect. For, in such sciences, those things that are prior as such in reality and in nature are also grasped earlier by us. Therefore, at the first stage of our approach toward these objects of knowledge, the principles appear to our intellect, whether they are definitions (for example, of the circle or the triangle, or of the number four or the number six and so on), or whether they are the propositions that they call “postulates” (for example, “to extend a line indefinitely” or “all right angles are equal” and so on, which are enumerated at the beginning of Euclid).33 Therefore, it is the same for common and most-common principles as it is for principles that are proper to purely mathematical sciences: their mode and notion of certitude and apprehended truth is as we have just described it.

However, it is otherwise for sciences concerning things joined to matter, to bodily nature, or to any changeable substance in general, or even to unchangeable substance – whether such things are the essences themselves,

---

33 Euclid, *Elementa*, vol. 1, lib. 1, postulates 2 and 4, p. 4, l. 16-17 and p. 5, l. 3; id., *Opera a Campano*, f. 4v.
the substances, the natural attributes, properties, or operations of essences or substances, or in general any alteration or change, by which the things are affected, either by nature or by the determination of intellect (as happens, for example, in ethics). In the sciences concerned with such things, I say that their proper principles have another mode of apprehended truth and certitude. For in all these sciences that are investigated and comprehended through the scrutiny of natural reason – whether they concern things abstracted both according to existence and our mode of consideration, or things joined to matter or bodily nature, as was said, or things abstracted according to our mode of consideration that are related to the physical world – in all these cases, the things that are grasped earlier by us and according to our mode of thinking are later in reality (and thus by nature are grasped later, even though they are grasped earlier by us). Such things are the objects of the senses. In the pursuit of these sciences, these things occur earlier, relative to us, in the inquiry undertaken by way of the senses.

Aristotle’s teaching that is transmitted in the prologue of the Metaphysics34 applies to the pursuit of these sciences: from sense there arises memory, and from these two an experience is acquired, and from many experiences comes the universal, which is the principle of art and science. He makes the same point at the beginning of Book I of the Posterior Analytics:35 “Every art and intellectual discipline comes from the pre-existing cognition” of the senses. Thus in physics, “there is motion” is received through the cognition of the senses; in medicine, “scammony purges the bile”; in music, “the proportion of pitches is relative to the size of the hammers being struck”; in optics, “light and colour move sight”,36 while the principle “the angles of incidence and reflection in a mirror are equal” is captured by experience using an instrument called a pinhole camera, as is evident in Book IV of Alhazen’s Optics;37 similarly, in astronomy, the experiential knowledge of certain things is gained through the instrument of the armillary sphere.

Therefore, proceeding along this path of sense and experience in the pursuit of these sciences, one universal is taken as their principle, and this principle in each science is only believed, and not at all known or intellected. For is not grasped from the proper reason of the terms, which would require the

34 Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysica, i.1, 980b28-981a12.
35 Aristotle, Analytica posteriora, i.1, 71a1-2, p. 5, l. 3-4.
use of intellect, nor is it a conclusion reached from any other principles or causes; rather, as was said, the principle is only believed. Accordingly, it is apprehended under the certitude of the true, which cannot possibly be otherwise. Now, I say “it is apprehended”, meaning the principle is that with which reason is objectively occupied in cognition, for example, “that, which is moved, exists”; I understand “the true” to mean the equality or consonance of the thing apprehended and the intellect (this, in its notion and mode, involves a complexion or composition of speech); finally, “certitude” about the truth of the apprehended thing itself is the firm and unshakeable assent of reason in the apprehended thing.

Now, although the believed [creditum] is apprehended by reason under the certitude of the true and, in this respect, agrees under a common notion with the known [scito], nevertheless, they differ from one another.

