

Finite Natures as a Specification of Internal Relations

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To understand an argument which would want to speak about something which exists allegedly as a finite nature, an initial problem is presented by the fact that we begin with a suggestive, grammatically phrased designation which implies that some kind of substantive or some kind of existing thing exists on its own. It has an identity of its own and it exists apart from the being of other things though it is qualified by an attribute which exists as a qualifying *accident*. Hence, as one option, we can possibly begin with what can be known and said about natures before we can then begin to speak about any qualifications that could be attributed to them although, admittedly, little can be said about that which exists as nature if qualifying accidents cannot be properly attributed. The interconnection or the interrelation points to why a degree of freedom exists with respect to one's choice of a suitable, apt point of departure. Either way however, whether we begin with what can be said about natures or what can be said about finitude, two different things are distinguished from each other although, obviously, they are intimately joined and united to each other. They combine and relate to each other in a way which can be understood in a way which can possibly point toward the reality of a second species of unobservable, internally existing, constitutive, inner relation (although a species of inner relation which would seem to exist as but a subspecies of the kind of inner relation which already belongs to the being and the relation of substances and accidents). As before, however, in our analysis, we try to move toward explanatory roots and causes which differ from the kind of apparent meaning that belongs to a common usage of words and concepts that we have using and which we have inherited as these have come down to us from prior apprehensions of meaning that have arisen and ensued in the wake of pragmatic forms of thinking and reasoning that commonly belong to all of us as human subjects.

On a basis then which knows about the species of internal relation which already exists between an accident and a substance, we can say that, if, yes, nature exists as a substance and finitude as one of its proper accidents, then an internal relation is to be acknowledged on the basis of how or why accidents (or conjugates) exist, or what accidents are as specifications and determinations of an understood, explanatory act of meaning that has been grasped by us through the mediation of a direct act of understanding. As we have been already noting, substances and accidents are only properly known if they exist as terms that mutually belong to our acts of understanding. Within this context, the intelligibility of an accident *qua* accident immediately points to the intelligibility of a substance *qua* substance (and the intelligibility of a substance, the intelligibility of a proper accident), and so we attend to the reality of an internal relation which always exists between an intelligible, understood accident (or conjugate) and an intelligible, understood substance (rating as a “thing” and not as a “body”).

However, on the other hand, if nature or that which is nature is conceived in a way which sets it apart from the notion and the prerogatives of “thinghood” or substance: if it is conceived not as being something which exists on its own (as if it were apart or set apart from the being of other things); if it is conceived in terms which point more to how it exists as an explanatory, formal principle which, in its being, exists also within itself as a connected, connecting union or relation between this or that variable (say, this or that predicate and this or that subject or term), or as this nest of multiple predicates and subjects (hence, as undoubtedly a signifying, designating, internal relation); if it exists as a determination of meaning which points to why, for instance, a given thing exists as a particular kind of substance and not as some other kind of thing or substance; or how, specifically, a given thing differs

from other things (having an intelligibility of its own as an indwelling, inner relation which joins and unites elements that exist as unobservable, intelligible variables), we can then move into an arena of inquiry and explanation which attends to nature in a somewhat different way. It ceases to be conceived in term of substance or thing; it ceases to exist thus as some kind of separate substance or separate thing. It exists instead as some kind of illuminating, connecting, intelligible form or order which belongs to a given substance or thing or which could possibly belong to a given substance or thing and so, whenever in fact a given substance exists, whenever a substance is somehow given to us as an other, as and if we compare the principle of form with the principle of substance, in the principle of substance something other exists: a something other or a something than that which would simply exist as the principle of an explanatory form (hence, an explanatory nature). While, yes, the intelligibility of a substance points to the reality of a substance; or, more accurately and finely, while the intelligibility of a substance suggests or points toward the possible reality or the truth of a postulated, existing substance, the reality of a substance exists as something which is other or which is greater than the reality or the intelligibility of this meaning or that intelligibility. Meaning and being are not to be simply equated with each other as much as, indeed, they are joined and related to each other. A real distinction is to be averted to. A real distinction is to be known, understood, and affirmed.

To avoid any unwanted confusions here and to clarify the exposition of our intended, desired for meaning, please distinguish between a prior, earlier tradition in thought and analysis which had identified the principle of form or nature with the principle of being or the principle of existence, and a more sophisticated, albeit, second later tradition of thought and analysis which was able to distinguish the principle of being or the principle of existence from the principle of form or the principle of nature. Form or acts of form differs from acts of being or, in other words, the act or the being of a form is to be distinguished from the act or the being of a thing's existence.

In the context of the first kind of thinking and understanding that comes to us from Plato and then also a bit differently from Aristotle,¹ being is to be associated with form (with form as nature; hence, change in our world is explained by the presence, the entry, or the introduction of an organizing, immaterial, intelligible form into a set of conditions which would be otherwise lacking in meaning, determination, and significance). Form is being. Form exists as being and being, as form. Form exists as a proactive, energizing, active type of principle and so if form exists as intelligibility (as an unseen but understandable ordering of material elements which would ultimately point to the being of a cosmos), intelligibility exists as being and being, intelligibility. Apart from intelligibility as being, nothing develops or can possibly emerge and exist in our world in a way that can be regarded as right, good, and proper. An inert, undifferentiated, purely potential kind of lump or mass (which we cannot too well imagine or conceptualize) would somehow passively simply exist as a specification and instance of non-being. Apart from form, nature, or intelligibility, no kind of order can possibly

¹To investigate this matter further, see the details and particulars of Eric D. Perl's discussion as this is given in his *Thinking Being Introduction to Metaphysics in the Classical Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 82-83. The relevant context is a section entitled "Reality as Form." As Perl argues in the opening paragraph of his discussion: "Aristotle argues at length in *Metaphysics Z* that being, that which is, in the primary and fundamental sense from which all other senses are derived, is form. He is thus fully in continuity with Plato in identifying reality, οὐσία, as form, εἶδος."

exist in our world: only a chaos and the kind of nothingness or the kind of void which belongs to the haphazardness of any kind of melange or mess which would exist as some kind of undifferentiated, chaotic gathering of many different, unknown things. In this context then, since form, nature, or intelligibility is distinguished (in having a reality of its own), and because it exists with a transcendence which properly belongs to it (vis-a-vis any potencies or any things which could possibly be and which have yet to be and to exist), then from within this tradition of understanding and thinking, it is said and it has been argued that a form or a nature exists as a thing or substance. Formal reality is to be identified with substantial reality. This form or nature differs from this other form or nature as a substance and so each exists in a way that is somehow other and separate from the being of other things. The transcendence of meaning points to why we can intelligently speak about the alleged correctness of its proper substantiality: the rightness of its sovereign, independent, autonomous status.

However, on the other hand, when the principle of nature or form is distinguished from the character, the quality, or the reality of its being and existence, when the principle of nature or form is not able to account for the being of its own reality and existence (for want of a better term, its own factuality), we enter into an enlarged or into a fuller understanding and conception of many different things which is now forced upon us as we distinguish between nature or form as encompassing the principle of meaning and intelligibility, and the principle of being, act of being, or act of existence which refers to some other kind of reality (a reality which has ceased to exist as some kind of hypothesis). Being, the act of being, or the act of existence encompasses, or it refers to something else which also somehow exists for us, although it is something which is quite other than the being and meaning of any given form or nature.

Hence, in the presence of a real distinction, given the relevance and reality of a real distinction, this act of being differs from nature or form as another kind of act because it refers to something that we do not understand and that we can never understand as much as we might advert to the truth of its being. Acts of being cannot exist for us as the term of a direct act of understanding although, through our reflective acts of understanding, we can possibly say that something exists though we might not know why, in fact, something exists. Existence or the meaning of existence exists as some other, unfathomable kind of thing since, within our current conditions, limitations, and context (given the kind of cognition which properly belongs to us as human subjects), we can never come to an understanding of that which exists as something's act of being or as something's act of existence. Why does anything exist at all? Why is there something instead of nothing? No understanding of existence as a condition can pretend to be entirely or fully adequate, or entirely or fully proper. Hence then, for our sake of our own convenience, for want of a better phrase, we can refer to it at times as possibly an "x" or, more traditionally, as something which would exist as a "known unknown." We can speak about it in terms of how, in its reality or in its givenness, it exists for us as something which is essentially hidden and mysterious.

Something mysterious, something unfathomable exists about that which happens to exist as *qua* the act of being or as *qua* the act of existence (despite the reality of this act of being, the reality of this act of existence) and, yet, this mysteriousness is not to be

equated with the presence or the givenness of some kind of irrationality. It does not point to the presence or to the necessity of any kind of irrationality which could be strangely present in our experience of life: amid certain conditions when, within any given set of conditions or circumstances, a lack of intelligibility is to be adverted to; a lack of intelligibility which would exist as some kind of privation or, more strongly, as a withdrawal or as a deprivation when that which should be given or present is, in fact, not given or present to us. Acts of being or acts of existence are not necessarily irrational, in some way defective, or ultimately unintelligible. The possibility of their rationality, and even the probability of their rationality, instead points to orders of meaning and rationality (and orders of being and existence) which are totally transcendent to ourselves in our understanding and knowledge of things (in terms of the meanings that we can know and the beings whose existence we can know and affirm): they totally exist beyond what we can possibly grasp and understand although existing with a reality and a presence that we cannot deny, forswear, or put to the side. Heuristically, as a general principle, the intelligibility of being, as we experience this intelligibility and as we anticipate this intelligibility – our orientation toward intelligibility points us toward experiences of mysteriousness (depths and ranges of mysteriousness) that we cannot too rashly associate with the evidence or the necessity of some kind of inexcusable, culpable ignorance that, with time and perseverance, we can somehow properly overcome and quash.

