

Dear Father Ashley,

I know we disagree, but I am having trouble identifying the precise *reason* why we do, the *source* of the disagreement. The following is written in the hope that your response to it might clarify that.

The questions we are discussing are not matters of anyone individual psychology; so it doesn't matter what a particular individual knows or believes about whether there are immaterial beings. So let us talk about D, who thinks immaterial existence would be contradictory.

Assume that D grasps the demonstration that "Whatever is human is risible." If so, he can reason "Whatever is human is risible. AI is human. AI is risible." That reasoning tells D something true about AI as a man, not as an animal or as living or as Greek or as an Democrat, etc. The last sentence is true whether or not D adverts to the fact that the reasoning tells him something about AI as a man, not as anything else; or even if he mistakenly thought that it did not tell him something true about AI as a man." For the demonstration that "Whatever is human is risible" establishes that risibility is a proper predicate of human beings and human beings are the proper subject of risibility: Risibility is true of human beings and only human beings. So if D can grasp that demonstration, he is at least capable of grasping that the reasoning about AI informs him about AI as a man, even if D does not advert to that or is even mistaken about that when he grasps the reasoning about AI

Now assume D can grasp Aquinas's argument that whatever exists has unity; so he knows that whatever exists has unity. He then reasons, "Whatever exists has unity. AI exists. AI has unity." That reasoning tells him something true of AI, not as a man or an animal or a living thing but as a being. The preceding sentence would be the case even if D did not advert to the fact that the reasoning tells him about AI as a being; or even if he mistakenly thought it did not. But in fact, if he understands the argument that every being has unity, he is at least capable of adverting to that fact. For the argument establishes that unity is a property of anything satisfying the description "something existing," rather than any other description that may be true of anything satisfying that description.

So D is capable of knowing that unity is a property of whatever exists. Now since goodness, beauty and truth are co-extensive with being, whatever is good, beautiful or true also has unity, and whatever has unity also has goodness, etc.. But Aquinas's argument does not show that unity pertains to things as being good, beautiful and true; it shows that it pertains to things as existents. For D might not know that goodness, etc. are co-extensive with being. Because of the problem of evil, D might even think it contradictory that whatever has unity has goodness. His mistake about the connection between unity and goodness would not mean that he does not grasp Aquinas's argument about unity; for that argument establishes the connection and existence and unity, not unity and goodness; it shows that unity belongs to things qua existing; it says nothing about the connection of existence and goodness or of goodness and existence.

And even if it were true that whatever exists is material, Aquinas's argument about unity does not inform D of the connection between unity and materiality but unity and existence. The argument does not make him aware that unity pertains to things qua material but qua being, any more than it makes him aware that whatever has unity has goodness, even though the necessary connection between unity and goodness is true, while the alleged necessary connection between unity and materiality is not.

If the argument does not inform him of the necessary connection between unity and goodness, to the extent that grasping that argument leaves him capable of denying that connection, a fortiori the argument certainly does not inform him of the false necessary connection between unity and materiality, regardless of what his OTHER beliefs tell him about that false connection. D might mistakenly believe in that connection, but he does not have to advert to his mistaken belief when he grasps Aquinas's argument. He might even have formed that belief years ago and not adverted to it since.

So D's personal psychology, his beliefs about the connection between existence and goodness, on one hand, and existence and materiality, on the other, have nothing to do with whether the argument connecting existence and unity is an argument about being as being, rather than about being as material.

It is possible, therefore, for us to recognize a distinction between arguments that inform us about Joe qua being and qua material (or living, or animal, etc.), even if we think that all beings are material. The distinction would be based on what terms are used in the syllogisms or, more precisely, on the INTENSIONS (the meanings, the objective concepts, the *rationes*) the terms are associated with in those arguments, rather than on the EXTENSIONS they have in the arguments. we don't have to know whether terms referring to being as being have an extension beyond the material to know that their intension is not the same as "extending beyond the material."

At this point, can we agree that in knowing (2) D knows a truth about being as being (as I have defined that phrase here; there of course can be other definitions) without knowing (1)? Assuming that we agree here, we can also agree on something else: Since D does not know (1), he does not know whether (2) belongs to a science distinct from the science by which he knows truths about being as material. D does not even know that such a science exists or can exist. But though D doesn't know (1) and so cannot know whether (2) belongs to a science that knows truths about being as material, he still knows the truth about being as being, as I am using that phrase (2).