First, they differ in the mode and reason of certitude. For demonstrative knowledge [scientia], relative to the known, brings about a kind of certitude arising from the evidence of the thing itself. This evidence occurs in the intellect from the intention and the notion of the terms, which form a complex with one another; this happens either through the immediate relation of the terms with one another, if the proposition is immediate in both cause and subject (first principles, for example, are like this), or through a mediate relation, if the conclusion was deduced from prior principles. But the certitude of faith or credulity with respect to the believed does not arise from the evidence of the thing, as it does in demonstrative knowledge, but rather has its cause and reason from the outside, as it were – that is, from the clear authority of some expert, from whose truth the intellect cannot reasonably dissent.

From this distinction in the mode of certitude there arises the second difference between the believed and the known. This consists in the order of apprehension according to which someone apprehends the thing itself (which is in fact the primary object of cognition) as well as the truth about that thing. This truth is one mode of the thing apprehended. For, in demonstrative knowledge, the evidence of the thing comes from the intention and notion of the terms, which are, as it were, the intrinsic principle of cognition discovered in the thing itself, insofar as it is a being and a thing of first intention. From this it follows that the thing itself by nature is apprehended first under its own real notion, which is the object of cognition, and only then does one apprehend truth or falsity about it, since, as Aristotle says, truth and falsity are certain modes of complexion.\footnote{Cf. Aristotle, \textit{De interpretatione}, 1, 16a12-13; \textit{De anima}, 111.6, 433a27-433b28.} But it is otherwise for faith in relation
to principles that are believed. For it does not have the cause and notion of its certitude from the thing itself, but from the authority of some expert, in whose truth reason declares our trust must absolutely be placed and to whose truth the will inclines. From this it follows that the believed as such is apprehended as true primarily and through itself and, as believed, it is known only under the notion of the true and not in its own notion, according to which it is a natural being. Thus, the believed does not have the same evidence as the known, because things known have evidence firstly and through themselves, insofar as they are beings of this or that kind according to the proper notion of their entity; things believed, however, are apprehended firstly and through themselves and have evidence only insofar as they are true, and not insofar as they are beings of this or that kind according to the real and proper notion of their entity.

From the foregoing, by way of summary, we can gather eight noteworthy conclusions about principles.

The first is that the cognition of principles is one thing, and the cognition of conclusions is another: for there is no demonstration of principles, but only of conclusions, because principles are not understood through anything prior – for they are themselves the principles of knowing other things – but conclusions are known from the principles.

The second is that the cognition of most-common principles, common principles, and those proper to purely mathematical sciences are one thing, because they are intellected, but the principles of metaphysics or things divine, of physics, and of things related to physics, are another, because they are received through the senses.

The third conclusion is that all principles do not possess the same certitude and evidence.

The fourth is that there is neither demonstrative knowledge, nor art, nor prudence of the principle of the knowable; there is either the reception of the senses (with respect to the believed), or intellect or wisdom (with respect to the other principles).

The fifth is that it belongs to wisdom to manifest the principles the sciences, not to demonstrate them.

The sixth is that the habits of principles of the first kind of certitude are innate in us. Later it will become clear whether they are in us by nature only in potency and proceed into act from pre-existing sense-cognition, as Aristotle says,\(^39\) or, as Plato says, whether they are by nature in us already in act, although

they are aroused by instruction fanning the ember, according to Boethius in Book III of *On the Consolation*, metre 11:40

Within ... there clings the seed of truth,
Which is aroused by instruction fanning the ember:
For why, being asked a question, do you freely and correctly respond,
Unless buried deep in the heart there burned a living coal?
If Plato’s Muse makes the truth resound,
What each forgetful person learns, they recollect.

The seventh conclusion is that nothing is more known than the first principles.
The eight is that it does not belong to any science to demonstrate its principles, even though they are disclosed by first philosophy or wisdom.

From these eight conclusions the properties of every complex principle, insofar as it is a principle, appear in summary form: namely, such a principle is conceived by intellect or common reason, or by the reception of the senses; it comes last in analysis and thus is terminative; it is more permanent and more manifest; it is first apprehended and far removed from deception, and is intelled through itself; it is understood from what comes after it, but in a different mode of cognition than that which comes after it; it is understood most of all; and it is not considered by any particular science.