Before attending then to the meaning and the significance of that which exists as finite nature, as one possible point of departure, let us first begin *proleptically* with what could be meant by nature *as nature* and not nature *as substance* and see how this focus and concern with nature has emerged as a distinct object of inquiry within the development of our critical, scientific understanding of many different things within our externally existing world (our scientific thought as this has arisen in the wake of the birth of Greek philosophy and science, originating in the world of ancient Greece). In our understanding, we try to understand why we should allegedly speak about that which exists as *phusis* (φύσις), or nature (or any natures at all), instead of other possible things, other possible determinations, other possible intended objectives (other possible formal objects which could exist as terms or as apprehensions which would properly belong to us with respect to any acts of understanding that could be possibly given to us). If a material object exists as the term or the datum of one of our acts of sensing, an immaterial formal object differs from it because of its immateriality. It exists because it is the term or the datum of a received, enlightening act of understanding (or, prior to our understanding, it is intended by us through our acts of inquiry and questions as these are turned toward the possible reception of any desired acts of understanding that could be possibly given to us). Hence, within the context of this cognitional perspective and through a kind of unity which exists between an order of cognitional and metaphysical variables (back and forth, as acts of understanding point to the objectivity of intelligibility and intelligibility, subjective acts of understanding), we can say, for instance, that, if a formal object exists as the term of a direct act of understanding (our acts of thinking and understanding transcending our acts of experiencing and sensing), it cannot differ from anything which can be said to exist as the intelligibility or as the form of a grasped, understood, intelligible nature. Linguistic, terminological differences are to be alluded to in our choice and use of different words but not other kinds of differences (if we think about the being of conceptual, mental differences and the being of real differences and distinctions). Hence, the intelligibility of a thing exists as a way (a form of designation) that we can use to speak about the nature of a thing. Natures exist as intelligibilities; or, in other words, as the intelligibility of formal objects. The self-transcendence that is endemic to us in our

acts of inquiry and cognition (or, more simply, the transcendence of our cognition), points to why also natures exist with a transcendental significance and reference (or with their own kind of transcendental potency as a species of possibility) although, at times, sometimes seldomly or sometimes frequently, they are grasped by us through our direct acts of understanding in ways which point to a lack of difference (the absence of a real distinction) between that which exists within us as an act of understanding and that which is grasped by us as a term which belongs to us in our act of understanding. No idea or reason exists apart from an act of understanding which grasps and knows it. Simply put: no act, without a term and no term, without an act.

Moving then through our acts of cognition, as our acts of inquiry are turned toward possible acts of understanding, if nature is understood within this context as having a distinctiveness that is grounded in its having an intended heuristic function and purpose (it exists as a species of objective); and if nature or the nature of anything exists as some kind of transcendent thing that also inclines and draws us out of ourselves towards itself as a desired, intended, formal object to which we are to be joined and united, then, from within this context and perspective, we best position ourselves to understand how or why we can and should properly speak about how nature exists as an effective final cause, end, or principle. Nature exist with an agency which properly belongs to it. Apart from ourselves, it already exists as an as yet unfathomed, inner, ordered, coherent organization of discrete but connected elements, parts, or variables: as a unity which, from us, awaits its comprehension, apprehension, discovery, and knowledge. It has a unity which transcends the kind of unity (the more primitive kind of unity or the lack of unity) which belongs to the being of material things (the kind of unity which only belongs to the being of material, external relations and the mode and means of their apprehension); or, in other words, the kind of unity that we can only sense and experience as necessarily a material relation or as a material conjunction and connection (as opposed to a unity or unities that are only known and experienced if they exist as answers to our asking of specific questions that are directed to our receiving specific acts of understanding; hence, they exist as correlatives which exist for us and which are given to us through the kind of response which belongs to the good which exists whenever the result is always the kind of combining and unifying which always belongs to our grasping acts of insight and understanding).

With respect then to these aforementioned different unities (if we think more about them): on the one hand, yes, a distinct form, way, or mode of composition belongs to the being of material things. Within this type of composition, parts or elements can be distinguished from each other although, here, through our acts of sensing and through our use of material determinations, we can only refer to the being of material elements or to the being of material ingredients. Each part differs from other parts but, as yet, only sensibly and materially (as when we would say, for instance, that, in this wall or pile, this brick differs from this other brick; or that, in this musical performance and rendition, these bars of music differ from these other bars of music). From the context of a larger, more general perspective (if we continue to think in terms of material specifications and determinations, material elements and material relations), we know and we can say that, in the material composition and the combining of different things which can produce this or that material object or thing, many different things can possibly come to be and emerge for possibly the first time. We can have new bricks on the one hand and, in addition, we can have new stones on the other hand and they obviously differ from each other in terms of their materiality and in their mode of formation and composition. We make bricks but not stones. Stones emerge differently from bricks although, between them, common properties are to be alluded to (for example, a common hardness which points to a shared, common form of durability).

The differences which exist between bricks and stones however point not only to the possibility of their having different material ingredients but, more strongly or more obviously, to a different ordering that can exist among possibly the same set of material components. We can say, in a given case, that a greater proportion should belong or does in fact belong to this element and a lesser proportion should belong or does belong to this other element. Applications of heat or pressure can effect changes with respect to the being of adjacent, component, materially existing parts. Examples of this abound within the practice of the culinary arts. Another familiar example points to how bronze emerges. When a certain proportion of copper is smelted with a certain proportion of tin, the somewhat more radical result is the emergence of a new, compound metal which is known as bronze. The tin is no more (nor is the copper) as something else emerges which differs from the being of any of the prior, component parts. The material parts can no longer be distinguished or experienced. They have ceased to exist in the wake of a new materiality that we can now sense and exploit for purposes which transcend what could be done earlier with what had been the case with either the copper or the tin.

Hence, for the sake of any understanding that can know about orders or patterns as these invisibly exist within the being of material things and as these orders can exist within the being of many material things (orders which determine what will be the materiality of any given thing and which, in their own being, cannot be material if they exist to explain and to determine the materiality of any given part or thing), we must speak about a new, distinct, higher order of things which exists as another species of determinative, determining order. Its primacy is explained by the fact that it conditions and makes for the being of new material determinations that we can then later experience and sense although, in themselves, in their being and identity, in the specification of their meaning and order, they would be lacking in having any form of material determination since by us, they are first inwardly grasped and known before they can be communicated and expressed (we encounter them within the data of our inner, immaterial consciousness, within the data of our self-awareness and knowledge) although, on the other hand, commonly or cognitively, they are discovered, apprehended, and known in ways that begin with our acts of sensing experience and our play with the being of material determinations, be they initially numerous or few. A written letter or word (before it is known to exist as a letter or word) always initially exists for us as but a mark or marks that we happen to come upon. We find that they have been inscribed or carved onto a flat surface and then later (usually often readily and quickly), through a subordinating instrumental use of these same material determinations, we can experience the fact that these marks reveal and point to other determinations of being that cannot be reduced to the materiality of their expressive presentation (to the being and the experience of any kind of material determination). Another kind of unifying composition exists within our world because the sensible unity or the sensible composition of a newly emergent, new, material thing requires or supposes a hidden but more powerful, unifying kind of composition which transcends anything which belongs to the being of material determinations and the material kind of unity which belongs to the being of material things. Sensible unities differ from intelligible unities if and as we begin to find that intelligible unities exist with a quality and perfection (or, in other words, with a unity) which surpasses the perfection and unity of anything which could exist as a sensible, material type of unity. A difference of degree differs from a difference in kind and it is surpassed by that which exists as a difference in kind or type. The union of differences which exists both within the complexity or within the unifying, unified composition of a sensibly existing unity is transcended or, as an experience, it is heightened or it is elevated through an experience of unity amid and within differences through a unification of differences which also now exists within the complexity and the unified, unifying composition of an intelligibly existing, intelligible unity.

In other words (and somewhat reiteratively), our experience of sensible unities points to physical differences among and between the different unities that we experience and notice. We encounter these physical differences. If a brick is not a stone in a way which differs from the being of a stone, and if each exists with its own form of material composition (having thus a different being and reality; hence, pointing to a different meaning and identity), the differences, in our attempt to not sense but to understand and explain these differences – these differences point to differences in the meaning of intelligible orders and so, if the intelligibility of one compositive element is to be somehow joined and related to the intelligibility of another compositive element in a way which transcends any kind of incoherence or contradiction - in a way which produces or which reveals something that is entirely new or different (having thus its own new, distinct intelligibility as this is given through a unifying relation of composite, composed, intelligible elements) - then the cause, the reason, or the agency is a composing, unifying species, form, or act of intelligibility which is *not without its own complexity* (as an ordering of two or more intelligibilities) and, yet too, not without its own unity and a species of compactness that is unlike any kind or form of material compactness. Try to compare, say, the density, thickness, or weight of a material thing with the density of an immaterial thing if we attend to how physical and chemical laws are expressed in a manner which works with the kind of abbreviation or the kind of shorthand which inherently belongs to the being and the articulation of differential equations. Can we really do it? How can we speak about the density or the compactness of a differential equation?

Accordingly thus, we necessarily speak about a constitutive, inner, unseen relation which necessarily belongs or which informs the nature or the intelligibility of a newly composited existing thing when, within the being of a compositely existing, new, material, embodied thing, differences between material elements exist which cannot be reduced to the being and peculiarities of any kind of material determination (as these refer to conjugates or to any measurements that belong, respectively, to extensions or durations of anything that exists within specifications of space and time). The unifying power or the unified kind of being which belongs to a thing's intelligible, formal nature enjoys an intensity, or it is possessed by a depth or a specification of unity which cannot be compared to the looser or to the lesser kind of unity which always belongs to the bodily integrity of a materially existing thing. So radically does the completeness and oneness of unity which belongs to a nature or a form differ from the completeness and the oneness which always belongs to the material unity of things which, as a unity, does not exist as a synthesizing form or nature which is always joined to the being of a material thing (as a composition of form and matter) since, simply put, no physical being exists entirely or simply as matter (nor, of course, more obviously and blatantly, does any physical being exist entirely as form as we find this to be the case when we think about the kind of simple being which belongs to angels and to God who both exist in purely spiritual way as purely spiritual beings although, admittedly, the simplicity of one differs from the simplicity of the other if one type of simplicity exists as an effect and the other as a cause).

