Problems of Being: Metaphysics 3313 A

Topic: The Subject of Metaphysics and the Supernatural

I. Introduction – Explanation of Course’s Topic [Reading: Owens, Elementary, “Historical Intro” and ch. 1.]
   A. Special Meaning of “Something as Existing” as Subject of Metaphysics
   B. Meaning of “Supernatural” and Identification with God
   C. (A) and (B) as Discreet but Causally Connected Items
   D. Why Use a Catholic Theologian, Thomas Aquinas?

II. Focusing in on the Metaphysical Viewpoint [Reading: Ibid., chs. 2 and 3.]
   A. Grasping the Distinction between a Thing and Its Existence: Conceptualization and Judgment
      1. General, Non-Metaphysical, Description of the Duplex Operatio Intellectus
         a. First Operation
            i. Preliminary Description and Labels
            ii. Lacks Particularities of the Instances
            iii. Distinctive Cognitive Dynamism
            iv. Terminologies for Object of First Operation
         b. Second Operation
            i. Reversal of Attention
            ii. Distinct Appreciation of Particularities
            iii. Composite Appreciation of the Instances
            iv. Terminologies for Second Operation
      2. Aquinas’ Metaphysical Application of the Two Intellectual Operations
         a. A Special Multiplicity of Instances – an individual thing as both really and cognitionally existing.
         b. Setting up the Multiplicity
         c. Applying the Two Operations
         d. Individual Thing Itself as the Commonality
         e. Distinct Appreciation of the Thing’s Real Existence
         f. Relation of Real Existence to the Thing
         g. Terminology for Judgmentally Grasped Existence
         h. Consideration of Cartesian and Empiricist Objections to a Real Thing Cognitionally Existing
   B. Prima facie Problems in the Metaphysical Viewpoint [Reading: Provided Handout from Ayer’s Language, Truth and Logic]
      1. A. J. Ayer’s Argument that the Thing’s Existence Cannot be an “Attribute”
      2. Reply from the Perspective of Esse
   C. Platonic Essentialism and Aquinas’ View of Essence as Potency [Reading: Owens, Elementary, chs. 4 and 9]
      1. Meaning of “Essentialism”
      2. Essentialism and the Metaphysicians Critiqued by Ayer
      3. Famous Essentialists
      4. Debate between Plato and Aquinas
         a. Plato’s Argument from Contemplation of Commonalities
b. Aquinas’ Reply: Contemplation via Abstraction

c. Platonic Observation of Incongruity between Commonality and Purported Data for Abstraction

d. Aquinas’ Distinction between Precise vs. Non-precise Abstraction

5. Aquinas on Essence as Absolute Passive Potency for \textit{Esse}.

D. Analogy and the Transcendentals: \textit{Ens, Unum, Verum, Bonum} [\textbf{Reading: Ibid., ch. 4; pp. 86-92}]

1. Difficulties in Conceptualizing Judgmentally Grasped Existence and the Need to Find Sameness in Difference

2. Examples of the Sameness-in-difference phenomenon in Ordinary Experience

3. Philosophical Elaboration under the Rubric of “Analogy”

4. Types of Analogy: Proportion and Proportionality

5. Application of Analogue Conceptualization to Judgmentally Grasped Existence

6. The More Primitive Context: The Notion of Being
   a. The Commonality of Being (\textit{Ratio Entis})
   b. Analogous Nature of Being (\textit{Unum})
   c. Being as Transcendental
   d. Being as Evocative of the Intellectual Life (\textit{Verum})
   e. Being as the Good (\textit{Bonum})
   f. The Good and the Eruption of Volition
   g. The Real Freedom of the Intellector of Being
   h. Intelectors of Being and the Encounter with Obligation
   i. Integration of \textit{Ratio Entis} and \textit{Actus Essendi}
   j. Aquinas’ Understanding of \textit{Ratio Entis} as \textit{Habens Esse}.

