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## Aquinas’s Fourth Way of Demonstrating God’s Existence: From Virtual Quantum Gradations of Perfection (Inequality in Beauty) of Forms Existing within a Real Genus

Of St. Thomas Aquinas’s Five Ways of demonstrating God’s existence in his famous *Summa Theologiae*, the one that often strikes many contemporary readers as most puzzling is his Fourth Way, which, in the first sentence, he says he takes from “gradations that are discovered in things.”<sup>1</sup>

By gradations discovered in things, in his second sentence, Thomas gives us an example of what his first sentence means: “[M]ore or less are said of different beings according to the way they resemble in different ways something that maximally exists, just as the hotter more resembles the maximally hot.”<sup>2</sup>

In his third sentence, taking the liberty to paraphrase St. Thomas, he claims that, *similar to the case of discovering unequal intensities of*

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (New York and London, United Kingdom: Blackfriars, 1967), I, q. 2, a. 3, *resp.*: “Quarta via sumitur ex gradibus qui in rebus inveniuntur.” *All English translations of the Summa theologiae in body of the text are mine.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: “[M]agis et minus dicuntur de diversis secundum quod appropinquant diversimode ad aliquid quod maxime est; sicut magis calidum est, quod magis appropinquet maxime calido.”

*perfection in existing* as more or less hot by comparing these less perfect forms of existing heat to a nature that we know to be maximally hot, so we know that some most perfect being exists by knowing that most true, good, and noble beings exist. The reason for his being able to draw this conclusion is that, following Aristotle, he claims predicating the terms “true,” “good,” and “noble” of beings is simply a different, analogous, way of calling them “beings”; and calling them “maximally true, good, and noble” is simply an analogous way of calling things “maximally beings,” or “perfectly beings.”<sup>3</sup>

In sentence four, again following Aristotle, Thomas adds that “the maximum in a genus is said to be the cause of all else that exists in the genus, just as fire, which is maximally hot, is said to be the cause of all other hot things.”<sup>4</sup>

From the preceding claims made in the Fourth Way, in the fifth, and concluding, sentence, St. Thomas states, “some being exists, which we call God, that causes the existence, goodness, and all other perfections, of all beings.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Some General Principles from the Teachings of St. Thomas Essential to Know to Comprehend His Argument**

Unless a reader is familiar with St. Thomas’s teaching about several general principles in his work, comprehending as precisely as possible what St. Thomas understood himself to be saying in this argument is not possible.

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<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*: “Est igitur aliquid quod est verissimum, et optimum, et nobilissimum, et per consequens maxime ens, nam quae sunt maxime vera, sunt maxime entia, ut dicitur II Metaphys.”

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*: “Quod autem dicitur maxime tale in aliquo genere, est causa omnium quae sunt illius generis, sicut ignis, qui est maxime calidus, est causa omnium calidorum . . .”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: “[E]st aliquid quod omnibus entibus est causa esse, et bonitatis, et cuiuslibet perfectionis, et hoc dicimus Deum.”

A first general principle a reader needs to know from St. Thomas is that he always considers philosophical, or scientific, arguments to be about beings existing within a real genus, or within a composite whole considered analogously after the fashion of a real genus. Such beings existing in this way are species parts of a real genus, or beings conceived of like species parts of a real genus.

According to St. Thomas, another general principle is that, strictly speaking, gradations of more or less good, better, and best exist principally and primarily within a real genus (from which they might then be analogously transposed to other genera, like that of logic or fictional beings).

Regarding, then, St. Thomas's assertion that he takes his argument from gradations found "in things," *the things* in which he finds these gradations, in some way, he considers to *exist as specific parts, or like species parts*, within one, same, real genus, or some whole resembling a real genus. Hence, in a way, *his Fourth Way is an argument based upon specific gradations of perfection in "having a generic unity, existence, aim, and act" existing within a real genus, or some whole like it.*

A third general principle is that a real genus is what, today, many of us would call "an organizational whole," or what Thomas commonly refers to as "an order," by which he chiefly means a real order. By a "real order," or "real genus," once again, he means a composite whole: a whole essentially divided by extreme, opposite terms, or limits, of difference (*contrary opposites*, extreme opposite species) of an essential, *unequal, relation of qualitative perfection* existing between or among species (specific parts) *of possession of, having*, a common term, or end/aim/unity/existence/and act.

*Since a real genus, or real "order," is essentially divided by extreme opposite limits of perfection in having* (possessing) a real generic aim, end, unity, existence, and act, fully to comprehend St. Thomas's

argument, readers need to be familiar with his philosophical/scientific principles of opposition, and especially with what he means by contrary opposites, real species, terms, parts, and aims/ends (all of which, for him, are “principles,” or ways of being one).

Finally, one other general principle essential to grasp in St. Thomas’s teachings considered as a whole is that he maintains that what all human beings first perceive, know, is not some numerically-one, individual, being. According to him, what first falls into the human intellect, and what is also first perceived, is not “numerically-one being.” Our first act of intellectual knowing is a conflation of sense and intellect: *a generic perception of a something-which-is*. What we first know, perceive, are not individually-existing, discrete, beings. Our first knowledge, perception, is generic, of an individual conflated with a genus. We first know, perceive, generically, not individually; and what we first perceive is a generic, composite, whole: “a-that-which-has-the-act-of-existing,” or “a *habens esse*.”

Unlike Enlightenment empiricists, nominalists, like David Hume and John Locke, St. Thomas does not maintain that everything which exists is a discrete individual, and, as first known, perceived as such. He is well known for telling us that what we first perceive, know, is *this existing something*. We first perceive an individual as an existing generic whole, a something which is. Only after numerous acts of experience do children, and even adults, gradually start to distinguish individuals from the organizational wholes with which we first conflate them when we first sense something unfamiliar to us. We know we are experiencing something that is, that has existence; but, at first, we do not perceive, know specifically, individually, what it is.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For defense of all the claims I make in this article related to the teachings of St. Thomas that need to be known so as completely as possible to comprehend what he understood himself to be saying in his Fourth Way of demonstrating God’s existence, see my Volumes 1 and 2 of my 2-volume *A Not-So-Elementary Christian Metaphysics*

### **What St. Thomas Means and does not Mean by a “Principle”**

To become familiar with what he means by all the principles to which I have referred in the above paragraphs, a reader must first comprehend what St. Thomas chiefly means, and does not mean, by “a principle.”

Starting first with what he chiefly does not mean by a “principle,” he does not mainly mean a “logical premise.” True, a logical premise is a principle; but, while all logical premises are principles, not every principle is a logical premise. *In fact, the notion of a principle was first formally developed by the ancient Greeks in ancient physics when physics was still conflated with metaphysics (as a proximate generator of action), not in logic* (the formal study of which originated later, among the Sophists).

