

Aristotle's Understanding of Metaphysics

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“Aristotle's metaphysics of matter and form corresponds to a psychology of sense and insight.”¹

It is no easy task to move toward an understanding of Aristotle's metaphysics. Different approaches are possible.² In terms of the approach that we will use here, we will begin with two basic texts in Aristotle (*Physics*, Bk 1, Ch. 7; *Metaphysics*, Bk. 5, Ch. 1 & 2) to see how, in his own way, Aristotle derives his principles of potency, form, and act from his analysis of movement or change. In doing this, for the sake of a better understanding, as the need arises, we will look back to the earlier history of Greek philosophy to see what problems had been experienced by earlier philosophers who could not grasp principles of explanation for understanding the phenomenon of movement or change. We want to move from the principles of being or reality as this exists in metaphysics from its Greek roots to its foundations in Aristotle. How do we speak about basic metaphysical principles? More specifically, how do we speak about potency, form, and act which are foundational in any knowledge of metaphysics (the roots of these things existing in Aristotle) and how do we derive distinctions which speak about different kinds of potencies, forms, and acts?

For instance, we will look at Parmenides’s poem and see the drama and excitement that he experienced (as if it were a revelation from God) which speaks about the nature of Being or Reality but which could not account for the existence of movement or change. We will look at the problems of Zeno in this regard. Then, we will look at Heraclitus who was fascinated by the omnipresence of movement (the constant experience of change in things) and who spoke about a principle of explanation in terms of the bed of a flowing river. In shifting from early Greek philosophy to Aristotle, we will try to distinguish

¹Lonergan, *Insight* 677/700, as cited by Sala, *Lonergan and Kant*, p. 160, n. 65; cited also by McCarthy, *Authenticity as Self-transcendence*, p. 62.

²If we should decide not to begin immediately with some of Aristotle's text, a recommendable approach encourages engaging in a study of human cognition that attempts to identify the different acts or operations which exist within the order of our human cognition. First, advert to the self-transcendence of our human minds and the operations of our intellects (given an insight which comes to us from St. Thomas Aquinas) who had noticed, in the context of his self-reflection, that the basic metaphysical principles of potency, form, and act exist as correlatives of our human cognitional experience if we should refer to the experience that a person has of himself or herself when he or she gets an insight or an act of understanding into any data that is being asked about or questioned. We begin or we move to an inquiry which reflects on how we get an act of understanding. We distinguish sensible experience from an inquiry which grasps an intelligible pattern within data and we then distinguish these two activities from a second operation of the mind which occurs in judgment. A good source for doing this would be to attend to Fr. Brian Cronin’s analysis of human cognition as we find this in his *Foundations of Philosophy*. Try to identify and verify the different activities which exist within us in our cognition. By grasping the meaning about what happens in our human cognition, we can then use this understanding as a basis for grasping the meaning of metaphysical principles. Then, in a second step, we identify or we correlate the threefold steps that are constitutive of human cognition (in our experiencing, understanding, and judging) with the basic metaphysical principles which exist as potency, form, and act. After these different things are done, we can move into an analysis of major texts in Aristotle that are foundational in understanding the form and shape of Aristotle's metaphysics.

or point out the differences which exist between descriptive or mythological thinking and abstract, explanatory thinking and analysis. For instance, Aristotle's notion of prime matter functions as an explanatory theory. It reveals both the limits of the human imagination and the power of the human mind. An explanatory principle is something that cannot be seen or sensed in any way. It can only be understood and grasped by us in a self-transcending act of understanding. It is a grasp of reality which ultimately brings us toward God. Note that truth can be communicated in different ways: through myth and symbol and also through theory and explanation. We try to resolve problems in interpretation by adverting to the difference which distinguishes a commonsense form of thinking and understanding from a theoretical form of thinking and understanding which moves beyond the more familiar interests and concerns of our human common sense. At the occasion permits, we might refer to developments in Greek culture that occurred prior to the birth of philosophy (developments which led to the birth of philosophy). For instance, Homer describes animals in terms of genus and species; and the Greek language employs articles (which are absent in Latin) which allow one to make distinctions between this thing and that thing. A good source is Bruno Snell's book about the Greek discovery of the human mind.

Citing the aforementioned two texts from Aristotle, first from the *Physics*, book 1, chapter 7 (in all its fullness) before we will then attend to his *Metaphysics* in book 5, chapters 1 and 2:

We will now give our own account, approaching the question first with reference to becoming in its widest sense: for we shall be following the natural order of inquiry if we speak first of common characteristics, and then investigate the characteristics of special cases.

We say that one thing comes to be from another thing, and one sort of thing from another sort of thing, both in the case of simple and of complex things. I mean the following. We can say (1) 'man becomes musical', (2) what is 'not-musical becomes musical', or (3), the 'not-musical man becomes a musical man'. Now what becomes in (1) and (2)-'man' and 'not musical'-I call simple, and what each becomes-'musical'-simple also. But when (3) we say the 'not-musical man becomes a musical man', both what becomes and what it becomes are complex.

As regards one of these simple 'things that become' we say not only 'this becomes so-and-so', but also 'from being this, comes to be so-and-so', as 'from being not-musical comes to be musical'; as regards the other we do not say this in all cases, as we do not say (1) 'from being a man he came to be musical' but only 'the man became musical'.

When a 'simple' thing is said to become something, in one case (1) it survives through the process, in the other (2) it does not. For man remains a man and is such even when he becomes musical, whereas what is not musical or is unmusical does not continue to exist, either simply or combined with the subject.

These distinctions drawn, one can gather from surveying the various cases of becoming in the way we are describing that, as we say, there must always be an underlying something, namely that which becomes, and that this, though always one numerically, in form at least is not one. (By that I mean that it can be described in different ways.) For

'to be man' is not the same as 'to be unmusical'. One part survives, the other does not: what is not an opposite survives (for 'man' survives), but 'not-musical' or 'unmusical' does not survive, nor does the compound of the two, namely 'unmusical man'.

We speak of 'becoming that from this' instead of 'this becoming that' more in the case of what does not survive the change-'becoming musical from unmusical', not 'from man'-but there are exceptions, as we sometimes use the latter form of expression even of what survives; we speak of 'a statue coming to be from bronze', not of the 'bronze becoming a statue'. The change, however, from an opposite which does not survive is described indifferently in both ways, 'becoming that from this' or 'this becoming that'. We say both that 'the unmusical becomes musical', and that 'from unmusical he becomes musical'. And so both forms are used of the complex, 'becoming a musical man from an unmusical man', and unmusical man becoming a musical man'.

But there are different senses of 'coming to be'. In some cases we do not use the expression 'come to be', but 'come to be so-and-so'. Only substances are said to 'come to be' in the unqualified sense.

Now in all cases other than substance it is plain that there must be some subject, namely, that which becomes. For we know that when a thing comes to be of such a quantity or quality or in such a relation, time, or place, a subject is always presupposed, since substance alone is not predicated of another subject, but everything else of substance.

But that substances too, and anything else that can be said 'to be' without qualification, come to be from some substratum, will appear on examination. For we find in every case something that underlies from which proceeds that which comes to be; for instance, animals and plants from seed.

Generally things which come to be, come to be in different ways: (1) by change of shape, as a statue; (2) by addition, as things which grow; (3) by taking away, as the Hermes from the stone; (4) by putting together, as a house; (5) by alteration, as things which 'turn' in respect of their material substance.

It is plain that these are all cases of coming to be from a substratum.

Thus, clearly, from what has been said, whatever comes to be is always complex. There is, on the one hand, (a) something which comes into existence, and again (b) something which becomes that-the latter (b) in two senses, either the subject or the opposite. By the 'opposite' I mean the 'unmusical', by the 'subject' 'man', and similarly I call the absence of shape or form or order the 'opposite', and the bronze or stone or gold the 'subject'.

Plainly then, if there are conditions and principles which constitute natural objects and from which they primarily are or have come to be-have come to be, I mean, what each is said to be in its essential nature, not what each is in respect of a concomitant attribute-plainly, I say, everything comes to be from both subject and form. For 'musical man' is composed (in a way) of 'man' and 'musical': you can analyze it into the definitions of its elements. It is clear then that what comes to be will come to be from these elements.

Now the subject is one numerically, though it is two in form. (For it is the man, the gold-the 'matter' generally-that is counted, for it is more of the nature of a 'this', and what comes to be does not come from it in virtue of a concomitant attribute; the privation, on the other hand, and the contrary are incidental in the process.) And the positive form is one-the order, the acquired art of music, or any similar predicate.

There is a sense, therefore, in which we must declare the principles to be two, and a sense in which they are three; a sense in which the contraries are the principles-say for example the musical and the unmusical, the hot and the cold, the tuned and the untuned-and a sense in which they are not, since it is impossible for the contraries to be acted on by each other. But this difficulty also is solved by the fact that the substratum is different from the contraries, for it is itself not a contrary. The principles therefore are, in a way, not more in number than the contraries, but as it were two, nor yet precisely two, since there is a difference of essential nature, but three. For 'to be man' is different from 'to be unmusical', and 'to be unformed' from 'to be bronze'.

We have now stated the number of the principles of natural objects which are subject to generation, and how the number is reached: and it is clear that there must be a substratum for the contraries, and that the contraries must be two. (Yet in another way of putting it this is not necessary, as one of the contraries will serve to effect the change by its successive absence and presence.)

The underlying nature is an object of scientific knowledge, by an analogy. For as the bronze is to the statue, the wood to the bed, or the matter and the formless before receiving form to any thing which has form, so is the underlying nature to substance, i.e. the 'this' or existent.

This then is one principle (though not one or existent in the same sense as the 'this'), and the definition was one as we agreed; then further there is its contrary, the privation. In what sense these are two, and in what sense more, has been stated above. Briefly, we explained first that only the contraries were principles, and later that a substratum was indispensable, and that the principles were three; our last statement has elucidated the difference between the contraries, the mutual relation of the principles, and the nature of the substratum. Whether the form or the substratum is the essential nature of a physical object is not yet clear. But that the principles are three, and in what sense, and the way in which each is a principle, is clear.

So much then for the question of the number and the nature of the principles.³

In attending to Aristotle's discussion as this is given to us in the *Physics*, book 1, chapter 7 (and if we turn for help to commentary that comes to us from Aquinas),⁴ we find that Aristotle refers to the phenomenon of becoming or change and he analyzes it in a way which determines a number of basic

³Cf. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.1.i.html> (accessed November 19, 2018)

⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and E. Edmund Thirlkel (Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1999), p. 55.

principles that are fundamental to how we are to understand change when, in change or in the life of changing things, we move from a condition of non-being to a condition of being. When we attend to the phenomenon of change, we find two kinds of being which can be denoted in terms which speak respectively about substantial being and accidental being or, in other words, substance and accident. In accidental change, a given thing, on the one hand, continues to exist and to endure (it does not change) while, on the other hand, a given quality or property ceases to be or to exist. A given quality changes. It is replaced by some other quality (even if it is the negation of a prior quality) and, as noted, this type of change occurs or it belongs to a being which endures and which does not cease to be or to exist amongst this type of change.

Differences in being point to differences in change and, conversely, differences in change point to differences in being. In substantial change, a given thing or substance ceases to exist as it becomes some other kind of thing or substance. If accidental changes suppose the being of things which exist as substances and if substantial changes need not suppose the being of anything which would exist as an accident, then substantial change exists as a more primary kind of thing (it is the more primary kind of change). Accidental changes suppose substantial changes and not the converse since substances must exist before any accidents can exist. If things exist first as substances before they can exist as accidents and if a substance emerges as an effect of change where something is changed in a way which leads to the emergence of a substance, then that which is changed exists at a more primitive level as a species of substratum or as the principle of reception. A reshaping of this substratum or the reception of a new configuration or form into a specification of matter converts the matter in such a way that it participates in the being of something which first emerges as a substance before any accidents can possibly emerge. Hence, with respect to the question and the business of reception, if changes are received by something which exists in a passive manner, the passivity of something which is changed points to how it exists as matter and not to how it exists as form (although, in Aristotle's aforementioned text as this exists in the *Physics*, nothing is said in terms of a concept about that which exists as matter or potency although, in terms of meaning and significance, the passivity of that which is changed in a way which, in turn, leads to the emergence of that which exists as substance is that which exists as matter or that which exists as potency). In words that come to us from elsewhere in the *Physics* of Aristotle, "change is the actualizing of a potential being as such."⁵ Matter or potency exists as that which can become something else in a way which does not destroy or obliterate the being of this matter or the being of this initial potency. In some way, the matter or the potency remains. In the *Physics*, 1, 7, we have a way of thinking and analysis which points to a number of primary metaphysical principles that belong to the being of our world if, in determining or adverting to the being of our world, we must refer in general to that which is subject to changes or a becoming which belongs to the nature or the intelligibility of our world as we experience it in terms which would have to refer to determinations of space and time and alterations which would exist in terms which refer to determinations of space and time.