So much for the second principal part of the *Preamble*.

[C] It remains to consider the third and final part, which concerns the proper mode of theological consideration.

One should know that this divinising wisdom proceeds in exactly the same way, according to the proper mode of a science, proportionately speaking, as the sciences mentioned above, apart from the purely mathematical sciences. This applies to its apprehension [*notitiam*] and use of most-common and common principles, as well as to the way in which its proper principles are received.

Now, this divinising wisdom uses most-common principles, such as “it is impossible that the affirmation and the negation of something are true”, or “it is impossible that something both is and is not”, and “names have determinate meanings”, and any others that there may be.41

This divinising wisdom also presupposes common principles like the other sciences, especially the quadrivial sciences, but by an analogy, in accordance with the notion of its own matter and subject; examples of these principles

---

40 Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, lib. III, metrum 11, p. 91, l. 11-16.
are “the whole is greater than its part”, Euclid, *Elementa*, lib. 1, common concept 8, p. 6, l. 4; id., *Opera a Campano*, f. 4v.

42

43

44

45

46
In or through this power the simple and pure intentions of things are appre-
hended, distinguished, collected, and drawn together, once they have been
separated from their idols, to borrow an expression from Averroes.\footnote{Cf. Averroes, De anima, ed. F.S. Crawford (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), lib. 111, comm. 6, p. 415, l. 62-64.} This is the
doctrine of Aristotle in Book 1 of the \textit{Metaphysics}, chapter 2,\footnote{Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysica}, \textit{i}.1, 980b28-981a12.} and in the final
chapter of Book 11 of the \textit{Posterior Analytics},\footnote{Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Analytica posteriora}, \textit{ii}.19, 100a3-9.} where he shows how, from many
sensations, memory arises in rational creatures once reason is stimulated, and
from many memories there comes experience, and from many experiences the
universal, which comes after the particulars and is, as it were, not separate
from them but is nearly identical with them. Such is the principle of art and
science, as has already been explained.\footnote{Cf. Berthold of Moosburg, \textit{Praeamb.} B, n. 34.}

»It is similarly the case in this science with regard to the reception of its
proper principles, namely, “there is multitude” and so on, which the author
receives and assumes, not by a propter quid demonstration, which is “from
what is prior or from the causes”, but by a quia demonstration, which is
“from those things, which seem to the many or to the wise to be the case, or
which are agreed upon from prior things”, as Aristotle, in Book 1 of the \textit{Ethics},
chapter 10,\footnote{Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Ethica Nicomachea}, \textit{i}.7, 1098a33-981a12.} and his commentator, Eustratius,\footnote{Eustratius, \textit{In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius}, lib. 1, c. 7, p. 124, l. 46-48.} have it. As if in response to
the question, “what are the modes by which the principles are cognised?”,
Aristotle says in that passage that there are three modes:\footnote{Aristotle, \textit{Ethica Nicomachea}, \textit{i}.7, 1098b3-4, p. 152, l. 5-6.} “Now, some prin-
ciples are viewed by induction, others by sense, and others by habituation, and
others in other ways.” Now, they are cognised “by induction”, for example, “if
you take equals from equals, what remains are equal”, and others like this. The
Commentator explains this as follows:\footnote{Cf. Eustratius, \textit{In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius}, lib. 1, c. 7, p. 126, l. 98 – p. 127, l. 12.} if someone doubts these, you assume
numbers, sizes, and other things that can be measured in the demonstration
of this principle. But the principles are cognised “by sense” when, for example,
we know the particular qualities of the elements that are prior to them, such
as the heat of fire, the humidity of air, and so on. The principles are cognised
“by habituation” when, for example, we understand that the virtues are good
and morally upright by performing them and in becoming familiar with their
The principles of this science, “there is multitude”, and so on, are received in exactly the same way. In fact, over and above the mode common to it and the other sciences, it has something greater in the notion and cause of its certitude and its unshakeable assent in these principles themselves.

