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### **citation for published version (APA)**

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GOD AS FIRST KNOWN



VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

*God as First Known*

The Common Ground of Philosophy and Theology  
in Bonaventure's Thought

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan  
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,  
op gezag van de rector magnificus  
prof.dr. V. Subramaniam,  
in het openbaar te verdedigen  
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie  
van de Faculteit der Wijsbegeerte  
op woensdag 11 november 2015 om 11.45 uur  
in de aula van de universiteit,  
De Boelelaan 1105

door

SUZANNE METSELAAR

geboren te Utrecht

promotor: prof.dr. W. Goris

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## *Acknowledgments*

CONTRARY TO THE FOLKLORE that claims that writing a dissertation – especially in philosophy – is a solitary project, in which the philosopher has stoically turned away from earthly diversions and has retreated to lonely introspection and contemplation, fulfilling his challenging task solely by relying on his own resources, I have experienced that this process is rather a practice that involves and depends on continuous collaboration with others. Seeing only one's own name on the cover therefore feels a bit awkward. All those who guided and supported me in so many different ways, and who enabled me to find the time, energy, stamina, joy and courage necessary to complete this project are contributors to the present work. They deserve my utmost gratitude – thank goodness for this acknowledgement section!

In the first place, I am grateful to my promotor, Wouter Goris, for providing me with the opportunity to write my PhD-thesis at the Department of Philosophy of the VU University. His vast knowledge and erudition proved an invaluable resource for my work, and his thorough feedback contributed enormously to the quality of the thesis. I would like to thank him for his patience – especially as some major life events temporarily came between my research and me – and for allowing me to grow as a philosopher.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my reading committee members and the members of my oral defense committee for devoting their precious time to a scrupulous reading of my dissertation.

I am also grateful to many other scholars in the field of the history of philosophy. First of all, to the members of the history of philosophy section of the Department of Philosophy, who commented on the texts that I presented at research seminars. Other scholars did me that favor as well. Paul Bakker was so kind to invite me for his research group meetings to present and discuss my work. The same holds for the Dutch



Society for Medieval Philosophy, Medium Aevum, and the Gronings-Nijmeegs Colloquium. My work has benefitted enormously from the discussions with the scholars present at these meetings. The many suggestions of Guy Guldentops, in the capacity of editor of *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, greatly improved the article that became the basis of the third chapter of this dissertation.

I am especially indebted to Andreas Speer. As the director of the Thomas-Institut at the University of Cologne, he was exceptionally hospitable in welcoming me as a researcher at the start of my PhD-project. For half a year, I was immersed in the vivacious microcosm of this institute, buzzing with incredible expertise, where I was immediately taken along in all sorts of scholarly and leisurely activities. In the company of Julia Wittschier, Tobias Schmidt, Stefan Nottelmann and Sabine Folger-Fonfara, I had a wonderful time.

During my journey in medieval philosophy, I enjoyed the presence of a group of fellow travellers: Femke Kok, Sander de Boer and Han Thomas Adriaenssen. Thank you for the joyous dinners, fruitful exchanges and moral support!

Then there are the roommates and colleagues at the Department of Philosophy. Those I had the pleasure of sharing a room or a corridor with, and who all have helped to make my years as a PhD-student a great time, are Stefan Roski, Kari Marx and Hein van den Berg. Michel Heijdra was a wonderful colleague in peripatetics, and the sparkling presence of Allard den Dulk lightened up any room he happened to step into. I especially appreciated Marije Martijn's knowledgeable and empathetic support.

Gerben Groenewoud has always generously shared his passion and expertise on Bonaventure with me. Both as a student and a lecturer, I admired his (guest) lectures on medieval philosophy, especially on Augustine and Bonaventure. I would also like to thank Gerben Meynen for his support. I greatly enjoy working with him in the master programme Philosophy, Bioethics and Health.

The kind and genial Benno van Croesdijk deserves a special mention in these acknowledgments. His sharp comments and support in the process of finishing the last bits meant a lot to me – and to the quality of the dissertation.

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to and appreciation of Guy Widdershoven, the director of my current workplace: the Department of Medical Humanities of VU University Medical Center. I feel very privileged to be working under his supportive, inspiring

and edifying supervision. I am just as lucky because of my wonderful colleagues at Medical Humanities, who make working there a true joy: Yolande Voskes, Margreet Stolper, Bert Molewijk, Rouven Porz, Petra Verdonk, Eric Ettema, Rien Janssens, Laura Hartman, Minne Bakker, Janine Trimp, Elleke Landeweer, Hannah Edelbroek, and, last but certainly not least, the lovely Patricia Brinckman.

To my friends and family, thank you for your patience with me and for supporting me in so many ways: Lotte, Martine, Annewieke, Pim and Salma, Michiel and Charlotte, Ide and Pauline, Jet and Edward, Janneke and Andre. Roel and Willemijn, thanks for the many wine-suffused nights, exceptionally good food, and for your beautiful voices and minds. Two Jannekes were of special importance to me: Janneke Metselaar guided me on my way to a PhD with her wisdom based on experience. The same goes for Janneke Zinkstok, on whose good advice I can always rely.

Annemiek Recourt and Renate Schepen are dear and long-time friends. I am proud to have them standing by my side as my two *paranimfen*, such strong and bright women who have set great examples to me. Time always runs short when enjoying their company.

Without my mother, Ans, and my father, Michiel, this dissertation would not have been. For all the obvious reasons, but especially because they were always there for me when I needed them. Although to them, this was only the most natural thing to do, I certainly do not take it for granted. Sadly, I can only imagine the creative surprises my father would have thought of to celebrate my doctorate.

And then there is Job, my love. I cannot begin to express my thanks for your patience, love, kindness, and, no less, my awe for your – almost scary – brilliance, vigor and authenticity in so many aspects of life. You show me there is indeed only one real number. Finally, here's to you, Hanne. You deserve extra chocolates, ice cream and visits to the zoo (and, actually, the whole world) for being so patient with your – all too often absent-minded, but definitely loving and forever thankful – mother. To both of you: thank you for illuminating my life!



## *Introduction*

THE TRADITION OF PLATONIC THOUGHT is characterized by the identity of the principles of being and knowledge: what is first in the order of being, is also first in the order of knowledge. Whereas in Plato himself, this *absolute first* is the idea of the Good, those who follow in his footsteps have often bestowed this double priority on *divine being*. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (ca. 1217 to 15 July 1274), the Franciscan friar born as Giovanni di Fidanza, also stands in this Platonic tradition. His thirteenth-century doctrine of God as first known (*Deus primum cognitum*), the subject of the present study, criticizes any created principle that is accepted as the final foundation of knowledge in favor of divine being as first known. However, as this introduction seeks to point out, Bonaventure also *changed* the ‘beginning with the absolute’: he is the first to conceive it as *first known* in the context of a transcendental, first philosophy, in which *esse* (or *ens*) *divinum* – and its unity, truth and goodness – is presupposed to knowledge of everything else.

I will argue that this ‘transcendentalization of the absolute’ could only take place within the specific epistemic constellation of the thirteenth century. Bonaventure’s renovation of this Platonic figure of thought is related to the fact that he was also inspired by the Aristotelian tradition, in particular by the thirteenth-century project to rethink the disciplinary autonomy and systematicity of philosophy as a science next to theology. This project led to the transformation of metaphysics into transcendental thought.<sup>1</sup> It led Bonaventure to integrate a Platonic

1 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas*, Brill: Leiden – New York – Köln 1996; *idem*, “The Transformation of Metaphysics in the Middle Ages,” in: K. Emery, jr., R.L. Friedman, A. Speer (eds.), *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages: A Tribute to Stephen F. Brown*, Brill: Leiden – Boston 2011, pp. 19–40.

conception of what is first into a metaphysics that, inspired by an ontological interpretation of Aristotle's first philosophy, systematically deals with both the structure and the knowledge of being.

Notwithstanding the tension that arose from the integration of these two traditions into one system of thought, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known constitutes an important moment in the history of metaphysics: Bonaventure made divine being the foundation of both metaphysics and theology, two different disciplines with their own method, conditions and domain. With this foundation he also created a *common epistemological ground* between both disciplines.

Also in twentieth-century philosophy, the beginning with the absolute in metaphysics has not remained unnoticed. *How did God enter into philosophy?* Heidegger asks. This question, he argues, is highly relevant, as it questions a determining event in the Western metaphysical tradition: the moment at which metaphysics received a foundation and God became the ground of all things.<sup>2</sup> He recognizes this moment already in Plato's elaborations on the Good as the unconditional condition of everything. Whereas Heidegger's question refers to the entire history of philosophy, which he conceives as predominantly ontotheological from Plato onwards, the present study focuses on the entrance of God – or divine being – in the thought of Bonaventure.

Bonaventure is not the first after Plato to reflect on the idea that divine being is not only ontologically first, but also cognitively, and that this can be discovered from the structure of our knowledge. However, in Bonaventure, as mentioned before, this foundation of thought acquires a *transcendental* character, as the idea of divine being becomes *primum cognitum*. With 'transcendental', I refer to the most general and first known properties that are demonstrated of being as being, the subject of metaphysics, thus accounting for the systematic unity of this science by way of derivation of all knowledge from being as first known. When the relation of these most general properties to the divine is accounted for within the reflection of those properties itself – as is characteristic for Bonaventure's metaphysics – the absolute acquires a transcendental character in its affirmation as first known.<sup>3</sup> In Chapter 1 I will discuss

2 M. Heidegger, "Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik," in: *Identität und Differenz* (1955–1957) (ed. F.-W. von Herrmann, Gesamtausgabe 11), Klostermann: Frankfurt a. M. 2006, p. 52.

3 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, "The Transformation of Metaphysics in the Middle Ages," pp. 41–62.

at length that this transcendentalization of the cognitive priority is not unproblematic, as it seeks to merge a Platonic model with an Aristotelian model of science.

*How did God enter into philosophy?* Heidegger argues that this question *itself* is an historical event (*Ereignis*). It deconstructs traditional and familiar foundations of knowledge and being. It is this question that heralds what has been called the ‘post-metaphysical era’ (Habermas).<sup>4</sup> As I will discuss in this introduction, part of the answer to Heidegger’s question is found in what happened in the thirteenth-century thought of Bonaventure, in a time in which the traditional and familiar foundations of thought were also challenged and transformed. However, not everyone agrees that such an answer is found here. In my discussion, I will address the view of present-day scholarship that finds in Bonaventure’s work an answer to the question of how God entered into *theology* rather than into philosophy.

The transformation of philosophy in the thirteenth century is closely related to yet another question, one that is much older than Heidegger’s: *How can philosophy enter Christian thought?* In one sense, this question is opposite to the question of how God entered philosophy. In another sense, it is similar, as both questions concern the foundations of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> This question has been important since the early days of Christianity.<sup>6</sup> However, it became urgent in a new way after the reception in the Latin West, from the thirteenth century onwards, of both Aristotle’s works and the commentaries on these works by Arabic philosophers. This reception led to dissatisfaction with the discourse of Christian thought up until then, which scholars came to perceive as problematically ambiguous, eclectic, and lacking systematicity. With this question, a new need for precision, consistence and systematicity was born.<sup>7</sup>

4 Cf. J. Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken I*, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a. M. 1988.

5 O. Boulnois, “Heidegger, l’ontothéologie et les structures médiévales de la métaphysique,” in: C. Esposito, P. Porro (eds.), *Heidegger e i medievali*, Brepols: Turnhout 2001, pp. 379–406.

6 As Theo Kobusch points out in *Christliche Philosophie*, there is a *philosophia christiana* since the first church fathers. This philosophy concentrates on self-reflection, which is to lead to knowledge of God eventually. Cf. Th. Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie: die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 2006.

7 J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 20.

Wolfgang Kluxen has described this new approach to metaphysics in the thirteenth century as a process of rationalisation that pursued a conclusive scientific interpretation of the world, realising the rational possibilities that were already present in the Aristotelian tradition. In this pursuit, the aim of medieval *theologi* was to enrich their theological thought with a Christian type of scientific intellectuality. In order to retain the necessity of faith and theology, however, they also criticized the ambitions of this science.<sup>8</sup> This *renovatio* of method in the thirteenth century resulted in a new and specifically *medieval* metaphysics, a process that has been called ‘der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik’.<sup>9</sup> Through its critical reception in later centuries, this renewed metaphysics has exerted a major influence on the metaphysics of the modern era.

Jan A. Aertsen has further specified this second beginning of metaphysics by claiming that the confrontation with Aristotelian philosophy led to the reflection on the foundations of both being and thought, and on the proper character of philosophy in its relation to theology, and, in this way, to the search for a philosophical legitimation of knowledge on the basis of *first principles*. He therefore describes medieval philosophy as *transcendental thought*.<sup>10</sup> Aertsen argues that the *ontological interpretation* of Aristotle’s first philosophy as the science of being *qua* being in particular was the condition for a further transformation – which he calls the ‘transcendentalization’ – of medieval metaphysics.<sup>11</sup> This ontological interpretation of metaphysics brought about the impetus

8 W. Kluxen, “Der Begriff der Wissenschaft,” in: P. Weimar (ed.), *Die Renaissance der Wissenschaften im 12. Jahrhundert*, Artemis: Zürich 1981, pp. 273–293.

9 L. Honnefelder, “Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansätze und Folgen der Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik im 13./14. Jahrhundert.” in: J.P. Beckmann, L. Honnefelder, G. Schrimpf, G. Wieland (eds.), *Philosophie im Mittelalter. Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen*, Meiner: Hamburg 1987, pp. 165–186. However, Jan Aertsen critically notes: ‘Although generally I am not inclined to minimize the importance of medieval philosophy, I wonder whether the phrase “the second beginning of metaphysics” is an appropriate expression for the development of the discipline in the Middle Ages. If there is a “second beginning”, there are good reasons for claiming that the main work of Arabic metaphysics, Avicenna’s *De philosophia prima*, rather than the Latin philosophy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries deserves this place in the genealogy of Western metaphysics.’ Cf. J.A. Aertsen, “The Transformation of Metaphysics in the Middle Ages.” pp. 19–40. Of course, there are good reasons for claiming that the work of Arabic metaphysics, such as that of Avicenna, also deserves a place in ‘medieval philosophy’.

10 J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 59.

11 Jan Aertsen refers to the classic study of A. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik? Die Diskussion über den Gegenstand der Metaphysik im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, Peeters:

to consider philosophy as a scientific discipline with its own system and domain, which could exist more or less independently from theology.<sup>12</sup>

The impetus and transcendentalization arising from the (re)discovery of Aristotle's works by the Latin West did not imply, however, that the approach to God, man and creation became predominantly Aristotelian. In particular, the *theologi* of the Augustinian school, such as the Franciscans, tried, on the basis of this new approach to philosophy, to integrate more conservative, Augustinian and Neoplatonic ideas into new scholastic systems of thought. Epistemologically this meant that they embraced the challenge to merge traditional and contemporary elements into a single and coherent doctrine of the conditions and principles of natural knowledge – by which these scholars proved themselves to be philosophers.

Bonaventure is not the first Franciscan who devoted himself to this task. He is however, the first to argue that natural knowledge of everything that exists presupposes divine being as first known, either in terms of being (*esse/ens divinum, primum esse, ens absolutum*), or in terms of truth (*veritas aeterna*). In doing so, he criticizes any *created* first principle that is accepted as the final foundation on which knowledge of everything else rests, in favor of a first philosophy in which all knowledge rests on a preliminary understanding of *divine being*. This preliminary understanding of divine being does not constitute a full comprehension of divine being: it is incomplete, as a full understanding of God exceeds the limits of all earthly knowledge and the capacities of the human mind *in via*. In this sense, Bonaventure opposes the Aristotelianism of his time insofar as Aristotle was held to make the foundations of philosophy *immanent* to the system of

Louvain 1998<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, cf. O. Boulnois, "Quand commence l'ontothéologie? Aristote, Thomas d'Aquin et Duns Scot," in: *Revue thomiste* 95 (1995), pp. 85–108. Carlos Steel holds that ethics is first philosophy in Plato, but loses this position from Aristotle onwards, in favor of ontology, cf. C. Steel, "The greatest thing to learn is the good. On the claims of ethics and metaphysics to be the first philosophy," in: W. Goris (ed.), *Die Metaphysik und das Gute: Aufsätze zu ihrem Verhältnis in Antike und Mittelalter: Jan A. Aertsen zu Ehren*. Peeters: Louvain 1999, pp. 1–25.

<sup>12</sup> As I stressed in note 7, already the early church fathers can be argued to be concerned with a Christian philosophy, as Theo Kobusch does. The novelty of the philosophical ambitions of theologians in the thirteenth century is however that, rather than on philosophy as self-reflection, they focused on philosophy as a science that is concerned with priority relations and first principles, in the domain of both knowledge and being. The tension, or rather: integration, of both approaches to philosophy can be argued to be expressed in what I call Bonaventure's 'transformation texts' in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.



philosophy itself and hence fully accessible to natural reason. This Aristotelianism brought about a shift of focus from an investigation of creation in order to rise above it to an ontology that focuses on being *qua* being. But although Bonaventure objects to this shift of focus, his work incorporates elements of this new ontology as well, a tension that asks for further investigation.

Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known is an important moment within the second beginning of metaphysics in the thirteenth century, and understanding it is meaningful for our understanding of the journey of 'the beginning with the absolute' throughout the history of metaphysics. It is all the more meaningful because, probably in relation to this second beginning, Bonaventure presents a *twofold account* of God as first known: it appears in both his philosophy and his theology. In fact, the figure of God as first known comes to determine the scope of both metaphysics and theology, albeit in a different way. This differentiation creates a 'watershed' between the domain of metaphysics and theology. In this way, metaphysics gains autonomy as a discipline, although it remains preparatory to theology and aware of its own limitations. At the same time, it provides metaphysics and theology with a common epistemology that is based on *Deus primum cognitum*. This particular innovation by Bonaventure influenced the doctrine of *Deus primum cognitum* in scholars after him, such as Henry of Ghent and Richard Conington.<sup>13</sup>

### The cognitive priority of the divine before Bonaventure

The idea that the Good, or divine being, is not only ontologically first, but also epistemologically is a philosophical idea with a long tradition. Here, I will address some transfigurations of that idea in the tradition before Bonaventure. It is found in Plato, as I have already indicated, but also in Augustine and Anselm. All three are important and well-respected sources for Bonaventure. However, although they share a common characteristic that defines the tradition before Bonaventure

13 Cf. W. Goris, *Absolute Beginners. Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*, Brill: Leiden – Boston 2007, pp. 3–33; W. Goris, "Two-Staged Doctrines of God as First Known and the Transformation of the Concept of Reality in Bonaventure and Henry of Ghent," in: *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (1) (2011), pp. 77–97.

– i.e. the centrality of the cognitive priority of divine being or the Good – none of them articulates the cognitive priority of God explicitly within the systematic context of a first philosophy, which is distinct from theology. This is only to be expected, because the possibility of the notion of ‘God as first known’ requires an epistemological reconfiguration that only took place around the beginning of the thirteenth century, as will be explained below.

Plato holds that the idea of the Good, which is beyond being, is the cause not only of all beings, but also of their intelligibility. It is the highest idea, as it surpasses the other ideas in dignity and power.<sup>14</sup> The Good is the ultimate secret of being, Adriaan Peperzak explains in *Platonic Transformations*; it cannot be captured in language, objectified by thought, or grasped by our intellectual capacities. In the *Politeia*, Socrates therefore stresses that it is not right to speak about it as if you know it, as it is furthest away from our comprehension, and only approachable through metaphor, comparing it for example with the sun.<sup>15</sup> Paradoxically, however, Plato described knowledge of the Good as the greatest doctrine (*megiston mathema*), with which the rulers of Plato’s ideal state should be acquainted. He did so because he considered the Good to be not only the ultimate goal of all our (cognitive) endeavors, but also the foundation of all our knowledge:<sup>16</sup> the good allows us to understand things with the mind in the way the sun allows us to see things with our eyes.<sup>17</sup> One requires knowledge of the Good itself, otherwise one is left with opinions about the Good, which are considered to be misleading.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the goal of studying the empirical world is to rise above it, and to contemplate the world of forms.

14 Plato, *Politeia* 508c–509a, Cf. D. Runia, “‘Beyond beingness in dignity and power.’ Plato’s Doctrine of the Good,” in: M. Pickavé, *Die Logik des Transzendentalen, Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag*, De Gruyter: Berlin 2003, pp. 487–500, p. 491.

15 Plato, *Politeia* 506c, D. Runia, “‘Beyond beingness in dignity and power.’ Plato’s Doctrine of the Good,” p. 489.

16 A.Th. Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations, with and after Hegel, Heidegger, and Levinas*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 1997, p. 14.; H.-G. Gadamer, “Die Idee des Guten zwischen Platon und Aristoteles,” in: D.A. Hyland (ed.), *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues*, State University of New York: Albany (NY) 1995, pp. 188–195.

17 Plato, *Politeia* 507d, 508d.

18 *Ibid.*, 506c.

In order to grasp what the Good is, Plato developed a scientific method called dialectics, which is primarily discussed in the *Politeia*.<sup>19</sup> In fact, this scientific method is the model of a science that precedes all others, and to which all others should lead. To Plato, dialectics is the highest of studies.<sup>20</sup> This method – or science – aims to rise, by means of ongoing analysis, from the relative to the absolute, from the phenomenon to the idea, and from the particular and concrete to the most universal and abstract. As will be addressed below, in Bonaventure’s metaphysics a similar approach to philosophy competes with an Aristotelian model of science, in which a plurality of sciences are recognized, which all have disciplinary autonomy and a proper subject. Among those sciences, there is first philosophy, which investigates being *as such*.

What Plato regarded to be the main project of philosophy is evocatively presented by the allegory of the cave, found in the *Politeia*.<sup>21</sup> The cave symbolizes the ‘normal’ state of people in their everyday lives. They see only shadows of reality, and their thoughts are only shadows of the truth. In contrast, through a perilous journey, the wise man finds a way out of this cave, the realm of mere appearances. He now discovers that, ultimately, there would be no light, reason, understanding, nor any thing at all, without the sun, which symbolizes the idea of the Good. Therefore, Plato saw the Idea of the Good as the most important object of learning, and he claimed that it should be the final aim of all our intellectual endeavors.<sup>22</sup> It is also the object of our deepest desire: *eros*.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, in Plato, as a starting point, the absolute guides our thought in a circular movement back to itself as the idea(1) that is most worthy to attain.<sup>24</sup> This is remarkable: something is absolutely first as a principle of all knowledge but is only known at the absolute end of our quest for knowledge.

In a sense, Aristotle prolongs the Platonic project. For Aristotle, that which is better known also forms the point of departure for our intellect,

19 *Ibid.*, 532b

20 *Ibid.*, 534e.

21 *Ibid.*, 514a–517a.

22 *Ibid.*, 505a–519c.

23 Plato, *Symposium* 199c5–212c. Cf. C. Steel, “L’Un et le Bien. Les raisons d’une identification dans la tradition platonicienne,” in: *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 73 (1989), pp. 69–85.

24 A. Th. Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations*, p. 14.

which is ultimately to arrive at an understanding of things that are better known in themselves. Yet in another sense, he opposes to it. He does so by rejecting Plato's *identification* of the foundation of being and that of knowledge by *differentiating* between what is better known in itself (either first causes, the most general and abstract, or the immaterial) and what is better known to us (being as such, singular concrete being, the material). Furthermore, as an absolute, unquestionable beginning (*anhypotheton*), he did not put forward the Good, as Plato did, but the principle of non-contradiction. The highest being that is recognized by Aristotle is merely the end point of all cognition.<sup>25</sup>

Despite Aristotle's criticism, the Platonic beginning with the absolute does not disappear. Rather, the idea is *christianized*, particularly in Augustine (354–430 AD). Augustine stands in a Platonic tradition by arguing that the eternal forms are the standards against which the truth of creatures and their acts can be judged. However, Augustine places the ideas in God's mind, which means we can only judge correctly if we have preliminary knowledge of God. Augustine articulates this in his theory of divine illumination. It is founded on an understanding of the human mind as an *imago Dei*, on the basis of which it is able to take recourse to the divine ideas even in natural cognition, through an 'inner light of truth'.<sup>26</sup>

On the basis of Augustine's view that the divine exemplars are truth itself, that created beings are true insofar as they participate in divine truth, and that we can learn about creatures on the basis of this divine truth, knowledge of God can be argued to be prior to knowledge of everything else in Augustine. This position becomes particularly clear in Augustine's short treatise *De Magistro*. Here, Augustine argues that when we learn something, this is because we are taught from within. Fellow human teachers can only point out the right direction – which is inwards and upwards rather than outwards – but we cannot truly learn from them.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, the soul should revert its gaze from the outside world to the inside world of the mind, and by means of introspection it might be

25 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 71b32; *Prior Analytics* 68b35–7; *Physics* A.1, 184a16–20; *Metaphysics* Z.3, 1029b3–12; *Topics* Z.4, 141b2–142a12.

26 Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, q. 46, 'De ideis' (ed. A. Mutzenbecher, Brepols: Turnhout 1975); Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIV, c. 15, n. 21. (eds. W.J. Mountain, F. Glorie, Brepols: Turnhout 1968).

27 Augustine, *De Magistro*, c. 11, n. 38, in: *Contra academicos. De beata vita. De ordine. De magistro. De libero arbitrio* (eds. W.M. Green, K. Daur, Brepols: Turnhout 1970).

able to turn its gaze upwards, as Augustine explained in *De vera religione*. This movement *extra-intra-ultra* forms the fundamental structure of the soul's trajectory as described in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.

In Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033–1109), we also find a strong affinity with the Platonic idea of the Good in the *Politeia*. Similar to Plato's Good, the God of the *Proslogion* is before, outside of, and beyond (*ante et ultra*) all beings.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Augustine describes the trajectory of thought, and Pseudo-Dionysius its final state, Anselm thematizes the beginning: the nature of the idea of God as we have it in our earthly state.

In the *Proslogion*, Anselm's primary goal is to prove God's existence. To this end, he uses the famous argument starting with the description of God as something above which nothing greater can be thought. He concludes his argument with a *reductio ad absurdum*: if that above which nothing greater can be thought would only exist in the mind, it would not be that above which nothing greater can be thought – for that would be something that exists *both* in the mind and in reality.<sup>29</sup> However, towards the end of the *Proslogion*, there is a prominent change of discourse: rather than describing God as something above which nothing greater can be thought, Anselm argues that the light of God is 'too much for me' (*nimia mihi*) and therefore 'inaccessible'.<sup>30</sup> As Anselm concludes: 'Thus, Lord, not only are you that than which one can think nothing greater, but you are something greater than can be thought.'<sup>31</sup> With this conclusion, Anselm qualifies his earlier argumentation, and affirms it at the same time: if God were not great enough to exceed all that can be in human thought, man would still be able to think

28 Anselm, *Proslogion*, c. XX, (ed. F. S. Schmitt, in: *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia*, vol.1, Thomas Nelson: Edinburgh 1946, pp.93–122), p.115: 'Tu es ante et ultra omnia.'

29 *Ibid.*, c. III, pp. 102–103: 'quare si id quo maius nequit cogitari potest cogitari non esse id ipsum quo maius cogitari nequit non est id quo maius cogitari nequit quod convenire non potest. sic ergo vere est aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest ut nec cogitari possit non esse et hoc es tu Domine Deus noster. sic ergo vere es Domine Deus meus ut nec cogitari possis non esse.'

30 *Ibid.*, c. XVI, pp. 112: 'vere ideo hanc non video quia nimia mihi est et tamen quidquid video per illam video sicut infirmus oculus quod videt per lucem solis videt quam in ipso sole nequit aspicere.'

31 *Ibid.*, c. XV, p. 112: 'ergo Domine non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit sed es quiddam maius quam cogitari possit.'

such a reality.<sup>32</sup> As Peperzak rightly concludes: ‘in Anselm, thought can think something beyond all that enters into it. It can think beyond what it thinks, beyond all beings and all ideas.’<sup>33</sup> In Anselm, the idea of God is the most eminent of ideas, and goes beyond anything that can be thought. Similarly, Bonaventure stresses in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* that divine being as pure actuality is the first thing that falls into the intellect, and that nothing greater can be thought.<sup>34, 35</sup> In the final chapter of the same treatise, however, he maintains that an understanding of the divine exceeds the confines of the human intellect.

Plato, Augustine, Anselm. Three ‘exhibits’ taken from the history of philosophy in order to demonstrate the central position of the idea of the absolute in epistemologies in and after Plato. Others could be discussed as well, such as Pseudo-Dionysius (5th–6th century AD), another important predecessor of Bonaventure. Although he has a very different cosmology and theology, he also argues that God – not so much the highest being, but rather beyond all being – is not only the cause of everything; he is also the cause of all *knowledge* that beings might possess.<sup>36</sup> Dionysius’s negative theology influenced Bonaventure. Although Dionysius distinguishes multiple ways to know God and

32 *Ibid.*, c. XX, p. 115: ‘Sic enim quodam modo es ultra illa. an etiam quia illa cogitari possunt habere finem, tu vero nequaquam?’

33 A.Th. Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations*, p. 86.

34 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium V.3* (ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, in: *Opera omnia*, Quarrachi 1891 vol. V, 308): ‘(...) esse nominat ipsum purum actum entis: esse igitur est quod primo cadit in intellectu, et illud esse est quod est purus actus. (...) Quia enim perfectissimum, nihil potest cogitari ultra ipsum melius, nobilius nec dignius, ac per hoc nihil maius; et omne tale est immensum.’

35 All references to the works of Bonaventure will be to the *Opera omnia* edition published by the Collegium S. Bonaventurae, Quarrachi 1891. The first number refers to the volume, the second number to the page. In the main text of my dissertation, Bonaventure’s texts are presented in English. I broadly followed the following translations. When I felt this was necessary, I made small amendments. For Bonaventure’s *In quator libros Sententiarum*, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti* and *Christus unus omnium Magister*, I primarily relied on the 2006–7 English translation of the 1938 Quaracchi Edition of Bonaventure’s work by the Franciscan Archive. For *De mysterio Trinitatis*, I relied on the translation by Emma Th. Healy (1955). For *De Scientia Christi*, I mainly based myself on Andreas Speer’s translation in German from 1992. I used Dominic Monti’s translation of the *Breviloquium* (2005), and Zachary Hayes’s translation of *De reductione artium ad theologiam* (1996). In the case of the *Collations in Hexaemeron*, I used the translation of W. Nyssen (1998).

36 Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De Divinis nominibus*, VII.2 (ed. B.R. Suchla, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum I.*, De Gruyter: Berlin – New York 1990).

speak about God, on closer inspection, he holds none of those ways to be accurate. Finally, all are to be refuted. It is only in a state of mystical excess that God is truly known. The ‘knowledge’, if that term applies, that the soul acquires of God in that state cannot be spoken about adequately. This corresponds the final stage, the ‘seventh day’, of the soul’s itinerary as described in Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, where the soul is also described to be in a state of mystical excess, and to experience God beyond the discursive.<sup>37</sup>

However, although each of these thinkers has his own method and systematicity in arguing for the cognitive priority of divine being, in none of them do we come across a systematic organization of metaphysics as first philosophy, apart from theology, in which divine being as first known has a central position. This first occurs in Bonaventure. The next section will discuss the way in which Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known changed the Platonic tradition of the beginning with the absolute by transcendentalizing the cognitive priority of divine being. The question remains whether, the other way around, transcendental thought *itself* changed as well when God became first known.

### Bonaventure’s transcendentalization of God’s cognitive priority

The inquiry into a systematic beginning of knowledge came about through the reception of Aristotle’s philosophy of science and metaphysics. Aristotle argues that first philosophy should deal with the most fundamental principles of reasoning, and that the ultimate foundation is a self-evident proposition, an *anhypotheton* underlying every demonstration: the principle of non-contradiction. In his *Metaphysics*, Avicenna supplements Aristotle’s first principle, which belongs to the order of propositions, with a plurality of concepts belonging to the order of definition. Concepts such as ‘being’, ‘thing’ and ‘necessary’ are not

37 Here, Bonaventure even quotes Dionysius: *Itinerarium* VII.5 (V 309): ‘...dicendo cum Dionysio ad Deum Trinitatem: “Trinitas superessentialis et superdeus et superoptime Christianorum inspector theosophiae, dirige nos in mysticorum eloquiorum superincognitum et superlucentem et sublimissimum verticem; ubi nova et absoluta et inconvertibilia theologiae mysteria secundum superlucentem absconduntur occulte docentis silentii caliginem in obscurissimo, quod est supermanifestissimum, supersplendentem, et in qua omne relucet, et invisibilium superbonorum splendoribus superimptentem invisibiles intellectus.’

reducible to more elementary concepts; rather, they are first impressed onto the soul.<sup>38</sup> Such first concepts, however, are not just formal principles of knowledge, such as the principle of non-contradiction; they constitute the systematic beginning of knowledge in the sense that all other knowledge depends on them *qua content*. Conversely, knowledge of anything else implicitly and indistinctly contains knowledge of these first concepts. In this way, first concepts determine the scope of natural knowledge, and they can be discovered by means of the analysis or resolution (*resolutio*) of any given thing.

Let me give a preliminary explication of what I mean by resolution. A resolution is a regressive process of working back from what is *initially* taken as given to the mind, to what is more fundamental in the order of knowledge, and on which the knowledge of this initial thing ultimately depends.<sup>39</sup> This procedure presupposes the classical distinction of what is prior and most evident *in itself* and what is prior in relation *to us*, as we are more familiar with it.<sup>40</sup> In the second chapter of this dissertation, the concept of resolution will be studied at length.

In the thirteenth century, theologians of the Latin West elaborated on the work done by Arabic philosophers. They dealt with the question of the *primum cognitum* in various ways. For Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, being is known first, whereas for Berthold of Moosburg it is the good. Guibert of Tournai, Bonaventure and Henry of Ghent, on the other hand, defended the proposition that divine being is first known.<sup>41</sup>

Thomas Aquinas picked up Avicenna's views on first concepts, as we

38 Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina* I.5 (ed. S. van Riet, Peeters: Louvain – Leiden 1977, 31–32): 'Dicemus igitur quod res et ens et necesse talia sunt quod statim imprimuntur in anima prima impressione, quae non acquiritur ex aliis notioribus se.'

39 This is a paraphrase of Michael Beaney's preliminary definition of 'analysis' in his elaborate lemma on this subject in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. He argues here that 'in its broadest sense, it might be defined as a process of isolating or working back to what is more fundamental by means of which something, initially taken as given, can be explained or reconstructed.' This is a regressive conception of analysis, which heavily influenced medieval conceptions of analysis or *resolutio*. Cf. M. Beaney, "Analysis", in: E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/analysis/>>.

40 Cf. Aristotle, *An.post.* A 2, 71b 33–72; Cf. S. Mansion, "Plus Connu En Soi', 'Plus Connu Pour Nous': Une Distinction épistémologique Importante Chez Aristote," in: *Pensamiento* 35 (1979), pp. 161–170.

41 W. Goris, "Das Gute als Ersterkanntes bei Berthold von Moosburg", in: *Die*



see, for instance, in his treatment of the transcendentals as first known, in *De Veritate* I.1. Thomas Aquinas identified the *primum cognitum* with the *proprium obiectum* of the intellect, i.e. the object that determines the scope within which the intellect is able to acquire knowledge. As a consequence, a single, preferred *primum* replaced the plurality of Avicenna's 'first impressions': the concept of being.<sup>42</sup> Other primordial concepts were attributed to being as first known as its – transcendental – conditions (*conditiones entis*), such as 'one', 'true' and 'good'. As such, the reflection on the first known became a central part of the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals. In contrast to Bonaventure, who argued that God as a special being is first known, Thomas Aquinas argued that the first thing known is what is most general, applying the method of conceptual analysis proceeding from the particular to the most general, which resulted in being in general (*ens*) as the *prima conceptio intellectus*.<sup>43</sup>

The first formulation of the doctrine of God as first known is found in the work of the Franciscan theologian Guibert of Tournai (1200–1284). In the *Rudimentum doctrinae*, Guibert of Tournai argues that 'everything defective that is known, is known by that which, without any defect itself, is known first, although it was not noticed.'<sup>44</sup> Hence, Guibert points out an absolute being without defects, i.e. divine being, that is known prior to everything else. We thus find the first contours of God as first known in Guibert, although Guibert did not seek to turn metaphysics into a science based on divine being as first known in the way Bonaventure did. Rather, Guibert awarded this priority

*Metaphysik und das Gute. Aufsätze zu ihrem Verhältnis in Antike und Mittelalter* Jan A. Aertsen zu Ehren, Peeters: Leuven 1999, pp. 139–140.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. J. A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas*; W. Goris, "Die Anfänge der Auseinandersetzung um das Ersterkannte im 13. Jahrhundert: Guibert von Tournai, Bonaventura und Thomas von Aquin," in: *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 10 (1999): pp. 355–369.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate* 6.1 and 6.4 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 50, Rome 1992, pp. 149ff., 170); *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate* 1.1 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera Omnia*, vol. XII/1, Rome 1970), pp. 3–8).

<sup>44</sup> Guibert of Tournai, *Rudimentum doctrinae* I, tract. III, cap. 2 (eds. C. Bérubé, S. Gieben, in: "Guibert de Tournai et Robert Grosseteste sources inconnues de la doctrine de l'illumination, suivi de l'édition critique de trois chapitres du Rudimentum doctrinae de Guibert de Tournai," in: J. G. Bougerol (ed.), *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, vol. II (Collegio S. Bonaventura: Grottaferrata 1974), p. 649.

to God within the realm of theology, which for him encompasses the consideration of all being and knowledge.

Guibert furthermore related God as first known to the immediate reception of knowledge through divine illumination. This was an expression of another way in which Avicenna influenced the Latin West, and what has become known as *Augustinisme avicennisant*, a term coined by Gilson. In this line of thought, Augustine's and Avicenna's thought were integrated into a doctrine of knowledge and cognition that identifies the Avicennian notion of a separate agent intellect with Augustine's God as the illuminator of the soul.<sup>45</sup> Bonaventure, however, rejects a special, immediate illumination on the level of natural cognition. Instead, he recognizes a created light and an individual active capacity of the intellect, which however requires the cooperation of the divine light. Furthermore, he stresses that it is only through the analysis of what is better known to us, that an understanding of divine being is revealed as presupposed to knowledge of everything else. This analysis of divine being as first known already occurs in the realm of natural knowledge *cq.* metaphysics.

Thus, to Bonaventure, what is first by nature is identical to what is actually first known to us. At first, he argues, we are blinded by God's brightness and much too occupied with the created world to recognize this *primum*. We only come to realize that the first cause of things is also first in the order of knowledge immediately after an analysis of what we are first aware of; thus the *intellectus plene resolvens* becomes aware of God as first known. As such, Bonaventure returns to a Platonic conception of what is first, but also retains some of Aristotle's qualification of this conception.

In general, Bonaventure's *metaphysica reducens* argues that nature cannot be explained by means of itself, but leads beyond itself to God. Therefore, the metaphysician should focus on reducing all creatures to their first principle as exemplary cause, both in the order of being and in the order of knowledge. Bonaventure's *metaphysica reducens* is clearly reflected in his adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals. The transcendentals became a topic of investigation when medieval authors, in their reaction to Aristotle's 'first philosophy', came to understand metaphysics as a transcendental science, *i.e.* as a science that

45 S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, Brill: Leiden – Boston – Köln 2001, vol. I, p. 2; E. Gilson, *Les sources greco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant*, Vrin: Paris 1986.

systematically deals with the structure of being and thought. Such a science could be part of a Christian worldview, and could complement an already existing theology based on revelation.<sup>46</sup>

Bonaventure characterizes the transcendentals as the ‘noblest and most general’ conditions of being. Far less than his influential contemporary Thomas Aquinas, does he focus on the generality of the transcendentals. Bonaventure holds that the transcendentals are *epistemological firsts* not because they are most general, as they apply to being as such, but because they apply to *divine* being *par excellence*. This means that creation, in which all things refer to divine being, unity, truth and goodness insofar they are, and are one, true and good themselves, is only understood on the basis of a preliminary understanding of exactly these terms as they apply to God. A preliminary understanding of divine being must be present in every soul and every intellect as the condition of all knowledge. At this point, Bonaventure’s doctrine of the transcendentals merges with his doctrine of God as first known – a process in which both were transformed.

Bonaventure thus changed the beginning with the absolute by transcendentalizing the cognitive priority of God: an understanding of divine being (and unity, truth and goodness) became epistemologically first in a first philosophy that systematically deals with the structure of being and thought. This transcendentalization was only possible in the context of the developments relating to ‘the second beginning of metaphysics’ in the thirteenth century, in which first philosophy was reconsidered on the basis of the reception of Aristotle and his Arab commentators. Seen the other way around, by changing the ontological interpretation of metaphysics – which led to the articulation of the doctrine of the transcendentals – by shifting its focus (back) to the way in which creation refers to the divine, Bonaventure changed the transcendental thought of his time as well.

46 Cf. L. Honnefelder, “Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansätze und Folgen der Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik im 13./14. Jahrhundert,” pp. 165–186; J. A. Aertsen, “Metaphysics as a Transcendental Science”, in: C. Esposito, P. Porro (eds.), *Metaphysica, sapientia, scientia divina. Soggetto e statuto della filosofia prima nel Medioevo*. Brepols: Turnhout 2005, pp. 377–390.

## Scholarly literature on Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known: an overview

As I have argued in the above, Bonaventure's accounts of *Deus primum cognitum* represent the transcendentalization of God's cognitive priority. It is within the context of the Platonic transformations that were addressed in the previous section that the analysis of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known presented in this thesis should be understood. This analysis will reveal that this transcendentalization of the cognitive priority of God takes place at *two levels*: the philosophical and the theological. This provides *Deus primum cognitum* with *double structure*. However, not everyone acknowledges this pivotal moment and its double structure in Bonaventure. Some even deny it.

For example, in a 2001 work that received considerable attention, *Saint Bonaventure et l'entrée de Dieu en théologie*,<sup>47</sup> Emmanuel Falque holds that it is not so much the question of how God entered into *philosophy* – Heidegger's question – that is relevant. Rather, he argues, it is the question of how God enters into *theology* that is important. He locates this entrance of God in Bonaventure's systematic approach to theology. Falque argues that Bonaventure's theology is not only the primary place in which God enters human thought, but that it presents 'la seule entrée possible'.<sup>48</sup> Falque regards Bonaventure's *Breviloquium* (1257), a condensed *Summa* that Bonaventure wrote for his students to guide them in their study of the Scriptures, as the prime exhibit to defend his thesis. In the *Breviloquium*, God, or more precisely, the trinity, becomes the a priori of theology.<sup>49</sup> On the basis of this a priori follows a thorough description of the realm of creation, Falque maintains.<sup>50</sup>

Falque's proposition is however, dubious, as the entrance of God in Bonaventure's thought does not solely take place in theology: Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known clearly articulates that all *natural* knowledge is founded on preliminary knowledge of God. As such, God

47 E. Falque, *Saint Bonaventure et l'entrée de Dieu en théologie*, Vrin: Paris, 2001.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 36: "L'a priori trinitaire bonaventurien doit donc s'entendre d'abord dans un sens transcendantal comme "une unité qui précède toutes les données des intuitions et par rapport à laquelle toute représentation d'objet est simplement possible."

50 For instance, *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39: "La sainte Écriture décrit ainsi tout l'univers (*sic describit totem universum*)" (...) précisément la théologie chez Bonaventure hérite de sa méthode à partir de l'Écriture, au moins dans le *Breviloquium*."

not only enters theology, but is received as the a priori of philosophy as well.

A second challenging reception of medieval transcendental thought is provided by Dominique Demange in *Jean Duns Scot. La théorie du savoir*.<sup>51</sup> Demange describes how Scotus distinguishes between a theory of knowledge (in the sense of a theory of the object), which is concerned with how being is thought and with univocal being as the first object of the intellect, and metaphysics, which deals with real being and representation. Demange deems this distinction in Scotus new and significant for the history of metaphysics: this intervention of a distinct theory of knowledge that founds metaphysics marks the transition from an ancient to a new metaphysics. Whereas this theory of knowledge (described as ‘ontology’ by Demange) is concerned with the conditions of intelligibility, metaphysics is concerned with actual being.<sup>52</sup> Thus, here we encounter yet another conception of ontology: rather than a proper science of being *qua* being, with its own system-immanent principles and conditions, it is an underlying conditional framework that determines metaphysics as a science of the real.

By distinguishing and describing these domains of knowledge, Demange seeks to identify a theory of knowledge that is specific to Scotus, and which constitutes a meaningful moment in the history of metaphysics.<sup>53</sup> What I would like to demonstrate by describing the

51 D. Demange, *Jean Duns Scot. La théorie du savoir*, Vrin: Paris 2007.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 17: ‘À l’intérieur de l’histoire de la métaphysique, ‘le moment’ Duns Scot constitue une phase très particulière ou l’ancienne métaphysique aristotélicienne, refondée par l’univocité de l’étant, est néanmoins distincte d’une théorie de l’être possible qui, lorsqu’elle deviendra ‘ontologie’, réintègrera alors le (nouveau) concept de la métaphysique comme l’une de ses parties. Ce qui revient à dire, en d’autres termes, que la transition entre l’ancienne métaphysique et la nouvelle se fait par l’intervention de la théorie de l’objet, c’est-à-dire de la théorie de la connaissance, qui chez Duns Scot, en particulier par l’action de la théologie, marque son autonomie sur la métaphysique (...) la métaphysique est pour Duns Scot une science du réel et non de la représentation (...) Ainsi définie, elle a une place éminente dans la théorie de la connaissance abstraitive; mais elle ne répond en rien à la question de l’objet premier de l’intellect, c’est-à-dire à la question des conditions de l’intelligibilité en général. (...) Duns Scot finira donc par reconnaître formellement cette dissociation entre théories de l’objet (‘ontologie’) et métaphysique: ‘l’étant, comme premier concept de la métaphysique, est désormais distingué de l’étant comme objet premier de l’intellect, à savoir l’étant au sens de la totalité du pensable, c’est-à-dire du logiquement possible.’

53 *Ibid.*, p. 18: ‘Délimiter précisément les “champs” de savoir’, pour identifier ensuite

differentiations of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known is similar to – and inspired by – Demange's aim: specific to Bonaventure is that the figure of God as first known provides the foundation on the basis of which both theology and metaphysics are possible and by which their distinction can be understood. Where Demange uses epistemology (or 'ontology' as he calls it) to refute the primacy of metaphysics in Scotus, I seek to use Bonaventure's epistemology to refute the monopoly of theology in his thought. As I have argued, this dissociation of metaphysics and theology is a significant moment within the Platonic tradition of beginning with the absolute.

Other scholarly literature has paid specific attention to Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known. Above all, the works of Andreas Speer, Jan Aertsen, Steven Marrone, Wouter Goris, Timothy Noone, and Camille Bérubé are important contemporary sources that substantially contribute to the understanding of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known. Their works all are relevant for the present study, and I will refer to them abundantly.

Andreas Speer established a large corpus of studies on Bonaventure's metaphysics. Speer focuses on the status of philosophy in relation to theology in Bonaventure's work, primarily by investigating the extent to which philosophical knowledge can be certain knowledge as well as the way in which it relates to wisdom.<sup>54</sup> Together with Jan Aertsen, Speer provided a first exploration of Bonaventure's adaptation of the doctrine

dans les textes les articulations, les points de passage que Duns Scot ménage entre les différents domaines épistémiques, pour finalement – a travers les chemins donnés par Scot lui-même – accéder à une vue structurée de la façon dont les sciences se rapportent les unes aux autres et de la façon dont elles se rapportent à la théorie scotienne du savoir, tel est l'objet de la présente étude.'

54 Some important publications are: A. Speer, *Triplex veritas. Wahrheitsverständnis und philosophische Denkform Bonaventuras*, Dietrich Köhler Verlag: Werl 1987; *idem*, "Metaphysica reducens: Metaphysik als erste Wissenschaft im Verständnis Bonaventuras," in: *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 57 (1990), pp. 142–182; *idem*, "Von der Wissenschaft zur Weisheit. Philosophie im Übergang bei Bonaventura." in: T. Borsche, J. Kreuzer (eds.), *Weisheit und Wissenschaft*, Wilhelm Fink Verlag: München 1995, pp. 115–127; *idem*, "The Certainty and Scope of Knowledge: Bonaventure's Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ," in: *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 3 (1993), pp. 35–61; *idem*, "Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy," in: *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1) (1997), pp. 25–46.

of the transcendentals, in which they also addressed his doctrine of God as first known.<sup>55</sup>

Jan Aertsen's major work on *Medieval Philosophy And The Transcendentals* is pivotal to this study, as he elaborately described the transcendentalization of metaphysics based on an ontological interpretation of Aristotle's first philosophy in the thirteenth century, in particular in Thomas Aquinas.<sup>56</sup> His interpretation of the epistemic constellation of the thirteenth century has become paradigmatic, and forms the background of this study as well.<sup>57</sup> In a more recent work on the development of the transcendentals throughout the Middle Ages, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought. From Philipp the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, Bonaventure's adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals receives more elaborate attention, and is also related to his doctrine of God as first known.<sup>58</sup>

With *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, Steven Marrone presented a major study on the development of a new, scientific approach to human cognition in relation to more traditional approaches in the thirteenth-century Latin West.<sup>59</sup> In particular, he focuses on Augustinian theologians and the way in which they relate to Aristotelianism in the later Middle Ages. He thoroughly investigates the relationship between divine illumination and theories of knowledge from Robert Grosseteste up to Duns Scotus. A discussion of Bonaventure's theory of cognition is part of this investigation. He attributes to Bonaventure a largely empiricist position.<sup>60</sup>

55 J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, "Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre", in: *Recherches de Theologie et Philosophie Medievales* 64 (1) (1997), pp. 32–66.

56 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval philosophy and the transcendentals. The case of Thomas Aquinas*.

57 For instance, cf. J.A. Aertsen, "Method and Metaphysics: The via resolutionis in Thomas Aquinas", in: *The New Scholasticism* 63 (4) (1989), pp. 405–418; *idem*, "What is first and most fundamental? The Beginnings of Transcendental Philosophy," in: J. A. Aertsen, A. Speer (eds.), *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter? Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale*, De Gruyter: Berlin – New York 1998, pp. 177–192; "Metaphysics as a Transcendental Science," pp. 377–390.

58 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought. From Philipp the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, Brill: Leiden – Boston 2012.

59 Cf. S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, Brill: Leiden – Boston – Köln 2001.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–154.

Camille Bérubé is one of the first to thematize the doctrine of God as first known.<sup>61</sup> In his article *De la théologie de l'image à la philosophie de l'objet de l'intelligence chez saint Bonaventure*,<sup>62</sup> he regards it as part of Bonaventure's philosophy on the proper object of the intellect, and argues that it implies an immediate and natural relation of the intellect with God.<sup>63</sup> In general, Bérubé interprets Bonaventure's thought primarily from its Augustinian background, and argues that Bonaventure is anterior to many 'Aristotelian' developments in thirteenth-century thought, such as to discussions on the role of a common concept of being in knowledge of divine and created being. Rather, he holds that Bonaventure's metaphysics is marked by a 'dialectics of participation', i.e. a Platonic model of science.<sup>64</sup>

In contrast, Timothy Noone and Rollen E. Houser consider Bonaventure's thought to be much more Aristotelian. This shows, for instance, from the fact that they argue that divine being in Bonaventure is a mere *specification* of being in general. Being (*ens*) is first known. Furthermore, they hold that in Bonaventure, besides certitude, human knowledge comes from created causes and a created light. Correspondingly, they hold that to Bonaventure, Aristotelian abstraction from the sensible is the sole source of our concepts of things.<sup>65</sup>

In Wouter Goris's thought, 'the beginning with the absolute' is an important theme. Goris acknowledges Bonaventure's importance in

61 Cf. C. Bérubé, *De la philosophie à la sagesse chez saint Bonaventure et Roger Bacon*, Istituto Storico dei Cappucini: Rome 1976; *idem*, *La connaissance de l'individuel au moyen âge*, Presses de l'Université: Montréal 1964.

62 C. Bérubé, 'De la théologie de l'image à la philosophie de l'objet de l'intelligence chez Saint Bonaventure', in: E.A. Synan (ed.), *S. Bonaventura 1274-1974*, vol. III, Grottaferrata 1973, pp. 161-200.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

64 Cf. Bérubé, C., "De la théologie de l'image à la philosophie de l'objet de l'intelligence chez saint Bonaventure," pp. 161-200; *idem*, *De la philosophie à la sagesse chez saint Bonaventure et Roger Bacon*, Rome 1976; C. Bérubé, S. Gieben, "Guibert de Tournai et Robert Grosseteste. Sources inconnues de la doctrine de l'illumination, suivi de l'édition critique de trois chapitres du Rudimentum Doctrinae de Guibert de Tournai," pp. 627-654.