Hence, in the conceptual order, St. Thomas understood the term “principle” chiefly to be a conflated metaphysical/physical idea analogously transferred by logicians from ancient metaphysicians/physicists (pre-Socratic philosophers) to logic.

According to St. Thomas, the idea “principle” is an analogous extension of the metaphysical concept of unity. Like the concepts of being the same, similar, and equal, the idea “principle” is simply another way of calling something “one.” For example, just as, for Aquinas, being “the same” chiefly means being one in substance, and being “similar” mainly means being one in quality, while being equal primarily means being one in quantity, for him, being a principle chiefly means being a “one” considered as a “starting point,” a “point” being simply a one having position in a line.

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(St. Louis, Mo.: En Route Books & Media, 2015 and 2016); and my *The Moral Psychology of St. Thomas Aquinas: An Introduction to Ragamuffin Ethics* (St. Louis, Mo.: En Route Books & Media, 2017).

Thomas further specifies his understanding of a principle by stating that it is the starting point of being, becoming, or knowing. In short, St. Thomas considers the term “principle” to be analogously predicable of pretty much anything and everything that exists, or can exist, outside or inside the human soul and its faculties and habits.

### **Some Specific Principles St. Thomas Uses in His Fourth Way: Existing, Unity, Having (Possessing), Equality, Inequality, Relation, Parts, Wholes, Partial-Perfection, Partial-Privation**

As used in the current argument under consideration, St. Thomas maintains as evident that: (1) *qualitative gradations of perfection* (“forms”) *unequally having, possessing, the act of existence* (specific beings, specific forms, species) exist in all real genera around us; and (2) these gradations of formal perfection in having existence are evident principles from which he can start his reasoning to demonstrate that God exists.

While St. Thomas is famous for his emphasis on the metaphysical principle of the act of existence (*esse*) and its analogous predication, as should be evident to anyone who has followed this discussion thus far, equally crucial to understand to follow his method of scientific (or philosophical) reasoning (forms of reasoning he considered to be identical) and scientific/philosophical predication are: (1) his principle of unity and (2) the extensive way in which he analogously predicates the term “unity” or “being one.”

A chief reason he had placed such emphasis upon the principles of existence and unity is that these are the essential principles of human knowability, intelligibility. A necessary condition for anything to be intelligible to, knowable by, human beings is that it be an “existing unity.” Unless something exists and is an existing unit, St. Thomas maintains we cannot know it. For this reason, St. Thomas sometimes calls what human beings know “indivisible intelligibles” (that is, intelligible

ones). Hence, according to him, *existing unity*, not just the act of existing, presents an intelligible, including a scientific, subject to the human intellect.

Indeed, according to Aquinas, “possessing,” or “having” is simply, in some way, to some extent, *more or less perfectly, completely*, “being one” with, “being related” to (not being in no way one with, not being totally divided from, or completely unrelated to) what is had, or possessed. If, for example, we say that “John exists,” since, according to St. Thomas, John is a being (an *ens*) and, since he also claims that an *ens* is a *habens esse* (that which “has” *esse*, the act of existing), to some extent, every being (*ens*), including John, is somewhat united (one with, related to) or divided from (not united, one, with; or totally unrelated to) its *esse*, its act of existing: the act of existing that John has or possesses.

Just as in any contemporary organizational whole, or operational organization, organizational parts *more or less perfectly, unequally*, participate, share, in an organization's organizational unity, aim or end, existence, action, *and perfection*, so St. Thomas considers the parts of a real genus, its species (generic parts), to share, participate, in, possess, the organization's generic aim or end, unity, existence, action, *and perfection*.

Several decades ago, in his metaphysical masterpiece *Painting and Reality*, in one, short, annotated-footnote, when he claimed that “order is the only kind of unity a multiplicity is able to receive,” the great French intellectual and student of St. Thomas Étienne Gilson made implicitly intelligible precisely why this organizational inequality must exist. Since to order some *multitude* is to cause the multitude to become *parts* of an organizational whole, and (while Gilson did not explicitly say so) since becoming parts of an organizational whole demands that the multitude be *unequally qualified and unequally related to generating numerically-one organizational aim, end, and act, absent*

*the reality of real qualities that act as unequal limiting principles (measures, principles of having) unequally relating a multitude to each other in an imperfect (less than totally-perfect) unity, no unity can exist within a finite universe!*<sup>7</sup>

As the ancient Greek physicist Parmenides had recognized millennia ago, *an absolutely perfect unity*, existing as totally indivisible and *unrelatable*, is a unity in which no multitude can equally or unequally possess, have, a share. And, as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had realized, also millennia ago, existence of such a unity as a reality necessarily entails that no part/whole relationships can exist, that the only type of opposition capable of existing is contradictory opposition. If absolutely, totally perfect, *unshare-able* unity is the only kind of unity capable of existing, no partially-perfect unity can exist; *no limited oppositions of having and not having* (partial possession and partial privation), relation, and contrariety *can exist*.

Existence of such an imperious unity essentially involves total privation, negation, of anything else, including the existence of philosophy/science. Such being the case, rationally to defend the reality of philosophy/science, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had set about to refute this teaching of Parmenides.

By the time Aristotle had come on the scene, Socrates and Plato had prepared the groundwork for Aristotle more completely to discover principles to accomplish this shared aim. Chief among these principles was that of virtual quantity (partially-perfect having/partial privation).

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<sup>7</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Painting and Reality* (New York: Pantheon Books, Published for the Bollingen Foundation, Inc., Bollingen Series 35, 1957), 20, fn. 17.

## The Nature of Virtual Quantity, How it Differs from Dimensive Quantity, the Difference between the Principles of Primary and Secondary Privation

While most students of St. Thomas and Aristotle know that Aristotle had distinguished between continuous and discrete quantity, few are aware that both had made a more primitive distinction between dimensive quantity and virtual quantity.

According to Aristotle and Aquinas, dimensive quantity is the species of quantity studied by geometricians and arithmeticians. It is a property, essential accident, existing within a substantial body that extends the body externally in three physical dimensions of length, width, and depth: being a long body, wide body, and deep body.

In contrast, virtual, or intensive, quantity (*quantitatis virtutis*, or, *intensiva*) is a property, essential accident, essential quality of form that emanates from a form internally by generating qualitative intensity of formal activity *through qualitative division of having formal greatness, perfection*, within a substantial soul and body (such as the intensive greatness [intensity] of a bodily color, like blue or red; or the lower and higher faculties of soul and habitual psychological *perfections and imperfections* of intellectual and moral virtues and vices, and *perfections and imperfections, privations*, of health and strength of bodily organs and their operations).