This becomes evident first from a consideration of the cognitive principle, with which the theologian applies himself to divine objects, and which is more eminent and thus more acute than every other cognitive principle that we use relative to any knowable objects whatsoever.

For it exceeds the particular reason, which some\textsuperscript{56} call “the cogitative” and which, though it is one in subject, is three in operation. Regarding its lower part, where it touches the imagination, the particular reason is opinionative and is occupied with the intentions of physical things; regarding its higher part, where it is joined to the universal reason, it knows demonstratively [\textit{scientifica}] and is occupied with purely mathematical things, such as arithmetic and geometry (these two kinds of speculation belong to reason, as the author explains in chapter 8 of \textit{On Fate and Providence},\textsuperscript{57} near the beginning); as for its middle part, the particular reason is occupied with mathematical things that are applied to the physical world, for example, with number related to sound in the case of harmonics, the visual and radial line in the case of optics, or moving quantity in the case of astronomy. From here the levels in reason can be considered from the diversity of knowable objects with which reason is occupied.

Now, the cognitive principle of this science also exceeds the universal reason, which we call “the possible intellect”, which apprehends the thing in its reason. This universal reason, regarding its lower part, is occupied with logical intentions; regarding its middle part, with metaphysical intentions, as can be gathered from the book and chapter mentioned above;\textsuperscript{58} but regarding its higher part, it reflects beings as such and is intellect, as is written in the same passage.\textsuperscript{59}

Indeed, these cognitive principles relate only to beings, though according to different notions. However, there are many divine things above being, as is clear


\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Proclus, \textit{De providentia et fato}, c. 8, §28, p. 136, l. 1 – p. 138, l. 5. Reading \textit{metaphysicas} with MS Oxford, Balliol College Library, Cod. 224B, where the critical edition follows MS Vaticano (Città del), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 292 (\textit{mathematicas}).


\textsuperscript{59} Cf. Proclus, \textit{De providentia et fato}, c. 8, §30, p. 139, l. 1-7.
in the case of things divine according to essence and what is divine according to cause, which is “above all beings”, as Dionysius attests in chapter 4 of *On the Divine Names* B.60 For this reason, in chapter 1 of the *Mystical Theology*,61 he calls “unlearned” those “who are sealed off in beings and believe that there is nothing supersubstantially beyond beings, but they presume to know, with that cognition that is according to themselves, him, who makes the shadows his hiding place”. Consequently, it is impossible that we should receive those things that are above us according to our ownness and thus compare things divine with a reason that has been reared on the senses, through which we are deceived by appearances, as he says there in chapter 7 of *On the Divine Names*.62 Dionysius adds an explanation for this,63 when he describes the cognitive principle in us of things divine, which we are seeking here: “one must see that our mind has a certain power for knowing, through which it examines things intelligible, but a union exceeding the nature of the mind (the other translation says: ‘a unity superexalted beyond the nature of the mind’), through which the mind is conjoined to those things that are above it. Therefore, it is necessary to think divine things according to this, not according to ourselves, but our whole selves placed outside our whole selves and deified wholly. For it is better to be God’s and not our own; thus, divine things will be given to those made to be with God”. Thus Dionysius.

Behold, how beautifully he describes this cognitive principle, this union or unity, with which »one must apply oneself to divine things«,64 and its super-eminence relative to every other principle in us! Proclus speaks of this principle, which he also calls “the one of the soul”, and about its eminence relative to every other cognitive power in us, in the text discussed above,65 and about how those treating divine things are made gods and knowers of things divine. For this reason, in question 10 of *On Providence*,66 he says that this one itself is more divine than the intellect.

Thus, it is evident that this science, because of its cognitive principle through which it considers divine things, not only incomparably exceeds all particular sciences in the certitude of its principles, but even the metaphysics of the Peripatetics that is occupied with being as being.