65 T.B. Noone, R. E. Houser, "Saint Bonaventure," in: E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), URL= <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/bonaventure/>>; R.E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Three-Fold Way to God," in: R.E. Houser (ed.), *Medieval Masters: Essays in Memory of Msgr. E.A. Synan*, Center for Thomistic Studies: Houston 1999, pp. 91-145, esp. pp. 100-104.



the history of this beginning.<sup>66</sup> He also identifies a dynamic structure in Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known.<sup>67</sup> In *Absolute Beginners, Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*, Goris counts Bonaventure among those who distinguish *two* levels in the doctrine of God as first known, such as Henry of Ghent. At the first level, there is a priority of the divine *within* the first transcendental concepts of natural reason. At the second level, God has a cognitive priority, which transgresses natural reason, *over* these concepts.<sup>68</sup>

In this study, I will not only build on the research that has already been done; I will also address differences in the interpretation of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known. Differences pertain, for instance, to the function and place of Bonaventure's accounts of divine being as first known. Some scholars interpreted them as rational proofs for the existence of God;<sup>69</sup> others saw them as Augustinian arguments for God as proper and first object of the intellect;<sup>70</sup> as part of Bonaventure's adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals;<sup>71</sup> as discourses on the certitude of knowledge;<sup>72</sup> as natural ways to know God; or as belonging to Bonaventure's doctrine of illumination.<sup>73</sup> Also, with regard to the role of divine being as first known in the mechanism of cognition, interpretations differ. Roughly, two positions can be distinguished. The first holds that Bonaventure employs "an

66 W. Goris, "Transzendente Gewalt," in: M. Pickavé (ed.), *Die Logik des Transzendentalen. Festschrift für Jan Aertsen*, De Gruyter: Berlin – New York 2003. 619–642.

67 W. Goris, "Die Anfänge der Auseinandersetzung um das Ersterkannte im 13. Jahrhundert: Guibert von Tournai, Bonaventura und Thomas von Aquin," pp. 355–369; *idem*, "Two-Staged Doctrines of God as First Known and the Transformation of the Concept of Reality in Bonaventure and Henry of Ghent," in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (1) (2011), pp. 77–97.

68 W. Goris, *Absolute Beginners, Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*, Brill: Leiden – Boston 2007 (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 93).

69 R.E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Threefold Way to God," pp. 97–154; T.B. Noone, R.E. Houser, "Saint Bonaventure."

70 C. Bérubé, "De la théologie de l'image à la philosophie de l'objet de l'intelligence chez Saint Bonaventure," pp. 161–200.

71 J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, "Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre," pp. 32–66.

72 E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure* (transl. I. Trethowan, F. Sheed) St. Anthony Guild Press: London 1965, pp. 358–60.

73 S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 214–18.

Aristotelian-style abstraction.”<sup>74</sup> The second position, on the other hand, argues that Bonaventure maintains an Augustinian theory of judgment and illumination<sup>75</sup> These differences are related to whether interpreters find in Bonaventure a more Aristotelian or, instead, a more Platonic model of science.

## Research questions

Most interpreters of Bonaventure presuppose that his doctrine of God as first known is a coherent, stable doctrine, with one singular message. The purport of this message, it is held, is that a created principle is rejected as the final foundation on which knowledge of everything else rests, in favor of a first philosophy in which all knowledge rests on an understanding of divine being. Interpretations that start from this premise however insufficiently recognize that there are different accounts of God as first known to be found at different places in Bonaventure’s work.<sup>76</sup> Only after close scrutiny of these different accounts and of the way in which they relate to each other, is it methodologically acceptable to decide upon the purport, coherence, and claim(s) of Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known. The leading question of this study therefore is:

*What is the meaning of the fact that there are different accounts of God as first known, found at different places in his work, for Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known?*

I seek to answer this main question by dealing with a series of subquestions that approach my subject from several perspectives.

A first question concerns the role and place of *Deus primum cognitum* in two important ‘system-building’ elements of Bonaventure’s metaphysics: the doctrine of the transcendentals and Bonaventure’s

74 For instance, cf. L.J. Bowman, “The Development of the Doctrine of the Agent Intellect in the Franciscan School of the Thirteenth Century,” in: *The Modern Schoolman* 50 (1973), pp. 251–279, esp. pp. 262–263.

75 For instance, cf. E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, pp. 360–361.

76 Most importantly, cf. I *Sent.* d.28 p.2 dubium I (I 504); II *Sent.* d.1 p.2 dubium II (II 52); *De mysterio Trinitatis* I.1 (V 50); *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* III.3 (V 304) and V.3. (V 309); *Collationes in Hexaemeron* V.30 (V 359) and X.18 (V 379).

exemplarism. The question is whether these two models are successfully integrated in Bonaventure's thought, or does an ambiguity or redundancy, in particular with regard to the foundations of knowledge, remain? This question is linked to an investigation of Bonaventure's integration of two models of science into one system: an Aristotelian and a Platonic model of science. Whereas an Aristotelian approach to science allows for a plurality of sciences, each with their own foundation and subject, a Platonic model of science seeks to unify the sciences into a system in which all sciences are preliminary to one ultimate science, in which the foundation of all knowledge is studied.

A second question to address concerns the method applied in Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known: that of *resolutio*. The scholarly literature focuses on the fact that Bonaventure, in his accounts of God as first known, holds that a resolution into created principles is insufficient to establish full knowledge of anything; in order to obtain full knowledge, the resolution should proceed until it arrives at an understanding of God. However, it is left unclear *which limit* is transgressed by a full resolution. Are these the same created principles in every resolution? Does every resolution in Bonaventure's work present the same kind of critique of created principles? If not, what is the meaning of these differences? The concept of resolution is embedded in the Aristotelian opposition of the orders of what is better known to us and what is better known in itself. How is this related to the doctrine of God as first known, which, in a way, abolishes this distinction?

Another question concerns the role of knowledge of the divine in the *mechanism of cognition*. If we can only understand creatures through preliminary knowledge of the divine, what does this mean for cognition? Interpreters of Bonaventure fail to agree on this issue. Roughly, they defend two different models of the 'collaboration' between the created truth and the divine truth in the act of cognition. Whereas the first model sees a role for the priority of knowledge of God only in the certification of knowledge, the second model grants this priority a more prominent place, as it argues that knowledge of God is involved in the act of abstraction itself. The question after the way in which knowledge of divine being is involved in cognition is relevant to understanding the 'negotiation' between the Platonic and the Aristotelian in Bonaventure's thought, as it helps us to determine to which point the reliance on divine being in the realm of natural knowledge and cognition extends.

Third, I will deal with the remarkable fact that in both the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, we find *two* accounts

of God as first known. Although this has been acknowledged in the scholarly literature, not much attention has been paid to the *meaning* of the fact that there are different accounts of God as first known found at different places in one and the same work, let alone to a comparison of both works with regard to this fact. Why does Bonaventure present two arguments for God as first known in one text? How do these accounts relate to one another? Do they articulate one and the same thesis? What is the significance of possible differences? How do these two works relate to each other in this respect?

### Methodological remarks

A few remarks need to be made with regard to research methods, the approach to philosophy and its history, and the limitations and scope of this study.

This study aims to provide a historical reconstruction of the philosophical views of Bonaventure. On the one hand, this reconstruction is based on a text-immanent interpretation of Bonaventure's work, as well as on conceptual analysis, for instance of the concepts 'abstraction' and 'analysis' as important concepts in Bonaventure's theory of cognition. On the other hand, more historical methods are employed, especially in comparing Bonaventure's views with those of a number of his predecessors and contemporaries in order to better understand his position. In doing so, I do not seek to point out direct relations of influence. Rather, I seek to point out the specificity of Bonaventure's position against the backdrop of his time, as well as within a series of thinkers I described as representatives of the Platonic tradition of beginning with the absolute.

A second consideration concerns the chosen approach to philosophical-historical analysis. This regards the study of history as a way of understanding the processes that have led to what we are today. From this perspective, a study of the history of philosophy is first of all a study of ourselves. A dialogue with other eras, cultures, and traditions incites us to reflect on ourselves, on where we perceive ourselves to come from, and on the way in which we (should) evolve. In doing so, we cannot escape our historical horizon. As Gadamer argued convincingly, this horizon of understanding is however neither static nor unchanging, but susceptible to change. His hermeneutical circle accounts for the allocation of one's position within a dialogue (with history, art, or

another human being), brought about by the replacement of prejudices and presuppositions by new ones, belonging to more profound insights. Thus, understanding and interpretation always involve the formation of new contexts of meaning that enable the integration of what is otherwise unfamiliar and incomprehensible. By venturing into what is strange to us, we can develop a less confined understanding of ourselves and our world.<sup>77</sup>

A prominent concept of Gadamer that is related to this development is cultivation, or *Bildung*.<sup>78</sup> The essence of *Bildung*, Gadamer holds, is a return to oneself that requires a transformation. This transformation always presupposes alienation, i.e. the encounter with the other. Therefore, Gadamer defines *Bildung* as ‘*trained receptivity towards otherness*’.<sup>79</sup> This might be the most important accomplishment gained by studying the history of philosophy.

Interestingly, Gadamer traces the origins of this concept of nineteenth-century German philosophy back to medieval texts on the *formatio* of the soul, i.e. its transformation or ‘reformation’ as *imago Dei*. Among these texts, we may very well count several works of Bonaventure, in particular the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. In these monastic discourses dealing with the soul’s meditative ascent to God, as Foucault described in Ancient and early Christian texts, a subject’s access to the truth is dependent on a transformation of one’s being. This transformation, in its turn, requires labor: practices, exercises, training, and enduring work on the self (*askesis*). Foucault relates this (ethical) action to spirituality. As Hadot argued in the same line of thought, philosophy was, in this case, both an expression of a way of life and an application of a certain ideal of living, among other practices belonging to that way of life, all of them meant to establish a transformation, an inner change in the subject.<sup>80</sup>

I will maintain that this ‘hermeneutics of the subject’ is much more than merely the genre of Bonaventure’s texts on the soul’s journey to

77 Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*. vol. 1., Mohr: Tübingen 1975.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

80 Cf. P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (trans. M. Chase, ed. A. Davidson, Blackwell: Oxford 1995).

God, but relates to the very core of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known.

## Overview of the Dissertation

Before turning to the main chapters, the reader may find it useful to obtain an overview of the whole of this dissertation.

In the first chapter, a first exploration of the place of the doctrine of God as first known in Bonaventure's thought will be presented. As it deals with the foundation of all knowledge, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known relates both to his exemplarism and to his doctrine of the transcendentals: two 'system-building' elements of Bonaventure's *metaphysica reducens*. However, the question remains: if Bonaventure has found himself a foundation for all knowledge in exemplarism, why would he need an account of God as first known within the framework of the doctrine of the transcendentals? Furthermore, it will be argued that the role of the doctrine of God as first known in Bonaventure's metaphysics is *ambiguous*: on the one hand, it can be argued to function within a 'Platonic' approach to science, in which metaphysics has no proper foundation but is relative or 'reduced' to theology, in which all sciences should culminate. On the other hand, it can be seen as part of an Aristotelian approach to science, in which it provides natural knowledge and metaphysics with a proper foundation.

In the second chapter, *resolutio* as the method that reveals that knowledge of the divine is presupposed to knowledge of the created will be dealt with. The literature on this subject focuses on the fact that Bonaventure considers a resolution into created principles to be insufficient to establish full knowledge of something. In order to obtain full knowledge, the resolution should proceed until it arrives at an understanding of God. Therefore, Bonaventure's distinguishes between a *semiplena* and a *plena resolutio*, which is seen as the most original feature of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known.<sup>81</sup> Here, I show that there are in fact three different *types* of resolution that Bonaventure considers to be inadequate to establish full knowledge of something. These types correspond to three types of resolution found

81 J.A. Aertsen, "What is First and Most Fundamental? The Beginnings of Transcendental Philosophy," p. 191.

in Thomas Aquinas. I end with considering what this criticism tells us about Bonaventure's first philosophy as such.

In the third chapter, the way in which knowledge of the divine is involved in the mechanism of human cognition is investigated, a subject on which there is much controversy in the literature. On the basis of a discussion of Bonaventure's pivotal texts on this subject, I argue that knowledge of the divine is involved in the noetic process of making the created intelligible: by means of an act of judgment, in which we take recourse to the divine ideas, an intelligible species can be abstracted from a sensible representation. This means that Bonaventure does not maintain an 'Aristotelian account of abstraction,' as some scholars defend. Furthermore, I show that both the abstraction of intelligibles from the sensible, material world and resolution as conceptual analysis involve an act of judgment in terms of a comparison of created being to first being. On both levels, preliminary knowledge of the divine is necessary. Therefore, the priority of the divine in the first act of cognition is twofold.

In the fourth chapter, a close analysis is provided of the resolutions to God as first known in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Bonaventure scholars hardly recognize that there are *two* accounts of God as first known in each of these works. My analysis shows that there exists a *structural similarity* between the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* with regard to their treatment of *Deus primum cognitum*. I come to conclude that in both texts, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known exhibits a *dynamic* character.

In a fifth chapter, this dynamic character is related to the fact that both texts present a spiritual discourse dealing with the gradual transformation of the soul. Each of the two accounts of God as first known is part of a different stage of the development of knowledge that corresponds to this transformation. By taking a closer look at the specific literary-philosophical character of the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* and the epistemology that belongs to it, I will further account for the dynamic character the doctrine of God as first known acquires here. As the truth gradually unfolds itself in these treatises, a single level of discourse or single claim that is made cannot be comprehended except from the perspective of the work as a whole, and every position taken is only a *momentary* stance within the event of the soul's progress. This means that there is no stable opposition between truth and falsity; what is first known at one stage, might be replaced by yet another first known at a further stage.

I conclude this dissertation with a résumé of the results of the investigations in the preceding chapters. Having presented a series of analyses of the doctrine of God as first known from several perspectives, I will deal with the question what these analyses together tell us about Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known.





## CHAPTER 1

### *God as first known in Bonaventure's metaphysica reducens. The tension between two models of foundation*

IN THIS FIRST CHAPTER, the place of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known in his *metaphysica reducens*<sup>1</sup> will be investigated. Especially the way in which it relates to what are considered to be the most important *systembildende Elemente*<sup>2</sup> of his metaphysics – his exemplarism, reductionism, illuminationism, and his account of the transcendentals – is under scrutiny. The term 'system-building elements' might suggest an unproblematic integration of different elements from different traditions into one coherent system. In this chapter, this integration with regard to Bonaventure's account of a foundation for all natural knowledge will be questioned.

As Jan Aertsen argues, Bonaventure elaborates a new exemplaristic-reductive form of first philosophy by relating exemplarism, as 'the metaphysical basis of the doctrine that a vestige of God is found in every creature,' to the doctrine of the transcendentals.<sup>3</sup> Although I follow Aertsen's analysis of Bonaventure's account the transcendentals as given in *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought* in this chapter, I seek to put more emphasis on the *tensions* that arise from the relation between

1 *Hexaemeron*, I, 17 (V, 332 b): 'Hoc est medium metaphysicum, et haec est tota nostra metaphysica: de emanatione, de exemplaritate, de consumatione, scilicet illuminari per radios spirituales et reducit ad summum. Et sic eris verus metaphysicus'. For an explanation of this term, cf. A. Speer, "Metaphysica reducens: Metaphysik als erste Wissenschaft im Verständnis Bonaventuras," in: *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 57 (1990), pp. 142–182.

2 Romano Guardini described the system-building elements of Bonaventure's theology in his *Systembildende Elemente in der Theologie Bonaventuras*, Brill: Leiden 1964. On the basis of this approach, Andreas Speer addressed the system-building elements of Bonaventure's philosophy in *Triplex Veritas. Wahrheitsverständnis und philosophische Denkform Bonaventuras*, Werl 1987. Also, cf. J.A. Aertsen and A. Speer, "Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre," in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 64 (1) (1997), pp. 32–66.

3 J.A. Aertsen, "The Transformation of Metaphysics in the Middle Ages", pp. 19–40.

exemplarism and the doctrine of the transcendentals in Bonaventure, in particular with regard to the foundations of knowledge. I will conclude that there is a tension between two models of foundations in Bonaventure that co-exist in his thought, i.e. exemplarism and the doctrine of the transcendentals. This tension concerns a *redundancy* in the account of the foundations of natural knowledge: in exemplarism, natural reason relies on the transcendent ideas as the foundations of empirical knowledge, whereas in the doctrine of the transcendentals, natural reason is founded on the self-evidency of the transcendental notions as first principles.

It will also be argued that the role and place of the doctrine of God as first known in Bonaventure’s metaphysics is *ambiguous*: on the one hand, it can be held to function within what I will describe as a Platonic approach to science, in which metaphysics has no proper foundation but is relative or ‘reduced’ to theology. On the other hand, the doctrine of God as first known can be seen as part of an Aristotelian approach to science, in which it contributes to the establishment of a proper foundation for natural knowledge and metaphysics.

First, let me briefly explain what I mean by a ‘Platonic’ and an ‘Aristotelian’ model or approach to science in relation to Bonaventure’s thought. I am well aware that these are very broad concepts that can refer to a plethora of philosophical elements. However, I would like to use these designations in the following, rather instrumental way in this chapter.

In Plato, all sciences remain hypothetical until an *anhypotheton* is disclosed, which happens in dialectics, the most important of all sciences. Dialectics reduces all hypothetical knowledge to the idea of the Good as the anhypothetical origin of all knowledge and being.<sup>4</sup> All scientific activities should lead up to this science.<sup>5</sup> Correspondingly, Bonaventure argues that all sciences should be oriented at obtaining knowledge of God, an orientation by which they are *unified*. Theology, the *scientia perfecta*, has a superior status among the sciences: every discipline should ultimately lead to this science. Bonaventure vigorously defends this privileged position of theology in his short treatise *De reductione artium ad theologiam*. This approach to science relates to the proposition that creation, i.e. the immanent world, depends on a transcendent

4 As I argued in the Introduction, the idea of the Good as unconditional beginning is the principal source of inspiration for the doctrine of God as first known.

5 Plato, *Politeia* 534e.

world of ideas cq. the realm of divine being, in which the exemplars of all things reside. To this transcendent reality, theology has a privileged access, and is therefore not only superior as a science, but the one true science to which all other sciences should be subordinated.

An 'Aristotelian' model of science, however, allows for a *plurality* of sciences, each with their own foundation. In the *Posterior Analytics*, in reaction to Plato, Aristotle proclaims the independence of the sciences: there is no unifying science. Rather, each science has its own subject and gains disciplinary autonomy on that basis. The universal science excluded here is the very First Philosophy deemed possible in the *Metaphysics*. The independency of the sciences according to the Aristotelian model of science, therefore, primarily regards their independence vis-à-vis the science of metaphysics, also called wisdom and theology. In the Christian context, however, theology based on revelation is the principal science and the Aristotelian model of science now serves the emancipation of metaphysics from theology.<sup>6</sup>

On the basis of the discussion of both Bonaventure's exemplarism and his account of the transcendentals, it will be argued that this tension between the Platonic and the Aristotelian is to be found not only *between* these 'system-building elements' of Bonaventure's metaphysics, but just as much *within* them.

On the one hand, Bonaventure's *reductive exemplarism* can be considered to be part of a 'Platonic approach' to science. In this context, the doctrine of God as first known shows that all knowledge depends on an understanding of divine being, which is most of all accomplished in theology, rather than in metaphysics, which is concerned with the study of with created being in relation to divine being as its exemplary cause. This provides metaphysics with a preliminary character. However, on the other hand, Bonaventure's exemplarism also defends the autonomy of metaphysics with regard to theology by allowing natural reason to collaborate with an inner light of truth, through which it has an understanding of first being (*esse primum*), on the basis of which certain and complete knowledge can be attained.

The new understanding of metaphysics based on an Aristotelian model of science largely – but certainly not entirely – determines the doctrine of the transcendentals in Bonaventure.<sup>7</sup> Within the context of

6 Cf. A. Speer, "Philosophie als Lebensform? Zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Weisheit im Mittelalter," in: *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 62 (2000), pp. 3–25.

7 *Ibid.*

an investigation of the transcendental conditions of being, the doctrine of God as first known provides a legitimation of natural knowledge on the basis of first principles (divine being, unity, truth and goodness) and hence it establishes a proper realm for metaphysics. However, (1) by arguing that knowledge of *created* being and its transcendental conditions (one, true and good) depends on knowledge of *divine* being and its attributes, and (2) by focusing on the *vestigiality* of creatures, i.e. the extent to which all created things refer to divine being, metaphysics as first philosophy is embedded in a larger framework, in which the scope of theological knowledge of divine being transcends that of metaphysics.

In the following sections, the role and place of God as first known will be explored in Bonaventure’s reductive exemplarism (section 1) and in his doctrine of the transcendentals (section 2). In the conclusions to this chapter (section 3), it will be discussed what the tension between (a) exemplarism and the doctrine of the transcendentals, and (b) what was described as an Aristotelian and a Platonic approach to science mean for the architecture of Bonaventure’s metaphysics.

## 1.1 God as first known and reductive exemplarism

### 1.1.1 Introduction

In Bonaventure’s doctrine of exemplarism, any created being is regarded as an expression of divine being, whereas divine being is the *exemplar omnium rerum*. Correspondingly, Bonaventure holds that the major goal of our cognitive activities that concern the sensible world is to be led from understanding a creature as a sign to an understanding of the God who is signified by it. Therefore, the metaphysician should proceed by studying creation in relation to its *exemplary cause*.<sup>8</sup> This task presupposes a collaboration of the intellect with divine truth, also in natural cognition. Bonaventure’s illuminationism explains the *mechanism* through which preliminary knowledge of divine being can precede and condition all empirical knowledge. Divine illumination enables the intellect to attain complete and certain knowledge already in the domain of natural knowledge. The doctrine of God as first known demonstrates that natural knowledge is indeed founded in a preliminary understanding of God. Whereas the mind becomes reflexively aware of this foundational understanding in the realm of

8 *Hexaemeron* I.17 (V 332).

metaphysics by means of its natural capacities, *revealed knowledge* of God is the starting point of theology, received by the mind that has also received the special illumination of grace. It can now leave the world of the sensible behind in its ascent towards (knowledge of) God.

From this perspective, as I will argue in the next section, Bonaventure's exemplarism seems to be in line with a Platonic model of science, in which all sciences lead up to one *anhypotheton*, which is studied by one superior science in particular – in this case, theology. However, I will come to conclude that Bonaventure's exemplarism is *also* marked by an Aristotelian approach to science, and establishes, at least to a certain extent, the autonomy of metaphysics.

### 1.1.2 Bonaventure's exemplarism

Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplarism is seen as the essence of his *metaphysica reducens*.<sup>9</sup> As he succinctly phrases the key message of exemplarism in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*:

Creatures of this sensible world signify the invisible things of God because every effect is a sign of a cause, and an example of an exemplar, and a way for the end towards which it leads.<sup>10</sup>

As a 'divine footprint' (*vestigium*), a created essence is held to express and resemble its divine exemplar, which is its causal, creative principle,

9 See for instance J. M. Bissen, *L'Exemplarisme Divin selon saint Bonaventure*, Vrin: Paris 1929; R. Guardini, *Systembildende Elemente in der Theologie Bonaventuras*, Brill: Leiden 1964; L.J. Bowman, 'The Cosmic Exemplarism of Bonaventure,' in: *The Journal of Religion* 55 (2) (1975), pp. 181–198; T.B. Noone, "The Franciscan and Epistemology: Reflections on the Roles of Bonaventure and Scotus," in: R.E. Houser (ed.), *Medieval Masters: Essays in Memory of Msgr. E.A. Synan*, Center for Thomistic Studies: Houston 1999, pp. 63–90; A. Speer, "Metaphysica reducens: Metaphysik als erste Wissenschaft im Verständnis Bonaventuras," pp. 142–182; *idem*, "Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy," pp. 25–46; *idem*, "Illumination and Certitude: The Foundation of Knowledge in Bonaventure," in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (1) (2011), pp. 127–141.

10 *Itinerarium* II.12 (V 302–3): 'Significans autem huiusmodi creaturae huius mundi sensibilis invisibilia Dei, partim quia Deus est omnis creaturae origo, exemplar et finis, et omnis effectus est signum causae, et exemplatum exemplaris, et via finis, ad quem ducit.'

on the basis of the postulate that effects resemble their cause.<sup>11</sup> In this way, ‘the wisdom of the craftsman is manifested in his works.’<sup>12</sup>

Creatures do not just possess properties that point towards their maker;<sup>13</sup> every creature is even argued to lead *more* to God than to anything else.<sup>14</sup> By means of this property inherent to created being, the mind that is not *yet* capable of contemplating the divine without the interference of the sensible, ‘as minds still rough and sensible do not yet see the intelligible forms to which the sensibles refer as signs to things signified,’<sup>15</sup> is ‘led by the hand’ (*manuductio*), starting from the noble properties of creatures unto knowledge of God.<sup>16</sup> This does not just apply to individual creatures; all things together form a ‘ladder’ that leads the soul to God: *ipsa rerum universitas est scala ad ascendendum in Deum*.<sup>17</sup>

Bonaventure distinguishes different ways in which creatures lead to their creator: they do so as shadow (*umbra*), trace (*vestigium*), image (*imago*) or likeness (*similitudo*). Whereas the former two concern all material creatures, the latter two concern the soul. As shadows, creatures represent God in an indeterminate, confused way. As ves-

11 I *Sent.* d. 3, p. 1, a.1, q. 2 (I 72): ‘quia relucet causa in effectu, et sapientia artificis manifestatur in opere, ideo Deus, qui est artifex et causa creaturae, per ipsam cognoscitur.’

12 I *Sent.*, d. 3, p.1, a.1, q.2 (I 72): ‘Dicendum, quod, quia relucet causa in effectu, et sapientia artificis manifestatur in opera, ideo Deus, qui est artifex et causa creaturae, per ipsam cognoscitur.’

13 Cf. I *Sent.*, d.8, p.1, a.1, q.1 (I 230–2); d.3, p.1, a.1, q.3 (I 74–5); d. 22, a.1, q.1 (I 390–1).

14 I *Sent.*, d. 3, p.1, a.1, q.2 (I 72): ‘omnis creatura magis ducit in Deum quam in aliquod aliud’. Cf. I *Sent.* d. 8. 1.2 (1 155).

15 *Itinerarium* II.11 (V 302): ‘sunt umbrae, resonantiae et picturae, sunt vestigia, simulacra et spectacula nobis ad contuendum Deum proposita et signa divinitus data; quae, inquam, sunt exemplaria vel potius exemplata, proposita mentibus adhuc rudibus et sensibilibus, ut per sensibilia, quae vident, transferantur ad intelligibilia, quae non vident, tanquam per signa ad signata.’ Cf. C. M. Cullen, *The Semiotic Metaphysics of Saint Bonaventure*, diss. Catholic University of America 2000; P.J. Miller (2010), ‘Cosmic Semiosis: Contuiting the Divine,’ in: *Semiotica* 178, pp. 303–344.

16 Cf. I *Sent.*, d. 34, a.1, q.4 (I 393–4): ‘Alia ratio est manuductio intellectus nostri. Quia cum per creaturas ad cognoscendum creatorem venimus, ut plurimum, fere omnes creaturae habent proprietates nobilos, quae sunt ratio intelligendi Deum, ut leo fortitudinem, agnus manguetudinem, petra soliditatem, serpens prudentiam et consimilia; ideo oportuit plura nomina transferri ad Deum.’

17 *Itinerarium* II.2 (V 297): ‘Cum enim secundum statum conditionis nostrae ipsa rerum universitas sit scala ad ascendendum in Deum’.

tiges of God they refer to God as a triple cause. As image, the soul resembles God in a more proximate and distinct way.<sup>18</sup> As a similitude, the soul reformed by grace becomes more deiform, and bears closer resemblance to God. In this state, God can be studied without the interference of the sensible, and on the basis of revealed knowledge.<sup>19</sup> This is done in theology (i.e. theology as the study of the Scriptures).<sup>20</sup>

From this perspective, the function of natural reason and philosophy is to lead to knowledge of God by means of the study of nature, in preparation of a study of the same subject once the mind is better prepared for it, i.e. theology.<sup>21</sup> Philosophy begins with reason and experience, its final and highest objective is knowledge of God. Theology, on the contrary, *starts out* with revealed knowledge of God, which it contemplates, interprets and reflects upon.<sup>22</sup>

In this hierarchy of ever more perfect ways of knowing God, the importance of a study of the empirical world as a means to the pro-

18 *I Sent.*, d.3, p. 1, a.1, q.2 (I 73): ‘Nam *umbra* dicitur, in quantum representat in quadam elongatione et confusione; *vestigium*, in quantum in elongatione, sed distinctione; *imago* vero, in quantum in propinquitate et distinctione.’

19 *Itinerarium* IV.4 (V 307): ‘efficitur spiritus noster hierarchicus ad conscendendum surcum secundum conformitatem ad illam Ierusalem supernam, in qua nemo intrat, nisi prius per gratiam ipsa in cor descendat, sicut vidit Ioannes in *Apocalypsi* sua. Tunc autem in cor descendit, quando per reformationem imaginis, per virtutes theologicas et per oblectationes spiritualium sensuum et suspensiones excessuum efficitur spiritus noster hierarchicus, scilicet purgatus, illuminatus et perfectus. (...) Quibus habitis, anima intrando in se ipsam, intrat in supremam Ierusalem, ubi ordines Angelorum considerans, videt in eis Deum, qui habitans in eis omnes eorum operatur operationes.’

20 *Itinerarium* IV.5 (V 307): ‘Ad autem speculationes gradum specialiter et praecipue adminiculatur consideratio sacrae Scripturae divinitus immissae, sicut philosophia ad praecedentem. Sacra enim Scriptura principaliter est de operibus reparationis.’

21 *Breviloquium* I.1.2 (V 211): ‘philosophia quidem agit de rebus, ut sunt in natura, seu in anima secundum notitiam naturaliter insitam, vel etiam acquisitam; sed theologia, tanquam scientia supra fidem fundata et per Spiritum sanctum revelata, agit et de eis quae spectant ad gratiam et gloriam et etiam ad Sapientiam aeternam. Unde ipsa, substemens sibi philosophicam cognitionem et assumens de naturis rerum, quantum sibi opus est ad fabricandum speculum, per quod fiat repraesentatio divinatorum; quasi scalam erigit, quae in sui infimo tangit terram, sed in suo cacumine tangit caelum.’

22 *Breviloquium* I.1.3 (V 211–2): ‘[sacra Scriptura sive theologia] etiam sola est *sapientia perfecta*, quae incipit a causa summa, ut est *principium* causatorum, ubi terminatur cognitio philosophica.’



posed end of all our cognitive endeavors is not denied. It is, however, *qualified*. Bonaventure vigorously criticizes philosophers who focus on the external world alone and deny the existence of exemplary causes that reside in the divine intellect. Especially, Aristotle and his followers become subject to this criticism.<sup>23</sup> They are accused of merely exploring contingent nature as ‘being as such’, without focusing on the *duality* of being, and considering the relationship between perfect and absolute being on the one hand and fallible and contingent being on the other.

In the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure famously sets out that, whereas emanation, exemplarity and consummation together constitute the whole of metaphysics, ‘the true metaphysician’ considers all being first of all in the context of exemplarity.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, metaphysics should be based on a double understanding of being, Bonaventure argues, as being is always two of a kind: either it is out of itself, according to itself and because of itself or it is out of another, according to another and because of another.<sup>25</sup> This binary distinction that these properties bring about, to which Bonaventure frequently relates, pertains to the distinction between the *creatum* and the *increatum*. From created being, the existence of uncreated being can be deduced.<sup>26</sup> This is done in his arguments for the existence of God: if there is created being, there has

23 *Hexaemeron* VI.2 (V 360): ‘Sed unde aliqui tenebras secuti sunt? Ex hoc, quod licet omnes viderint primam causam omnium *principium*, omnium *finem*, in *medio* tamen diversificati sunt. Nam aliqui negaverunt, in ipsa esse exemplaria rerum; quorum princeps videtur fuisse Aristoteles, qui et in principio *Metaphysicae* et in fine et in multis aliis locis exsecratur ideas Platonis’.

24 *Hexaemeron* I.13 (V 331): ‘Metaphysicus enim assurgit ad illud esse considerandum in ratione principii omnia originantis; et in hoc convenit cum physico, qui origines rerum considerat. Assurgit etiam ad considerandum illud esse in ratione ultimi finis; et in hoc convenit cum morali sive ethico, qui reducti omnia ad unum summum bonum ut ad finem ultimum, considerando felicitatem sive practicam sive speculativam. Seu ut considerat illud esse in ratione omnia exemplantis, cum nullo communicat et verus est metaphysicus.’

25 *Hexaemeron* I.12 (V 331): ‘Esse enim non est nisi dupliciter: vel *esse*, quod est ex se et secundum se et propter se, vel *esse*, quod est ex alio et secundum aliud et propter aliud.’

26 *I Sent.*, d.3, p.1, a.1, q. 2 (V 71–2): ‘contingit non solum effectum cognosci per causam, sed etiam causam per effectum; ergo si Deus est causa operans secundum suam nobilitatem, et creatura effectus, poterit Deus cognosci per creaturam.’

to be uncreated being, if there is being by participation, there is being by essence, etc.<sup>27</sup>

Another way of moving from a created being to its uncreated foundation is by means of *conceptual analysis*: by thoroughly investigating the *knowledge* we have of a creature, we finally arrive – or *should* arrive – upon evidence of knowledge of uncreated being as its foundation. The latter procedure is central to Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known. That we somehow have knowledge of the divine at our disposal, also in the realm of metaphysics and natural reason, is accounted for in Bonaventure’s illuminationism, which will be discussed in the next section.

In this way, metaphysics can fulfill its major task: prepare for theology. Bonaventure defends this in his short but famous treatise *De reductione artium ad theologiam*. The major message of this text is that philosophical knowledge, with which the *artes liberales* of his time were concerned, is ultimately to be reduced to theological knowledge.<sup>28</sup> In works such as the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure further specifies this kind of philosophy that prepares for theology. This is not Aristotelian philosophy, he argues, which was increasingly popular among the Parisian *artista*e of Bonaventure’s time, but rather, a philosophy that is in alignment with the Platonic tradition, that seeks to convert the soul towards the exemplary causes.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, Bonaventure’s doctrine of exemplarism does not only seek to express ontological and epistemological realities; it also has a strong normative component: the major goal of the metaphysician *ought to be* to be led from the creature as a sign to (an understanding of) divine being, to which it refers. Characteristic of Bonaventure’s exemplarism – and here he diverges from Augustine – is that he holds that exploring being from the perspective of its relation to divine being as exemplary cause should be the task of metaphysics, and not only that of theology,

27 *Hexaemeron* X.15 (V 379): ‘omnia creatura dicit, Deum esse secundum rationem originis: ut si est ens creatum, est ens increatum; et si est ens per participationem, est ens per essentiam; et si est ens per compositionem, est ens per simplicitatem; et si est ens per multiformitatem, est ens per uniformitatem vel identitatem.’

28 Cf. *De reductione artium ad theologiam* (V 317–325).

29 About philosophers within the Platonic tradition, Bonaventure argues in *Hexaemeron* V.23 (V 357): ‘(philosophi) venerunt ad hoc, in quo lux separata est a tenebris; seperando enim se a tenebris, converterunt se ad lucem. Sed hoc ita fit, ut anima convertat se primo super se: secundo, super intelligentias spirituales; tertio, super rationes aeternas.’

and that we are – up to a certain extent – able to fulfill this task on the basis of natural knowledge, which has at its disposal an understanding of divine being. This reductive exemplaristic form of first philosophy is not only a critique of Augustine, but can also be regarded as a critique of Aristotelian thought. Aristotle rejects the doctrine of the ideas and, correspondingly, knowledge of the divine as the foundation of all other knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

### 1.1.3 Bonaventure’s illuminationism

To investigate all beings from the perspective of exemplarity (*esse in ratione omnia exemplantis*), a source of knowledge of this exemplary being is required. That the intellect has such a source available, also within the realm of natural knowledge, is articulated by Bonaventure’s illuminationism: it resonates Plato’s doctrine of ideas and Augustine’s adaptation of it by placing the ideas in the divine intellect and replacing the reminiscence (*anamnesis*) of what is forgotten by a return inside oneself in search for a divine light that continuously illuminates the soul.

Bonaventure’s theory of illumination articulates how knowledge of God as divine exemplar is available to the human intellect. Whereas exemplarism is articulated in terms of being, illuminationism is articulated in terms of truth: just as the divine intellect is able to produce all things, the divine light of truth, impressed on every soul, is capable of expressing everything.<sup>31</sup> Generally speaking, it describes how ‘light’ acts as a connecting agent between the perception of created things and the reception of divine truth, or, in Augustinian terms, between the higher and the lower part of the intellect.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it accounts for the combination of two sources of knowledge. One is empirical, the other is given through illumination.

However, the relation of these sources is not one of equal members: Bonaventure repeatedly argues that created truth is only fully known in the light of uncreated truth.<sup>33</sup> In order to truly know anything whatsoever, the human soul requires the co-operation of the divine. Only on the basis of this immutable foundation, he argues, we know something in the strict sense of the term, i.e. fully and with certainty.<sup>34</sup>

30 Cf. J.A. Aertsen *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, p. 150.

31 Cf. *Hexaameron* XII.7 (V 385).

32 A. Speer, “Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy,” p. 38.

33 Cf. *Sent.* I, d. 8, p. 1, a. 2 (I 155).

34 *Hexaameron* I.13 (V 331): ‘nihil sciatur nisi per veritatem immutabilem’. Cf. A. Speer,

Importantly, this is already the case in natural knowledge. Bonaventure implies that not just the faithful receive divine aid by means of an infused divine light of truth; everyone is able to know with certainty through natural illumination.<sup>35</sup> This light of truth is given to every human being (cf. Chapter 3).

On the way in which we are able to know with certainty within the realm of natural reason Bonaventure elaborates extensively in his *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi* q. IV.<sup>36</sup> The criteria to know with certainty are met as the knowing subject has available a perfect, infallible standard that guides the mind, and the created object can be related to its eternal, immutable idea.<sup>37</sup> This presupposes a preliminary understanding of both divine being and the eternal ideas that reside in this being, which is exactly what Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known defends: it states that any being whatsoever cannot be fully known without 'an understanding of the most pure, actual, complete and absolute being, which is unqualified and eternal, in which all things are found in their purity.'<sup>38</sup> This being is identified as divine being.<sup>39</sup>

That the intellect knows this being through a divine light of truth

"Illumination and Certitude: The Foundaton of Knowledge in Bonaventure," pp. 127–141.

- 35 *De scientia Christi* IV, sol. 5, 6 (V 25): 'neuter negat, quin illud lumen verum, quod illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum, a nostris mentibus attingatur, sed quod in hac vita nondum plene videtur.'
- 36 *De scientia Christi* IV (V 23–24): 'Si ergo ad plenam cognitionem fit recursus ad veritatem omnino immutabilem et stabilem et ad lucem omnino infallibilem; necesse est, quod in huiusmodi cognitione recurratur ad artem supernam ut ad lucem et veritatem: lucem, inquam, dantem infallibilitatem scienti, et veritatem dantem immutabilitatem scibili.'
- 37 *De scientia Christi* IV (V 23): 'cognitio certitudinalis esse non potest, nisi sit ex parte scibilis immutabilitas et infallibilitas ex parte scientis.'; *idem*, *Sermo IV. Christus unus omnium magister* 6 (V 568–569): 'Ad cognitionem enim scientialem necessario requiritur veritas immutabilis ex parte scientis. Omne enim, quod scitur, necessarium est in se et certum est ipsi scienti. Tunc enim scimus, "cum causam arbitramur cognoscere, propter quam res est, et scimus, quoniam impossibile est aliter se habere".'; Cf. A. Speer, "The Certainty and Scope of Knowledge: Bonaventure's Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ," pp. 35–61.
- 38 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): 'non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuветur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti; quod est ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate.'
- 39 *Itinerarium* V.3 (V 309): 'Sed hoc non est esse particulare, quod est esse arctatum, quia permixtum est cum potentia, nec esse analogum, quia minime habet de actu, eo quod minime est. Restat igitur, quod illud esse est esse divinum.'

is an insight that we can attain through an analysis of created, fallible being. As Bonaventure argues in *Collationes in Hexaemeron* c. V:

(Insight is) brought by experience in the following way: what is produced is defective with respect to the first; similarly, what is composed with respect to the simple; similarly, the mixed with respect to the pure, and similarly for the others; therefore they are called privations. But privations are not known unless by their positions. After all, the straight is the judge both of the crooked and of itself. And if all knowledge comes from pre-existing knowledge: intelligence therefore experiences in itself, that it has a certain light, by which it knows first being (*primum esse*).<sup>40</sup>

Bonaventure thus seeks to disclose the presence of a natural light of illumination that conditions knowledge of God as ‘first being’, the prerequisite for knowing anything else. The metaphysician ought to turn to this light as the foundation on the basis of which everything else is known. Through this light, the intellect attains a *preliminary understanding of divine being*, of which it can become reflexively aware by the use of natural reason. That such a preliminary understanding founds all other knowledge is maintained by the doctrine of God as first known.

#### 1.1.4 How God is first known

The preceding sections discussed Bonaventure’s approach to creatures as imperfect similitudes that are only fully known on the basis of preliminary knowledge of their exemplary forms. This knowledge is possible through what is described as a light, impressed naturally on the soul, by which it knows divine being, in which the exemplary forms reside. Bonaventure does however *not* maintain that this knowledge of divine being is straightforward, obvious or sufficient within the realm of natural knowledge. Rather, it is implicitly functional within our cognitive acts. Through an investigation of the content of our

<sup>40</sup> *Hexaemeron* V.30 (V 359): ‘Fertur similiter experiendo sic: productum respectu primi defectivum est; similiter compositum respectu simplicis; similiter permixtum respectu puri, et sic de aliis; ergo dicunt privationes. Sed privationes non cognoscuntur nisi per habitus suos. Iudex enim est rectum sui et obliqui. Et si omnis cognitio fit ex praesistenti cognitione: ergo necessario intelligentia experitur in se, quod habeat aliquod lumen, per quod cognoscat primum esse.’

knowledge of creatures, however, the intellect is able to discover this hidden foundation. This discovery and the procedure that leads up to it are thematized by the doctrine of God as first known.

The doctrine of God as first known addresses a remarkable paradox in Bonaventure's work, which is that although the mind has an understanding of the divine, initially, it is not *aware* of this knowledge, nor has it direct, immediate access to this knowledge in its state of imperfection. 'The intellect is remarkably blind,' Bonaventure argues, 'as it does not consider that which it sees first and without which it can become acquainted with nothing.'<sup>41</sup> Evocatively, in terms of illumination, Bonaventure compares the mind to the eye, which focuses on differences in color, rather than on the light through which it actually sees those colors, and even when the eye sees this light, it will not recognize it.<sup>42</sup> In the same way, he argues, the mind is focused on universal and particular being, without noticing being beyond all categories, which comes to the mind first (a discussion of this paradox is found in Chapter 4).<sup>43</sup>

Thus, at least under regular circumstances, the intellect is unconscious of its foundation. In this sense, Heidegger's statement that what is most intimate to us is yet furthest away from our comprehension applies.<sup>44</sup> It also bears resemblance to Aristotle's metaphor of a night creature to describe the same phenomenon: 'For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all.'<sup>45</sup> The question remains: how does the

41 *Itinerarium* V.4 (V 309): 'Mira igitur est caecitas intellectus, qui non considerat illud quod prius videt et sine quo nihil potest cognoscere.'

42 *Ibid.*: 'Unde verissime apparet, quod 'sicut oculus vespertilionis se habet ad lucem, ita se habet oculus mentis nostrae ad manifestissima naturae'; quia assuefactus ad tenebras entium et phantasmata sensibilibum, cum ipsam lucem summi esse intuetur, videtur sibi nihil videre; non intelligens, quod ipsa caligo summa est mentis nostrae illuminatio, sicut, quando videt oculus puram lucem, videtur sibi nihil videre.'

43 *Ibid.*: 'Sed sicut oculus intentus in varias colorum differentias lucem, per quam videt cetera, non videt, et si videt, non advertit; sic oculus mentes nostrae, intentus in entia particularia et universalia, ipsum esse extra omne genus, licet primo occurrat menti, et per ipsum alia, tamen non advertit.'

44 M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (ed. F.-W. von Hermann, Gesamtausgabe 2). Max Niemeyer: Tübingen 1957, p. 16.

45 Aristotle, *Metaphysica* II, 993b9–11. Cf. C. Steel, *Der Adler und die Nachtteule. Thomas und Albert über die Möglichkeit der Metaphysik*, Aschendorff: Münster 2001.

intellect move from being unaware to becoming aware of this special understanding? How does it discover that God is first known?

Bonaventure maintains that divine truth is always known *together* with a created standard, and in such a way that it is to some degree glimpsed by us, in our state of imperfection, but never directly grasped.<sup>46</sup> Correspondingly, divine truth as the reason of understanding (*ratio intelligendi*) cannot be the sole, the bare, or the whole reason.<sup>47</sup> As such, the divine ideas are not the *obiectum quod* of human knowledge, but merely the *obiectum quo*; only by their influence, we attain certain and direct knowledge of creatures. The specifying properties and material principles of our knowledge of creatures, which makes it distinct knowledge, arise out of experience.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Bonaventure argues that the divine ideas are ‘contuited’ rather than intuited. Whereas intuition designates immediate and direct knowledge of an object, contuition signifies knowing something else *in the course* of knowing the first object.<sup>49</sup> God is thus implicitly and confusedly known in all empirical knowledge. Therefore, knowing the essence of a creature can be the occasion for understanding something about God. This requires making this implicit, preliminary understanding of God explicit reflexively. This is done by way of analysis or resolution (*resolutio*)

For now, *resolutio* can be described as the analysis of a created being in which its relation to its first cause is included (in Chapter 2, this

46 *De scientia Christi* IV (V 23): ‘ad certitudinalem cognitionem necessario requiritur ratio aeterna ut regulans et ratio motiva, non quidem ut sola et in sua omnimoda claritate ut ex parte a nobis contuita secundum statum viae.’

47 Cf. *Christus unus omnium Magister* n. 18 (V 572): ‘Quod autem dicatur ratio intelligendi, sane intelligendum est, non quia sit intelligendi ratio sola, nec nuda, nec tota. Si enim esset ratio sola, non differret cognitio scientiae a cognitione sapientiae, nec cognitio in Verbo a cognitione in proprio genere. Rursus, si esset ratio nuda et aperta, non differret cognitio viae a cognitione patriae, quod quidem falsum est, cum illa sit facie a faciem, haec autem per speculum et in aenigmate; quia nostrum intelligere secundum statum viae non est sine phantasmate. Postremo, si esset ratio tota, non indigeremus specie et receptione ad cognoscendas res; quod manifeste videmus esse falsum, quia, amittentes unum sensum, necesse habemus amittere unam scientiam.’

48 *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi* q. 4 c (V 23–24).

49 For an extensive elaboration on ‘contuition’ as a Bonaventurian term to explain how divine ideas are attained in natural human cognition, cf. F. Roberts, *Divine Ideas as Pattern for Human Knowledge. Bonaventure and Thirteenth-Century Franciscan Theology on Divine and Human Knowledge*, diss. University of Louvain 2011, pp. 345–409, and J.M. Bissen, “De la contuition,” in: *Études Franciscaines* 46 (1934), pp. 559–69.

will be discussed at length). A complete resolution establishes full knowledge of a created being. At the same time, it discloses that an understanding of divine being is underlying knowledge of everything else.<sup>50</sup> Hence, knowledge of God is not so much *inferred* through resolution, the way it is in proofs of the existence of God, which also take created being as a starting point; rather, an understanding of God is *discovered* as the foundation of all other knowledge:<sup>51</sup> this procedure amounts to the explication of what is implicitly given in all empirical knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

In the third chapter of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, a good example of *resolutio* is given. Here, Bonaventure provides an argument concerning the full understanding of created being. He first states that something is only fully understood when it is fully defined. One comes to a definition of a term only by appealing to its generically superior term, until the most supreme and general terms (*suprema et generalissima*) are reached. Crucially, this resolution into what is most general is not considered to be sufficient. Bonaventure continues the analysis of created being by investigating the properties that all created beings have in common. These properties all pertain to the imperfections or defects of created being, such as the fact that all creatures are dependent, composite, mutable, etc. As in the account of God as first known from the *Collationes*, discussed in the previous section, he argues here that

50 L. Oeing-Hahnhoff "Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter." in: P. Wilpert (ed.), *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung*, De Gruyter: Berlin 1963, pp. 71–91, p. 81.

51 A. Gerken, „Identität und Freiheit – Ansatz und Methode im Denken des heiligen Bonaventura,“ in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 37 (1974), pp. 98–110, pp. 100–101.

52 Cf. J.M. Bissen, "De la contuition," pp. 559–69; R.E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Three-Fold Way to God," p. 102; L. Schumacher (2011), *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge*, Wiley-Blackwell: Hoboken (NJ) 2011, p. 131. Alexander Gerken concludes the following (p. 237): 'Bonaventura geht die verschiedenen Akte durch und findet bei ihrer Auflösung stets ein Moment, das nicht aus dieser Welt der Veränderung und Bewegung stammt. Es ist schlechthin das Moment des Unbedingten, das eine Erklärung weder aus dem Wesen der Dinge noch des menschlichen Geistes findet. Und doch fließt es in jeden höheren geistigen Akt als ein Konstitutivum mit ein, als ein Einfluß von oben.'; L. Hödl, "Die Zeichen-Gegenwart Gottes und das Gott-Ebenbild-Sein des Menschen in des hl. Bonaventura 'Itinerarium mentis in Deum,' c. 1–3," in: A. Zimmerman (ed.), *Das Begriff der Repraesentatio im Mittelalter*, De Gruyter: Berlin 1971, p. 94–112, pp. 104–105; E. Gilson, *La philosophie de saint Bonaventure*, Vrin: Paris 1924, 150, 429, 489, 525, 583 ff.



these ‘privations and defects cannot be known except through their positive features’. With this formula, Bonaventure argues that created being, defective as it is, can only be known through an understanding of divine being, which is in the possession of these positive features, i.e. it is perfect, independent, simple, etc.

He concludes that, to come to a full understanding of any created being (*ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum*), our intellect needs the help of an understanding of something that is most pure, actual, complete, and absolute. This is unqualified and eternal being, ‘in whom are the essences of all things in their purity’. By this he can only mean divine being, and the divine exemplars that it holds.

Thus, through the procedure of *resolutio*, the mind becomes aware of the foundation of knowledge of everything else that it has available to the mind. As becomes clear in the account of God as first known from *Collationes V* that was shortly discussed above (discussed extensively in Chapter 4), this preliminary understanding is mediated by an inner light of truth, which is already involved in natural knowledge.

### 1.1.5 Conclusions

This section discussed the doctrine of God as first known in the context of Bonaventure’s reductive exemplarism: here, it maintains that preliminary knowledge of divine being is involved in knowing creatures, which enables the metaphysician to see the world through the lens of causal exemplarity. The doctrine of God as first known runs parallel to the doctrine of illumination. What the former articulates in terms of being, the latter articulates in terms of truth.

The doctrine of illumination explains the mechanism by means of which preliminary knowledge of a divine exemplar can precede and condition all empirical knowledge of creatures as imperfect similitudes. The doctrine of God as first known argues that this understanding of divine being is at the basis of complete knowledge of creatures, that it is not founded on anything else, and that it is implicitly known in the course of knowing creatures. The awareness of this knowledge reflexively comes about through a process called resolution. In contrast, in theology, that God is first (known) is known immediately: an analysis of empirical knowledge is not necessary, as this insight is provided directly by revealed knowledge (in Chapter 4, the way in which God as first known is foundational in both metaphysics and theology will be further discussed).

Still, the question remains whether Bonaventure's exemplarism, in which the doctrine of God as first known has a central place, is based on a Platonic model of science or rather on an Aristotelian approach. Most interpreters regard Bonaventure's account of the foundation of natural knowledge within the context of his reductive exemplarism in a way that is in line with what I have described as a Platonic approach to science.

Etienne Gilson, for instance, argues that Bonaventure's philosophy is 'the most medieval' of all medieval philosophies because Bonaventure rejected pure reason as its ultimate foundation: natural reason is not autonomous as it relies on a source, known through a light of truth, which itself exceeds the limits of the natural.<sup>53</sup> Some interpreters of Bonaventure are even convinced that there is no such thing as 'Bonaventure's philosophy', because his metaphysics is fully defined by a theological perspective.<sup>54</sup> Among them is also Rudi Imbach, who holds that the place and content of philosophy in Bonaventure is strictly determined from the perspective of Christian faith and theology.<sup>55</sup> Rather than bound to its own autonomous rules, he argues, it is subjected to the regime of Christianity: an *intellektuelle Fremdbestimmtheit*.<sup>56</sup> Most radical of all Bonaventure scholarship is probably Joseph Ratzinger, who argues that Bonaventure wages 'a battle against a self-sufficient philosophy standing over against faith,' and even maintains a general anti-philosophical, even anti-intellectual attitude.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, although they characterize philosophy and natural reason in Bonaventure differently, all the interpreters mentioned here affirm philosophy's heteronomy in relation to theology. They do *not* recognize

53 E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 437.

54 For instance, Werner Dettloff argues that: "Es geho"rt zu den wichtigsten Voraussetzungen einer richtigen Bonaventura-Interpretation, daran zu denken, da"ß man nur in einem sehr uneigentlichen Sinne von einer „Philosophie Bonaventuras“ sprechen kann. Philosophie und Theologie bilden bei ihm eine so vollkommene Einheit, da"ß oft ein an sich rein philosophischer Gedankengang in Wahrheit von theologischen Gesichtspunkten bestimmt ist." Cf. W. Dettloff, "Licht und Erleuchtung in der Christlichen Theologie, besonders bei Bonaventura," in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 49 (1986), pp. 140–149, p. 147.

55 R. Imbach, "Bonaventura: Collationes in Hexaameron," in: K. Flasch (ed.), *Interpretationen. Hauptwerke der Philosophie: Mittelalter*, Reclam: Stuttgart 1998, p. 286.

56 *Ibid.*, 288.