Assuming thus that, as a basis, we have come to a good understanding about how Aristotle understands the nature of human cognition (if we assume or if we can conclude that Aristotle's understanding of the human mind dovetails with our self-understanding and so our understanding of the human mind), we can begin to move into the details or the distinctions which exist within the framework of Aristotle's metaphysics. We begin to look at how he understands the nature of existing things in general where, for Aristotle, the science of metaphysics is best signified and understood if we should refer to it, in

⁵Aristotle, *Physics*, 3, 1, 201a10-11, as quoted by Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: the desire to understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 60.

Aristotle's own words, as the science of *First Philosophy* [*Prōtē philosophia*], or as the science of *Wisdom* [*Sophia*], or as the science of *First Science* [*Prōtē epistēmē*].⁶ Begin with a fundamental question which asks “What is being?” [*tí to on*] and then, from there, in order to understand the nature or the essence of being (what it is for something to be), begin initially with an understanding of things that exist about ourselves, things that we know about whose existence we do not question or doubt. How do these things exist? How have they moved into a condition of existence from a prior condition of not existing? Why are the beings beings? Why are the beings that be things which be or things which exist?⁷ Determine thus the first causes or the first principles of things which exist *qua* their existence and then, from there, apply or generalize these causes or principles to the entire universe of existing things (to the being of things that we do not directly know about, in a step which moves from a familiarity with known knowns to that which exists as known unknowns). On the basis of this knowledge, as a further step, move then toward the kind of understanding which is applicable and which is possible for us if we should want to engage in the work of lesser, subsidiary sciences and disciplines where their object of study is always something which exists as a differentiation of being or, alternatively, in other words, as a specification of being. For instance, the science of botany studies the being of plants although, in the kind of being which belongs to plants, a kind of being exists which participates in that which is the beingness or the existence of all existing things. As we have been noting, it is entirely natural for us as human beings and it is quite proper for us as human beings that we would want to understand the being and the existence of all things as we move from understanding the being of a given thing toward possibly understanding the being of some other kind of thing although, in the kind of being which belongs to plants, a kind of being exists which participates in that which is the beingness or the existence of all existing things. As we have been noting, it is entirely natural for us as human beings and it is quite proper for us as human beings that we would want to understand the being and the existence of all things as we move from understanding the being of a given thing toward possibly understanding the being of some other kind of thing.

At this point thus, on a methodological note: the differences which exist within being in turn explain why, for each science, a different method of inquiry is to be alluded to since, among all the particular sciences, each science works from its own distinct set of first principles in a manner which is peculiar to it. A given set of first principles points to a distinct mode of scientific procedure.⁸ If, for instance thus, a certain type of induction is peculiar to the science of biology and another type of induction is peculiar to the science of zoology, the kind of inquiry which belongs to the pursuit of mathematics points to a mode of inquiry which acknowledges the primacy of deduction (deduction rather than induction). Instead of first principles which come from the data of our sense perception in a primary way (in some way, these principles are derived from the data of our sense perception), in the pursuit and practice of mathematics, first principles come from the inventiveness and the ingenuity of mathematical minds when these minds are in a condition of act.⁹ The data of sense perception, in this context, play a lesser role (an incidental or a subsidiary role within the discipline of mathematics) if, in contrast, we attend to the kind of role which belongs to induction and the emergence of the lesser sciences of man and nature which exist in a manner which differs from the kind of inquiry that belongs to the practice of mathematics).

⁶Vasilis Politis, *Aristotle and the Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 2.

⁷Politis, *Aristotle and the Metaphysics*, p. 4.

⁸Randall, *Aristotle*, p. 33.

⁹Berman, *Law and Revolution*, p. 133.

However, these things being said, even and as if we admit that, with Aristotle, the beginnings of metaphysics lie in the power or the force of our natural human wonder and a desire that wants to introduce clarity and understanding into an obscure puzzling situation (responding to a question what asks about “What is being?”), it is to be admitted also that, as given to us for our reading and study, Aristotle’s metaphysics was experienced by very many persons to be something which was very obscure in all of its detailed elaborateness even if its purpose or function was to introduce a new clarity into things that had not been well understood or known: functioning as an ordering principle for the pursuit of all our critical scientific activities. In the context, for instance, in his own day and time, the Iranian philosopher Avicenna (d. 1037) claimed that, though he had read the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle 40 times, he did not succeed in really understanding it. The understanding which he did have was, for him, somewhat limited: too limited for comfort or satisfaction. Hence, as a useful tool or as a point of entry for ourselves in terms of how we can possibly move toward an understanding of Aristotle’s metaphysics, from a viewpoint that works from within the realism of Aristotle’s cognitional philosophy, the critical realism which allegedly belongs to the nature of our human understanding and how, from the human order of knowing, we can pass to the objectivity of the world of truly existing things (the realm of existing things, the order of metaphysics), we work from a basis which will accordingly allude to a kind of parallel or a corresponding unity which exists for us as we move from the order of our human cognition toward and into a like order which exists with respect to the order of real objects which, together, constitute the order of being (which exists independently whether or not we could be knowing anything about anything which exists within this order at any given time).

As our point of departure then, to understand the causes of being as these causes would apply to the being or the existence of all things which exist within our world, let us begin with two metaphysical principles. One is potency; the other, form. First, with respect to the being of potency and how we can understand what this is and where it sits within the context of Aristotle’s thought, from the givens of sense which exist as an experience of sensibility (sensibility as that kind of being which can be sensed and which is known by us by how it is related or how it is revealed to us through our different acts of human sensing, existing as the term of our different acts of human sensing), within the order of reflection and the kind of reflection which exists within the *Physics* of Aristotle and also within his *Metaphysics*, from that which is given to us as sensibility, from that which exists as sensibility, we can understand potency as a particular species or type of being. In another way of speaking, matter as *hule* and potency as *dunamis* refer to the same thing.¹⁰ That which is sensed exists as matter and, at the same time too, this matter (in its formlessness or indeterminacy) exists as potency. A commonly used simple example says that the clay of the earth points to how it exists as potency. It is bereft of any form or shape (relatively speaking since clay is clay and not stone; hence, it does not exist as an instance of pure potency, as an unrestricted kind of potency). Hence, as something that is simply or merely given to us and as something that can be used or taken up by us in a way that can confer on it a noticeable form or shape, for this reason, through an analogical form of reasoning that is given in this example, it is argued that, in its distinctiveness, matter or potency exists essentially as a passivity, as a species of passivity. It is that which can receive. It can become this or it can become that. In becoming this or in becoming that, it exists as the presupposition or the precondition for the being of any kind of becoming or change. Hence, in the context of Aristotle’s analysis, matter or potency technically exists as *hupokeimenon* (literally: as “that which is presupposed by” any kind of change or becoming which would refer to the reception of a determination where, typically, a previously existing

¹⁰Aristotle, *Physics*, A.6-7, 193b1, as cited by Byrne, “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” p. 11.

determination is replaced by a newly existing determination).¹¹ In change, a potency moves into a condition of act or, more accurately, it is put or placed into a condition of act. The potency disappears or it ceases to be whenever we speak about its actualization: the actualization of a potency in change (or, alternatively here, the “actualization of a potential” whenever changes occur of one kind or another).¹²

Hence, in its condition of potency or materiality, a potency cannot realize itself to become some other kind of thing. For purposes of illustration, we can distinguish between the being of a lump of clay and the being of an earthen clay pot. Notice, grasp the difference between them and we should understand why, to potency or matter, a condition of passivity is to be alluded to. All matter, all potencies exist with a passivity that is proper to potency in terms of the kind of being which belongs to potency. As a species of material cause, clay can be made into a clay pot or into a clay dish. The being of clay, as potency, can be converted or it can be turned into a realization which would exist as either a clay pot or perhaps a clay plate (among other possible realizations that can be brought into being from a material substrate which would exist for us as clay). From clay, we can have china. Nothing of clay can receive a realization or be converted into a form or a shape which would refer to the kind of realization which exists if we should refer to the being of a bronze kettle, the being of a bronze pot, or the being of a bronze plate. In matter or potency, relative to form, matter/potency exists as becoming (as that which becomes or changes). Within this context, it exists as the principle of becoming with respect to the being of things. If a material component exists within the being of any given thing, because this component can be moved or because it can be altered in some way, a given thing which has a material component is a kind of being which can be changed or altered in some kind of way.¹³ Conversely, if a material component is absent or if it is found to be wanting in some kind of way, then the absence of materiality points to the absence of any possible change or alteration. Something exists in a way that is fully actual, in a condition of realization which would have to be described as its completeness and, as complete, it is perfect.

To account for change thus, to explain transitions where something is moved from a condition of potency to a lessening or an absence of potency (to explain why something receives a determination which makes it into a particular kind or type of existing thing since no potency, as potency, is able to bring itself into a condition of act), an active or agent principle needs to be determined and known and if we are to give this kind of principle a name that we can use to talk about it, on the basis of an analogy which refers to the being of a sensible form or shape and the reception of this sensible form or shape (how, in sensation, a form is received apart from its originating source and apart from the matter of this same source),¹⁴ we can take this principle and then, by generalizing it or, in other words, by immaterializing it or by abstracting it, a principle or form is derived which exists simply as form (form as it exists apart from matter, having a kind of reality which differs from the kind of reality which belongs to matter). Form as act or realization differs from matter as potency (it is not to be confused with matter or potency) or, in other words, when matter is generalized in a manner which leads us to a

¹¹Aristotle, *Physics*, A.6-7, 191a9, 193a2-193b22, as cited by Byrne, “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” p. 10.

¹²Feser, *Five Proofs on the Existence of God*, p. 18.

¹³Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 91.

¹⁴Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, pp. 85-86. The rhythmic vibration of a sounding bell is received by a like rhythm which emerges and which exists within the hearing of a human hearer, a human listener.

meaning for potency (as an apprehension of potency), form differs from potency (a formal cause from a material cause) since, if any given potency receives a determination which diminishes its potency or which lessens the potency which formerly it had possessed, the explanation for this is the entry or the ingress of something which exists as a specification or as a determination (a determination as opposed to the absence of a determination), a determination which exists as a structure or form (form as opposed to potency). Hence, in Aristotle's own words, through a negative species of predication: "by matter I mean that which in itself has neither quality or quantity nor any of the other attributes by which being is determined."¹⁵ The being of things in our world is explained by the entry and the reception of something which exists essentially as a form (albeit form entering into a set of material conditions in a manner which points to the being and the reality of an essence when form is considered in terms of how it is united to a given set of material conditions).¹⁶ Instead of referring to the being of some other kind of principle in metaphysics which can explain why things exist in the way that they do and how or why they become and change in the way that they do, to the principle of form and the being of form belongs a primacy and a centrality which explains why it has been said about the metaphysics of Aristotle that it is to be regarded as essentially a metaphysics of form. In comparison to form, potency lacks status or, if you will, it exists at a lower, lesser level (existing as becoming). Its indeterminacy more closely connects it with the principle or the privation of nothingness than with the being of something which is to be contrasted with the condition and the negation of nothingness. Potency is that which is somehow without this or that quality or characteristic. That which truly exists is that which exists as form. From a knowledge of forms we move toward a knowledge of potencies. Forms specific potencies in a relation which explains why, within the order of being, the order of existing things, form precedes potency.¹⁷ Simply put: first form, then potency (or, cognitively, within the order of our human cognition, we begin with understanding, we begin with intelligible determinations, something which we already understand; and then, from there, we can move toward that which we have yet to experience as a determination as this can be given to us within a new act of understanding that could be possibly given to us).

Since the being of existing things is explained by form, in a shorthand form of expression, with Aristotle, we would then say that, ultimately, being is form and form, being. The determinacy or the specificity of a form points to its stability or its unchangeableness (hence, its eternity), a form of existence that is not subject to any kind of change, any kind of impermanence, or any kind of variation. Hence, from the absence of indeterminacy or, more strongly, from the exclusion of any kind of changeableness or indeterminacy, in form we have a species of existence which always points to the eternal existence of forms (forms which exist apart and which are not conditioned by any conjugates or properties which would refer to spatial temporal categories: determinations of space and time). That

¹⁵Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1029a20, as quoted by Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 92.