By *perfecting* internal, qualitative operations, *virtual quantity limits, measures*, the intrinsic liberty (independence of action from external circumstances) that a substance possesses as a result of the internal strength of intrinsic unity and simplicity of its nature. *This internal quality of greatness, perfection, of formal unity* causes an extension of strength and depth of unity, simplicity, and liberty of causal influence of substantial action in degree and kind.

Aristotle and Aquinas consider quantity to be a real cause existing within a substance, a necessary, inherent property that, among other things, divides and extends a bodily substance into internal and external substantial parts. Wherever it exists, real quantity causes real divisions, limits, intrinsic measures of greatness, *perfection*, in having, principles of relation and *relatability*.

According to Thomas, what enables virtual and dimensive quantity to operate with this causal efficacy within a substance is that both are what, following Aristotle, Thomas calls “secondary privations.” Among other reasons, he calls them “secondary privations” because Aristotle had called unity “the primary privation” and he had considered quantities to be analogous ways in which pluralities become one.

**Why Such Preceding Ways of Talking Are  
Eminently Reasonable and How Unity, Number,  
Virtual Quantity, Privation and Perfection,  
Resistance and Receptivity, Opposition and Contrariety,  
Are Real Principles Essentially Related to  
Generating Real Genera and Real Species**

While such preceding ways of talking might sound strange to the contemporary mind, when properly understood, such designations are eminently reasonable.

One reason they sound strange to us is because, for centuries, the modern and Enlightenment mind has become accustomed to think of unity as chiefly a mathematical number and mathematical numbers chiefly as concepts. *According to Aristotle and St. Thomas, unity is no number at all, mathematical or otherwise.* It is a chiefly qualitative principle of formal resistance to division (formal indivision), and a principle of quantity, number. Number is a species of quantity. Quantity, in turn, is a limited plurality.

For example, because *a number is essentially a plurality, a limited plurality, the first number is two* (two ones existing as one composite whole: one two); and what a geometrician studies is not length, width, and depth. A geometrician studies *quantified, limited*, length, width, and depth. Analogously, what arithmeticians study are not pluralities. They study limited pluralities.

Furthermore, since, according to St. Thomas, real species only exist, and are known as existing, within real genera and real individuals, since *real genera and individuals are divided by, and known in and through, their more or less generically-perfect species* (in and through which they act and are also sensed), St. Thomas considered dimensive and virtual quantities to be really sensible and sensed (for example, we know, sense, animals like John or Fido inasmuch as we sense a rational or brute animal); and he considered number to be a common sensible, a real accident limiting, specifying, and individualizing generic intensive quantities (forms). Hence, numbers specifically differ as quantities, not as animals, or other substances!

Beyond being a limited plurality, as I have already noted, Aristotle and Aquinas had considered a number to be a secondary privation. They had done so because they had not conceived of our initial knowledge of unity, being one, to have arisen from sensation of dimensive quantity alone. *They had maintained we derive our initial of knowledge of unity by sensing a quality of resistance to organizational division within a continuum.* They said this awareness first arises from a sense of formal, organizational indivision, *qualitative resistance to division within a dimensive quantum continuum whole.*

That is, a sensation of qualitative resistance to division within an organizational whole (a sense of formal, organizational unity) generates the first human awareness of unity. Once possessed of this sense of unity as qualitative, organizational indivision, organizational unbreakability, we are then able *analogously* to extend predication of this con-

cept to other genera (for example, to politics as political unity and to mathematics as mathematical unity).

*Crucial to understand about the origin of our first sensation of unity is that this awareness is generated by perceiving a species of privation: partial privative negation of perfect unity!* To distinguish this perception of indivision from the secondary privations of the properties, essential accidents, of quantity and quality, St. Thomas refers to unity existing and apprehended as formal indivision as the “primary privation.” He also refers to it as the principle of “the primary opposition” that generates contrariety: between a one and a many. Considered as such, unity is judged to be analogous to one of two species of privation and negation: (1) total and (2) partial.

Thomas considers total opposition, negation, to be the opposition existing between contradictory opposites in which, if one opposite exists, the other opposite cannot exist. He claims that partial opposition, negation, is the kind of opposition that exists within the three remaining kinds of opposition: possession and privation (*having and not having*); relation, and contrariety (extreme differences, parts, existing within a common genus, or organizational whole).

### **An Original Act of Genius on Aristotle’s Part**

One of the acts of original genius on the part of Aristotle was for him to realize that the only way to refute the teaching of Parmenides and to save philosophy/science “as a really-doable human deed” was for him to make intelligible to himself and to others how partial, imperfect, generic, specific, and individual unities (wholes) can exist. To form this concept he eventually recognized he would have to make intelligible how generic, specific, and individual beings can *have some* unity without *being total* unity.

As a student of Plato, Aristotle realized that, *in his teaching about participation*, Plato had hit upon the answer to Parmenides; but, because Plato had misconceived of the first human awareness of unity to be mathematical (a principle of number, instead of an internal, qualitative principle of organization, partial resistance to formal division within an organizational whole), he had not completely understood how to explain this answer to himself and to others. Once Aristotle was able to realize that the key to refuting Parmenides lay in understanding that all *having, possession, participation*, essentially involves generic, specific, and individual, partial receptivity/resistance to total, absolutely perfect, unity (*receptivity to some unity, but resistance to total unity generically, specifically, and individually*), he realized that he had the chief principle he needed to save science/philosophy as a really-doable human deed.

Even to the ears of many, perhaps most, contemporary students of Aristotle and St. Thomas, *the claim I have made above that we first sense unity by sensing privation, privative negation, might well sound ridiculous*. After all, how could anyone seriously maintain that we sense negations, privations?

### **Why the Claim that We Sense Negations, Privations, and Species is Philosophically/Scientifically Reasonable**

My reply to such a response is, “Tell that to Galileo Galilei.” As a student and admirer of Aristotle and Aquinas, in his famous, groundbreaking study of his two new sciences of motion, like a good Aristotelian and student of St. Thomas, he had maintained that nothing moves until *receptivity exceeds resistance*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Galileo Galilei, *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*, trans. Henry Crew and Alfonso de Salvio (The University of Adelaide: Macmillan, 1914), “Third Day”: a reply by Sagredo to Simplicio related to the topic of “Naturally Accelerated Motion.” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

Furthermore, according to St. Thomas, while total negation, total privation, can only exist as a mental being, a being of reason (*ens rationis*), partial negation and privation can exist admixed in a really-existing nature or substance.

The reason many, perhaps most, students of St. Thomas would find my claim absurd is because they are repeatedly taught that, by the term “privation,” St. Thomas means “absence,” not resistance. *This claim is false!*

*According to St. Thomas a privation is a resistance existing within a determinate potency to complete execution of its proper act.* (Thus understood, by the way, this notion is essential to the *concept of mass* in contemporary physics, which Galileo appears to have started to discover!)