---

60 Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, 4.3 (*Dionysiaca*, vol. 1, p. 175; *PG* 3, 697A).
61 Dionysius, *De mystica theologia*, 1.2 (*Dionysiaca*, vol. 1, p. 569–570; *PG* 3, 1000A).
63 Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, 7.1 (*Dionysiaca*, vol. 1, p. 385–386; *PG* 3, 865C-868A).
65 Cf. Proclus, *De providentia et fato*, c. 8, §31-32, p. 139, l. 1 – p. 140, l. 5.
66 Cf. Proclus, *De decem dubitationibus circa providentiam*, q. 10, §64, p. 106, l. 9-11.
This is evident in a second way from a consideration of the divinising or supersapiential habit through which this theology receives its principles, and from a reflection on the eminence of this habit itself relative to all other habits, whether these be scientific or even sapiential.

To make this point clearer, one should know that, just as Plato and Aristotle diverge on the question of the cognitive powers and modes of cognition in the human soul, so likewise they do not agree on the question of scientific and sapiential habits.

Aristotle, as the author attests in his book *On Fate and Providence*, chapter 8, leads us through the cognitive powers and modes of cognition in our soul as far as intellect and intellectual activity, and insinuates nothing beyond this. But Plato and the theologians before Plato praised a cognition beyond intellect, which they divulge as a divine frenzy, and they say that this cognition is the one of the soul. For in this one – which Dionysius, as we saw, calls “the union (or, according to the other translation, ‘the unity’) superexalted above the nature of the mind (or intellect)” – the cognitive power and the cognition are the same. Therefore, it necessarily follows that, just as the cognitive powers and modes of cognition are ranked in terms of nobility and eminence, so too must the sapiential habits of these cognitive powers be ranked in terms of nobility and excellence. For one cognitive power relates to another just as one habit relates to another. Now, the cognitive power of this, our divinising theology, exceeds not only the cognitive powers of all sciences but even the intellect itself, as was said – and the intellect, according to the author in the text mentioned above, is greater than every science and belongs to the soul itself “insofar as it is an image of what is truly intellect”. For “imitating this as much as it can, the soul itself becomes intellect, running beyond science, abandoning the manifold methods with which was formerly adorned, and raises its eyes to beings alone”. Thus Proclus.

The eminence of this cognitive power, the one or unity of the soul, is so great that the soul – once it is completely stationed within it – is almost made into God, according to Dionysius and the author in the passage mentioned above. Therefore, the habit of this, our divinising beyond-wisdom, exceeds every other habit – not only of the sciences, but even the habit of intellect that is wisdom, through which Aristotle received his first principles in his first philosophy which, because it concerns being as being, is merely of beings.

---

69 Cf. Proclus, *De providentia et fato*, c. 8, §32, p. 139, l. 8-21.
Now, according to Aristotle himself, this habit of wisdom, although it seems to differ in general from intellect, nevertheless is said by him to consist in science and intellect.

»This can be shown more clearly by the three propositions that Aristotle himself gives in Book vi of the Ethics, chapter 8.71 The first is that wisdom is the most certain kind of knowledge; the second, that wisdom is “intellect and demonstrative knowledge [scientia]”; the third, that wisdom “is the most honourable knowledge because it holds the highest rank”. He proves the first proposition when he says72 that “wisdom must not only know what follows from the principles but also must be able to say what is true about the principles”. The second part of this quotation shows the difference between wisdom and intellect; for, according to what Eustratius the commentator says there,73 wisdom “is not only the cognition of things demonstrated from the principles but is the veridical science of the principles themselves and those things relating to them”. For wisdom is able to think these things, not only by a primary reception, but, if needed, it can use arguments to persuade someone who requires them. For this reason, first philosophy is entirely wisdom and the first philosopher is entirely wise, “because it crafts the crafts, knows the sciences scientifically, demonstrates the principles, and, where it is fitting, manifests them”, and conveys them to the other sciences. The Commentator gives the fine example of geometry:74 geometry assumes extensions, height, width, and depth, but the philosopher himself demonstrates these, and likewise for the other sciences.