57 J. Ratzinger. *Die Geschichtstheologie des Heiligen Bonaventura*, Schnell & Steiner: M"unchen 1959, esp. chapter 4.1: 'Die These Gilsons und seiner Anh"anger: Bonaventura der Augustinist', pp. 121–127.

in Bonaventure’s exemplarism an attempt to consolidate the realm of metaphysics with a proper foundation, on the basis of which it gains autonomy with regard to theology.

Andreas Speer, however, elaborately defends a very different position. He regards Bonaventure’s reductive exemplarism to be part of a *metaphysica reducens* that gains a certain disciplinary autonomy by allowing natural reason to collaborate with an inner light of truth, on the basis of which certain knowledge can be attained *naturally*.<sup>58</sup>

These differences in the scholarship on Bonaventure indicate that the function of God as first known within Bonaventure’s reductive exemplarism is less than straightforward. As I have shown in this section, it is indeed part of an encompassing project in which theology is the unifying science. The mind not yet capable to contemplate divine being immediately has to take recourse to an analysis of created beings, which point to their exemplary cause on the basis of analogous likeness. This analysis is part of a process of ever better ways of knowing God that requires a conversion away from the sensible inside oneself. The efforts of philosophy culminate in theology, the science that is founded on revealed knowledge. The reflexive awareness of a preliminary understanding of divine being, which is accomplished in a resolution of knowledge of created being, only stresses the necessity of this conversion inwards, and the fact that knowledge of God, the ultimate goal of all cognitive endeavours, is established in metaphysics in a *preliminary* way. From this perspective, the doctrine of God as first known can indeed be seen as part of what I designated a ‘Platonic approach’ to science.

Yet, at the same time, there is no doubt that metaphysics is given a specific task (study all things in relation to their exemplary cause), subject (divine being), and foundation (preliminary knowledge of divine being as the basis for all empirical knowledge), all to which natural reason is capable independent of either revealed knowledge or grace. In this sense, the continuum with Augustine’s illuminationism and exemplarism is breached, in favor of what I designated as an ‘Aristotelian approach’ to science, in which metaphysics acquires more disciplinary autonomy.

58 For instance, cf. A. Speer “Bonaventure and the question of a medieval philosophy,” pp. 25–46.

## 1.2 God as first known and the transcendentals

### 1.2.1 Introduction

Steven Marrone calls it ‘an extraordinary moment’ for the Augustinian tradition in the 13th century that in Bonaventure, the idea of divinity, conceived as ‘pure being’, and implicated in and known before all other objects of understanding, together with the notion of a natural impression of God, is ‘woven into the fabric of his doctrine of illumination’.<sup>59</sup> However, in Bonaventure’s adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals, the subject of the present section, the doctrine of God as first known also maintains a central position.<sup>60</sup> Similar to other medieval accounts of the transcendentals, it seeks to explain the relation between ‘being’ and the other transcendental predicates (in this case, ‘one’, ‘true’ and ‘good’), in order to provide metaphysics as first philosophy with the basic structure of a science according to an Aristotelian model. In such a model, science (*epistêmê*) not only deals with facts but also explains them by displaying their priority relations, both in the order of being and in the order of knowledge.<sup>61</sup> Notwithstanding the Aristotelian impetus that set the development of medieval transcendental thought in motion, the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals should not be perceived as a purely Aristotelian endeavor. Rather, it is an integration of Platonism and Aristotelianism in the attempt to find a foundation for both being and knowledge.<sup>62</sup> This section focuses on this integration in Bonaventure’s account of the transcendentals.

As Andreas Speer and Jan Aertsen argue in *Die Philosophie Bonaven-*

59 S. P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance*, pp. 214–18.

60 For a more extensive account of Bonaventure’s adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals, Cf. G. Cresta, *Die Transzendentalien des Seins als onto-theologische Grundsätze des Seienden: ein Beitrag zu Metaphysik und Anthropologie Bonaventuras*, diss. Universität Freiburg 2004; J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*; J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, “Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre,” in: *Recherches de Theologie et Philosophie Medievales* 64 (1), pp. 32–66.

61 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 78a22–28.

62 As Wouter Goris argues: “In der Transzendentalienlehre entwickelten mittelalterliche Denker eine Letztbegründung des theoretischen Denkens, die sich nicht als eine weitere Lehre neben anderen versteht, sondern als eine solche, welche die überlieferten Traditionen zu umfassen und zu verbinden weiß.” Cf. W. Goris (ed.), *Die Metaphysik und das Gute: Aufsätze zu ihrem Verhältnis in Antike und Mittelalter*, Jan A. Aertsen zu Ehren, Peeters: Louvain 1999, p. XII.

*turas und die Transzendentalienlehre*, the doctrine of God as first known is integrally part of his account of the transcendentals as it deals with first principles, i.e. the foundations of knowledge of everything that is. Hence, it contributes significantly to the *Begrundungsleistung* of medieval metaphysics as transcendental thought, in line with what was described as an Aristotelian model of science.<sup>63</sup> In this context, the doctrine of God as first known can therefore be argued to be involved in the emancipation of metaphysics by providing it with a proper structure and foundation.

However, the parallelism between the order of knowledge and the order of being that is established with the doctrine of God as first known, or, more precisely, the identification of the first principle of being with the first principle of knowledge, is *not* in line with an Aristotelian approach to science. This identification relates to the characteristic focus of Bonaventure’s adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals: his focus on the *vestigiality* of the “most noble and general” conditions of all created being, and their concrete role in helping the soul ascend to God – an encompassing project in which metaphysics is embedded. In as far as Aristotle was held to make the foundations of metaphysics immanent to the system of metaphysics itself, this focus on the reference of created being to something that cannot be directly studied in metaphysics, i.e. divine being, is not Aristotelian.

### 1.2.2 *The transcendentals as the most noble and general conditions of being*

Through the reception of Aristotle’s work on metaphysics as a science of being qua being, the medieval conception of metaphysics was transformed into a ‘transcendental science’ in the thirteenth century Latin West. In this process, Avicenna’s reception of Aristotle was particularly influential.<sup>64</sup> He assigned common being as the subject of metaphysics, because a first philosophy can only deal with something self-evident and non-demonstrable. Because of its self-evidence, ‘being’ is also a first conception to the intellect. Herewith, Avicenna rejected God as the subject of metaphysics, because it is God who is demonstrated *in* metaphysics.

In the thirteenth century elaborations on first philosophy, many

63 J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, “Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre,” pp. 32–66.

64 J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, pp. 672–3.

followed in Avicenna's footsteps. The doctrine of the transcendentals, dealing with the question of whether there are terms by which absolutely anything can be characterized, was now fully developed. These terms are called 'transcendentals' because their extension includes the extensions of the terms that name each and every one of the (Aristotelian) categories into which being is divided, *and* is greater than, i.e. transcends, these extensions. Since (most) medieval thought is ontotheological, God is conceived as a being as well. Therefore, the transcendental attributes of being apply not only to created being, but also to divine being, which transcends categorial being. This medieval interpretation of metaphysics as first philosophy brought about a shift of focus away from an investigation of creation in order to rise above it – consistent with the Platonic project of metaphysics – to an ontology that focuses on being *qua* being, and on its disciplinary structure, foundation and autonomy.<sup>65</sup> Although Bonaventure objects to this shift of focus, his work incorporates elements of this new ontology at the same time.

Although Aristotle's first philosophy as the science of being *qua* being and Avicenna's reception of it set off the 'transcendentalization' of medieval metaphysics,<sup>66</sup> others, such as Boethius and Augustine, are relevant in the history of ideas that led to the doctrine of the transcendentals as well.

Augustine, for instance, discusses unity, truth, goodness, and being as predicates that relate to God in a primary and privileged way, and only in a derivative way to God's creation.<sup>67</sup> In *De Hebdomadibus*, Boethius investigated the tensions between participation and substantiality, a tension that relates to the tension between Platonism and Aristotelianism. He came to identify the general conditions belonging to substances. These conditions are general precisely because they pertain to substances as the effects of a creative cause, in which these substances participate. In doing so, Boethius sought "to bring the positions of Aristotle and Plato into a certain harmony, and to show

65 Cf. W. Goris, J.A. Aertsen, "Medieval Theories of Transcendentals," in: E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition) URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/transcendentals{-}medieval/>>.

66 Cf. Introduction, n.11.

67 Cf. W. Goris, J.A. Aertsen, "Medieval Theories of Transcendentals."

that they are not at odds about everything, as many hold, but that on most things in philosophy they are quite in agreement.”<sup>68</sup>

Hence, within the history and development of the doctrine of the transcendentals itself a tension between elements from the Aristotelian and the Platonic tradition is present. This tension is reflected in Bonaventure’s treatment of the transcendentals, and in particular in the role and place that is given to the doctrine of God as first known.

### 1.2.3 *The vestigiality of the transcendentals in Bonaventure*

Bonaventure’s statement that without (the understanding of) unity, truth and goodness, a thing cannot be nor can it be understood to be,<sup>69</sup> found already in the *Sentences*, unambiguously indicates that the transcendentals play an essential role in both his epistemology and ontology as first principles. In the following sections, this role will be described.

In the *Breviloquium* (1257), a condensed *Summa* that Bonaventure wrote for his students to offer them guidance in studying the Scriptures, we find two important passages that deal with the transcendentals. They provide insight into Bonaventure’s approach. In chapter VI of its first book, of which the encompassing theme is the trinity, the transcendentals are first presented as ‘the most noble and universal conditions of being’ (*conditions entis nobilissimae et generalissimae*). Bonaventure stresses that these conditions do not contract being according to its ‘supposit’ (*supposita*) – by which he means that the transcendentals do not limit being in reality – but rather, conceptually (*secundum rationem*).<sup>70</sup> The transcendentals cover all domains of existence: the divine, the natural world, and the world of the human mind. However, they do not apply to all kinds of being in the same way. Bonaventure’s main

68 Boethius, *In Librum Aristotelis De interpretatione*, (ed. in: *Patrologia Latina* 64, Paris 1891<sup>2</sup>, p. 433): “His peractis non equidem contempserim Aristotelis Platonisque sententias, in unam quodammodo revocare concordiam, et in his eos non ut plerique dissentire in omnibus, sed in plerisque quae sunt in philosophia maxime consentire demonstrarem.”

69 I *Sent.*, d.3, p.2, a.1, q.3 (I 86): ‘dicitur essenziale sine quo res non potest esse nec potest intelligi esse, ut sunt illa in quibus attenditur ratio vestigii, ut unitas, veritas, bonitas.’

70 *Breviloquium* I.6 (V 214–5): ‘Quia enim primum principium est nobilissimum et perfectissimum, ideo condiciones entis nobilissimae et generalissimae in eo reperiuntur in summo. Hae autem sunt unum, verum, bonum, quae non contrahunt ens secundum supposita, sed secundum rationem.’

goal in this reflection on the trinity, is to argue that the transcendentals are attributed to divine being *par excellence*: the divine essence is argued to be convertible with unity, truth and goodness in their most supreme form, as the first principle is the most noble and perfect being.

Like his teacher Alexander of Hales,<sup>71</sup> Bonaventure enriches his account with a *trinitarian motive*: he relates the transcendentals not only to the divine essence, but also to the trinity of persons. Unity is appropriated to the father, truth to the son, and goodness to the spirit.<sup>72</sup> This appropriation relates to the characteristics of the three persons of the trinity. The highest unity is appropriated to the father, as he is the absolute first (and therefore cannot be a composite), the highest truth is appropriated to the son as he is the most equal and most beautiful,<sup>73</sup> and the highest good is appropriated to the spirit as the most useful, beneficial and communicable.<sup>74</sup>

In addition, the transcendentals are related to the trinity as a *causing principle*: as the highest one implies principle and origin, it is appropriated to the father as efficient cause. The highest beauty (substituting 'the highest truth' here) holds expression and example; therefore it is appropriated to the son as exemplary cause. Finally, the highest good includes the concept of an end, because of which it is appropriated to the spirit as final cause.<sup>75</sup> Hence, in its supreme form, unity implies *principality*, whereas truth implies *exemplarity* and good implies *finality*.

71 Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* I.3 q.1 c.1, n.73 (ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, Quarrachi 1951, vol. I, p. 115): 'secundum quod esse rerum comparatur in relatione ad causam divinam, simili modo triplicatur determinatio. Causa enim divina est causa in triplici genere causae: efficiens, formalis ut exemplar, finalis. Quae quidem causalitas, cum sit communis toti Trinitati, appropriatur ut causa efficiens Patri, exemplaris Filio, finalis Spiritui Sancto.'

72 *Breviloquium* I.6 (V 214–5): 'omnia essentialia omnibus personis aequaliter et indifferenter convenient; tamen Patri dicitur appropriari unitas, Filio veritas, Spiritui sancto bonitas.'

73 For a similar equation of beauty and truth in Bonaventure, cf. I *Sent.*, d.31, p.2, a.1, q.3 (I 543–5).

74 *Breviloquium* I.6 (V 214–5): 'Et quia summe unum est summe primum, quia caret omni inceptio; et quia summe verum est summe aequale et pulcrum; et quia summe bonum est summe utile et proficuum: hinc oritur secunda appropriatio Hilarii, quae est aeternitas in Patre, quia non habet initium sed est omnino primum; species in Imagine, id est in Verbo, quia summe pulcrum, usus in Munere, id est in Spiritu sancto, quia summe proficuum et communicativum.'

75 *Ibid.* (V 215): *Breviloquium* I.6.3: 'quia summe unum et primum tenet rationem principiandi et originandi; summe pulcrum et speciosum tenet rationem finiendi,



Thus, being and its transcendental conditions one, true and good, do not only apply to all creatures, but, most of all, they apply to God in a threefold way: as divine essence, holy trinity and causing principle.

It is the way in which Bonaventure elaborates on God as a causing principle that structures his approach to the transcendentals. This becomes clear from the second book of the *Breviloquium*, which deals with creation. Here, a second important section on the transcendentals is found. In chapter II.1, Bonaventure focuses on the *relation* of the transcendentals as properties of both creatures and the divine, and on the relation between both. Here, created being is described to receive its unity, truth, and goodness from a perfect being, which necessarily acts from itself (*a se*), according itself (*secundum se*) and because of itself (*propter se*). As such, God acts as a threefold cause with respect to every creature.<sup>76</sup> On account of this causal relation, everything is one, true and good:<sup>77</sup> as an efficient cause, God brings about the unity of the creature; as an exemplary cause, he brings about the truth of the creature; as final cause, he brings forth the goodness of the creature.<sup>78</sup>

This relation of creatures to God’s threefold causality is not something new: we find it in Philip the Chancellor as well. He relates the unity of everything to the first being (*primo ente*) as an efficient cause, the truth of all being to God as a formal cause, and the goodness of being to God as a final cause.<sup>79</sup> However, both Bonaventure and Alexander

quia “bonum et finis idem”: hic oritur tertia ratio appropriandi efficientiam Patri, exemplaritatem Filio, finalitatem Spiritui sancto.’

76 *Breviloquium* II., 1 (V 219):.4: ‘quoniam principium perfectissimum, a quo manat perfectio universorum, necesse est agere a se et secundum se et propter se – quia nullo in agendo indiget extra se – necesse est, quod habeat respectu cuiuslibet creaturae intentionem triplicis causae, scilicet efficientis, exemplaris et finalis.’

77 *Ibid.*: ‘necesse est etiam, omnem creaturam secundum hanc triplicem habitudinem comparari ad causam primam. Omnis creatura constituitur in esse ab efficiente, conformatur ad exemplar et ordinatur ad finem; ad per hoc est una, vera, bona.’

78 *Ibid.*, II.1.2: ‘Per hoc autem, quod additur in certo pondere, numero et mensura, ostenditur, quod creatura est effectus Trinitatis creantis sub triplici genere causalitatis: efficientis, a quo est in creatura unitas, modus et mensura; exemplaris, a quo est in creatura veritas, species et numerus; finales, a quo est in creatura bonitas, ordo et pondus.’

79 Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono* q. VII (ed. N. Wicki, Francke: Bern 1985, vol. I, pp. 26–27): ‘dicendum est quod sunt tres conditiones concomitantes esse: unitas, veritas et bonitas. Unitas autem est prima illarum, secunda veritas, tertia bonitas. In idem enim possunt coincidere efficiens, formalis et finalis, sed materialis non. Unde, unaquaqueque essentielle habens has tres rationes causarum tres habet

of Hales<sup>80</sup> go yet one step further, as they connect this relation based on causality to the *vestigiality* of creatures, i.e. the fact that creatures can – and should – be seen as traces, signs, or references that lead us back to God. But much more than his teacher Alexander, Bonaventure elaborates on the nature of this vestigiality and on the way in which it concretely helps the human mind in reducing the created to the divine.

In the *Sentences*, Bonaventure argues that we can come to know God through sensible things because they are one, true and good,<sup>81</sup> the most universal and intelligible (*maxime conditions et intelligibilis*) conditions of being.<sup>82</sup> Bonaventure argues here that they should be regarded as a way from the creature to God as a ‘ratio cognoscendi through superexcellence,’ because every noble property in a creature is to be attributed to God in its highest degree.<sup>83</sup> This is because

conditiones quae concomitantur esse ejus secundum quod est a primo ente: ut a primo ente, secundum rationem unius efficiatur unumquodque ens unum ab ipso, secundum quod est causa formalis exemplaris, verum, secundum quod est finalis, bonum.’

80 Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* I.3 q. 1 c. 1, n. 88 (ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, vol. I, p. 140): ‘Istae ergo intentiones non separantur ab essentia rei velut vestigia primae causae, quae est Trinitas unius essentiae.’; *Ibid.*, I, n. 73 (p. 115): ‘Item, secundum quod esse rerum comparatur in relationem ad causam divinam, simili modo triplicatur determinatio. Causa enim divina est causa in triplici genere causae: efficiens, formalis ut exemplar, finalis. [...] Secundum hoc, esse in creatura, quod fluit a causa, triplicem sortitur impressionem, ut in conformatione ad causam. Impressio ergo dispositionis in esse creaturae, secundum quam fit conformitate ad efficientem causam, est unitas. [...] Item, impressio dispositionis, secundum quam fit in conformitate ad causam formalem exemplarem, est veritas. [...] Praeterea, impressio secundum quam fit in conformitate ad causam finalem, est bonum. (...) Unitas esse creaturae monstrat unitatem efficientis, veritas veritatem exemplaris, bonitas bonitatem finis.’

81 *I Sent.*, d.3, p.1, q.2 (V 73): ‘Nam creaturae dicuntur (...) vestigium quantum ad proprietatem, quae respicit Deum sub ratione triplicis causae, efficientis, formalis et finalis, sicut sunt unum, verum et bonum. (...) Quoniam enim omnis creatura comparatur ad Deum et in ratione causae et in ratione triplicis causae, ideo omnis creatura est umbra vel vestigium.’

82 *Ibid.*: ‘unitas, veritas, bonitas, in quibus consistit vestigium, sunt conditiones maxime universales et intelligibiles.’

83 *Ibid.*, d.3, q.2 (V 72): ‘Si autem cognoscatur quoad conditiones perfectionis, sic potest esse dupliciter, sicut pictura dupliciter cognoscitur: aut sicut pictura, aut sicut imago; unde aut sistitur in pulcritudine creaturae, aut per illam tenditur in aliud. Si primo modo, tunc est via deviationis (...) Si secundo modo, prout est via in aliud, sic est ratio cognoscendi per superexcellenciam, quia omnis proprietas nobilis in creatura Deo est attribuenda in summo; et sic patet illud.’

these properties relate in terms of *analogy*; they establish an analogous relation between the creator and the created.<sup>84</sup> On this basis of analogy, everything, however small it may be, is compared to God.<sup>85</sup>

In addition to his focus on the vestigiality of the transcendentals, Bonaventure’s treatment of the transcendentals is characterized by its functionality within the mind’s road to God, as Jan Aertsen argues.<sup>86</sup> This ascent, which is elaborately and concretely described in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, consists of a first step, in which material substances are studied, followed by a second step, in which spiritual substances are considered. In a third step, the soul contemplates God in a more immediate way.<sup>87</sup> In all stages, the transcendentals guide the ascending soul. Accordingly, the transcendentals do not only relate to the vestigiality of creatures; they are also related to the soul as an image of God. The (human) soul is an image as it not only has God as its cause, but also can have God as its object. This is possible for all three faculties of the soul, i.e. memory, intelligence and will.

The relation of the transcendentals to the three faculties of the soul is already found in the work of Alexander of Hales.<sup>88</sup> Bonaventure also relates the transcendentals to the soul, which, as *imago Dei*, reflects its creator. However, he does not so much maintain that memory, intellect, and will relate to unity, truth and goodness in general, like Alexander, but rather, that they relate to *divine* unity, truth and goodness. This becomes clear in the third chapter of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. Unity is retained by *memory*, as it retains simple things without which it is impossible to remember or think of those things that are derived

84 *Ibid.*, d.3, q.2 (V 73): ‘Ad illud quod obiicitur de defectu communitatis, dicendum, quod non est commune per univocationem, tamen est commune per analogiam.’

85 II *Sent.*, d.35, a.2, q.1 (II 610–11): ‘et quia quodlibet ens, quantumcumque modicum, habet istam comparationem ad Deum, in quolibet ente creato reperiuntur haec tria’.

86 ‘The distinctive form of Bonaventure’s theory of the transcendentals is closely connected with his view of the human consideration of reality as an ascent of the mind to God,’ Jan Aertsen argues in J.A. Aertsen, (2012), *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, p. 147.

87 I *Sent.* d.3, p.1, a.1, q.2 (I 73): ‘Primus autem gradus quantum ad ascensum ad aspectum praesentiae est in consideratione visibilium, secundus in consideratione invisibilium, ut animae vel alterius substantiae spiritualis; tertius est ab anima in Deum, quia “imago ab ipsa veritate formatur et Deo immediate coniungitur”.’

88 J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval philosophy and the transcendentals. The case of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 46–47.

(*principiantur*) by means of them.<sup>89</sup> Because of its retention of all temporal things, i.e. of all things past, present, and future, memory has a likeness to eternity.<sup>90</sup> Although divine unity is not mentioned here explicitly, it is probable that with this likeness to eternity, a likeness or relation to divine unity is meant. *Intelligence* is argued to be able to grasp the truth of things, but only as it is conjoined to eternal truth itself; the mind cannot seize a truth with certitude except by means of the truth that is teaching it.<sup>91</sup> The *will* is focused on the good in everything, but leads into the highest goodness as it strives for the highest good. This presupposes the impression of the notion of the highest good.<sup>92</sup> On this basis, Bonaventure concludes that through a study of these three powers of the soul, ‘you will already be able to see God through yourself as through an image, which is to see God through a mirror in mystery.’<sup>93</sup>

Finally, the transcendentals as divine properties become even better known when the mind is transformed into a *similitudo* of God. Now it is able to reflect on the divine unity through God’s primary name, as it is revealed in the scriptures: ‘being’ (*esse*).<sup>94</sup> By contemplating divine being without interference of material substances, the mind learns that to the divine essence belongs ‘the most simple unity, the most serene truth, and the most sincere goodness’, though which all things are.<sup>95</sup>

The relation with his reductive exemplarism now becomes clear:

89 *Itinerarium* III.2 (V 303): ‘(Memoria) retinet etiam *simplicia*, sicut principia quantitatum continuarum et discretarum, ut punctum, instans et unitatem, sine quibus impossibile est meminisse aut cogitare ea quae principiantur per haec.’

90 *Ibid.*: ‘(memoria) igitur retentione actuali omnium temporalium, praeteritorum scilicet, praesentium et futurorum, habet effigiem aeternitatis, cuius praesens indivisibile ad omnia tempora se extendit.’

91 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Ex quo manifeste apparet, quod coniunctus sit intellectus noster ipsi aeternae veritati, dum non nisi per illam docentem nihil verum potest certitudinaliter capere.’

92 Cf. *Itinerarium* III.4 (V 304–5).

93 *Itinerarium* III.1 (V 303): ‘Considera igitur harum trium potentiarum operationes et habitudines, et videre poteris Deum per te tanquam per imaginem, quod est videre per speculum in aenigmate.’

94 Cf. *Itinerarium* V (V 308–10).

95 *Itinerarium* V.8 (V 310): ‘Quia vero est summe unum et omnimodum, ideo est omnia in omnibus, quamvis omnia sint multa et ipsum non sit nisi unum; et hoc, quia per simplicissimam unitatem, serenissimam veritatem, sincerissimam bonitatem est in eo omnis virtuositas, omnis exemplaritas et omnis communicabilitas; ac per hoc, ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia.’

by means of the transcendentals, Bonaventure provides a systematic account of the entirety of being, central to which is the way in which creatures as vestiges or similitudes relate to their causal exemplar. Hence, Bonaventure articulates metaphysics as a science that is not primarily concerned with being qua being, but with the vestigiality of creatures as they concretely lead the soul to God. Here, he diverges from Avicenna, who renounced a theological interpretation of the transcendentals.

#### 1.2.4 *The transcendentals as firsts in the order of understanding*

As they comprehend everything that is, the transcendentals also encompass being as it is thought by man, i.e. the world within the human mind (*minor mundus*). Here, we find that the transcendentals figure as firsts in the order of understanding. At this point, Bonaventure’s doctrine of the transcendentals overlaps with his doctrine of God as first known. As will be discussed in this section, whereas Thomas Aquinas – in line with Avicenna – maintains that common being is the first conception of the intellect, Bonaventure maintains that God is first known.

Bonaventure was not the first to hold that the transcendentals are intellectual firsts. Philip the Chancellor already did so. Wanting to refute the Manichean doctrine of the Cathars, he saw the main objective of his *Summa de bono* to defend the good as convertible with being in order to refute the possibility of materialized evil. In this context, he stated that the *communissima*, through which we find ‘the silver of understanding,’ are common principles that we have to understand first in order to be enlightened by Christian faith.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, following Avicenna, Philip located the primacy of the transcendentals on the level of *definition*: they cannot be defined by something prior to them, because the *primae* are convertible with being itself; there is no higher genus above them. Therefore, they are at the end point of any resolution: ‘Being, one, true and good are firsts (...) Of these first intentions it is

96 Philippus Cancellarius, *Summa de bono*, prol. (ed. N. Wicki, p. 4): ‘Sicut argentum in mineriis ex venis occultis tanquam ex suis principiis eruitur, ita intelligentia quaestionum ex communitate principiorum, tanquam ex occultis venis extrahitur, quibus ignoratis, caetera caligine involvuntur. Et ideo naufragaverunt circa fidem, rationem principiorum ignorantes, ut Manichaei. De bono autem intendimus, principaliter quod ad theologiam pertinet. Speculatio enim de aliis quantum ad differentiam boni nescitur pertinere.’

said that they are simple, because nothing is before them in which they can be resolved.<sup>97</sup>

Alexander of Hales also argues that being and its determinations cannot be defined.<sup>98</sup> But whereas Philip calls the transcendentals ‘firsts’ because of the fact they cannot be reduced to anything prior in the order of definition, Alexander goes one step further: the transcendentals are the first impressions upon the intellect. ‘Being’ is therefore regarded as the *first intelligible*, whereas the other first impressions upon the intellect are the first determinations of being, i.e. the transcendental conditions of being: one, true and good.<sup>99</sup> Herewith, the doctrine of the transcendentals undergoes a ‘cognitive turn’: its systematization no longer only applies to the ontological and conceptual status of the transcendentals, but it becomes part of a theory of cognition as well. But whereas Alexander does not explain this cognitive primacy of the transcendentals any further,<sup>100</sup> Bonaventure, like Thomas Aquinas, provides argumentation to defend that the transcendentals are first known. Another important difference with Alexander – and with Aquinas – is that Bonaventure does not maintain that common being, together

97 *Ibid.*, q. IX (ed. N. Wicki, p.30): ‘ens et unum et verum et bonum sunt prima (...). Prime intentiones simplices dicuntur, quia non est ante ipsas in que fiat resolutio. Ante prima non est quod in eorum veniat diffinitionem.’ Cf. H. Pouillon, “Le premier Traité des Propriétés transcendantales. La “Summa de bono” du Chancelier Philippe,” in: *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie* 42 (1939), pp. 42–43.

98 *Ibid.*, III q. 1 (ed. N. Wicki, p. 113): ‘Si ergo notificetur, hoc non poterit esse nisi per posteriora, hoc est per abnegationem oppositae intentionis et per positionem effectus consequentis’, ‘Hinc est quod in notificatione ‘unius’ est una notio per abnegationem, alia vero per effectum consequentem: per abnegationem oppositae intentionis (...) ‘ens indivisum’ (...) per effectum consequentem (...) ‘divisum ab aliis’.

99 Alexander of Hales, *Summa Theologica* I.3 q. 3 c. 1, (ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, p. 113). With concern to the fact that there is nothing prior or better *known* than being and its determinations, Alexander states here that these are not only first and best known simpliciter, but also first and best known to our intellect: they are the first impressions of the intellect: ‘respondendum quod sunt priora et notiora simpliciter et sunt priora et notiora quoad nos; primae autem impressiones intellectus, cum non habeant prius et notius simpliciter, non possunt notificari per priora simpliciter, sed notificantur per priora et notiora quoad nos (...) Dicendum quod cum sit ‘ens’ primum intelligibile, eius intentio apud intellectum est nota; primae ergo determinationes entis sunt primae impressiones apud intellectum: eae sunt unum verum, bonum.’

100 J.A. Aertsens, *Medieval philosophy and the transcendentals. The case of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 44.

with its transcendental conditions, but *divine* being and its attributions unity, truth and goodness are first known.

Bonaventure is not the very first to argue that God is first known; this position was already defended by his contemporary and fellow Franciscan Guibert of Tournai, in his *Rudimentum doctrinae*.<sup>101</sup> Guibert states here that God is first noticed by the intellect, and that through knowledge of God, everything else is known.<sup>102</sup> However, Guibert does not place this cognitive priority of the divine in the context of a systematical account of being and its intelligibility, as Bonaventure does. Guibert does not relate the firstness of God to natural reason and metaphysics. Rather, it remains part of his doctrine of divine illumination, as it is given by grace. Bonaventure, on the other hand, holds that a preliminary understanding of divine being and its conditions is present to every soul and every intellect as the condition of all knowledge. The clearest case in which Bonaventure shows how the transcendentals function as first known is given in *Itinerarium* III.3, which I will shortly discuss here (a much longer analysis of this text is found in Chapter 4).

With regard to the mind’s capacity to understand, Bonaventure first states here that something is only fully understood if it is fully defined. One comes to a definition of a term only by appealing to its generically superior term, until the most supreme and general terms (*suprema et generalissima*) are reached; without knowing them, the inferior terms (in this case, designating a particular substance) cannot be fully known. Therefore, Bonaventure argues, ‘unless being in itself (*ens per se*) is known, one cannot fully come to a definition of a specific substance. Being in itself cannot be known if its conditions remain unknown, which are one, true and good.’<sup>103</sup> Thus, not only being in itself is addressed as *first intelligible* here, its transcendental conditions one, true and good

101 Cf. C. Bérubé, *De la philosophie a la sagesse chez saint Bonaventure et Roger Bacon*, pp. 201–257; M. Laarmann, *Deus, Primum Cognitum. Die Lehre von Gott als dem Ersterkannten des menschlichen Intellekts bei Heinrich von Gent*, Aschendorff: Münster 1999, pp. 271–278; W. Goris (1999), “Die Anfänge der Auseinandersetzung um das Ersterkannte im 13. Jahrhundert: Guibert von Tournai, Bonaventura und Thomas von Aquin,” pp. 355–369.

102 Guibert of Tournai, *Rudimentum doctrinae*, p. 1, tract. III c.2 (ed. C. Bérubé, S. Gieben, p. 647–651): ‘Quod in creatura Deus primo ab intelligentia advertitur, et sic in eo quodammodo cetera cognoscuntur.’

103 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Capit autem intellectus terminorum significata, cum comprehendit, quid est unumquodque per definitionem. Sed definitio habet fieri per superiora, et illa per superiora definiri habent, usquequo veniatur ad suprema et generalissima, quibus ignoratis, non possunt intelligi definitive inferiora. Nisi

are as well. However, Bonaventure continues by demonstrating that these firsts are not truly first after all. The reason behind this is that not making the distinction between created and divine being by assuming the unspecified concept of *ens per se* as *primum obiectum cognitum*, which addresses both God and created substance,<sup>104</sup> would be inadequate, because ‘privations and defects cannot be known except through their positive features’.

To demonstrate this, twelve disjunctions are presented, in each of which a privation is opposed to its position, to illustrate that being can be thought of either as imperfect or as perfect, as dependent or as independent, simple and composite, etc. Clearly, the privations are aspects of created being, whereas their positions are proper to the divine. With this series of disjunctions, Bonaventure aims to clarify that created being, defective as it is, can only be known through a concept of a perfect being. Therefore, Bonaventure concludes that, to come to a full understanding of any created being (*ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum*), our intellect needs the help of a concept of something that is most pure, actual, complete, and absolute – by which he can only mean a concept of the divine being.

Finally, Bonaventure notes that this argument also applies to the conditions mentioned before (*conditiones praelibatis*): one, true and good as conditions of *divine* being are presupposed to all other knowledge as well.<sup>105</sup> Hence, whereas at first, it appeared as if being as such (*ens*

igitur cognoscatur quid est ens per se, non potest plene sciri definitio alicuius specialis substantiae. Nec ens per se cognosci potest, nisi cognoscatur cum suis conditionibus, quae sunt; unum, verum, bonum.’

<sup>104</sup> Cf. I *Sent.*, d.8, p.2, a.1, q.4 (I 173–4). Here, Bonaventure uses the term *ens per se* both for created being and divine being, but he explains this use is equivocal: God is a being through himself because he needs nothing; a creature is a being through itself as substance ‘because it is not in another as subject’ (*Deus enim est ens per se, quia nullo egens; creatura est ens per se, quia non est in alio ut in subiecto, eget tamen alio ad sui conservationem*). However, the creature needs something else for its conservation. In the mind, *ens per se* therefore analogously addresses both divine and created substance.

<sup>105</sup> *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Ens autem, cum possit cogitari ut diminutum et completum, ut imperfectum et ut perfectum, ut ens in potentia et ut ens in actu, ut ens secundum quid et ut ens simpliciter, ut ens in parte et ut ens totaliter, ut ens transiens et ut ens manens, ut ens per aliud et ut ens per se, ut ens permixtum non-enti et ut ens purum, ut ens dependens et ut ens absolutum, ut ens posterius et ut ens prius, ut ens mutabile et ut ens immutabile, ut ens simplex et ut ens compositum: cum “privationes et defectus nullatenus possint cognosci nisi per



*per se*) and its most general conditions were first known, Bonaventure continues his analysis and finally concludes that it must be *divine* being that, on the basis of its unique and supreme qualities, is first known.

To point out the specificity of Bonaventure’s position, a short comparison to Thomas Aquinas is useful. Aquinas draws on a primarily Aristotelian line of thought with regard to a first known: he distinguishes between what is prior to us, i.e. relatively, and what is prior in itself, i.e. absolutely. Whereas God is an *a priori* first, his effects are first known *to us*.<sup>106</sup> What is not material, such as God, cannot be directly known, let alone be *first* known.<sup>107</sup> Correspondingly, not God but common being is argued to be the subject of metaphysics. Within the realm of natural knowledge, human reason can only acquire *a posteriori* knowledge of God through creatures.<sup>108</sup> What we know about God is an *end product* of natural reason rather than the starting point, as it is inferred from knowledge of creatures, rather than underlying it.<sup>109</sup>

That we have available to us an understanding of divine being mediated by illumination is denied by Thomas Aquinas, in a way similar to Aristotle’s denial of the existence of Plato’s world of ideas. What is first and better known *for us*, and the starting point of our cognition, is being in general, Aquinas argues in *De veritate* 1.1, in which the resolution must end.<sup>110</sup> For Bonaventure the Franciscan, however,

positiones”, non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuvetur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti; quod est ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate. Quomodo autem sciret intellectus, hoc esse ens defectivum et incompletum, si nullam haberet cognitionem entis absque omni defectu? Et sic de aliis conditionibus praelibatis.’

106 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I. 2. 2 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 4, Ex Typographia Polyglotta: Rome 1888, pp. 8–9).

107 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate*, q. 1., art. 3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 50, Ex Typographia Polyglotta: Rome – Paris 1992, p. 87). Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval philosophy and the transcendentals. The case of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 10

108 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate* 1.3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, p. 87): ‘quidem dixerunt quod primum quod a mente humana cognoscitur etiam in hac vita est ipse Deus, qui est veritas prima, et per hoc omnia alia cognoscuntur.’ Cf. W. Goris, “Die Vergewärtigung des Heils. Thomas von Aquin und die Folgezeit,” in: J.A. Aertsen / M. Pickavé (eds.), *Ende und Vollendung. Eschatologische Perspektiven im Mittelalter*, De Gruyter: Berlin 2002, pp. 417–433, p. 418.

109 J.P. Torell, “La vision de Dieu per essentiam selon saint Thomas d’Aquin,” in: *Micrologus* 5 (1997), pp. 43–68.

110 Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate* 1.1 (ed. Commissio Leonina,

a divine standard is available to the intellect through illumination. Because of this, what is first by nature can be identical to what is better known to us, although we come to realize this only after an analysis of that of which we are first aware of, i.e. created substances. Thus, Bonaventure's decisive argument for a first known is not based on its generality, but rather, on its unique and supreme qualities as a first principle.

### 1.2.5 Conclusions

This second section of this chapter discussed Bonaventure's adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals. By means of the transcendentals, Bonaventure organizes his *metaphysica reducens* as a study of being according to an Aristotelian model of science, with its own (first) principles and priority relations. The doctrine of God as first known is a central part of this organization of metaphysics.

Bonaventure elaborates on the transcendentals (one, true and good) as the noblest and most general conditions of being; terms by which absolutely anything can be characterized. Most eminently, however, these transcendental terms apply to divine being. This is not characteristic of Bonaventure's account: a central question of the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals is that of how the transcendentals as common to all things relate to what is proper to God.<sup>111</sup> Rather, Bonaventure's account of the transcendentals is marked by the all-pervasive effort of his metaphysics to reduce all creatures to their first principle, both in the order of being and in the order of knowledge. His main focus is therefore on the vestigiality of the transcendentals, i.e. the fact that the being and the being 'one', 'true' and 'good' of all creatures refer to divine being, its unity, truth and goodness.

Corresponding to this vestigiality, the transcendentals as they apply to the divine are *epistemological firsts*. They are discovered by a conceptual resolution that leads to what the synthetic construction of knowledge takes as its starting point: ultimately, it is concluded, our intellect needs the help of an understanding of divine being, unity, truth and goodness in order to completely understand any creature. In this way, the transcendentals help to lift the human mind up from considering

vol. 22/I, Rome: 1970, p.4–5): 'Sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri reductionem in aliqua principia per se intellectui nota, ita investigando quid est unumquodque. Alias utrobique in infinitum iretur, et sic periret omnino scientia et cognitio rerum.'

111 J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought. From Philipp the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, Brill: Leiden – Boston 2012, p. 9.

creation to considering the divine, and hence contribute to the soul’s ascent to God.

Thus, Bonaventure considers the transcendentals to be first known, not because they are most general or common, as Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas maintain, but because they apply to divine being *par excellence*. Hence, in Bonaventure, firstness and commonness are not reciprocal in the way they are in Philip or Aquinas. Rather, he chooses a more theological interpretation of the transcendentals: the special status of divine being, unity, truth and goodness as *exemplary causes* grant them primacy *both* in the order of knowledge and the order of being. In this way, Bonaventure consolidates metaphysics as a science of being that is still founded on knowledge of God, and more consonant with his reductive exemplarism than it initially appeared. In doing so, Bonaventure at least *partially* distantiates himself from an Aristotelian interpretation of metaphysics as a science in the line of Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas, and aligns it with a more Platonic approach.

### 1.3 Conclusions

In this first chapter, the place of Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known in two of the most important *systembildende Elemente* of his *metaphysica reducens*, i.e. exemplarism and his account of the transcendentals, was discussed. On the basis of this discussion, it can be concluded that what *integrates* Bonaventure’s exemplarism and his account of the transcendentals into one metaphysical system is the fact that divine being as *exemplary cause*, known through an inserted light of truth on which natural reason relies, provides the basis for the identification of what is first in the order of being with that which is first in the order of knowledge.

At the same time, from this discussion, it can also be concluded that there is a *tension* between these two models of foundations in Bonaventure that co-exist in his thought, a tension that suggests a *redundancy* in the account of the foundations of natural knowledge: in exemplarism, natural reason relies on the transcendent ideas as the foundations of empirical knowledge, whereas in the doctrine of the transcendentals, natural reason is founded on the self-evidency of the transcendental notions as first principles. The question remains: how do both models of foundation relate within the realm of natural reason?

An answer to this question will be given in Chapter 3, on the role

of knowledge of the divine in Bonaventure's theory of cognition. The analysis of this subject will reveal that the account of divine being as first known within the doctrine of the transcendentals corresponds with the act of *judgment* that is involved in the establishment of distinct knowledge, i.e. complete and determinate knowledge of something: to know something created completely and definitely, you have to relate it to its first cause. The account of God as first known found in Bonaventure's exemplarism, however, *also* corresponds with the process of making the sensible intelligible, sometimes described by Bonaventure as *abstraction*. In this act, confuse knowledge is generated: knowledge of created being in which knowledge of divine being is implicitly given. Hence, the accounts of what is first known in exemplarism and the doctrine of the transcendentals relate to two stages in the development of knowledge.

This chapter started by arguing that within Bonaventure's metaphysics, there is a tension between two models of science, both of which relate to God as first known. These models I designated 'Platonic' and 'Aristotelian'. With a Platonic model of science I mean here: an approach to science in which metaphysics does not have a proper foundation but is relative to theology, the unifying science in which all sciences should culminate. In contrast, an Aristotelian model of science allows for a *plurality* of sciences, each of which has a proper subject, structure and foundation. By the way, it needs to be noted that the latter model does not automatically declare metaphysics to be an autonomous first philosophy; rather, it was debated upon what was to be understood by Aristotle's divine science, by which man becomes wise: natural theology cq. metaphysics, or rather theology based on revelation.

It has now become clear that the tension – or rather, integration – between the Aristotelian and the Platonic is found in *both* exemplarism and the doctrine of the transcendentals, not merely between them. Exemplarism proceeds from the proposition that an immanent reality (created being) depends on a transcendent world (divine being), in which the exemplars of all things reside, and that the final aim of all cognitive endeavors is knowledge of this divine exemplar. The end point of the metaphysician is merely a *reflexive awareness* of the fact that he has an understanding of divine being, on the basis of which he knows everything else. The theologian, in contrast, has a more immediate and profound access to knowledge of divine being on the basis of revealed knowledge, and continues where the metaphysician ends. This provides metaphysics with a preliminary character as opposed

to theology as unifying science. Notwithstanding this hierarchy, it was however concluded that in Bonaventure’s exemplarism, at least to a certain extent, metaphysics is granted disciplinary autonomy, as natural reason is able to establish certain and complete knowledge of created being by taking recourse to an inserted light of truth (*lumen inditum*), on the basis of which the divine exemplars can be involved in knowing with certainty. The discovery of a preliminary understanding of divine being, which is known through this light, affirms this proper foundation.

By elaborating on the transcendentals Bonaventure accounts for the systematical unity of metaphysics as a science of being, and establishes the legitimation of natural knowledge on the basis of first principles. This provides metaphysics with disciplinary autonomy. However, Bonaventure’s doctrine of the transcendentals articulates a first philosophy that is not primarily concerned with being qua being, but rather with the *vestigiality* of created being and its transcendental conditions ‘one’, ‘true’ and ‘good’. Both in the *ordo essendi* and the *ordo cognoscendi*, these *vestigia* lead the soul to divine being, unity, truth, and goodness as *prima*. In this respect, Bonaventure diverges from Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas, who focus on a study of common being, and aligns his account of the transcendentals with a more Platonic approach to science.

In fact, assessing Bonaventure’s balancing act between the Platonic and Aristotelian is fundamental to an analysis of his doctrine of God as first known. Every chapter of this dissertation will provide such an assessment in its own way. In the case of the next chapter, this concerns the way in which the integration of the Aristotelian and the Platonic shapes the *method* of God as first known, i.e. *resolutio plena*.

## Resolutio plena as the method of the doctrine of God as first known. Three different critiques on the ‘semi-plena’

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, I dealt with Bonaventure’s *metaphysica reducens*, which argues that nature cannot be explained by means of itself, but leads beyond itself to God. This conception of metaphysics criticizes any ontology in which the philosopher’s investigation only focuses on the empirical world, and searches for immanent first principles. Rather, Bonaventure argues that the major goal of the metaphysician is to be led from creatures as *vestigia Dei* to (an understanding of) divine being. This goal is attained both through a study of the empirical world, in which created beings refer to their exemplary cause, and through the analysis of knowledge of created beings into God as first known. The present chapter focuses on the latter procedure: *resolutio plena* as the method of the doctrine of God as first known. This method is shaped by the integration of a Platonic conception of what is first known into a metaphysics that, inspired by an ontological interpretation of Aristotle’s first philosophy, systematically deals with (the knowledge of) being.

Very generally, a resolution within the order of knowledge can be described, as Michael Beaney does, as a method of analysis in which a thing is related to its ultimate principle through a regressive process of working back from what is initially taken as given to the mind to what is more fundamental, and on which the knowledge of this initial thing ultimately depends.<sup>1</sup>

1 In his elaborate lemma in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on ‘analysis’, Michael Beaney maintains that in ancient Greek thought, ‘analysis’ referred primarily to the process of working back to first principles by means of which something could then be demonstrated. This is a *regressive* conception of analysis, which heavily influenced medieval conceptions of analysis or *resolutio*. As the classic source for our understanding of ancient Greek analysis, Beaney mentions a passage in Pappus’s *Mathematical Collection* (± 300 AD): ‘For in analysis we suppose that which is sought to be already done, and we inquire from what it results, and again what is the antecedent of the latter, until we on our backward way light upon

In the case of Bonaventure, it is well known that resolution is a technique that discovers that knowledge of the divine is presupposed to knowledge of the created.<sup>2</sup> The term ‘*resolutio*’ is also used by Bonaventure to address the process of understanding *itself*, and describes the understanding intellect as a ‘resolving intellect’ (*intellectus resolvens*).<sup>3</sup> A fully resolving intellect (*plene resolvens*) establishes complete knowledge

something already known and being first in order. And we call such a method analysis, as being a solution backwards.’ Cf. M. Beaney, “Analysis,” in: E.N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 edition). See for a similar account of analysis as regression L. Oeing-Hanhoff, “Analyse/Synthese,” in: J. Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Schwabe & Co: Basel 1971, pp. 232–48.

- 2 The most relevant publications on *resolutio* and/or *reductio* in Bonaventure include: J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought. From Philipp the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*; J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, “Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre,” pp. 32–66; G.-H. Allard, “La technique de la ‘reductio’ chez Bonaventure,” in: J.-G. Bougerol (ed), *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, vol. II (Collegio S. Bonaventura: Grottaferrata 1974), pp. 395–416; C. Bérubé, “De la théologie de l’image à la philosophie de l’objet de l’intelligence chez saint Bonaventure,” pp. 161–200; A. Engemann, “Erleuchtungslehre als Resolutio und Reductio nach Bonaventura,” in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 1 (1934), pp. 211–242; Gerken, A., “Identität und Freiheit – Ansatz und Methode im Denken des heiligen Bonaventura“, in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 37 (1974), pp. 98–110; C.-F. Geyer, “Intellectus plene resolvens,” in: *Theologie und Philosophie* 51 (3) (1976), pp. 359–385, p. 359; W. Goris, “Die Anfänge der Auseinandersetzung um das Ersterkannte im 13. Jahrhundert: Guibert von Tournai, Bonaventura und Thomas von Aquin,” pp. 355–369; W. Goris, *Absolute Beginners, Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*; W. Goris, “Two-Staged Doctrines of God as First Known and the Transformation of the Concept of Reality in Bonaventure and Henry of Ghent,” pp. 77–97; R.E. Houser, “Bonaventure’s Three-Fold Way to God,” pp. 91–145; T.B. Noone, R.E. Houser, “Saint Bonaventure,” in: Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2010 Edition); L. Oeing-Hanhoff, “Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter”, pp. 71–91; A. Speer, *Triplex veritas. Wahrheitsverständnis und philosophische Denkform Bonaventuras*; A. Speer, “Metaphysica reducens: Metaphysik als erste Wissenschaft im Verständnis Bonaventuras,” pp. 142–182; A. Speer, “Bonaventure and the question of a medieval philosophy,” pp. 25–46.
- 3 I Sent. d.28 p.2 *dubium* I ( I 504): ‘Alio modo contingit aliquid intelligere praeter alterum, intellectu resolvente (...) Et hoc potest esse dupliciter: aut intellectu resolvente plene et perfecte, aut intellectu deficiente et resolvente semiplene. Intellectu resolvente semiplene, potest intelligi aliquid esse, non intellecto primo ente. Intellectu autem resolvente perfecte, non potest intelligi aliquid, primo ente non intellecto.’

of the created, which is only possible by relating it to preliminary knowledge of the divine, on which this knowledge depends.<sup>4</sup>

Although with his doctrine of God as first known, Bonaventure boldly challenges the views of his contemporaries, who hold that 'being in general' is first known, such as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure never devoted a treatise to it. Rather, his accounts of divine being as first known are scattered throughout his work: they appear in different contexts and they are employed for diverging purposes. Nevertheless, they do show close coherence on the basis of four general aspects. The literature on Bonaventure focuses on these four aspects.

First, each *resolutio* is a *unifying movement* that reduces every single thing back to one first principle, which is absolutely simple.<sup>5</sup> As such, it is part of Bonaventure's critique of the rise of the natural sciences, of Aquinas's perspective on the autonomy of human cognition, and of the fragmentation of the sciences into a plurality of sciences, each of which is autonomous with regard to the others.<sup>6</sup> This was discussed in Chapter 1.

Second, each *resolutio* demonstrates the *dependence* of (knowledge of) the created on (knowledge of) the divine.<sup>7</sup> Some authors relate this dependence directly to the dependence of the human intellect on divine illumination and the divine intellect itself as the absolute foundation of all knowledge, in line with a Platonic model of science.<sup>8</sup> As I argued

4 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): 'Quomodo autem sciret intellectus, hoc esse ens defectivum et incompletum, si nullam haberet cognitionem entis absque omni defectu? (...) 'non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuvetur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti (...).'

5 For instance, cf. *I Sent.*, d. 28, dub. 1 (I 504).

6 Cf. A. Gerken., "Identität und Freiheit – Ansatz und Methode im Denken des heiligen Bonaventura," pp. 99–100, p. 109. For a description of *resolutio* as a unifying movement, also cf. L. Oeing-Hanhoff, "Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter," p. 81, C.-F. Geyer, "Intellectus plene resolvens," p. 372, G.-H. Allard, "La technique de la 'reductio' chez Bonaventure," p. 416.

7 For instance, cf. *De Scientia Christi*, q. 4c (V 23–24); *II Sent.*, d. 1, p. 2, dub. 2 (II 52); Cf. A. Speer, "*Principalissimum fundamentum*. Die Stellung des Guten und das Metaphysikverständnis Bonaventuras," in W. Goris (ed.), *Die Metaphysik und das Gute. Aufsätze zu ihrem Verhältnis in Antike und Mittelalter: Jan A. Aertsen zu Ehren*, Peeters: Louvain 1999, pp. 105–138, esp. p. 115 and p. 122.

8 As Antonellus Engemann argues: '[Resolutio] scheint ja mannigfaltig zu sein, doch bewegt es sich stets in der Richtung des Unbedingten (...) Die Idee des Unbedingten weist also zuletzt auf den Unbedingten selbst hin, der durch seine



in the former chapter, the demonstration of this dependence could also be seen as part of a *Begründungsleistung* that seeks to establish the (relative) autonomy of natural reason, in line with an Aristotelian model of science.

Third, they all make *explicit* – i.e. discover – what is implicitly known in the course of knowing everything else – an analytic movement opposed to demonstration or synthesis.<sup>9</sup> Rather than an insight that is developed, the intellect becomes *aware* of its foundation through a complete analysis.<sup>10</sup> In *Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter*, Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff argues that Bonaventure’s analysis in the order of knowledge starts with a conceptual analysis, but continues with an analysis of knowledge of imperfect being, which discovers a priori knowledge of perfect, eternal and absolute being, i.e. divine being, as privations and defects are only known through their positions.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, a resolution is a discovery, rather than a proof,<sup>12</sup> although some authors argue that it is in fact a specific kind of argument for the existence of God.<sup>13</sup>

Fourth, a resolution into created principles is considered to be

Erleuchtungen den Geist des Menschen unterstützt und ihn so gleichsam an seiner Unbedingtheit teilnehmen läßt.’ Cf. A. Engemann, “Erleuchtungslehre als Resolutio und Reductio nach Bonaventura,” p. 237.