Also, that, as animals, we sense such privations (*and beyond privations, even real genera and species*) is easily demonstrable from the fact that, instantaneously, on the perception of wolves as wolves (individual members of the species wolf), sheep tend to flee. They do this because the sense of fear causes in them a sensation of their own weakness, inability to resist the attack of a wolf, *which saner minds and sheep*, even today, recognize is a natural, species-enemy of sheep. Analogously, any human being who senses weakness senses privation, imperfect possession of strength to resist something belonging to some real genus and species of being (or perhaps even a whole real species or genus). Surely, if brute animals like sheep can sense real species, so, too, can human beings.

*This principle of partial privation of totally perfect unity in the teaching of St. Thomas is crucial to comprehend: (1) in order intellectually to grasp his teaching about philosophy/science considered as a whole; and (2) because it is a principle essentially connected to the nature of virtual quantity by means of which division of a real genus into real species parts is achieved (in and through unequal possession, im-*

*perfect having, by a qualified multitude [species parts] of some generic unity, aim/end, and act).*

The qualitative resistance (partial privative negation and receptivity) to total, perfect, unity and total disunity existing within the virtual quantum parts (species) of an organizational whole allows for the possibility of an *intrinsic* opposition between privation and possession within a subject (and a genus), thus making this virtual quantum principle of partial privation (resistance)/partial possession (partially-perfect receptivity) an essential, proximate principle of all contrariety *and of all species. This intrinsic principle of privation of complete possession (totally-perfect having, total perfection) of a generic unity causes otherness, negation, or difference to involve contrariety (and not contradiction), which makes possible the origin of all real species, higher and lower genera and species, and more and less perfect individual members of species!*

Having made the above the distinctions, returning to St. Thomas's Fourth Way of demonstrating God's existence so as to make it more or less intelligible to contemporary readers becomes much more doable (becoming more possible as we make further distinctions along the way). To proceed, need immediately exists, once again, to recognize that, when St. Thomas talks about "gradations that are discovered in things," he is locating these gradations *of specific perfections in having a generic perfection* within a real genus, or something we analogously conceive after the fashion of a real genus.

In part, the reason he does is because he locates the existence of every finite being within a real genus and species. This is true even of beings that are transitioning from one genus to another. As they do so, they exist within the finite order, which is a wider, more remote, genus (generic whole) in which all finite beings, even possibly everlasting ones (like in the physical universe of Aristotle) exist.

## How St. Thomas's Understanding of a Genus Continued a Long-Standing Western Philosophical/Scientific Tradition

In fact, proceeding in this way, St. Thomas is simply continuing a philosophical/scientific Western tradition of several millennia, tracing back before Aristotle, as far as the ancient Greek physicists, who first originated within Western civilization the concept of a “genus.” For the early Greek theological-poets everything that exists (even the gods) had emerged, or was generated, from some material (Earth, *Gaia*) that had previously existed. Continuing, but depersonalizing this principle, the first of the ancient Greek philosophers, the ancient Greek physicists, had claimed that all species of beings that now exist have been generated by one of four original, everlasting species of matter (earth, air, fire, or water); or some numerically-one combination of these, that, somehow, had previously contained whatever it had subsequently generated.

The chief problem these early physicists had was to try to figure out which of these four first principles was the first everlasting, common matter (the genus) from which all the other species of matter had initially emerged, been *generated*, and how this emergence occurred and continues. Because of this long-standing intellectual tradition, when talking about a genus, to paraphrase him, St. Thomas will sometimes make a remark that often puzzles some readers: that, in the concept of some finite thing, “its genus is taken from the matter,” while “its species is taken from the form.”<sup>9</sup>

Since angels are not material, strictly speaking, St. Thomas claims they do not exist within a real genus. The same is true if we consider

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 36: “The genus is not the matter, but taken from the matter as signifying the whole; nor is the difference the form, but taken from the form as signifying the whole.” Available online—see the section *References* for details.

the genus that metaphysicians study, since that genus includes material beings and beings that need not be material, or conceived of in relation to matter. Hence, including such beings within a genus, talking about species of them, essentially involves predicating the terms “genus” and “species” analogously. Furthermore, it is precisely within such genera and species that St. Thomas locates what he calls “analogous predication.”

### **A Crucial Point to Note about the Role that Analogous Predication Plays in the Teaching of St. Thomas**

This is a crucial point to note about the teaching of St. Thomas in general. He considers the language a scientist/philosopher uses to be chiefly, essentially, the language of analogy, not the language of the logician, which is chiefly that of univocity. And he maintains that the genus a scientist/philosopher studies: (1) is mainly a real genus, not a logical genus; and (2) that this real genus exists as a generic cause within the species it helps generate and these species, in turn, exist as specific causes within individuals they help generate.

These essential differences between the essential language that a philosopher/scientist uses and the genus he or she studies from the essentially different language and genus used and studied by logicians helps to explain the pitiful inability that still exists among the overwhelming number of contemporary intellectuals who claim to be students of St. Thomas accurately to represent to themselves and to their students his teachings about analogy in general, and especially when it is applied in philosophy/science.

I made the above distinctions in some, closely-preceding, paragraphs so as to explain: (1) why, even though, *strictly speaking*, ways of being like “good” (*bonum*), “true” (*verum*), “noble” (*nobile*), and the like (ones analogously-predicated to differ like real species within a

real genus) are not real species existing within a real genus; *and* (2) *why, in different parts of his Fourth Way, St. Thomas analogously talks about them as if they are real species existing within a real genus.* He does so chiefly because, according to our psychological constitution as human beings, everything we evidently know as being real or not real, in one way or another, we have to talk about analogously as a genus (an organizational whole) or species existing within a genus (parts existing within an organizational whole through which generic causes execute generic [organizational] acts to achieve generic [organizational] aims).

### **How St. Thomas Considered the Acts of Predication of the Logician and Philosopher/Scientist to Be Essentially Different**

That what I have been saying in this article to this point is true as supported by everything St. Thomas says subsequently in his Fourth Way from his second sentence to his last sentence.

In an evident reference to analogous predication, St. Thomas starts his second sentence of the Fourth Way by saying, “[M]ore or less are said of different beings according to the way they resemble in different ways something that maximally exists, just as the hotter more resembles the maximally hot.” In this kind of analogous predication, St. Thomas is telling us that a multitude of things are said according to different, virtual-quantum-unequal relationships (qualitatively-unequal relationships) to some *numerically-one, nature, or form: a single definite nature existing within a single definite subject or substance.* He maintains that, in analogous (that is, “proportionate”) predication, the many things said of a “single, definite nature” are beings said of a really-existing, numerically-one, subject (*chiefly, a generic or specific form*) according to somewhat the same and somewhat different (that is, unequal) relationships.