Hence, and as a corollary, while the composition and the unity of a materially existing thing requires a kind of bonding or a kind of composition which exists more intensively not as a difference in degree but as a difference in kind, potency, and effect, the complexity of a nature as a relation between constitutive elements in turn also points to a species of defect: to a relative lack of simplicity which somehow needs to be acknowledged; a relative lack of simplicity which, in turn, points to why restrictions and limitations of one kind or another are to be admitted whenever we should speak about how forms are internally determinative of how materially existing things exist. While some material differences can be resolved or put to the side if we should know about the being of a given nature, other

material differences point to differences which exist among and between the being of different natures and thus about our need to know about the being of these different natures (as the finitude of one nature points to the finitude of another).

To more thoroughly explain our position and thesis here: every material component, to the degree that it exists as an intelligible thing, is to be associated with an intelligibility which properly belongs to it. The material unity of a materially existing thing, to the degree that it too is intelligible, is itself also to be associated with an intelligibility which also properly belongs to it. In either case (whatever), a given intelligibility is not to be identified with any other intelligibility as an explanation and reason for things and, because this is so, we cannot speak about the unrestrictedness of any one of these different intelligibilities. A common condition of restrictedness belongs to the being of all these different intelligibilities and so, in broadly speaking about their restrictedness, we must speak about their limitedness or, in fact and in other words, their *finitude*: the finitude of intelligibilities as they refer only to this or that being or to something which would exist as something else. In general, because a finite nature explains only this and not that other thing, a first kind of finite relation inwardly exists between the intelligibility of a given nature and that to which the intelligibility applies with respect to its materiality (its material being) and, if this finite relation or finite relation were not to exist at all, a divorce or a separation would have to exist between the being of a thing in its materiality and the intelligibility of a thing in a way which would then imply that reality or the being of things is something which would have to be seen as something which is always essentially other (or, in other words, as essentially unintelligible). A thing would be real only if, in fact, it would be lacking in the intelligibility which it should and ought to have. Our acts of cognition would have to exist in a way which would point to our not having to need anything which would exist as an act of understanding.

In other words, the materiality of a given thing immediately points to the finitude of its nature or form: to an explanatory power or reason which is not entirely comprehensive or complete because, in some way, it is lacking in explanatory clout; it is too partial; hence, somewhat defective. Other things are not being explained and this could include, for instance, the intelligibility *per se* of intelligibility or, in other words, an understanding *per se* of understanding as a distinct species of cognitive act. The nature of a material thing and the nature of an immaterial thing can exist in ways that, in their own way, are both limited and finite. A finite nature performs a useful service in reducing the darkness or the limitedness of our current acts of understanding and knowledge. It adds to the extent of our understanding but only, obviously, in a restricted limited way as growth and expansions in our understanding reveal new things, new possibilities, new options and nuances: experiences of understanding and apprehensions of intelligibility which, in turn, elicit new additional questions from us which can ask about how or why intelligibility exists at all; how or why our understanding exists in the way that it does. If an experience of multiplicity through our acts of sensing and experiencing elicits questions that are turned toward the different kind of simplicity which belongs to the form of an intelligible unity, an experience of multiplicity that is given to us through our acts of understanding in turn elicits similar but new, different questions. We are turned toward possible apprehensions of greater intelligibility (toward intelligibilities) that, ideally, would seem to be relatively lacking in degrees of finitude; intelligibilities and understanding which could be increasingly larger and more comprehensive: hence, intelligibilities and understanding which would be less limited or less finite: ideally infinite, if this can possibly be the case for us.

In having then determined what is meant when we speak about a finite nature and how the meaning of a finite nature points to the meaning of a finite, inner connection or facilitating relation (where each

intelligible part or element, in its significance, points to other intelligible parts or elements: the intelligibility of this differing from the intelligibility of that, this intelligibility and that intelligibility), we can then work with this kind of heuristic determination in a way which refers to how it exists as a general principle of order and also as a general principle of discovery as, now, we apply it to the parameters and history of our intellectual culture and thought in a way that more fully reveals how the kind of finite inner relation which exists within a finite nature exist as a suggestive species of first principle that can possibly lead us toward new apprehensions of meaning that, until then, had been somewhat neglected, obscure, or hidden. The application, in revealing nuances of meaning about the being of other things, reacts or we can say it turns back on ourselves as a kind of cause: turning us back toward our initial, heuristic understanding of finite natures and relations in a way which then adds substance or content to the contours and apprehension of our prior acts of understanding or, in other words, we can say that it converts our initial, heuristic kind of understanding of different things with respect to the being of their finite natures and relations into something which now exists as a more embodied, substantial kind of grasp and understanding. To use a metaphor: we add flesh to our bones in a way which adds to the intelligibility of our prior acts of understanding. The more that we know about the being of a given thing - the more that we already know - the better or the more will be our subsequent growth in our acts of understanding as conditions of potency are more readily reduced to new instances and conditions of act and achievement. We better find and detect a movement of things which has been existing within the mass, the accumulation, and the data of our scientific, philosophic history and we see how, from limited developments which have existed within a given, restricted discipline (or/and other disciplines), the creation of this type of larger, differentiated context has served to create conditions for us which have helped us move toward more comprehensive acts of understanding with respect to the more general kinds of insight which can exist within the reflections and inquiries of metaphysics and the self-inquiries that belong to any kind of growth which can also occur within ourselves within the data of our self-knowledge: insights that have been able to distinguish and notice how the principle of finite natures and relations exists as a serviceable, separable kind of employable, applicable, intelligible, heuristic form and tool. To argue to their meaning, truth, and relevance (to know anything about them) already always supposes how our own natures exist with a finite form of inner relation that can only belong to ourselves and not to some other finite nature with its own finite, inner relation of distinct terms.

Hence, from a historical perspective and as we move into the contours of a historical perspective: with respect to determining how we can come and work with an initial meaning and understanding of things which points to the sense of an anticipatory, heuristic designation about what is meant by the kind of inner relation that is constitutive of the being of any given finite nature, a useful starting point can be adverted to if we should advert to the kind of meaning which Aristotle had himself initially imagined and grasped in the context of his scientific inquiry (as he inwardly experienced the manner or the mode of the kind of scientific procedure that he was engaged in within the context of his inquiry). Simply put, what is or what was Aristotle's notion of form? How does Aristotle's notion of form point to an idea or to an understanding which can know about this or that form or this or that nature? In this context then, we refer to an implied kind of formal object which belongs or which is shaped and evinced by an ordering of specific questions that, together, Aristotle was asking and posing when, initially, in the elaboration of his physical science as we find this in his *Physics*, an anticipatory, proleptic meaning first presents itself to us about that which exists as nature when nature is being understood and conceptualized in connection with questions which want to ask about the being (or, in other words, the intelligibility) of that which exists within external, observable, physical nature: specifically, the changing, shifting phenomena of differing movements, motions, cessions, and rests

which exist within the material world which exists about us² (before then, as a desired and partially understood meaning, this notion of nature can be applied and conceptualized in ways which can refer to our experience of insensibly existing movements, or our insensibly existing motions which we can find within ourselves if we should refer to the data of our inner experience which exist whenever we refer to the data of our consciousness of self). Motions, changes also occur within the order of our thinking and understanding as also other invisible motions and changes which occur within the ambit of our desires and feelings. If physics is concerned with understanding externally existing, sensible, material motions of one kind or another (why things move and why things are at times in a stationary condition of rest: things move from a first condition of rest to a second condition of rest); or, in other words, if the science of physics is concerned with understanding what happens in the transitions which occur whenever an object moves from one state of rest to another state of rest, then the object of inquiry in this type of inquiry and context is some kind of explanation about *why* this dynamic phenomena or phenomenon occurs and happens in terms of some kind of external force or mover that is somehow acting on another and then, for some reason, ceasing to act on another in order to bring it to a condition of rest. Y moves because it is being caused, impelled, or pushed by X and it ceases to move when it is not caused, impelled, or pushed by X. Self-moving kinds of action, in their own way, presuppose the causality of their own outer context if any kind of movement is to occur if that which exists in a condition of potency is not able to bring itself into a condition of act.

²Aristotle, *Physics*, 2, 1, 192b 21-22: as if it were a substance or thing, "...nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute." Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, trans. Michael G. Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 41. In his commentary, Aquinas also refers to Aristotle's notion of nature as a principle of mutation that exists within things. Nature is to be distinguished from what happens as a consequence of art or artifice or as a consequence of chance. Cf. Aquinas, *Sententia super Physicam*, 2, 1, 142. The reference to art refers to the imposition of a form from without. An external agent acts from without on the basis of a nature that exists within the operative external agent. But, the nature that exists as a principle of movement and of rest within an operative external agent is not to be confused with a nature that exists within something other which an external agent might try to act upon and work with. What is acted upon has a nature of its own (a nature which refers to an immanent principle of motion and rest which differs from the principle of motion and rest that exists within an externally active agent). Cf. *Sententia super Physicam*, 2, 1, 143. However, with regard to nature, an active principle of motion can be distinguished from a passive principle of motion. A given thing can do certain things in a completely expected, natural way. A thing's nature points to a principle of explanation for characteristic forms of self-movement (even as we admit that other variables can be identified as causes which contribute to given instances of self-movement). When a given thing is able to receive movements from another in a manner which is completely suitable and natural to it, a thing's nature can refer to a species of passive potentiality which exists within a given thing (a characteristic form of potentiality that a given thing has in possible conjunction with a species of active potency). In Aristotle, according to Aquinas's understanding of Aristotle, nature can sometimes refer to matter when, by matter, we refer to the passivity or the potentiality which a given thing has. However, more often than not, as Lonergan notes, nature in Aristotle refers more frequently to the principle of form as an intelligibility and less so to the principle of matter (as a sensibility). Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, eds. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, trans. Michael G. Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 539.