9 For instance, cf. *Hexaemeron* X, 6 (V 378).

10 A. Speer, “Bonaventure and the question of a medieval philosophy,” p. 34.

11 L. Oeing-Hanhoff, “Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter,” p. 79.

12 For instance, Carl-Friedrich Geyer argues that: ‘Aus dem gleichen Grunde entbehrt auch die Methode des Charakters eines Beweises; vielmehr stellt sie sich dar als Aufweis jenes Grundes, von dem her in der Weise des Rückfragens nach dem primum principium gefragt wird.’ Cf. C.-F. Geyer, “Intellectus plene resolvens,” p. 367. Alexander Gerken argues: ‘Bei (Bonaventura) geht es vielmehr darum, zu zeigen, dass wir schon durch den Erkenntnisakt selbst Gottes Licht voraussetzen und mit seiner Hilfe denken, es geht also um die Explikation des implizit Vorausgesetzten. Die Methode der reductio ist also kein Beweis, sie denkt nicht von einem Axiom oder einer schon gewonnenen Erkenntnis als Grund weiter, so dass sie dann eine neue Erkenntnis als Resultat gewinnen würde. Die Methode der reductio geht vielmehr zurück in den letzten Grund, sie beweist nichts, aber sie weist etwas auf. Sie weist nämlich auf, was im Erkenntnisakt anwesend ist, dass der Grund, mit dessen Hilfe auch die ersten, ursprünglichsten Denkschritte unternommen werden, schon ein unvergängliches Sein, einen ewigen Ursprung, voraussetzt.’ Cf. A. Gerken “Identität und Freiheit – Ansatz und Methode im Denken des heiligen Bonaventura,” pp. 100–101.

13 Rollen E. Houser identifies resolution as a ‘noetiological proof’ of God’s existence. Cf. R.E. Houser, “Bonaventure’s Threefold Way to God,” pp. 125–126.

*insufficient* to establish full knowledge of something; in order to obtain full knowledge, the resolution should proceed until it arrives at an understanding of God.<sup>14</sup> This transgression of the domain of the created is marked by Bonaventure's distinction between a *semiplena* and a *plena resolutio*, which is seen as the most distinguishing feature of Bonaventure's accounts of God as first known. As Jan Aertsen has stated: 'the originality of Bonaventure's position consists in his method of the resolution of knowledge,' in which 'the intellect can resolve incompletely and half-way (*semiplene*) or perfectly and completely (*plene*)'.<sup>15</sup>

However, what is still underdetermined in the literature is exactly *what* is transgressed by a full resolution. To be more precise: it is hardly thematized that there are different *types* of resolution that Bonaventure considers to be *inadequate* to establish full knowledge of something.<sup>16</sup> An analysis of Bonaventure's use of resolution, presented in this chapter, reveals that there are in fact *three* different types of resolution in metaphysics that Bonaventure criticizes. These types will be identified, and it will be discussed on what grounds they are considered insufficient to arrive at what is first, and how they are transgressed. I maintain that these three types of resolution that Bonaventure criticizes correspond to three types of metaphysical resolution found in Thomas Aquinas.

In the following sections, these three types in Aquinas will be identified. Subsequently, an analysis will be presented of Bonaventure's different accounts of divine being as first known, in which these three types of resolutions are – more or less explicitly – criticized and replaced by a resolution that goes beyond that in which the criticized resolutions end. Finally, on the basis of this analysis, conclusions are drawn with

14 For instance, *Itinerarium* V, 3 (V 308–309).

15 J.A. Aertsen, "Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?," p. 191. Also, cf. A. Speer, "Bonaventure and the question of a medieval philosophy," p. 41.

16 This is not to say that, in the literature on Bonaventure, a differentiation of his accounts of divine being as first known is not made at all. Antonellus Engemann, for instance, distinguishes three types of resolution, related to three acts of the soul: that of the intellect, that of the will, and that of the comprehension of being as such. The first category has three different subtypes: (a) a *resolutio* to the idea of the absolute; (b) a *resolutio* to what Engemann calls *veritas ontologica*; (c) a *resolutio* that establishes certainty. Cf. A. Engemann, "Erleuchtungslehre als *Resolutio* und *Reductio* nach Bonaventura." With concern to the domains of application of *reductio*, Allard distinguishes the domain of metaphysics, physics, logic, mathematics, ethics, politics and theology. Cf. G.-H. Allard, "La technique de la 'reductio' chez Bonaventure," esp. pp 412–13.

regard to resolution as the methodology belonging to Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known.

## 2.1 Three types of metaphysical resolution in Thomas Aquinas

### 2.1.1 Introduction

In this section, three different types of resolution found in Thomas Aquinas will be discussed. Bonaventure criticizes each of them, although he does not directly or explicitly criticize Aquinas. Rather, his criticism relates to what these types of resolution have in common, which is that they all resolve into *created* principles. This criticism determines the profile of the methodology of Bonaventure's doctrine of divine being as first known.

First, resolution as *divisio*, i.e. the analysis of a thing into its most elementary components, such as matter and form, will be discussed. Second, a type of resolution to highest principles, which ends in transcendental being (*ens*) and its conditions, will be dealt with. Third, a type of metaphysical resolution that resolves a thing into that which is (*id quod est*) and its existence (*esse*) is considered. With regard to this last resolution: it is not so much the case that Bonaventure criticizes an analysis of a thing in its *id quod est* and *esse*. Rather, he holds that, whereas Aquinas describes this *esse* of particular things to participate in *esse commune* as the actuality of all things (or: the existence of transcendental *ens*), which Aquinas argues to be first known, Bonaventure holds that only *divine* being can be pure actuality, and falls into the mind first.

For a large part, I will gratefully draw on Eileen Sweeney's account of resolution in Thomas Aquinas in her elaborate article 'Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,' although I will also diverge from her distinctions.<sup>17</sup> She argues that 'while resolution/analysis may be important in the histories of philosophy and science, its own history is, to say the least, confused,' and that Aquinas's use of resolution is a 'mirror of this complexity'.<sup>18</sup> Notwithstanding

17 E.C. Sweeney, "Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas," in: *The Thomist* 58 (1994), pp. 197–243.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

this complexity, she holds that Thomas Aquinas consistently describes the path of reasoning in metaphysics as resolute.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, it should be stressed that by no means a full account of resolution in Thomas Aquinas is provided in this section. Besides, a large corpus of knowledge on this subject already exists.<sup>20</sup> This section merely seeks to represent three kinds of resolution that can be found in Aquinas, all of which Bonaventure considers to be inadequate to identify what is first in the order of knowledge.

### 2.1.2 Resolution as division in Thomas Aquinas

In some cases, Aquinas describes *resolutio* as the movement from something complex into its simple components, which precedes and is presupposed to *compositio*, the movement from components to compound.<sup>21</sup> To illustrate that to know something as a whole requires a division into its components first, Aquinas mentions the understanding of sentences, which presupposes knowledge of their most fundamental building blocks, i.e. letters, which are indivisibles:

Just as in other things in order to know the whole, it is necessary to divide the composite until one arrives at incomposite things, i.e., until one arrives at indivisibles which are the smallest parts of the whole: for example, in order to know sentences, it is necessary to divide until one

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>20</sup> Far more than in Bonaventure, the various uses of *resolutio* in the works of Thomas Aquinas have been studied and debated upon. To name a few major studies: L.M. Régis, "Analyse et synthèse dans l'œuvre de Saint Thomas," in: *Studia Mediaevalia in honorem admodum Reverendi Patris Raymundi Josephi Martin*, De Tempel: Bruges 1948, pp. 303–330; J.A. Aertsen, "Method and Metaphysics: The via resolutionis in Thomas Aquinas," pp. 405–418; E.C. Sweeney, "Three Notions of Resolutio and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas," pp. 197–243; Also, cf. L. Oeing-Hanhoff "Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter," pp. 71–91; S.E. Dolan, "Resolution and Composition in Speculative and Practical Discourse," in: *Laval Theologique et Philosophique* 6 (1950), pp. 9–62; A.M. O'Brien, *The Meaning of Resolution as Reflective Method in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, diss. Fordham 1975.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Politicorum* I l. 1 n. 8 (cit. in: E.C. Sweeney, "Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas," p. 201): 'Ad cognitionem compositorum primo opus est via resolutionis, ut scilicet dividamus compositum usque ad individua; postmodum vero necessaria est via compositionis, ut ex principiis indivisibilibus iam notis diiudicemus de rebus quae ex principiis causantur.'

arrives at letters, and to know natural, mixed bodies, it is necessary to divide them until one arrives at the elements.<sup>22</sup>

This process of dividing a composite until one reaches its indivisible, incomposite elements Aquinas calls the path of resolution (*via resolutionis*).<sup>23</sup> This type of *resolutio* can therefore be designated as a kind of *divisio*, Sweeney argues.<sup>24</sup> She describes division as a (preliminary) cognitive process of sorting out a complex and indistinctly known whole, rather than a judging act to complete an act of cognition.<sup>25</sup> In Aquinas, this resolution can pertain to the division of an essence into genus and difference, to a thing into its essence, properties and accidents, or to the abstraction into matter and form.<sup>26</sup> In every case, the resolution ends in created principles.

Sometimes, Aquinas speaks of this type of resolution in terms of abstraction.<sup>27</sup> In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas describes abstraction as a process whereby the intellect can ascend to a higher level of understanding than the senses that only perceive the individual object, a process which involves the resolution of the concrete thing into form and matter: ‘For while (the intellect) knows the thing as having a form in matter, it nonetheless resolves the composite into these (form and matter), and considers this form in itself.’<sup>28</sup> This resolution is

22 *Ibid.*, ‘Quod sicut in aliis rebus ad cognitionem totius necesse est dividere compositum usque ad incomposita, id est usque ad indivisibilia quae sunt minime partes totius: puta ad cognoscendum orationem, necesse est dividere usque ad litteras, et ad cognoscendum corpus naturele mixtum, necesse est dividere usque ad elementa.’

23 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, “Method and Metaphysics: The *via resolutionis* in Thomas Aquinas,” pp. 405–18.

24 E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p. 201.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 215.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

27 A.M. O’Brian, *The Meaning of Resolution as Reflective Method in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 64. E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” pp. 213–14.

28 E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p. 213–14. Cf. Thomas Aquinas *Compendium Theologiae* I, 62 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 42, Editori di San Tomasso: Rome 1979, p. 109): ‘Est enim duplex resolutio, quae fit per intellectum. Una secundum abstractionem formae a materia, in qua quidem proceditur ab eo, quod formalius est, ad id, quod

necessary as a preliminary act of understanding, because things that are individuated by matter are unintelligible.

To understand the essence of a thing, it has to be abstracted from its material conditions, Aquinas argues.<sup>29</sup> In another approach to *resolutio* as *divisio*, the resolutive process is described as removing the individuating conditions from the species, in order to grasp the universal in the particular.<sup>30</sup>

From this point of view, Aquinas considers the universal forms that are abstracted from the *phantasmata*,<sup>31</sup> i.e. the essences of material things (*quiditas rei materialis*), in which the resolution ends, to be first known.<sup>32</sup> Although he argues that, in a sense, the objects of sense perception as they present themselves to reason are first, the first – and proper – object of the intellect is this ‘being as found in material things.’ This argumentation by Aquinas caused what Aertsen calls ‘the objective turn’ in metaphysics. It implicates that what is not material, such as God, cannot be directly known, let alone be *first* known.<sup>33</sup>

As will be discussed later in this chapter, Bonaventure argues that a resolution of a thing into its components is insufficient: it is only completed if it is related to the first being (*primo ente*) as the first cause of the object, which is known along with it.

est materialius; nam id, quod est primum subiectum, ultimo remanet, ultima vero forma primo removetur.’

29 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 85 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, p. 330–1): ‘Cognoscere vero id quod est in materia individuali, non prout est in tali materia, est abstrahere formam a material individuali.’

30 *Compendium Theologiae* I, 62 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 42, p. 109): ‘Alio vero resolutio est secundum abstractionem universalis a particulari, que quodam modo contrario ordine se habet: nam prius removetur conditiones materiales individuantes, ut accipiatur quod commune est.’

31 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate* 1.3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, p. 86): ‘Cum autem in intellectu humano sit potentia actiua et passiuua, obiectum potentie passiuue, scilicet intellectus possibilis, sit id quod est actum per potentiam actiuam, scilicet intellectum agentem, quia potentie passiuue debet respondere proprium actiuum; intellectus autem agens non facit intelligibilia formas separatas, que sunt ex se ipsis intelligibiles, set formas quas abstract a phantasmatis; et ideo huiusmodi sunt que primo intellectus noster intelligit.’

32 *Ibid.*: ‘(..) cuilibet potentie est cognoscibile primo suum proprium obiectum.’

33 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate* 1.3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, p. 87). Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The case of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 10.

## 2.1.3 Resolution to highest principles in Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas also describes *resolutio* as the movement from effects and particulars towards causes and universals.<sup>34</sup> This procedure does not dissolve a whole into its simple components; rather, it moves ‘upwards’ towards higher, more complete and more general causes and principles.<sup>35</sup> This type of resolution is characterized by Sweeney as ‘Neo-Platonist,’ as it follows the return of all things to their highest causes and ends in what is first: ‘(it) follows a process which is understood to begin with some implicit grasp of simple principles (...) envisioning knowledge as grounded in and made possible by a knowledge of principles.’<sup>36</sup>

For Aquinas, these higher, simpler principles or truths are either *extrinsic* or *intrinsic* causes. The extrinsic cause is a separate substance, i.e. God, whereas the intrinsic causes are general being (*ens*) and its properties. Parallel to this distinction of causes runs the distinction between two types of Neo-Platonic resolution: a *resolution secundum rem* and a *resolution secundum rationem*. The former is a resolution within the order of *being*. It resolves into God as highest principle, who is being *per se*. Aquinas relates this resolution to the process in which things strive for the highest Good, which is found in God in the highest degree.<sup>37</sup> The latter resolution takes place within the order of *concepts*, and resolves into created being (*ens*) and its transcendental conditions as highest principles.<sup>38</sup>

Aquinas uses this *resolution secundum rationem* in order to demonstrate what is first known in *De veritate* 1.1. In every question as to what something is, he argues here, we reduce that which is to be defined to something more general and better known. When, for example, we ask ‘What is man?’ we answer by giving the genus ‘animal’ and add to it a specific difference, ‘rational’. We can go on to ask what this genus

34 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate*, 6.1 sol.c (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, pp. 162–3).

35 E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p. 215.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 215–216.

37 Thomas Aquinas, *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, c. I, q. 1.2, n. 51 (ed. C. Pera, P. Caramello, C. Mazzantini, Marietti: Taurini 1951, pp. 17–8).

38 E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p. 228. Sweeney argues here against Aertsen, who claims that resolution *secundum rationem* moves in another direction than resolution *secundum rem*, as the former is to be compared with Calcidian resolution. Cf. J.A.Aertsen, “Method and Metaphysics: The via resolutionis in Thomas Aquinas”, p. 414.

is, and again reduce it to something even more general. This regress cannot, however, go on indefinitely, for an infinite regress would make complete knowledge of things impossible. Therefore, the resolution must end with something that is not known through anything else but is evident through itself.<sup>39</sup> This first known is being (*ens*), Aquinas argues. It is first known in the sense that it is the condition of all knowledge and is implicit in every concept.<sup>40</sup>

All other concepts arise through an *addition* to being, Aquinas continues in *De Veritate* 1.1, They add something to being in the sense that they express a mode (*modus*) of it that is not yet made explicit by the term 'being' itself. This explication is possible in two ways. First, what is expressed can be a *special* mode of being. Being is then contracted and limited. Second, what is expressed is a *general* mode of being. This pertains to the transcendental properties or conditions of being. Thomas distinguishes five of these *general* modes of being, i.e. five transcendental conditions of being (*ens*). 'Thing' (*res*) expresses the quiddity or essence of a being. 'One' (*unum*) signifies that a being is undivided. The term 'something' (*aliquid*), literally 'another what' (*aliud quid*), indicates the division of a being from every other thing. The conformity of every thing to the (divine) intellect is expressed by 'true' (*verum*). The conformity to the appetite (or to its final end) is expressed by 'good' (*bonum*). As they coincide with being (*ens*) as such, these modes of being are transcendental conditions. Together with transcendental *ens*, they are first known.

Resolution as division and a resolution to higher principles are sometimes equated under the same denominator, as both move from the complex or composite to the simple, or from effect to cause.<sup>41</sup> Sweeney, however, objects to this equation: whereas the former type

39 Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate* 1.1 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 22/I, pp. 4–5): 'Sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri reductionem in aliqua principia per se intellectui nota, ita investigando quid est unumquodque. Alias utrobique in infinitum iretur, et sic periret omnino scientia et cognitio rerum.'

40 *Ibid.* (p.5): 'Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit est ens.'; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologia* I q. 94.2 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, p. 415): 'Illud quod primo cadit sub apprehensione est ens, cujus intellectus includitur in omnibus quaecumque quis apprehendit.'

41 Cf. S.E. Dolan, "Resolution and Composition in Speculative and Practical Discourse," p. 62; Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Method and Metaphysics: The via resolutionis in Thomas Aquinas*, p. 408.



of resolution moves ‘downwards’ the ontological ladder to the components of things, the latter moves ‘upwards’ to what is highest, rather than most elementary.

There is yet another difference: resolution as division can be characterized as a method of discovery preceding composition, whereas what Sweeney calls ‘Neo-Platonic resolution’ is rather a way of judgment, following composition and confirming what is known.<sup>42</sup> In fact, Thomas Aquinas describes a circular structure of discursive reason, proceeding and returning to first principles: ‘the circularity (of reason) is observed in this, that reason arrives at conclusions from principles according to the way of discovery, and examines discovered conclusions according to the way of judgment, resolving them back into principles.’<sup>43</sup> Thus, this resolution to highest principles is a *judging* act, confirming the discovery.<sup>44</sup> Scientific knowledge, that is, certain and necessary knowledge, Aquinas argues, consists not merely in knowing it, but is only established when we resolve back to these first, most common principles.<sup>45</sup> When we resolve into higher causes and principles *per se*, i.e., to divine being, we have not mere *scientia*, but wisdom (*sapientia*). Such a resolution cannot take place within the realm of metaphysics, the basis of only natural knowledge. This is the reason why Aquinas strongly disagrees with those who argue that God is first known.

In the first question of his Commentary on Boethius’ treatise *De Trinitate*, this criticism is most clearly expressed. Here, Aquinas refers to an anonymous position in which knowledge of God is argued to be the foundation of all other knowledge – Bonaventure’s? That of Guibert of Tournai? This position he considers to be untenable, as it would presuppose immediate knowledge of God, whereas human reason can

42 Cf. L.M. Regis, “Analyse et synthèse dans l’œuvre de Saint Thomas,” pp. 301–330; E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p. 203.

43 Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputate De veritate*, 10.8 ad. 10 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 22/II, Ad Sanctae Sabinae: Rome 1970, p. 323): ‘Haec autem circulatio attenditur in hoc quod ratio ex principiis secundum viam inveniendi inconclusiones pervenit, et conclusiones inventas in principia resolvendo examinat secundum viam iudicandi.’

44 E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p.224.

45 Thomas Aquinas, *In III Sent. d. 23 q. 2 a.2* (ed. M.F. Moos, in: *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi Parisiensis*, vol. 3/2, P. Lethielleux: Paris 1956, pp. 722–9).

only acquire knowledge of God through creatures.<sup>46</sup> In addition, if God would be first known, Aquinas argues, beatitude would be possible already in this life, which cannot be the case. Via another *reductio ad absurdum*, Aquinas argues that, because we would have the eternal truth at our disposal if God were to be first known, we would never err or disagree with regard to God. On this basis, he comes to conclude that God cannot be first known. What we do know about God in this life is an *end product* of reason rather than the starting point, as it is deduced from knowledge of creatures, rather than underlying it.<sup>47</sup>

In reaction to the early Franciscan doctrine of God as first known, Aquinas ventures into the reason why other scholars could come to the conclusion that God is first known. He distinguishes two types of resolution within the order of knowledge, and argues that they are confused in this case. There is a path that leads to what is first and better known *in itself* (God as the first cause). Arriving at this first is the *completion* of all the intellect's cognitive endeavors. This resolution is to be distinguished from another resolution that leads to what is first and better known *for us*, and is, as such, the *starting point* of our cognition, which is being in general (*ens*) and its transcendental conditions.<sup>48</sup> This distinction relates to the Aristotelian distinction between what is first to us and what is first in itself, by nature.

Bonaventure, on the other hand, *identifies* what is first known in itself and what is first known for us: his *resolution secundum rationem* and *resolution secundum rem* run parallel. He considers a resolution that ends in *ens* and its *generalissima* to be incomplete (*semi-plena*), as will be discussed at length later on.

46 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate* 1.3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, p. 87): 'quidem dixerunt quod primum quod a mente humana cognoscitur etiam in hac vita est ipse Deus, qui est veritas prima, et per hoc omnia alia cognoscuntur.' Cf. W. Goris, "Die Vergegenwärtigung des Heils. Thomas von Aquin und die Folgezeit," p. 418.

47 Cf. W. Goris, "Die Vergegenwärtigung des Heils. Thomas von Aquin und die Folgezeit," p. 418; J.P. Torell, 'La vision de Dieu per essentiam selon saint Thomas d'Aquin', pp. 43–68.

48 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio Super Boethium De trinitate* 6.1, 3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, pp. 162–63); Cf. W. Goris, "Die Vergegenwärtigung des Heils. Thomas von Aquin und die Folgezeit," p. 419.

## 2.1.4 Resolution into esse commune in Thomas Aquinas

In *De substantiis separatis*, Aquinas describes a type of metaphysical resolution that resolves a particular thing into ‘that which is’ (*id quod est*) and its existence (*esse*).<sup>49</sup> As Jan Aertsen describes: ‘(Here,) Thomas describes (...) a resolution that we have not yet encountered. It is the resolution of being into its internal principles: in the last phase of the evolution of philosophy each thing is resolved into “that which is” and its “being” (*suum esse*).’<sup>50</sup> This existence of a thing relates to *common* existence (*esse commune*), in which all things participate. As Rudi Te Velde argues, this type of resolution in Aquinas resolves from the consideration of categorical being, i.e. particular modes of being which are categorically divided, to the transcendental consideration of being as being (*esse*), common to all beings, which does not coincide with a particular mode of being.<sup>51</sup>

Let us take a closer look at this being (*esse*) according to Aquinas. Hereto, we turn to his interpretation of Boethius’s *De Hebdomadibus* in his *Commentary on The Trinity*. Both the purport of *De Hebdomadibus* itself and its interpretation by Aquinas are much debated upon.<sup>52</sup> Here, I follow Stephen Brock,<sup>53</sup> who focuses on ‘the respective roles of Platonism and Aristotelianism in the ontologies of Boethius and St. Thomas’, and Jason Mitchell, who relates resolution in Aquinas to his *quinque viae*.<sup>54</sup>

49 Thomas Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis*, c. 9 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 40, Ad Sanctae Sabinae: Rome 1968, p. 57): ‘Oportet igitur communem quandam resolutionem in omnibus huiusmodi fieri, secundum quod unumquodque eorum intellectu resolvitur in id quod est, et in suum esse.’

50 J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The case of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 156.

51 As Rudi te Velde explains in: R.A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, Brill: Leiden – New York – Köln 1995, p. 143.

52 Cf. J. Collins, “Progress and Problem in the Reassessment of Boethius,” *The Modern Schoolman* 23 (1), (1945), pp. 1–23; H. V. Clare, “Whether Everything That is, Is Good: Marginal Notes on St. Thomas’s Exposition of Boethius’s *De Hebdomadibus*,” in: *Laval Theologique et Philosophique* 3(1) (1947), pp. 66–76; 3(2) (1957), pp. 177–194; 5(1) (1949), pp. 119–140. A more recent, comprehensive study that also deals with the differences in interpretation, is R.A. A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*.

53 Cf. S.L. Brock, *Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on Esse: Thomas Aquinas and the De hebdomadibus*, Catholic University of America Press: Washington D.C. 1990, 161–198. Brock draws partly on Ralph McInerny, Boethius and Aquinas.

54 J.A. Mitchell, “The Method of *Resolutio* and the Structure of the Five Ways,” in: *Alpha Omega* 15(3) (2012), pp. 339–380.

Boethius puts forward the thesis that *esse* and *id quod est* differ. Aquinas argues that Boethius is not referring to a ‘real’ diversity between *esse* and *id quod est*.<sup>55</sup> Rather, he refers to their signification. *Esse* signifies being in an abstract way, whereas *id quod est* signifies being in a concrete way. However, Aquinas argues that in composite things, they differ not only in signification, but also in *reality*: ‘in every composite, one thing is “to be” (*esse*), and another is the composite itself. Every simple thing has as one its “to be” and “that which is”.’<sup>56</sup> There is only one absolutely simple reality, which is God.<sup>57</sup>

In God, *esse* and *id quod est* coincide. Any composite thing is something that merely *has esse*.<sup>58</sup> In *De Veritate* 21, Aquinas deals with an objection that argues that *esse* is proper to God, and therefore cannot be inherent to other things. Aquinas responds that *esse* is not proper to God in the sense that there is no *esse* other than the uncreated *esse*, but that it is proper to God only in the sense that God alone *is* his *esse*. Other things merely *have esse*. Nevertheless, this is truly their own, and it is

55 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De hebdomadibus* (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 50, Ad Sanctae Sabinae: Rome 1992, p.16): ‘Dicit ergo primo, quod ‘diversum est esse, et id quod est,’ que quidem diversitas non est hic referenda ad res de quibus adhuc non loquitur, set ad ipsas rationes seu intentiones. Aliud autem significamus per hoc quod dicimus esse et aliud per id quod dicimus id quod est; sicut et aliud significamus cum dicimus currere et aliud per hoc quod dicitur currens. Nam currere et esse significatur in abstracto sicut et albedo; set quod est, id est ens et currens, significatur in concreto velud album.’

56 *Ibid.*, (p. 14): ‘Omni composito aliud est esse, aliud ipsum est. Omne simplex esse suum et id quod est unum habet.’

57 *Ibid.*, (p. 26): ‘Id autem erit solum vere simplex quod non participat esse, non quidem inherens set subsistens. Hoc autem non potest esse nisi unum, quia, si ipsum esse nichil aliud habet admixtum preter id quod est esse, ut dictum est impossibile est id quod est ipsum esse multiplicari per aliquid diuersificans, et, quia nichil aliud preter se habet adiunctum, consequens est quod nullius accidentis sit susceptiuum. Hoc autem simplex, unum et sublime est ipse Deus.’

58 *Ibid.*, (p. 24): ‘Est ergo primo considerandum quod sicut esse et quod est differunt secundum intentiones, ita in compositis differunt realiter. Quod quidem manifestum est ex praemissis. Dictum est enim supra quod ipsum esse neque participat aliquid ut eius ratio constituatur ex multis, neque habet aliquid extrinsecum admixtum ut sit in eo compositio accidentalis; et ideo ipsum esse non est compositum; res ergo composita non est suum esse; et ideo dicit quod in ‘omni composito aliud est esse’ ens, et ‘aliud ipsum’ compositum quod est participando ipsum esse. Deinde cum dicit: ‘Omne simplex’ etc., ostendit qualiter se habeat in simplicibus in quibus necesse est quod ‘ipsum esse et id quod est’ sit ‘unum’ et idem realiter. Si enim esset aliud realiter id quod est et ipsum esse, iam non esset simplex set compositum.’

not the divine *esse*.<sup>59</sup> Thus, each entity has its own act of existing. Rudi Te Velde explains: “To Thomas, being is the intimate act of existing which is at the heart of every reality, the all-embracing actuality of the formal content of things, but not itself part of that content.”<sup>60</sup>

Moving *beyond* particular acts of being, we can also speak in a more *general* way about the act of existing: *esse commune* is how Aquinas designates the act of being when it is viewed in general. Thus, *esse commune* is not so much the actual existence of an essence, but rather ‘actuality of all acts’.<sup>61</sup> It expresses the perfection and the actuality of transcendental *ens*. As Te Velde concludes:

The conclusion must be that the negative statement that being cannot be a genus is deepened and transformed by Aquinas into the metaphysical insight that being is the actuality of all acts and therefore the perfection of all perfection. (...) Being is something common precisely insofar as it is related as act to the whole of the particular essence according to which one thing differs from another. In their differences the many determinate acts of the essences relate to something common, the common actuality of all acts.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, transcendental being (*ens*), which is argued to be first known by Aquinas, can be identified with this *esse commune* when it is regarded as ‘the actuality of all acts’. It is another way of looking to what is first known, i.e. through the lens of existence rather than of essence.

59 Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate* 21.4, ad 7 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 22/III(1), Ad Sanctae Sabinae: Rome 1973, p. 604): ‘Cum dicitur: Esse est proprium Deo; non est intelligendum quod nullum aliud esse sit nisi increatum; sed quod solum illud esse proprie dicitur esse, in quantum ratione suae immutabilitatis non novit fuisse vel futurum esse. Esse autem creaturae dicitur esse per quamdam similitudinem ad illud primum esse, cum habeat permixtionem eius quod est futurum esse vel fuisse, ratione mutabilitatis creaturae. Vel potest dici, quod esse est proprium Deo, quia solus Deus est suum esse; quamvis alia esse habeant, quod esse non est esse divinum.’

60 Cf. R.A. te Velde, *Being and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, p. 184. Rudi te Velde refers here to Fabro’s article “L’obscurissement de l’esse...” where Fabro argues that the primacy of esse as actus essendi was, for a long time, not properly acknowledged by Thomists. Also, he refers to Gilson’s *Being and some philosophers*, in which Gilson argues similarly that in Thomas Aquinas, concrete being is to be understood from the point of view of its actual existence.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 200.

According to Leo Elders, *esse* is even a better word than *ens* for a first known that is most general and indeterminate:

Thus the first concept that we acquire is general and as yet indeterminate (...) being means all that is real and stores within itself the reality of everything that exists in one way or another (...) We can (...) say that being means “that which is”. Apparently there is a kind of duality in our concept of being which we explicate by this expression. That which is most proper to and most profound in being is not “THAT which is” but “BEING REAL”. Aquinas states this repeatedly and emphatically: “The meaning and kernel of being lies in the act of being and not in that to which the act of being is attributed”. “Being states no essence but merely the act of being”. “The noun being (*ens*) is derived from the being (*esse*) of the thing.”<sup>63</sup>

On this basis, it can be argued that *esse* is that *by which* things are first intelligible; *what* the intellect first grasps is *ens*. Bonaventure, as will be argued in the following, rejects the identification of *esse* as first known with either *esse commune* or *esse particulare*. Rather, he argues that *esse divinum*, as pure actuality, is first known, or: ‘falls into the mind first’ (*primum cadit in mente*).

#### 2.1.5 Conclusions on resolution in Thomas Aquinas

In this section, three types of resolution in Thomas Aquinas were succinctly described for the purpose of preparing an analysis of Bonaventure’s accounts of resolution. The first type of resolution that was discussed is a movement from something complex into its simple, most elementary components (*divisio*). The second type of resolution ends in higher principles: general being (*ens*) and its transcendental conditions, thing (*res*), one (*unum*), something (*aliquid*), true (*verum*) and good (*bonum*). The third type resolves a particular thing into ‘that which is’ (*id quod est*) and its existence (*esse*).

Notwithstanding their differences, what all these types of resolution have in common, is that they resolve into *created principles*. As the forthcoming sections will discuss, Bonaventure argues that created principles cannot be foundational to our knowledge. Therefore, he criticizes each of these resolutions as being incomplete, and in need

63 L. Elders, *The Metaphysics of Being of St. Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective*, Brill: Leiden – New York – Köln 1993, pp. 39–40.

of an additional analysis to completely resolve into what is truly first known: divine being as the *uncreated principle* of all knowledge.

## 2.2 Bonaventure's accounts of *resolutio* into *Deus primum cognitum*

### 2.2.1 Introduction

The present section will deal with Bonaventure's critique on each of the three different kinds of metaphysical resolution discussed in the preceding section. It will be pointed out that each time that Bonaventure deals with a resolution to divine being as first known, one of these types is criticized. Hence, the doctrine of God as first known is a critique of any account of what constitutes a complete understanding in which created principles are considered as the most foundational. However, one way by which the accounts of God as first known that Bonaventure presents can be *differentiated* is by distinguishing between the specific type of resolution that is criticized. In this section, such a differentiation will be made. It will also be considered on what grounds each of these types is considered as insufficient to arrive at what is truly foundational, and how, each time, it is transgressed by a 'complete resolution' (*plena resolutio*) that ends in divine being as first known.

### 2.2.2 Bonaventure's critique of resolution as *divisio*

In the present section, Bonaventure's critique of a type of resolution that is based on the argument that what is composite can only be understood through what is simple is discussed. As discussed, this type of resolution is also found in Thomas Aquinas, who argues that you have to know what something is made of in order to know it as a whole. Instead of arguing that a resolution ends in knowledge of the indivisible *parts* of a thing, of which it is composed, Bonaventure argues that a resolution has to end in knowledge of what is *absolutely* simple and indivisible, which can only be God. The end point of a resolution cannot be the smallest parts of a thing, because everything that is created is *inherently* composite, even its smallest parts, he argues. Hence, Bonaventure criticizes a notion of resolution as *divisio* as we find it, for instance, in Thomas Aquinas.

In the *proemium* of Bonaventure's first book of the *Sentences*, we encounter a short but remarkable account of a resolution to what is most simple. Traditionally, this first book deals, after Peter Lombard,

with God's unity and trinity. Here, Bonaventure announces his own approach to this subject. He describes three ways in which God can be a subject of science. The first of these three ways concerns God as that to which all things are reduced as to their radical principle (*principium radicale*). He compares God in this respect to what is the radical principle of grammar: the letter, 'in which the resolution of the *grammatici* ends' (*in quo stat resolutio grammatici*).<sup>64</sup> Thus, here, the smallest, indivisible element of a composite (in this case, the letter as the smallest element of a sentence) is compared to God as the radical principle to which all things are reduced. Obviously, God is not the radical principle of all things in the sense that he is an element of a composite, but rather, in the sense that he is the first cause of all things. It is as such that he is absolutely simple or indivisible, just as the letter is the simplest and indivisible component of a sentence. Because of this similarity, both are the end point of a resolution.

As pointed out in section 2.1, Thomas Aquinas makes a similar reference to letters as indivisibles when dealing with *divisio* as *via resolutionis*, as he argues that

in order to know the whole, it is necessary to divide the composite until one arrives at incomposite things, i.e., until one arrives at indivisibles which are the smallest parts of the whole: for example, in order to know sentences, it is necessary to divide until one arrives at letters.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, rather than the movement to God as a radical principle, Aquinas compares the movement from a complex whole into its indivisible

64 I *Sent.* proem. q.1 (I 7): 'Dicendum, quod subiectum in aliqua scientia vel doctrina tripliciter potest accipi. Uno modo dicitur subiectum in scientia, ad quod omnia reducuntur sicut ad principium radicale (...) Nam subiectum primo modo, ad quod omnia reducuntur sicut ad principium elementare vel radicale, est littera, quam ideo vocat Priscianus elementum, quia est minimum, in quo stat resolutio grammatici (...) Nam subiectum, ad quod omnia reducuntur ut ad principium, est ipse Deus. (...) per hunc modum et in hoc libro est assignare subiectum secundum triplicem differentiam. Nam subiectum, ad quod omnia reducuntur ut ad principium, est ipse Deus.'

65 Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Politicorum* I cap. 1/a (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Operao omnia*, vol. 48, Ad Sanctae Sabinæ: Rome 1971, p. A73): 'necesse est dividere compositum usque ad incomposita, id est usque ad indivisibilia quae sunt minime partes totius: puta ad cognoscendum orationem, necesse est dividere usque ad litteras.'



components in order to understand it, to the division of sentences into letters as their smallest components.

Elsewhere, Bonaventure denies that a resolution of a composite ends in matter and form if ‘simplicity’ is taken as the criterion for that in which the resolution ends. In a distinction in his *Commentary on the Sentences* on whether God is what is most simple, Bonaventure holds Aristotle to have stated that a resolution has to end in what is most simple, to which he agrees. However, to Aristotle, he continues, this meant that the resolution ends in the principles of form and matter, which are created principles. This would mean that something created is truly simple.<sup>66</sup> This conclusion is strongly refuted by Bonaventure: true simplicity only pertains to God’s essence. Only in God, there is no composition, difference or multiplicity whatsoever.<sup>67</sup>

Although it is not explicitly concluded in his response, it clearly follows from this argumentation that a resolution that ends in what is most simple must end in God, rather than in created principles. This is firmly confirmed in *De mysterio Trinitatis* q.1 a.1. Here, Bonaventure argues that the resolving act of the intellect might fail due to a defect of the intellect. He describes this failure as the incapacity to resolve *beyond* created being into first principles in God.<sup>68</sup> However, if a resolution is done right, the intellect finds, among other things, that:

if there is diminished being or being according to something else, there is simple being, because being according to something else can only be

66 *I Sent.* d.8. p.2 a.1 q.2 (I 167). In the objections, Bonaventure represents Aristotle’s position: ‘omne illud est simplex, in quo stat resolutio; sed resolutio stat in principiis, quae sunt materia et forma, quia materia ulterius non resolvitur, cum sit status in causis, alioquin esset ire in infinitum: ergo cum resolutio stet in creato, aliquid creatum est simplex.’

67 *Ibid.*: ‘simplicitas essentiae privat compositionem et privat essentialem differentiam sive multiplicatatem. Unde simplex est, quod non habet compositionem partium nec multiplicatatem actionum sive formarum. In solo autem Deo est privatio compositionis et differentiae sive multiplicatatis: ideo simplicitas in solo Deo est essentialiter.’

68 *De mysterio trinitatis* 1.1 (V 49): ‘quantum ad defectum in actu resolvendi incidit dubitatio, quando intellectus carnalis nescit resolvere nisi usque ad ea quae patent sensibus, sicut sunt ista corporalia; ex qua ratione putaverunt aliqui, solem istum visibilem, qui obtinet principatum inter creaturas corporales, esse Deum, quia nescierunt resolvere usque ad substantiam incorpoream nec usque ad rerum prima principia.’

known through simple being. (If) all created being is partial being (*ens secundum partem*), only uncreated being is simple and perfect being.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, Bonaventure argues here that simple being is first in the order of knowledge, and that this simple being can *only* be uncreated being, because it is neither partial, diminished, or according to something else. In this perfect being, an intellect successfully resolving ends.

As to why every creature is inherently composed, and cannot be purely simple, whereas God is pure simplicity, Bonaventure frequently refers to Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus*, which is a discussion of being, existence, simplicity and complexity. Here, Boethius argues that everything that is (*quod est*) participates in being (*esse*) in order to exist. Only in an absolutely simple being *esse* and *quod est* are identical, a state which pertains solely to God. That by which creatures are, on the other hand, is something other than what they possess in themselves, as all creatures exist by participation. They are therefore inherently complex, whereas God is absolutely simple. As Bonaventure argues in the *Sentences*:

Every thing that exists besides God accepts a 'to be' (*esse*) from elsewhere (...) for that reason, nothing is its own 'to be' (...) But God alone is independent. Moreover, all others are by a dependence (...) a being dependent (*esse dependens*) on a comparison to God or from God himself. But nothing that depends is its own dependence: for that reason nothing is most highly simple, because what is most simple is most absolute.<sup>70</sup>

69 *Ibid.* (V 46–7): 'si est ens diminutum sive secundum quid, est ens simpliciter: quia ens secundum quid nec esse nec intelligi potest, nisi intelligatur per ens simpliciter, nec ens diminutum nisi per ens perfectum, sicut privatio non intelligitur nisi per habitum. Si ergo omne ens creatum est ens secundum partem, solum autem ens increatum est ens simpliciter et perfectum.'

70 I *Sent.* d.8. p.2 a.1 q.2 (I 168–9): 'enim omne, quod est praeter Deum, accipit esse aliunde (...) ideo nihil est suum esse(...) Solus autem Deus est independens. Omnia autem alia sunt dependentia, sive comparatione ad principia, ex quibus sunt, sive unum principium componens complicitur ad aliud, sive esse dependens comparatione ad Deum sive ab ipso Deo. Nihil autem, quod dependet, est sua dependentia: ideo nihil tale est summe simplex, quia omne simplicissimum est absolutissimum.'

Thus, created things are argued never to be truly simple because they have a ‘to be’ (*esse*) from elsewhere. Therefore, they fall into composition.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, a resolution to what is truly simple can, according to Bonaventure, only end in God.

This is not to say that Bonaventure discards resolution as division. In I *Sent.* d.28 p.2 *dubium* I, he holds that, by means of a resolving understanding, we come to understand what is essential to the thing, apart from its accidental properties.<sup>72</sup> However, he stresses that this procedure by itself will not lead to a *complete* understanding; only if the resolution is continued and ends in *first* being, something is fully understood.<sup>73</sup>

In this *dubium*, Bonaventure deals with the resolving intellect in the context of a question of on the trinity: on how ‘unbegottenness’ (*innascibilitas*) and paternity, both properties of the first person of the trinity, are to be understood. However, although this text has the trinity as its subject, the method on which it expounds pertains to understanding something – either completely or incompletely – in general. Its central question is whether ‘unbegotten’ necessarily implies ‘paternity,’ or whether it can also be understood without paternity. Bonaventure explains that these properties, both attributed to the first person of the trinity, are entirely inseparable in themselves, yet according to our understanding, ‘the one can be accepted apart from the other’ (*una potest accipi praeter alteram*).<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, this description is similar to the way in which Thomas

71 *Ibid.* (V 168): ‘omnis creatura habet esse datum aliunde, ergo habet esse aliunde acceptum, ergo nulla creatura est suum esse, ergo in omni creatura est dependentia sive differentia; sed nullum tale simpliciter simplex.’

72 I *Sent.* d.28 p.2 dub. I: (I 504) ‘Alio modo contingit aliquid intelligere praeter alterum, intellectu resolvente; et iste intellectus considerat ea quae sunt rei essentialia, sicut potest intelligi subiectum sine propria passione.’

73 *Ibid.*: ‘Alio modo contingit aliquid intelligere praeter alterum, intellectu resolvente (...) Et hoc potest esse dupliciter: aut intellectu resolvente plene et perfecte, aut intellectu deficiente et resolvente semiplene. Intellectu resolvente semiplene, potest intelligi aliquid esse, non intellecto primo ente. Intellectu autem resolvente perfecte, non potest intelligi aliquid, primo ente non intellecto.’

74 *Ibid.*: ‘Dicendum, quod est loqui de intentione huius nominis ingenitus et pater vel simpliciter, vel prout ponuntur in persona divina. Si loquamur simpliciter, sic diversae sunt intentiones, et una praeter aliam est intelligibilis et separabilis secundum rem, sicut patet in generatione hominum. Alio modo est loqui de his, prout ponuntur circa personam divinam, et sic dicunt aliam et aliam rationem innotescendi; et illae duae secundum rem omnino sunt inseparabiles, tamen se-

Aquinas describes what happens in abstraction or separation, which he defines as understanding one thing without considering the other, even if these things are not separate from each other in reality. This is done through an act by which the universal is abstracted from the particular in order to consider the essential nature of the species apart from its individual qualities as represented by the *phantasmata*.<sup>75</sup>

Bonaventure now argues that something can be understood apart from something else, i.e. abstracted, in *two* ways: either as an apprehending understanding (*intellectum apprehendentem*), or as a resolving understanding (*intellectum resolventem*).<sup>76</sup> He starts out with describing an apprehending understanding:

something cannot be understood without something that is its ratio intelligendi, just as God cannot be understood apart from deity, and man apart from humanity; yet an effect can be understood, with (its) cause not understood, and an inferior, with (its) superior not understood, because one can apprehend man, with none of (his) superiors understood. And thus the Philosopher says, that he who says “one” in a certain manner says “many”, not simply (speaking), but in a certain manner, because implicitly.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, an understanding of the ‘quiddity’ of something, such as ‘humanity’, is indicated as a first necessity to understand the concrete thing, such as ‘man’. However, this is as far as the apprehending intellect goes, as the passage above indicates: it establishes an understanding in which something is understood without its superiors, i.e. its species, higher *genera*, and its cause. At the end of the cited section, Aristotle

cundum intellectum una potest accipi praeter alteram. Et sic loquitur Augustinus, non quod re separari possint, sed quantum ad intelligere nostrum.’

75 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I 85 a.1 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, pp. 330–2).

76 I *Sent.* d.28 p.2 dub. I (I 504): ‘Sed quod possit intelligi aliquid praeter alterum, hoc potest esse multipliciter: aut quantum ad intellectum apprehendentem, aut quantum ad intellectum resolventem.’

77 *Ibid.*: ‘Si primo modo, sic non potest intelligi aliquid sine aliquo, quod est ei ratio intelligendi, sicut Deus praeter deitatem, et homo praeter humanitatem; potest tamen intelligi effectus, non intellecta causa, et inferius, non intellecto superiori, quia potest quis apprehendere hominem, non intellecto aliquo superiorum. Et sic dicit Philosophus, quod qui unum dicit quodam modo multa dicit, non simpliciter, sed quodam modo, quia implicite.’

is quoted. The Quarrachi edition refers to the first book of the *Physics*, but this exact statement is not found there.<sup>78</sup> However, Aristotle does argue here that scientific knowledge requires the *distinction* of elements, principles and conditions through *analysis*. Preceding full analysis, the intellect merely has a confused understanding of something, in which these elements, principles and conditions are not yet distinguished. In this sense, one thing is recognized, but many aspects of it are perceived only implicitly:

When the objects of an inquiry (...) have principles, conditions, or elements, it is through acquaintance with these that knowledge, that is to say scientific knowledge, is attained. For we do not think that we know a thing until we are acquainted with its primary conditions or first principles, and have carried our analysis as far as its simplest elements. (...) The natural way of doing this is to start from the things that are more knowable and obvious to us and proceed towards those which are clearer and more knowable by nature. (...) Now what is to us plain and obvious at first is rather confused masses, the elements and principles of which become known to us later by analysis.<sup>79</sup>

It seems, therefore, that Bonaventure sought to compare an apprehending understanding to what Aristotle calls ‘what is plain and obvious at

78 The Quaracchi editors refer to Aristotle, “*Phys.*, I, textus 21”, i.e., *Phys.*, I, 2, 185b30–34 (cf. Averroes, *In Aristotelis Physicorum*, I 21, in: *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, vol. 4 (ed. Venice 1562, fol. 15rB–C). The adagium is also quoted by the famous Anonymus Alani (A. de Libera, L. Gazziero (eds.), “Le sophisme «Omnis homo de necessitate est animal» du *Parisinus Latinus* 16135, f. 99rb–103vb,” in: *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 75 (2008), pp. 323–368, esp. 338 – no source indicated), and by Thomas Aquinas, e.g., in *Quaestiones quodlibetales* VII, 6, 3, arg. 3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 25/I, Ex Typographia Polyglotta: Rome 1996, p. 32); the Leonine editors cite parallel passages from Albert and refer to *Metaph.* VII 12, 1037b8–27. However, the sentence is found neither in the *Physics* nor in the *Metaphysics*. Robertus Anglicus refers to book II of the *Topics* (see A. Gondreux, “*Turba ruunt* (Ov. Her. 1, 88?): Histoire d’un exemple grammatical,” in: *Bulletin du Cange* 61 (2003), pp. 174–222, esp. 216, §1.3.2.2 – source not identified by the editor); the sentence is clearly based on Boethius’ translation of *Topics* II 5, 112a16–17 (ed. L. Minio-Paluello, p. 39): ‘Amplius omnis qui dixit quidlibet quodammodo multa dixit, eo quod plura sunt unicuique ex necessitate consequentia.’

79 Aristotle, *Physics* I 2, 184a9–b15.

first,' or 'confused masses,' in which elements and principles remain implicit, only to become known by way of analysis.

Subsequently, Bonaventure argues that by means of a *resolving* understanding, we come to understand what is essential to the thing, apart from its accidental properties:

In another manner it concerns understanding something without the other, using the resolving intellect; and this intellect considers the things that are essential to a thing, as the subject can be understood without its own properties.<sup>80</sup>

From this, it becomes clear that Bonaventure also regards resolution to be a divisive, analytic procedure in which elements, principles and conditions are distinguished in order to obtain an understanding of the essence of a thing.

Up until here, Bonaventure seems to maintain a conception of abstraction or *resolutio* that is quite similar to that of Aquinas. However, in what follows, Bonaventure goes beyond this first distinction between two ways of understanding, i.e. an apprehending understanding and a resolving understanding, by adding a second distinction: he argues that a resolving understanding is possible in two ways, i.e. fully and perfectly (*plene et perfecte*) and deficiently and incompletely (*deficiente et resolvente semiplene*):

In another way something is understood apart from something else by a resolving intellect (...) and this can be twofold: either by means of the fully and perfectly resolving intellect, or by means of the deficiently and halfway resolving intellect. By means of the halfway resolving intellect it can be understood that something is while it is not understood by means of the first being (*primo ente*). By means of the perfectly resolving intellect, however, something cannot be understood if it is not understood by means of the first being.<sup>81</sup>

80 *I Sent.* d.28 p.2 dub. I (I 504): 'Alio modo contingit aliquid intelligere praeter alterum, intellectu resolvente; et iste intellectus considerat ea quae sunt rei essentialia, sicut potest intelligi subiectum sine propria passione.'

81 *Ibid.*: 'Alio modo contingit aliquid intelligere praeter alterum, intellectu resolvente (...) Et hoc potest esse dupliciter: aut intellectu resolvente plene et perfecte, aut intellectu deficiente et resolvente semiplene. Intellectu resolvente semiplene, potest intelligi aliquid esse, non intellecto primo ente. Intellectu autem resolvente perfecte, non potest intelligi aliquid, primo ente non intellecto.'

Hence, what Bonaventure argues to be deficient about a *sempiene* resolution, is that it establishes an understanding of a thing in which it is understood apart from something else, but in which an understanding of first being (*primo ente*) is *not* involved. In this case, as he mentioned before in this *dubium*, an effect is understood without its cause being understood (*potest tamen intelligi effectus, non intellecta causa*). A perfectly resolving understanding, on the other hand, necessarily involves an understanding of this first being as first cause.

To further assess Bonaventure's position, it is helpful to compare his account of complete understanding with that of Thomas Aquinas, to whose account of abstraction he referred earlier on in this *dubium*. Aquinas also argues that the understanding intellect does not attain a perfect understanding in its first act of apprehension, but rather, that the intellect understands in degrees:

the human intellect does not acquire perfect knowledge by the first act of apprehension; but it first apprehends something about its object, such as its quiddity (...) and then it understands the properties, accidents, and the various relations of the essence.<sup>82</sup>

Bonaventure's account may not seem to be that different from Aquinas. However, Bonaventure, as we have seen, maintains that understanding the essence of something is completed only by relating this essence to divine being as its first cause. For him, this constitutes the difference between a *semi-plena* and a *plena* resolution.

This is confirmed in yet another *dubium* of the *Sentences*. In II *Sent.* d.1 p.2 *dubium* II, we find an investigation of the nature of the relation between goodness and being in which Bonaventure comes to similar conclusions as in the *dubium* discussed in the above: a complete understanding is only established if a thing is compared to its cause. In this case, however, he approaches the subject from a Neoplatonic perspective: the subject is discussed in terms of participation rather than in those of division or abstraction. Here, the parallelism is stressed of the tendency of all things to revert to their origin, and the analysis of knowledge of creatures, which ends in knowledge of God as their first cause.

In this text, Bonaventure describes the understanding intellect in terms of a resolving intellect in the context of a discussion of Boethius's

82 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I 85 a.5 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, p. 341).

tractate *De Hebdomadibus*. In this treatise, Boethius deals with the nature of the relation between goodness and being,<sup>83</sup> proceeding from the question, posed by a friend: 'How can substances be good in virtue of the fact that they have being when they are not substantial goods?'<sup>84</sup> He starts out with the presupposition that things that exist, are good, and that they are so either by virtue of their *substance* or by *participation*. This presents him with a problem: things cannot be substantially good, because that would make all things similar to God, which would be an impious conclusion, Boethius argues. The alternative is that things are good through participation in divine goodness. However, all things are inclined to the good as their final cause. Why should they still be *inclined* towards the good, as they already take part in it through participation?

To solve this *aporia*, Boethius conducts a thought-experiment in which, for a moment, he abstracts good from being. By doing so, he discovers that goodness is either a property or a principle of things, and concludes that there is a first good that is good in itself, as a principle, by virtue of its own being, which is God. Created things are also good by virtue of their being, i.e. substantially, but only in a *secondary* sense: their being has flowed from the first good, therefore the being itself of created things is good. By establishing this disjunction between created goodness and uncreated goodness, which Aertsen describes as an articulation of 'the polarity between the transcendental and the transcendence of the good,'<sup>85</sup> Boethius is now able to conclude that the derivation of the being of all things from God as the first good establishes the goodness of particular things and, at the same time, establishes both an essential difference *and* an essential relation between all things and their first principle. In this way, Boethius preserves the good as a transcendental property of all beings, without compromising the unicity of the first good as a transcendent principle.

Bonaventure affirms the solution that Boethius presents: whereas

83 Cf. Boethius, *Opuscula Sacra* and *De consolazione Philosophiae* (ed. C. Moreschini, K.G. Saur: Munich – Leipzig 2000).

84 For an elaborate discussion of Boethius's *De hebdomadibus* from the perspective of the doctrine of the transcendentals, cf. J.A. Aertsen, "Good as Transcendental and the Transcendence of the Good," in: S. MacDonald (ed.), *Being and Goodness*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca (NY) 1990, pp. 56–73. Also cf. S. MacDonald, "Boethius's Claim That All Substances Are Good," in: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 70 (3) (1988), pp. 245–79.

85 J.A. Aertsen, "Good as Transcendental and the Transcendence of the Good," p. 59.



God is absolutely good through his essence (*bonum per essentiam*), all created things are good out of their relation of dependence on this first good. This goodness does pertain to a *substantial* goodness, i.e. a goodness inherent to all beings, but one ‘which does not add upon the form a new essence, but only a relation to the final cause’. Thus, this participative relation of created beings to God is essential rather than accidental: things can neither relinquish their being nor their goodness.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, ‘true’ and ‘good’ are considered to be attributes of a being according to itself (*secundum quod ipsum*). As such, these attributes are *consequent* to it.