St. Thomas explains that the multitude of things said of this numerically-one nature state something “different” (predicate a different meaning) “insamuch as they imply different relationships;” and they say something the “same” (predicate the same meaning) “inasmuch as these different relationships are referred to one and the same thing.”<sup>10</sup>

To make more intelligible to his readers precisely what he means by this type of intra-generic form of analogous predication (predication involving species belonging to the same genus), he tells us the first example is one in which a multitude is being unequally, relationally-referred to some one nature considered as a final cause, “an end.” Then, he presents the famous example of “healthy” or “healthful” so often reported in a grossly inaccurate way by people who claim to be faithful students of St. Thomas. Reported by St. Thomas, the example proceeds as follows:

First, he [Aristotle] gives the example of many things being related to one thing as an end. This is clear in the case of the terms healthy or healthful. For the term healthy is not predicated univocally of food, medicine, urine and animal; because the concept healthy as applied to food means something that preserves health, and as applied to medicine it means something that causes health; and as applied to urine it means something that is a sign of health; and as applied to an animal it means something that is the recipient or subject of health. Hence every use of the term healthy refers to one and the same health; for it is the same health that the animal receives, which urine is a sign of, which medicine causes, and which food preserves.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 1, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., Inc., 1961), bk. 4, lesson 1, no. 535 and 536. Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 537: “Ponit enim primo unum exemplum, quando multa comparantur ad unum sicut ad finem, sicut patet de hoc nomine sanativum vel salubre. Sanativum enim non dicitur univoce de diaeta, medicina, urina et animali. Nam ratio sani secundum quod dicitur de diaeta, consistit in conservando sanitatem. Secundum vero quod dicitur de medicina, in faciendo sanitatem. Prout vero dicitur de urina, est signum sanitatis.

After finishing this first example in which the numerically-one predicate term (“healthy,” or “healthful”) is considered as numerically-one end or aim, he explains that, while “definitionally-considered,” the nature, or form, being predicated (“healthy,” or “healthful”) remains unchanged (the definition remains identically the same of all the subjects of which “healthy,” or “healthful” is said), *because of the essentially different relationships of subject terms to which the predicate term is being referred are included as an essential part of the act of predication*, the meaning of what is said essentially differs. Hence, while the definition of the form “healthy,” or “healthful” remains identical in the following instances, *when we apply “healthy,” or “healthful” to: (1) the art of medicine, we mean the art of medicine causes health; (2) an animal, we mean that health exists in the animal; (3) food, we mean that food preserves health; and (4) urine, we mean that urine is a sign of health.*

Notice how radically different is the nature of professional conversation in which philosophers/scientists engage from the way logicians talk. While both refer definitions to subjects, *the way they do so radically and essentially differs*. Logicians demand that terms be predicated univocally, while philosophers/scientists require that they be predicated analogously.

Unlike philosophers/scientists, who require that definitions be said of subjects: (1) *with no change of definition* and (2) *according to unequal relationships*, logicians demand that definitions be said of subjects: (1) *with no change of definition* and (2) *according to exactly the same relationship*. For example, logically-considered, predicating “man”

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Secundum vero quod dicitur de animali, ratio eius est, quoniam est receptivum vel susceptivum sanitatis. Sic igitur omne sanativum vel sanum dicitur ad sanitatem unam et eandem. Eadem enim est sanitas quam animal suscipit, urina significat, medicina facit, et diaeta conservat.”

of Socrates and Plato<sup>12</sup> refers identically the same definition (rational animal, for example) to both Socrates and Plato; and does so according to equally the same relationship (in both instances, we are saying “man” of Socrates and Plato *because animal rationality exists in both of them according to a species equality*). Hence, what logicians definitionally “say” of a multitude of subjects is identical to what they mean. In the case of philosophers/scientists, on the other hand, what they definitionally “say” of a multitude of subjects is not identical to what they mean. In each case they mean something somewhat the same and somewhat different!

Having finished with this first example from Aristotle, St. Thomas follows with a second one in which he presents examples chiefly related to an efficient, not a final, cause. More precisely, to prevent confusion in the minds of readers, since he gives as his example of the “art” of medicine numerically-one nature of efficient cause to which all the predication chiefly refers, and *since the medical art is a formal habit* through which a medical doctor practices his or her medical nature, a more precise way to refer to this example would be to describe it as talking about its numerically-one subject as an *efficient and formal cause* (proximately a formal cause) Whichever case be better, reported by St. Thomas, what Aristotle says proceeds as follows:

Second, he gives the example of many things being related to one thing as an efficient principle. For one thing is called medical because it possesses the art of medicine, as the skilled physician. Another is called medical because it is naturally disposed to have the art of medicine, as men who are so disposed that they may acquire the art of medicine easily (and according to this some men can engage in medical activities as a result of a peculiar natural constitution). And another is called medical or medicinal because it is necessary for healing, as the instruments which physi-

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<sup>12</sup> Saying, “Socrates is a man. Plato is a man.”

cians use can be called medical. The same thing is also true of the things called medicines, which physicians use in restoring health. Other terms which resemble these in having many senses can be taken in a similar way.<sup>13</sup>

While, in some respect, examples 1 and 2 differ regarding causes (final and efficient), they essentially agree insofar as both emphasize that what is principally and primarily being said of every species in a genus is said in relation to some maximum in the genus, numerically-one nature, in which *some generic form, or organizational principle (organizational unity)* maximally exists as a generic perfection as in a generating subject. In example 1, the numerically-maximally-most-perfectly-one nature (form) is “health,” chiefly existing in some one animal nature that (*depending upon the species natures existing within it*) qualitatively-unequally distributes its generic health throughout its species parts. In example 2, the numerically-maximally-most-perfectly-one nature is the “medical art” existing, first and foremost, as a generic habit in the numerically-maximally-most-perfectly-one generating art (excellence, virtue) of the medical doctor by which *the form of health* is restored.