And so from the foregoing it is clear that intellect is the simple reception of principles, but wisdom is the reception of the principles with certainty about them.«75

If, therefore, wisdom is the most certain knowledge, as the first proposition states, because it receives the principles of the sciences with certainty about them, what shall we say about our beyond-wisdom? It receives, with certainty, not only the principles of beings (which according to Aristotle are themselves beings),76 but even the principles that are beyond beings, and especially the primarily Good, which is the principle and cause, not only of all beings, but

73 Eustratius, In Ethicam Nicomachieam commentarius, lib. vi, c. 7 (MS Vatican [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 2171, f. 112rb and 112va).
74 Cf. Eustratius, In Ethicam Nicomachieam commentarius, lib. vi, c. 7 (MS Vatican [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2171, f. 112vb-113ra).
75 Cf. Thomas of York, Sapientiale, lib. 111, c. 23 (F f. 168ra-b).
76 Cf. Aristotle, Metaphysica, v.1, 1012b34-1013a23.
even of the divinising principles that are the primordial principles of all beings, which are beneath the first Principle as such. What shall we say, except that this is the most certain and highest cognition of the deified human?

For this reason, the author, speaking about that cognition of the soul, by which it ascends to the One and hypothetical, says this in *On Fate and Providence*, chapter 8: “From this, the geometer and each of the other scientists will derive knowledge of their principles, because it reconnects the many and divided principles with the one principle of all. For what it (meaning: the Principle) is in all things, in geometry is the point, in arithmetic the monad, and in each science that which is most simple, from which the sciences bring forth and demonstrate what belongs to them. But, to be sure, each of these is called a particular principle, but the Principle of all beings is the principle as such, and it is this that the ascent of the teaching of the sciences reaches”. Thus Proclus.

From what has been said it is abundantly clear that, if wisdom is said to have such certainty while it only concerns beings, how great will the certitude of that wisdom be, which treats not only beings, but beyond-beings, which, as it were, infinitely surpass beings themselves? For among these are things that are divine according to essence and indeed God himself, who is glorious unto the ages.

»Similarly, from the second proposition we have the other difference between wisdom and intellect, namely, that wisdom consists of intellect and demonstrative knowledge. For, as the Commentator states, wisdom is the habit composed of intellect and knowledge. For intellect has cognition of the principles and demonstrative knowledge concerns conclusions derived from the principles, but wisdom has the necessary knowledge of both. Accordingly, Aristotle says that “the wise must not only know what follows from the principles (that is, the conclusions), but must be able to say what is true about the principles”. “Therefore, when the soul conceives both kinds of truth – both the truth about the principles and the truth about what follows from the principles – then it becomes intellectual, and a theologian (that is, a wise soul).” Thus the Commentator.

77 Proclus, *De providentia et fato*, c. 8, §29, p. 138, l. 7-15.
78 Cf. Eustratius, *In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius*, lib. vi, c. 7 (Ms Vaticano [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2171, f. 113ra).
80 Cf. Thomas of York, *Sapientiale*, lib. i, c. 23 (F f. 168rb).
81 Eustratius, *In Ethicam Nicomacheam commentarius*, lib. vi, c. 7 (Ms Vaticano [Città del], Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2171, f. 113rb).
Indeed, since the cognitive power of our supersapiential and divinising wisdom not only runs beyond every kind of knowledge that concerns beings, but even ascends beyond intellect itself, as was shown above, the habit of this wisdom will not strictly speaking be composed of intellect and knowledge, but will be the simple inspection of the Form forming all things as such, according to what is said by Boethius in *On the Trinity*: "in theology one must apply oneself intellectually, not being led astray by imaginings, but rather by looking into the Form itself”.

And since, as he says in Book V of *On the Consolation*, prose 5, “there exists the higher eye of the intelligence, for, surpassing the boundary of the universe, it views that simple Form by the pure apex of the mind”, so therefore, according to Dionysius in chapter 7 of *On the Divine Names* “because of the divine wisdom, souls have the rational power, indeed, to go about in a circle around the truth of beings, and because of their abundant variety they fall short of the unitive minds, but also, by virtue of enfolding the many into the one, they are held worthy of intellections equal to the angels, insofar as this is fitting and possible for souls”.