Hence, the object is a determining *causal nature* or a *causal form* with an intelligibility which would exist as an ordering of variables or as an ordering of different causes if, always, a given variable exists as a species of cause and if different causes can be distinguished though they exist and function together (hence, in Aristotle, we have an interrelated set of four primary causes; although in Galileo, an algebraic equation which specifies a distinct, correlated set of variables that have been mathematized in a way which identifies a formal cause and not causes that can be material, efficient, and final). Whatever the conceptuality however, in either case, the object is always an apprehension of something (an apprehension of meaning) that is either not subject to change or, on the other hand, it is much less subject to any kind of change or revision than anything which could be caused or effected since, if we to explain anything that changes, the best or the only appropriate explanation is something which is not itself changing (something which is not subject to change). Compare, for instance, the stability or the absence of change which exists in a perpetually burning flame with how, on the other hand, its effects can be multiple and diverse as they lead to a moving, burning type of expanding conflagration. In the manner of how it exists, in its most general sense, nature or form exists as the principle or as the explanation of all later subsequent movements and rests, changes and achievements, changes and equilibria. In physics (and also in other contexts), it exists as a higher, transcendent type of thing, the truth or the reality of a thing however (as in, say, the truth of a nature) existing thus as a higher, more transcendent type of thing because the truth of a nature is something which is much more (it is other) than the intelligibility or the meaning of any given, known, apprehended nature. Again, differences in degree are not to be compared to differences in kind or type.

To spell this out a bit more: we notice that movements of all kinds obviously occur in our outer, physical, sensibly existing world. Some movements occur in terms of locomotion through changes of position and location; others, without there being any changes of place or location. Movements occur in the life of plants as leaves and branches grow toward a perceived illumination and presence of light. Roots move toward sources of moisture and water. Visible changes occur and, if we want to understand why these visible changes occur in the ways that they do (in and through the patterns which we perceive in the changes which externally occur about us), questions arise which seek to move toward an enlightening, liberating act of understanding and a law which points to the presence of some kind of grasped, understood, normative regularity or some kind of understood, normative, recurring order or pattern of things as this invariantly exists within a variety of many different, changing things. When we understand why a given thing acts in a way which generally characterizes how it commonly tends to act, and behave a *nature* (a *law*) is known in a preliminary, speculative fashion. An immanently existing, insensible nature allegedly explains that which exists as externally existing, sensible nature. Reiteratively: intelligible, insensible nature exists as a datum (or as a term) of our intellectual, conscious grasp and understanding and not as a datum or term that belongs to our empirical acts of human sensing. As we sense material relations within or in terms of externally existing movements and motions, we also sense instances or occasions of rest and repose. However, as a second, distinct species of relation (as an internally existing, intelligible, intellectual type of relation), natures which exist as finite intelligibilities ontologically exist within externally existing, sensed movements and the being of bodies; hence, they also exist in their own way in an outer, non-spatial, external fashion (within events and occurrences) and, if we are lucky, if we ask and pose the right questions and queries, and if we are diligent and patient with ourselves (and others) in our efforts to move

toward some kind of comprehending understanding, we might come to know about the being and the significance of these natures (and the constitutive, inner relation which exists within each of them) that would be grasped by us through the mediation and the reception of any direct acts of understanding that could be given to us at different times, and sometimes frequently, within conditions that we might not directly control, govern, or manage. Understandings, the light of our understanding – this often comes to us apart from the willing and the wanting of our understanding, apart from our conscious willing and desiring as we have these in the kind of struggle which exists within our different acts of inquiry: when, in fact, we are sometimes engaged in the business and the play of other tasks and concerns, pursuing other objectives and interests (when we might not be seeking to understand anything at all in particular). As, through time and reflection, we increasingly find how our acts of thinking and imagining differ from our acts of grasping and understanding, we should increasingly come to know more about the wondrousness or the giftedness of our understanding and how it exists as a special kind of remit that is at times given to us (hence, the passivity and the indebtedness which belongs to our human acts of understanding versus, on the other hand, the actuation and the activity that belongs to other acts of understanding that do not belong to us because they are causative of ourselves and others with respect to the acts of understanding which, at times, we and others enjoy and possess). The being of our passive understanding points to the being of a contrary kind of understanding which is entirely active in a way which is bereft of any kind of absence or potency.

If and as we then begin to attend more fully to ourselves and to how, reflectively, similar inner relations also exist within ourselves, we should more fully come to know about the finitude or the restrictedness of our own nature or form. We have our own species or type of acts of understanding when, reflectively, we notice that, if we move from our acts of sensing and shift into our acts of questioning and imagining, we find a manner or a process of knowing that, in its partiality, its gradualness, and its discursiveness, is peculiarly distinctive of ourselves as cogitating human knowers. A process of distinguishing separation always occurs for us through the agency of our acts of desired, received, abstracting acts of direct understanding (cited as acts of “simple apprehensions” by Aquinas): through, now, the entry and the mediation of a fertile, fecund act of grasping understanding when, now, an intelligible, intellectual nature, pattern, order, or law (which exists within something which is other than ourselves) is somehow brought into ourselves or, we would say that it is disengaged or it is disembodied through the kind of liberating catalyst which always exists and belongs to us through our reception of an insightful, understanding, grasping, intellectual act: an act which is however always joined to the instrumentality and the efficacy of sensed, imagined, apt images (best cited in their technical specificity as “phantasms”) which exist for us, in their refined materiality, as suggestive, pregnant, material clues if, through our desires and our attentiveness, we can be disposed both to our creating of new images and to our finding of images within images; hence, to our receiving and our use of these images. Material causes act in concert or in conjunction with immaterial causes or, more elaborately, we can say that, in both complementary and dialectical ways, material causes act on immaterial causes without effecting or causing them (hence, passively, as a disposing constellation of hints or clues) as immaterial causes in their way act on the being of material causes (to draw from them a significance which inwardly exists as a potency within the materiality, the imagery, of any given cause). Each species of act plays a role in a way which points both to something which is both creative and inexhaustive in our human acts of understanding and, yet, to something which is finite and restricted in the range and depth of our human acts of understanding. Something which is finite is

joined to something which is infinite in the mating and the union which exists between the order of our cognitive acts and the order of our cognitive desires which, in turn, condition and encourage acts and desires that would be more than cognitive as the internality of our understanding is expressed and displayed in ways that have moved into the space and time of our external behavior.

In a way which illustrates how finitude and infinity is something which somehow belongs to how we exist as human beings, we can refer and think about how, in the Aristotelian tradition, we can think about ourselves as “rational animals.” This designation represents and points to a definition that has been given with respect to the form or the whatness of our human nature. When we think about ourselves and the kind of nature that we have, we must refer to two contrasting, different things: a presence and givenness of rationality and a presence and givenness of animality and how these two principles are intimately linked and joined with each other in a condition of mutual support, reliance, and dependence (even as we need to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic forms of reliance and dependence if we need to acknowledge and to take account of the fact that rationality and animality do not exist on the same plane or level with respect to how they relate to each other, the extrinsic conditioning of our sensing differing from the inner, intrinsic conditioning which belongs to the kind of normative interiority which is denominative of our human acts of thinking and reasoning). Our knowing of our human cognition does not admittedly exist in a completely disembodied manner and, at the same time too, the animality of our human condition is something which exists in a qualified, conditioned sense. We cannot speak about an unadulterated form or a pure presence of animality if, in this animality, we find potencies that are receptive of actuations which transform, lift, and regulate our animality: which take our animality into ways of being and living that are entirely transcendent of the kind of animality which always initially belongs to us as human beings and subjects. A plasticity belongs to our animality in a way which does not belong to all other forms of animate, animal life if, in their being, only animality exists and nothing else which could be other than it. When, for instance, an understanding of our human nature is transposed into the terms of a communicable, understandable definition, our animality is additionally and immediately transcended when a universalized intellectual determination which exists as meaning or form is joined to a universalized, intellectual specification of matter which exists as common matter which, in itself, exists as the term of a form of intellectual act which exists as an act of conceptualizing understanding, our acts of concept formation existing as prolongations and, at the same time, differing from our acts of direct understanding which precede our later acts which exist as acts of definition and conceptualization.

The interactive kind of inner relation which accordingly exists amongst our acts of sensing, our acts of inquiring and imagining, and our acts of understanding within the order of our human cognition (this order existing, in its own right, as itself a finite nature, albeit, as an open, receptive kind of finite nature: the finite nature of our understanding as it specifies the form or the structure of our cognition as transitions occur from one kind of act to another kind of act; this act needs this other kind of act) – this inner relation reveals its competence or, in fact, we can say that it reveals its power and its authority because it is geared or it is suited to that which it can understand or, in other words, the being of other, internally existing, inner relations which exist within the materiality of other, externally existing bodies: within, say, the being of material things or the being of material events and their various

material combinations. Like knows like (or that which is finite best knows that which is finite) as we move back and forth from how an intelligible, finite form exists within specifications and determinations of that which happens to exist as matter to how an intelligible, finite form also incarnately exists within ourselves (our bodily, material selves). In both cases, the form or the nature which is known explains why a given thing is endowed with the sensible features which it happens to have (which accordingly separate it, or which distinguish it from the being and the influence of other bodies and which, in turn, serve to point us toward other differences that we might want to understand, clarify, and know in terms of what could be their own distinctive meaning, truth, and reality). To know the nature of one thing, if one is to understand it totally or more fully, implies that we might want to know about the nature or the form of other things if, with Aristotle, we would want to say and to argue that nothing ever exists within a void or vacuum. Nothing moves or nothing changes unless, in some way, it is being effected, moved, or acted upon from without by something which is quite other and which effects, moves, and acts: hence, the elicited receptivity of our acts of sensing and the elicited receptivity of our acts of understanding and an elicited receptivity which also exists within the order of our desires and feelings as, in some way, we are moved and touched in ways that are not fully or entirely subject to the sway of our individual forms and acts of self-government. We sense, understand, and feel without entirely controlling what we are sensing, understanding, and feeling.