¹⁶To avoid confusion, please distinguish here between material conditions which exist as particular matter and material conditions which exist as common matter. Essences exist when form, as a universal, is joined to a universalized apprehension of matter which exists as common matter. The essence of a maple tree refers, for instance, to the unity which exists between, on the one hand, the nature or the intelligibility of a maple tree that is shared by all maple trees (participated in by all maple trees) and, on the other hand, a common materiality which belongs to the shared matter or the corporality which is common to the being of all maple trees. The intelligibility and the materiality both exist as abstractions that are known by us through as our acts of understanding as we individually move from our acts of human sensing toward our later acts of human understanding.

¹⁷Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 42.

which changes and that which never changes necessarily exclude each other (in an absolute and total way) even as we also realize and know that, within our world, nothing exists apart from a combination which exists between that which exists in a condition of potency and that which exists in a condition of form (the indeterminate being of potency being united or joined to the determinate kind of being which exists as form). A potency is informed by a form; a material cause, by a formal cause.

Why the visible or the sensible form of a body is not to be identified with the inner form of a thing is to be explained by the fact that, while our acts of sense directly know (they directly apprehend, they directly experience) the visible or the sensible form that is directly known by us through our various acts of human sensing, our acts of understanding directly know (they directly apprehend or they directly experience) another kind of object which exists as an intelligible form, an intelligible structure, or an intelligible configuration of intelligible parts or elements which are understood or grasped by us through the mediation of a direct act of understanding that is somehow given to us within a particular context (when, perhaps, we are not expecting to receive a given act of understanding). With St. Ignatius of Loyola, if we should use the kind of language which he uses, in our understanding of Aristotle, we would distinguish between a seeing of visions and an uplifting of our understanding. Forms exist with the kind of being which peculiarly belongs to them, or through the kind of being which they happen to have, because of how they have been apprehended by us through our acts of understanding.

As we have already noted within Aristotle's understanding of human cognition, an apt image or a phantasm that has been imaginatively constructed by us on the basis of the kind of raw material which exists for us in our received data of sense (the received givens of sense) suggests or it directs us to an inner kind of being, a structure or a form which somehow exists within a mass, an aggregate, or an accumulation of matter: a structure or a form which is not sensed but which is grasped or which, in some way, is invisibly "seen" because it has been understood. The form exists interiorly. The external kind of being that is outwardly experienced by us refers to the sensibility of our sensed data; the inner kind of being that is inwardly experienced, the form or the intelligibility of an understood, intellectualized object. A real difference or a real distinction exists between potency and form although this difference will not be understood by us if we cannot begin to discover (if we cannot begin to understand and know) how or why our acts of sense differ from our acts of understanding, our acts of sensing having a different nature or a different form from the kind of nature or form which belongs to our acts of understanding. A real distinction which exists within the order of our human cognition reflects and, at the same time, it points to a real distinction which exists within the order of existing things (the order of being). In both Aristotle and Plato, a real unity exists between our minds and the greater world which is the cosmos or the order of our universe. A fundamental unity exists between the two and so, from the real distinction which exists between our sensing and our understanding, we attend to a real distinction which exists between the metaphysical components of potency and form and then, from the real distinction which exists between these components of potency and form, we can move back toward a greater understanding which we can possibly have about the kind of difference which exists between our acts of sensing and our acts of understanding. In knowing about the being of one distinction, we should begin to know more about the being of the other major distinction, back and forth.

With respect then to forms and the meaning of forms, examples of forms refer to such things as the Manness or the humanity of human beings or the Treeness of existing trees (among many other

possible examples that can be cited as instances or examples of form).¹⁸ A thing's form denotes the specific characteristics that belong to a given thing and not to any other kind of thing. It explains why a given thing has the visible kind of form which properly belongs to it, the form or intelligibility of a thing being related to the function of a thing because it specifies or it explains how a given thing exists: what it is able to do (in terms of its activity) and what it is able also to receive (in terms of its passivity). Active and passive acts can be distinguished from each in a way which points to how they are related to each other. As human beings, for instance, we can all ask questions and, as human beings, we can also receive acts of understanding that are simply given to us and which are not produced by our mere willing of them or our desiring of them. A form is not *per se* the being of an individual thing or the substance of an individual thing (more about this later) since forms exist as universal realities or, in other words, they exist as universal principles. They exist as a species of cause: a cause which exists as a formal cause. They exercise a species of universal causality as a given form enters into a set of material conditions in a way which introduces an order within a set of material conditions (effecting or establishing an order which works with material conditions but which cannot be reduced to any given set of material conditions). A form is that, for instance, which takes material conditions and when turn turns or converts these conditions in a way which makes either a man or a chicken. It is perishable from a viewpoint which attends to the contingent order of things which exists within our world where, here, we refer to the movement or the migration of forms (when a given form moves from one possible instantiation within a set of material conditions to another possible instantiation within another set of material conditions). Hence, the form of a living being is not the form of a corpse. With death, the form of a living being is said to leave or depart. It ceases to be present and it is replaced by the being or the presence of another form. Its instantiation ends within a given context of conditions and yet, always, at the same time, as an invisible, intelligible reality, it continues to exist as a universal principle because many particulars, at other times and places, can be informed by the being or the presence of same form. As human beings for instance, we all exist as human beings (we all share in the same form) even as we live out our individual lives in each our own individual way.

In conjunction then with form, matter or prime matter exists as a co-principle of possibility for the existence or the being of individual things because, through matter (or the givenness of matter), a form can be joined to that which exists as an instance of matter. Because matter is that which can accept a form, the relation or the ordination which exists on the part of matter with respect to possible receptions of form points to how matter *per se* is to be associated or identified with that which exists essentially as material causality (as some kind of material cause). Prime matter, as unrestricted indefinite matter, can receive any kind of form that could be given to it although when matter exists in a qualified manner (in a manner which points to restrictions that exist with respect to it), it can accept some forms although not other determinations of form. In this context thus, the matter is not pure; the potency is not infinite. In any case however, despite restrictions in qualified instances of matter or in the lack of any restrictions if we should attend to matter as prime matter, in the receptivity of matter or in the openness of matter, in matter we have the principle of changeableness as this exists within the being of things. Absolutely with respect to prime matter but relatively with respect to all determinations of matter, this matter as potency always exists as an undetermined element: it can take on a definition or a meaning which would exist, cognitively, as an intelligibility and which would exist, metaphysically, as a form. Matter as matter is parallel or it is to be identified with the empirical residue of Bernard Lonergan's cognitional analysis. Within the context of a metaphysical perspective, subtract form as it exists within

¹⁸Sullivan, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 50.

any given context and what is left over refers to that which would exist as an empirical residue (as prime matter). Matter is not intelligible in and of itself. It only becomes intelligible or it is known to us through the entry or the reception (the consideration) of a form or an intelligibility which realizes or which actualizes that which exists initially as matter or that which first exists as potency. If form exists thus as a universal principle or as the principle of universality within the being of things, matter exists as the principle of individuation among the being of many things because, as given, it refers to that which is unique with respect to the being of a given thing or object. It is an object's "thisness," its quantifiable determination. For instance, all wheels or all trees have the same form or the same function but no two wheels or no two trees have the same matter nor do they share in the same amount and grade of matter.¹⁹ In their individuality, this wheel and this other wheel can have the same form and, similarly, this tree and this other tree. By referring to these examples thus, more clearly or more vividly, we can then understand how, in the existence of things, a universal principle is joined to a particular principle (form to matter). A positive relation always exists between these two principles (the form of an existing thing "does not exist in actuality without matter,"²⁰ without its union with matter, form apart from matter enjoying an ideal kind of existence) although, at the same time too, between matter and form, a species of mutual exclusion is to be admitted if we attend to how, together, but as contrary related principles, matter and form exist as explanatory principles and how this kind of existence (as a species of explanation) points to reverberations and conclusions which are to be drawn about the being of existing things (the kind of being which belongs to existing things as these are known and as they exist for us within the world of our ordinary experience).

To understand the notion of substance as we can find this in Aristotle on the basis of what we have come to understand about matter and form and the proportionate or the isomorphic relation which exists between the being of these metaphysical principles and the being of cognitional principles which exist when we refer to our acts of sensing and our acts of understanding, a fully adequate understanding about how substance exists in Aristotle must attend to differences in meaning and significance which exist if we should compare the kind of notion which comes to us by way of Aristotle's *Ten Categories* with the kind of notion which we find in Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. As we have already noticed, in the *Ten Categories*, nine predicates distinguish or indicate a unit or a type of being which for us exists as a substance. A substance exists as the fundamental, primary category; nine subsidiary predicates (cited as accidents) inhere within the being of a given substance. They apply to the being of a given substance. They qualify it in some way in terms of how a given substance exists or, more accurately and precisely, in terms of how a given substance is coming across to us in the experience that we have been having of it or are currently having of it. These distinct predicates all exist as descriptions. They exist as terms or as contents which belong to our differing acts of human sensing. Hence, as descriptions, as an *ordering* of descriptions, they can be viewed as a species of scientific description. The listing of nine predicates supposes a comprehensive arrangement of all the descriptive conjugates that are needed if a given object is to be fully described by us in the kind of knowing which exists at the level of description, employing all our different acts of human sensing, working together in a way which includes all possible descriptive aspects. The primacy of substance points to a notion of being or a notion of reality which says that being or reality exists as a multitude of substances which are all related to each other in ways which point to the order and the being of a cosmic whole (a universe which exists as a cosmos).²¹

¹⁹Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy*, p. 75.

²⁰Pabst, *Metaphysics*, p. 20.

²¹Hill, *After the Natural Law*, pp. 40-41.

As a technical note at this point (a note that we should not omit): if we should begin now to speak about the notion of being or the notion of reality which exists in Aristotle's thought, please note that, with Plato, Aristotle works with a notion of being that is informed by analogies. An adequate notion of being cannot be univocal. Why this is so is because the kind of being which belongs to a given substance or thing is not always the same kind of being which belongs to another substance or thing although, admittedly, as Aristotle argues, being is “common to all things”²² although, at the same time too, and as Aristotle argues, this same being also differs from all other things to the degree that all other things differ from each other in terms of the kind of being which belongs to each of them.²³ The fullness of being which a given thing has cannot be known or conveyed to ourselves and others through a sense or a notion of being which would be content to work with a univocal significance. Given things often do not belong to the same genus of existing things. However, by referring (implicitly) to possible acts of understanding which could exist for us as analogical acts of understanding, it can be argued that all “things...are one by analogy.”²⁴ In analogical acts of understanding, a common meaning for being can be known (it can be acknowledged as a point of departure), but in a way which also respects differences. Through the use of analogies (through the denotation and the connotation as these exist together in an intelligible unity through the mediation in an analogical form), identities, similarities, and differences can be combined with each other in ways that can lead to an enlargement of our understanding if, through this understanding, a larger number of variables can be joined to each other in a context which refers to the suggestiveness and the fruitfulness of one single act of understanding albeit, an act of understanding which would exist for us as an analogical act of understanding.

Returning now to the kind of discussion that we find in Aristotle about the meaning of substances, in the *Categories*, by referring to the species of descriptive predication that we find in Aristotle's *Categories*, a substance is encountered or it is known by us in terms of how it exists as a body. As a body, a substance exists as a descriptive object of attribution; it exists with a kind of unity or a wholeness which is sensed in terms of the space, the contours, and the shape of its bodily unity and, as we have been noting and arguing, this unity is known through a listing of predicates that are grounded in our various acts of human sensing and, at the same time too, through predicates which are limited by these same acts of sense in the kind of knowing which properly belongs to these acts of sense in our different acts of human sensing. However, from a contrary or a complementary viewpoint (if we should work with another point of point of departure which points to the reasonableness of a second perspective), if we should move toward predicates which are not descriptive (not referring to the data of our senses), if we should work with predicates which are grounded in our acts of understanding (they proceed or they come from our acts of understanding through a kind of transcendence which always exists in our acts of understanding), then, on this basis, a new listing of predicates can be given to us: a set of properties or characteristics which purportedly exist as explanations and which do not exist as descriptions. The explanations propose reasons; they refer to rational considerations of one kind or

²²Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 3, 1005a27, as cited by Pabst, *Metaphysics*, p. 11.

²³Pabst, *Metaphysics*, p. 11 & n. 15, citing texts of Aristotle taken from the *Metaphysics*, the *Categories*, and the *Parts of Animals*.