As the examples to which St. Thomas refers make evident, in all cases of analogous predication within a philosophical or scientific genus, the chief subject about which scientists/philosophers talk, the maximum in the genus, is some existing nature (generic form, principle of a generic, organizational whole) in which this generic form unequally ex-

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<sup>13</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 1, bk. 4, lesson 1, no. 538: “Secundo ponit exemplum quando multa comparantur ad unum sicut ad principium efficiens. Aliquid enim dicitur medicativum, ut qui habet artem medicinae, sicut medicus peritus. Aliquid vero quia est bene aptum ad habendum artem medicinae, sicut homines qui sunt dispositi ut de facili artem medicinae acquirant. Ex quo contingit quod ingenio proprio quaedam medicinalia operantur. Aliquid vero dicitur medicativum vel medicinale, quia eo opus est ad medicinam, sicut instrumenta quibus medici utuntur, medicinalia dici possunt, et etiam medicinae quibus medici utuntur ad sanandum. Et similiter accipi possunt alia quae multipliciter dicuntur, sicut et ista.”

ists according to imperfect species-form possession and privation as the proximate generating principle of organizational harmony and unified action within all its species parts. For this reason, in the same book and lecture from his *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, he refers to Aristotle as saying:

It is the office of one science to study not only those things which are referred “to one thing,” i.e., to one common notion, but also those which are referred to one nature according to different relationships. And the reason for this is that the thing to which they are referred is one; just as it is clear that one science, medicine, considers all health-giving things. The same thing holds true of other things which are spoken of in the same way.<sup>14</sup>

### **Returning to St. Thomas's Fourth Sentence in His Fourth Way, Plus Another Crucial Point from the Teachings of St. Thomas that Needs Emphasis**

Returning now to St. Thomas's fourth sentence in his Fourth Way of demonstrating God's existence, Aquinas says, “the maximum in a genus is said to be the cause of all else that exists in the genus, just as fire, which is maximally hot, is said to be the cause of all other hot things.”

All the preceding claims in the argument being true, in his fifth and last sentence of the Fourth Way, Thomas concludes, “Therefore some being exists, which we call God, that causes the existence, goodness, and all other perfections, of all beings.”

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 544: “Deinde cum dicit quemadmodum ergo hic ponit maiorem primae rationis; dicens, quod est unius scientiae speculari non solum illa quae dicuntur secundum unum, idest secundum unam rationem omnino, sed etiam eorum quae dicuntur per respectum ad unam naturam secundum habitudines diversas. Et huius ratio est propter unitatem eius ad quod ista dicuntur; sicut patet quod de omnibus sanativis considerat una scientia, scilicet medicinalis, et similiter de aliis quae eodem modo dicuntur.”

Before starting to summarize St. Thomas's Fourth Way in a manner that should make it more easily intelligible to contemporary readers, need exists especially to emphasize another crucial point from the teachings of St. Thomas: *he considers the act of existing (esse) to be "the act of all acts and the perfections of all perfections."*<sup>15</sup> Such being the case, to be rationally consistent, he necessarily has to conclude that, to some extent, anything and everything that has existence (every *ens*, existing being) is somewhat perfect.

Since Thomas maintains that "*forma dat esse*" (form gives *esse*) and that a form can only do this as a *habens esse*:<sup>16</sup> *as a somewhat imperfect receiver transmitter, distributor, of esse*, by nature, St. Thomas has to be conceiving of generic, specific, and individual forms as *qualities, virtual quantities*, limiting principles of receiving, dividing, measuring, and distributing the existence, unity, and action of a generic form and aim, or end (since an aim, or end, is a maturely-existing form: the act of perfection, mature, formal development, at which generation aims). This means that he considers all forms (generic, specific, and individual) to behave like what today we tend to call "conductors" or "principles of conductivity."

As anyone familiar with conductors understands, by nature, (1) they exist in an *instrumental relationship* toward what they conduct (what they conduct is not something they possess by nature as conductors; the nature of a conductor and what it conducts are not identical, essentially differ); (2) to transmit what they conduct, they have to receive it according to their intrinsic qualitative ability to receive and conduct it; (3) in receiving something to conduct, they necessarily qualita-

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<sup>15</sup> Cf., for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia Dei*, trans. the English Dominican Fathers (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1952), q. 7, a. 2, ad 9: "[E]sse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum." Available online—see the section *References* for details.

<sup>16</sup> Cf., for example, *S.Th.*, I, q. 76, a. 7, resp.: "Forma autem per seipsam facit rem esse in actu, cum per essentiam suam sit actus."

tively limit, measure, the way what is conducted acts (for example, electricity acts qualitatively differently in a light bulb than it does in a toaster, or microwave, oven); (4) in relation to what is being conducted, the quality of conductors is more or less good, perfect; even if it is not absolutely perfect in all respects, to the extent that it exceeds all other conductors in qualitative conductive capacity, some one conductor is the maximum of qualitative excellence in this or that genus of conductivity; hence, this last one is the measure of conductive perfection of all the rest; (5) in perceiving conductors in operation, we perceive more or less qualitative perfection in the ways of existing and modes of operation conductors transmit, distribute.

Simply put, Aquinas conceives of different genera and species as qualitatively unequal conductors that are distinguished from one another as qualitatively distinct composite wholes based upon what they conduct and the qualitatively different ways they conduct it. When he perceives “gradations existing in things,” he perceives qualitatively unequal conductors of qualitatively different ways of being and acting (for example, more or less healthy human beings whose physical organs are, more or less perfectly, harmoniously, distributing human health throughout more or less qualitatively perfect organs). And when he perceives this or that qualitatively more perfect medical doctor removing disease and restoring health to a human body, he is perceiving that person analogously behaving like a more or less skilled orchestra leader removing disharmony and restoring harmony to an orchestral performance.

According to St. Thomas, since a genus exists in its species, and its species exists in its individuals, all real genera are constituted of real, specific, and individual forms. Since what human beings know, sense, is always some form (principle of unity existing within some organizational whole and generating organizational harmony within it), we first intellectually apprehend this form in and through a generic sense perception of some organizational harmony. This being so, evident to St.

Thomas is that, always and everywhere, in every act of sense perception, and simultaneous act of intellectual knowing, we human beings perceive qualitatively more or less acts of harmonious perfection, qualitatively unequal gradations, units, of perfection in co-operative, organizational existence and action (the principles of which, for St. Thomas, is chiefly what gradations of finite forms are). Every act of human knowing, including that of sense perception, is comprised of a generic awareness of some organizational whole, in and through which we sense some more or less perfect generic, harmonic, unity: some relatively perfectly/imperfectly existing whole unit, existing and acting in and through qualitative, harmonic, perfections and imperfections in more or less perfect species and individuals.

No wonder should exist, then, as to why St. Thomas considers as evident that gradations of perfection (more or less perfect, specific forms) exist within things. Nor should wonder exist as to why he considers such gradations of perfection to exist within all real genera. For him, every existing thing existing within every existing genus and species is a virtual quantum unit, admixture, of existing qualitative, harmonic, perfection and imperfection.