III. Causal Implications in the Subject of Metaphysics

A. The Aristotelian Accidental and Dependency [\textbf{Reading: Ibid., chs. 10-11}]

1. Introduction

2. Previous Discussion of Attributes and Aristotle’s Notion of Accidents

B. Causality vs. David Hume’s Critique [\textbf{Reading: Ibid., pp. 77-78}]

1. Aristotelian Demonstration of Efficient Causality from the Dependency of Accidents.

2. Hume’s Critique and a Reply
   a. No Direct Knowledge of Causality
      i. in the external world
      ii. in the internal world
   b. No Reasoned \textit{A Posteriori} Knowledge of Causality from Constant Conjunction
   c. No Reasoned \textit{A Priori} Knowledge of Causality
   d. An Aristotelian Reply

C. Efficient Causality for \textit{Esse} [\textbf{Reading: Ibid., ch. 5, pp. 68-75; Ibid., pp. 80-81}]

1. Review of Methodology for \textit{Esse as Sui Generis Accident}

2. Application to \textit{Esse} of Aristotelian Demonstration of Efficient Causality

3. The Causal Regress: Finite, Infinite, Circular?

4. Subsistent \textit{Esse} as the First Cause of the Thing’s \textit{Esse}.

IV. Identification of Subsistent \textit{Esse} with the Supernatural: Metaphysical Proofs of Infinity, Simplicity, Transcendency, Unicity, Immutability, Eternity, Creative, Immensity, Spirituality, Volitional, and Omniscience. [\textbf{Reading: Ibid., pp. 83-89; ch. 25}]

V. Syllogistic Presentation of Aquinas’ \textit{De Ente} Reasoning.

VI. Tasks of “High” Metaphysics:
   (A) The Creator and Human Freedom and (B) The Creator and the Existence of Evil
I. Aims and Purposes: Though Aquinas was *ex professo* a theologian, indications exist that Aquinas mentally possessed a mature philosophical science of metaphysics just as certainly as he possessed a science of mathematics. This course aims to introduce students to the basic ideas of Aquinas’ philosophical science of metaphysics. These basic ideas are only two: the subject of the science and the implications thereof. In the lectures I pursue this aim with students, not by reading texts, but by thinking along the paths that lead to these basic ideas. This thinking includes some engagement with other historical figures. Aquinas’ texts and those of Thomists are extensively available in the references of the Owens book mentioned below.

II. Textbook: Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*. At Bookstore. Further reading, as well as recommended reading, will be assigned and mentioned during the course.

III. Marking. The final mark will be computed as follows. There will be a brief quiz on every previous week’s lecture material; the average of these quizzes will count for 10% of the final mark. The average of three in-term exams will count for 45% of the final mark. Approximate dates for the in-term exams are: Feb. 15, Mar. 20, Apr. 19. The final comprehensive exam will count for 30%. The remaining 15% of the final mark will be determined from a 5-7 paper. For details on the paper, see course document, “Metaphysics Report.”. Due date for the paper is Apr. 26. No extensions.

MLA students will follow another regimen for a final mark. Please see the professor about this at the start of classes.

IV. Attendance. The teacher expects students to be present for every class. Lack of attendance is a basis for dismissal from the course.

Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. Their offices can be reached at (713) 525-6953 or 2169.

**LETTER GRADES**

Because of certain cases that I will explain in class, I have decided to grade an exam on a scale of 0-100 points. The numerical points equivalent to the letter grades are:

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In this course the following understandings of the letter grades are used in the marking of essay questions.

**A** The student shows unusual aptitude for the subject matter of the course and shows better than average application. The “A” student shows initiative and originality in attacking problems and consistent ability to adapt his knowledge of the field to new
situations. The student goes beyond the requirements of assigned work in reading and research and is able to integrate what has been learned in other areas of study.

B The student has better than average aptitude for the subject matter of the course and has shown at least average to above average application.

C The student has average aptitude for the course and has applied himself with average industry.

D The student may receive a “D” mark for a number of reasons. The student may have less than average aptitude and have failed to apply himself with better than average preparation. The student may have average aptitude or in some cases, even better than average aptitude, but through lack of industriousness, has failed to grasp the essentials of the course. In general, however, it signifies unsatisfactory work.

F The student has not advanced sufficiently in the subject matter to be able to follow intelligently subsequent course material. The student may have less than average ability and have worked with less than average industriousness, or may have average ability and have failed to work at all.

METAPHYSICS REPORT (Fall, 2017)
(15% Final Grade)
The report is a 5-7 page paper on our class text by Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, pp. 71-85. What I want the student to do is to analyze this material for its main points and to notice how they summarize the course and situate metaphysics in respect to the sciences.

Rubrics for the report include the following:

- The paper should be in your own words; no quoting of the author.
- References. Parentheses with “p” for page followed by a number are sufficient – I know the text about which you are reporting. You should provide references any time you make a claim about your author. The point is a reader of your paper should be given sufficient information to be able to check any claims that you make about the author.
- Paper must be typed, double-spaced, print no larger than 12 point, one inch margins top, bottom, and sides of page.
- In good style. = no typos or bad grammar. Proof-read paper before passing it in!