What is it, then, that we disagree about? To the extent that I understand you, I see different aspects in your position, and I am not sure which, if any, is more basic. One aspect concerns the fact the existence of the immaterial is at most only a hypothetical possibility for D, and one that he cannot know not to contain a contradiction until he proves the existence of the immaterial. Another aspect is the view that before knowing (1), D can only use the concept of being as it is found in the analogates that are primary in his understanding (material substances and, secondarily, their accidents). To grasp (1), or in grasping (1), he must use analogy in a way that he not only has not but cannot use before knowing (1).

Concerning the first aspect, we have already stipulated that D believes the existence of the immaterial would be contradictory. That would not prevent someone from asking D to hypothesize that existence, for the sake of argument, in order to see what would logically follow from it according to what D already knows about "being qua being." Someone could ask D whether if there were an immaterial being, that being would have unity. D would say yes. D might go on to draw another implication showing that attributing unity to the immaterial would result in a contradiction and so showing that the existence of the immaterial implies a contradiction. But that reasoning would have to use the already known necessary connection between being and unity as premise.

(I happen to believe that Cantor fulfilled Aquinas's challenge to show that an actually infinite multitude was impossible. He showed that that contradictory consequences — e.g., that a whole

would not be greater than its parts and that some infinities are greater than others --- follow from assuming an actually infinite multitude. But such contradictory conclusions only follow if known necessary truths about quantity as quantity are used as premises.)

Now let's ask D to assume that an unmoved mover exists. Though he believes the hypothesis impossible, that would not prevent him from drawing conclusions from it as all of us do when we discuss propositions that we believe contradictory, for example, when we draw conclusions to try to show that they are contradictory. Already knowing truths, like (2) about "being qua being" and also certain truths about being as material, D should be able to see that many — actually all, but let's only consider the weaker claim — of the conclusions shown about God in the Prima Pars, would be true if per impossible there were an unmoved mover. (E.g., if there were an unmoved mover its existence would have to be identical with its acts of knowing and loving, etc.)

There is nothing arcane about the preceding claim. Its truth is even a matter of empirical fact. Atheist and agnostics have been reading the Prima Pars, for centuries and for centuries have been able to demonstrate that they understand the claims made there by their discussions of them. That "knowledge" is only hypothetical. So, among other things, it does not inform them that there exists a science distinct from the science that talks about being as material. But the conclusion that they would have to draw is that the science that talks about being as material also knows truths about being qua being.

For they could understand that the conclusions of the Prima Pars follow necessarily from the assumption of an unmoved mover only by knowing that truths about being as being — for example (2) — used as premises to draw the conclusions in the Prima Pars are necessarily true. So they would know that those premises would have to be true of immaterial beings, if there were such, because they know that they would have to be true of anything that was assumed to exist.

And by grasping Aquinas's argument for (2), they would have scientific knowledge of the necessary connection between being and unity, even if they did not know that the knowledge belonged to a science distinct from the science that also knows truths about beings as material. So the fact that D does not yet know that the existence of the immaterial is not contradictory is irrelevant to his ability to have scientific knowledge of truths about being as being.

The second aspect of your position is the view that to know (1), or in the act of knowing (1) the meanings of some of the terms we have up until now used in grasping truths must be modified according to the doctrine of analogy. But we have seen that D must **ALREADY** have a sufficient understanding of the meanings of the terms used in the Prima Pars to grasp that statements using those terms must be true of an unmoved mover, if there is an unmoved mover. So why would anything have to change with reference to D's understanding of meanings when he additionally learns of the existence of the unmoved mover?

If analogy is required to understand those meanings as said of an unmoved mover, analogy must already be sufficiently in operation to allow us to know what those terms would mean **IF** they were true of an unmoved mover, and so know what they would mean **IF** there is immaterial existence. Whatever modifications to the original meanings of those terms as used for material beings are necessary for understanding them as used of an immaterial being must be able to be made before we know the actual existence of any immaterial being. So what further modification, analogical or otherwise, need take place when we later learn the existence of an immaterial being?