²⁴Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 5, 6, 1017a 2-3, as quoted by Pabst, *Metaphysics*, p. 13.

another that can be understood but not seen. They are to be attributed or they are to be ascribed to a new kind of object or to the being of another kind of unity or whole which is known by us as a consequence of how our human inquiry and thinking has been moving toward this unity through the kind of completion which exists for us through the kind of apprehension which exists in all our acts of understanding (whenever acts of understanding are given to us within the order of our human cognition). A substance ceases to be simply a body when now, as the focus and terminus of our understanding and as the bearer of properties which exist as terms which belong to our acts of understanding, it is turned into an immaterial kind of object: an object which exists as more of a form than as matter or potency, being something which exists as the term of our understanding, existing as an understood (as allegedly a form which exists within a given set of material conditions) because it has been grasped and known by us through acts of understanding which differ from the kind of knowing which belongs to our different acts of human sensing (our initial acts of understanding existing for us as direct acts of understanding before there can be any kind of move which would exist if our acts of understanding are converted into a form which refers to reflective acts of understanding). Hence, within this larger cognitive context, the form or unity which is known by us within our understanding is a species of form which exists as a substantial form (or central form if we should choose to work with the kind of conceptuality that is employed in the context of Bernard Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*). Accidental forms refer to the being of explanatory attributes; substantial forms refer to being of objects which exist as things. The matter within which a substantial form exists accordingly exists as substantial matter. Where accidental forms exist within accidental matter, substantial form exists within substantial matter. Substantial matter goes with substantial form and substantial form, substantial matter. Each defines the other: accidental form, accidental matter; substantial form, substantial matter. Reality or the whole of being is composed of a plurality or a variety of different things or, in other words, a plurality of different substances. Things and substances refer to the same thing ("thing" being a new way of our being able to speak about that which exists as "substance").

In understanding thus how an empirical or a sensate notion of substance as this exists in Aristotle is to be understood and related to an explanatory or a rational notion of substance as this also exists in Aristotle, because our obvious point of departure has been the shift from human acts of sensing toward human acts of understanding as this exists within the order of our human cognition, for this reason, the explanatory notion of substance that we find in Aristotle is to be regarded as the truer, more real, more mature notion. It succeeds or it emerges from a prior, more primitive notion of substance as our shift towards understanding within the order of our cognition moves from the materiality of sense, matter, and potency toward the intellectuality of understanding and form. Where the being of a body is known primarily through the experience of its materiality in sense (through the correlative principle of matter as a species of distinct metaphysical principle), the being of a thing is known primarily through the experience of its intellectuality in understanding (through the principle of form as another species of distinct metaphysical principle). Substances as bodies are to be associated with the obviousness of sense and matter; substances as things, with the intellectuality of form and the rarer kind of achievement which exists for us as human beings when we move from acts of cognition which exist as our acts of sensing toward acts of cognition which would exist for us as our acts of understanding. Bodies, physical objects are sensed; substances, things, are understood. For a typical example of this shift, compare how a child conceives of an elephant with how a zoologist conceives of the same creature. A child speaks about "a large animal with trunk and huge ears"; a zoologist speaks about a "member of a species [that is] related more or less closely with other mammalian species, and having

evolved in morphology and habits to survive within a certain range of environments.”²⁵

Through the kind of self-knowledge which thus we can begin to have of ourselves in our self-understanding, we should soon notice that it is easier for us to engage in the first kind of act which exists in our acts of sensing than in the second kind of act which would exist as our acts of understanding. First, we know about bodies; then, we can know about the existence of substances or things. Rarer still, however, than the acts of understanding which exist as our acts of direct understanding is a second kind of intellectual act which would exist for us as a reflective act of understanding (the kind of act which would exist as the drawing of a rational conclusion or a judgment which would emerge in the wake of an apprehension which experiences or knows about a sufficiency in evidence which would then immediately point to the reasonableness of a conclusion that knows or which affirms that a given meaning or form is to be regarded as a true meaning or form: a reality which would then immediately join the being of a human knower with an order of things which transcends the being of a given knower).

Shifting now from an understanding of forms toward an understanding of essences as this exists in Aristotle: if, as a formal cause, the substantial form of a thing or the form of a substance is something which exists within a concretely existing individual thing and if it explains why a given thing exists in the way that it happens to be and exist (similarly, a form within an event explains why a given event occurs in the way that it does), then, from the known “whyness” or the known form of a thing, the “whatness” of a thing, the quiddity of a thing, or the essence of a thing is something which can be determined as a further specification of meaning (as a more articulate specification of meaning) if a form which has been abstracted is then rejoined to a material principle which is not to be identified with individual instances of matter which would belong to the distributed being of individual concretely existing things. This matter goes with this form and this other matter goes with the same form. On the one hand: like form, the essence of a thing specifies or it points to the nature or to the intelligibility of an understood thing since, within any given essence as this can be known by us, the “whyness” or the form of a thing is given to us. The form exists as an essential, necessary ingredient. Without form, no essence. Hence, loosely speaking, and yet truthfully, if the “whatness” of a thing refers to the “whyness” of a thing, if the “whatness” of a thing is grounded in the “whyness” of a known thing (its form), then a thing's form is to be associated with a thing's essence in a way which allows us to say, with Aristotle, that a thing's form is a thing's essence. In Aristotle, a thing's form is often referred to as its essence although, through careful study and analysis, a real distinction can be shown to exist between that which exists as a form and that which exists allegedly as an essence (a distinction that was not unknown to Aristotle within the conduct of his own study and analysis although, within the conceptuality of Aristotle's language, no Greek term stands for essence, the Latin neologism “essence” having been invented in order to refer answers that are given to “what” questions or most specifically, as a way of designating “what makes anything what it is”).²⁶

Technically speaking thus, for the sake of an understanding which a bit more precise, a thing's form is not a thing's essence because, in moving from a form to an essence, an essence exists as a greater, larger thing. The intelligibility which belongs to it is greater than the intelligibility which belongs to a form. To an essence belongs a form or a species of concreteness which differs or which sets it apart from the abstract kind of being which exists with respect to the being of forms and the immediacy of

²⁵Meynell, *Redirecting Philosophy*, p. 245.

²⁶Randall, *Aristotle*, p. 245, n. 13.

forms within the being of our consciousness whenever, in any given case or instance, acts of understanding are given to us when we are not expecting to receive them within the experience that we have of ourselves whenever we refer to how we exist and live as knowing human beings. In the apprehension of an essence or in the conceptualization and the uttering of an essence, the universality of a form is taken as a given (as a presupposition) and, as a form, it is rejoined or it is reconnected to a new specification of matter which has also been abstracted and generalized although in a manner which differs from the intelligibility of a form. We speak here about a universalization of matter which exists as common matter. A particular specification of matter has been replaced or we say that it is replaced by a specification of matter which is universally applicable. A common form of matter applies to all possible individual instances of the same matter. The union of a universal form with that which exists as common matter accordingly constructs or it constitutes the kind of being which exists as an essence (an essence which is not a form): hence, the meaning of a given essence.

To introduce a measure of clarity that is not so obvious in the explanations that are offered by Aristotle, if we work with a cognitive distinction that comes to us originally from the philosophy and theology of St. Augustine,²⁷ we would say that, if a form is

²⁷See Gerard Watson, "St Augustine and the inner word: the philosophical background," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 54 (1988), pp. 84-85. With respect to the Augustinian origin of arguments which allege that an intelligible emanation is to be found to exist within the conscious life of our human minds, while Augustine distinguishes between one species of word which exists as a *verbum insitum* (it is to be identified with the rationality of our human minds in its activities in thinking and understanding) and a second species of word which exists as a *verbum prolatum* (it is to be as identified with the outer words of our human speech as this exists in the givenness of articulate, communicable language), he also distinguishes a third species of word which is to be identified as a *verbum intus prolatum*. As a word which exists as an inner word, it refers to a word that is inaudibly spoken. It is expressed inwardly within our human interiority and it functions as an intermediary between a *verbum insitum* and a *verbum prolatum*. In the wake of our understanding, a word is spoken or it is expressed within ourselves (interiorly) and its status is not less than that which we experience in any act of thinking or understanding which occurs within our human minds. But, at the same time also, this word stands apart from the being of any kind of outer word of speech since, within our self-awareness, it cannot be denied that outer words sometimes tend to be deficient communicators of meanings: of meanings which are inchoately but more fully known and sensed from within the depths of our cognitive self-awareness. Outer words, as we sometimes experience them, can lack a fullness of meaning which seems to exist only within the context of a preliminary, pregnant articulateness which commonly belongs to the meaning of inner words. Words are spoken within our souls or within our hearts (as Augustine speaks about it) and they are meant to speak of things that go beyond or which transcend the kind of being which belongs to our acts of understanding. They come from our prior acts of understanding (from the species of word which exists as a *verbum insitum*) and they lead us toward the outer words of human speech which exist as a *verbum prolatum*. Cf. Lonergan, "Introduction," *Verbum*, p. 6. As Lonergan goes on to note and emphasize, in a text that is cited by Frederick G. Lawrence, "The Hermeneutic Revolution and Bernard Lonergan: Gadamer and Lonergan on Augustine's *Verbum Cordis* – The Heart of Postmodern Hermeneutics," *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy & Education* vol. 19, nos. 1-2 (2008), p. 59:

...as Augustine's discovery was part and parcel of his own mind's knowledge of itself, so he begged his readers to look within themselves and there to discover the speech of

grasped by us through a direct act of understanding, an essence is grasped by us through an act of definition or an act of inner speaking and conceptualization which emerges within us (inwardly) in the wake of a prior act of understanding. Citing in the briefest way the kind of example and illustration that we can take from the kind of understanding which exists in the practice of mathematics: in solving a given mathematical problem, in a direct act of understanding, we immediately know why “x” must always equal “y” or that “x” must always equal “y” (the answer or the solution is all now too obvious to us) and, at the same time too, or in immediately springing from this first realization that we have, we also find that we are experiencing or knowing that we are in the presence of a mathematical law that is universally applicable. The solution of a particular mathematical problem points to the being or the relevance of an invariant mathematical law, and even if this law has not yet put into a formula that can be communicated to other persons, in the apprehension of this same law, we have a new kind of awareness: we experience the term of an intellectual proceeding which is the proceeding of an inwardly known concept or word, a proceeding which is to be identified with the proceeding of an act of conceptualization. Hence, a real distinction needs to be posited if we are to distinguish between the being of a direct act of understanding (Aristotle's act of “simple apprehension”) and the being of a subsequent act of cognition which exists as an act of conceptualization. A form moves toward the kind of completion which it can have through the conceptualization or the apprehension of an essence as soon as our acts of understanding are succeeded by a second kind of recognition which always exists within us, through how our acts of conceptualization proceed or emerge from our prior acts of understanding. An internal form of recognition and speaking always springs or flows from our prior acts of understanding and the swiftness or the alacrity of this recognition should accordingly point to the being or the reality of a new species of oneness that we experience within our cognition: moving first from the unity of a form and an act in an act of direct understanding toward the second unity of a form and matter in a subsequent act of conceptualization, our acts of understanding always leading us toward the intellectual kind of proceeding which also exists within us through the thematization which somehow always exists in terms of how our acts of conceptualization are directed and impelled by the kind of non-mechanical thrust or propulsion which always exists within our prior acts of understanding. If thus, by our understanding, we know about the being of forms (we know why this must be that), then, from the genesis, the prolongation, or the fructifying extension of this same understanding as it moves toward a less simple form of understanding, in our understanding we also know about a second kind of universality which exists whenever we talk about the being of essences. An essence exists as a conceptualized form, as a form that has been separated from a prior act of understanding because, now, it has been joined to a new specification of matter which exists as a specification of common matter.