It is, however, not merely this ontological subject that Boethius addresses that is of interest to Bonaventure. This is indicated by the fact that Bonaventure shifts the discussion to the question of whether we can actually *understand* being abstracted from goodness. Bonaventure now maintains that a thing can be understood *without* the attributes that are consequent to it – such as ‘true’ and ‘good’ – by both an *apprehending* intellect and an intellect *resolving semi-fully*. In both cases, a thing is thought abstracted from its relation to first being. An intellect *fully* understanding *cq.* resolving, however, also understands the conditions that are consequent to a thing. However, as ‘true’ and ‘good’ mean a necessary disposition and relation of a created essence to its cause (*dicit habitudinem necessarium et relationem ad causam*), they can only be understood by taking this cause in consideration as well. From this perspective, a full resolution is defined as an intellect fully comparing something to its causes (*plene ad causas comparante*).<sup>87</sup> Hence, also in this

86 II *Sent.* d.1 p.2 dub. II (II 51–2): ‘Item quaeritur de hac propositione: In quantum sumus, boni sumus. Ergo videtur, quod nos boni sumus per essentiam, quod est contra Boethium in libro de Hebdomadibus, qui dicit, quod sumus boni participatione. (...) Prima est bonitas substantialis, quae non addit supra formam novam essentiam, sed solum relationem ad finalem causam, ex qua comparatione omne aliud a Deo habet esse bonum. Et quia illa comparatio ad causam essentialem sive finalem est essentialis, nec unquam esse relinquit nec potest relinquere; hinc est, quod Augustinus dicit: “In quantum sumus, boni sumus”. – Ad illud ergo quod obiicitur de Boethio, dicendum, quod ipse vocat bonum per essentiam illud bonum, quod est absolute bonum, non ex dependentia ad aliud. Hoc autem modo nulla creatura bona est, immo ex comparatione, et ideo participatione.’

87 II *Sent.* d.1 p.2 dub. II (II 52): ‘dicendum, quod illud quod attribuitur alicui secundum quod ipsum, potest dupliciter attribui: aut enim consequitur, aut praecedit. Si praecedit, sic est ita essentialis, quod sine ipso nec est nec potest intelligi. Sed si aliquo modo consequitur, non tamen cadit in aliud genus, potest quidem intelligi intellectu apprehendente et intellectu semiplene resolvente; sed

*dubium*, again in the context of a discussion of abstraction, albeit from a more Neoplatonic perspective than in the former *dubium*, Bonaventure defends that the relation of a created being to its uncreated causal principle is an essential relation that needs to be taken into account in order to completely understand this being as a whole.

Thus, in this section, the way in which Bonaventure criticizes resolution as *divisio*: as it ends in the *created* elements, relations, and principles of a thing, but does not take into account its essential relation to God as its first cause – the only thing that is truly indivisible and purely simple – it is regarded to be insufficient. Nevertheless, a divisive procedure in the act of understanding is not discarded by Bonaventure. Rather, it is complemented by a resolution that proceeds from effects into causes, ending in God as first cause.

### 2.2.3 *Bonaventure's critique of resolution into most general principles*

The second type of resolution that Bonaventure criticizes is a resolution ending in the most general principles of being. In Aquinas, we find such a resolution, characterized by Eileen Sweeney as Neo-Platonist,<sup>88</sup> because rather than in simple components, this type of resolution ends in higher principles. To Aquinas, these higher principles in which the resolution ends, are *ens commune*, i.e. being in general, and its transcendental conditions, rather than God.<sup>89</sup>

As I have argued, for Thomas Aquinas, there is a marked difference between a *resolutio secundum rem* and a *resolutio secundum rationem*: whereas the former resolves into God, the latter resolves into *ens*.<sup>90</sup>

intellectu plene ad causas comparante non potest intelligi, non intellectu illo, maxime cum illud dicit habitudinem necessarium et relationem ad causam, sicut verum et bonum.’

88 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate*, 6.1 sol.c (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, pp. 162–3). Cf. E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p. 215.

89 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I 85 a.1 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, pp. 330–2).

90 E.C. Sweeney, “Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas,” p. 228. Sweeney argues here against Aertsen, who claims that resolution *secundum rationem* moves in another direction than resolution *secundum rem*, as the former is to be compared with Calcidian resolution. Cf. J.A. Aertsen, “Method and Metaphysics: The *via resolutionis* in Thomas Aquinas,” p. 414. Sweeney agrees upon the fact that there are two types of resolution in Aquinas, but disagrees on Aertsen’s position that the distinction between these two corresponds to the distinction between resolution *secundum rem* and resolution *secundum rationem*.

It is first known in the sense that it is the condition of all knowledge and is implicit in every concept.<sup>91</sup>

Basically, as will be shown in this section, Bonaventure disagrees with Aquinas on the basis of the argument that what is deficient can only be understood through what is perfect, i.e. something *without* any lack or deficiency: you have to know that what is lacking itself in order to comprehend the lack of it – an argument that Bonaventure borrows from Averroes.<sup>92</sup> Created being is inherently deficient, Bonaventure holds. Therefore, to understand it, an appeal has to be made to something *outside* of creation: a special, perfect being, possessing all the qualities that created being is deprived of. This can only be divine being. A complete resolution therefore resolves *beyond* the most general created principles into the first causal principle, God.

A good example of this type of resolution we find in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* III.3. Bonaventure seeks to prove here that an understanding of an absolute and perfect being is presupposed to our understanding of an imperfect and dependent created being. The resolution that is presented here consists of two parts. The first part deals with the process of *definition*, which has to end in what is highest and most general (*suprema et generalissima*). Bonaventure argues that any full definition of a created thing depends on an understanding of being (*ens*) and its transcendental conditions one, true and good (*unum, verum, bonum*).<sup>93</sup>

However, understanding the *generalissima* is not enough for a complete understanding of this substance: the second part of the resolution shows that there remains something about everything created being that cannot be understood by means of knowledge of any other created

91 Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate* 1.1 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 22/I, p. 5): ‘Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit est ens.’ Cf. *idem*, *Summa theologiae* I 94 a.2 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, pp. 315–6): ‘Illud quod primo cadit sub apprehensione est ens, cujus intellectus includitur in omnibus quaecumque quis apprehendit.’

92 Cf. Averroes, *Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis ‘De Anima’ libros* III.25, (ed. S.F. Crawford, Medieval Academy of America: Cambridge (MA) 1953, p. 462.

93 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Capit autem intellectus terminorum significata, cum comprehendit, quid est unumquodque per definitionem. Sed definitio habet fieri per superiora, et illa per superiora definiri habent, usquequo veniatur ad suprema et generalissima, quibus ignoratis, non possunt intelligi definitive inferiora. Nisi igitur cognoscatur quid est ens per se, non potest plene sciri definitio alicuius specialis substantiae. Nec ens per se cognosci potest, nisi cognoscatur cum suis conditionibus, quae sunt; unum, verum, bonum.’

thing, which is the fact that it is defective, in one way or another. We cannot come to know this inherent aspect of creation through the created itself because, as Bonaventure quotes Averroes, 'privations and defects cannot be known at all unless by their positions'.<sup>94</sup> Thus, an appeal has to be made to something *outside* of creation, possessing the qualities that created being is deprived of. This is introduced as first being.

Being can be thought as

diminished and complete  
imperfect and perfect  
being in potency and as being in act  
according to something and as being  
a part and as a whole;  
transitive and as permanent  
being through something else and as being in itself (*ens per se*)  
mixed with non-being and as pure being  
dependent and as absolute  
posterior and as prior  
mutable and as immutable  
simple and as composed.<sup>95</sup>

Subsequently, Bonaventure adds the argument that 'privations are only known through their positive features', by which knowledge of the more perfect in any of these pairs of conditions must be presupposed to knowledge of the less perfect. In the conclusion of this second part

94 This Averroean argument is also used in *Hexaemeron* V.30 (V 359): 'Fertur similiter experiendo sic: productum respectu primi defectivum est; similiter compositum respectu simplicis; similiter permixtum respectu puri, et sic de aliis; ergo dicunt privationes. Sed privationes non cognoscuntur nisi per habitus suos. Iudex enim est rectum sui et obliqui. Et si omnis cognitio fit ex praeexistenti cognitione: ergo necessario intelligentia experitur in se, quod habeat aliquod lumen, per quod cognoscat primum esse.'

95 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): 'Ens autem, cum possit cogitari ut diminutum et completum, ut imperfectum et ut perfectum, ut ens in potentia et ut ens in actu, ut ens secundum quid et ut ens simpliciter, ut ens in parte et ut ens totaliter, ut ens transiens et ut ens manens, ut ens per aliud et ut ens per se, ut ens permixtum non-enti et ut ens purum, ut ens dependens et ut ens absolutum, ut ens posterius et ut ens prius, ut ens mutabile et ut ens immutabile, ut ens simplex et ut ens compositum.'

of the resolution, defective and incomplete being is identified as created being, whereas ‘being without any defect’ is identified as ‘a being most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute’, an understanding of which is necessarily presupposed to a full understanding of its counterpart, i.e. created being:

our intellect does not come to completely resolve (*plene resolvens*) the understanding of whatsoever created being, unless it is aided by (*iuvetur ab*) the understanding of a most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute being.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, in the second part of the resolution, created being (*ens*) is compared to first being by means of twelve disjunctions, a comparison which is argued to be necessary in order to fully understand (*plene resolvens*) a created being. Through this procedure, the resolution ends in the discovery of an understanding (*intellectu*) of God as a most pure, actual, complete and absolute being (*ens*). This understanding is presupposed to a complete understanding of any created thing. As Bonaventure rhetorically asks his reader, ‘how would the intellect know this defective and incomplete being without having any knowledge of a being without any defect?’<sup>97</sup>

Hence, the major difference between the resolutions of Aquinas and Bonaventure is that Bonaventure goes *one step further* than Aquinas: although he also concludes that *generalissima* are presupposed to knowledge of whatever substance, he adds to that conclusion the argument that the comparison of the created to the uncreated is necessary to fully understand created being. Hence, to the process of definition a procedure is added by which created being is related to first being. In this procedure, what Duns Scotus has later called ‘disjunctive transcendentals’ play a pivotal role.

In *De mysterio Trinitatis* I.1, we find a similar resolution. It is part of a demonstration of the *indubitability of God’s existence*.<sup>98</sup> In this article,

96 *Ibid.*: ‘non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuvetur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti (...)’

97 *Ibid.*: ‘Quomodo autem sciret intellectus, hoc esse ens defectivum et incompletum, si nullam haberet cognitionem entis absque omni defectu?’

98 God’s indubitability is a recurring theme in the work of Bonaventure, although this *quaestio* can be regarded as his most elaborate text focusing on this issue. At

three defects of the intellect leading to doubt are discussed.<sup>99</sup> One concerns the failure of the intellect's resolving act. Bonaventure describes this failure as the incapacity to resolve *beyond* created being into first principles in God.<sup>100</sup> However, if the intellect carries out its resolving act correctly, he argues, it is one of three ways in which God indeed proves to be indubitable.

This resolution to God as first known is part of a series of arguments that seek to prove that we cannot doubt the existence of God because it is proclaimed by all creatures, and that his existence can be demonstrated from them: all things share certain conditions which point towards their maker. Each of these conditions implies the existence of first being.<sup>101</sup> This last remark stresses that these conditions are transcategorical and apply to everything created. However, these conditions do *not* apply to God; they demarcate all created being from uncreated being, and, with their counterpart condition designating uncreated being, they can be qualified as disjunctive transcendentals. Ten of them are mentioned here:

<i>created being</i>	<i>first being</i>
1. posterior	prior
2. from another	from itself
3. possible	necessary
4. relative	absolute
5. qualified, diminished	absolute, unqualified, perfect
6. because of another	because of itself
7. by participation	by essence

considerable length, the same topic is comparably treated in I *Sent.* d.8 p.1 a.1 q.2 (I 153–155).

99 *De mysterio Trinitatis* I.1 (V 49): 'propter defectum hominum dubitari ab aliquo potest, an Deus sit, et hoc secundum triplicem defectum intellectus cognoscentis: vel quantum ad actum apprehendendi, vel quantum ad actum conferendi, vel quantum ad actum *resolvendi*.'

100 *Ibid.*: 'quantum ad defectum in actu resolvendi incidit dubitatio, quando intellectus carnalis nescit resolvere nisi usque ad ea quae patent sensibus, sicut sunt ista corporalia; ex qua ratione putaverunt aliqui, solem istum visibilem, qui obtinet principatum inter creaturas corporales, esse Deum, quia nescierunt resolvere usque ad substantiam incorpoream nec usque ad rerum prima principia.'

101 *Ibid.*: 'Item ostenditur hoc ipsum secunda via sic: omne verum, quod clamat omnis creatura, est verum indubitabile; sed Deum esse clamat omnis creatura: ergo etc. – Quod autem omnis creatura clamet, Deum esse, ostenditur ex decem conditionibus et suppositionibus per se notis.'

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| 8. in potency  | in act       |
| 9. composite   | simple       |
| 10. changeable | unchangeable |

By means of this series of disjunctives, Bonaventure seeks to prove that the *existence* of created being necessarily presupposes first being. For instance, with regard to the disjunction of possible and necessary, he argues that all creatures have some degree of possibility, there must be something that is necessary, because ‘nothing that is indifferent to being and non-being (which ‘possible’ implies) can exist, except through something which is entirely determined by being’ – and therefore necessary.<sup>102</sup> There is, however, one exception found within this series: with regard to the dependence of diminished being on absolute being, Bonaventure does not so much refer to the order of being, but rather, to the order of *knowledge*, as he argues here that diminished being depends on perfect being, because a privation cannot be understood except with respect to a habit:

Diminished being (...) presupposes perfect being, as privations can only be known through their habits.<sup>103</sup>

So, again by using the argument that a lack can only be understood on the basis of a knowledge of that which lacks, Bonaventure resolves from knowledge of created being to knowledge of perfect being, by which he resolves beyond created principles into God.

A more elaborate version of this same argument we find in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* c. V:

102 *Ibid.* (V 46–7): ‘si est ens possibile, est ens necessarium: quia possibile dicit indifferentiam ad esse et non-esse; nihil autem indifferens ad esse et non-esse potest esse nisi per aliquid, quod est omnino determinatum ad esse. Si ergo ens necessarium, nihil habens omnino de possibilitate ad non-esse non est nisi Deus, omne autem aliud habet aliquid de possibilitate quaelibet entis differentia infert, Deum esse.’

103 *Ibid.*: ‘si est ens diminutum sive secundum quid, est ens simpliciter: quia ens secundum quid nec esse nec intelligi potest, nisi intelligatur per ens simpliciter, nec ens diminutum nisi per ens perfectum, sicut privatio non intelligitur nisi per habitum. Si ergo omne ens creatum est ens secundum partem, solum autem ens increatum est ens simpliciter et perfectum; necesse est, quod quaelibet entis differentia inferat et concludat, Deum esse.’

(Insight is) brought by experience in the following way: what is produced is defect with respect to the first; similarly, what is composed with respect to the simple; similarly, the mixed with respect to the pure, and similarly for the others; therefore they are called privations. But privations are not known unless by their positions. After all, the straight is the judge both of the crooked and of itself. And if all knowledge comes from pre-existing knowledge: intelligence therefore experiences in itself, that it has a certain light, by which it knows first being (*primum esse*).<sup>104</sup>

Here, Bonaventure presents a resolution to pre-existing knowledge of something first, simple and pure, which is identified here as first being (*primum esse*).

Thus, an important difference between Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas is that, whereas the latter confines the resolution to a first known to the realm of the created by ending in the highest created principles, Bonaventure argues that such a resolution is incomplete, and due to a failing intellect. Rather, he goes beyond created principles to resolve into God as perfect being. Hereto, as mentioned above, he uses an 'Averroean lever': i.e. the argument that a lack can only be understood on the basis of knowledge of that which is lacking, combined with a series of what have become known as disjunctive transcendentals in Duns Scotus.

#### 2.2.4 *Bonaventure's critique of a resolution into esse*

A third type of resolution found in Aquinas resolves a particular thing into 'that which is' (*id quod est*) and its existence (*esse*).<sup>105</sup> This type of resolution resolves from the consideration of categorical being, i.e. particular modes of being which are categorically divided, to the transcendental consideration of being in general that is common to all

<sup>104</sup> *Hexaemeron* V.30 (V 359): 'Fertur similiter experiendo sic: productum respectu primi defectivum est; similiter compositum respectu simplicis; similiter permixtum respectu puri, et sic de aliis; ergo dicunt privationes. Sed privationes non cognoscuntur nisi per habitus suos. Iudex enim est rectum sui et obliqui. Et si omnis cognitio fit ex praexistenti cognitione: ergo necessario intelligentia experitur in se, quod habeat aliquod lumen, per quod cognoscat primum esse.'

<sup>105</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 40, p. 57): 'Oportet igitur communem quamdam resolutionem in omnibus huiusmodi fieri, secundum quod unumquodque eorum intellectu resolvitur in id quod est, et in suum esse.'



beings (*esse commune*).<sup>106</sup> As the ‘actuality of all acts’, it designates the actuality of transcendental *ens*, which is first known.

Bonaventure does not explicitly criticize a resolution of something into its *id quod est* and *esse*. However, in *Itinerarium* V.3, he argues that *esse divinum* is what falls into the mind first, rather than created *esse*. Here, Bonaventure seeks to resolve from particular being to contemplate being (*esse*). Bonaventure, however, seeks to contemplate being (*esse*) as the first divine name. Hereto, ‘everything that is understood’ (*omne, quod intelligitur*) is analyzed. First, three ways are distinguished in which being (*ens*) is understood: either as a non-being (*non ens*), as a being in potency (*ens in potentia*), or as a being in act (*ens in actu*). Second, it is argued that a non-being is only understood through knowledge of a being. Subsequently, knowledge of a being in potency is reduced to knowledge of a being in act. Hence, as cognition of a non-being is reduced to that of a being, and a being in potency to a being in act, the conclusion of this resolution seems to be that a being in act is first known.<sup>107</sup> However, in a next step, the resolution continues by transgressing the domain of *things* that are understood. It is stated that

being (*esse*) names (*nominat*) the pure act itself of a being (*entis*): being (*esse*) is therefore what first falls into the intellect, and this being (*illud esse*) is pure actuality (*actus purus*).<sup>108</sup>

Hence, to understand the ‘in-act-ness’ of a being in act, an understanding of being as pure actuality is required, which is, in consequence, the prerequisite for everything that is understood. Herewith, the resolution transgresses the order of the concrete (*ens*) and resolves into the abstract (*esse, actus purus*) as first known. We have seen that in Thomas Aquinas, actuality or the ‘act of all acts’ is identified with *esse commune*, which is first known. The question is, however, how this being (*illud esse*) is to be identified.

Bonaventure argues that there are several options: it either is particular being, analogous being, or divine being. However, this being cannot

106 Cf. R.A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, p. 143.

107 *Itinerarium* V.3 (V 308): ‘omne, quod intelligitur, aut intelligitur ut non ens, aut ut ens in potentia, aut ut ens in actu. Si igitur non-ens non potest intelligi nisi per ens, et ens in potentia non nisi per ens in actu (...).’

108 *Itinerarium* V.3 (V 308): ‘(...) esse nominat ipsum purum actum entis: esse igitur est quod primo cadit in intellectu, et illud esse est quod est purus actus.’

be particular being (*esse particulare*), he argues, because particular being is limited being, and therefore always mixed with potency. Neither is this being to be identified with analogous being (*esse analogum*), with which the being of different *conceptual* beings subsumed under one and the same denominator is meant. Because it only exists in the mind, this being scarcely is (*minime est*), Bonaventure argues, and therefore has the least actuality. As two out of the three options are now discarded, he concludes that this being that first falls into the intellect can only be divine being (*esse divinum*).<sup>109</sup> Therefore, everything that is understood, is ultimately understood through an understanding of divine being as pure actuality.

Bonaventure does not mention *esse commune* here as a candidate for *illud esse*. Did he not take this into account? Possibly, he did. In Bonaventure's critique of analogous being as that which falls into the intellect first, the first formulation of the doctrine of God as first known by Guibert of Tournai resonates. Guibert was a Franciscan like Bonaventure, and his successor at the University of Paris. Guibert's work, which has become known under the title *Rudimentum doctrinae*, preceded and influenced Bonaventure.<sup>110</sup> In this tractate, Guibert holds that God is first noticed in creatures.<sup>111</sup> He also discusses the inadequacy of *ens analogum* as a measure for beings, because it is merely intentional being, which exists only in the intellect, and therefore has even less actuality than any finite being in reality.<sup>112</sup>

In the tenth chapter of the *Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure's position that *esse divinum* is first known to the intellect is reaffirmed. This chapter also considers being (*esse*) as the first divine name. Just as in *Itinerarium* V.3, it is argued that 'divine being comes into the mind first' (*esse enim divinum primum est, quod venit in mente*). Furthermore, from an analysis

109 *Ibid.* (V 308–309): 'Sed hoc non est esse particulare, quod est esse arctatum, quia permixtum est cum potentia, nec esse analogum, quia minime habet de actu, eo quod minime est. Restat igitur, quod illud esse est esse divinum.'

110 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, p. 159.

111 Guibert of Tournai, *Rudimentum doctrinae* p. I, tract. III, c.2 (eds. C. Bérubé, S. Gieben, pp. 647–51).

112 *Ibid.* (ed. C. Bérubé, S. Gieben, p. 648): 'Non enim poteris iudicare illud esse verius illo, cum utrumque deficiat in essendo, nisi per ens quod est sine defectu essendi aliquo (...) Nec est illud ens ad quod recurris ens analogum, quia, cum tale sit in sola intentione, minus habet de esse quam lux vel aurum. Non igitur de entibus certe iudicabit anima per illud ens deficiens et vanum.'

of the order of creation, departing from conditions of created being, Bonaventure also concludes that ‘the first of all intellectual things is first being (*primum esse*).’ Here, Bonaventure argues that first being is ‘inscribed’ in all creatures. Subsequently, he quotes the author of the *Liber de causis*, who states that ‘being’ (*esse*) is the first of created things, and advances in opposition to this statement his own thesis that first being is first of all *intellectual* things:

Therefore, these reflections on the order, origin and completion lead to that first being (*illud esse primum*) which is represented by all creatures. This name is indeed inscribed in all things (...) Therefore he (the author of *Liber de causis*) said: the first of all created things is being (*esse*); but I say: the first of all intellectual things is first being (*esse primum*).<sup>113</sup>

It might very well be that Bonaventure made this prominent statement, with which he closes this chapter on the consideration of being (*esse*) as the first divine name, because some of his contemporaries connected the phrase from *Liber de causis* to the idea that created being is fundamental in the consideration of creation, rather than *first* being (*primum esse*). For instance, in his *Summa de creaturis*, Albert the Great interprets ‘being is the first of all created things’ in such a way that being (*esse* or *ens*) is the concept beyond which the resolution of other concepts cannot go; in the intellect, (created) being itself has nothing prior to it, whereas whatever comes after it presupposes (the simple concept of) being.<sup>114</sup> He argues that the resolution cannot resolve up to the first

113 *Hexaemeron* X.18 (V 379): ‘Hae igitur speculationes ordinis, originis et completionis ducunt ad illud esse primum, quod repraesentant omnes creaturae. Hoc enim nomen scriptum est in omnibus rebus; et sunt hae conditiones entis, super quas fundantur certissimae illationes. Unde dixit ille: prima rerum creatarum omnium est esse; sed ego dico: prima rerum intellectualium est esse primum.’

114 Albert the Great, *De bono* q. 1.6 (ed. H. Kühle, C. Feckes, B. Geyer, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 27, Aschendorff: Münster 1951, p. 10–11): ‘in Libro de causis, quarta propositio est haec: ‘primum rerum creatarum est esse, et non est ante ipsum creatum aliud.’ Ergo videtur, quod ens sit ante bonum. ‘Ante’ autem est per intellectum, quo posito non de necessitate ponitur aliud. Ergo iterum bonum non convertitur cum ente.’ This is confirmed in Albert’s *solutio* (p. 11): ‘Si enim consideretur intentio boni et intentio entis, in unoquoque ens erit creatum primum et causa primaria, et bonum erit per informationem in ente et secundum. Intentio enim entis est intentio simplicissimi, quod non est resolvere ad aliquid, quod sit ante ipsum secundum rationem.’; *idem*, *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa* II.1.17 (ed. W. Fauser, in: *Opera omnia*, vol. 17/2, Aschendorff: Münster 1993, p. 81): ‘Esse enim, quod dico

principle if it regards the essences of things, because the first principle is not essentially involved in the constitution of things.<sup>115</sup> Obviously, Bonaventure thinks otherwise. He does not infer from the statement of the *Liber de causis* that being (*esse*) is first known, but stresses that for something to exist *and* to be understood by us it depends on its *reference* to *first* being. It is in this referential sense that first being (*primum esse*) is inscribed in all things, and, correspondingly, it is 'the first of all intellectual things'. Therefore, rather than created being (*esse creatum*), divine being (*esse divinum*) is first known.

### 2.2.5 *Conclusions on Bonaventure's critique of three types of resolutio*

In this section, it was shown that Bonaventure criticizes three types of resolution to a first known: (1) *resolutio* as *divisio*, (2) *resolutio* into being (*ens*) and its transcendental conditions as the most general principles, and (3) *resolutio* into *esse* (*commune*). If the way in which this critique is distributed in his work is considered, three things stand out. First, Bonaventure's treatment of *resolutio* in his *Commentary on the Sentences* focuses on a critique of resolution as division or abstraction, whereas in his later work, he concentrates on a critique of *resolutio* into higher principles. Second, in the accounts of resolution found in *De mysterio Trinitatis*, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure uses what I have called an 'Averroean lever' to resolve from the created into God: the argument that deficiencies can only be understood if there is preliminary knowledge of that which is lacking. As every created thing is deficient, an understanding of divine being, which is perfect, is presupposed to knowledge of created being. Third, in both the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure criticizes *esse creatum* as first known in favor of *esse divinum* as the first thing to fall into the intellect.

modo simplex conceptus est et informis et in quo sicut in ultimo stat resolutio, non nisi causa(e) prima(e) creatum esse potest.'; Cf. L. Sweeney, "'Esse Primum Creatum' in Albert the Great's *Liber de Causis et Processu Universitatis Esse Primum Creatum*," in: *The Thomist* 44 (1980), pp. 599–646, at pp. 599–602; Cf. W. Goris, "Das Gute als Ersterkanntes bei Berthold von Moosburg," pp. 160–165.

115 Albert the Great, *De causis et processu universitatis* II.1.17 (ed. W. Fauser, p. 81): 'Primum enim principium non ingreditur essentialiter constitutionem rei alicuius. Propter quod resolutio entium non devenit usque ad primum principium, quando in essentialia fit resolutio.'

### 2.3 Conclusions

In this chapter, a differentiation of Bonaventure's accounts of God as first known was made on the basis of what they criticize. I sought to demonstrate that there are three different types of resolution that Bonaventure considers to be inadequate to establish full knowledge of something. I have shown that these types correspond with three types of resolution found in Thomas Aquinas. In his accounts of *resolutio*, Bonaventure discusses on what grounds they are considered to be insufficient to arrive at what is first known. In each case, he replaces, or rather: *completes*, these 'halfway' resolutions by a resolution that ends in divine being rather than in created principles. This differentiation of Bonaventure's accounts of resolution on the basis of his criticism of different types of resolution is not yet thematized in the literature on his doctrine of God as first known. In this concluding section, the findings in this chapter will be summarized, and their meaning for *resolutio* as the methodology of the doctrine of God as first known will be considered.

First, a type of resolution was discussed that is based on the argument that what is composite can only be understood through what is simple. However, rather than the indivisible *parts* of a thing, of which it is composed, Bonaventure argues that a resolution has to end in what is *absolutely* simple: divine being. Because everything that is created is dependent on divine being, it is inherently composite, and never fully simple. Herewith, he criticizes a notion of resolution as *divisio* as we find it, for instance, in Thomas Aquinas: the process of breaking a concept down into more simple parts in order to make it intelligible. This resolution will not lead to a full understanding of something, Bonaventure argues, because the relation of the created thing to its first causal principle is regarded as an essential relation that needs to be assessed in order to understand the thing itself.

The second type of resolution that is criticized is a resolution ending in the most general principles, such as transcendental being (*ens commune*) and its conditions. On the basis of the argument that all created being is deficient, and that what is deficient can only be understood through what is perfect, Bonaventure argues that in order to understand something completely, an appeal has to be made to an understanding of a perfect being, which can only be divine being, in which the resolution should therefore end.

A third type of resolution resolves from the consideration of categor-

ical being to the transcendental consideration of being as being (*esse*), which is common to all beings (*esse commune*).<sup>116</sup> As the ‘actuality of all acts,’ or simply ‘existence’, *esse commune* designates the actuality of transcendental *ens*, Aquinas argues: all creatures have it in common. Rather than *esse commune*, Bonaventure argues that only *esse divinum* can be pure actuality, because all other being is limited in its actuality because it is somehow deficient as compared to perfect divine being. Correspondingly, only *esse divinum* can be first known.

When considering the distribution of Bonaventure’s accounts of *resolutio* in the context of God as first known over his works, we find that his treatment of *resolutio* in his Commentary focuses on a critique of *resolutio* as division or abstraction, whereas in his later work, it constitutes a critique of *resolutio* to the most general principles (*ens* or *esse commune*).

Now that this differentiation between Bonaventure’s accounts of *resolutio* is made on the basis of his criticism of three different types of resolutions, the question is what this differentiation tells us about the methodology of Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known in general. I will argue that his accounts share at least three important characteristics, which are (1) the distinction made between resolving merely halfway (*semiplene*) and fully (*plene*); (2) a ‘twist’ in technique, coupled to a transition of domain; (3) a return to the Platonic, which is established through this change of technique, in which the parallelism of *resolutio secundum rem* and *resolutio secundum rationem* is reinstalled.

First of all, all of Bonaventure’s accounts criticize any resolution that ends in created principles or elements rather than in divine being. This critique is marked by the distinction made – either implicitly or explicitly – between resolving merely halfway (*semiplene*) and fully (*plene*). In each case, in one way or another, Bonaventure declares an act of understanding in which the resolution does *not* end in divine being to be deficient and incomplete. Subsequently, this deficient act of understanding is distinguished from a perfect act, in which the intellect resolves *beyond* creation into divine being, by which complete knowledge is obtained. As mentioned before, this distinction between a halfway, and therefore deficient, and a complete, and therefore full resolution, is already a well known characteristic of Bonaventure’s accounts of divine being as first known.

A second characteristic is much less recognized, although it is related

116 R.A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, p. 143.

to the first: a complete resolution according to Bonaventure does not proceed by mere *iteration*, i.e. by repeating rounds of analysis, for instance into ever smaller parts, in order to arrive at a first. Rather, it is characterized by a ‘twist’ in technique. Hence, Bonaventure challenges a conception of resolution as purely iterative. Let us consider this characteristic. Usually, a resolution proceeds by iteration of the same procedure, until an ultimate point is reached in which the resolution ends. The same steps are executed over and over again, either into ever smaller parts, or into the ever more general. For instance, a genus with respect to its species is a species itself with respect to an even higher genus, in which it can be resolved. Hence, the step from species to genus is iterated in a step from this genus to a higher genus – until one arrives at what is most general. In Bonaventure’s resolutions that end in God as first known, there is however marked change of technique *en route*. The point at which this change of technique takes place coincides with the moment a *semiplena* resolution is complemented in order to make it complete (*plena*). This change of technique always goes along with a *transition of domain*.

Hence, a resolution that breaks a concept down into more simple parts (*divisio*) is complemented by resolving knowledge of the created to knowledge of God as absolutely simple being. Correspondingly, a transition takes place from the analysis of a thing into its internal principles to relating a creature to its uncreated first cause. Thus, the domain of creatures and their intrinsic causes is transcended by establishing the relation between creature and creator as extrinsic cause. In “La technique de la ‘reductio’ chez Bonaventure”, Guy-H. Allard investigates the logic of reduction in Bonaventure. He contrasts a resolute movement with the procedure of *divisio*. He describes the latter as a descending and decomposing movement, the former as an ascending, unifying movement. Where *divisio* ends, *reductio* begins, he therefore maintains.<sup>117</sup>

Second, a resolution proceeding by way of definition, i.e. the analysis into ever higher genera, is followed by a procedure resolving from deficiencies found in the created to those properties that are found in first being, using a series of disjunctive transcendentals. I have designated this as an ‘Averroean movement’ from the deficient to the perfect. Hence, there is a transition from an analysis within the domain of created being to a comparison of the created to the uncreated.

<sup>117</sup> G.H. Allard, “La technique de la ‘reductio’ chez Bonaventure,” p. 399.

Herewith, this resolution gains a 'twist', in which what Duns Scotus was later to call 'disjunctive transcendentals', and what I have called an 'Averroean lever', play a pivotal role. Allard calls this movement of Bonaventurian *resolutio* from the imperfect to the perfect 'unique': 'la pensée se voit contrainte, dans son accès ascendant a l'intelligibilité, a suivre une direction unique: celle du négatif (perçu comme imparfait et incomplet) vers le positif.'<sup>118</sup>

Although he hardly expounds on the technical nature of the two different elements that he distinguishes, Carl-Friedrich Geyer, in 'Intellectus plene resolvens. Bonaventuras Beitrag zu einer Philosophischen Theologie,' argues that Bonaventure's resolution integrates two aspects: the 'rational' and the 'positive-theological.'<sup>119</sup> The first is a logical, whereas the second is a 'theological, almost mystical' element. Furthermore, the first is Aristotelian, when Bonaventure speaks of the reduction of the species to a genus, as well as plurality to unity, the posterior to the anterior, the part to the whole, etc., whereas the second is Christian, in the sense that what is in the Son is reduced to the Father, who is first principle, Geyer holds. As the intellect discovers innate knowledge in the second step, by which it is able to understand the divine, Geyer designates this second step as part of a positive theology.<sup>120</sup>

However, I doubt that the second element distinguished by Geyer, if it indeed is to be identified with the second step in the resolution, is less philosophical than the first. Rather, it is a philosophical procedure that belongs to (Neo)Platonic thought than to Aristotelianism. This is acknowledged by Oeing-Hanhoff, who is more precise in distinguishing the two moments in this type of resolution. Oeing-Hanhoff, however, does not distinguish between *divisio* as the resolution into smallest components, and definition as a procedure that ends in what is most general.

In the case of Thomas Aquinas, Oeing-Hanhoff argues, definition

118 *Ibid.*, p. 403

119 C.-F. Geyer, "Intellectus plene resolvens," p. 367.

120 *Ibid.*, p. 367: 'Wie die Methode der *resolutio* zwei Momente, das philosophische und das positiv-theologische, in sich vereint, so gründet sie auf zwei Voraussetzungen, dem Exemplarismus und der Illuminationslehre, vermittelt welcher der Mensch überhaupt erst von der „Welt der Ideen“ erfahren kann, der er sich in der *plena resolutio* zuwendet. (...) Aus dem gleichen Grunde entbehrt auch die Methode des Charakters eines Beweises; vielmehr stellt sie sich dar als Aufweis jenes Grundes, von dem her in der Weise des Rückfragens nach dem *primum principium* gefragt wird.'



as a way of analysis leads to the most general concept *ens*, which is the first concept of the intellect. In contrast, he argues, Bonaventure lets a full analysis end in divine being as first known.<sup>121</sup> ‘Deshalb erschließt die Begriffsanalyse die metaphysische Konstitution der Dinge, die zwar nicht aus verschiedenen res, wohl aber aus a parte rei formal verschiedenen realitates bestehen,’ he argues. In Aquinas, this can pertain to the procedure of definition, in which the most general concept is distinguished from more specific concepts, but it can also mean the abstraction of the universal from the particular, he adds.<sup>122</sup> Bonaventure’s analysis in the order of knowledge is different, he argues, as it starts out with a conceptual analysis, but continues with an analysis of knowledge of imperfect being, which discovers a priori knowledge of perfect, eternal and absolute being, i.e. divine being, as privations and defects are only known through positions.<sup>123</sup> This is a method belonging to the Neoplatonic tradition, Oeing-Hanhoff concludes.<sup>124</sup>

Hence, although I consider – with Eileen Sweeney – *divisio* as decomposition to be something different than the process of definition, I agree with Oeing-Hanhoff that the two procedures that Bonaventure combines in his critique of a resolution to a first that solely consists in definition are *both* philosophical, be it that the first is rather Aristotelian, whereas the second is more Platonic. Whereas an innate understanding of divine being is foundational to this resolution, it is not based on revealed knowledge. Taking this epistemological fact into consideration together with the nature of the techniques that are being employed, there is nothing ‘theological’ or ‘mystical’ about it.

Third, in the resolution that demonstrates that the reception of God as pure actuality is presupposed to an understanding of any created being, it is first of all the transition from the domain of the concrete (things that can be understood) to the abstract (*illud esse, quod est actus purus*) and, in addition, the transition of the created (*ens in actu, esse*

121 L. Oeing-Hanhoff, “Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter”, p. 73.

122 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

123 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

124 *Ibid.*, p. 81: ‘Indem Bonaventuras Erkenntnisanalyse ein eingeborenes Wissen um das universale göttliche Sein aufdeckt, von dem her etwas als unvollkommenes begrenztes Seiendes erkannt werden kann, an dem das partikuläre endliche Seiende aber auch teilhaben muß, um überhaupt sein zu können, ist sie zugleich die Rückführung des erkannten partikulären Seienden auf sein erstes universales Prinzip: naturalis resolutio als Weg von der Wirkung zur einfachen Ursache im Sinne der neuplatonischen Tradition dieser Methode.’

*creatum*) to the divine (*esse divinum*). In this sense, Allard's observation that *reductio* moves from the concrete to the abstract is correct, albeit that it only applies to a certain kind of resolution found in Bonaventure.

Thus, it can be concluded that Bonaventure is dissatisfied with the classic conception of resolution as iteration when it comes to resolving into a first known. It could therefore be argued that he does not only criticize resolutions ending in created principles, but that he transforms the conception of *resolutio* as such: it does not necessarily pertain to a procedure of repeating rounds of analysis until an *a priori* is reached, but it can combine different techniques to arrive at a first.

Finally, a third similarity pertains to the fact that all resolutions reflect Bonaventure's criticism on the ontological interpretation of Aristotle's metaphysics of his time, and, along with it, his ambition to integrate a Platonic conception of what is first into a systematic reflection on being and knowledge. Allard even explicitly designates *reductio* in Bonaventure (in the broadest sense) as Platonic, and argues that 'la *reductio* platonicienne est une activité discursive qui circonscrit une aire scientifique et découpe un champ du savoir.'<sup>125</sup> As such, it is much more than a simple technique, but rather to be compared to Socratic maieutics, Cartesian doubt, and Hegelian dialectics, Allard holds.<sup>126</sup> On the nature of this Platonic movement, he argues: 'La montée est unitive, c'est-à-dire, par elle la pensée a reconnu d'abord une parenté entre les choses ainsi groupées et ensuite une dépendance naturelle et nécessaire à l'égard d'un terme unique qui est principe de cette classification.'<sup>127</sup> It is indeed this unifying ascent towards a special being that, as this chapter has demonstrated, characterizes *resolutio* in Bonaventure as Platonic.

As discussed in the Introduction, Plato grants the Idea of the Good, which is beyond being, to be the cause not only of the being of all things, but also of their intelligibility.<sup>128</sup> His student, Aristotle, agrees with him that true knowledge is knowledge from causes, and that the entirety

125 G.H. Allard, "La technique de la 'reductio' chez Bonaventure," p. 386. But, although he argues that *reductio* and *resolutio* are more or less synonymous, he does make two distinctions (p. 415) '(1) la *resolutio* circonscrit une aire subjective (in intellectu) du savoir dont la *reductio* découpe la dimension objective; (2) la première recherche l'indivisible et le simple; la dernière, les grands genres universaux.'

126 G.H. Allard, "La technique de la 'reductio' chez Bonaventure," p. 386.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 398.

128 Plato, *Politeia* 509b.

of what is intelligible should rest on a final insight, i.e. on something that is known through itself rather than through something else.<sup>129</sup> However, Aristotle qualifies the strictness of the Platonic identification of the foundation of being and that of knowledge by arguing that there is a difference between what is better known in itself and what is better known to us.

Correspondingly, as an Aristotelian metaphysician, Aquinas distinguishes two types of resolution: there is a resolution that leads to what is first and better known *in itself* (God as the first cause). Resolving into this first is the completion of the intellect's reflection, i.e. the *end point* of an act of cognition. Another resolution leads to what is first and better known *for us*, and, as such, the *starting point* of our cognition, which is being in general.<sup>130</sup>

However, Bonaventure's resolutions criticize this Aristotelian qualification of the Platonic identification of the foundation of being and that of knowledge, and reflect his ambition to reinstall a Platonic approach to exemplary causality, in which nature cannot be explained by means of itself. By seeking to demonstrate in different ways that resolutions that end in created principles are *semiplene* and therefore deficient, he accuses, on the level of an epistemological instrument, the Aristotelians of his time. In all the resolutions that I have discussed, this criticism is combined with a return to the Platonic in the shape of a reversion to the absolute, by means of presenting an analysis of created being that is only completed if its relation to its exemplary cause is included.

129 Cf. W. Goris, "Transzendente Gewalt," p. 620.

130 Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate* 6.1, 6.3 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, pp. 162–63); Cf. W. Goris, "Die Vergegenwärtigung des Heils. Thomas von Aquin und die Folgezeit," p. 419.

*The role of knowledge of the divine in Bonaventure's theory of cognition*

‘ON EVERY SOUL, cognition of the divine truth is impressed, and through it, every act of cognition takes place.’<sup>1</sup> This short but telling statement by Bonaventure addresses the pivotal role of knowledge of the divine in the mechanism of cognition. This chapter explores this role.<sup>2</sup>

In the first chapter, Bonaventure’s exemplarism was discussed: this doctrine argues that a divine idea or exemplar and the sensible object as its created representation are interrelated: a created essence expresses its divine exemplar, which is its causal principle. Correspondingly, to understand a created being is to understand it in its relation to its exemplary being.<sup>3</sup> This presupposes that an understanding of the exemplary being is somehow involved in (fully) understanding a created being. Bonaventure’s doctrine of illumination articulates how this knowledge of exemplary being is available to the human intellect by describing how light figures as the connection between the perception of created things and divine truth.

In Chapter 2, Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known was argued to articulate and defend this primacy of knowledge of the divine through *resolutio plena*. It claims that preliminary knowledge of divine being is presupposed to knowledge of any created being. Conversely, it shows that our knowledge of any given thing implicitly and indistinctly contains knowledge of divine being. In this way, knowledge of God

1 I *Sent.* d. 8 q.11, q. 1 2, (I 155): “Divinam veritatem esse probat et concludit omnis veritas et natura creata (...). Probat etiam ipsam et concludit omnis intelligentia recta, quia omni animae eius cognitio est impressa, et omnis cognitio est per ipsam.”

2 In an almost identical form, this text was published as an article: S. Metselaar, “Are the Divine Ideas Involved in Making the Sensible Intelligible? The Role of Knowledge of the Divine in Bonaventure’s Theory of Cognition,” in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 2012 (79/2), pp. 337–372.

3 Cf. *Hexaemeron* X 18 (V 379).

determines the horizon of natural knowledge: all of our actual, acquired knowledge of the world is mediated by a preliminary understanding of first being.

However, neither Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known, nor his exemplarism or illuminationism, to which it is intrinsically connected, elucidate *the way in which* this mediation takes place: if creatures are only understood through preliminary knowledge of the divine, how does this work? In other words: what is the role of knowledge of the divine in the mechanism of cognition? This is what the present chapter investigates. Because Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known primarily focuses on the first object of knowledge, which is fundamental to knowledge of all concepts,<sup>4</sup> I will restrict myself to a discussion of the role of knowledge of the divine in the first act of cognition: the generation of knowledge of things.

In the process of doing so, I will deal with a controversy in the literature on Bonaventure’s theory of cognition. It concerns the way in which two activities involved in cognition, as well as the way in which they relate to one another, should be understood: judgment and abstraction. Roughly, two positions can be distinguished. The first holds that Bonaventure employs ‘an Aristotelian-style abstraction.’<sup>5</sup> This kind of abstraction is argued to precede the involvement of the divine ideas in cognition. Abstraction, that is, making sensible data intelligible, is held to be carried out by the intellect taking recourse to sensible data, whereas an act of judgment through illumination, in which the divine ideas are appealed to, is assigned a purely normative role of establishing the truth of a concept after it is produced, providing certitude to what has become known already. The implication of this first position, then, is that there is a domain in which the intellect is capable of deriving knowledge of created essences from sense, memory and experience only – through an act that on that basis is described

4 J.A. Aertsen, “What is First and Most Fundamental? The Beginnings of Transcendental Philosophy,” pp. 177–192; W. Goris, “Die Anfänge der Auseinandersetzung um das Ersterkannte im 13. Jahrhundert: Guibert von Tournai, Bonaventura und Thomas von Aquin,” pp. 355–369.

5 For instance, Leonard J. Bowman argues that Bonaventure ‘does hold that an Aristotelian-style abstraction is requisite for the knowledge of sense data.’ Cf. L.J. Bowman, “The Development of the Doctrine of the Agent Intellect in the Franciscan School of the Thirteenth Century,” pp. 262–263.

as Aristotelian.<sup>6</sup> This act is complemented by an act of judgment that, when the intellectual act involves certainty, is made on the basis of a divine measure.

The second position, on the other hand, argues that no such domain exists: knowledge of and regulation by the divine is already presupposed in making a created essence intelligible; making the sensible intelligible includes an act of judgment, in which a divine measure – being the *rationes aeternae* – is appealed to. From this perspective, an Aristotelian account of abstraction is argued to be *reframed* within an Augustinian theory of judgment and illumination.<sup>7</sup>

The two positions present different models of the ‘collaboration’ between the created truth and the divine truth in the act of cognition and, correspondingly, they present different accounts of the primacy of the latter truth: whereas the first position locates the priority of knowledge of God on the level of certification alone, the second position grants this priority a more prominent place, as it is granted an a priori status on the level of intelligibility as such.<sup>8</sup>

By discussing the texts of Bonaventure by means of which we can

6 For instance by S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 153–154.

7 As Étienne Gilson argues: “It is clear that, if abstraction in his sense is identical with Augustinian judgment, it must be an operation very different from the simple act by which Aristotle’s active intellect informs the possible intellect by the species, which it has made intelligible. St. Bonaventure’s abstraction must necessarily contain (...) a judgment which draws the universal from the particular and which (...) implies in that very fact the intervention of the eternal principles and of God.” Cf. E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, pp. 360–361.

8 The designation of Bonaventure’s theory of cognition as either largely ‘Aristotelian’ or decidedly ‘Augustinian’ is not wholly without merit. Nevertheless, I choose to be rather careful in using these labels to describe these elements in Bonaventure’s thought, for one thing because this opposition neglects the empiricist elements that are found in Augustine’s thought and in the Neo-Platonic tradition after Augustine. If I do use these labels, this will be in dialogue with the positions taken in secondary literature in which they are employed. For a critical discussion of the standard picture of ‘Augustinian illumination’ as a Platonic account of knowledge that holds that certain, necessary truth is attained by no means via the senses, but solely via awareness of the divine ideas in the mind of God, Cf. W. Petersen Boring, “Revising our Approach to ‘Augustinian illumination’: A reconsideration of Bonaventure’s *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi IV*, Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae* Ia.84, 1–8, and Henry of Ghent’s, *Summa quaestionum ordinarum*, q. 2, art. 1, 2,” in: *Franciscan Studies* 68 (2010), pp. 39–81. See also L. Schumacher, *Divine Illumination. The History and Future of Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 101–142.

come to an understanding as to what ‘abstraction’ and ‘judgment’ mean in his thought, I will resolve this controversy. I will show that Bonaventure undeniably holds that an act of judgment, in which the divine ideas are involved, is included in making the essence of a created thing intelligible, a process he sometimes refers to as abstraction. This would imply, fully in line with Bonaventure’s exemplaristic metaphysics, that things are only known as such if they are known in relation to what they represent. Correspondingly, it implies that the priority of knowledge of God, as argued for in Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known, is located at the level of intelligibility itself, rather than on the level of consolidating the truth of what has become known by the intellect.

Finally, I will show that my conclusion regarding the way in which sensible data of created things become intelligible through abstraction corresponds to Bonaventure’s account of *resolutio* or analysis: both intellectual activities involve an act of judgment in terms of a comparison of created being to first being. In the case of abstraction, this is a judgment by which something is made intelligible as such; in the case of resolution, this is a judgment that is involved in a full analysis of the intelligible species. The first judgment occurs implicitly, whereas the second occurs explicitly. Both these acts can only take place on the premise of preliminary knowledge of first being. In the first case, however, God is first known implicitly, in the second, he is explicitly recognized as an a priori ground of knowledge as the mind becomes aware of the first principle of the creature under consideration. Correspondingly, I will argue that in the first case, *confused knowledge* of the created is generated, whereas in the second case, *distinct knowledge* is established.

I will proceed as follows. First, I will present a short reflection on the three acts of cognition carried out by the intellect, in all of which knowledge of God is foundational, and explain the focus of this chapter’s investigation: the role of the divine in the establishment of *conceptual* knowledge of the material world (3.1). Subsequently, I will deal with the ‘anatomy’ of the intellect and the cooperation of its capacities. Hereto, I will analyze II *Sent.* d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4 (3.2). As this discussion raises the question of the purport of ‘innate knowledge’ in Bonaventure, I will take a short detour from my investigation of the act of cognition to reflect on Bonaventure’s innatism (3.3). Subsequently, I will discuss the way in which the intellect’s capacities relate to the divine, for which I will turn to Bonaventure’s texts on certainty and

illumination, primarily *De scientia Christi* IV (3.4). Finally, I will look into the mechanism of cognition in more detail, first by discussing *Christus unus omnium Magister* (3.5), after which I will turn to *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* II (3.6). Before I come to my conclusions, however, I will relate abstraction to *resolutio* (3.7). In my conclusions, I will summarize my findings with regard to the priority of the divine in the mechanism of cognition (3.8).

### 3.1 The primacy of God in all three acts of cognition

In the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, Bonaventure elaborates on the way in which knowledge of God is presupposed at all levels of cognition. Three acts of cognition are distinguished, which are described as the ‘perception of terms, propositions, and inferences’.<sup>9</sup>

First of all, Bonaventure argues, the intellect perceives terms when it comprehends what each thing is by definition. This procedure is however only completed when it is ‘aided by the understanding of the most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute being; which is simple and eternal being, in which there are reasons for all things in its purity’. A concept of a created being therefore presupposes a preliminary understanding of divine being and what resides in divine being: the eternal ideas. Here, it is clear that Bonaventure describes what is necessary to establish distinct knowledge: knowledge of what something is on the basis of a definition, in which all its essential parts and principles are distinguished, which, as it is argued, eventually comprises an understanding of what is most perfect and absolute.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the intellect is argued only to comprehend a proposition truly when it knows with *certainty* that it is true. Being certain is defined here as knowing that a truth cannot be regarded otherwise. Our mind, however, is mutable, Bonaventure argues. Therefore, it cannot, on

9 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Operatio autem virtutis intellectivae est in perceptione intellectus terminorum, propositionum et illationum.’

10 *Ibid.*: ‘Capit autem intellectus terminorum significata, cum comprehendit, quid est unumquodque per definitionem. Sed definitio habet fieri per superiora, et illa per superiora definiri habent, usquequo veniatur ad suprema et generalissima, quibus ignoratis, non possunt intelligi definitive inferiora (...) non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuvetur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti; quod est ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate.’



its own, generate an immutable truth and thus truly comprehend a proposition. Hereto, it has to rely on an immutable truth, which it knows through ‘that light that illumines every man coming into this world, which is the true light and the word in the beginning with God.’ Thus, certainty is bestowed on the truth of propositions through the divine illumination of the mind, via which the intellect can appeal to an immutable truth.<sup>11</sup>

Notably, certainty pertains to the truth of propositions here, whereas in *De scientia Christi*, it primarily pertains to the truth of things. In *Itinerarium* c. II, certainty is also associated with the truth of things.<sup>12</sup> This is however not problematic: as both concepts and propositions can be true according to Bonaventure in the sense that they correspond to the way in which things relate to their divine exemplars or to a state of affairs that represents what is *in arte aeterna*, certainty pertains both to the truth of concepts and of propositions.

Third, our intellect is argued only to understand an inference when it sees that its conclusion follows *necessarily* from its premises. However, necessity is not found in the material world, because it is contingent, nor does it follow from the existence of a thing in the soul, because things in the soul are a fiction if they do not exist in the outside world; concepts, therefore, cannot provide a ground for necessity. Necessity is however provided by the exemplarity of the eternal ideas, ‘according to which the thing has an aptitude and characteristic’. Therefore, the fact that when a man runs, he moves can be known with necessity.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, on all these different levels of cognition, knowledge of God is

11 *Ibid.*: ‘Intellectum autem propositionum tunc intellectus dicitur veraciter comprehendere, cum certitudinaliter scit, illas veras esse; et hoc scire est scire, quoniam non potest falli in illa comprehensione. Scit enim, quod veritas illa non potest aliter se habere; scit igitur, illam veritatem esse incommutabilem. Sed cum ipsa mens nostra sit commutabilis, illam sic incommutabiliter relucens non potest videre nisi per aliquam lucem omnino incommutabiliter radiantem, quam impossibile est esse creaturam mutabilem. Scit igitur in illa luce, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum, quae est lux vera et Verbum in principio apud Deum.’