Again, this is not an arcane point. Examples abound, and we should all hope they abound. The

most common reason offered for atheism is that Atheist KNOW that if there is an uncaused cause, he would have to be both all good and all knowing. They incorrectly also think that conjunction is contradicted by the existence of evil. But they are perfectly correct about that conjunction. So we should all hope that the later conversion of many who had been Atheist because of evil does not alter their understanding of the terms that already allowed them to see that if there were a God, he must be both all good and all knowing.

Since any modifications in meaning required to know the necessary truths justifying inferences like "If there is an uncaused cause, he is all good" must be able to take place before we know the existence of the immaterial, your point about ambiguity is not relevant. But that is not the only reason it is not relevant.

For ambiguity to invalidate a syllogism, the ambiguity must take place within the syllogism itself. The fact that the use of a term in a syllogism may be ambiguous relative to some other use of the term outside of a syllogism cannot invalidate the syllogism. (It might cause someone to be subjectively confused about what he thinks the syllogism argues, but again, our debate is not about anyone's individual psychological history; it is about objective conditions for knowing.) So a claim of ambiguity on the basis of some theory, whether of analogy or anything else, is not sufficient. The existence of the ambiguity must be shown in the actual case.

There is no such ambiguity in "Whatever exists has unity. X exists. X has unity." It doesn't matter what we put for X. If we put God, we put something whose existence is infinitely different from that of any other being, actual or possible. But the minor premise does not say anything proper to how X exists. And when we have proven that an uncaused cause exists, we do not yet know anything proper to X's existence.

AFTER we have proven God's existence, the results of further syllogisms, especially of the *via negativa*, will require us to modify our use of "exists" even more than we may have been required to before we proved the existence of God. But my arguments above show that before we know that God exists, we would be capable of knowing that the conclusions of the latter syllogisms too would be true if God exists. And the arguments show that we could know that only by knowing necessary truths whose terms we knew or were capable of knowing before we know that God exists.

All of the above is implicit in my article, where I tried to be as succinct as I am verbose here; apparently succinctness was not sufficient. The first paragraph on p. 32 show that before we prove the immaterial, we must have (i.e., understand) words whose understood meanings in fact include the immaterial in their extension; whether or not we know that their extensions include the immaterial. If having such words requires analogy already, so be it. AFTER we learn of the actual existence of the immaterial, analogy might have to come into play further, but that would be a different question.

That paragraph argues that, if we didn't have such words, whether or not we know they extend to the immaterial, we couldn't ask the question whether there are immaterial beings or understand the question when posed. And if all the words we used to ask whether there is an immaterial such-and-such only include material things in their extension, all those question would have to be answered in the negative. (It would indeed be contradictory for the immaterial to exist!)

And if, *per impossibile*, the human acquisition of a meaning with immaterial extension required that someone first assent to that existence, that would not require him to prove that existence. As soon as someone else merely believed in it, whether based on genuine revelation or not, they

could explain the meaning to the rest of us without convincing us that it has an application, or even if I think it contradictory to have an application. In fact, I couldn't think it contradictory unless I understood the meaning.

So the meanings of some of our words must already include the immaterial in their extension, whether we know it or not; and so we are capable of grasping any self-evidently necessary truths, if there be such, using those meanings before we know actual immaterial existence. And if there are no such truths, how will we ever prove the existence or anything else of the immaterial?

For example, we must already know necessary truths that use a meaning for "cause" that can non-contradictorily, whether we know it yet now or not, be combined with that of "uncaused." AFTER we know that in fact these meanings MUST be asserted of the same existent, we will have to greatly refine our concept of cause, starting from our original meaning, and analogy will no doubt be involved. But if meanings that extend to the immaterial always require analogy, whether we know it or not, analogy had to be sufficiently involved to prove the existence of the immaterial BEFORE we would be able to prove that existence.

Second paragraph argues the only way to increase the extension of a meaning is to decrease intension, not to add intension but to remove intension. What you are left with after you remove intension must be something that was there all along together with whatever intension you have now removed; otherwise, you'd be left with nothing. So to arrive at meanings that in fact extend beyond the material --- whether we know that or not --- they must be included as part of our less universal concepts all along as, in the case of univocals, a genus is included in a species and is only logically distinct from the species. The logical superior must be included as part of what we know when we know the inferior, as what color is is included when we know what red is.