The kind of completion which exists in our acts of conceptualization accordingly explains why, often, in Aristotle, the form of a thing is said to be the essence of a thing despite a real difference that can be alluded to if, in their being and performance, acts of conceptualization are distinguishable from the

spirit within spirit, an inner *verbum* prior to the use of language, yet distinct both from the mind itself and from its memory or its present apprehension of objects.

kind of being and performance which exists in our acts of direct understanding, our acts of understanding always immediately leading to inner acts of conceptualization and the being of conceptualized concepts that are necessary for us if, humanly, we are to engage in any form of interior dialogue within ourselves about something that, perhaps, we have understood or if, subsequently, we are to engage in a form of external dialogue with other persons if we should seek to engage their attention and interest in order possibly to elicit new questions about meaning and understanding or new questions which could ask about the possible truth of any meaning that which we have come initially to understand and know. Simply put, employing a commonly used example: the nature or the form of a maple tree exists among all instances of maple trees and, perhaps, in Aristotle's act of "simple apprehension" or in Lonergan's act of "direct understanding," we truly understand this nature or form. Then, in knowing or speaking about the essence of a maple tree, we allegedly know about the essence of all maple trees in terms of how a common nature or form has been joined to a material potency that is shared or which is common to the individual being of all maple trees. If, in direct understanding, form and act are united to each other in such a way such that the two cannot be separated from each other, in the thematization or the conceptualization of an understanding that we have received in a given instance of it, an interiorly understood form is turned into a species of externally existing object. We say that it is objectified because, now, it is turned into something that we can begin to think about or talk about. We can begin to pose questions about the nature or the intelligibility of a maple tree as if its being is somehow other than ourselves (as if it is other than that which has been our understanding of it, in a manner which accordingly points to how it exists as a reality which appears to be quite other than ourselves, transcending who and what we happen to be as human beings). In moving thus toward an apprehensions of form, a measure of self-transcendence always exists within our understanding and then, in moving toward apprehensions of essence, a measure of self-transcendence is added to the first measure or the first kind of self-transcendence which had existed for us when, through acts of direct understanding, prospective human knowers are united to that which allegedly exists as a form within the inner being of externally existing things.

The kind of objectivity or in the objectification which occurs as we move from forms to essences accordingly thus explains why, in Aristotle, essences can be identified with substances or why they have been identified with substances (given the union which exists that joins, on the one hand, a substantial form with a specification of matter, on the other hand, that applies to the being of a given substance in all of its many instances). The result is always the being or the reality a truly existing thing which exists as something which is fundamentally primary within the order of being in general and which everything else would have to suppose and presume. The being of things or being in general is something which is explained by the primary type of being which exists in terms of essences (intelligible, understood essences).²⁸ Essences as substances exist as both the bearer of qualities that

²⁸Politis, *Aristotle and the Metaphysics*, p. 15. Please note, however, that some controversy exists about how precisely we are to understand Aristotle when we encounter his analysis and discussions about the meaning of *primary being* or that which exists as primary being if we are to understand that which exists as the being *qua* being of existing things. If the object of our metaphysical inquiry is an understanding of being in general or, more precisely, the beingness or the existence of things solely in terms of their being and existence, then, if the object is the being of some kind of cause or explanation, then, when this object is conceptualized in terms which would refer to it as a primary kind of being, in our speaking about this primary being, we would accordingly speak about it as a species of first principle. From it, as a fundamental point of departure, many conclusions can be drawn or, more precisely, from the thesis of this primary being and according to how it has been

can become actual in it and they exist also as the bearer of qualities which are already actual within it.²⁹ Relative to the being of qualities that come and go, substances endure. They exist as enduring subjects of change.³⁰

All these things being said thus about matter, form, and essence and the kind of order which exists among these metaphysical principles and how they are related to a corresponding order which exists within the order of our human cognition, if we should want to move toward a set of principles which would serve to explain the being of these aforementioned metaphysical principles, then we can do no better than to speak about a more fundamental form of relation which exists if we should think about how, in every kind of change or alternation which occurs within our world - changes which we can see and analyze when we look at motion or movement as a distinct type of being or phenomenon - in every change or alternation, a species of reduction occurs if we move from that which exists within a condition of potency toward that which exists within a condition of act. In potency and act, in Aristotle, two different kinds of being exist together in a manner which refers to the being of existing beings where, in the being of an existing thing or a substance, these two different kinds of being exist together within the being of individual things - the potency of a thing exists within the being or the reality of a thing, potency existing within act - and together they explain why emerging things exist within a world which is subject to change even if we should happen to believe that the world is something which has always been as it is (although its parts are such that they appear to be constantly shifting and changing in the kind of being which belongs to them).³¹ In other words thus, the whole range of being - whether it is partially material or, in some ways, entirely immaterial - the whole range of being is reducible or it is divisible into these two basic categories of potency and act: citing Aristotle's own words, "the potential and the completely real."³² Potency exists as a kind of reality, as a kind of being. Absence of reality goes with a kind of void which would exist as a strange kind of presence (it would exist as indetermination); reality, with the kind of being which exists as specification and determination.

conceptualized, a heuristic is given and supplied that can then be applied in any subsequent inquires that we might want to make with respect to the nature and the being of individual objects as these exist in terms of species and genus. All exist, in their own way, as modifications of being since, to some extent, each exists in an individual kind of way.

29Osborne, *Philosophy for Beginners*, p. 19.

30Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 41.

31Please note thus that the eternity of the world was a belief that was commonly held among the ancient Greeks. The contingency of the world or belief in the contingency of the world is a point of view which comes to us from the acceptance and ingress of later Judeo-Christian belief and, through the replacement of grounding assumptions, it can be argued that, in the conduct of later inquires, in both science and philosophy or in how science and philosophy exist together, repercussions were not absent. In the context of his own day and time (centuries after Aristotle), Aquinas had argued that the eternity of the world or the contingency of the world, its createdness, is not something that can be proved one way or the other through the sophistries or the abstractions of our philosophical human reasoning although, if we should know about the contingency of any given thing, we should know that a contingently existing thing is not able to realize its own existence in a manner which would move from the potency or the possibility of its being toward the actuality or the reality of its being.

32Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 11, 9; 1065b16, as cited by Sullivan, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p.

While, on the one hand, we have noted that matter exists as potency if we should want to refer to the materiality of bodies (objects which are sensed would exist for us as bodies), potency exists as a larger thing or as a more general category if we should want to refer to immaterial kinds of potency and immaterial kinds of being which can emerge from immaterial kinds of potency where, in both cases, whether we should prefer to speak about the being of a material potency or about the being of an immaterial potency, potency suffices as a more general, apt designation. Its use transcends denotations and connotations which would want to have us think about our acts of human sensing and about that which could be given to us through our various acts of human sensing. Talk about matter instead of talk about potency tends to encourage a way of thinking and speaking that would have us believe that our human cognition is solely constituted by our different acts of human sensing and not by the being or through the kind of instrumentality which belongs to other kinds of cognitive act. To potency belongs a greater degree of abstractness than the abstractness which exists if we prefer to speak about matter than potency.

With respect then to the being of act and potency and moving to determinations of their being and meaning as this comes to us from Aristotle, in act, something exists either as it is fully realized in some kind of way (having, in some way, a fullness of being; hence, in some way, it is bereft of potency), or secondly, as it can be realized in some way (having within it an absence of being that is relative or circumstantial; the absence of being can be amended or corrected through a development which would point towards new actualizations or new realizations of being in shifts that would move from potency to act). In potency *qua* potency, something exists as an openness to realizations of one kind or another or some kind of development or increase which points to its variability or its changeability. The openness exists as potency; or as capacity, passivity, or receptivity. Something can exist thus, in one aspect, as fully actual and real (it, in fact, exists) although, in another but related aspect, it can also exist as something that is entirely possible or potential and so it is not yet, in some way, fully real or actual. What is missing would exist as a species of not yet. Potency is not to be equated with nothingness nor with something that is entirely lacking in being.

As noted or as we have been suggesting, before something can transition from a condition of potency to a condition of act, it must first exist in a condition of being or act before it can become something else, existing within a newer or a fuller condition of act. Change must begin from something which must exist in a prior condition of being before it can possibly change to enter into a new form of being or a new form of existence. For example, to say that oil is flammable is to say that the potential for it to burn is already present within it as an actuality although it needs some kind of external cause (for example, the application of a burning match) if we are then to move from that which is potential within oil to that which is actual within the oil: the burning of a given amount of oil. That which exists in a condition of potency is not able to put itself into a condition of act. Instead of a strict disjunction which would seem to exist thus between being and becoming, through the principle of potency as it exists within the principle of being as the principle of being refers to the being of things, by this means thus, becoming can be regarded as something which exists within the being of existing things as some kind of incomplete, partial act. Becoming, motion, movement is not nothing or non-being and, at the same time, it is not being (it is not act) though it exists as something which exists within the actuality or the being of existing things. Citing some of Aristotle's own words: change or movement would exist as both "actuality and not actuality,"³³ or, in other words, more precisely, change or motion, becoming,

³³Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 11, 9; 1066a26, as cited by Sullivan, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p.

exists as the “actuality [the realization] of the potential as such.”³⁴ Appositely: “motion is the actuality of the potential *qua* potential.”³⁵ In becoming or in potency, a third type of being exists since it cannot be equated with that which exists simply as Being or that which exists simply as Non-being or as the very absence of being. To explain more fully:

On the one hand, the striving or the motion itself exists with a beingness which properly belongs to it (its existence or its actuality cannot be denied) and, on the other hand too, at the same time, this striving or motion has a potency of its own since it has yet to reach its proper goal or a condition of actualization which would exist as the fulfillment of a given movement if movements or motions are distinguished from each other on a basis which refers to their inherent intelligibility (their reasonableness). Not all motions or movements are endowed with the intelligibility which they should have. Irrational actions can be found, for instance, in how some human beings behave. We think about wanton acts of violence, although, on the other hand too, other actions and movements present themselves to us in a way which points to some kind of inherent intelligibility which is understood to a greater degree if we can point to ends, goals, or terms of action which belong or which, in some way, participate in the intelligibility of a given action or motion. Hence, within this context: motions, movements, or actions share in the intelligibility which belongs to the achievement of certain ends or goals. Change is to be understood by us in a way which points to its reasonableness or its rationality and, by the principles which we use to understand change and to detect its presence within the givens of our sense perception or the givens of our self-awareness, we understand how or why change can be distinguished from the kind of flux which exists if chaos should emerge as an object of inquiry for us in our efforts to come to a possible understanding of it. Minus intelligibility and that which exists as change is seen immediately to exist as chaos. Import understanding – or introduce understandings which could come from the kind of actuation which exists for us in higher acts of understanding or in unrestricted acts of understanding – and then, for these reasons, on this basis, different conclusions can be reached.

All these things being said, before any kind of change can occur, before there can be any kind of transition that would move from a condition of potency to a condition of act, something must exist either with a prior condition of being which is more primitive and a condition of being which is less primitive compared to later realizations of being which could replace it or which could come to it. Since, as we have noted, nothing which can be can ever realize itself through its own nothingness, its own potency, and so move toward a new condition of being or act, for this reason we can understand why the existence of potencies always suppose the prior existence of acts; potential being, actual being. Potencies can only be known if we first know about how a given thing exists. The condition of a given act, the givenness of its being, determines what it can receive in terms of its passive potency and what it can become in terms of its active potency through the doing which can also properly belong to it. For example, the phenomenon of our human questioning exists as an act, as an activity, and also as a potency. As an active potency, our questioning makes for the possibility of an increase in our understanding (the receiving which occurs in experiencing new acts of understanding). Acts lead to

³⁴Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 11, 9; 1065b17, as cited by Sullivan, p. 53.

³⁵Aristotle, *Physics*, 201a11-12, as cited by Byrne, “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” *Loneragan Workshop*, p. 16.

acts and then, from there, to later acts, and later acts cannot exist without the being of earlier acts. For example, a human being can exist as simply or merely a human being. The existence is fully actual in terms of a received act of being or a received act of existence since no human being can cause him or herself to exist. However, this actuality of existence does not necessarily include or encompass acts of being or existence which would refer to intermittent acts of sensing, thinking, and understanding (if we should limit ourselves to citing these prominent examples among other options and choices that we can also make). These later acts or operations and other similar acts all exist potentially within the mere being or the mere existence of a given human individual. The kind of being or the kind of act which is the existence of a given thing immediately conditions or it determines all the range of potencies that a given thing has or that it can have if we should attend to a second kind of possible being which is the fuller being or the realization of a given thing's existence (all the potencies which properly belong to it to the degree that they can be reduced or brought to a condition of act): what a given thing can become as new actualities emerge through various actions or operations which can change the quality of a thing's being, the manner of its concrete existence. Acts and operations come and go (in Aristotle's terminology, as noted, they exist as "accidents": hence, a tripartite distinction speaks about accidental potencies, accidental forms, and accidental acts) and so, as these acts and operations cease to exist within a given context, they can be succeeded by the being of other acts and operations and a new order of existing things which can emerge and exist as a consequence among these different acts and operations.