12 Cf. section 2.5.

13 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Intellectum vero illationis tunc veraciter percipit noster intellectus, quando videt, quod conclusio necessario sequitur ex praemissis (...) Huiusmodi igitur illationis necessitas non venit ab existentia rei in materia, quia est contingens, nec ab existentia rei in anima, quia tunc esset fictio, si non esset in re: venit igitur ab exemplaritate in arte aeterna, secundum quam res habent aptitudinem et habitudinem ad invicem secundum illius aeternae artis representationem.’

presupposed. However, whereas in the last two cases, the *logical necessity* of an inference and the *reliability* of a proposition is warranted, in the first case, conceptual knowledge of any given thing is argued to depend on knowledge of God *qua content*. Since the debate on a first known concerns fundamental and primary *concepts*, I will limit myself here to an investigation of this first act of cognition – this is not to say that an investigation of the other acts of cognition in relation to God as first known could not harvest interesting results.

### 3.2 The capacities of the human intellect: II *Sent.* d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4

#### 3.2.1 *The context of II Sent. d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4*

In this section, I will discuss the capacities that Bonaventure assigns to the human intellect from the perspective of his ‘rational psychology’, i.e. the metaphysical discipline that seeks to determine the nature of the human soul. A key text on this subject is a question from the second book of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, II *Sent.* d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4, on ‘whether the agent intellect and the possible intellect are one or diverse powers.’<sup>14</sup> It presents abstraction and judgment as two intrinsically related intellectual activities, as they cooperate in one complete act of understanding something.

To be able to evaluate this account of the intellect and its capacities, the objective of this question needs to be understood first. In Bonaventure’s time and intellectual surroundings, different theories on the human intellect were in circulation, many drawing on Augustine’s psychology. These theories were confronted with Aristotle’s *De Anima* and the Arabic commentaries on this text, which became widely available to the academic community of the Latin West after the first half of the thirteenth century. Aristotle’s enigmatic distinction between two intellects in *De Anima* III.3, that is, between a capacity that ‘can make all things’ and another that ‘can become all things’, as well as his statement that the agent intellect is ‘separate, unmoved and unmixed’,<sup>15</sup> sparked a debate on the intellect’s unity, individuality and activities, in which a plurality of positions was taken.

14 II *Sent.* d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4 (II 567–71): ‘Utrum intellectus agens et possibilis sint una potentia, an diversae.’ Cf. J.F. Quinn, *The Historical Constitution of St. Bonaventure’s Philosophy*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies: Toronto 1973, pp. 345–352.

15 Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.5, 430a17–25.

These positions especially concern the agent intellect. This capacity is generally perceived as an abstracting agency that grasps the cognitive content of sense images, or, put another way, transforms sensory representations into intelligible representations. It was however debated whether the agent intellect is actually part of the individual soul or whether it is to be seen as an agent that is external to the individual, and, in the latter instance, whether it should be identified with God. Also, it was debated whether the agent intellect is the active form of the potential, material intellect or whether it relates to the potential intellect in some other way. Still others even doubted the mere existence of an agent intellect. Some thinkers took over Averroes’s and Avicenna’s views, who denied that the individual soul is able to understand by its own means. Rather, they argued, it relies on an active, supra-individual agent or intelligence to which it strives to become conjoined.<sup>16</sup> Others, such as Thomas Aquinas, defended the intellect as naturally endowed with all the necessities to operate independently, and argued an active and formal agent intellect and a receptive and material potential intellect to be two distinct capacities that are proper to the individual soul.<sup>17</sup>

In the question under consideration, Bonaventure takes a position within this debate. This position is for a large part – but not entirely – comparable to that of William of Auvergne (ca. 1180/90–1249). In his treatise on *De anima*, one of the most substantial Latin works on the subject of the human soul from the first half of the thirteenth century, William criticizes the idea of an agent intellect as a distinct capacity of the human soul, arguing that this idea is incompatible with the simplicity and indivisibility of the soul. At the same time, William also discards the Arabic modifications of this idea, in which the agent

16 Cf. J. Jolivet, “Intellect et intelligence. Note sur la tradition arabo-latine des XII<sup>ème</sup> et XIII<sup>ème</sup> siècles,” in: J. Jolivet, *Philosophie médiévale arabe et latine. Recueil d’articles*, Vrin: Paris 1995, pp.169–180; H. A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect*, Oxford University Press: New York – Oxford 1992; D.N. Hasse, “Das Lehrstück von den vier Intellekten in der Scholastik: von den arabischen Quellen bis zu Albertus Magnus,” in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 66(1) (1999), pp. 21–77.

17 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 79.3c (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, pp. 266–7).

intellect is taken to be a spiritual substance external to the human soul.<sup>18</sup>

According to Leen Spruit, Bonaventure took William's cue by blurring the strict functional distinction between the agent and possible intellect, denying the former to be completely active and the latter to be completely passive.<sup>19</sup> As I will show, Bonaventure indeed defends the substantial unity of the soul, as William does, and argues for the mutual dependency of the possible and agent intellect in their activities, which together bring about a complete act of understanding. Nevertheless, in contrast to William, Bonaventure refutes the idea that the intellect should not be divided into an agent and a possible intellect and that the agent intellect is a superfluous instance. Rather, like Thomas Aquinas, he presents an elaborate argument for the agent intellect as a distinct power proper to the individual soul (*aliquid ipsius animae*) and stresses its abstractive capacities. He does so, however, in quite an extraordinary way: by arguing that the potential and the agent intellect are mutually dependent on each other's activities and that neither of them is completely active or passive.

Furthermore, this question of on the powers of the intellect is part of an article that generally deals with the question of whether the soul is to be divided, and if so, in what way. Bonaventure recognizes and allows for a plurality of ways of making divisions within of the soul, which he argues to depend on the *perspective* from which the soul is regarded, and which he attributes to different customs of several authors. He mentions a division on the basis of the *nature* of the soul's powers (vegetable, sensible, rational – subdivided into intellective and affective), with regard to *offices* (the inferior and superior portion of the soul), according to *states* (the speculative and practical intellect), according to *gaze* (as the cognitive power is divided into reason, intellect and intelligence), according to their *acts* (the inventive and judging capacity as two capacities of the cognitive power), or according to *motivation* (natural and deliberative power).<sup>20</sup> A striking similarity

18 William of Auvergne, *De anima* (ed. F. Hotot, in: *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, p. 122 and pp. 205–210).

19 L. Spruit, "Agent Intellect and Phantasms. On the Preliminaries of Peripatetic Abstraction," in: *Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities* 2004 (82/1), pp. 125–146, esp. 137–138.

20 *II Sent. d.24 p.1 a.2 q.3* (II 566): 'Unde notandum est, quod multis modis consueverunt auctores divisionem potentiarum animae accipere. Aliquando secundum naturam ipsarum potentiarum, ut cum dividuntur potentiae animae in vegetabilem,

between the conclusions of all the questions of this article is that in each of them, Bonaventure defends that distinctions between different parts of the soul can indeed be made, yet by no means on the level of the soul’s substance or essence. The frequent references to Augustine’s *On the Trinity* reveal the reason behind this position: because the soul is created as an image of God, it maintains a unity of essence, although it is not *absolutely* one, like God.<sup>21</sup>

Correspondingly, the affirmative arguments of the fourth question’s *quod videtur* strongly diversify between the agent and possible intellect, confirming that they are substantially different, whereas the objections of the *sed contra* – presenting the position of William of Auvergne *et alii* – hold that no distinction between both intellects can be made whatsoever. Bonaventure’s response finds a middle way between these positions.

His own account of the possible and agent intellect is shaped by means of a discussion of four theses on the way they should be divided: as (1) two different substances, (2) two different powers, (3) a potency and a habit or as (4) an absolute and a relative power.

sensibilem et rationalem, vel ipsa rationalis in intellectivam et affectivam. – Aliquando vero secundum officia, ut cum dividitur ratio in superiorem et inferiorem. – Aliquando secundum status, ut cum dividitur intellectus in speculativum et practicum; intellectus enim speculativus secundum alium statum efficitur practicus, videlicet dum coniungitur voluntati et operi in dictando et regendo. – Aliquando vero fit divisio potentiarum secundum aspectus, sicut dividitur potentia cognitiva in rationem, intellectum et intelligentiam, secundum quod aspicit ad inferius, ad par et ad superius. – Aliquando vero secundum actus, sicut fit divisio in inventivum et iudicativum; invenire enim et iudicare sunt actus potentiae cognitivae ad invicem ordinati. – Aliquando vero fit divisio potentiarum animae secundum modos movendi; et sic est illa, quae est per naturalem et deliberativam.’

21 *Ibid.*, d.24 p.1 a.2 q.1 (II 561): ‘Ad illud ergo quod primo obiicitur de Augustino, quod sunt una essentia et una vita; respondendum est, quod ideo dicuntur esse una essentia propter hoc, quod in una essentia radicantur et adeo adhaerent illi intrinsecus, ut non cedant in aliud genus (...) Deus est tres personae, sed in creatura habens tres potentias non est ipsae potentiae; et haec est dissimilitudo quaedam trinitatis creatae et Trinitatis increatae. (...) ex ipso verbo beati Augustini colligitur, quod cum dixit, memoriam intelligentiam et voluntatem unam esse essentiam, non dixit per omnimodam identitatem, sed per quandam intrinsecam adhaerentiam.’

3.2.2 *The agent intellect as proper to the individual soul itself*

To start with, Bonaventure fully refutes the first thesis, i.e. that the capacities of the soul are *substantially* different, of which he presents two interpretations, none of which he considers to be viable. First, he discusses the Avicennan position that only the possible intellect is connected to an individual body, whereas the agent intellect is a separate intellect: as an hypostasized, tenth intelligence within a Neo-Platonist hierarchy of emanation, it illumines and completes the individual souls when they are conjoined to it.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, he mentions a second, affiliated position on the diversification of the active and possible intellect as different substances, one which Gilson has termed *Augustinisme avicennissant*:<sup>23</sup> the claim that the agent intellect is actually God *himself*, which was held by some of Bonaventure's contemporaries who were seeking to harmonize Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle's agent intellect as a substance separate from the individual soul with Augustine's theory of divine illumination, in this way also dismissing an agent intellect as proper to the human soul.<sup>24</sup>

To counter these positions that hold that an agent intellect is not part of the individual soul, Bonaventure employs an Aristotelian argument put into a Christian context, stating that all living creatures are assigned an active force (*vim activam*) proper to the distinctive trait of the species they belong to, and that man as a rational animal has a proper capacity for understanding, notwithstanding the fact that, generally, 'God is the principal agent in the activity of every creature.'<sup>25</sup> Therefore, he

22 *Ibid.*: 'Quidam namque dicere voluerunt, quod intellectus agens sit intelligentia separata; intellectus autem possibilis sit anima corpori coniuncta. Et modus iste ponendi et dicendi fundatus est super multa verba philosophorum, qui posuerunt, animam rationalem illustrari a decima intelligentia et perfici ex coniunctione sui ad illam. – Sed iste modus dicendi falsus est et erroneus.'

23 Etienne Gilson, "Roger Marston: Un cas d'Augustinisme Avicennissant," pp. 37–42. Roger Marston, rather than dismissing the agent intellect as superfluous, follows Alexander of Aphrodisias in treating the agent intellect as God himself, Gilson argues.

24 *II Sent. d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4* (II 568): 'Alius modus intelligendi est, quod intellectus agens esset ipse *Deus*, intellectus vero possibilis esset noster animus. Et iste modus dicendi super verba Augustini est fundatus.'

25 *Ibid.*: 'Sicut aliis creaturis data est potentia ad alios actus, sic *Deus*, quamvis sit principalis operans in operatione cuiuslibet creaturae, dedit tamen cuilibet vim activam, per quam exiret in operationem propriam. Hic credendum est indubitanter, quod animae humanae non tantummodo dederit intellectum possibilem, sed etiam agentem, ita quod uterque est aliquid ipsius animae.'

concludes, the agent intellect must be something belonging to the individual soul itself. In addition, he denies that another created power is capable of illuminating and perfecting the human soul: only God illuminates the human mind, and he does so immediately. Thus he dismisses the existence of an intermediate intelligence between the human soul and God.<sup>26</sup> Notably, Bonaventure does not dwell on this immediate divine illumination any further here, nor does he discuss the role of the divine ideas; rather, he leaves this short remark unspecified. Most probably, he does so as the objective of this paragraph lies elsewhere: to reject the idea that the agent intellect is a distinct substance in favor of the claim that it is *ipsius aliquid animae*, and the soul itself is a substantial unity. His discussion of the following three theses further specifies this status of the agent intellect.

### 3.2.3 *The agent intellect and possible intellect as two different powers*

Bonaventure affirms that both intellects are two different powers that belong to one and the same substance. However, he does maintain that they mutually rely on each other’s activities. Therefore, neither of them is completely active nor passive. It is thus denied that the possible intellect is a passive ‘becoming of all,’ whereas the agent intellect would be a purely active ‘making of all,’<sup>27</sup> a position found in many of Bonaventure’s contemporaries, such as Thomas Aquinas, which is based on Aristotle’s *De anima* III, 5.<sup>28</sup> Rather, Bonaventure distributes the intellect’s activities over these two powers in the following way:

The possible intellect is ordained to receive, the agent intellect is ordained to abstract; the possible intellect is not purely passive, for

26 *Ibid.*: ‘Nulla enim substantia creata potentiam habet illuminandi et perficiendi animam, proprie intelligendo; immo secundum mentem immediate habet a Deo illuminari, sicut in multis locis Augustinus ostendit.’

27 *Ibid.*: ‘Unus modus intelligendi et dicendi est, quod intellectus possibilis sit potentia pure materialis, quae inest animae ex parte suae materiae; intellectus vero agens sit potentia pure formalis, quae inest animae ex parte suae formae. Et hic modus dicendi videtur fundari super verba Philosophi, qui dicit, quod “intellectus possibilis est, quo est omnia fieri; intellectus agens, quo est omnia facere”, sicut contingit in forma et materia reperire. – Sed hic modus dicendi non consonat veritati.’

28 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Boethium De trinitate*, 1.1 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 50, pp. 80–3) and *Summa theologiae*, I 79 a. 1–4 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, pp. 258–259).

it has to turn itself to the species existing in the phantasm, and by turning to it to receive and judge it through the assistance of the agent intellect. Similarly, the agent intellect is not entirely in act, for it cannot understand any other thing than itself unless it is aided by the species, which has to be united to the intellect after it is abstracted from the phantasm. Therefore, neither does the possible (intellect) understand without the agent (intellect), nor the agent without the possible.<sup>29</sup>

Let us take a closer look at this passage. The activities of receiving and judging the species are assigned to the possible intellect. The agent intellect assists the possible intellect in carrying out these activities by abstracting these species from the phantasm. On the other hand, the agent intellect needs the activities of the possible intellect to carry out its own tasks. This strongly suggests simultaneity: the one activity can only occur through the other and vice versa. Accordingly, Bonaventure argues that this plurality of acts is ordered with respect to, and conjoined with one another to perfect one complete act of understanding; although to understand is in fact one simple act, our understanding requires both an act of receiving and judging, or abstracting and undergoing.<sup>30</sup> This unity is stressed by the way in which judging and abstracting are presented as synonyms in this sentence – as *recipere* and *suscipere* are also synonymous. In any case, synonymous or not, abstraction and judgment are presented as activities that are neither conducted separately nor consecutively, but rather, simultaneously and intrinsically related to one another.

Nevertheless, to what judgment exactly pertains remains unclear at this point. Furthermore, what is meant by *suscipere* is not that clear

29 *II Sent. d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4* (II 568): ‘Intellectus possibilis ordinatur ad suscipiendum, intellectus agens ordinatur ad abstrahendum; nec intellectus possibilis est pure passivus; habet enim supra speciem existentem in phantasmate se convertere, et convertendo per auxilium intellectus agentis illam suscipere, et de ea iudicare. Similiter nec intellectus agens est omnino in actu; non enim potest intelligere aliud a se, nisi adiuvetur a specie, quae abstracta a phantasmate intellectui habet uniri. Unde nec possibilis intelligit sine agente, nec agens sine possibili.’

30 *Ibid.*: ‘Ad illud obiicitur, quod intelligere est actus unus et simplex; dicendum, quod etsi intelligere possit quodam genere simpliciter dici actus simplex, nihilominus tamen ad nostrum intelligere concurrunt recipere et iudicare, sive abstrahere et suscipere; et hi sunt plures actus ad invicem ordinati, ex quibus resultat unus actus perfectus. Sic et in potentiis intelligendum est se habere, quod sic sunt diversae differentiae intellectus, ut tamen in suis actionibus ad invicem ordinatae sint et coniunctae ad actum intelligendi perficiendum.’



either. Generally speaking, it means ‘reception’, and indeed, in this question, the reception of the sensible is thematized. ‘Reception’ could, however, also refer to the receiving of a divine light, the presence of which was touched upon only succinctly in this question. This text, however, provides no evidence that the intellect’s act of receiving also pertains to reception of a divine light, which would then be involved in the mechanism of cognition as well.

### 3.2.4 *The agent intellect as an ‘habitual potency’*

The third way to assign the difference between the potential and the agent intellect is to distinguish between a potency and a habit. Bonaventure however denies that the classic distinction between habit (*habitus*) and potency (*potentia*) correctly expresses the difference between the active and the possible intellect. Generally speaking, a habit relates to a potency the way the complete relates to the incomplete: the *habitus* represents the actualization of what the potency is not yet, namely a full disposition.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the agent intellect, Bonaventure takes ‘habit’ to mean that the agent intellect is completely active and determined, and in no need of any other agency or source. Bonaventure mentions interpreters of Boethius who claimed that the agent intellect is a habit as it contains in itself all the universals, by which probably, Avicenna and the like are referred to, as they considered the agent intellect to be completely self-sufficient as the source of all intelligible forms. But as we have seen, Bonaventure discards Avicenna’s approach to the agent intellect.

Rather, the agent intellect is a ‘habitual potency’ (*potentia habitualis*): a capacity that has an innate power to produce intelligibles but is still

31 *Ibid.*: ‘Tertius modus assignandi differentiam, quo dicitur, quod differunt sicut potentia et habitus, dupliciter habet intelligi. – Uno modo, ut intellectus agens dicatur habitus quidam constitutus ex omnibus intelligibilibus; intellectus vero possibilis intelligatur idem ipse, prout est in potentia ad acquirendam cognitionem per phantasmata. Et hic modus ponendi fundari videtur super verba Boethii, qui dicit, quod “summam retinens, singula perdit”. Quod voluerunt aliqui intelligi sic, quod intellectus noster dicatur habere apud se cognitionem universalium innatam, alioquin non posset per virtutem suam, abstrahendo etiam a sensibus et phantasmatibus, facere intellectum possibilem actu intelligentem; omne enim quod educit alterum de potentia in actum, est ens in actu. – Sed iste modus dicendi verbis Philosophi non consonat, quod dicit, “animam esse creatam sicut tabulam rasam”, “nec habere cognitionem habituum sibi innatam, sed acquirere mediante sensu et experientia”.’

in need of excitement by sensible images.<sup>32</sup> Bonaventure defends this claim by arguing that the soul is created as a *tabula rasa* and needs sense experience in order to know: a decidedly Aristotelian position.<sup>33</sup> He illustrates this with the example of a cat's eye. Here, the intellect is compared to the cat's eye: just as this eye is reckoned not only to receive light, but also to be luminous itself, the intellect is argued to cause an intelligible species through the light it is endowed with.<sup>34</sup>

- 32 *Ibid.*: 'Alius modus dicendi est, ut dicatur intellectus agens differre a possibili, sicut habitus a potentia; non quia agens sit pure habitus, sed quia est potentia habitualis. – Et iste modus dicendi probabilis est et verus et super verba philosophica et catholica fundatus.' This characterization of the agent intellect seems to be modeled after the description of *synderesis* as the inclination to the good as a rational and moral capacity that is both innate and acquired, which we find, for instance, in Philip the Chancellor; cf. Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono* IV q. 2 (ed. N. Wicki, pp. 192–205). In Bonaventure, the term *synderesis* is also used. However, here it applies solely to the will as a leading, directive capacity ordered towards the good, which is not a cognitive capacity, like conscience is; cf. II *Sent.* d.39 a.1 q.2 (II 903). Using the same description for the agent intellect as Philip uses for *synderesis* is all the more interesting in this context because *synderesis* is a capacity that is directed at norms above itself, since it takes the good as its guiding principle. This implies that the agent intellect is a *potentia habitualis* in the sense that it also operates by means of a measure that is above itself. In this particular question, this aspect of the agent intellect is, however, not elaborated upon.
- 33 That the agent intellect is an inborn capacity is also argued for in II *Sent.* d.39 p. II. q.2 (II 908–11), a decisive text on innatism. Here, the existence of inborn knowledge is also rejected by referring to Aristotle: if this were the case, Bonaventure argues, he would not have called the agent intellect the faculty 'that makes everything,' neither would he have stated that the soul is created as a blank slate, and that knowledge of principles is gained through sense, memory and experience. In support of the same claim, however, Bonaventure also appeals to Augustine by arguing that principles are not known beforehand (*prius*) – by which Platonic recollection must be referred to –, but are 'seen' in an uncreated light. It is concluded that we are able to know by means of an *innate light of reason* given to the soul that presents it with principles to judge the sensible species by. This light of reason is therefore called a 'natural faculty of judgment' (*naturale iudicatorium*), rather than an abstractive capacity. Thus, in this question, Aristotle's claim that the soul is a *tabula rasa* is qualified.
- 34 II *Sent.* d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4 (I 569): 'Huius autem simile potest poni in oculo cati, qui non solum habet potentiam suscipiendi per naturam perspicui, sicut alii oculi, sed etiam potentiam faciendi in se speciem per naturam luminis sibi inditi.' On the cat's eyes, see Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XII 2.38 (ed. J. André, in: *Etymologies, Livre XII: Des Animaux*, Les Belles Lettres: Paris 1986, pp. 120–121; Aquinas too used this analogy: cf. *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* 7.10 (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 23, Vrin: Paris 1982, p. 182; *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis* (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 24/II, Editions du Cerf: Rome – Paris 2000 p. 437).

Again, the abstractive capacities of the agent intellect are confirmed. Furthermore, from this passage, it seems that knowledge comes about *solely* through the intellect’s abstractive capacities working on sensible data; the divine ideas remain out of the picture.

In addition, Bonaventure refers to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who is argued to hold that intellectual substances are lights (*lumina*) that are perfected and complemented by a spiritual light (*lux*). He compares the latter light with the active force that Aristotle called the agent intellect.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.2.5 *The reliance of the intellect on the body*

The fourth and last thesis regarding the difference between agent and potential intellect states that they differ as an absolute and a relative power with relation to the body. A first interpretation, which considers the agent intellect to be standing by itself, whereas the possible intellect is solely there to unite the intellect to the body and to the phantasms, is discarded. Rather, Bonaventure holds that both powers are in a sense reliant on the body. The agent intellect is always in act as it always shines and is, out of itself, ready to illumine: it is in this sense that it is an absolute power. Sometimes, however, something is not illumined because of some impediment of the body. In this sense, the agent intellect is not completely absolute.<sup>36</sup> The possible intellect needs to be excited by sensible images. Hereto, it needs to be connected to the bodily senses. Therefore, it is a relative power. Thus, by arguing that neither the possible intellect nor the agent intellect is *completely* functionally independent of the bodily functions, Bonaventure once

35 II *Sent.* d.24 a.1 p.2 q.4 (II 567–71): ‘Verus enim est secundum Dionysium, quod substantiae intellectuales, eo ipso quod intellectuales substantiae, “lumina sunt”: ergo perfectio et complementum substantiae intellectualis lux est spiritualis: ergo illa potentia, quae consequitur animam ex parte intellectus sui, quoddam lumen est in ipsa, de quo lumine potest intelligi illud Psalmi: Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine. Et hoc lumen videtur Philosophus intellexisse esse intellectum agentem. Dicit enim, quod “ille intellectus, quo est omnia facere, est sicut habitus quidam, ut in lumine; quodam enim modo et lumen facit colores potentia actu colores”, sicut habetur tertio de Anima.’

36 *Ibid.*: ‘Et hinc est, quod una dicitur convenire animae secundum se, altera vero in comparatione ad corpus, et una semper esse in actu, altera vero non; non quia semper anima actu intelligat per intellectum agentem, sed quia, sicut lumen corporale semper lucet et de se promptum est ad illuminandum, res autem illuminabilis non semper illuminatur propter aliquod impedimentum.’

again makes a case for the fact that both intellectual powers are steadily connected to one individual human being.

### 3.2.6 *Concluding remarks on the capacities of the intellect*

Bonaventure's refutation of the objections to the thesis that the agent and potential intellect are two different substances, which is found at the end of this question, succinctly outlines his position on the human intellect. At the same time, it summarizes how Bonaventure argued strongly against any division between the intellect's powers that is more radical than his own:

And thus, thinking of the agent and possible intellect, we ought not think of them as two substances or as two powers so separated, that one has to perfect its own operation without the other, and that the agent intellect understands something without the possible intellect (...) those two different capacities (*differentiae*) are to be thought of in such a way that they concur inseparably in one complete operation of understanding.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, although Bonaventure positively defends the diversification of the soul's intellectual activities, he nonetheless maintains the essential unity of the intellect. He argues that the agent intellect and the possible intellect are two different intellectual *powers* that belong to one and the same *substance* and that both rely on the bodily senses, that they mutually and profoundly rely on one another in their activities, and that these activities inseparably and simultaneously convene in one complete act of understanding. This simultaneity also points towards the idea that abstraction, conducted primarily by the agent intellect, and judgment, carried out by both, are not subsequent activities, but are somehow functionally related.

Remarkably, the role of divine illumination in cognition and its relation to the natural light of truth is practically left out of this discussion of the intellect. Although it is not denied that divine illumination

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Et ita, cum cogitamus de intellectu agente et possibili, non debemus cogitare quasi de duabus substantiis, vel quasi de duabus potentiis ita separatis, quod una sine alia habeat operationem suam perficere, et aliquid intelligit intellectus agens sine possibili, et aliquid cognoscat intellectus agens, quod tamen homo, cuius est ille intellectus, ignoret. (...) sed sic cogitandae sunt esse illae duae differentiae, quod in unam operationem completam intelligendi veniant inseparabiliter.'

is involved in this act, Bonaventure rather seeks to stress both the intellect’s reliance on the senses and the interdependency of its powers, two innate capacities. This could lead to the conviction that, although he does not so much deny that the divine ideas are involved in the act of cognition, Bonaventure defends a predominantly ‘Aristotelian’ account of abstraction, maintaining that an intelligible species is produced solely by the intellect’s proper capacities that act upon a sensible species. There are quite a few Bonaventure scholars who defend this interpretation. Bonifaz A. Luycks, for instance, describes Bonaventure as a strong adherent of Aristotelian abstraction on the basis of this text.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Leonard J. Bowman argues that Bonaventure holds ‘that an Aristotelian-style abstraction is requisite for the knowledge of sense data,’<sup>39</sup> and defends that “abstraction and illumination are really co-principles of knowledge in Bonaventure’s system,”<sup>40</sup> assigning to the abstractive capacities of the agent intellect the generation of concepts of things, a process that is then followed by illumination, which establishes the certainty of the concept.<sup>41</sup>

Before I turn to other texts to see if further evidence for this interpretation can be found, I would like to dwell on the question why Bonaventure does not elaborate on the purport of a divine light in cognition in this specific question, although he does mention that God and only God illuminates the human mind, and that he does so immediately. Why is the primacy of knowledge of the divine absent as a

38 B.A. Luycks, *Die Erkenntnislehre Bonaventuras*, Aschendorff: Münster 1923, p. 34. With regard to the text under consideration, Luycks (pp. 83–84) argues: ‘(Der intellectus agens) gelangt nur zur eigentlichen, vollen Tätigkeit, wenn er sich aktuell den Phantasmen zuwendet, sie reinigt, erleuchtet und so the species intelligibilis ablöst.’ Likewise, Bernard Gendreau concludes that ‘in Saint Bonaventure we have a form of the theory of abstraction according to which similitudes or species are acquired from the senses and a form of self-sufficiency in knowledge according to which the mind by its own enlightening powers, perceives and judges the value of its knowledge.’ Cf. B. Gendreau, “The Quest for Certainty in Bonaventure,” in: *Franciscan Studies* 21 (1961), p. 167.

39 L.J. Bowman, “The Development of the Agent Intellect in the Franciscan School of the Thirteenth Century,” pp. 262–263.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 265.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 264: “Bonaventure teaches a type of abstraction wherein the agent intellect turns to sense species, and so illumines the possible intellect. But this abstraction is inadequate to reach full truth and full certitude, for that demands a foundation in the eternal exemplars, and is accessible only by way of the innate exemplars and illumination.”

major theme in Bonaventure's philosophical psychology as elaborated in *Sentences* II d. 24, even though there is ample opportunity to discuss it?

Taking into consideration the debate in which Bonaventure participates, this could very well be the case because the objective of this text lies elsewhere: to reject the idea that the agent intellect is a separate substance in favor of the claim that it is *ipsius aliquid animae* as a distinct capacity, whereas the soul is, at the same time, a substantial unity. In defending this claim, however, William of Auvergne, who criticizes the idea of an agent intellect as a distinct capacity of the human soul as this would be incompatible with the simplicity and indivisibility of the soul, is not Bonaventure's greatest opponent. Rather, Bonaventure is primarily opposed to Arabic psychology, in which the agent intellect is taken to be a spiritual substance external to the human soul.

This becomes clear from the fact that Bonaventure starts out his response by strongly and elaborately denying the Avicennian position that only the possible intellect is connected to an individual body, whereas the agent intellect is a separate intellect. In addition, he refutes a second, affiliated position on the diversification of the active and possible intellect as different substances, one which Gilson has termed *augustinisme avicennisant*: the claim that the agent intellect is actually God himself, which was defended by some of Bonaventure's contemporaries.<sup>42</sup> They were, in fact just like Bonaventure, seeking to harmonize Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle's agent intellect with Augustine's theory of divine illumination, but chose a different strategy.<sup>43</sup>

Taking all this into account, it seems plausible that in *Sentences* II d. 24, Bonaventure saw it as his primary aim to defend the agent intellect as an active capacity proper to the individual soul, without, by any means, compromising the substantial unity that the soul is. For this goal, including an elaboration on the intricate cooperation between agent intellect and divine intellect, let alone elaborating on God as first

42 Cf. E. Gilson, "Roger Marston: Un cas d'augustinisme avicennisant," pp. 37-42.

43 II *Sent.* d.24 p.1 a.2 q.4 (II 568): 'Quidam namque dicere voluerunt, quod intellectus agens sit intelligentia separata; intellectus autem possibilis sit anima corpori coniuncta. Et modus iste ponendi et dicendi fundatus est super multa verba philosophorum, qui posuerunt, animam rationalem illustrari a decima intelligentia et perfici ex coniunctione sui ad illam. Sed iste modus dicendi falsus est et erroneus. Alius modus intelligendi est, quod intellectus agens esset ipse Deus, intellectus vero possibilis esset noster animus. Et iste modus dicendi super verba Augustini est fundatus.'

known, would not be very strategic, as this could only blur his position amidst his several opponents. By not denying it, but by just leaving it (almost) out of the picture in this particular question, he avoids any unnecessary confusion, thus making a stronger case for the specific position he aims to defend.

Finally, in the *Sentences* in general, Bonaventure adverts to the – widely accepted – idea that knowledge of God is impressed in some way upon the human mind rather than to articulating a doctrine of God as first known, such as in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. One could therefore also argue that a shift occurred in Bonaventure’s thought, and that he attributed a less important role to the divine in the act of cognition in the *Sentences*. I do not think that this is the case. For instance, the statement taken from the *Sentences*, that ‘on every soul, cognition of the divine truth is impressed and through it, every act of cognition takes place’<sup>44</sup> does articulate, albeit in terms of impression, that preliminary knowledge of divine being is presupposed to knowledge of any created being, which is the central tenet of Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known. In addition, in two *dubia* of the *Sentences*, as I have shown in the preceding chapter, Bonaventure deals with a resolution in which he proves God or *primum esse* to be first known – albeit in the context of the Trinity and of the convertibility of being and goodness rather than in the context of an exposition on the intellect, such as in the *Itinerarium*.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, speaking of a shift in Bonaventure’s thought would go too far.

Nevertheless, Bonaventure’s position on impression and innatism is not that straightforward. As it is, however, important with regard to determining the role of knowledge of God in cognition, in the following section, I will discuss Bonaventure’s innatism as it is laid out in yet another question of the second book of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, II *Sent.* d.39 a.1 q.2.

44 I *Sent.* 8.1.1.2 (I 155): ‘Divinam veritatem esse probat et concludit omnis veritas et natura creata (...). Probat etiam ipsam et concludit omnis intelligentia recta, quia omni animae eius cognitio est impressa, et omnis cognitio est per ipsam.’

45 Cf. II *Sent.* d.1 p.2 dub. II (II 51–2) and I *Sent.* d.28 p.2 dub. I (I 504).

### 3.3 Bonaventure's innatism

Not only the agent intellect is argued to be a capacity that is innate to the soul: throughout Bonaventure's works, terms such as 'innate', 'inserted', and 'impressed' are to be found abundantly to describe knowledge that is opposed to acquired knowledge.<sup>46</sup> This vocabulary raises the question of whether there is indeed any knowledge whatsoever that is 'ingrained' or 'inborn' in the human soul, as it was argued in the *quaestio* discussed in the preceding section. As the answer to this question is important to an understanding of the way the soul has knowledge of the divine, I will go into this subject somewhat further in the present section.

Edward R. Houser observes a controversy with regard to the subject of innatism in Bonaventure's thought. He contrasts the attribution of a theory of nativism to Bonaventure with that of a theory of natural and continuous illumination. According to the first theory, God infused concepts into the soul at the moment of conception or birth, and the mind needs only to recall them. Houser especially mentions Zachary Hayes and Etienne Gilson as proponents of this interpretation, as they both maintain that at least some knowledge is considered to be innate in a Cartesian sense *avant la lettre*, i.e. present from birth, in Bonaventure's thought. This denies the fact that Bonaventure rejects any sort of Platonic reminiscence, Houser criticizes. He remarks – and this represents the second position, which he affirms – that the words *innata* and *naturaliter* have the same root, and that innate knowledge is therefore to be associated with natural illumination. He specifies how this idiom is used by Bonaventure:

when emphasizing how illumination is caused by God, Bonaventure uses *impressa* as a synonym for *inserta*; when focusing on how universal knowledge of God is, he uses *innata* as a synonym for *naturaliter*, both words having the same root. *Natural* knowledge of God, then, does not come from innate ideas, the Platonic form of which he explicitly rejected.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *II Sent.* d.3 p.2 a.2 q.2 (II 122–4), *Itinerarium* III.4 (V 304–5), *De mysterio Trinitatis* I.1 (V 45–51).

<sup>47</sup> R.E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Three-Fold Way to God," pp. 91–145.



Correspondingly, Houser argues that Bonaventure’s *cognitio innata* of God is not a Cartesian innate idea present from birth, but comes from Damascene, *De fide orth.* 1.3: ‘Cognitio existendi Deum *naturaliter* nobis *inserta* est’.<sup>48</sup> In the following, I will assess whether this interpretation is correct.

In a decisive text on innatism, II *Sent.* d.39 p. II. q.2, Bonaventure treats man’s cognitive capacity together with his moral capacity (*conscientia*). He argues here that knowledge is neither fully innate nor fully acquired, but rather, in a certain way acquired *and* in a certain way innate. This does not mean that the intellect is in the possession of an innate ‘database’ of knowledge. In order to refute this kind of innatism, Bonaventure gives three arguments based on the authority of Aristotle and one that refers to Augustine: first, he maintains, if the intellect would retain pre-fabricated knowledge, Aristotle would not have called the agent intellect the faculty ‘that makes everything’. Second, when this was the case, Aristotle would not have stated that the soul is created as a blank slate. Third, Aristotle would not have argued that knowledge of principles is gained through (*via*) sense, memory and experience. Next to these Aristotelian objections to any innate content, Augustine’s argument that principles are not known beforehand (*prius*) – by which Platonic remembrance must be referred to – but are rather ‘seen’ in an uncreated light, is presented as an objection in favor of illumination against knowledge that is naturally ‘canned’ in the soul.

All this is however not to say that Bonaventure completely denies any sort of innatism. One specific position on innatism is accepted: our cognitive dispositions (*habitus cognitivi*) are in some way innate and in some way acquired, and this pertains to knowledge of principles (*cognitio principiorum*).<sup>49</sup>

What is meant by ‘knowledge of principles’ here? In order to know, Bonaventure explains, two principles necessarily come together: the presence of a knowable and that of a light by means of which we judge of it, just as we see in sight. He notes that Augustine had already made this duality clear: we have cognitive dispositions through an innate light of reason given to the soul on the one hand, and acquired reasons

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> II *Sent.* d. 39 a. 2 q. 2 (II 912–3): ‘Et propterea est tertius modus dicendi, quod habitus cognitivi quodam modo sunt nobis innati et quodam modo acquisiti, non tantum loquendo de cognitione in particulari et de cognitione conclusionum, sed etiam de cognitione principiorum.’

in the form of species on the other. This given light of reason is called a 'natural faculty of judgment' (*naturale iudicatorium*), Bonaventure continues, which leads the soul in judging either things or actions. Thus, the particular content of knowledge is acquired through the senses, but the *ability* to process and judge sense data is given as an innate capacity, it is argued here, similarly to what was argued in the preceding section.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, the focus in this question is on *judgment* as the proper activity of this innate capacity, which is described here as a natural light of reason, whereas in the 24th distinction of this second book of the Commentary, this innate capacity was identified with the agent intellect, which primary task is to *abstract*. This similarity presents no hard evidence, but is in favor of the hypothesis that judgment and abstraction are terms that designate the same activity of making the sensible intelligible, or that are, somehow, closely related in this act.

In addition to this innate capacity, some moral and cognitive principles are also considered to be innate. Bonaventure explains: among things we can know, some things are more evident than others. Some things are even *most* evident (*maxime evidentia*). These are basic notions or (moral) principles – as examples, Bonaventure mentions the principle 'Do not do to others what you do not want to be done to yourself' and the notion of God's supratemporality. Cognition of these first principles can be said to be innate to us because the natural light of truth 'suffices to know them, *after* [my emphasis] the reception of the species, without any extra persuasion, because of their evidence'. What is meant by this, is not so much that we know those principles without the sensible, but that we have a light to establish those principles after knowledge of particulars, the building blocks of these principles, is acquired. In the case of the basic principle that we should honor our parents, this means that the species 'father' is not naturally impressed on the soul, but once acquired, we can, by ourselves, produce this fundamental principle.

Finally, Bonaventure holds that, next to the innateness of an intellectual capacity and some fundamental principles, we possess *notions* that

50 *Ibid.*: 'Cum enim ad cognitionem duo concurrant necessario, videlicet praesentia cognoscibilis et lumen, quo mediante de illo iudicamus, sicut videmus in visu, et in praecedenti auctoritate innuit Augustinus: habitus cognitivi sunt quodam modo nobis innati ratione luminis animae inditi, sunt etiam quodam modo acquisiti ratione speciei, et hoc quidem verbis Philosophi et Augustini concordat. (...) Illud autem lumen sive natural iudicatorium dirigit ipsam animam in iudicando tam de cognoscibilibus quam de operabilibus.'

we cannot have acquired through the senses, as they cannot possibly be derived from the material world. Knowledge of these things is described by Bonaventure as simply innate knowledge (*habitus simpliciter innatus*). This also concerns for instance a notion of God, which is argued to be inserted naturally in the soul. Also, the soul knows itself without the interference of the exterior senses.<sup>51</sup> How does Bonaventure account for these innate notions?

While agreeing with the Aristotelian idea that the soul is created as a *tabula nuda*, Bonaventure does give this idea an Augustinian twist: Aristotle’s thesis that nothing is in the intellect that was not in the senses before, and that all cognition stems from the senses, is explained to apply to those things that have being in the soul as *abstracted similitudes*, i.e. species originating from material things:

if the Philosopher sometimes says that nothing is in the intellect that was not in the senses first, and that every cognition rises from the senses, this must be understood to apply to those things that indeed have being in the soul through an abstracted similitude, and they are said to be inscribed in the soul. And on this account the Philosopher very notably says, that nothing has been written in the soul, not because there is in it no knowledge, but because there is in it no picture or abstracted similitude.<sup>52</sup>

This statement significantly qualifies the position that all knowledge stems from the senses as it creates room to argue, without outrightly contradicting Aristotle, that there are notions in the soul that are not derived from the exterior senses; these notions are just not to be compared with acquired similitudes. What kind of notions are we dealing with then? Bonaventure concludes his response with the following:

<sup>51</sup> Cf. I *Sent.* d.3 p.1 a.1 q.1 (I 69).

<sup>52</sup> II *Sent.* d.39 a.1 q.2 (II 904): ‘Ex his patet responsio ad illam quaestionem, qua quaeritur, utrum omnis cognitio sit a sensu. Dicendum est, quod non. Necessario enim oportet ponere, quod anima novit Deum et se ipsam et quae sunt in se ipsa, sine adminiculo sensuum exteriorum. Unde si aliquando dicat Philosophus, quod: “nihil est in intellectu, quod prius non fuerit in sensu”, et quod “omnis cognitio habet ortum a sensu”, intelligendum est de illis quae quidem habent esse in anima per similitudinem abstractam; et illa dicuntur esse in anima ad modum scripturae. Et propterea valde notabiliter dicit Philosophus, quod in anima nihil scriptum est, non quia nulla sit in ea notitia, sed quia nulla est in ea pictura vel similitudo abstracta.’

And this is what Augustine says in *De civitate Dei*: "God has inserted in us a noble judgment, where what belongs to light and what to darkness is known in a book of light, which is truth, because truth has been naturally impressed in the heart of men."<sup>53</sup>

Thus, a natural faculty of judgment that we are endowed with is argued to be inserted. In order to judge what something is, however, it relies on 'a book of light', which is a 'naturally impressed truth'. Especially when recalling Bonaventure's earlier invocation of Augustine's argument that principles are not known beforehand, but are 'seen' in an uncreated light, this conclusion confirms that the notions that condition judgment are known to the soul through illumination.

Thus, in his interpretation of Bonaventure's position on innate knowledge, Houser seems to be right. This treatise makes clear that first of all, what is innate to the intellect is an active capacity that judges things or actions. As it turns out at the end of Bonaventure's response, it does so by means of knowledge that is inserted by a light of truth that is impressed on the soul. Therefore, what is innate is not *merely* an active capacity; also, it is an uncreated light of truth that inserts knowledge into the soul.

To further assess the purport of the divine in making a sensible intelligible, I will deal with Bonaventure's account of the certainty of knowledge in the following section, in which he argues that both a created and an uncreated ground and truth are required in a complete act of cognition, and that a conversion of the intellect to the sensible in order to make it intelligible *includes* a judgment that takes recourse to a divine measure.

53 *Ibid.* (II 904): 'Et hoc est quod dicit Augustinus in libro de Civitate Dei: "Inseruit nobis Deus natural iudicarium, ubi quid sit lucis, quid tenebrarum, cognoscitur in libro lucis, qui veritas est, quia veritas in corde hominum naturaliter est impressa."'; I *Sent.* d.17 a.1 p.1 q.4 (I 301): 'Species autem innata potest esse dupliciter: aut similitudo tantum, sicut species lapidis, aut ita similitudo, quod etiam quaedam veritas in se ipsa. Prima species est sicut pictura; et ab hac creata est anima nuda. Secunda species est impressio aliqua summae veritatis in anima, sicut verbi gratia animae a conditione sua datum est lumen quoddam directivum et quaedam directio naturalis, data est etiam ei affectio voluntatis. Cognoscit igitur anima, quid sit rectitudo, et quid affectio, (...) Unde quod Augustinus dicit, quod huiusmodi habitus cognoscuntur in ipsa veritate et per similitudines, quae sunt idem quod ipsae, non dicit hoc, quia non fiat aliqua species in intellectu cognoscentis, sed quia in anima non est pura species, sed veritas quaedam ab ipsa veritate impressa.'

3.4 The divine and the created as the dual ground of certain knowledge: *De scientia Christi* IV3.4.1 *The relation of the intellect to the divine*

In the preceding sections, it has become clear that ‘innate’ to Bonaventure designates *both* the inborn capacity of the intellect to acquire knowledge *and* knowledge transmitted through illumination rather than through the senses. In fact, that the agent intellect as a natural light is dependent on divine illumination is stressed in many other of Bonaventure’s texts. For instance, he states that

The spiritual light, which is God (...) is most omnipotent: it can produce and cause a created light conform to itself in some manner, which, however, is not sufficient for itself, even after it has been produced, unless the influence of the highest light be at hand for it. And thus it must be understood in the human soul, that it has its own light, namely a created one, through which it is completed, which is both produced and conserved by the eternal light.<sup>54</sup>

This passage argues that the divine light *produces, conserves* and *influences* the created light or agent intellect that is proper to the individual soul, which is thus not entirely self-sufficient: the intellect not only relies on sense data, but also relies, naturally and from the outset, on an a priori, divine source of knowledge. Bonaventure makes a more elaborate case for this twofold reliance in *De scientia Christi* IV, a question that explores the way the created and the divine cooperate in the establishment of certitude.<sup>55</sup>

54 II *Sent.* d.17 a.1 q.1 (II 412–3): ‘Lux enim spiritualis, quae Deus est (...) sit omnipotentissima, potest producere et facere lucem creatam aliquo modo sibi conformem; quae tamen sibi non sufficit, etiam postquam producta est, nisi adsit ei summae lucis influentia. Et sic intelligendum est in anima humana, quod ipsa habet lucem propriam, scilicet creatam, per quam completur, quae a luce aeterna et producitur et conservatur. Lux autem corporalis in diversis corporibus potest reperiri ut perfectio, cum non sit forma omnino simplex, sed sit nata coniungi materiae.’

55 Cf. Th. Crowley, “Illumination and Certitude,” in: E.A. Synan (ed.), *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, vol. 3 Collegio S. Bonaventura: Rome 1973, pp. 431–448; A. Speer “The Certainty and Scope of Knowledge: Bonaventure’s Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ,” pp. 35–61; H. Nagakura, “Abstraction et illumination: Une theorie de la connaissance chez Saint Bonaventure,” in: M.C. Pacheco, J. Meirinhos (eds.), *Intellect et imagination dans la philosophie medievale, actes du XIe Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale de la Société Internationale pour l’Étude de la Philosophie*

This question of on human knowledge is part of Bonaventure's exploration of the knowledge of Christ, the topic he chose for his first *disputatio* as a *magister ordinarius* in Paris, resulting in seven *Quaestiones disputatae de scientia Christi* (1253–54). This strategically chosen subject was not only a theologically important theme but also has major philosophical significance. It allowed Bonaventure to honor his intellectual heritage as a Franciscan by discussing the knowledge of Christ,<sup>56</sup> and, at the same time, to take a stance in the philosophical debate concerning the foundations of *human* knowledge, which was fuelled by the introduction of Aristotle's epistemology in a predominantly Neoplatonist intellectual climate: as Christ's intellect is argued to be both human and divine, both parts needed to be investigated. The elaboratedness of this fourth question as compared to the other questions on the subject testifies to the fact that Bonaventure's academic interests were not solely theological, but that he was also philosophically ambitious to deal with novel approaches to the autonomy of human reason and philosophical certitude.<sup>57</sup> In the following section, I will deal with his Franciscan account as to what natural reason is capable of.

In *De scientia Christi* IV, which deals with the question of whether that which is known by us with certainty is known in the eternal ideas themselves, Bonaventure presents natural reason as *relatively autonomous* in its operation: the intellect is committed to the divine, as it is argued

*Médiévale* (S.I.E.P.M.), Brepols: Turnhout 2006, pp. 1243–54; J.Th. Ernst, *Die Lehre der hochmittelalterlichen Theologen von der vollkommenen Erkenntnis Christi. Ein Versuch zur Auslegung der klassischen Dreiteilung: visio beata, scientia infusa und scientia acquisita*, Herder: Freiburg 1969, pp. 53–96.

- 56 The general objective of this series of questions is to give an explanation of the psychological unity of Christ, an issue dealt with by several of Bonaventure's predecessors. For instance, in *De Trinitate* XIII.24, Augustine explored intellectual endowment of Christ, concluding he 'has treasures both of wisdom and of knowledge'. Anselm addressed the dual nature of Christ in *Cur Deus homo*, Hugh of St. Victor focused on the perfection of Christ's human knowledge in *De Sacramentis Christianæ Fidei* III, and Alexander of Hales stresses the ambiguity of Christ's knowledge, arguing he knows perfectly both in God and by himself (*Glossa in Sent.* 3.13.10–3.14.24). Also, Bonaventure himself dealt with this topic earlier, be it less elaborate, in his *Commentary on the Sentences*: III *Sent.* d.14, q.1–3.
- 57 According to Andreas Speer, these ambitions clarify why Bonaventure, throughout the entire series of questions, seems especially after *epistemological* implications of Christ's knowledge, rather than expounding on the theological, that is, christological aspects his knowledge. Cf. A. Speer "The Certainty and Scope of Knowledge: Bonaventure's Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ," pp. 41–42.

that all certain knowledge is regulated by the divine ideas. To be more precise, it is argued here that a conversion of the intellect to the sensible in order to make it intelligible includes a judgment that, if certain knowledge is to be established, takes recourse to the divine ideas, which provide the intellect with an infallible measure to judge by.

### 3.4.2 Bonaventure’s moderate illuminationism

To start with, Bonaventure distinguishes three ways of arguing that everything that is known with certainty is indeed known in the light of the eternal ideas, and presents the third position – his own – as the preferable *via media* between the other two, which can be assigned to Guibert of Tournai and Thomas Aquinas respectively.

The first position holds that the eternal light provides us with the *only* and *complete* ground of certain knowledge: things are only truly known in the divine word (*Verbo*), whereas things in their own genus (*in proprio genere*), known through the senses, provide no ground for certainty whatsoever.<sup>58</sup> This position could well be that of his Augustinian predecessor Guibert of Tournai, who argues that divine illumination provides a special and sole ground for certain knowledge. Second, Bonaventure rejects a position that can be attributed to Guibert of Tournai, who argues that divine illumination provides a special and the sole ground for certain knowledge.<sup>59</sup>

Bonaventure discards this first position, as it rules out any distinction between knowledge *in via* and *in patria*, between knowledge of things in their own genus and in the divine word, between scientific knowledge and wisdom, natural knowledge and special knowledge attained by grace, rational knowledge and revealed knowledge.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Guibert, Bonaventure argues that the regulation of the mind by the divine is

58 *De scientia Christi* IV (V 22–3): ‘uno modo, ut intelligatur, quod ad certitudinalem cognitionem concurrat lucis aeterna evidētia tanquam ratio cognoscendi tota et sola.’

59 Cf. The first chapter of W. Goris, *Absolute Beginners, Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*, pp. 37–45; S. Gieben – C. Bérubé, “Guibert de Tournai et Robert Grosseteste. Sources inconnues de la doctrine de l’illumination, suivi de l’édition critique de trois chapitres du *Rudimentum Doctrinae* de Guibert de Tournai,” pp. 627–654.

60 *De scientia Christi* IV (V 23): ‘Et haec intelligentia est minus recta, pro eo quod secundum hoc nulla esset rerum cognitio nisi in Verbo; et tunc non differet cognitio viae a cognitione in patriae, nec cognitio in Verbo a cognitione in proprio genere, nec cognitio scientiae a cognitione sapientiae, nec cognitio naturae a cognitione

not only special but also *natural*, and that the uncreated is not the sole source but, in the case of natural knowledge, only a partial source of knowledge.

The second position presented states that the eternal ideas as *rationes cognoscendi* are not connected with (*attingit*) themselves when certain knowledge is established. Rather, they provide a foundation for certainty by means of their mere influence (*influentia*).<sup>61</sup> This position is taken by Thomas Aquinas, who argues that the human intellect is not in need of any new illumination besides its natural illumination to establish certain or scientific knowledge of the sensible world.<sup>62</sup> This position is discarded as well: this influence would not provide sufficient ground for certainty, as the eternal ideas have to be reached *themselves* to regulate (*regulari*) the mind immediately as eternal and immutable rules, rather than affecting the mind merely by their influence.<sup>63</sup> Bonaventure therefore denies that these rules naturally structure and form the mind so that after its formation it is able to come to certain knowledge all by itself. Instead, Bonaventure defends a *continuous* regulation of the intellect by divine rules that *transcend* the mind and reside in eternal truth.

Rather than affirming either one of these two positions, Bonaventure formulates his own position *in via media* by stating that:

for certain knowledge, an eternal ground is necessarily required to regulate the mind, which is a moving ground (*ratio aeterna ut regulans, et ratio motiva*), not by itself however and in its full clarity, but together with a created ground, and partially discerned (*contuita*) by us according to our wayfaring state.<sup>64</sup>

gratiae, nec cognitio rationis a cognitione revelationis; quae omnia cum sint falsa, ullo modo est ista via tenenda.’

61 *Ibid.*: ‘Alio modo, ut intelligatur, quod ad cognitionem certitudinalem necessario concurrat ratio aeterna quantum ad suam influentiam, ita quod cognoscens in cognoscendo non ipsam rationem aeternam attingit, sed influentiam eius solum.’

62 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I 84.5c. (ed. Commissio Leonina, vol. 5, p. 322); R. Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae* 1a 75–89, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2001, pp. 302–310.