The connection which exists, as a finite relation, among or between different material determinations and different immaterial determinations which, in themselves, accordingly exist as finite, intelligible natures or forms (which are not lacking in their own different, specific finitude with respect to how a given intelligible element is related to another intelligible element if a given inner, intelligible relation exists as a kind of cause for the being of distinct intelligible components: the elements and the relation mutually determine each other) - this kind of connection or these kinds of connection accordingly explain two things or we can say that they point to two realities that cannot be separated from each other. First, to borrow a turn of phrase that originally comes to us from the conceptuality of Aquinas, and somewhat reiteratively in terms of its meaning and significance for us, we can say that, in every act of understanding, a reduction to unity always occurs. The received, experienced, ambiguous "haziness of sense data" is overcome or it is transcended by an order of being and experience which exists as a tightly organized, closed kind of understood, conceptualized order which radically differs from any kind of order that we encounter through or within the data of our sensing experience. No correlation, no one to one relation, necessarily exists between a given material item and any given formal, intelligible item if in fact, as a matter of circumstance, from an assembly or a collection of different material bodies (different material determinations of this or that), an identical form is taken and it is abstracted in a way which points to how it exists as a wholly different kind of other.

On the other hand however, in seeking to move and to find an objectively existing kind of order which would also come to exist within ourselves (within the order of our subjectivity) as an illuminating, inspiring, transcendent kind of order that can possibly lead us toward other kinds of acts and deeds, we can find an order which more fundamentally exists and develops within ourselves as a kind of immanent, indwelling source and ground: an order which can grow and develop within ourselves in a way which points us toward increases and enhancements of unity which can begin to exist more fully within ourselves: within and through a form of self-constitution which exists within the growth and the development of our consciousness. In our desiring of acts of understanding and in our wanting to move more fully toward anything that perhaps we are understanding or are wanting to understand, we tend to change and discipline ourselves and so, the more we internally refashion and discipline ourselves, the greater will be the unity or the harmony which comes to exist within ourselves. As one good then leads

to another good, as we move in a growing unity or harmony from discipline to understanding and then from understanding to discipline, the oneness from without which comes to exist more fully within ourselves in turn leads us to know more about the being and the oneness of our own personal selves where, however (and perhaps a bit surprisingly), the complexity of any given unity is a datum which cannot be used to argue against the tightness or the completeness of any unity which can possibly unite a multitude of different variables together in a oneness which is productive of all the different parts or variables which happen to exist within something which exists in itself as an intelligible, understandable thing. No contradiction is to be adverted to as each adds to the other: the complexity to the oneness and the oneness to the complexity. Something exists in a more intelligible way if it exists not only as something which can be grasped by an act of understanding but if, in its own right, it exists as an act of understanding (if the intelligible is itself intelligent and if it is predominantly and primarily intelligent as a source of intelligibility where, within the order of things, the intelligibility exists as an effect and the intelligence, a cause).

The more then that we can come to know about the being of any given outer, transcendent unity which is other than ourselves though it can come in a way to exist within ourselves, the better we should come to know about how, in our compound human oneness, we are to respond to the world that exists about ourselves and other persons that we might come to know and to meet within this same living world. Our questions reveal a point or a focus and their asking reactively sharpens and redirects our focus and gaze as we become more committed to any acts or activities that can possibly direct us toward an order of things that we have yet to fully grasp, understand, and know: an order of things that we can somehow live with and so be more fully joined to. The self-disciplining which is required within the order of our human cognition creates conditions or we can say that it lends itself toward creating a new, larger context and order of things which cannot be lacking in a reverberating order of moral consequences and effects if, through a kind of extension or a prolongation of spirit, attitude, and orientation, an asceticism which exists and dawns without our cognition moves us into an asceticism which also connaturally belongs to us in an assembly or patterning of our externalizing actions and deeds as, continually, through our desires, wants, and appetites, we try to move toward the being of other unities and relations (can we say fuller unities and relations?) that cannot be given to us merely through our prior acts of enjoying, sensing, and feeling; nor by anything which would exist in a prior way as an assembly or as a species of cognitional act. A primacy which exists within our passions and desires is conditioned or it is assisted by a primacy which also exists within our acts of understanding and knowledge.

Hence, in the wake of our desires, as a better understanding of external, intelligible, finite natures that exist from without leads us toward a better understanding of the kind of finite nature which exists within each of us as human beings (the better or the greater our self-understanding and self-discipline, the better or the greater should be our understanding and knowledge of other things) - a better understanding of ourselves and our finite nature (if all the better this is to happen and occur) - this promotion or desire for greater understanding in turn leads us or it directs us toward questions which would want to think about the possible intelligibility of a nature which cannot be finite in the extent of its explanatory range and power if finitude is to be understood in a way that cannot be itself finite or limited. Our finitude, in its own separateness and distinctiveness, implies the being and truth of other determinations which would have to exist in terms of their unrestrictedness and infinity: a lack of finitude. Hence, our finitude in general exists as a preliminary type of datum (as a suggestive, pregnant point of departure). We want to understand ourselves with respect to the reality or the limits of our own finitude and, in fact, the finitude of every other kind of finite nature that also happens to exist. We

too frequently and too often encounter these other finitudes in ways which preclude our not having or our not taking some notice of them. However, if the vicissitudes of change (life and death and movement) can only be understood on the basis of something that does not change and which can never change (the dynamic of change *per se* cannot explain or account for itself), finiteness and finitude can only be understood if, strategically, our point of departure is the postulation of something that can never be finite or restricted in any kind of way (to the extent here, admittedly, that our context is a condition of unrestrictedness as this exists within the intentionality and the order of our reason or, in other words, a dominance of rationality as we think about how, in our thinking, reason and rationality exist together in a fundamental oneness that is distinctive of their unity). Simply put, an adequate or a true philosophy of finite natures supposes or points to the need for an adequate and a true philosophy of infinite nature to the extent, however indirectly and elliptically, something can be said about both the meaning and the being of that which exists as infinite nature.

Throughout, we suppose a real distinction which must always exist between acts that are essentially willful, thoughtless, and lawless (hence multiple, changeable, and arbitrary), and other acts which exist as acts of reason and understanding: hence, not inherently subject to abrogations, cancellations, and nullifications as, subsequently, new later acts of understanding emerge and as they supplement and add to the good which is already given to us in our prior, earlier, received acts of understanding. To invoke a logical, lawful consideration that governs our acts of thinking and reasoning (when and as we refer to the principle of the excluded middle and as we apply it within our current considerations): what cannot exist as a finite nature (or finite thing) would have to exist as an infinite kind of nature (or as an infinite kind of thing), although the meaning or the intelligibility of this infinity would not have to be known by us in any kind of inexhaustible, direct way (it is not directly known and understood) or, in other words, we can only know and speak about it in a way which is *partial* or *apophatic* if we should work with both a preliminary or a heuristic understanding of finitude in conjunction with concrete apprehensions of specific finitudes that, in some way, are possibly right and adequate for us or, in some way, possibly relevant, apt, and useful for us within the order of our direct acts of understanding. If we should know about the being of direct acts of understanding, we should have some sense about the being of that which exists as indirect acts of understanding (analogical acts of understanding). With respect to the import and meaning of negative determinations (or negative meanings), as an other (as a distinct other), infinity always exists as the contrary negation of finitude. That which exists as something less always points to something which exists as something more: a something more that we can consider and think about and possibly move toward as we experience a kind of infinity which exists within the ambit of our wants and desires. Again, reiteratively, the finitude of things is something which does not exist as a self-explanatory thing and something within us wants to have a reason or explanation.

If a given nature accordingly explains why a given thing engages in this or that act or operation that is properly suited to it in terms of its possible self-movement or self-motion, and also why this or that other act or operation can be properly received from without as some kind of effect (from some kind of proximate or remote external agent or cause), a nature which explains *the presence or the functioning of every kind of possible act or operation* can be regarded as simply a desired known unknown: or, in other words, as an “x” where this “x” would exist as some kind of proposed, mysterious, infinitely

intelligible, intelligent nature that we would want to exist in some way within ourselves to the degree that this is possible. The attribution of intelligence supposes a nature which also exists as an actualizing act: hence, as both a first principle of causation *qua* explanation (as an ordering relation of all other causes), and as an actuation of causation *qua* act from which all other things happen to come and proceed. As an unlimited, unrestricted nature which also exists as an unrestricted act, in its intelligibility and intelligence, no limits restrict its extent, its intensity, and its duration. We cannot know about what could be the range, intensity, or duration unless we say that we would be referring to something which is infinite. Hence, as we refer to an unrestricted actor or subject who also exists as an unrestricted formal principle of causation, we would have to refer to something which exists as an unrestricted source of two types of incarnate, incarnating meaning which exist within our world if, within our world as we experience and know it, we should or we must refer refer, on the one hand, to a cognitive, factual type of meaning and knowledge (when we know both what a thing is and that it also exists) and, on the other hand too, to an effective, operational type of meaning and knowledge which refers to what a thing does or effects, or can do and effect as an understanding and apprehension of known meaning and significance is turned or as it shifts into consequent acts of our human conformity in terms of acts of execution and deeds or, in other words, a form of outward expressiveness that extends into multiple determinations of space and time, changing our experience of space and time and the experience of others in the context of their space and time. No other nature would or could exist with more meaning and significance than this kind of intelligible, intelligent nature (existing allegedly and supposedly as an infinitely existing, active nature): or, in other words, the unrestrictedness in nature, intelligibility, and intelligence, as an unimaginable but thinkable qualification and conception, immediately points to connatural exemplifications of unrestrictedness in all the acts that can be informed or which are informed by this same active nature, whether we should refer to the being of an unrestricted act of being or existence, or the being of unrestricted operations which would belong to this being's subjective life and activity. An unrestricted intelligible, intelligence (that we do not understand) points to an unrestrictedness in being, life, and operations that, similarly, we do not understand and can never understand.