Among differing acts of being and about how acts of being which exist as acts of mere being or existence differ from acts of being which exist as active and passive acts (active and passive operations or active potencies and passive potencies), an Aristotelian distinction speaks about a thing's act of being or existence as a species of first act and how the operations or acts of a thing's being exist as a species of second act, a second act following the being of a first act.³⁶ One must come before the other. However, that which is first and that which is second always depends on the context of its particular application: where these distinctions are being applied within a given situation. Something is first relative to something which is second but the second can be first relative to a third which would be second. If we should want to speak about three fundamental metaphysical principles which allegedly, in some way, whether explicitly or implicitly, all come to us from Aristotle in terms of potency, form, and act and the kind of order which allegedly exists among these different principles, as Aristotle would have it thus, the reception of a form by a potency can be classed as a second species of first act and so, from this, by way of a conclusion that comes to us centuries later, principally from the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, the reception of an act by a form, a second species of second act. Where, in Aristotle, form enjoys a primacy and a centrality which explains why, in the metaphysics of Aristotle, a metaphysics of form is to be alluded to (the being of things is understood through their forms and the reception of forms), in the metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas, from the primacy and the centrality of act relative to the being of form, the result is not a metaphysics of form but a metaphysics of act (the being of things is understood principally through their acts of being or their acts of existence even if, by form, we can know about the kind of existence that, in fact, belongs to the being of a given thing). The relativities that are to be found within the structure and the articulation of a comprehensive metaphysics – as these relativities are determined – on this basis thus, exact specifications of meaning can be known in terms of how they exist within parameters and contexts that are clearly defined and known by us in ways that relate principles and terms to each other together within the wording and the construction of propositions that are governed by the principle of contradiction. The individual terms define the kind

³⁶Sullivan, *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 51.

of relation which exists among them and the relation in turn defines the meaning of the composite individual terms. Hence: potency, form, and act have each a meaning which is understood by how each term relates to the others and, in a similar fashion, acts of sensing, understanding, and judging have each a meaning which depends on how each type of act relates to the other acts. Acts of understanding are not understood if no contrast exists with acts of sensing and if the kind of role which belongs to our acts of sensing is not understood in terms which can relate to our later acts of understanding and how this species of cognitive act properly exists, one kind of act either leading to another kind of act or presupposing the being of another kind of cognitive act.

As corollaries that can now be understood more fully from a foundation which refers to the being of potency and act, in moving toward concluding our understanding about how the principle of potency and act exists within the thinking of Aristotle's philosophy, three corollaries can be considered in an order of points which encompasses Aristotle's philosophy of nature in a way which moves initially from (1) φύσις [*physis*] or nature as an interior principle of movement which exists within the being of existing things to (2) φύσις [*physis*] or nature as an understanding of things which thinks in terms of four necessary causes which should always be invoked if a larger number of variables is to be reduced to the unity of a more comprehensive form of explanation (an order exists among these causes) and then, from there, to (3) φύσις [*physis*] or nature as a more general principle (a most general principle) which points to how or why, between the being of our cognitional principles and activities and the being and significance of our metaphysical principles, a connatural unity exists: an order which joins these two sets of principles with each other in a way which points to a species of mutual necessity if, from the perspective of this unity, a more adequate understanding of things is to be attained (an understanding which can link a greater number of variables with each other and so answer a larger number of questions). In discussing any given topic or question, all thorough forms of discussion require a form of analysis and a manner of composition or synthesis which can constantly move from cognitional principles to metaphysical principles and then, from there, back toward cognitional principles *ad infinitum* until, eventually, a satisfactory understanding of things is achieved or until, at a later date, new questions will be asked in the hope of moving toward possible increases in the extent and range of our understanding.

First then, with respect to φύσις [*physis*] or nature as an interior principle of movement within things (sometimes cited as the primary Aristotelian understanding of *physis* or as the most well known understanding of *physis* in Aristotle),³⁷ the nature (or the natural potency) of a thing or the nature (or

³⁷Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law*, p. 6. As Grant notes, Aristotle defines *physis* in different ways as he moves or as we move from one text and context to another text and context. We can argue that, from the discussion about nature or *physis* in the *Physics* to the same kind of discussion in the *Metaphysics*, a development can be found. The later the analysis, the more differentiated the meaning. In the *Metaphysics* (4, 4, 1014b16-1015a19), seven definitions are allegedly indicated although, according to Grant, if we take these definitions and compare them to each other, we should find that they can be reduced or condensed into three definitions which allegedly refer to the (1) nature or essence of something, the (2) full being of a thing, and (3) a power or inclination which works within a thing to effect its change and self-movement. As a species of interpretive analytical principle that guides our thinking and understanding: how we understand *physis* in Aristotle depends on the particular kind of approach that we are using in our reading and interpretation of Aristotle, one kind of heuristic leading to a particular specification of meaning and another leading to another. The better or more nuanced our own approach, the more penetration is the extent of our intelligence and the wiser our

the natural potency) of an event is that which exists or which refers to a general principle of motion and rest which exists within things as a constitutive inner principle, determining who and what things are and what they can do and experience as a consequence of who and what they happen to be (nature or the natural as that which is capable of self-organization).³⁸ Citing Aristotle directly: “nature is a principle or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not accidentally.”³⁹ In the definition of nature which thus comes to us from Aristotle, the nature of a thing is vital and pivotal if we should want to establish the identify and the life of any given thing. Hence, by means of this internally existing nature, “things have a principle of growth, organization, and movement [which belongs to them]...in their own right.”⁴⁰ Something is natural to it if, in its development, it is “most in keeping with the perfection of the nature of a definite thing.”⁴¹ Physical changes or physical motions exist in conjunction with other kinds of changes or other kinds of motions as these are given, for instance, in the being of meteorological and geological changes, and as we move into chemical changes, biological changes, zoological changes, and human changes as these exist with respect to variations in our human subjectivity, in our “sensation, feeling, thought, habit, and action.”⁴² The existence of self-movement within things in turn determines or we would say that it demarcates a world which exists, in its collectivity, as that which is “the whole of the changing.”⁴³ Our naturally existing world or Nature is first known by us through our different acts of human sensing. From nature as an interior principle, as a derivative or as a secondary determination of meaning, we have the external world of Nature – Nature, in upper case. By adverting then to the internal principles which exist within things, these principles denote the nature of existing things and so things are natural to the degree that such a principle exists within them and, in addition too, the activity or the behavior of these things is also natural or appropriate to the degree that it complies or that it conforms to the nature which exists within these things or, in other words, the natural being and the natural behavior of a thing reflect or, in some way, they flow from an inner natural principle which somehow exists within them (for reasons or by way of causes which have yet to be understood and identified in any given case).⁴⁴ The normativity of internally existing natures directly points to the appropriateness or to the naturalness of certain types of behavior and, conversely too, the inappropriateness or the unnaturalness which would belong to other kinds of behavior that are lacking in normativity.

judgments, then, the wiser will be our understanding of the possible meaning of *physis* in Aristotle as we move through Aristotle through a form of analysis that is not troubled or baffled by differences in Aristotle's choice and use of words since differences word choice do not always point to differences in meaning that are crucial if we are to move toward a comprehensive understanding of *physis* as this exists in the context of Aristotle's philosophy and thought.

38Aquinas, *Sententia super Physicam*, 1, 1, 3; 2, 1, 145; *Quaestio disputata De unione verbi incarnati*, 1 (as cited by Gilby, *Theological Texts*, pp. 286-287, n. 507); Spaemann, *Essays in Anthropology*, p. 76. See also Patrick Byrne, “Insight and the Retrieval of Nature,” *Loneragan Workshop* 8 (1980): 14, where Byrne explains the meaning of this definition after quoting what Aristotle gives as a definition in his *Physics*, 192b21-22.

39Aristotle, *Physics*, 2, 1; 192b21-23, as translated by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye.

40Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 81.

41Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée*, II, #220, in *Oeuvres Philosophiques*, ed. P. Janet (Paris: Alcan, 1900), vol. 2, p. 234, as quoted by Brague, “Are Non-Theocratic Regimes Possible?,” p. 4.

42Byrne, “Insight and the Retrieval of Nature,” *Loneragan Workshop*, p. 8.

43Byrne, “Insight and the Retrieval of Nature,” *Loneragan Workshop*, p. 7.

44Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, pp. 81-82.

The indwelling of an immaterial nature suggests that, normally or usually, a given thing has but only one nature or only one intelligible form: one whyness, one whatness, or one quiddity or essence.⁴⁵ As noted, the nature of a given thing, in specifying what a given thing is, specifies what it is able to do and what it is not able to do and what it is able to experience or receive from the being of other things, specifying also the identity of the causes or the movers which are needed if a given thing is to undergo the changes which specifically and typically belong to it.⁴⁶ If we should employ a more technical way of speaking that comes to us from how the principles of act and potency have been translated and put into terms and designations which have turned them into designations of potency (distinguishing two different kinds of potency): together, with each other, active potencies and passive potencies constitute the nature or the natural potency of a given thing or substance.⁴⁷ If we should know the nature or the intelligibility of a thing as a specification of act (hence, as a realization or as a determination), we should immediately know the identity of a corresponding, apt potency: a potency which exists and is known, relative to the being of a given act, a given realization, or a given determination that could be received by the potency in question in a way which would reduce the being of this potency into a condition of act, extinguishing a given potency when, now, it exists within a condition of act. Act supplants or replaces potency in a manner which can point to the being or the identity of new emergent potencies.

Because, in Aristotle, a real distinction exists between a nature and an accident (the nature of a thing, as an explanatory principle, exists as a constant while what a given thing is doing at any given time differs

⁴⁵Please note, however, that the having of only one nature for a given being is not always or necessarily an absolute rule. Exceptions exist. It is not always true since not everything which has existed in this world has had but only one nature or only one substantial form. In Christian belief, it is held, for instance, about Christ that the incarnate Christ possessed two natures at one and the same time: a divine nature and a human nature. What Christ could not do as a man, as a Son of Man, he did as God, as the Son of God. In addition also, if we look at the physical world as this exists for us within the common world of our ordinary experience, we seem to find instances of metamorphosis where a living thing first exists with one kind of nature or form until it comes to have another kind of nature or form. Natures are shed, lost, or relinquished according to a higher order of meaning or principle of intelligibility. Tadpoles become frogs and caterpillars, butterflies. However, if we look for a nature (an intelligible principle) that can identify how changes in nature can occur within the being of a given thing, we cannot so easily speak about a being which first has one nature and then another nature which would totally differ from the first or which would be unconnected with the first. The purpose or the function of an understanding which knows about a nature is to find an explanation that can account for many different kinds of changes or movements. In dealing with instances of metamorphosis, an understanding of change which wants to understand how or why a succession of forms exists with respect to a given existing concrete being would have to be a species of understanding which knows about the being of a substantial form since, from the perspective of this form, we would understand why an intelligible order exists with respect to the being of a succession of forms. Always, when moving toward an understanding which grasps the form of an intelligible nature, we engage in a species of activity which wants to move from an experience of multiplicity toward a condition of unity as this unity exists within the kind of oneness which belongs to the intelligibility of an understood nature.

⁴⁶Byrne, "Insight and the Retrieval of Nature," *Lonergan Workshop*, p. 14.

⁴⁷Aquinas, *De Potentia*, q. 1, a. 1 and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 23.

from what it could be doing at some other time),⁴⁸ and because accidental attributes or accidental events come and go according to the kind of nature which individually belongs to them, by understanding and attending to the substantial nature or the substantial form of a given thing, we can understand why some accidents can be regarded as normal or proper and why others can be regarded as incidental or circumstantial (at some times, violent). Acts of cognition which are rational are seen to be proper to the life of human beings but not so our height, our weight, and the color of our hair.⁴⁹ With respect to the things of this world, the nature of a given thing cannot be simply identified with how a given thing actually exists nor with what a given thing is actually doing in a given act or operation. From a thing's nature, its being or the existence of any of its operations cannot be derived. Understanding a given finite nature or essence does not mean that we will necessarily understand the actuality of its being or the actuality of its existence.⁵⁰

Hence, within this context, a nature (as Aristotle understands it) would have to exist as a limited form of explanatory principle. It explains a fewer number of things because it cannot be equated with the concrete being of an existing thing and all the things that a given thing does, performs, or experiences. A certain fullness of reality is missing: a fullness which refers to the simple existence of concretely existing things or/and the activities of these concretely existing things although, admittedly, in some way, the nature of a thing, as an explanatory principle, is such that it is ordered toward possibly receiving acts of being or existence – acts which would refer to the existence of a given thing or being and which could also refer to the being of operations although, as noted, in the metaphysics of form which exists in Aristotle, the being of existing things is not explained by way of act but by the principle of form.