63 *De scientia Christi* IV (V 23): ‘mens in certitudinali cognitione per incommutabiles et aeterna regulas habeat regulari, non tanquam per habitum suae mentis, sed tanquam per eas, quae sunt supra se in veritate aeterna. Et ideo dicere, quod mens nostra in cognoscendo non extendat se ultra influentiam lucis increatae, est dicere Augustinum deceptum fuisse (...) et hoc valde absurdum est.’

64 *Ibid.* (V 23): ‘Et ideo est tertius modus intelligendi, quasi medium tenens inter



Thus, Bonaventure argues here that the eternal ideas are (1) not entirely founding certain knowledge, but only *partially*, as they cooperate with a created foundation, and (2) not fully discerned – the way they are known is addressed with the term *contuita* – but only seen *obscurely*, because of the impaired capacities of the human soul in its fallen state.

Therefore, a double relation of foundation is argued to be required for certain knowledge: (1) a created, mutable truth that relies on an absolute, immutable and stable truth; (2) a fallible light of the mind that relies on an absolute, infallible light:

Created truth (...) is not immutable as such, but only on a condition (*ex suppositione*). Similarly, the light of the creature is not infallible on its own. Neither this created light nor this truth is absolute, because they are created from not-being into being. Therefore, to arrive at complete knowledge (*ad plenam cognitionem*), recourse (*recursus*) is taken to a truth that is entirely immutable and stable and to a light that is completely infallible, one must necessarily go back, in this kind of knowledge, to the highest art as to the light and the truth: to the light, in so far it bestows infallibility upon the knowing subject, to the truth, in so far as it bestows immutability to the object known.<sup>65</sup>

Bonaventure thus maintains a moderate illuminationism by defending a partial but continuous and implicit involvement of the divine in natural cognition on the basis of which certain knowledge can be established. In this quotation, certain knowledge is identified with complete knowledge (*plena cognitio*), which is established by taking full recourse to the divine light and truth. What is understood by this recourse and what enables the mind to do so?

utramque viam, scilicet quod ad certitudinalem cognitionem necessario requiritur ratio aeterna ut regulans et ratio motiva, non quidem ut sola et in sua omnimoda claritate, sed cum ratione creata et ut ex parte a nobis contuita secundum statum viae.<sup>7</sup>

65 *Ibid.* (V 23–24): ‘Veritas autem creata non est immutabilis simpliciter, sed ex suppositione; similiter nec lux creaturae est omnino infallibilis ex propria virtute, cum utraque sit creata et prodierit de non-esse in esse. Si ergo ad plenam cognitionem fit recursus ad veritatem omnino immutabilem et stabilem et ad lucem omnino infallibilem; necesse est, quod in huiusmodi cognitione recurratur ad artem supernam ut ad lucem et veritatem: lucem, inquam, dantem infallibilitatem scienti, et veritatem dantem immutabilitatem scibili.’

3.4.3 *The conditions for certainty*

As became clear in the preceding section, Bonaventure's position on certain knowledge addresses two levels: one concerns the quality of the intellect, the other that of knowledge itself. Accordingly, two requirements for certain knowledge are introduced: the *excellence (nobilitas) of knowledge* and the *worthiness (dignitas) of the knower*.<sup>66</sup> The excellence of knowledge is conditioned by two criteria: (a) *immutability* on the side of the object and (b) *infallibility* on that of the subject.<sup>67</sup> The question is how these criteria are met: the human intellect is fallible and the created world is changeable and imperfect. How could either of them provide reliable knowledge?

In the passage cited at the end of the preceding section, a *double relation of foundation* is presented: (1) a created, mutable truth that relies on an absolute, immutable and stable truth, and (2) a fallible light of the mind that relies on an absolute, infallible light. The regulation of the human mind by the divine thus has a double function: it aids the activity of the intellect on the one hand and provides a foundation for the truth of things on the other. Divine illumination therefore not only presents the mind with a measure for the truth of a known object, but it is also involved in the act of establishing infallible knowledge: the light of the intellect relies in its activities on the divine light. Furthermore, certain knowledge is identified with *complete* knowledge (*plena cognitio*), which is established by taking *full recourse* to the divine light and truth.

With regard to the second criterion for certain knowledge, the worthiness of the knower, a difficulty Bonaventure sees himself presented with is why the human mind, especially in its fallen state, would be dignified to attain to the divine ideas. Hereto, Bonaventure draws on the Augustinian division between an inferior and a superior part of reason. This inferior part consists of reason converting to the sensible, whereas its superior part consists of reason turning to the eternal ideas as divine laws. These parts relate to one another in an *act of judgment*, he argues, in which sensible data are compared to the eternal ideas, that is, they are judged by means of them:

66 *Ibid.*: 'Quod autem mens nostra in certitudinali cognitione aliquo modo attingat illas regulas et incommutabiles rationes, requirit necessario nobilitas cognitionis et dignitas cognoscentis.'

67 *Ibid.*: 'Nobilitas, inquam, cognitionis, quia cognitio certitudinalis esse non potest, nisi sit ex parte scibilis immutabilitas, et infallibilitas ex parte scientis.'

to come to a full (*plenum*) judgment in knowing and acting, the inferior part needs its superior counterpart. In the latter the *imago Dei* is found, which, because of its nature, adheres to the eternal rules and by which it defines and judges with certainty.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, it is argued, cognition not only requires the conversion of the knowing subject over the knowable sensible object, but:

This conversion includes a judgment; a certain judgment is however only made by a certain and unjudgeable law (...) and therefore, here is included the eternal ground and truth.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, recourse to a divine light and truth is taken through an act of judgment, included in the act by which the intellect turns to a sensible object. Interestingly, it is not after the intellect has turned to the sensible that the intelligible species is judged; rather, a judgment is *included* in this conversion. Although the mechanism of this conversion is not elucidated any further here, this strongly suggests that drawing the intelligible from the sensible object does involve an act of judgment, in which the inferior part of reason turns to the senses, cooperating with its superior part, which turns to the divine ideas.

To understand the way in which a created truth is *certified* by such a judgment that appeals to divine truth, it helps to take into consideration Bonaventure’s definition of truth for a moment. In the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, he calls truth the adequation of the intellect and the thing known, by which, at least in the first place, not the *human* intellect is meant, but rather, the *divine* intellect, which is the cause of the thing’s

68 *Ibid.* (V 24): ‘Ipsum etiam requirit dignitas ex parte scientis. Cum enim spiritus rationalis habeat superiorem portionem rationis et inferiorem; sicut ad plenum iudicium rationis deliberativum in agendis non sufficit portio inferior sine superiori, sic et ad plenum rationis iudicium in speculandis. Haec autem portio superior est illa, in qua est imago Dei, quae et aeternis regulis inhaerescit et per eas quidquid definit certitudinaliter iudicat et definit; et hoc competit ei, in quantum est imago Dei.’

69 *Ibid.* (V 25): ‘Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod ad cognitionem nihil plus requiritur nisi cognoscens et cognoscibile et conversio huius super hoc; dicendum, quod haec conversio includit iudicium; iudicium autem certum non fit nisi per legem certam et iniudicabilem, secundum quod dicit Augustinus in libro de Vera Religione et in libro de Libero Arbitrio, quod ‘nullus de veritate iudicat, et sine veritate nullus bene iudicat’; et ideo hic includitur ratio et veritas aeterna.’

existence. A thing is perfectly true when it exactly corresponds with the causing intellect (*res autem vera est, secundum quod adaequatur intellectui causanti*) – however, because nothing completely corresponds with this intellect after the fall, every created thing is essentially corrupted and no longer entirely true, Bonaventure argues with Augustine.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the certification of a created truth comes down to relating it to its exemplar in the divine intellect to assess its adequation to it. This is only possible if these ideas somehow cooperate in cognition.

#### 3.4.4 *The epistemic status of the divine ideas in natural cognition*

Finally, the question still is *in what way* the divine ideas are known and how they cooperate as compared to sensible things under regular circumstances, as they are argued not to be fully known nor to provide sufficient ground for knowledge.

In *De scientia Christi*, the type of knowledge of the divine ideas is directly related to the state of being of the soul: the extent to which the divine ideas are known depends on the more or less deiform the soul has become. Bonaventure first distinguishes three general states of the soul as *imago Dei*: (1) the state of fallen nature, in this life: lacking deiformity and being deformed, the soul only sees the ideas *partly and in darkness*. (2) The state of innocence, before the fall, in which the soul was not deformed by sin and when the ideas were known *partly but not darkly*, and (3) the state of glory, in which the image has become fully deiform and therefore knows the ideas *clearly, fully and distinctly (clare et plene et distincte)*.<sup>71</sup>

With concern to its viatorial state, Bonaventure specifies that the soul can become less deformed, through which it more or less clearly and distinctly knows the divine ideas, albeit never fully, clearly and distinctly,<sup>72</sup> but always, to a certain extent, in a hidden and obscure

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* III.3 (V 343).

<sup>71</sup> *De Scientia Christi* IV (V 23): ‘in statu innocentiae erat imago sine deformitate culpae, nondum tamen habens plenam deformatitem gloriae, ideo attingebat ex parte, sed non in aenigmate. In statu vero naturae lapsae caret deformitate et habet deformitatem, ideo attingit eas ex parte et in aenigmate. In statu vero gloriae caret omni deformitate et habet plenam deformatitem gloriae, ideo attingit eas plene et perspicue.’

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* (V 24): ‘Quoniam igitur certitudinalis cognitio competit spiritui rationali, in quantum est imago Dei, ideo in hac cognitione aeternas rationes attingit. Sed quia in statu viae non est adhuc plene deiformis, ideo non attingit eas clare et plene et distincte; sed secundum quod magis vel minus ad deformatitem accedit,

way.<sup>73</sup> What is meant by that? The ideas are argued to be known in their principles and *generality* (*in suis principiis et in sua generalitate*) – which is the reason why it is required that a divine source of knowledge is combined with similitudes abstracted from sensible appearances (*phantasmata*) as sources of *distinct* and specific knowledge. Here, we see that, rather than an opposition between confused and distinct knowledge, Bonaventure maintains an epistemological distinction between the sensible as the provider of distinct and specific elements of knowledge and the ideas as the providers of knowledge of the principles and general aspects of a thing.

As such, Bonaventure describes the divine ideas as ‘moving ground’ (*ratio motiva*) of knowledge. To what this pertains becomes clear from the distinction that Bonaventure makes between scientific knowledge and wisdom, departing from the question of how we can reach the divine ideas if we only know them indistinctly and obscurely. He argues that the deformed mind’s poor sight is not an argument against knowing through the eternal ideas and reaching them, but rather, against being *fixed* in them (*figitur*). Whereas the scientist or philosopher knows with certainty without being able to *focus* on and contemplate the eternal ideas, he argues, the wise, however, connects with these ideas in such a way that he can contemplate them in quietude. *Scientia* therefore involves the divine ideas as moving grounds (*per modum rationis moventis*): the mind relates to them as leading (*ductivae*) principles for knowing but does not single them out to reflect upon. The intellect of the wise, on the other hand, contemplates the divine ideas (*reductivae et quietativae*) as stable grounds of knowledge. Wisdom however takes a transformation of the soul, which one only attains when the soul is cleansed by the justice of faith.<sup>74</sup> A conversion to the sensible is then no longer necessary.

secundum hoc magis vel minus eas attingit, semper tamen aliquo modo, quia nunquam potest ab eo ratio imaginis separari.’

73 *Ibid.* (V 26): ‘Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod quidquid cognoscitur in illis aut cum velamine aut sine velamine; dicendum, quod in statu viae non cognoscitur in rationibus illis aeternis sine velamine et aenigmate propter divinae imaginis obscuracionem. Ex hoc tamen non sequitur, quod nihil certitudinaliter cognoscatur et clare, pro eo quod principia creata, quae aliquo modo sunt media cognoscendi, licet non sine illis rationibus, possunt perspicue et sine velamine a nostra mente videri.’ The gradual progression of knowledge of the divine that accompanies the transformation of the soul is described in more detail in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, which I will discuss at length in Chapter 4.

74 *Ibid.* (V 24): ‘Ad illud obiicitur, quod mentis humanae acies invalida in tam excel-

Although there are many who know scientifically, Bonaventure states, there are only a few who actually *realize* they connect with the divine ideas (*qui illas rationes sciunt se attingere*). Moreover, of these few, there are still less who *believe* this.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, faith and awareness are the decisive criteria of wisdom, rather than having recourse to the divine ideas as grounds of cognition.

Thus, by being described as a hidden and moving source of knowledge, cooperating with a distinct created source, the divine is argued to be involved in natural reason in an implicit way. No explicit recognition for the divine ideas is argued to be necessary for certitude: also the faithless can take recourse to them in the establishment of certain knowledge.

### 3.5 Abstraction in *Christus unus omnium Magister*

A much later text, the tractate *Christus unus omnium Magister*, written in the form of a sermon, also deals with the subject of natural knowledge. Here, it is embedded in a discourse on spirituality that describes the development and perfection of faith through Christ, who is designated here as the ‘master and principle’ of all certain cognition (*magister et principium cognitionis*).<sup>76</sup>

lenti luce non figitur, etc.; dicendum, quod ad hoc, quod cognoscat per aeternas rationes, non oportet, quod in illis figatur, nisi in quantum cognoscit sapientialiter. Aliter enim attingit illas rationes sapiens, et aliter sciens: sciens attingit illas ut moventes, sapiens vero ut quietantes; et ad hanc sapientiam nemo pervenit, “nisi primo per fidei iustitiam emundetur”.’

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* (V 26): ‘Ad illud quod obiicitur, quodsi in illis rationibus cognoscimus, quod omnis cognoscens et sapiens; dicendum, quod non sequitur, quia attingere rationes illas non facit sapientem, nisi quis in eis quiescat et sciatur se illas attingere, quod quidem spectat ad sapientem. Huiusmodi enim rationes attinguntur ab intellectibus scientium ut ductivae, sed ab intellectibus sapientium ut reductivae et quietativae. Et pauci sunt, qui isto modo illas attingant, ideo pauci sunt sapientes, licet multi scientes; pauci quidem sunt, qui illas rationes sciunt se attingere; immo quod plus est, pauci sunt, qui velint hoc credere, quia difficile videtur intellectui ad aeterna contemplanda nondum elevato, quod ita habeat Deum praesentem et propinquum.’

<sup>76</sup> *Christus unus omnium Magister* 1 (V 567): ‘Unus est magister vester, Christus, Matthaei vigesimo tertio. In verbo isto declaratur, quod est fontale principium illuminationis cognoscitivae, Christus videlicet (...) Triplex namque est gradus cognitionis certitudinalis et rectae (...) Secundum hoc apparet, quod triplex

In this tractate, certain knowledge acquired through natural reason is identified with ‘scientific knowledge’ (*cognitionem scientialem*). As in *De scientia Christi*, the necessary requirements for scientific or certain knowledge are argued to be immutable truth of the object of knowledge and infallible certitude on the part of the knowing subject, so that everything known is in itself necessary as well as certain to the knower. Notably, it is added here that we know that this state of certainty is reached, when we assess or *judge* (*arbitramur*) that we know the *cause* of the thing: then we know that a thing cannot possibly be regarded otherwise.<sup>77</sup> This is a paraphrase from Aristotle’s first book of the *Posterior Analytics* and by means of it the discourse on certitude is directly related to Aristotle’s discourse on scientific knowledge. In the paragraph to which Bonaventure refers, which deals with the criteria of ‘demonstrative knowledge’, Aristotle explains that

We suppose ourselves to possess unqualified scientific knowledge of a thing, as opposed to knowing it in the accidental way in which the sophist knows, when we think that we know the cause on which the fact depends, as the cause of that fact and of no other, and, further, that the fact could not be other than it is.<sup>78</sup>

By evoking Aristotle, Bonaventure thus argues that certain or scientific knowledge of something presupposes knowledge of its cause. However, Bonaventure has a very specific cause in mind, as he continues with:

Therefore, on the part of the knowable, immutable truth is required. Moreover, a truth of this kind is not a created truth, (...) but rather a creating truth (...). Since, therefore, things have ‘being’ in their own genus, they also have ‘being’ in the mind, and they have ‘being’ in eternal reason. Neither is their ‘being’ entirely immutable in the first

est modus cognoscendi, quorum primus est per credulitatem piae assensionis, secundum per approbationem rectae rationis, tertius vero per claritatem mundae contemplationis.’

77 *Christus unus omnium Magister* 6 (V 568–9): ‘Est etiam magister cognitionis, quae est per rationem, et hoc, in quantum est veritas. Ad cognitionem enim scientialem necessario requiritur veritas immutabilis ex parte scibilis, et certitudo infallibilis ex parte scientis. Omne enim, quod scitur, necessarium est in se et certum est ipsi scienti. Tunc enim scimus, “cum causam arbitramur cognoscere, propter quam res est, et scimus, quoniam impossibile est aliter se habere”.’

78 Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, I c. 2, 71b19ff.

and second manner, but only in the third, that is, insofar as they are in the eternal Word. It thus remains that nothing can make things perfectly knowable, unless Christ (...) be there.

Thus, Christ as a creating and immutable truth is argued to be presupposed to perfect knowledge here. Bonaventure hence reformulates divine illumination in terms of Christ as 'the fontal principle of cognitive illumination'. This is in line with the title of this sermon, which refers to Augustine's famous tractate *De Magistro*, in which he demonstrates that things are only truly known through Christ as the inner light of truth, and that divine laws are inherently and necessarily involved in natural cognition. At the same time, Bonaventure quite unproblematically adds many quotes of and references to Aristotle to this account. The question is whether these arguments are merely in favor of the general thesis of this text, making it more up-to-date by relating to the scientific discourse of his time, or if these arguments somehow *adjust* Augustine's position, allowing for a more empiricist stance with regard to natural cognition. Consequently, it is the question of what this means for the way in which judgment, abstraction and illumination relate, and, hence, the way knowledge of the divine is involved in the mechanism of cognition.

At first sight, as we shall see, this text seems to affirm the conclusion that Bonaventure, maintains a predominantly 'Aristotelian' account of abstraction, which, as I have shown, is a conclusion that could be drawn from a certain reading of *Sentences* II d. 24 as well.

In a subsequent paragraph, Bonaventure continues his reflection on scientific knowledge. Here, Bonaventure criticizes both Plato and Aristotle: the former because he designated the intelligible world to be the only source of certain knowledge, the latter because of the fact that he completely rejected the eternal ideas. Nevertheless, Bonaventure also acknowledges the value of both accounts: he grants 'the word of wisdom' to Plato, as he primarily considered superior things, whereas to Aristotle, 'the word of science' is given, as he dealt with the inferior things of the sensible world. Subsequently, as Bonaventure criticizes the exclusivity of their sources of knowledge, he presents his own account as a synthesis of both these views:

Though according to Augustine the soul has been conjoined to the eternal laws, because in a certain way it attains to that light according to the highest part of the agent intellect and the superior portion of reason, nevertheless it is indubitably true, according to what the Philosopher



says, that cognition is generated in us by means of (*via*) sense, memory and experience, from which within us there is gathered the universal, which is the principle of art and science.<sup>79</sup>

Two interpretations of this pivotal text can be given. The first considers the use of ‘though’ (*licet*), after which Augustine’s view on cognition is presented, followed by its qualification by means of ‘nevertheless’ (*tamen*), after which Aristotle is quoted on his empiricism. On this basis, it argues that Bonaventure *adjusts* Augustine’s doctrine of divine illumination by stating that cognition is *nevertheless* generated in us via sense, memory and experience, from which universals are gathered. This might be regarded as an affirmation of the idea that knowledge of created essences – comes about without any interference of the divine ideas, especially since Aristotle is just given ‘the word of science.’

However, this first interpretation, which is based on the argument’s global structure, does not take into account adequately its content: here, Bonaventure connects the eternal laws to the highest part of the agent intellect, and identifies the agent intellect with what Augustine has called the superior part of reason, which is concerned with the eternal ideas, as opposed an inferior part of reason, which is concerned with the sensible. From this connection, it can be concluded that the agent intellect combines taking recourse to the divine ideas with taking recourse to sense, memory and experience in a regular act of cognition. Thus, the relevant distinction made here is not that between Aristotle and Augustine, but between one part of the agent intellect (the highest) and another (the lower), which both partake in the generation of knowledge. Whereas the former receives the divine light, the latter receives its input from the senses.

Accordingly, Fidelis Schwendiger holds that the acquisition of sensible knowledge is a ‘completely Aristotelian-Thomistic’ undertaking in Bonaventure, and that Bonaventure understands the acquisition of sensible knowledge along ‘completely Aristotelian-Thomistic lines.’<sup>80</sup>

79 *Christus unus omnium Magister* 8 (V 572): ‘Unde licet anima secundum Augustinum connexa sit legibus aeternis, quia aliquomodo illud lumen attingit secundum supremam aciem intellectus agentis et superiorem portionem rationis; indubitanter tamen verum est, secundum quod dicit Philosophus, cognitionem generari in nobis via sensus, memoriae et experientiae, ex quibus colligitur universale in nobis, quod est principium artis et scientiae.’

80 F. Schwendinger, “Die Erkenntnis in den ewigen Ideen nach der Lehre des hl. Bonaventura,” in: *Franziskanische Studien* 16 (1929), pp. 29–64, esp. 60–61:

Similarly, it appears that this interpretation leads Timothy Noone and Rollen Edward Houser to conclude that all other features of human knowledge besides certitude come from created causes and a created light in Bonaventure's thought. According to Bonaventure, they argue, abstraction from the sensible is the sole source of our concepts of things.<sup>81</sup>

In *The Light of Thy Countenance*, Steven Marrone discusses how the role of illumination in Bonaventure's work should be regarded, acknowledging the two alternatives sketched out here: illumination conceived of as a normative process linked to the epistemic question of truth and illumination as an ideogenetic mechanism undergirding operations of mind. Like Houser and Noone, he comes to conclude that Bonaventure maintains an Aristotelian type of abstraction, and he considers divine illumination not to be involved in ideogenesis.<sup>82</sup> Rather, he attributes to Bonaventure a largely empiricist position.<sup>83</sup> These interpretations of the role of abstraction and the place of (knowl-

'Über die Erkenntnis der sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Außenwelt denkt Bonaventura vollkommen aristotelisch-thomistisch. (...) Sie gewinnt aber geistiges Wissen von der Außenwelt, dadurch daß der intellectus agens aus dem phantasma eine species abstrahiert und sie dem intellectus possibilis einprägt (...) Eigengezetzlich, ursprünglich und innerlich unabhängig steht neben diesem Erkennen der ratio inferior das der ratio superior, das das Innerseelische, das Geistige und die obersten Denkprinzipien umfaßt. In dieser Scheidung erkennen wir ein augustinisch-platonisches Erbstück (...).'

81 R.E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Three-Fold Way to God," pp. 100–104; T.B. Noone, R.E. Houser, "Saint Bonaventure." Hendrikus van der Laan also assigns to the agent intellect an abstractive role, leaving the role of the divine ideas in the mechanism of cognition out of his consideration. See H. Van der Laan, *De wijsgerige grondslag van Bonaventura's theologie*, Buyten en Schipperheyn: Amsterdam 1968, p. 130.

82 S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, p. 141. Marrone is, at the same time, doubtful on whether definitive conclusions can be drawn, which he ascribes to a lack of doctrinal coherency of in Bonaventure's thought. He is however not convinced that Bonaventure redefines Aristotelian abstraction by placing it within an ideogenetic process that also includes the divine ideas: under normal circumstances, he maintains, the source from which the content for intelligibles is drawn is a created, mostly material source.

83 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–154: 'For Bonaventure, Aristotelian abstraction extended to knowledge not only of the natural kinds like 'horse' or 'rock' [...] but also of primary knowables like 'whole' and 'part.' (...) Bonaventure's confidence in the acquisition of knowledge from worldly, material sources applied, therefore, even to those special terms serving as building blocks for the complex foundations of thought,

edge of) the divine in the act of cognition have in common that they grant to the intellect the capacity of distilling created essences from sense data without appealing to the divine ideas. In a next step, this created truth is brought together with an uncreated truth, in order to assess or judge it so as to establish certainty. However, as I have argued, with this statement from *Christus unus omnium Magister*, it is more likely that Bonaventure wanted to stress that *both* the eternal ideas and sense data are involved in making the sensible intelligible.

### 3.6 Abstraction, judgment and illumination in the *Itinerarium II*

Still, the question remains to be answered *in which way* the divine ideas are implicitly involved in knowledge of created things. Bonaventure explicitly addresses this in the second chapter of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. In this chapter “On the sight of God in his vestiges in this sensible world,” Bonaventure discusses the way created things become known, although knowledge of creatures *as such* is not his final objective. Rather, this is to demonstrate ‘how man is led by hand to contemplate God in all other creatures, which enter our minds through bodily senses’: affirmative of the fact that valuable knowledge is indeed derived from the senses, it focuses on knowledge of God to be found in the perception and intellection of creatures. As such, this second chapter describes the second of seven steps of the soul’s ascension to God laid out by the *Itinerarium*.<sup>84</sup> From the perspective of this objective, Bonaventure also deals with the way in which abstraction relates to judgment.

Bonaventure distinguishes between two powers of the soul that are concerned with sense cognition: an apprehensive and an intellectual capacity – he does not distinguish between a possible and agent intellect here. Whereas the former receives and retains data (*species*) through

the first principles of science [...] an Aristotelian and decidedly non-Neoplatonizing rationale.’

84 Cf. L.J. Bowman, “The Cosmic Exemplarism of Bonaventure,” pp. 181–198; G.F. LaNave, “Knowing God through and in All Things: A Proposal for Reading Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*,” in: *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009), pp. 267–299.

sense experience, the latter is concerned with making these data intelligible. These capacities carry out three consecutive activities that are involved in the cognition of simple things: apprehension (*apprehensio*), enjoyment (*oblectatio*) and distinction (*diiudicatio*).<sup>85</sup> In all activities, ‘proportionality’ is a key term.

By apprehension, Bonaventure argues, all sensible things can possibly enter the soul.<sup>86</sup> However, things do not enter as substances, but as similitudes. Bringing forth a similitude is the first out of three ways, which correspond to the three activities mentioned in the preceding paragraph, in which created beings function as vestiges or traces (*vestigia*) of God as they enter the mind through the senses.<sup>87</sup> First of all, by generating their own similitude which is apprehended by the mind, created beings reflect the eternal generation of Christ from God.<sup>88</sup>

After apprehension, Bonaventure distinguishes a stage of enjoyment (*oblectatio, delectatio*). This arises when a similitude suits the senses.<sup>89</sup> The senses enjoy the perceived similitude in three ways: because of its beauty (when seen), its pleasantness (when smelled or heard), or its wholesomeness (when tasted or touched). These ways of enjoyment have in common that they take place on the basis of proportionality of

85 *Itinerarium II.2–3* (V 300): ‘Notandum igitur, quod iste mundus, qui dicitur macrocosmus, intrat ad animam nostram, quae dicitur minor mundus, per portas quinque sensuum, secundum ipsorum sensibilibium apprehensionem, oblectationem et diiudicationem (...) Homo igitur, qui dicitur minor mundus, habet quinque sensus quasi quinque portas, per quas intrat cognitio omnium, quae sunt in mundo sensibili, in animam ipsius.’

86 *Itinerarium II.4* (V 300): ‘(Sensibilia exteriora) intrant, inquam, non per substantias, sed per similitudines suas primo generatas in medio et de medio in organo et de organo exteriori in interiori et de hoc in potentiam apprehensivam; et sic generatio speciei in medio et de medio in organo et conversio potentiae apprehensivae super illam facit apprehensionem omnium eorum quae exterius anima apprehendit.’

87 *Itinerarium II.1* (V 299–300): ‘Sed quoniam circa speculum sensibilibium non solum contingit contemplari Deum per ipsa tanquam per vestigia, verum etiam in ipsis, in quantum est in eis per essentiam, potentiam et praesentiam; et hoc considerare est altius quam praecendens: ideo huiusmodi consideratio secundum tenet locum tanquam secundus contemplationis gradus, quo debemus manuduci ad contemplandum Deum in cunctis creaturis, quae ad mentem nostram intrant per corporales sensus.’

88 *Itinerarium II.7* (V 301): ‘Sic ergo omnia cognoscibilia habent sui speciem generare, manifeste proclamant, quod in illis tanquam in speculis videri potest aeterna generatio Verbi, Imaginis et Filii a Deo Patre aeternaliter emanantis.’

89 *Itinerarium II.5* (V 300): ‘Ad hanc apprehensionem, si sit rei convenientis, sequitur oblectatio.’

the similitude to either one of the senses.<sup>90</sup> This constitutes the second way in which created beings function as vestiges of the divine as they enter the mind through the senses. By being delectable, a similitude refers to the fact that in the son, as the supreme similitude, there is supreme beauty, pleasure and wholesomeness, and that he has the highest proportionality and equity (*proportionalitas et aequitas*) to the one who generated him: ‘It can manifestly be seen that in God alone there is fontal and true delectation, and that we are led by hand to acquire that from all other delectations.’<sup>91</sup>

After apprehension and enjoyment, distinction (*diiudicatio*) takes place, which is carried out by the intellect. This intellectual distinction is to be distinguished from the distinction that is made by the particular or exterior senses, which assess, for instance, whether something is either black or white, and from that of the interior sense, which determines whether something is either wholesome or harmful.<sup>92</sup> Rather, by means of this third *diiudicatio*, intellectual understanding is established. Through it, the species enters the intellect and is made intelligible. What exactly does this act comprise?

First of all, Bonaventure explains that this distinction pertains to the establishment of the reason (*ratio*) why the senses take delight in the species. This ground for enjoyment is argued is to be found in the object from which the species is received, and is described to be the object’s proportion of equality (*proportio aequalitatis*).<sup>93</sup> This first, rather enigmatic exposition on *diiudicatio* leaves many things unexplained,

90 *Ibid.*: ‘Delectatur autem sensus in obiecto per similitudinem abstractam percepto vel ratione speciositatis, sicut in visu, vel ratione suavitatis, sicut in odoratu et auditu, vel ratione salubritatis, sicut in gustu et tactu, appropriate loquendo. Omnis autem delectatio est ratione proportionalitatis.’

91 *Itinerarium* II.8 (V 301): ‘Secundum hunc modum species delectans ut speciosa, suavis et salubris insinuat, quod in illa prima specie est prima speciositas, suavitas et salubritas, in qua est summa proportionalitas et aequitas ad generantem.’

92 *Itinerarium* II.6 (V 301): ‘Post hanc apprehensionem et oblectationem fit diiudicatio, qua non solum diiudicatur, utrum hoc sit album, vel nigrum, quia hoc pertinet ad sensum particularem; non solum, utrum sit salubre, vel nocivum, quia hoc pertinet ad sensum interiorem; verum etiam, quia diiudicatur et ratio redditur, quare hoc delectat; et in hoc actu inquiritur de ratione delectationis, quae in sensu percipitur ab obiecto.’ Cf. *II Sent.* d.25 p.2 a.1. q.6 (II 623). Here, Bonaventure distinguishes both reception and judgment on the level of the senses as well as on the level of the intellect.

93 *Itinerarium* II.6 (V 301): ‘Hoc est autem, cum quaeritur ratio pulcri, suavis et salubris: et invenitur quod haec est proportio aequalitatis.’

most of all, what this ‘proportion of equality’ exactly is. Undoubtedly, proportionality is a key term in this exposition on cognition: the species is argued to be proportional to its source and enjoyment of the species occurred on the basis of its proportionality to the senses. Therefore, enjoyment must refer back to something – a reason (*ratio*) – within every object, which is now at stake in *diuidicatio*.

In what follows, Bonaventure states that this ‘proportion of equality’ is the same in great or small things. Also, it has no extension in spatiotemporal dimensions, neither is it mutable or transitory. Rather, as it fully abstracts from place, time and movement, it is argued to be purely spiritual.<sup>94</sup> On this basis, we can conclude that by *diuidicatio*, the mind aims to make something intelligible by distinguishing it from the similitude’s representation of the material, individuating aspects of the object. This conclusion corresponds to Bonaventure’s definition of distinction:

Distinction (*diuidicatio*) therefore is an action, which makes the sensible species, accepted sensibly through sense, go into the capacity of the intellect by purifying and abstracting it.<sup>95</sup>

This description raises the question of on what basis the mind distinguishes between the material and impure conditions of the object on the one hand, and its spiritual and pure ‘proportion of equality’ on the other. In what follows, Bonaventure answers this question by stating that ‘distinction occurs through reason abstracting from place, time and mutability [...] by means of an immutable, uncircumscribable and interminable measure (*rationem*).’<sup>96</sup> But where do we find such a measure, as the human intellect, like all created things, is itself mutable and limited? Bonaventure explains:

94 *Ibid.*: ‘Ratio autem aequalitatis est eadem in magnis et parvis nec extenditur dimensionibus nec succedit seu transit cum transeuntibus nec motibus alteratur. Abstrahit igitur a loco, tempore et motu, ac per hoc est incommutabilis, incircumscriptibilis et omnino spiritualis.’

95 *Ibid.*: ‘Post hanc apprehensionem et oblectationem fit diuidicatio (...) Diuidicatio igitur est actio, quae speciem sensibilem, sensibiliter per sensus acceptam, introire facit depurando et abstrahendo in potentiam intellectivam.’

96 *Itinerarium II.9* (V 301): ‘diuidicatio habet fieri per rationem abstrahentem a loco, tempore et mutabilitate ac per hoc a dimensione, successione et transmutatione, per rationem immutabilem et incircumscriptibilem et interminabilem.’

Nothing is entirely immutable, uncircumscribable and interminable, except what is eternal; however, everything that is eternal is God and is in God: therefore, the more certainly we distinguish all things, we distinguish them through such a measure (*rationem*); it is clear, then, that he himself is the reason for all things, the infallible rule and the light of truth, in which all other things radiate infallibly, indelibly, undoubtedly, unbreakably, indistinguishably, thoroughly unchangeably, unconfinably, interminably, indivisibly, and intellectually.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, the measure we use in order to abstract the object’s proportion of equality from its material aspects is a divine measure, at least in the case of certain cognition. In God, forms and rules are found, communicated through a ‘light of truth’, through which our mind is able to assess all things that enter through the senses.<sup>98</sup> Through these forms and rules, Bonaventure continues,

we judge with certitude all sensibles coming into our consideration. (These laws) are indivisible as intellectual and incorporeal beings, not made, but uncreated, eternally existing in eternal art, from which, through which and according to which all shapely things are formed.<sup>99</sup>

This last quotation leaves no doubt that the act of distinction involves a judgment (*iudicium*) that, in the case of certain knowledge, occurs by means of the exemplary forms as a measure to judge by, enabled by the mind’s illumination by a ‘light of truth’. Through this judgment, it is

97 *Ibid.* (V 302): ‘nihil autem est omnino immutabile, incircumscriptibile et interminabile, nisi quod est aeternum; omne autem quod est aeternum, est Deus, vel in Deo: si ergo omnia, quaecumque certius diiudicamus, per huiusmodi rationem diiudicamus; patet, quod ipse est ratio omnium rerum et regula infallibilis et lux veritatis, in qua cuncta relucunt infallibiliter, indelebiter, indubitanter, irrefragabiliter, indiudicabiliter, incommutabiliter, incoarctabiliter, interminabiliter, indivisibiliter et intellectualiter.’

98 *Ibid.*: ‘et ideo nec certitudinaliter iudicari possunt nisi per illam quae non tantum fuit forma cuncta producens, verum etiam cuncta conservans et distinguens, tanquam ens in omnibus formam tenens et regula dirigens, et per quam diiudicat mens nostra cuncta, quae per sensus intrant in ipsam.’

99 *Ibid.*: ‘Et ideo leges illae, per quas iudicamus certitudinaliter de omnibus sensibilibus, in nostram considerationem venientibus (...) indivisibiles tanquam intellectuales et incorporeas, non factas, sed increatas, aeternaliter existentes in arte aeterna, a qua, per quam et secundum quam formantur formosa omnia.’

considered in what degree the species resembles its divine form. Once again, this clearly shows that, according to Bonaventure, abstraction involves an act of judgment that appeals to the divine ideas.

The question remains what this 'proportion of equality' refers to. In this last quotation, the divine ideas are not only argued to be measures to judge by, they are also argued to be the exemplary causes of all things. This touches upon Bonaventure's theory of exemplarism as the doctrine of the relations of expression between God and creatures, holding that, in God, the exemplars or 'prototypes' of all that exists are found, by means of which he expresses himself in creatures, whereas, conversely, creatures refer back to their creator by their proportionality to these prototypes. As a divine idea is exemplary for the created thing, which therefore is a representation of its exemplar on the level of the sensible, it also is the measure for knowledge of this created thing. Thus the analogy between the *ordo essendi* and the *ordo cognoscendi* in Bonaventure's thought is related to the fact that knowledge of the divine is presupposed to knowledge of the created.

With this in mind, the meaning of the 'proportion of equality' (*proportio aequalitatis*) of the object becomes clear: it is the created essence of the sensible thing, which is proportioned after its divine exemplar. Distinguishing – by abstracting and judging – this proportion, accomplishes a full understanding of the created thing, but, because of its referential character, also brings about indirect and implicit knowledge of its divine exemplar – a kind of knowledge that Bonaventure sometimes designates with 'contuition.' This 'most excellent and immediate' reference of the created to the eternal truth is the third and last way mentioned in *Itinerarium II*, in which created things that come to our senses act as traces (*vestigia*) of God in terms of their proportionality.<sup>100</sup> In this way, God is known in creatures, which is exactly what this chapter seeks to demonstrate: Bonaventure himself concludes this section of the *Itinerarium* by stating that the exemplified (*exemplata*) rather than the exemplars themselves are proposed to the mind in order to know God, 'as minds still rough and sensible do not

100 *Itinerarium II.9* (V 301): 'Excellentiori autem modo et immediatori diiudicatio ducit nos in aeternam veritatem certius speculandam.'



yet see the intelligible forms to which the sensibles refer as signs to things signified.<sup>101</sup>

By means of this analysis, the relation abstraction–judgment in the act of cognition has become apparent: abstraction can only occur through a judgment of the species in which its proportionality to its divine exemplar is assessed. Abstraction is ‘pulled’, so to say, by judgment; judgment partakes in abstraction. Thus, rather than *following upon* abstraction, judgment in fact *conditions* the process by which the sensible becomes intelligible. Bonaventure’s conception of abstraction is therefore not ‘Aristotelian’ in the sense that it is carried out exclusively by an intellect that turns to the sensible, *after* which it is judged. Rather, in order to discern what something is, the intellect has to appeal to a divine measure: an understanding of the way a created thing relates to its causing principle is essential to an understanding of the thing itself, which implies that its causing principle is – in some way or another – known beforehand.<sup>102</sup> As I indicated in my introduction, some scholars came to a similar interpretation.

Specifically with regard to this section of the *Itinerarium*, Andreas

101 *Itinerarium* II.11 (V 302): ‘sunt umbrae, resonantiae et picturae, sunt vestigia, simulacra et spectacula nobis ad contuendum Deum proposita et signa divinitus data; quae, inquam, sunt exemplaria vel potius exemplata, proposita mentibus adhuc rudibus et sensibilibus, ut per sensibilia, quae vident, transferantur ad intelligibilia, quae non vident, tanquam per signa ad signata.’

102 Whereas I have demonstrated that the participation of an infallible measure in the act of judgment, by which the species is abstracted from its sensory likeness, is unmistakably argued for in the *Itinerarium*, Christopher Cullen argues that even in the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure freely draws from Aristotle in describing the process by which we come to know sensible things. Although Cullen concludes that judgment is an action that purifies and abstracts the sensory likeness received in the senses and then causes this likeness to enter into the intellective power, he does not mention the involvement of the divine ideas. Rather, Cullen refers to Marrone’s position, regarding the *Sentences* to ‘reject unambiguously’ the idea that the divine ideas are involved in coming to know created essences, and arguing that in the *Itinerarium*, ‘the reference is neither lengthy nor explicit enough’ to draw any definite conclusions. (See C.M. Cullen, *The Semiotic Metaphysics of Saint Bonaventure*, pp. 56–58.) Sofia Vanni Rovighi seems to defend a position in-between mine and that of scholars defending an ‘Aristotelian’ account of abstraction, as she acknowledges a complete act of cognition only to be completed after an act of judgment, taking God as its criterium. On the other hand, she does hold that judgment follows upon abstraction, rather than enabling it. See S. Vanni Rovighi, *Filosofia della conoscenza*, Edizioni Studio Domenicano: Bologna 2007, pp. 79–80.

Speer attributes to the species an ‘aesthetic dimension’. He notes that *species* does not only mean *similitudo*, as a representation of the object known, but also *ratio cognoscendi* and *speciositas*. This latter aspect of the species is first experienced in the enjoyment of the species (*oblectatio*) and then discovered in the act by which the species enters the intellect (*diiudicatio*). It pertains to the *proportio aequalitatis*, which relates the creature to its exemplary being. The species itself thus carries with it the measure for its own abstraction. It is identified by the intellect by judging the species by relating it to the *aeterna veritas*, which therefore underlies, as a first principle, the entire process of cognition.<sup>103</sup>

Jean Rohmer is another scholar who affirms that in Bonaventure, something becomes only intelligible when it is judged by its proportionality to its exemplar. In “La théorie de l’abstraction dans l’école franciscaine,”<sup>104</sup> Rohmer even argues that in Bonaventure, the theory of abstraction is fully reframed within a theory of judgment.<sup>105</sup> In *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, Étienne Gilson explicitly denies as well that

103 A. Speer, *Triplex Veritas. Wahrheitsverständnis und philosophische Denkform Bonaventuras*, pp. 57–61. Similarly, although Lydia Schumacher, in her succinct but lucid account of Bonaventure’s theory of knowledge, argues that Bonaventure does not entirely uphold Augustine’s views on illumination, she also maintains, be it in more general terms than Speer, that the mind’s abstractive work is aided by the eternal reasons. Cf. L. Schumacher, *Divine Illumination. The History and Future of Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge*, pp 129–130.

104 M.J. Rohmer, “La théorie de l’abstraction dans l’école franciscaine d’Alexandre de Halès à Jean Peckam,” in: *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 3 (1928), Paris, pp. 148–161.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 108. Rohmer argues that something becomes intelligible by means of the enlightenment of the *species sensibilis* through the light of eternal truth. We do not find in Bonaventure an agent intellect that is charged with pulling out of sensible matter universal knowledge, he upholds. Rather, it uses its light to illumine the proper and distinct *rationes cognoscendi* acquired via the senses in order to generate intelligible universals, but only through the support of the eternal rules and the divine light. Addressing this process with ‘abstraction’ is using abstraction as a synonym for judgment, Rohmer concludes that the sensible species enters the intellect through the operation of a judgment upon it, in which the human intellect is assisted by divine illumination (pp. 150–152). Whereas Rohmer investigates *iudicium* primarily in the *Itinerarium*, Benoit Garceau focuses on the *Sentences*. He endorses Rohmer’s interpretation of the *Itinerarium* but denies that this interpretation also applies to the *Sentences*, thus identifying a shift in Bonaventure’s thought. Rather, he interprets II *Sent.* d. 24 as a text in which the agent intellect is assigned the task of abstraction in an Aristotelian sense. Cf.

Bonaventure uses abstraction in the Aristotelian sense. Like Rohmer, he regards an Aristotelian theory of abstraction to be reconfigured within an Augustinian framework of illumination, in which judgment has an ideogenetic role. He argues:

When writing the *Commentary*, the Seraphic Doctor uses the Aristotelian term abstraction to describe the operation by which the intellect evolves the sensible data of knowledge into the intelligible; but he also uses indifferently and exactly in the same sense the Aristotelian expression *abstrahere* and the Augustinian *judicare*.<sup>106</sup>

Gilson finds this synonymous use of abstraction and judgment for instance in the question of the 24th distinction of the second book of the *Sentences*. Also, he finds it confirmed in *Itinerarium* II.<sup>107</sup> He considers judgment 'as the Augustinian equivalent of Aristotelian abstraction, and this is what Bonaventure has in mind when he speaks of abstraction.' Therefore, Gilson states that 'the very formation of general ideas *implies* (my emphasis) the action of the eternal principles.'<sup>108</sup> He specifies this assistance of the eternal principles by stating that they are immediately active as a cause of knowledge, rather than as an object, hence Bonaventure's remarkable expression *obiectum fontanum*: a hidden source of thought immediately infusing the mind with knowledge without being perceived itself.<sup>109</sup> Like Rohmer, Gilson argues that in judgment, a universal is drawn from the particular by means of an intervention of the eternal principles.<sup>110</sup>

Notwithstanding more specific differences and the individuality of their perspectives, my analysis of abstraction and judgment is largely

B. Garceau, *Judicium: Vocabulaire, sources, doctrine de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Institut d'Etudes Médiévales: Montréal – Vrin: Paris 1968, pp. 76–85.

106 E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, p. 360.

107 *Ibid.*, pp. 483–484, n. 34.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 363.

109 *Ibid.*, pp. 361–363.

110 *Ibid.*, pp. 360–361: 'It is clear that, if abstraction in his sense is identical with Augustinian judgment, it must be an operation very different from the simple act by which Aristotle's active intellect informs the possible intellect by the species, which it has made intelligible. St. Bonaventure's abstraction must necessarily contain, although in an implied form only, a judgment which draws the universal from the particular and which, by introducing the necessary and unchangeable in this process, implies in that very fact the intervention of the eternal principles and of God.'

in accord with Gilson's, Rohmer's and Speer's positions: on many occasions, as I have shown, Bonaventure stresses the active abstractive capacity of the intellect that causes an intelligible species by purifying the sensible species from its material and individual aspects in order to distill its essence. However, in order to do so properly and fully, it needs to take an uncreated truth as its measure, which it does by means of an act of judgment. If judgment is not synonymous with abstraction, it at least enables abstraction.

As I will explain in the following section, this act of judgment, implicitly involved in abstraction, and, correspondingly, this knowledge of the divine that is implicitly known in knowledge of the created, is part only of the *first* step in coming to a complete understanding of a created thing. Whereas the texts in the preceding sections dealt with abstraction and judgment as the activities by which something is made intelligible, I will deal again with the resolving intellect in the next section, which further examines what is apprehended by the intellect, and therefore constitutes the *final* step in a complete act of understanding. Furthermore, I will maintain that there is a judgment in resolution complementary to that which is involved in abstraction: rather than implicitly, however, it is now explicitly made.

### 3.7 The abstracting and the resolving intellect

As I have shown in Chapter 2, in his accounts of *resolutio*, Bonaventure argues that the establishment of a full understanding of the essence of a created thing does not only pertain to a complete analysis into its parts; it also incorporates an assessment of the essential relation it maintains with its creator. It is a reflexive analysis of knowledge explicates what is implicit and undiscovered in what is known. The question is: how does resolution relate to abstraction, as both involve primordial knowledge of God?

Especially in I *Sent.* d.28 p.2 *dubium* I, the relation between abstraction and resolution, as well as the type of knowledge that results from these activities, becomes clear. Here, Bonaventure distinguishes the *intellectus apprehendens* from the *intellectus resolvens*. An apprehending intellect, so it is explained, neither takes the *awareness* of the 'superiors' of a thing, that is, its higher *genera*, nor an understanding of its cause; in this first apprehensive act, these elements, principles and conditions

are only understood *implicitly*.<sup>111</sup> This description of the apprehending intellect fits the understanding of a created thing as it comes about through abstraction.

Complete knowledge, on the other hand, only emerges when the first principles, primary conditions and simple elements of the thing become distinctly known. By a resolving understanding, we come to this knowledge, as it involves the understanding of what is essential to the thing, apart from its accidental properties.<sup>112</sup> This resolving understanding, as we have seen, is possible in two manners: fully and perfectly (*plene et perfecte*) or deficiently and incompletely (*deficiente et resolvente semiplene*). Because the relation of the created being to first being is considered to be essential to the understanding of it, the intellect only resolves fully if it takes this relation into account. Correspondingly, what Bonaventure considers to be deficient about an incomplete resolution, is that it establishes an understanding of the created in which no understanding of first being is involved.<sup>113</sup> Thus, the relation of the created thing to its uncreated principle is regarded as an *essential* relation that needs to be assessed in order to know the creature completely.<sup>114</sup>

This comparison of the created to the divine in order to know it completely thus closely resembles the act of judgment that is involved

111 I *Sent.* d. 28 p. 2 dub. 1 (I 504): ‘Si primo modo, sic non potest intelligi aliquid sine aliquo, quod est ei ratio intelligendi, sicut Deus praeter deitatem, et homo praeter humanitatem; potest tamen intelligi effectus, non intellecta causa, et inferius, non intellecto superiori, quia potest quis apprehendere hominem, non intellecto aliquo superiorum. Et sic dicit Philosophus, quod qui unum dicit quodam modo multa dicit, non simpliciter, sed quodam modo, quia implicite.’

112 *Ibid.*: ‘Alio modo contingit aliquid intelligere praeter alterum, intellectu resolvente; et iste intellectus considerat ea quae sunt rei essentialia, sicut potest intelligi subiectum sine propria passione.’

113 *Ibid.*: ‘Et hoc potest esse dupliciter: aut intellectu resolvente plene et perfecte, aut intellectu deficiente et resolvente semiplene. Intellectu resolvente semiplene, potest intelligi aliquid esse, non intellecto primo ente. Intellectu autem resolvente perfecte, non potest intelligi aliquid, primo ente non intellecto.’

114 *Ibid.*: ‘Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod non est intelligere esse etc.; dicendum, quod illud quod attribuitur alicui secundum quod ipsum, potest dupliciter attribui: aut enim consequitur, aut praecedit. Si praecedit, sic est ita essentialia, quod sine ipso nec est nec potest intelligi. Sed si aliquo modo consequitur, non tamen cadit in aliud genus, potest quidem intelligi intellectu apprehendente et intellectu semiplene resolvente; sed intellectu plene ad causas comparante non potest intelligi, non intellecto illo, maxime cum illud dicit habitudinem necessarium et relationem ad causam, sicut verum et bonum.’

in abstraction. However, whereas things are related *explicitly* to their first principle in resolution, relating the created to a divine measure is, as I have shown in the above, merely *implicitly* involved in an act of abstraction.

On the basis of the above, I would like to maintain that there are *two* acts of judgment to be distinguished in Bonaventure's first act of cognition: one on the level of the process by which something becomes merely intelligible, another on the level of concept analysis. Whereas the former judgment is implicit, the latter is explicit and part of a *reflection* on what has become known by an apprehending understanding. Furthermore, as both assess the extent to which something is proportioned to its divine exemplar, both these acts of judgment can only take place on the premise of preliminary knowledge of first being.

Finally, to describe the different types of knowledge that these complementary acts of judgment generate, we might employ a vocabulary used by several of Bonaventure's contemporaries: that of *confused* and *distinct* knowledge. This distinction marks the difference between knowledge that involves implicit knowledge of God, by means of which something is confusedly known, and knowledge in which the creature is fully and distinctly known through explicitly relating it to divine being, which is now discovered to be first known.

### 3.8 Conclusions

In this chapter, I investigated the purport of preliminary knowledge of the divine in the mechanism of cognition. If creatures ought to be known in the light of their creator, as Bonaventure's exemplarism defends, and if they are only understood through preliminary knowledge of the divine, which his doctrine of God as first known seeks to prove, then how does this work? How are the divine ideas actually involved in the act of cognition? Is their priority located on the level of intelligibility or (only) on the level of certification?

To come to an answer to these questions, I primarily focused on the meaning of judgment and abstraction in Bonaventure's theory of cognition. Broadly, two alternative accounts of these intellectual activities and the way they relate were discussed: one in which abstraction renders a sensible species intelligible without appealing to the divine ideas, which are merely there to certify that which has become known; another in which an act of judgment is necessary to abstract a created essence from its sensible representation.

On the basis of a discussion of Bonaventure’s pivotal texts on this subject, I have shown that knowledge of the divine is indeed involved in making the created intelligible: by means of an act of judgment, in which full recourse to the divine ideas is taken, a created thing is compared to divine being, a comparison by means of which its essential aspects can be distinguished from its material aspects, as this act assesses the extent to which something is proportioned to its divine exemplar. Thus, Bonaventure does not maintain an ‘Aristotelian account of abstraction’ in the sense that the intellect’s proper capacities act upon sense data in order to make them intelligible, without the divine ideas taking part in it.

Finally, I have shown that my conclusion regarding the way in which sensible data of created things become intelligible through *abstraction* corresponds to Bonaventure’s account of resolution or analysis: both cognitive activities involve an act of judgment in terms of a comparison of created being to first being. In abstraction, the divine ideas are appealed to in order to identify the created essence of a thing. In resolution, the essential relation of a created being to its first cause is assessed to further examine this essence – and to discover its parts and principles. Correspondingly, in the first case, knowledge of a thing comes about in which its parts and principles are only implicitly comprehended; knowledge which we can designate – although Bonaventure himself does not employ this term – as ‘confused’ knowledge. ‘Distinct’ knowledge is established in the case of resolution or analysis: the parts and principles of a thing become separately known. Moreover, an intellect fully resolving becomes aware of its knowledge of first being. In abstraction, on the other hand, this knowledge is implicitly involved.

Bonaventure himself does not clearly distinguish between judgment as the implicit comparison of the created to first being that is involved in abstraction, and judgment as an explicit comparison that is involved in resolution, in which the created is considered in its relation to its exemplary being. This distinction, however, makes clear that the priority of the divine in the first act of cognition is twofold: both on the level of abstracting the intelligible from the sensible and on the level of a complete analysis of what has become known, preliminary knowledge of the divine is necessary.