To avoid any confusions here, let us recall a metaphysical principle which says that no potency truly or rightly exists *as legitimately or properly a potency (a true, intelligible potency)* if no act exists that can explain why a given potency exists or, in other words, no act can properly reduce it to a condition of act in terms of its real being and existence. Only if we should try to speak about absences of intelligibility can we then, imaginatively, speak about some other kind of potency which we would not be able to think or conceive of to the extent that our acts of thinking and conceiving exist as intelligible, rational acts. The being of acts which exist always points to the being of possible realizations which would exist as potencies (relative to these acts) since the reality or the truth of an objectively existing potency cannot be known or adverted to if we cannot refer to that which would exist as its intelligible cause: a cause which would exist as its completing, facilitating, implementing act. How can we know about the being of any proper potency in terms of what could be if we cannot know about an act that can take a given potency and then reduce it to a condition of act? No potency exists apart from a corresponding act of being which would exist as its act of actuation. Hence, if the *reality* of finite intelligibilities *as potencies* points to their objectively existing reality as potencies and objectively existing *actuations* which properly belongs to them (or actuations which can properly belong to them), all the more so is this the case if, in an unrestricted fashion, we should want to speak about how, for us (in our limited, conceptualizing acts of understanding), infinite intelligibility also exists as a real potency as something which could somehow possibly be and exist for us (as something which, in its potency, must be in some way): as something that, somehow implicitly and dimly, points to the reality of an infinitely

existing act of intelligibility and intelligence that we implicitly and dimly know; as something that we need to refer to and to affirm if everything else (that, to some extent, is lacking in some degree of intelligibility) is to be or to exist in some way (if, on the other hand, it is to be fully understood and known). If a given finite thing can be understood by us (by our knowing about its finite form through the mediation in us of a finite act of understanding), can we possibly speak about an infinite act of understanding as this would apply to the being of a finite thing? Can we understand much more about the being of a finite thing if we can possibly move from one or more finite acts of understanding toward an act of understanding which would be infinite?

As a corollary however to what we would want to advert to and to emphasize, the absence of any difference between the *act of being* or the reality of this unrestricted nature and the *unrestricted intelligibility* of this same nature accordingly explains why we cannot speak about the receptivity or the passivity of an allegedly unrestricted, existing, understanding, intelligent, effective act (this act as a divine, active subject) since, in its being or because of what it is, receptivity and passivity always exists as a restriction and limitation. They imply and suggest that a given subject, in its life and being, needs to receive something that would have to come to it from outside of itself (from sources that would be somehow external and other to it); hence, in its being, it would not be able to exist and live in an entirely unrestricted way. The absence of reception with respect to the being of unrestricted intelligibility points to why, in this absence of potency which belongs to unrestricted intelligibility and intelligence, we must speak about why, in this unrestricted intelligibility, its existence exists inwardly within it as a primary datum (as a matter of fact), or as a conclusion that we cannot do without if we should find that, in speaking about the being of intelligibility and intelligence, we are speaking about things which necessarily exist as indemonstrable first principles that we cannot prove since, in this case here, we are referring to things that cannot be proved or deduced from ways of thinking and argument that would somehow exist beyond or outside of an order of things that is constituted or which exists as the being and the reality of intelligibility and intelligence. Mysteriously, from within itself, we are thinking of something which exists in its own right as an actively causing, uncaused cause. The givenness of reason and intelligibility cannot be ultimately reduced to something that would be some other reason or intelligibility.

To think thus in a way that can conversely move from infinity to finitude (instead of from finitude to infinitude; from finite acts of understanding to infinite acts of understanding), in working thus from analogical or speculative determinations which would advert to how we may speak about the unrestricted properties of something which would exist as an unrestricted, infinite nature (or as having an unrestricted nature), our introduction of restrictive qualifications, in a delimiting way, immediately leads us toward a better understanding about what could be meant when and if we should try to speak about the being of finite natures and how we are to think about the kind of property or properties which should properly belong, in general, to all finite natures. A finite nature cannot refer to anything that exists in some kind of unrestricted, unlimited way. A finite nature cannot refer to God as an unrestricted subject or actor (the intelligibility, the reason, or the intelligence of God) although, on the other hand, it can refer to every kind of contingent being that exists (whether for instance, in one sense, we should choose to speak about angels, or whether for instance, in another sense, we should choose to speak about how in our contingency we exist as human beings). The self-movement of one kind of being is not the self-movement of another kind of being. As human beings, we engage in a species of self-movement which an angel is not able to do (in lacking our human nature and the capability which refers to the intelligibility of our intelligible, human nature); and similarly, an angel can engage in a form of self-movement that is closed to us in terms of what we can do as human beings since, as human

beings, we are not blessed with the natures of angels, our human natures and the natures of angels (as intelligibilities) each revealing what each is able to do and what each is able to receive and accept. To reiterate, as a species of first principle, a teaching that is to be affirmed and employed: potencies are known in their clarity and distinctiveness through that which exists (or which could exist) as the formal principle of their intelligible nature (whether we should refer to a formal principle that is being presently understood and grasped or to a formal principle that, in some way, we presently anticipate and, in some way, we would like later to understand or possibly experience in some way).

To expand then our understanding about the meaning of a finite nature: by way of a summary and recapitulation: each kind of being is able to engage in actions that are grounded in how it specifically exists as a subject (whether as an active or as a passive subject) and, in addition, each is not able to engage and to participate in certain actions that can come or which exist in terms of from how something else exists as a living subject (hence, as another kind of subject). As subjects (if we speak about finitely existing subjects): each is able to receive acts or operations which create conditions which, in turn, allow for characteristic forms of self-movement. Since nothing having a finite nature, given this qualification of finitude, is able to be or to exist in an unrestricted way, nothing having a finite nature is able to cause itself or to move itself apart or separately from the being of other things unless, somehow, other factors and conditions exist and are operative (from without) to elicit a thing's being or/and a characteristic form of self-movement which, as an event or act, would belong to the life of a given existing thing. To explain this allegation and claim we can simply note that the form of a thing in its nature (its intelligibility) is not to be confused with any acts of instantiation which would refer to the act of a thing's existence and it is also not to be confused with that which could exist as its operations and receptions. Form admittedly suggests the reality of instantiation and existence. It also qualifies acts of being and existence if these are in fact given from without (without, however, necessitating the givenness of any instance of existence or any act of a thing's real being and existence). Our inability to reduce the being or the givenness of reason and intelligibility to something which would exist as also a reason or intelligibility points to the limitations of the principle of form, nature, or intelligibility; hence, the givenness of something else that is somehow more important and vital. To help us a bit in this context, we can recall a teaching which comes to us originally from Socrates, a teaching that we find which, unfortunately, we must reject and not accept: a teaching which wrongly claims that simply to know the good is always to do the good (acts of being existing always in the wake of forms and the apprehension of any given form or meaning). The lack of identity (whether fortunately or unfortunately) points to the fact that more exists within our world than the meaning and being of form and intelligibility.

Forms are finite thus in a third way (in a more fundamental way or in a more general way) to the extent that, by their very nature, they differ from acts of being or from acts of existence. Forms are not only finite to the extent that they are always partially correlated or imperfectly mated to material determinations of one kind or another (the transcendence of a form explains why, for some material conditions, no finite form exists), and also to the extent that, amongst each other, they differ from each other as distinct, hence limited specifications of intelligibility but, in addition too, they are finite if they differ and if they are to be distinguished from that which exists as something which is greater or more important: that which exists as the act of a thing's being or the act of a thing's existence. Despite how great is the intelligibility of a given nature and despite how the greatness of its intelligibility suggests and points to the likelihood or to the probability of its truth and reality, its act of truth and being exists within a higher, transcendent order of things that is both real and intelligible in a way that we are not able to penetrate, understand, and grasp. Intelligibility differs from actuality because the intelligibility

of form is surpassed or it is transcended by the mysteriousness or the actuality of the reality of being and existence (why anything, in fact, exists as all; or, more accurately, that anything exists at all). We can think, for instance, about the mysteriousness of our own being (the fact that, for some reason, we exist as we do) and we can also think about the mysteriousness of all other existing things (the fact that these other things exist for reasons that we cannot fathom, grasp, or attain). Somewhat paradoxically and with this or that degree of disappointment, form as the principle of intelligibility is not able to explain things that would seem to be more interesting and wonderful than anything that we can ever possibly understand, explain, and know. Something other exists than the being of intelligibility and this other transcends both that which exists in terms of materiality and that which exists in terms of intelligibility although, admittedly, not in a way which is devoid of suggestive allusions (fertile relations and connections) which would seem to point to the appropriateness and the reality of a higher order of things if, within the order of material and intelligible things, we should find dispositions and orientations which exist in their own right as potencies which inveterately or, in fact, inherently belong to a metaphysics or an ontology of things which properly belongs to the constitution of our existing world. The intelligibility of a form exists in its own right as a potency: hence, its finiteness. Potency points to finiteness. Where material potencies exhibit their finitude with respect to the actuality of a form or intelligibility, forms (or intelligibilities) through their formal potency exhibit their own finitude with respect to the real possibility of their receiving a new species of act which exist as acts of being or as acts of existence.

To speak now more about the finiteness of form as this relates however not to how it is joined to material determinations, and not to how forms differ from each other as forms, and not to how they differ from the kind of principle which refers to acts of being and existence, is to think and to begin to speak about a kind of finite impact or finite influence which belongs to the kind of inner, constitutive relation which belongs to the being of every finite form: finite nature as increasingly a principle of limitation. Initially, for instance, if, with Aquinas, we combine an act of thing's being or existence to the reality of a finite nature (as this exists as an intelligibility) and as we think about what kind of relation would exist between a finite nature and a received act which exists as an act of being or existence, we would then speak about how a finite nature specifies what kind of act of being or what kind of existence can be received or accepted by a given finite nature. A finite nature points to the being of a finite act of existence. It first determines or it limits the scope of an act of being even as we must admit and hold that, from a finite nature, we cannot get a finite act (a finite act of being or a finite act of existence).³ In moving from acts of being with respect to a thing's existence to acts of being which respect to receptions and activities that can belong to a thing's existence, most simply put, in their finitude and finiteness, finite natures inwardly impose restrictions (in unobservable ways) on any acts or operations which could exist and which would follow in the wake of the kind of primacy which, relatively speaking, first belongs to the act of a thing's being or the act of a thing's existence. Acts of being are succeeded by acts which exist as receptions and also, in some cases, as activities or actions (as self-movements) where no self-movements exist in a way that is totally without their being caused and elicited in some way; hence, existing apart from any kind of reception or, in other words, the act

³From potency, you cannot get form or nature. Similarly, from form or nature, you cannot get act. As form or nature exists as a kind of reception relative to whatever exists as potency, act exists as a second kind of reception. Hence, we must speak about a first and a second potency. First potency refers to a possible reception of form or nature that can exist and second potency refers to a possible reception of an act or operation (an act of being and also possibly an act which refers to an operation or an activity which initially supposes that something already exists).

and the influence of an external cause of some kind that encourages and conditions acts of self-movement to some extent (more or less, whether in this way or that way). For illustrative purposes, a commonly used metaphor (in English) says that, turnips being turnips (and not something else), “you cannot get blood out of a turnip.” Certain materials can be obtained from a turnip and turnips behave in certain ways. From a turnip, animal blood cannot be obtained.⁴ Forms apart from acts of being and existence and forms apart from any acts which exist in terms of receptions, movements, and operations – these all impose restrictions in a way which points to a passive form of causality which properly belongs to them. No acts of being, no receptions, movements, or operations can exist in an entirely unrestricted, independent way if they are always subject to some kind of modification that comes to them from the finitude of an indwelling, existing form which determines how something exists as a finitely natured, existing subject (to the extent that it exists as both a passive and an active center of reception and activity).