Second, by way of a further understanding of motion or movement which comes to us if we move with the principles of potency and act in the context of Aristotle's philosophy, from potency and act or, alternatively, from matter and form, we can move toward the kind of teaching which Aristotle offers when he speaks about the necessary existence of four different kinds of causes (four necessary causes)⁵¹ if movement or change, as it exists in our world, is to have a fully adequate explanation where, for instance, in book 9 of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle summarizes the adumbrations and speculations of Pre-socratic teaching as this refers to a general understanding of all the causal explanations which can possibly exist for us in our attempts to understand the being of our world. How to explain why something is changing in the way that it is changing if differing answers can be given about why something is changing in the way that it is changing (differing answers which do not conflict with each is saying or offering as an explanation)?⁵² What are these distinct causes and what kind of role do they individually play as heuristic tools if our larger, general object is always an understanding of everything that can undergo or initiate any kind of movement or change within the circumstances of our currently existing world as this world has always existed as a species of reality which, to some extent, is self-moving and self-causing?⁵³ On a basis which can be determined on the basis of potency and act, or on a basis which can be determined on the basis of matter and form, with respect to these

48Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 193.

49Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 41.

50Lonergan, *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 11; p. 53; p. 164.

51Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1, 3, 10; *Physics*, 2, 7, as cited by Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 43; Byrne, "Insight and the Retrieval of Nature," *Lonergan Workshop*, p. 15.

52Byrne, "Insight and the Retrieval of Nature," *Lonergan Workshop*, p. 15.

53Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 82.

first principles, four distinct causes can be determined where each exists as a relation or as a perspective which works from a slightly different point of departure that is grounded in how it can be said that potency and act or matter and form are related to each other.⁵⁴ As a fundamental point of departure however: the association of form and act with determinacy and matter and potency with indeterminacy suggests that none of these contrasting terms is understood if its correlative is not also understood in a way which points to a dialectical but mutual form of determination. The meaning of one mediates the meaning of the other back and forth. One is positive while the other, negative and each cannot be entirely understood apart from its opposition or contrast with the other.

In a way which accordingly shows that Aristotle was the first person to speak about the necessary existence of four necessary distinct causes that must be invoked if we are to have a comprehensive understanding of anything which exists within the world of our ordinary experience, Aristotle notes as follows: (1) Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes discovered the kind of being which exists as a material specification of cause (hence, material cause); (2) the Pythagoreans to Plato, form as formal cause; (3) Empedocles and Heraclitus, respectively through the principle of Love and Strife and the principle of *logos*, the being of efficient or instrumental causes; and finally (4) Anaxagoras, Socrates, and Plato, the being of final causes which Aristotle accepted and which he further developed within the later context of his ethics when speaking about how our human movements are directed or intended toward that which would exist as a concrete good.

With respect then to the being of efficient or instrumental causes (given earlier discussions about the meaning of material and formal causes in Aristotle), an efficient or an instrumental cause refers to that by which something else is made. Hence, an efficient cause refers to some kind of instrument or means that is used in a given context. One does this in order to do that. A frequently employed example refers to an artist who carves a statue from a mass of stone. The hammer and chisel that he uses function as efficient or as instrumental causes. By their use, through an external kind of application and use, something else is brought into being which had not existed before.⁵⁵ An efficient cause accordingly exists as a catalyst: as an agent cause, as a moving cause, as an agent object, or as a moving substance. It moves matter or something other which exists as an other from a condition of non-being toward a condition of being.⁵⁶ In a definition which comes to us from Aristotle, it is “that from which change or rest first begins.”⁵⁷ A parent, as a substance (*ousia*), through the form of the parent's humanity, takes something other which is not yet human and, by working with it, changes it into something which is now human.⁵⁸ More precisely in wording which can be used to define the nature of an efficient cause, it is that “*by which* something [other] is made.”⁵⁹

To understand the nature of an efficient cause, we begin by understanding how we can move from the nature of a formal cause to the nature of an efficient cause, an understanding of formal causes leading

54Byrne, “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” *Lonergan Workshop*, p. 15.

55Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 98.

56Joseph Owens, *Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, p. 76 & n. 19 citing Aquinas, *De Ente*, 4. See also Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, p. 8; and Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 41.

57Aristotle, *Physics*, 194b30, as quoted by Patrick H. Byrne, “Teleology, Modern Science and Verification,” *Lonergan Workshop*, vol. 10, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston: Boston College, 1994), p. 4.

58Byrne, “*Insight and the Retrieval of Nature*,” *Lonergan Workshop*, p. 15.

59Alder, *Aristotle for Everybody*, p. 42.

us toward an understanding of efficient causes. On formal causes: when a form exists within a given thing, as a formal cause, it accordingly exists as a distinct predicate, having its own effect. It indicates what a given thing is: why it exists in the way that it does, what this same thing is able to receive without destroying or violating its being and identity, and what this same thing is able to do as an extension or as a communication of its being and identity if, with respect to the being of a given thing, it exists with a measure of self-motion and self-movement which points to its animate, living nature. Living things or animate substances are characterized by varying degrees of self-motion; dead inanimate things, by a lack of self-motion. When the intelligibility of a formal cause accordingly indicates what a given thing is able to receive (when its passivity is indicated and understood), we can then understand what kinds of action can come to it from without (from external sources and causes): actions which can bring a given thing into a condition of being or actions which can bring a given thing into a specification of being which refers to the kind of fuller being which exists in context of its flourishing. It is one thing to simply be or exist. It is another thing to fully live and be. Then too however, by also understanding what a given thing is able to do, we can also understand how a given thing can also exist and function as if it is itself a species of efficient cause. By its own actions, it can bring something else into being: either a being which is totally other than the being who is the doer or the subject of efficient causality or something which exists within the life of the subject who is the agent or the doer of efficient causality. We can read a book in order to grow in our own understanding and knowledge or we can read a book in order to engage in actions which construct external objects We might want to build a house, a computer, or some other external object. While substances (or things) exist with formal determinations which point to their distinctiveness (who and what they are), through their efficient causality, these same substances or things can pass on or they can communicate their whatness (their formal determinations) to things which would exist as new others (acting upon these others in a way which effects the being of something which, before, had not existed). In a point of difference or contrast with the formality or the immateriality of formal causes, efficient causes work with material means of one kind or another to effect the emergence or the being of other things even if, admittedly, in some circumstances, these other things or these other objects exist in an immaterial way (they have no spatial or temporal conjugates).⁶⁰

Paraphrasing the kind of argumentation which we can find in the teaching of Aquinas: since contingent being cannot cause itself (since, in Aquinas, the form or the nature of a contingent being is not to be equated with the act of being or the act of existence which belongs to an actually existing contingent thing), the beingness or the existence of an actually existing contingent thing can only be explained if we should refer to an act or a cause of being or existence which comes from something other (externally), this other referring to the reality or the activity of an efficient cause. In a shift which moves

⁶⁰As Hill notes in *After the Natural Law*, p. 43, the materiality of material and efficient causes is to be distinguished from the formality or the immateriality of formal and final causes and, in differing ways also, each set respectively refers to the being of internal and external aspects with respect to the being and the becoming of things. Matter exists as an internal component when we refer to the being of existing things. Form also exists as an internal component (matter and form go together) and so, with respect to material and formal causes, both exist as internal components with respect to the reality of existing things (things which exist as substances). However, as external causes, an efficient cause brings something which is other into being and, in an external way too, according to Aristotle's understanding of final causes, these act from without or externally to bring something which is other into a condition of fuller, more perfect being.

toward the kind of truth which is expressed by a proposition which exists for us as an analytic principle (its truth is such that the form or the predicate of a thing exists within the meaning or the being of a given thing; a thing exists as a substance or it exists as a subject), a difference in internal relations distinguishes the causality and the reality of a formal cause from the causality and the reality of an efficient cause. In a formal cause, a form exists within a set of material conditions and, in the consequent internal relation which exists between form and matter as these exist together, as noted, in and by itself, a formal cause does not bring something other into a condition of being from a prior condition of non-being. The causality of a formal cause is limited to specifying why something exists in the way that it happens to be and exist. However, with respect to the being of efficient or instrumental causes: if, in another predicate of relation, an internal relation is constitutive of the being of another thing, if an internal relation brings a being into a condition of existence which before it had not enjoyed (moving from a condition of non-being to a condition of being), then, in this sense, we can refer to how this type of internal relation can be regarded as an efficient cause and not as a formal cause. The internal relation which exists within the being of an efficient cause points to a variable or a factor which explains how or why a given something has been brought into a condition of being from a prior condition of non-being. On this basis then, if human beings can understand how they can function as efficient causes, if they can understand how, in their efficient causality, they can effect or bring into being the being of other things (things can refer also to the being or the existence of other human beings), then, they can begin to understand how efficient causes have functioned to effect the being of their personal existence. To some extent, they can understand and know these external causes, determining them and also possibly the order which can join these efficient causes with each other in a manner which is more effective than the being of some other kind of order.

With respect to the being of final causes, for Aristotle (in the context of his teleological biology, his teleological ethics, and his teleological physics): "nature does not act without a goal."⁶¹ In asking why something exists or why it functions in the way that it happens to exist or function, implicitly, in the posing of this question, we would be asking about the existence of some kind of end or purpose, a realization of some kind: a "that for the sake of which,"⁶² a "form which finally results when the motion continues on to completion,"⁶³ where here, in Greek, *telos* refers to the term of a realization or the term of a development which would exist as some kind of "end," "goal," "purpose," or "fulfillment."⁶⁴ In general terms thus: an "x" exists in the way that it does because of a "y." Hence, with respect to that which exists as "y," as an explanation, it imparts or it points to a possible direction or to an orientation which can exist with respect to that which exists as "x," informing the being or the nature of "x," belonging in a way to the fuller existence of that which exists as "x." The "x" in question does not exist in some kind of isolation by itself (in a self-enclosed kind of way) but in a manner which points to a measure of self-transcendence which properly belongs to it. The self-transcendence exists initially as a species of passive potency although, in the case of living things, another species of self-transcendence can be identified if we should refer to the possible activation or the eliciting of active potencies which

61Osborne, *Philosophy for Beginners*, p. 19.

62Byrne, "Insight and the Retrieval of Nature," *Lonergan Workshop*, p. 15.

63Byrne, "Insight and the Retrieval of Nature," *Lonergan Workshop*, p. 15.

64Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 34; Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 83.

can be brought into a condition of act if we admit that, as a final cause, a given “y” exerts a perfecting influence. Its causality is such that it functions as an immaterial kind of efficient cause through the attractiveness which it exerts on things which are other than itself,⁶⁵ at times drawing a lower order of being toward a realization of some kind which cannot be effected in any other kind of way (since, as we have previously noted, as a general principle, nothing which exists in a condition of potency is able to realize itself through a change which could be described as a species of self-actuation, a self-actuation of something which, in its potency, is bereft of that which exists in a condition of act). Realizations of potency come from acts and not from something which exists only as a “could be” or as a possibility (hence, as a potency). If, in the life of a given thing, stages of development can be noticed or if, say, the emergence of “x” makes for the possible emergence of something which exists as “z,” then, in order to understand the nature or the being of a living thing or in order to understand a possible relation which can exist among a number of different living things, then the necessary result is the postulation of a final cause (an order of finality) that is able to link these different stages and conditions with each other in a way which suggests that formal causes exist for the sake of final causes (for the sake of realizations and perfections which have yet to be, exist, and emerge).⁶⁶

On a critical note: to avoid any confusions here and to determine the kind of final cause which is to be identified with Aristotle's notion of final cause, please note thus that this final cause is not to be identified with the possible being of some kind of inner tendency, a *nisus*, a desire, or an effort which somehow exists within things as a governing “inner impulse” that impels growth or which directs the life and growth of a given thing,⁶⁷ although, on the other hand, it is to be admitted that this type of understanding has been attributed to Aristotle or it has been postulated as a better understanding about how, in nature, teleological causes function and operate. In the first case, R. G. Collingwood speaks about final causality as an inner tendency which exists within things, a finality which does not have to be conscious in the manner of its operation in order for it to exist and function as an operative cause,⁶⁸ and, without qualification, this understanding is attributed to the kind of understanding that comes to us from Aristotle. But then, on the other hand, in the thought of Bernard Lonergan, a like understanding of finality is given which suggests that, perhaps, Collingwood is its probable source or he exists as a kindred source although, on the other hand, this same understanding is to be attributed to Aristotle in a manner, however, which points to the necessity of a qualification. The finality that comes to us from Collingwood and Lonergan does not come to us from Aristotle in terms which refer to a *telos* or in terms which would refer to a final cause as an *archê hothên hê kinêsis* [as the source of movement].⁶⁹ Instead, the parallel in Aristotle is with how, in the *Physics*, Aristotle understands motion or movement as a species of inner principle or inner cause which exists within the being of things. If, in Aristotle, final causes resemble efficient causes in terms of an external causality which belongs to them (the externality of their operation), in Lonergan, the reverse applies: final causes resemble formal causes in terms of a form of internal causality (in their own way, they operate within the being of things). A formal cause indicates what a given thing is; a final cause, what the same thing can become given what it already happens to be. Citing Lonergan's own words on the identity of final causes as these indicate

65Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 84.