You can correctly reply that the analogy of attribution works differently. But whatever our FIRST logical superior(s) is, whatever logical superior must be included in what we know when we know anything else, it has to be left when we remove all other intensions. Is being in a sense that includes immaterial being, whether we know it or not or whether we think it contradictory or not, that logical superior?

So far I have not done Aquinas the disservice of citing him as an authority, only as an example. But to bring this over-long discussion to an end let me cite his repeated statements (e.g., In Meta IV, l. 6; XI, l.4, etc.) that the being that is the subject "genus" for metaphysics is the being that is first known by the human intellect, is known to all, is known when anything else is known. There is no way to interpret 605, for example, other than saying that the principle of non-contradiction, which metaphysics studies, is known when anything else is known since knowing the PNC depends on the understanding of that which is first conceived by our intellect, being. There is no way to interpret 2210 other than as saying that the terms of the common principles are known to all men, belong to the study of first philosophy, and are the reason the common principles belong to first philosophy. (On "commonness" see the last paragraph of my article.)

So the our first known logical superior, known when anything else is known, is the being studied by metaphysics. And since can arrive at the more universal by removing less universals, we can form a concept of being adequate for metaphysics by removing such intensions as rational, animal, living, and material. And once having that concept, we can grasp self-evident truths employing it and scientifically demonstrate other truths about being, like (2), that without any (further?; it makes no difference to this point) change of meaning are true of immaterial being even if we

think such being contradictory.

Concerning *separatio*, Aquinas mentioned it only once, and then while discussing a Pythagorean-Platonic theory of mathematics; he NEVER mentioned it when discussing metaphysics. And the way he brings metaphysics into that discussion of mathematics need not be interpreted as saying more than "Judgments of separation from matter do sometimes occur, and when they do, contrary to Plato, they occur in metaphysics." Is it possible that he meant to say more than that? Perhaps. But that place gives no EVIDENCE that he meant more.

Likewise, when distinguishing metaphysics from the philosophy of nature, he gives no evidence that he meant more than that we need to know (1) to know whether statements about being as being belong to a distinct science from the philosophy of nature, not to know whether any statement about being as being whatsoever is true.

The burden of proof is on anyone who thinks Aquinas meant more than these two weaker claims about *separatio*. That burden is not and cannot be met by the fact that we may not yet know that immaterial existence is not contradictory or by a theory about ambiguities that cannot be found in any of the relevant syllogisms.

If grasping the existence of the immaterial requires us to modify meanings BEFORE grasping that existence, it is possible that after we grasp that existence we will have to modify them FURTHER and so use analogy further.

For someone could ask D "If there are immaterial beings, do they have unity." D would consider that a counterfactual hypothetical to which he could answer yes. But there would be nothing hypothetical about the basis on which D would answer yes. The question asks him to hypothesize the extramental union of the intensions of "being" and "immaterial." And by having grasped Aquinas's argument, he knows that the extramental connection between his intension for the noise "existent" and his intention for noise "unity." is absolutely necessary. Again, this is not a matter of personal psychology; a term's extension either includes the immaterial or it does not, regardless of what I think.

So D's false belief that whatever exists is material would not require him to think that Aquinas's argument that whatever exists has unity makes things a property they have qua material rather than qua existing. Though D thinks all beings are material, he is capable of knowing that Aquinas's argument that whatever exists has unity establishes that unity belongs to things as existents, not as material existents. For even though the connection between existence and unity, unlike that between existence and materiality, is true, he is capable of knowing the soundness of the argument while being mistaken

And even if D thought every being was material, he could see that Aquinas's argument concerns the connection between unity and existence, not between unity and materiality or goodness. For D can fail to see that the latter connection is true and exi

Since D also thinks that whatever exists is material, he might conclude that whatever has unity is material. But that would not prevent him from grasping

; his ignorance would not make it any less the case that whatever has unity as goodness, etc.; his mistake about it would not make it any less true.

it is also a property of whatever is good, whatever is beautiful, whatever is true, etc, since they are co-extensive with being, though D may not know that yet. D's ignorance, however, does to make it any less the case that unity is a property of whatever is good, etc.