A finite nature specifies why some receptions, actions, and operations can be regarded as proper for a given thing (a given substance) and why other receptions, actions, and operations cannot be regarded as proper for how a given thing lives and exists. We all know, for instance, that it belongs to the finite nature of human beings that they should enjoy acts of understanding (finite acts of understanding). It is proper for us as human beings that our human cognition should occur through an interaction which exists between our acts of sensing and our acts of understanding. However, our human nature limits what kinds of acts of sensing and what kinds of acts of understanding can be enjoyed by us as human beings and when these acts will occur and how their occurrence can exist in a pattern that is typical of our human behavior. As human beings, we cannot experience acts of seeing that are akin to what a hawk is able to do in the acts of seeing which are proper to a hawk. The seeing of a hawk is far more acute and far more powerful. Similarly, angels enjoy acts of understanding that, as human beings, we cannot enjoy. To explain why a given thing is able to engage in certain acts or motions that are proper to it (whether a given act exists as a complete act or operation, or whether it exists as an imperfect act where no coincidence exists between an act or action and the end or purpose of an act or action: compare an act of understanding with an act of questioning), we must advert to internal relations which exist between an unseeable finite nature and an order of fulfillment and realization that moves beyond a world of possibilities and idealities to a concrete type of world which exists in terms of instantiations, verifications, being, and existence.

In order to explain any external relations, we must always turn toward the possible being of internal relations and the kind of transcending, inner awareness which inherently belongs to how our acts of understanding exist for us (whether we should speak about our direct acts of understanding or, later, about our analogical acts of understanding which exist in ways that can be said to come or to derive from our prior, direct acts of understanding and which can be said too to encourage and to lead us toward the possibility of our having new, direct acts of understanding that can be possibly given to us in the wake of new inquiries and questions that, in turn, create a larger context for correlating a new given question with the aptness or the suitability of a given reply or answer that can only be understood and known with respect to the reality of its meaning and truth if it is correlated to how it exists as a response or as a solution which meets the point of our posing or encountering a given question which, possibly, we have yet to grasp and understand but which we need to grasp and know before we can begin to know anything about the meaning or the truth of something which can be given to us in a way

⁴See http://www.phrases.org.uk/bulletin_board/51/messages/908.html (accessed February 2, 2011).

which points to why we might want to speak about it as a proposition that can be expressed in ways that differ as we move from language to language and from the wording of one sentence to the wording of another).⁵

In the ordering which we have drawn then between acts of being in terms of existence and other acts which exist as receptions, movements and operations, the kind of ordering which exists between these two different sorts of acts in turn lends itself to a specification which needs to speak about how two finite, internal relations exist together in a way which points to the finite unity of a finite combination of the two. In referring to an internal relation which simply refers to the act of being of a finite nature, for reasons of convenience using traditional language, we can refer to a substantial type of internal relation (hence, an indwelling *substantial* finite nature) and then, when referring to this finite nature in a way which points to the presence or the absence of any variations in the character and quality of its substantial being (the play of any variations), we can refer to the presence and absence of circumstantial conditions (hence, to an *accidental* kind of internal, finite relation). The kind of finite nature which belongs to an act of sensing (or, for instance, an act of understanding) cannot be understood apart from the other kind of distinct, finite nature which more fundamentally belongs to simply the being of a subject which is sometimes sensing and, at other times, engaged in an act of understanding. Some finite natures cannot be thought about or conceived apart from how, in their primacy, other finite natures exist: finite natures which can be thought about and conceived in a way which points to their distinct autonomy and a kind of independence which inherently belongs to them.

The reality of internal relations as these refer to finite natures can then be verified through our engaging

⁵To understand what kind of difference exists if we are to distinguish between a logic of question and answer and a logic of propositions, see how R. G. Collingwood speaks about the truth and the reality of this distinction in the context of his *Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 29-43. Within a kind of logic which works with propositions and which is centered on the importance and the primacy of propositions, a proposition (as opposed or as differing from the wording of any given sentence) exists as a distinct unit of meaning and truth. Its meaning is grasped if we should understand the meaning of words as they are joined together in the relation which exists between a subject and its one or more predicates. Its truth can then be entertained and grasped in terms of four possible options which reflect or which point to four different theories of truth: truth in terms of pragmatic value or use; truth as coherence with other propositions; truth as correspondence with something which exists on the outside; or truth as tautology where the meaning of terms immediately implies their validation and truth. However, if, in fact, meaning exists as a far more complex kind of thing, if it cannot be reduced to the notion and the terms of a proposition that has been put into an organized set of communicable words and concepts, then our understanding will falter and it will not expand and grow if we fail to allude to the fact that our understanding of things depends on the degree of our further interest and curiosity or, in other words, in our attempts to ask questions that we might want or should pose. Hence, we will not understand another's meaning and truth if we do not advert to the question or the questions that another was attempting to address: ask, understand, and answer in the context of their own place and time. Without some kind of historical inquiry or without combining a philosophical consciousness with an historical consciousness, there will be much that we will not understand about what could be the meaning and knowledge of other persons and groups. Too frequently, contradictions would seem to exist and to multiply when, in fact, they do not really or truly exist. Can these two kinds of consciousness be properly distinguished from each other in our engaging in any kind of philosophic analysis?

in prospective acts of reflective understanding (through our possibly moving toward a reasonably sure affirmative judgment) where, through a reflective act of understanding, we have been able to move from an internal relation that has been first understood (it has been existing as a datum of our intellectual consciousness) toward the same internal relation which is now known to exist in its truth as a verified reality as now, through the mediation of our acts of judgments, an understood internal relation comes to exist as a datum within the higher kind of order which now belongs to us within the order of our rational consciousness. If, by our acts of direct understanding, we have moved from the kind of data which belongs to the order of our empirical consciousness (from external determinations of one kind or other that have been somehow sensed)⁶ toward an understood internal relation that has been somehow inwardly grasped and understood, through our acts of inquiry in the context of our reflective acts of understanding, we have been moving in another direction: back toward suppositions

⁶To avoid any misunderstanding here and in a way which points to an extension or an expansion of our intended meaning, please refer to external determinations in a way which is a bit less simple than how, possibly, we have been thinking about it. We refer to a real difference which exists if we should distinguish between merely hearing sounds (or merely seeing marks on a flat surface) and, on the other hand, hearing sounds (or seeing marks) which simultaneously reveal or communicate an instantiated, inner meaning or significance which exists within the sounds and marks: a meaning which is however to be identified with the givenness of a given datum as it is being received and experienced. In our sensing and through our sensing, more is sometimes being sensed and experienced because, in some of our acts of sensing, a meaning is being immediately grasped and understood. We have not always to ascribe or to attribute any meaning to a given, sensed datum although admittedly, from an initial experience of meaning which exists as a datum, questions can come to us about other possible determinations of meaning. We can ask about the possible existence of other meanings that can perhaps explain the current meanings that we are presently experiencing. Some meanings or, in other words (more accurately), the kind of meaning which belongs to our human world exists incarnately (or, in a mediating kind of way) because, through their material embodiment which exists for us as a kind of communicative carrier, a meaning can be immediately experienced by us in a way which elicits our attention, memory, and interest. We can be moved by how a given meaning is being given to us and so we are encouraged to ask new questions and to re-imagine things in new, creative ways. We can be open to possibly experiencing new acts of understanding that can be given to us and so, by this means, participating in the being of new realities that we have yet to know about and, in some way, live and abide with. A given meaning, if we should refer to it in terms of its realization, if it is to exist in all of its fullness and being – it might need a form of material embodiment that will be more apt or suitable for it (and for us): hence, in some way, as an effective cause, it will seek and work with any available, disposable material for the sake of its being able to communicate or present itself to us in a more striking, arresting way; hence, revealing a new, larger world of existing things which transcends anything which can be grasped by us as if we were to work with only a sensible or a material kind of determination as these determinations exist for us within the mode of thought and inquiry which is distinctive of the pattern of consciousness which typically belongs to the ways and means of natural scientific procedure (in the mode of its practice and performance). Not so, however, any science or discipline whose object is the being of human things and which attempts to understand the being of human things: things which belong to us in our human world and which are constitutive of our human world where their proximate source is, in fact, the kind of making and originating which belongs to us as human beings and subjects. Cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, as cited by Bernard Lonergan, “The Absence of God in Modern Culture,” *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J.*, eds. William F. J. Ryan, S. J. and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S. J. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), pp. 104-105.

and conditions and experiences which belong to how, amongst us as human beings, an interaction constantly exists within the order of our human cognition (whether, for one, an order of mutual priority, or an ongoing form of interaction between our acts of sensing and our acts of understanding or, on the other hand and in addition, an order of mutual priority and an interaction which exists between our acts of knowing and our acts of willing and desiring). These all point, in their own way, to conditions which somehow need to be met and then possibly to the givenness or the verification of these conditions as, gradually, perhaps sometimes slowly or sometimes quickly, we initially move from an awareness of conditions which points to our need for certain kinds of experiences and then to an awareness which immediately reveals or which exists as these experiences. The awareness (the consciousness) exists as our experience and the result is an apprehension of rationality as an intellectual type of condition when a given truth is now known to be true (which differs from how it is thought to be true or how it is assumed to be true). An internal relation has been somehow grasped and understood as something which is more than something which could possibly be or exist because, now, it is something which is, in fact, right, true, germane, or relevant. Hence, by this means, within the contingency of our human living (within our desiring, knowing, and doing), new first principles can come to exist for us which, in their relativity, we can possibly begin to use in ways that elicit or which can lead us toward new ways of thinking and new acts of inquiry that can, in turn, reveal new determinations of meaning and being.