66Patrick H. Byrne, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 197.

67Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 34; Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 83.

68Collingwood, *Idea of Nature*, p. 83.

69Aristotle, *Physics*, 2, 1, 192b21-22, as cited by Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, p. 476.

both an absence of Aristotelian origins and also a derivation from Aristotelian origins: “finality is not *principium motus in alio inquantum aliud* [a principle of movement in another thing insofar as it is other]; it is not *id cuius gratia* [that for the sake of which]; [instead] it is *principium motus in eo in quo est* [a principle of movement within the thing itself (in that in which the principle too has being)].”⁷⁰ In its dynamism and also its incompleteness, for Aristotle and Lonergan, this inner tendency or this active potency is something which exists as motion, movement, or change, and so it exists as a kind of in between. It exists as a departing or as a shifting from a prior condition of potency toward a later condition of act; or, perhaps more accurately and precisely, it exists as a departing or as a moving from a lesser condition of act toward a later, fuller condition of act.

To understand, however, how or why final causes differ from efficient causes and how they also differ from formal causes, in its simplicity, a useful point of departure refers to the example of a sculptor who works with stone, hammer, and chisel to carve a statue. In his thinking and understanding, the sculptor has a plan, an image, which exists within his mind. Within the mass of the stone that he is working with, he sees an image that he wishes to reveal and so he removes the obstructing stone to reveal the being of this image. The image, relative to the materiality of the stone, exists as a species of formal cause. It identifies the form of a statue. A statue is a statue because of the form which it has. However, in the work which is being done, material, efficient, and formal causes are being combined with each other in many and various ways and the intelligibility which specifies this combination of differing acts and potencies is itself a predicate (a species of predicate) which transcends the being of all the other causes or predicates which together are needed if we are to explain the being of existing things. The sculptor, in his own right, is a human being and the formal causality of his humanity is being combined with the being of other causes in a way which refers to the being and the finality of a larger, more general scheme of things. In finality, this exists for the sake of that, and in the correlation and interrelation of many different variables, in the context of a general order which exists among many different things, a given end or purpose or, in other words, a condition of perfection or a condition of realization which exists at one level of being is explained by the being of other ends or purposes (other, possible conditions of realization) through a chain of causes which moves through differing levels of being or reality toward higher orders of being or reality. If, for instance, we should look at the organic world of living things which surrounds us, we notice that without water and a cycle of events which make for a regular supply of water, no plant life can ever exist. But then, without the existence of certain kinds of vegetative life, certain other kinds of life form would not exist within the animal kingdom and then too, without the existence of life forms which exist among lower animals, higher animals would not be able to exist. Generically speaking: one type of being creates conditions of possibility for the emergence of other types of being. Hence, in Aristotle, the primacy of final causes is such that it points to why final causes are to be understood in a way which regards them as “the cause of causes” (*causa causarum*).⁷¹ To repeat and reiterate what we have said and to try and give a fuller explanation about how, in our world, a finality exists with respect to the being of existing things:

In the world of our experience, a final causality imparts a unity or it creates a comprehensiveness that is able to integrate the being of all lesser final causes and, at the

⁷⁰Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, p. 476.

⁷¹Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 43, quoting D. Q. McInerney, *Metaphysics* (Elmhurst, PA: Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 2004), 266; Charles A. Hart, *Thomistic Metaphysics An Inquiry into the Act of Existing* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1959), p. 299.

same time too, all other primary causes (material, formal, and efficient). All other causes can be understood in terms of how they all relate to each other if we can point to an internal orientation or a vector which exists within the world of our ordinary experience, a world which cannot be or exist in the way that it does if certain levels of being or if certain kinds of being are not to be known in a way which recognizes the fact that certain things exist as points of departure for the possible existence of other things: higher things or higher levels of being even if the being of lower or prior things is without any kind of awareness which would know about the existence of this kind of order or this kind of ordination. As noted, a higher level of being or a higher kind of being can only exist if certain lower levels of being exist in some kind of preliminary way or if, similarly, lower kinds of being exist. Apart from our subjective considerations or apart from our subjective desires as these exist within the human order of things when we ask about the kind of order which exists among our many human actions and how our actions are orientated toward goals and objectives which are proper to them, within the external world of physical, chemical, biological nature (as this exists) an objective species of order is discoverable, a teleological order of some kind or other even if we would have to admit that the existence of this order is not so easily understood within a context of mind and a way of thinking which prefers to think that a teleological order of things is to be associated only with the human order of existing things and not with an order of things which exists apart from any kind of human intervention that would take up this world in a way that is suited to our refashioning of it ways that would seem to suit our human interests and desires.

By attending thus to the form of a thing (the form of a substance), from the principle of form and by understanding how it relates to the principle of matter as this exists in potency, the result should be an apprehension which knows about an order of being and how finality exists within the being of our world. Consciously or unconsciously, a goal-oriented system strives for its own form of self-realization and for whatever perfection is possible within a context of limitations as these are allowed and permitted by the essence of a particular thing (perhaps according to how this essence is known by us initially through an understanding that knows about the being of its relevant form).⁷² If, from the form of a thing, we understand the essence of a thing, from the same form (or, in other words, from the same principle), we should also understand how a thing best exists when it is realized a manner which points to the fullness of its being (the fullness of its reality).⁷³ For an example here that is often used: metaphysically speaking, an acorn is an actuality which exists as the potentiality for the later being (the later emergence) of a mature oak tree since its matter contains the potentiality for becoming a mature oak tree which is the acorn's eventual actuality in the course of time although, in metaphysical terms, we would say that an oak tree's being or that the oak's tree's existence is the actuality of an acorn: an actuality which would exist as the realization or as the kind of terminus which belongs to the life and being of an acorn. Throughout, a form exists as an operative, operating cause and the form of an acorn is such thus that its realization or its end is the reality of a fully existing tree.

An adequate understanding about the nature of a formal cause should always thus indicate the being and the operation of a final cause and the possible understanding that can be had if we should attend to the possible being and meaning of a final cause. This proceeding of an understanding of finality from a

⁷²Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy*, p. 79.

⁷³Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 41.

apprehension which first understands and knows about the intelligibility of a formal cause accordingly explains why these two causes exist together as respectively denoting internal and external aspects which belong to the intelligibility of things, an intelligibility however which refers to the “formal nature of things.”⁷⁴ The form of a thing exists internally as one of its two components (the other component is matter) but, as an internally existing thing, the form or the intelligibility of a thing points to a species of external cause which is the term or the terminus of a formal cause with respect to its possible later realization within conditions that belong to the being of our world in terms of its spatial and temporal conjugates. Hence, the intelligibility of a final cause is other than the being of a formal cause although, from an understanding of formal causes, we move toward an understanding of final causes. Relative to the being of formal causes, final causes exist in an external manner as a higher principle of order. *Qua* externality, final causes resemble efficient causes (both exist in an external way) although the resemblance ends as soon as we advert to how they refer to different aspects or different parts that are constitutive of how change occurs within the world of our ordinary experience or to a different kind of relation which can exist between act and potency or a different kind of relation which can exist between form and matter. If, in Aristotle, every kind of change is a process of being moved or affected by something else which is other than itself in some way (whether changes occur within our souls or within the being of inanimate nature),⁷⁵ to explain every kind of movement or change which occurs, it is accordingly noted and argued that every kind of moving or changing involves a potential (a material cause) which receives a form (a formal cause) from an agent (an efficient cause) in a context which creates conditions that lead to the possible reception of new changes in a growth, a development, or a perfection of some kind which occurs within the being of that which had been potential (a final cause).⁷⁶

To conclude with an example which attempts to explain how these four necessary causes exist together, we can distinguish between the plan of an architect to construct a building and the realization of this same building once it has been constructed. Very many events or causes need to occur before we can have the finished product, a completed building. Now, as an analytic principle (as a truth that cannot be doubted since the predicate exists within the subject), it can be said that, prior to the completion of a given building, the building in question, in fact, does not exist. Its lack of being or its lack of reality explains why it cannot be or act within a currently existing context in order to effect or to bring about a given act or an activity which would contribute to the construction of the building in question. As we have noted, nothing which exists in a condition of potency is able to realize itself. However, if we should want to talk about how we are to advert to a possible application of different causes that can effect the construction of a given building, we can refer here to efficient forms of causality. An architect and subsequent builders work from a realized conception or a thought out plan which exists as a species of formal cause. This thought out plan is to be concretely realized in a manner which works from a set of architectural drawings, these drawings existing as a species of first principle for the generation of a series of efficient, instrumental causes. However, if, within this context, we should move to another point of view and if we should advert to an intelligible order which exists within a series or a succession of acts or causes that ultimately leads toward the realization of a building's construction, we will encounter an intelligibility which differs from the intelligibility or the form of efficient causality: an order of intelligibility which is denoted if we should refer to that which exists as the final causality of a realized intelligibility and why, from the standpoint of a realized accomplished

⁷⁴Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 43, n. 12.

⁷⁵Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 11, 7, 1072b3, as cited by Hill, *After the Natural Law*, p. 44, n. 15.

⁷⁶Byrne, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle*, p. 166.

intelligibility, we can go back and find an order which is to be distinguished from other kinds of intelligible order which exist because, here, its point of reference is the maturity of a completed form. Final causes differ from efficient causes because, in each case, a different base or a different point of departure is to be employed as a species of first principle for the determination of a given relation which exists as we move from the formality of one kind of cause to the formality of another kind of cause where, in the being of each cause, act and potency are related in a different way.

As a third species of corollary, in potency and act, we have metaphysical principles which are reflected and more fully understood through a correspondence which exists when we refer to the being of cognitional principles (the being of our cognitional acts) and how, conversely, our cognitional acts are more fully understood if our point of departure shifts and becomes the being and the reality of our metaphysical principles. Acts as activities presuppose acts which exist as acts of being or as acts of existence where, in this type of situation, acts of being or existence exist within a condition of potency relative to acts or activities which refer to a species of reality which transcends the kind of being which is given if we should refer to the mere factuality of being or the factuality of existence. For a complete understanding of cognitional activities as these exist among human beings, we must refer to their conditions of possibility and hence, from this, to questions which can ask about the possibility and the reality of these conditions. If, for instance, our human cognition exists as an ongoing form of interaction between our acts of sense and our acts of understanding, is not the condition of possibility for the having of these activities a requisite species of being which would exist for us as the union of a corporeal body with an immaterial soul? The being of things both in the being of ourselves and in the being of others leads to the being (the realization) of our knowledge and our understanding of things even as we admit too that our knowledge and understanding of things leads us toward to the being of things, a greater knowledge about the actual being of things. Through our self-reflection, we come to know about apprehensions of being that are given to us as a consequence of our later acts of inquiry and discovery although, through this same self-reflection, we can also begin to realize that apprehensions of being are already somehow given to us apart from the instigation of any inquiries that could lead us toward new apprehensions of being that would add to the sum of that which we already happen to know about the being of existing things. If it is argued thus, with Aristotle, that pedagogically, from what we already know, we move to that which we can come to understand and know, then, in a similar way, we can argue that being exists as a precondition, as a species of *a priori*. Knowing always supposes being if, from being, from the being that is already understood and know without our having to ask any questions, we move toward knowing and the kind of being that can be known by us through our various acts of cognition, one following on another in a way which moves from our acts of sensing through our acts of direct understanding on into our acts of understanding which would exist for us as our reflective acts of understanding. The transcendence which exists in our human acts of cognition is explained by a greater transcendence which refers to how all these acts exist or how they are brought into being by a world that, in some way, already mysteriously exists in a way which transcends the being of our human cognition. A world exists which is proportionate to the kind of knowing which belongs to us in our human cognition; and the being of this world and the being of ourselves - if all this can be understood or grasped by us in some kind of limited way – this same world is something which transcends the kind of being which is ourselves in how we happen to exist and, yet, this same world also belongs or exists within us (in our being) through a form of participation that is available to us (which is partially given to us) by way of the kind of agency which exists within the kind of awareness which also belongs to us within our human acts of cognition.