Since every genus is divided by extremes of harmonic perfection and imperfection (partial privation), easy to comprehend is why St. Thomas maintains that the maximum within a genus is the measure and cause of all the rest that is in the genus. For, without some relatively most perfect being (for example, some relatively most-perfectly-healthy) and relatively most imperfect being (for example, some relatively most-imperfectly-unhealthy) within a genus (for example, within the genus "health"), no real genus can exist. And, since the only way a relatively, qualitatively, most-imperfect being can exist within a genus is by being most deprived of its extreme, qualitative, opposite (perfect organizational harmony, health) of which it is the extreme, partial privation (qualitative resistance) to which it is essentially related (like a

relatively healthy tooth to a cavity in it), the relatively most-perfect being measures and causes to exist in the genus its qualitative negation.

Finally, in perceiving that a hierarchy of unequal possession of formal perfection in being (more or less qualitatively perfect ways of having existence) exists within any and every real genus, immediately evident should be that: (1) a highest, most perfect, real order, genus, of formal perfection exists *universally* within the order of real existence and (2) all other genera of more or less perfect ways of having existence (forms) exist as species within this more remote and most perfect genus.

Since the way St. Thomas conceives of a real genus is similar to the way, today, many people conceive of a distribution network of more or less perfect conductors (forms) in which the conductor and what is conducted are not identical (differ) in nature, the existence of a universal, overarching genus (organizational whole) of perfections comprised of the most perfect of generic perfections, forms (harmonic conductors of existence, none of which possesses qualitative perfection in existence by nature) in which all other subgenera of perfections participate as less-perfect conductors of qualitatively-less-perfect perfections, indicates to St. Thomas that: (1) if real genera and species exist, some absolutely perfect being must exist; (2) if this were not the case, no real perfection could exist within any genus, species, or individual that has existence within a genus and species; (3) if no real, qualitatively limited perfection and partial privations existed within any genus, species, or individual member of a genus and species, no real principles of division of genera and species by contrary opposition of partial perfection and partial privation would exist by means of which real unity and existence could be really diversified; (4) consequently, no real genera, species existing within genera, and individuals would exist; only one absolutely perfect being would exist.

Since this conclusion is evidently false, some absolutely perfect being must exist that, by the power to cause imperfect likenesses of itself (finite forms) communicates limited ways of being harmoniously perfect and imperfect. These limited ways of being harmoniously perfect and imperfect, in turn, are essential principles that, by dividing an organizational whole by extreme opposing parts, cause the existence of real genera, species, and individuals. St. Thomas calls this absolutely perfect being “God.”

### **Six Final Points**

To start to wrap up this exposition and defense of my way of interpreting St. Thomas’s Fourth Way as I have summarized it in the above paragraphs, I want to make *six final points*.

1. Evidently true for St. Thomas Aquinas is that the material universe in which all human beings live, and all material beings exist, is populated by a hierarchy of qualitatively unequal, more and less perfect/deprived, *composite causal wholes*: generic composite wholes existing within species composite wholes, existing within individual composite wholes. In short, our material universe is a real genus, organizational whole, a causally-generated hierarchical order of more or less perfectly harmonized generic, specific, and individual perfections and imperfections.

2. Each hierarchy of really-existing composite, causal, wholes is divided into parts, each having a respective *act of existence, and transmitting this act of existence in the form of an inclination to generate perfect operation of the composite whole, through a hierarchy of harmonious perfections proper to the respective whole that it is*.

For example, generic wholes/forms/parts imperfectly have a generic act of existence (living or non-living, intellectual or non-intellectual, sentient or non-sentient) that they transmit, conduct, help to

cause to exist, in and through, more-or-less-perfectly-harmonious operations of their species-specific parts (species). The genus exists in and through the qualitative perfections of its species harmoniously to be able to cause generic perfection through more or less perfect specific acts. *In short, the genus exists in and through (and is more or less known to exist) through the specific, more or less harmonious, perfections of the species it generates!* The more perfect a species, the more clearly, evidently, it manifests the harmonious perfection of its genus; and the more perfect (harmonious) the specific operations, the more easily knowable, in principle, its genus becomes visible, knowable, to a human being more or less familiar with it. For example, the better a football or baseball player is, the more easily perceptible to a well-educated student of athletics will be the ability to recognize the perfection (beauty) of that player's athletic ability.

Analogously, really-existing specific wholes/forms/parts imperfectly have a specific act of existence (animal, plant, or non-living matter; rational or non-rational animal, different species of plant life) that they transmit, conduct, help to cause to exist in and through more-or-less-perfectly harmonious operations of their individual parts. A species exists in and through the qualitative perfections of its individual parts *harmoniously to be able to cause specific perfection through more or less perfect species-specific individual acts. In short, the species exists in and through (and is more or less known to exist through) the species-specific perfections (harmonic beauty) of the existence and operations of individuals it helps to cause!* The more perfect an individual in existence and operation, the more clearly, evidently it manifests the harmonious perfection (beauty) of its species! Hence, this or that individual football or baseball player will manifest the act of playing football or baseball more perfectly, beautifully, than another. In so doing, a well-educated football or baseball fan will be able to recognize (*induce*) the perfection of that player's football or baseball ability.

Analogously, again, *individual wholes/forms/parts* exist, imperfectly having a species-specific, individual act of existence that they transmit to individual composite parts (like intellectual faculties and bodily organs in human beings, or elements in non-living species) in the form of a hierarchy of individual harmonic perfections (like intellectual and moral virtues, organic strengths and weaknesses, natural inclinations to seek facultative, organic, or non-organic, material, organizational perfections in organizational unity and action, like acting in accordance with physical laws). The more perfect the individual parts of an individual member of a species, the more clearly, evidently, it manifests the perfection, beauty, of its individual, specific perfections! Hence, this or that individual football or baseball player will manifest the organic and psychological qualities of health and strength (*beauty*) that any educated football or baseball trainer can easily recognize (*induce*) to be the qualities of perfection organically and psychologically possessed by other great players in their respective sports.

3. Hence, the universe of St. Thomas is populated by a threefold causal distribution network (network of conductors) of harmonic beauty in which *one act of existing in qualitatively three, unequally virtual-quantum-perfect ways*, exists within, and relatively beautifies, each individual material being. Within the one act of existence of every living and non-living, sentient and non-sentient, material being are generic, specific, and individual, more or less perfect, ways of having existence, a beautiful way of being, qualitatively contracted, condensed, into one individual formal cause within one material body.

More. While every real generic whole, species whole, and individual whole that exists has, possesses, its own, numerically-one act of existing (*esse*), it is only able to possess it relationally (*ad esse*), as an numerically-one existing being (like John) existing within an instrumental relationship as a co-conductor with other species (generic parts) of numerically one species act of existing (rational-animal existence)

and numerically-one generic act of existence (animal existence). Each of us is only able to exist as long as, in exercising and preserving our own, individual act of existence and actions, we simultaneously, instrumentally, help to preserve, perfect, and beautify the natural species and genera in and through which we possess our own, numerically-one act of being.