If we should want to speak, however, not about finite natures but first about finite essences and then about finite substances (or, in other words, finite things), and whether or not we can speak about internal relations which exist with respect to finite essences and finite substances, an affirmative answer with respect to essences follows if we move from a meaning which refers to a finite nature to a meaning which refers to a finite essence when we realize that, in its own right, an essence exists as the term of a distinct act of understanding although now as the term of a conceptualizing act of understanding. A difference in meaning exists here if we refer and attend to a real difference which exists between an act of direct understanding and a consequent act of concept formation (an intellectualizing act of conceptualization). One leads to the other: understanding to communicable concept. An act of direct understanding initially knows about a finite nature if and as it detaches a form or a meaning from what is given within a datum or data of sense. In this way, a finite nature is identified with an intelligible form (admittedly, a finite form). But when, through an act of conceptualization, a form is rejoined or it is reunited with an intellectualized material component or an intellectualized material principle (a material principle which exists as an abstracted specification of matter which would accordingly refer to a common or to a universal specification of matter: hence, we speak about common matter),⁷ instead of a finite

⁷Common matter, as a kind of summary or, more accurately, a generalization, is never directly encountered by us as human beings through any acts of sensing which might come into play for us. Common matter exists, instead, as a species of metaphysical principle as does prime matter (to cite one example among others that we can possibly refer to). In this world, we never directly experience anything which exists as prime matter since all instances of matter exist with a degree of determination or specification which precludes any possible direct relation with data or an experience of prime matter. But, by attending to what happens when our human cognition moves from acts of sensing to acts of understanding and by understanding how our acts of understanding differ from our acts of sensing, metaphysical principles can be discovered as our acts of self-understanding move from

nature we now speak about the being or the givenness of a finite essence that we can refer to, tell others about, and interrogate further by asking new questions. Within our understanding, instead of being in the presence of a finite nature, we find that we are in the presence of a finite essence, with a finitude which overlaps and which yet differs from the finitude of a finite nature. In moving toward essences, a finite nature has been transposed into a specification of conceptual being which exists whenever we should speak about the being of finite essences. In the transition which occurs, the internal relations which exist with respect to a finite nature are retained although in a new, in a larger context of meaning which has expanded as we now speak about the being of finite essences.

In moving from finite essences and the relevance of applicable internal relations, we can now move toward finite substances and the existence of real internal relations as these pertain to the existence of finite substances. In every essence, because two elements or two principles are joined together to form a unity, in the conceptualization which we find in Aristotle which talks about the formation of this unity, essences are identified as having a unity which can be best referred to as a substance. A finite essence can be identified with a finite substance. Hence, in this context, we can say with Aristotle that “*this man* [existing as a finite substance] is composed of *this body* and *this rational soul* [existing together as a finite essence], and...*this material thing* [existing as a finite substance] is composed of *this matter* and *this form* [existing together also as a finite essence].”⁸ In Aristotle's understanding of how or why individual things exist, the explanation which is offered says that form, as an active principle, is received by matter, functioning as a passive principle. Hence, the result is the being or the substance of a given thing.⁹ A substance exists as a way of speaking about things. Substances exist as

specific experiences of acts of sensing and acts of understanding toward conceptualizations which generalize what is known to exist about a common structure or form that, in general, exists within the order of our human cognition (specifying the kind of order which belongs to our human cognition and so indicating how it differs from other kinds of cognition). From this generalized order (which, for some, might not exist as more than an inner concept or word, as a datum of their inner consciousness of self, prior to any form of articulation), conclusions accordingly follow which generalize a like order which exists in whatever is known as a consequence of our interacting acts of sensing and our interacting acts of understanding. From a generalized notion which thinks about acts of sense as a genus, we move toward a generalized notion which refers to the data of sense that, in their own way, also exist as a genus. Prime matter emerges as a metaphysical principle and, similarly, when we work with generalized notions or concepts that refer to how our acts of understanding interact with our acts of sensing, we can begin to speak about the differences which exist between that which exists as particular matter which is to be correlated with individual, distinct acts of sensing and that which exists as common matter which can never be correlated with an individual, distinct act of human sensing (because its proper correlative is a distinct act of understanding).

⁸Bernard Lonergan, *The Incarnate Word*, trans. Charles C. Hefling Jr., eds Robert M. Doran and Jeremy D. Wilkins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 145.

⁹Michael Novak, “A Key to Aristotle’s ‘Substance’,” *Substances and Things: Aristotle’s Doctrine of Physical Substance in Recent Essays*, ed. M. L. O’Hara (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 188-208. Please note, to avoid confusion, that Aristotle distinguishes between a first substance and a second substance. See Aristotle, *Categories*, 1, as cited by Lonergan,

things. They exist as distinct things or as distinct essences. On the basis of these conclusions, we can conclude that we can properly speak about internal relations as these refer to finite substances. Finite substances exist as a way of speaking about finite essences and, vice versa, finite essences exist as a way of speaking about finite substances.

With a degree of contrast, Aquinas proposes a different understanding of substances because substances exist when essences are joined with acts of being or acts of existence or, to be a bit more specific when speaking about contingently existing substances, finite essences are joined with finite acts of being or finite acts of existence.¹⁰ A substance is not an essence, a *that by which it is* a *what is* or a *that which is*.¹¹ However, though we

Incarnate Word, p. 143. A first substance refers to a concretely existing thing that we can directly point to in an empirical way because it exists as a physically embodied being. It is a being that can be sensed before it can be understood. An order of constitution can be referred to: by an essence composed of matter and form and also by a contingent act of being or existence that is joined to it, a contingent thing contingently exists. As the term of an act of sensing, a first substance would exist more particularly or specifically as a body. Second substances, however, refer to what we know when we can move into a generalization, a generalization which refers to the reality of an abstraction and so the necessity of an act of understanding. If we refer to a number of concretely existing substances which all possess the same form or nature, we can speak about these substances in a way which refers to a collectivity that is not directly sensed but which is abstracted or which is understood to exist whenever we should refer to what we know through the reception of our acts of understanding. “Man” or “cow” exists thus at a further remove (as a second substance; hence, not as a body but as an immaterial kind of thing which exists as the term of an act of understanding). Within the terms of Aristotle's conceptuality, it differs from first substances which refer to these particular men or these particular cows which, through our distinct acts of sensing, we can know about in terms of their particularity and individuality.

¹⁰Lonergan, *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, p. 11. In the kind of language which Lonergan uses, it is said that finite essences as finite essences do not include their own act of being or their own act of existence, their own “to be.” If “you understand any finite essence, you do not understand being.” But, on the other hand and hypothetically speaking, if, somehow, you were to understand an infinite essence which would refer to an understanding of everything which happens to exist, then, within this context, we would have an understanding that includes everything that has to do with acts of being or acts of existence. An understanding that includes everything would exclude nothing that is understood. However, as we compare what is grasped in acts of direct understanding and what is grasped in acts of reflective understanding, it should be obvious to us that, following our acts of direct understanding or in the wake of our acts of direct understanding, a knowledge of being requires new questions and elicits new acts of understanding (existing as reflective acts of understanding) and the presence of this requirement suggests that it is easier to understand an essence than it is to understand then why, now, we can properly speak about an act of being or an act of existence. Reflective acts of understanding appear to be more rare and, in fact, they more rarely occur if they require apprehensions of evidence which might not be available and which are necessary if we are to move from anything which exists as a suggestive idea or hypothesis to that which exists as a verified truth.

¹¹Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 29, a. 4, ad 2; 3a, q. 17, a. 1, ad 7; q. 17, a. 2 & ad 4; Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 151; p. 158.

might ask if this difference in explanation effects any radical change in any conclusions which would want to speak about the reality of internal relations as these exist with respect to finite substances, in either case, an intelligible nature of some kind continues to function as a principle of explanation (even as we admit that Aquinas adds act of being or act of existence as a principle of explanation to nature as a second, distinct principle of explanation although, admittedly, it is not a principle that we are able to grasp or to explain in any kind of direct way). Whether, in fact however, we should work with Aquinas's notion of substance or with Aristotle's notion of substance, we can move from speaking about the being of finite substances to speaking about the being of finite natures and so to the pertinence of relevant internal relations which need to be differentiated and understood if we are to move toward a more sufficient knowledge that can speak about the kind of causality which specifically belongs to the intelligibility of finite natures as we encounter them or as we begin to encounter them within an order of things that we initially know through our acts of sensing before we can properly know them through our acts of understanding.

Briefly then, in conclusion, a differentiated understanding of internal relations with respect to the being of finite natures (because we have found a multitude of inner relations) – this determination points to the probability of more than one act of analogical understanding that can arise; it should allow for a plurality of analogical acts that can then point to nuances of meaning that would otherwise be missed or overlooked if, through the mediation of our desire for understanding and through possibly receiving acts of understanding, our larger objective and goal is to draw more closely and to move more fully toward the inner relations that are constitutive of how God exists as a community and how, in God, a community exists more perfectly in its oneness than any kind of community which can be said among ourselves. The greater our philosophic understanding, the greater our theological understanding, or the greater should be the extent and depth of our theological understanding. The one aids the other although, conversely, it is not to be denied that, if believed and accepted, the doctrine of the Christian Trinity with respect to the being of divine internal relations acts as its own cause and spur for us to the degree that it encourages us to move toward an understanding of internal relations as this can arise for us within our current human context, using the various acts of cognition that properly belong to us to the degree that we exist as cogitating human subjects.