Now, Dionysius had said already that in these angels “intellectual power and activity shines forth pure and immaculate and is able to behold the divine intellects. And by virtue of its simplicity and immateriality, the intellectual power is shaped, as much as possible, by its simplicity, immateriality, and by its divinely, conformly, and uniformly unitive character, after the divine and beyond-wise mind and reason”. And below, in the same chapter, section 1, after he spoke about the cognition of God in a general way, he adds: “And there is, furthermore, the most divine cognition of God, which is known through ignorance according to the union above mind, when the mind, having departed from everything else, and then also sending itself away, is united with the super-resplendent rays, and is illuminated hither and yon by the inscrutable depth of wisdom.” Dionysius makes the same point in chapter 1, section A.

From these passages, we clearly see the eminence of the habit of the supersapiential science of the Platonists in comparison to the habit of sapiential metaphysics.

---

83 Boethius, *De Trinitate*, c. 2, p. 169, l. 79-81.
84 Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, lib. v, prosa 4, p. 149, l. 86-88.
88 Cf. Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, 1.1 (*Dionysiaca*, vol. 1, p. 5-8; PG 3, 585B-588A).
The third proposition, from which the third difference comes, is that wisdom is the most honourable knowledge.\textsuperscript{89} This is explained in two ways. The first is relative to its matter and subject, since we say that things divine are most honourable.\textsuperscript{90} According to Aristotle,\textsuperscript{91} these things are being as such and its parts, modes, and properties. The second is relative to its form, since we think using the most honourable principles, and wisdom is a veridical and most certain knowledge about these principles. Therefore, Aristotle says in the same place\textsuperscript{92} that “wisdom is the demonstrative knowledge and intellect of things that are most honourable by nature”\textsuperscript{93}.

From this third proposition, once again, we clearly see the eminence of the habit of this divinising science above the habit of metaphysics. In terms of matter and subject, this wisdom concerns the most honourable things, namely, the divine good according to cause primarily and according to essence or existence – that is, the first Good and One and the goodesses and unities – and also what participates goodness after the manner of an exemplar.

Similarly, in terms of its form, these are the most honourable principles, through which this divinising science ascends to the thatness of the primarily One and primarily Good (I do not say “the whatness”), in accordance with what Dionysius writes in chapter 7 of \textit{On the Divine Names}, section H.\textsuperscript{94} “Moreover, one must ask how we are to know God, who is neither intelligible, nor sensible, nor is absolutely any of those things that exist. So is it never true to say that we know God? Not from his nature, for this is unknown and exceeds all reason and mind; but from the ordering of all things, just as it has been projected from him”, and so on. Thus Dionysius.

For this reason, the author ascends methodically and gradually, according to his capacity, to what is beyond all things, through the principles proper to the science, as will be clear immediately in what follows.

From all the foregoing it is abundantly clear that this, our divinising philosophy, is most truly and properly a science – a science, moreover, that is veridical, most certain, and thus the highest of all, both by virtue of its mode of proceeding from principles that are most-common, common, and proper, which is truly scientific, and by virtue of the habit, by which it receives its principles, as has been shown here extensively.

\textsuperscript{89} Berthold of Moosburg, \textit{Praeamb.} C, n. 71.
\textsuperscript{90} Cf. Thomas of York, \textit{Sapientiale}, lib. 111, c. 23 (F f. 168rb).
\textsuperscript{91} Cf. Aristotle, \textit{Metaphysica}, VI.1, 1026a9-32.
\textsuperscript{93} Cf. Thomas of York, \textit{Sapientiale}, lib. 111, c. 23 (F f. 168rb).
\textsuperscript{94} Dionysius, \textit{De divinis nominibus}, 7.3 (\textit{Dionysiaca}, vol. 1, p. 402-403; PG 3, 869C-D).