4. Such being the case, St. Thomas maintains that individual actions of every, individual, material being manifests three qualitatively-unequal species of perfection (harmonic beauty): generic, specific, and individual; and natural inclinations to act in ways that reflect these qualitatively different ways of being perfect (harmonically beautiful).

5. According to St. Thomas, the form (limited principle of having) through which every finite nature (generic, specific, and individual) possesses its numerically-one act of existing (*esse*) exists within the composite whole that it co-operatively helps to unify as a proximate generator, cause, of action: impelling this qualitatively different whole toward perfect organizational operation (organizational beauty) as the kind of composite whole it is.

Within human beings, in his “Treatise on Law” within his *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas refers to this threefold inclination within every organizational whole toward perfect organizational preservation and operation in terms of a threefold inclination to behave by which human beings and other finite beings are limited by three qualitatively different orders of formal influence in their actions.

He tells us that *eternal law* is an rule or measure to act or not to act that human beings share as a generic inclination with all beings belonging to all existing genera to execute the perfect generic operations (harmonic acts of beauty) by which generic-perfections are caused in and through respective specific and individual natures and natural operations these generic-perfections are inclined to help cause.

Beyond eternal law, St. Thomas talks about *natural law* and *instinct* as species-specific inclinations within human beings and brute animals. He claims that natural law is a species-specific, human inclination to generate the perfect human operations that we human beings naturally tend to execute in and through the species-nature-and-species-perfections inherent in our individual natures; and he refers to *animal instinct* as a species-specific inclination within non-rational, brute, animals to generate the perfect animal activities that these animals are, by the species perfections inherent in their individual natures, specifically inclined to perform.

Beyond eternal and natural laws, St. Thomas tells us that *civil law* is a mode of social direction of individual action using civil society as an instrument that human beings incline, by nature as individual/socially-inclined beings, to generate as forms of self-governance to assist ourselves in generating perfect individual actions not capable of being generated by the generic and specific perfections existing within our natures as individuals.<sup>17</sup>

While St. Thomas does not mention *laws of physics* in his “Treatise on Law,” beyond general governance of non-living beings by eternal law, he subscribed to the notion that, even in individual actions, inanimate beings incline to be governed by physical laws, such as gravity, that perfect their individual operations as individual parts to harmonize with other individual parts in order, as perfectly as possible, to exist within, and promote and preserve, a physical species and genus in existence.

6. Finally, St. Thomas is abundantly clear that the only place in which real genera exist is within real species, and that the only place real species exist is within real individuals. *This being the case, the only way human beings can know about the existence of real species and*

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<sup>17</sup> *S.Th.*, I-II, qq. 90–97.

*genera is through the effects that these qualities (virtual quantities of having limited perfection in existing and acting) have in and through the activities of individual wholes. When he perceives these individual activities of individual wholes (qualitatively-imperfect unities), Aquinas senses, knows, as evident that qualitatively-unequal generic, specific, and individual perfections (principles of organizational harmonic beauty) exist as essential causes naturally inclining these individuals to generate, protect, and preserve perfect, individual, specific, and generic organizational operations.*

And he knows that such qualitatively *imperfect ways of having existence are*, at best, imperfect self-conductors and instrumental-conductors of an act that *none of them*, as a conductor, *is*. For example, as imperfect self-conductors (through our faculties of soul and bodily organs that our soul helps to generate) caused by our numerically-one act of personal existence, at best, through our generic, specific, and individual forms, we human beings receive and hold onto an imperfect way of having temporal existence. As we do this, simultaneously, we exist *ad esse*, in instrumental relation, to specific and generic parts (in and through which the generic and specific organizational wholes within which we generically and specifically exist hold onto their own respective acts and ways of existing).

The only way St. Thomas can make intelligible to himself how such qualitatively-unequal, self- and instrumental (individual, specific, and generic) conductors of organizational existence, and their unequal ways of being perfect (harmoniously one), can possibly exist as conductors and instrumental transmitters, distributors, of acts and perfections they essentially do not, cannot, cause, is by immediately concluding that some principle of perfectly having qualitative perfection must exist. Only such a being can cause harmonic perfections of unity in opposites (which, by nature, do not incline to co-exist and co-operate).

More. It must do so as an absolutely perfect being that perfectly possesses the act of existence. Some being must exist that perfectly possess, *has*, what it perfectly *is*. This being St. Thomas calls “God.”

Finally, were God as thus conceived not to exist, our universe would be composed entirely of conductors with nothing to conduct; instruments with no acts to transmit; genera with no species existing in them; species with no individuals; and no individuals having existence. Having no acts of existing to conduct and relative perfections in and through which to conduct them, the universe would be composed of nothing; it would, could, not exist.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, that this should be so should surprise none of us because, all around us, we witness, personally-experience as evidently true, that individual, organizational wholes (especially in business, athletics, fine arts) composed of qualitatively unequal parts, naturally incline to exist and to act as excellently, perfectly, beautifully as they organizationally can. The truth of this preceding claim is reinforced by the fact that, to make his or her point intelligible, even someone who wanted to refute this claim I have just made and this article considered as a whole would have to do so in an organized way, as a complete, or perfect, intelligible whole. And the more intensely that person would want to disprove what I have said would psychologically incline him or her as a human being, a scholar, to do so as perfectly as possible, by devising the most perfect arguments possible against me.

I rest my case.



**Aquinas's Fourth Way of Demonstrating God's Existence:  
From Virtual Quantum Gradations of Perfection (Inequality in Beauty) of  
Forms Existing within a Real Genus**

SUMMARY

The chief aim of this article is to show that St. Thomas Aquinas's Fourth Way of demonstrating God's existence can only be made precisely intelligible by comprehending it as a real, generic whole in light of its specific organizational principles. Considered as a real, generic whole, this argument is one from effect to cause (from a real order of more or less perfectly existing generic, specific, and individual beings [*habens esse*] more or less perfectly possessing generic, specific, and individual ways of being within qualitatively different, hierarchical, orders of existence to a first cause of this *order of perfections*). In addition, this article maintains that, to comprehend this complicated argument, readers must be familiar with philosophical principles that St. Thomas repeatedly uses throughout his major works, but with which most of his contemporary students tend to be unfamiliar. Consequently, a secondary aim of this paper is to introduce readers unfamiliar with them to some of these principles so that they may be able better to comprehend what St. Thomas is saying in this demonstration and in other teachings of his as well.

KEYWORDS

St. Thomas Aquinas, fourth way, God, existence, genus, species, individual, principle, analogous predication, unity, number, virtual quantity, privation, perfection, resistance, receptivity, opposition, contrariety.

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