As I already mentioned in the concluding section of Chapter 1, this duality can be presented as a solution for the ‘redundancy-problem’ identified in the first chapter. Here, it was argued that there are two models of foundations that co-exist in Bonaventure’s thought: in exemplarism, natural reason relies on the transcendent ideas as the

foundations of empirical knowledge, whereas in the doctrine of the transcendentals, natural reason is founded on the self-evidency of the transcendental notions as first principles. The question that was raised was why a resolution to divine being as first known is considered necessary when the certainty of knowledge is already based on an immutable standard that is given in natural cognition? It has now become clear that the account of divine being as first known within the doctrine of the transcendentals corresponds with the act of judgment that is involved in the establishment of distinct knowledge. The foundation of natural knowledge as found in Bonaventure's exemplarism can be argued to correspond with an act of judgment in confuse knowing, although not exclusively. As discussed, the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3 ends in *ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate*: the exemplary ideas that reside in divine being are also referred to as first known in the resolution that leads to distinct knowledge.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>115</sup> *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): 'non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuветur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti; quod est ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate.'





## CHAPTER 4

### *The structural similarity between the Itinerarium mentis in Deum and the Collationes in Hexaemeron with regard to Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known*

IN THIS CHAPTER, I will go into four of Bonaventure's accounts of God as first known in great detail.<sup>1</sup> They are found in two of his works: the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Remarkably, each of these works contains *two* accounts of God as first known. The analysis given in the present chapter aims at finding out the way in which these accounts relate to one another, and what this means for Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known as a whole. I will come to conclude that the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* exhibit a *structural similarity* with regard to their treatment of God as first known, and that in the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known acquires a *dynamic* character. The way in which this dynamic character relates to the literary-philosophical form of both treatises will subsequently be discussed in Chapter 5.

In the scholarly literature on Bonaventure, considerable attention has been paid to the way in which his doctrine of God as first known is to be regarded. This has resulted in a variety of interpretations of this doctrine. His arguments have, for instance, been approached as rational proofs for the existence of God,<sup>2</sup> as Augustinian arguments for God as proper and first object of the intellect,<sup>3</sup> as part of Bonaventure's

1 A large part of this tekst is published as an article: S. Metselaar, "The structural similarity between the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexameron* with regard to Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known," in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85(1), pp. 43–75.

2 Cf. R.E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Threefold Way to God," pp. 97–154; T.B. Noone and R.E. Houser, "Saint Bonaventure."

3 Cf. C. Bérubé, "De la théologie de l'image à la philosophie de l'objet de l'intelligence chez Saint Bonaventure," pp. 161–200.

adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals,<sup>4</sup> as discourses on the certitude of knowledge,<sup>5</sup> and as natural ways to know God, belonging to Bonaventure's doctrine of illumination.<sup>6</sup>

Remarkably, however, hardly any methodological reflection has been given to the fact that there are different accounts of God as first known found at different places in one and the same work: in both the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, two accounts of God as first known are given. Whereas most interpretations simply presuppose that Bonaventure's accounts of God as first known together constitute one solid doctrine, I think that only after close consideration of the differences between the various accounts of God as first known in both these works, is it methodologically acceptable to decide upon such a claim. I will therefore investigate Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known in the two works mentioned by means of an analysis and discussion of the relevant texts. The questions leading this investigation are: why does Bonaventure present two arguments for God as first known in one text? How do these accounts relate to one another? Do they articulate one and the same thesis? On what grounds do they defend the thesis that God is first known? What is the significance of possible differences? What does this tell us about Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known?

In the following, an analysis will be provided of the accounts of God as first known that the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* present. First, I will elaborate on the two resolutions to God as first known in the *Itinerarium* and assess how they relate to one another (5.2). Subsequently, I will do the same for the *Hexaemeron* (5.3). Finally, I will draw conclusions by comparing both works (5.4).

This will reveal a perspective not yet presented in the research done on Bonaventure's account of what is first known: the fact that there exists a *structural similarity* with regard to the treatment of God as first known between the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*. This structural similarity consists of the fact that, in both works, (a) a *double account* of God as first known is given; (b) these two accounts of God as first

4 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, "Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre," pp. 32–66.

5 E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, pp. 358–60.

6 S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 214–18.

known have different *outcomes*; and (c) the *transition* from the first account of God as first known to the second is *prefigured* by a distinction within the first account. Finally, I will argue that Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known acquires a dynamic character in the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*.

#### 4.1 Two accounts of God as first known in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*

##### 4.1.1 Introduction

In its first six chapters, the *Itinerarium* describes the soul's conversion in six subsequent stages, a process that ends in contemplative knowledge of the trinity, the highest form of knowledge possible for man *in statu viae*. A mystical experience that is even beyond this is described in a final chapter. The first resolution to God as first known is found within the third stage of the soul's pilgrimage (third chapter), in which the soul's natural capacities are dealt with. The second resolution is found in the fifth stage (fifth chapter), in which the soul, 'reformed by the gifts of grace', is now able to contemplate God from the perspective of his primary name, 'being' (*esse*).

The main question of this section is how these two resolutions to a first within the foundation of knowledge relate to each other and how their differences are explained. The answer to this question is obtained through an analysis of both resolutions and a comparison of their outcomes and contexts. I will come to conclude that, whereas the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3 results in the acknowledgement that all knowledge depends on knowledge of a most actual and complete being, the resolution of *Itinerarium* V.3 reveals the *prerequisite* for this understanding: the reception of actuality itself through divine being 'falling into the mind' (*cadit in mente*). Thus, the second resolution found in the *Itinerarium* goes beyond the first by resolving beyond the order of concepts into the acknowledgement of what is presupposed to all concepts.

#### 4.1.2 Resume of the *Itinerarium*

As its title indicates, the *Itinerarium* is to be seen as a kind of ‘manual’ or ‘travel guide’: it describes, or rather, *prescribes* a spiritual journey to God. Moreover, it reconstructs this journey: in seven chapters, it deals with the soul’s ascent to God in six subsequent stages, culminating in a seventh stage of mystical contemplation.<sup>7</sup> Each chapter is written from the perspective of the soul at that specific stage of its journey; the knowledge of God that it conveys corresponds to this stage.

The structure of the soul’s journey is elaborately discussed in the prologue and the first part of the first chapter. Here, as a metaphor or image of the soul’s road to God, Bonaventure presents the crucified seraph as seen by Saint Francis – whom he calls his guide and example – in his vision on Mount Alverna: the seraph’s six wings represent the six steps of itinerary along which one is to arrive there.<sup>8</sup> A second, albeit less prominent metaphor for the soul’s ascent, is the creation of the world in six days. Just as God perfected the world (*universum mundum*) in six days and rested on the seventh day, Bonaventure argues, the mind as a microcosm (*minor mundum*) proceeds ‘most orderly’ (*ordinatissime*) through six steps of illumination towards the quietude found in contemplation.<sup>9</sup> This ‘*ordinatissime*’ stresses the fact that the steps towards God truly presuppose each other and together form a coherent whole that constitutes the soul’s ascent.

In general, the journey of the soul follows the route first set out by Augustine – from the exterior world to the interior mind, and from the interior but inferior human mind to the superior mind of God. In the

7 Other literature on the ascent of the soul described in the *Itinerarium* includes: M. Blohm “The Feminine and Masculine as Principles of Ascent in the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*,” in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (1) (2011), pp. 25–42; G.F. LaNave, “Knowing God through and in All Things: A Proposal for Reading Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*,” pp. 267–299; Ph. Boehner, “Notes and Commentary,” in: Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, trans. Zachary Hayes, Franciscan Institute Publications: New York 2002, pp. 131–2.

8 *Itinerarium* prol. 2 (V 295): ‘Nam per senas alas illas recte intelligi possunt sex illuminationum suspensiones, quibus anima quasi quibusdam gradibus vel itineribus disponitur, ut transeat ad pacem per exstaticos excessus sapientiae christianae.’

9 *Itinerarium* I.5 (V 297): ‘sicut Deus sex diebus perfecit universum mundum et in septimo requievit; sic minor mundus sex gradibus illuminationum sibi succedentium ad quietem contemplationis ordinatissime perducatur.’

prologue, Bonaventure relates these three steps to the three pairs of seraphic wings. A seraph, as described in the Bible (Isaiah 6:2), has three pairs of wings: two pointing downward to cover the Seraph's feet, two horizontal wings for flight, and two pointed upward covering its face. Similarly, the six stages of the soul's ascent are subsumed under three perspectives from which God can be known. The two lower wings of the Seraph represent the first perspective, which concerns the sensible world outside us (*extra nos*), in which traces or footprints (*vestigia*) of God are to be found, *through* which and *in* which God can become known. The first chapter therefore deals with seeing God through signs in the *physical world* that point towards God. The second deals with signs found in the *sensory life* that humans have in common with other animals. In this first stage, man is approached as animal or sensory, as he is a material being. As such, he also is a *vestigium Dei*.

The two middle wings of the Seraph symbolize the second perspective, which is inside ourselves (*intra nos*), and which is provided by the structure of the mind itself, that constitutes an image of God. Through and in this image, we attain knowledge of God (third and fourth chapter). Here, Bonaventure distinguishes between signs of God found in the *natural exercises* of the mind, preeminently in intellectual activities (c. 3), and those signs found in its *practical exercises* – its virtuousness – when the soul is 'reformed by grace' (c. 4). This second pair of wings deals with man as a spiritual being. As such, he is first an *imago Dei*, and after his reformation by grace, a *similitudo Dei*.

The two highest wings of the Seraph symbolize the third view from above the mind (*supra nos*); through the divine light and in it, the soul reaches contemplative knowledge of God. First, by means of *reason* seeing God as having one divine nature through his revealed name 'being', which relates to God's unity of essence (c. 5), second by means of *faith* seeing God in the trinity of persons through his other name 'good' (c. 6). This third pair of wings deals with man as *mens* (mind), through which he is able to transcend himself. Finally, these three sets of twin steps culminate in the 'mental and mystical transport' found in mystical experience, which is even beyond reason, and which is the final, seventh stage of the soul's journey (c. 7).

4.1.3 *The resolution to a first known in Itinerarium III.3*

The resolution to God as first known given in the third chapter of the *Itinerarium*, ‘On the contemplation of God through his image impressed into the natural capacities (of the mind),’ is part of Bonaventure’s discussion of the capacities of the intellect, and the way in which God can be known through reflection on these capacities. The general capacity of the intellect is to perceive (*percipere*), as this element runs through the description of its three subcapacities, which are dealt with in the following order: (1) the perception of terms; (2) the perception of propositions; (3) the perception of inferences or deductions. This order of discussion reflects the fact that the capacity to produce an inference presupposes the ability to produce propositions, which, in its turn, presupposes a complete understanding of the meaning of terms. It also implies that what is fundamental for the understanding of simple terms is at the heart of the foundation of *all* cognition that the intellect is able to produce.

The resolution to God as first known coincides with the description of the intellect’s perception of terms. It consists of two parts: a first part reflecting upon definitions, which resolves to ‘being in itself’ (*ens per se*) together with its conditions one, true and good,<sup>10</sup> and a second part, dealing with the ways being (*ens*) can be thought, resolving to the understanding of a being which is most pure, actual, complete and absolute.<sup>11</sup>

10 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Operatio autem virtutis intellectivae est in perceptione intellectus terminorum, propositionum et illationum. – Capit autem intellectus terminorum significata, cum comprehendit, quid est unumquodque per definitionem. Sed definitio habet fieri per superiora, et illa per superiora definiri habent, usquequo veniatur ad suprema et generalissima, quibus ignoratis, non possunt intelligi definitive inferiora. Nisi igitur cognoscatur quid est ens per se, non potest plene sciri definitio alicuius specialis substantiae. Nec ens per se cognosci potest, nisi cognoscatur cum suis conditionibus, quae sunt; unum, verum, bonum.’

11 *Ibid.*: ‘Ens autem, cum possit cogitari ut diminutum et completum, ut imperfectum et ut perfectum, ut ens in potentia et ut ens in actu, ut ens secundum quid et ut ens simpliciter, ut ens in parte et ut ens totaliter, ut ens transiens et ut ens manens, ut ens per aliud et ut ens per se, ut ens permixtum non-enti et ut ens purum, ut ens dependens et ut ens absolutum, ut ens posterius et ut ens prius, ut ens mutabile et ut ens immutabile, ut ens simplex et ut ens compositum: cum ‘privaciones et defectus nullatenus possint cognosci nisi per positiones’, non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuvetur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti; quod est ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate. Quomodo

The first part starts with equating the perception of the meaning of terms with the definitional understanding of the object to which the word refers, and argues that a full definitional understanding of individual objects involves the resolution to the *suprema* and *generalissima*, i.e. to the categories:

Moreover the intellect seizes the things signified by terms, when it comprehends, what each thing is by definition. But a definition has to be made through things superior, and these latter have to be defined by things superior, until one comes to things supreme and most general, which when ignored, inferiors cannot be definitively understood.<sup>12</sup>

Bonaventure deals with the Aristotelian method of definition here. To Aristotle, the categories, i.e. the highest *genera*, are indefinable because they are most general, and knowledge of them is presupposed in all definitional knowledge.

After having described this process of moving up the *arbor Porphyriana* in general, Bonaventure focuses on the category of substance and makes definitional knowledge of any particular substance dependent on the resolution to a first within this category, as he states that ‘unless it is known what is being in itself (*ens per se*), one cannot completely (*plene*) know the definition of whatever particular substance (*specialis substantiae*)’.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Bonaventure adds that being in itself is only known if it is known together with its conditions one, true and good (*unum, verum, bonum*). Surprisingly, these conditions are attributed to the category of substance here, whereas, usually, they are

autem sciret intellectus, hoc esse ens defectivum et incompletum, si nullam haberet cognitionem entis absque omni defectu? Et sic de aliis conditionibus praelibatis.’

12 *Ibid.*: ‘Capit autem intellectus terminorum significata, cum comprehendit, quid est unumquodque per definitionem. Sed definitio habet fieri per superiora, et illa per superiora definiri habent, usquequo veniatur ad *suprema* et *generalissima*, quibus ignoratis, non possunt intelligi definitive inferiora.’

13 It would not be reasonable to assume that *ens per se* refers to God in this passage, because he might be the most supreme, he is not the most general. Bonaventure argues for this in other texts. For instance in his *I Sent.* d.8 p.2 a.1. q.4 (I 173): ‘Deus autem simplex. Non propter generalitatem, quia ens tale nihil est habens distinctum a rebus creatis. Deus autem est habens in se ens distinctum a rebus, et habens esse simplex et infinitum; et ideo nec in uno genere nec in pluribus esse potest.’



presented as the transcendental conditions of being, which run through all the categories.

Thus, to completely perceive a term, i.e. to understand the object to which a term refers, understanding its category is presupposed, together with it being one, true and good. In this case, a particular substance presupposes the category of substance (*ens per se*).<sup>14</sup>

However, Bonaventure's resolution is not yet completed, but merely halfway. Remarkably, the second part of the resolution starts off with how 'being' (*ens*) can be thought, rather than continuing on 'being in itself' (*ens per se*). The fact that a transition takes place becomes clear from the fact that 'being in itself' reappears as one member of the divisions of 'being' (*ens*) that are given here; as I will show, 'being in itself' now has acquired a different meaning.

In this second part of the resolution, twelve disjunctions are presented that address the ways in which being (*ens*) can be thought by bringing about a binary distribution of properties over being:<sup>15</sup>

Being can be thought as

diminished and complete  
imperfect and perfect  
being in potency and as being in act  
according to something and as being

- 14 Similar to my conclusion, Camille Bérubé holds that Bonaventure first completely reduces the cognition of a particular substance to that of the genus of substance; without knowledge of this supreme and most general *genus*, no particular substance whatsoever can be completely defined. Cf. C. Bérubé, "De la theologie de l'image à la philosophie de l'objet de l'intelligence chez Saint Bonaventure," p. 180. Rather than the category of substance, however, Aertsen and Speer consider Bonaventure to argue that the transcendental notion of being (*ens*) and its conditions one, true and good are the highest and most general concepts at which one arrives through the process of definition; categorial being is surpassed to arrive at the transcendentals, which transcend and encompass the scope of the highest *genera*. They therefore do not discuss the meaning of the transition that is subsequently made within the resolution from being in itself (*ens per se*) to being (*ens*). J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, "Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre," p. 60.
- 15 *Avant la lettre*, this distribution is reminiscent of a class of transcendental concepts that are attributed to Duns Scotus, i.e. the so-called disjunctive transcendentals; properties, which are not coextensive with the first transcendental being, but still escape from categorial classification. Cf. J. Woléński, "Two theories of transcendentals," in: *Axiomathes* 8 (1997), pp. 367–380.

a part and as a whole  
transitive and as permanent  
being through something else and as being in itself (*ens per se*)  
mixed with non-being and as pure being  
dependent and as absolute  
posterior and as prior  
mutable and as immutable  
simple and as composed.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, there is a common denominator, determining the scope of the consideration, i.e. being (*ens*), and a series of *modi* specifying this being, which are grouped in twelve subsequent disjunctions.

The way the modes of being on the left relate to their counterparts on the right is described by the statement that: ‘privations and defects cannot be known at all unless by means of (their) positions’<sup>17</sup>; with regard to their counterparts, ‘diminished’, ‘imperfect’, ‘in potency’, etc., are privations, i.e. defects or lacks, which can only be known by means of pre-existent knowledge of what is actually missing, such as being ‘complete’, ‘perfect’ or ‘in act’. Knowledge of the being described by the left side of the disjunctions is thus resolved to knowledge of the being described by the right side.<sup>18</sup> This epistemological relation is affirmed

16 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Ens autem, cum possit cogitari ut diminutum et completum, ut imperfectum et ut perfectum, ut ens in potentia et ut ens in actu, ut ens secundum quid et ut ens simpliciter, ut ens in parte et ut ens totaliter, ut ens transiens et ut ens manens, ut ens per aliud et ut ens per se, ut ens permixtum non-enti et ut ens purum, ut ens dependens et ut ens absolutum, ut ens posterius et ut ens prius, ut ens mutabile et ut ens immutabile, ut ens simplex et ut ens compositum.’

17 *Ibid.*: ‘privationes et defectus nullatenus possint cognosci nisi per positiones.’ Bonaventure is referring to Averroes’s *Commentaria Magnum De Anima* III.25. Bérubé holds, however, that the source of Bonaventure’s resolution of concepts of imperfect being to concepts of perfect being is not Averroes, but Aristotle’s *Topics*. Cf. C. Bérubé, “De la théologie de l’image à la philosophie de l’objet de l’intelligence chez Saint Bonaventure,” p. 181. This is not implausible: as Aristotle states in *Topics* VI.4 (141b1–142b20): ‘Clearly, then, any one who has not defined a thing through terms that are prior and more intelligible has not defined it at all. (...) One form, then, of the failure to work through more intelligible terms is the exhibition of the prior through the posterior, as we remarked before. Another form occurs if we find that the definition has been rendered of what is at rest and definite through what is indefinite and in motion: for what is still and definite is prior to what is indefinite and in motion.’

18 The exception to this rule is made by the twelfth disjunction, in which the being

somewhat later in this section by means of a rhetorical question: how would the intellect know that being is defective and incomplete, if it would have no knowledge whatsoever of a being without any defect?<sup>19</sup>

In the conclusion of this second part of the resolution, defective and incomplete being is identified as created being, whereas ‘being without any defect’ is identified as ‘a being most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute’, an understanding of which is necessarily presupposed to a full understanding of its counterpart, i.e. created being:

our intellect does not come to completely resolve (*plene resolvens*) the understanding of whatsoever created being, unless it is aided by (*iuvetur ab*) the understanding of a most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute being.<sup>20</sup>

Although Bonaventure does not identify the object of this understanding explicitly so, this description can only refer to divine being, which becomes all the more clear by the specification that this is simple and eternal being, in which the reasons (*rationes*) of all things are in their purity.<sup>21</sup> The last part of this sentence clearly refers to the *rationes aeternae*, exemplary of all things and therefore presupposed to knowledge of every created thing.

By the use of the adverb *plene*, the transition between the two parts of the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3 becomes manifest. Whereas the first part argues that ‘being in itself’ must be known in order to fully (*plene*) understand a particular substance, it is now argued that our intellect needs support from an understanding of divine being in order to fully (*plene*) resolve the understanding of created being.

Evidently, from the first to the second part, the argument has changed. The second part basically employs a three-place relation – being, and both members of a disjunction – in which epistemic priority is granted to the more perfect member of each division of being. The

in the possession of the condition which is missing in something composed, i.e. simple being, is mentioned first.

19 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘Quomodo autem sciret intellectus, hoc esse ens defectivum et incompletum, si nullam haberet cognitionem entis absque omni defectu?’

20 *Ibid.*: ‘non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuvetur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti (...)’

21 *Ibid.*: ‘ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate’.

epistemic status of the understanding of absolute being that supports the understanding of created being is nevertheless not identical with the epistemic status of the understanding of created being it supports. Only the latter is *fully* understood, the former merely supports the understanding of the latter, and the mind's awareness of it is indirect or reflexive. That there would be no full understanding of created being if the mind could have 'no knowledge whatsoever' of a being without any defect is tantamount to saying that the mind has cognition more perfect than it is aware of, without suggesting that this cognition amounts to full knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

The question now remains how the first part of this resolution relates to the second. Hereto, a short excursus to the *Sentences* is helpful. Here, Bonaventure explains that there is a distinction between an understanding resolving only halfway (*semi-plene*) and a completely resolving understanding (*plene resolvens*). A fully resolving understanding, however, goes all the way back to the most superior thing, which is the first cause both of the existence of the thing and of full knowledge of it. An understanding resolving halfway fails to accomplish this insight.<sup>23</sup> In line with this explanation, Bonaventure might have called the first part of the resolution a *semi-plena* and the second part a *plena resolutio*. However, he strategically proceeds by first presenting the first part as a complete resolution, as complete knowing (*plene scire*) a definition is stated to be presupposed in the comprehension of something. Subsequently, he presents the second part of the resolution as a *critique* of this claim, by replacing the first '*plene*' with another. An understanding completely resolving (*plene resolvens*) is now argued only to occur if it is aided by an understanding of an absolute being. Thus, the first part of the resolution is re-evaluated by the second, which reveals that the former was in fact a resolution only halfway rather than the accomplishment of a full understanding.

22 Another epistemological issue, unaccounted for in the setting of *Itinerarium* III.3, concerns the relation of the more perfect member of each division of being with the being it divides. The interpretation of this relation heavily bears upon the interpretation of *Itinerarium* III.3 as a whole. One possible interpretation would be that, by proving that full understanding of created being presupposes any cognition whatsoever of divine being, the resolution in *Itinerarium* III.3 sets up a concept of being *common* to God and creature. The rival interpretation would be that no such third term is obtained, since the cognition of being *directly* falls apart in either divine or created being.

23 Cf. I *Sent.* d.28 dub. 1 (I 504); II *Sent.* d.1 p.II dub. 1 (II 51).

Crucial to this understanding of the relation between the first and the second part of the resolution is the strategic use of *equivocity* in this resolution: being in itself (*ens per se*) in the first part addresses the category of substance, whereas, in the second resolution, in the seventh disjunction, *ens per se* represents absolute being in relation to created being (*ens per aliud*).<sup>24</sup> This shift of the meaning of being in itself *within* this resolution indicates the shift in perspective, replacing the consideration immanent to categorial being with the reflection on the relation of created being to divine being.

Finally, the resolution of *Itinerarium* III ends with the remark ‘and thus for the other conditions mentioned before.’<sup>25</sup> Here, Bonaventure refers to the conditions attributed to being in itself in the first part of the resolution, i.e. *unum*, *verum* and *bonum*, that would have to undergo a resolution similar to being (*ens*) if we are to understand completely what these created properties are. For instance, complete understanding of ‘true’ as it applies to created being is only possible if there is a pre-existing understanding of what is true in its most pure, most actual, complete and absolute sense.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, in *Itinerarium* III, on the level of the knowledge of God that the soul can attain by means of the reflection on its natural capacities, a resolution, departing from a created being resolving into God as ‘a most pure, most complete, most actual, and absolute being (*ens*)’ is presented. This resolution consists of two parts. The first concludes that knowledge of the category of substance (*ens per se*) together with its

24 Although Bonaventure does not reflect on his equivocal use of being in itself here, he does so in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, explaining that *ens per se* applies both to created being and divine being, but that this use is equivocal: whereas God is a being *per se* because he needs nothing, a creature is a being in itself as a substance ‘because it is not in another as subject’. However, the creature needs something else for its conservation, whereas God does not, which makes God *ens per se* in the most proper sense. Cf. I *Sent.* d.8 p.2 a.1 q.4 (I 174): ‘Deus enim est ens per se, quia nullo egens; creatura est ens per se, quia non est in alio ut in subiecto, eget tamen alio ad sui conservationem.’

25 *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304): ‘et sic de aliis conditionibus praelibatis’.

26 In “Die philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre,” Andreas Speer and Jan Aertsen claim that Bonaventure’s discussion of the intellect’s capacities is part of his adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals. They consider Bonaventure’s resolutions to God as first known as an integral part of this doctrine, as they show that that knowledge of the transcendentals is presupposed to all knowledge. Cf. J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, “Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre,” pp. 32–66.

conditions one, true and good is presupposed to complete definitional knowledge. In the second part, defining something turns out to be insufficient to attain full knowledge of it: created being as such is only to be known if a being is known that can be identified as divine being. This also counts for the properties of created being; one, true, and good. Concerning the way in which the created and the uncreated are known: although created being can be fully known, divine being is only known indirectly or reflexively; by no means is it argued that this understanding of *ens absolutum* concerns conceptual or full knowledge.

In the literature on Bonaventure, different conclusions with regard to the purpose of this account of God as first known are drawn.

In his article 'Bonaventure's Three-fold Way to God,'<sup>27</sup> Rollen E. Houser holds that Bonaventure sought to realize the full potential of the Neoplatonic approach to God by means of presenting a doctrine in which three possible ways of proving God's existence are combined. He counts the resolution in *Itinerarium* III.3 among Bonaventure's 'noetiological'<sup>28</sup> arguments for the existence of God: arguments, in which God is proved from mental notions, which logically lead to his existence. By means of these arguments, according to Houser, Bonaventure meant to improve Anselm's strategy of proving the existence of God by replacing his negative *reductio* – as Anselm's argument leads to the conclusion that the denial of God's existence would generate a contradiction from the fact that we are unable to think of anything *quo maius* – by a positive deduction of the existence of God out of the divine essence and the predicates adequate to this essence. Bonaventure did so, Houser maintains, by *adding* 'axiomatic middle terms', which have to account for the implication that God is that than which nothing greater can be thought.

Most terms used to describe God, Houser argues, do not qualify as 'axiomatic middle', as they necessarily connote imperfection. Defining terms, however, the way Bonaventure did in *Itinerarium* III.3, 'opens a passage to proper terms the argument can use':<sup>29</sup> the transcendentals, which are 'the perfect candidates for the axiomatic middle terms of a proper argument for the existence of God' because they do not imply imperfection, can be predicated non-metaphorically of God, and are primordial. In this way, Houser argues, the first part of the resolution

27 R.E. Houser, "Bonaventure's Threefold Way to God," pp. 97–154.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

29 *Ibid.*

of III.3 accounts for the fact that nothing greater than God can be thought.<sup>30</sup>

In the second part of the resolution, he holds that Bonaventure chose formulae for the divine essence based on these transcendental notions in order to provide positive descriptions establishing positive grounds for the insight into God's existence, by means of applying Avicenna's rule that privations and defects can only be known when something positive is known. In this way, 'in Bonaventure's hands, Anselm's negative *reductio* (...) became a positive deduction of the existence of God out of the divine essence.'<sup>31, 32</sup>

Although Houser's argumentation is in itself solid, this interpretation of *Itinerarium* III.3 does not seem probable. In the first place, Bonaventure himself did not set out on a mission to improve Anselm's argument or on giving as many different proofs for the existence of God as possible. Furthermore, it seems rather far-fetched to consider it to be the aim of this resolution to prove the existence of God. I have demonstrated that this resolution to God as first known functions as a *pathway* to make knowledge of God explicit. In this same section, Bonaventure extends this claim to the comprehension of propositions and the understanding of inferences. In this way, on different levels of cognition, he seeks to prove that knowledge of the divine makes *any* act of cognition successful and complete.

Therefore, if this resolution is a proof, it is to be seen as a demonstration that an understanding of God is the foundation of all other knowledge, rather than a proof for the existence of God. Furthermore, rather than that knowledge of (the existence of) God is *inferred*, this resolution presents a *discovery* of what is known all along.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 126: 'All more specific concepts presuppose transcendental notions (...) Consequently, in order to make his argument clearer than Anselm's, Bonaventure reduced the *quo maius* formula to the transcendentals it presupposes, because they are terms more obvious to all minds.'

31 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

32 In the entry on Bonaventure in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, written together with Timothy Noone, Houser has slightly modified his earlier interpretation of the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3. They now consider this resolution to have a twofold goal: next to being an argument for the existence of God, they attribute an epistemological objective to it: 'such a resolution means that behind all, even the most determinate and specific, conceptions of things lies a transcendental awareness of being that informs all of our knowledge.' In this sense, it presents an effort to demarcate the proper object of the human mind as being. Cf. T.B. Noone, R. E. Houser, "Saint Bonaventure."

In his article ‘De la théologie de l’image à la philosophie de l’objet de l’intelligence chez saint Bonaventure,’<sup>33</sup> Camille Bérubé also strongly denies that Bonaventure aims to prove the existence of God or the indubitability of his existence by means of his resolution in *Itinerarium* III.3. Rather, he regards it as a part of Bonaventure’s philosophy on the proper object of the intellect. To Bonaventure, Bérubé argues, the image of God which is constituted by the three faculties of the mind implies an immediate relation with God as the natural object of these faculties.<sup>34</sup>

Similar to my interpretation, in *The Light of Thy Countenance*,<sup>35</sup> Steven P. Marrone holds that the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3 actually gives ‘the most complete account’ of the idea of being as ‘avenue to knowledge of God’, as it explains that no being is understood except insofar as God, the perfect being, is in some way known, the occasion being the resolution of knowledge of simple terms to generate evidence that the soul is indeed an image of God.<sup>36</sup>

Another controversy found within the scholarly literature pertains to the *outcome* of this resolution. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer argue that it accomplishes an insight in a most pure, actual, complete and absolute being, which is eventually identified with ‘divine being’ (*esse divinum*) in chapter V of the *Itinerarium*.<sup>37</sup> It therefore proves, they argue, that God is first known in the order of understanding. Bérubé maintains the same, and even calls this understanding of the divine to be a *concept* of God, being the first object of the intellect.<sup>38</sup>

33 C. Bérubé, “De la théologie de l’image à la philosophie de l’objet de l’intelligence chez Saint Bonaventure,” pp. 161–200.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 179: ‘Comme, pour Bonaventure, l’image implique une relation immédiate à Dieu comme objet des facultés, il en résulte que le recours à la philosophie pour montrer la présence et l’influence de Dieu, ainsi qu’une relation immédiate à Dieu, devra faire appel à quelque théorie qui fasse de Dieu l’objet naturel des facultés, et non seulement un objet à atteindre par ces habitus surnaturels que sont les vertus théologiques, les dons du Saint-Esprit et sens spirituels, comme au chapitre suivant.’ Furthermore, Bérubé holds that Bonaventure does not use the word ‘object’ in *Itinerarium* III, as he considers it too scholarly for the readers he had in mind, but is describing the same thing as in other texts, such as *De scientia Christi*, in which God is designated ‘motive object’ or *ratio regulans et motiva*.

35 Cf. S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 214.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 182.



R.E. Houser and Timothy Noone, however, argue that divine being is a mere *specification* of being, whereas being (*ens*) is first known. *Within* the concept of being, a distinction is made between created and uncreated being. Knowledge of the latter is presupposed to knowledge of the former, they hold.

Noone's and Houser's position relates to the position of Wouter Goris, which he defends in *Absolute Beginners, Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*,<sup>39</sup> albeit that Goris defends a more complex interpretation: he counts Bonaventure among those who distinguish *two* levels in the doctrine of God as first known. At the first level, there is a priority of the divine *within* the first transcendental concepts of natural reason. At the second level, God has a cognitive priority *over* these concepts. The priority of the divine *within* the first transcendental concepts is proven by the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3, he argues, which is to be regarded as a reflection on the concept of being (*ens*). 'Being' (*ens*), as it appears in the second part of the resolution of III.3, is therefore perceived by Goris as 'analogical being' (*ens analogum*), a complex transcendental concept which only exists within the mind, and contains the concept of created being as well as the concept of divine being. Hence, *analogous being* is first known in *Itinerarium* III.3; the understanding of a most actual, absolute being in which the resolution ends, *presupposes* this encompassing concept. Therefore, Goris concludes, 'God' remains immanent to the intellect in *Itinerarium* III.3, and analogous being is first known.

Camille Bérubé presents a counterargument to Goris's position. He argues that the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3 differs from the way Aristotle dealt with the reduction of terms. Aristotle approached terms as abstract notions, i.e. not as realities, but as concepts. The same goes for Avicenna, who affirmed the priority of cognition of being in all complex knowledge in his elaboration on how concepts could be reduced to their most simple elements, thus making claims only on a conceptual level. Although Bérubé confirms that Matthias of Aquasparta and Henry of Ghent take Aristotle and Avicenna as their point of departure, he considers Bonaventure to be *anterior* to these discussions on the role of the common concept in the knowledge of God and of created being; rather, he holds, the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3 is part of a metaphysics that expresses a 'dialectics of participation'.

39 Cf. W. Goris, *Absolute Beginners, Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*.

From this perspective, Bérubé connects Bonaventure's resolution to Anselm's *Monologion*, as both thinkers assumed the parallelism between the *ordo essendi* and the *ordo cognoscendi*, something Bérubé considers of 'extreme importance for a literal comprehension of the text of the *Itinerarium*'<sup>40</sup>. As this dialectics of participation is usually applied to reduce beings to their first cause within a Neoplatonist metaphysics, Bonaventure now transposes this dialectics to the order of concepts: as God is the first principle of being, he is also first known.

Indeed, Bonaventure makes clear that the origin of being and knowledge are identical, and that the metaphysician rises from the consideration of the principles of created and particular substances to universal and uncreated being, which is the first principle of everything.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, as 'participation' is defined as a mode of possession in which what is possessed (created being) is received from another being (God), which is essentially different, but on which it depends for its existence,<sup>42</sup> knowledge of every created being 'possesses,' implicitly, an understanding of first being, on which it depends.

Bonaventure is acquainted with the concept of analogous being, as he mentions it in *Itinerarium* V.3 as being that only exists in the mind and therefore has the least actuality.<sup>43</sup> Nowhere, however, he explicitly distinguishes two levels in the doctrine of God as first known, first prioritizing the divine conceptually and then granting God a cognitive priority *over* these concepts. Nevertheless, the second part of the resolution of *Itinerarium* III.3, in which Bonaventure first presents a binary distribution of properties over being as it is thought, and *within* this domain of 'being as it is thought', reduces created being to being without any defect, does suggest that this understanding of the divine as immanent to something like analogous being, which would argue for Goris's position.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.13 (V 331).

<sup>42</sup> J.-G. Bougerol (ed.), *Lexique Saint Bonaventure*, Editions Franciscaines: Paris 1969, p. 105.

<sup>43</sup> *Itinerarium* V.2 (V 308–309): 'esse analogum, quia minime habet de actu, eo quod minime est.'

#### 4.1.4 *The transition from the mind's natural capacities to the mind reformed by grace in the Itinerarium*

The resolution to God as first known in the third chapter of the *Itinerarium* was part of a consideration of the natural capacities of the mind: God was approached through the activities, characteristics and scope (*habitus scientiales*) of the soul's natural powers.<sup>44</sup> The perspective from which knowledge of God is sought after is however different in chapter V, where the second resolution to God as first known is found. Here, the point of view is taken from *above* the mind: through the divine light, the soul is argued to reach contemplative knowledge of God by means of his revealed name 'being' (*esse*). The question is: how did the soul arrive at this point of view from above the mind? How is the state of being, which enables contemplation, obtained?

The transition from the perspective of natural reason to that of contemplation is described in chapter IV, which deals with 'the sight of God in his image reformed by gracious gifts.' Here, Bonaventure argues that in order for the soul to proceed with its itinerary, the natural light of reason and the knowledge it acquired by that light do not suffice; hereto, a purification and reformation of the soul is needed: deformed by original sin, the mind is so much involved in the sensible that it does not have access to a vision of God purified from this preoccupation with the senses. It is unable to get rid of this preoccupation and this deformity by its own means, no matter how enlightened one might have become through the use of natural reason. Rather, only by means of the reception of the 'gifts of grace', which are the theological virtues belief, hope and love, the soul is purified, enlightened and completed, whereby it is now apt to contemplate God without interference of the senses.<sup>45</sup> Here, Bonaventure argues that this reformation is not for everyone: only a few are able to contemplate God as first principle,<sup>46</sup> to leave all

44 Cf. *Itinerarium* IV.7 (V 307).

45 *Itinerarium* IV.2–3 (V 306): 'Ideo, quantumcumque sit illuminatus quis lumine naturae et scientiae acquisitae, non potest intrare in se, ut in se ipso delectetur in Domino, nisi mediante Christo (...) Necessè est igitur, si reintrare volumus ad fruitionem Veritatis tanquam ad paradisum, quod ingrediamur per fidem, spem et caritatem mediatoris Dei et hominum Iesu Christi, qui est tanquam lignum vitae in medio paradisi. (...) Supervestienda est igitur imago mentis nostrae tribus virtutibus theologicis, quibus anima purificatur, illuminatur, et perficitur, et sic imago reformatur.'

46 *Itinerarium* IV.1 (V 306): 'Mirum autem videtur, cum ostensum sit, quod Deus

sensible knowledge behind and to acquire *wisdom* by contemplation.<sup>47</sup> With wisdom, knowledge of the eternal truths is meant, acquired by the mind that contemplates the intellectual world unmediated by the sensible.

Furthermore, whereas knowledge of God acquired by means of the natural capacities of the mind, as elaborated in the first three chapters of the *Itinerarium*, is aided by philosophy, wisdom enabled by grace is supported by theology, i.e. the truths revealed by the scriptures, Bonaventure argues in this fourth chapter.<sup>48</sup>

The prologue of the *Itinerarium*, as I have shown in the first part of this chapter, makes clear that the stages described by its subsequent chapters are hierarchical in structure, which means that without having completed the preceding stage, a next stage cannot be entered. Thus, after having turned inwards by means of the reflection on the capacities of the mind in the third stage, the powers and virtues of the soul are to be reformed by grace in the fourth stage to enable the soul to proceed to the fifth stage. The second resolution to God as first known presented by the *Itinerarium*, given at this fifth stage, therefore *presupposes* both the reformation of the soul by grace and the first resolution found in *Itinerarium* III.3.

#### 4.1.5 *The resolution to a first known in Itinerarium V.3*

Every chapter of the *Itinerarium* deals with knowledge of God from its specific perspective, corresponding to the state of the soul that it represents. Chapter V deals with the contemplation of ‘the invisible and eternal things of God above the mind’ through the consideration of God’s first name, being (*esse*). This divine name, Bonaventure argues, has been revealed to the mind through the Old Testament.<sup>49</sup>

sit ita propinquus mentibus nostris, quod tam paucorum est in se ipsis primum principium speculari.’

47 *Ibid.*: ‘Sed quoniam non solum per nos transeundo, verum etiam in nobis contingit contemplari primum principium; et hoc maius est quam praecedens: ideo hic modus considerandi quartum obtinet contemplationis gradum. (...) Ideo totaliter in his sensibilibus iacens, (mens humana) non potest ad se tanquam ad Dei imaginem reintrare.’

48 *Itinerarium* IV.5 (V 307): ‘Ad autem speculationes gradum specialiter et praecipue adminiculatur consideratio sacrae Scripturae divinitus immissae, sicut philosophia ad praecedentem. Sacra enim Scriptura principaliter est de operibus reparationis.’

49 *Itinerarium* V.2 (V 308): ‘Primus modus primo et principaliter defigit aspectum in ipsum esse, dicens, quod qui est primum nomen Dei. (...) Primum spectat potissime

This contemplation of ‘being’ includes a second resolution to God as first known. In this section, I will hold that this resolution is not quite the same as its counterpart in chapter III.3; not only does its argumentative strategy differ, its outcome is different as well: rather than an understanding of a concrete being (*ens*) with specific properties (*actualissimum*, *completum*, *aeternum*, etc.), it is now being as such (*esse*) or ‘pure actuality itself’, which ‘first falls into the intellect’ (*primo cadit in intellectu(m)*). The paragraph in which this second resolution to God as first known is presented consists of three parts which together argue that divine being (*esse divinum*) is first known.

The first part is concerned with proving the absolute certainty (*certissimum*) of being itself (*ipsum esse*).<sup>50</sup> The second part exposes an order within the foundation of knowledge by resolving the understanding of everything that is understood (*omne, quod intelligitur*) to being in act (*ens in actu*), followed by a reduction of the understanding of being in act to being (*esse*) as pure actuality, which falls into the intellect first. As such, *esse as such* is presupposed in the understanding of every concrete being (*ens*).<sup>51</sup> The third part of this paragraph eventually identifies pure being with divine being (*esse divinum*).<sup>52</sup> In the following, I will present an analysis of these three parts of this second resolution to God as first known, as a part of the mind’s contemplation of ‘the invisible and eternal things of God above the mind.’

The first part of *Itinerarium* V.3 argues that being itself (*ipsum esse*)

ad vetus testamentum, quod maxime praedicat divinae essentiae unitatem; unde dictum est Moysi: Ego sum qui sum.’

50 *Itinerarium* V.3 (V 308): ‘Volens igitur contemplari Dei invisibilia quoad essentiae unitatem primo defigat aspectum in ipsum esse et videat, ipsum esse adeo in se certissimum, quod non potest cogitari non esse, quia ipsum esse purissimum non occurrit nisi in plena fuga non-esse, sicut et nihil in plena fuga esse. Sicut igitur omnino nihil habet de esse nec de eius conditionibus; sic e contra ipsum esse nihil habet de non-esse, nec actu nec potentia, nec secundum veritatem rei nec secundum aestimationem nostram.’

51 *Ibid.*: ‘Cum autem non-esse privatio sit essendi, non cadit in intellectum nisi per esse; esse autem non cadit per aliud, quia omne, quod intelligitur, aut intelligitur ut non ens, aut ut ens in potentia, aut ut ens in actu. Si igitur non-ens non potest intelligi nisi per ens, et ens in potentia non nisi per ens in actu; et esse nominat ipsum purum actum entis: esse igitur est quod primo cadit in intellectu, et illud esse est quod est purus actus.’

52 *Ibid.* (V 309): ‘Sed hoc non est esse particulare, quod est esse arctatum, quia permixtum est cum potentia, nec esse analogum, quia minime habet de actu, eo quod minime est. Restat igitur, quod illud esse est esse divinum.’

‘has nothing from non-being (*non esse*)’ and therefore cannot be thought not to be. This is done by arguing that being and not-being mutually exclude each other in all possible domains. This includes being how we think and judge it (*secundum nostram aestimationem*), which means that, in the world of the mind, it is just as impossible for being and non-being to commingle as it is in the world outside us – in a proposition, ‘being’ and ‘is not’ cannot be thought together; ‘being’ as a subject implies its predicate ‘is’. Therefore, being itself cannot possibly be thought *not* to be.

Subsequently, the second part, which I designated as a resolution to a first, starts with the recognition that cognition of not-being (*non-esse*) depends upon the cognition of being. Bonaventure argues that not-being is a privation of being (*privatio sit essendi*), from which he concludes that ‘not-being does not fall into the intellect (*cadit in intellectum*) except through being’.<sup>53</sup> Presumably, the rule that a privation, in this case not-being (*non-esse*), does not fall into the intellect unless by its position, in this case being (*esse*), governs this deduction.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, it is stated that ‘being does not fall into the intellect through something else’. Thus, by implication, being (*esse*) is already announced to be the first to fall into the intellect. In what follows, evidence for this conclusion is provided. First, by resolving everything that is understood to the understanding of being in act, and, second, by showing how being in act can only be known through being (*esse*) as pure actuality.

First, everything that is understood (*omne, quod intelligitur*) is analyzed by distinguishing three ways in which being (*ens*) is intelligible: either as a non-being (*non ens*), as a being in potency (*ens in potentia*), or as a being in act (*ens in actu*).<sup>55</sup> Second, the relation between the understanding of a non-being (*non ens*) and that of a being (*ens*) is specified, reducing knowledge of a non-being to that of a being: ‘non-being (*non ens*) cannot be understood except through a being (*ens*).’ Similarly, knowledge of a being in potency is reduced to knowledge of a being in act. As cognition of a non-being is reduced to that of a being, and a being in potency to a being in act, the implication of this resolution seems to be that a being in act (*ens in actu*) is first known.

53 *Itinerarium* V.3 (V 308–9): ‘non-esse privatio sit essendi, non cadit in intellectum nisi per esse’.

54 Cf. *Itinerarium* III.3 (V 304); n.17.

55 *Itinerarium* V.3 (V 308): ‘esse autem non cadit per aliud, quia omne, quod intelligitur, aut intelligitur ut non ens, aut ut ens in potentia, aut ut ens in actu.’

However, the resolution continues by *transgressing* the domain of things that are understood. It does so with the statement that ‘being (*esse*) names (*nominat*) the pure act itself of a being (*ens*).’<sup>56</sup>

For this reason, to understand the in-act-ness of a being in act, knowledge of *esse* is required, which is, in consequence, prerequisite for everything that is understood.

Therefore, Bonaventure concludes that, rather than a being in act (*ens in actu*), ‘being (*esse*) is what first falls into the intellect.’<sup>57</sup> This being is stated to be pure actuality itself.<sup>58</sup> Thus, being (*esse*) as first known makes the actuality of a concrete being in act (*ens in actu*) intelligible, and as such, conditions the intelligibility of all other things, as the resolution has shown.

Finally, the third part of paragraph V.3 deals with the identification of this being (*illud esse*). There are several options: it either is particular being, analogous being, or divine being. The argument proceeds by elimination of alternatives. First, it is concluded that this being (*esse*) is not particular being (*esse particulare*), by which the being or actuality of either that or this being (*ens*) is meant. Particular being is constrained being, which is mixed with potency. A being that is pure act is not mixed with potency; therefore particular being is not to be identified with this being (*illud esse*) which is first known. Neither is this being to be identified with analogous being (*esse analogum*), with which the being of different conceptual beings subsumed under one and the same denominator, i.e. being, is meant, which only exists in the mind; therefore, this being scarcely is (*minime est*) and has the least actuality. Since two out of the three options are discarded, it is concluded that this being which first falls into the intellect can only be divine being (*esse divinum*).<sup>59</sup>

Notably, most of the properties attributed to what was first known in *Itinerarium* III, are now attributed to divine being (*esse divinum*): most pure, most actual, absolute, simple and eternal.<sup>60</sup> Among the things belonging to divine being the transcendental conditions of being presented in the first resolution also show up, this time in their

56 *Ibid.*: ‘esse nominat ipsum purum actum entis.’

57 *Ibid.*: ‘esse igitur est quod primo cadit in intellectu.’

58 *Ibid.*: ‘illud esse est quod est purus actus.’

59 *Ibid.* (V 308–309): ‘Sed hoc non est esse particulare, quod est esse arctatum, quia permixtum est cum potentia, nec esse analogum, quia minime habet de actu, eo quod minime est. Restat igitur, quod illud esse est esse divinum.’

60 Cf. *Itinerarium* V.5–6 (V 309).

independent rather than in their concrete, adverbial form: ‘the most simple unity, the most serene truth, (and) the most sincere goodness.’<sup>61</sup>

The question remains *in what way* divine being is first known. *Itinerarium* V.4 sheds light on the *epistemic status* of divine being, as well as on the way in which *esse* relates to *ens* within the order of knowledge:

Wonderful therefore is the blindness of the intellect, which does not consider that which it sees first and without which it can become acquainted with nothing. But as the eye, intent upon various differences of colors, does not see the light, through which it sees other things, and if it sees it, does not advert to it; so the eye of our mind, intent upon particular and universal beings (*entia*), though ‘being’ itself outside of every genus first occurs (*occurrat*) to the mind and through it other (beings), it nevertheless does not advert to it.<sup>62</sup>

This text confirms that, although *esse divinum* is first in the foundation of knowledge, it is everything but the first thing that is acknowledged. Rather, the intellect is unconscious of what is known all long and what enables it to come to know anything else. In the section quoted above, Bonaventure explains this by comparing divine being occurring to the mind with light, which is the medium through which we see things or colors, and which is first seen by the eye. *Esse* or pure actuality is no concrete being, but rather the *medium* through which things (*entia*), either particular or universal, are known. Thus, divine being (*esse*) transgresses the domain of intelligible beings (*entia*) as its *prerequisite*: through being (*esse*) itself, a being (*ens*) is known. Cognition of divine being is therefore of a different order than cognition of beings.

Furthermore, there are two possible ways to interpret this passage with regard to what the mind is now capable of. Either the mind, at this stage of the soul’s ascent, still does not advert to being (*esse*), as its blindness is inherent to its viatorial state, or the blindness of the intellect

61 *Itinerarium* V.8 (V 310): ‘per simplicissimam unitatem, serenissimam veritatem, sincerissimam bonitatem est in eo omnis virtuositas, omnis exemplaritas et omnis communicabilitas.’

62 *Itinerarium* V.4 (V 309): ‘Mira igitur est caecitas intellectus, qui non considerat illud quod prius videt et sine quo nihil potest cognoscere. Sed sicut oculus intentus in varias colorum differentias lucem, per quam videt cetera, non videt, et si videt, non advertit; sic oculus mentes nostrae, intentus in entia particularia et universalia, ipsum esse extra omne genus, licet primo occurrat menti, et per ipsum alia, tamen non advertit.’



is overcome at this point. In *Itinerarium* V.4 Bonaventure also states that the mind fails in contemplating divine being as it is ‘accustomed to the shadows of beings and to the images of sensibles.’<sup>63</sup> This relates to what was stated in chapter IV, i.e. that only a few are able to contemplate the first principle, as the mind is naturally ‘distracted by cares, beclouded by phantasms, and enticed by concupiscences’. Completely involved in sensible knowledge, it cannot reenter into itself by its own means.<sup>64</sup> The mind is however reformed by grace in the fourth stage of its itinerary, enabling it to enter the fifth, in which being (*esse*) as first principle is first of all presented as a revealed truth. Now, the mind is no longer ‘blinded by the light of the highest being’, but is able to consider what falls into the intellect first, or ‘to advert to what it sees first’, which it does by means of this second resolution.

Finally, the question is how the two resolutions to God as first known found in the *Itinerarium* resolutions relate.

With regard to this subject, quite some controversy is found in the literature on Bonaventure. Bérubé, to begin with, regards the resolutions of *Itinerarium* III.3 and V.3 as reaching *identical* conclusions, as they both describe a metaphysical reduction in which God as exemplary, efficient and formal cause is argued to be first known.<sup>65</sup> Speer and Aertsen, however, maintain that, whereas *Itinerarium* III.3 establishes an insight in a most pure, actual, complete and absolute being, the resolution of *Itinerarium* V.III *identifies* this being as ‘divine being’.<sup>66</sup> Marrone, on

63 *Ibid.*: ‘Unde verissime apparet, quod ‘sicut oculus vespertilionis se habet ad lucem, ita se habet oculus mentis nostrae ad manifestissima naturae’; quia assuefactus ad tenebras entium et phantasmata sensibilium, cum ipsam lucem summi esse intuetur, videtur sibi nihil videre; non intelligens, quod ipsa caligo summa est mentis nostrae illuminatio, sicut, quando videt oculus puram lucem, videtur sibi nihil videre.’

64 *Itinerarium* IV.1 (V 306): ‘mens humana, sollicitudinibus distracta, (...) phantasmatis obnubilata, (...) concupiscentiis illecta, (...) totaliter in his sensibilibus iacens, non potest ad se tanquam ad Dei imaginem reintrare.’

65 C. Bérubé, “De la théologie de l’image à la philosophie de l’objet de l’intelligence chez saint Bonaventure,” p. 181: ‘Selon cette perspective, on interprète la connaissance de Dieu comme être très pur et éternel du chapitre 3, ainsi que la connaissance de Dieu comme acte pur du chapitre 5, comme une réduction métaphysique dans laquelle Bonaventure affirmerait qu’on ne peut connaître et donc concevoir parfaitement un être créé quelconque sans y inclure Dieu comme cause exemplaire, efficiente et finale.’

66 J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, “Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre,” .p. 61.

the other hand, considers the resolution of V.3 to be a *clarification* of the argument given in *Itinerarium* III.3, as Bonaventure explains here that 'being' (*esse*) was the first idea to come to the intellect, by which he intended to evoke Avicenna's *Metaphysics* (*ens imprimuntur in anima prima impressione*). But whereas Avicenna held that a *general* notion of being was the ultimate basis for knowledge, he argues, Bonaventure means that this being is a *special* being, i.e. God. By this addition in *Itinerarium* V.3, Bonaventure clarified what led him to conclude that perfect being is first known in *Itinerarium* III.3, Marrone holds.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast, Goris considers the resolution to a first in *Itinerarium* V.3 to be a *critique* of that in *Itinerarium* III.3, rather than an identification, affirmation or elucidation. The priority of the divine over all concepts, argued for in chapter V of the *Itinerarium*, proves the concept of analogical being arrived at in chapter III to be inadequate as a foundation for natural knowledge, as the argument criticizes the lack of actuality of *ens analogum*, existing only as a concept in the human mind, Goris argues. Now, pure actuality itself (*esse est quod est purus actus*) proves to be the foundation of all understanding of created being.<sup>68</sup>

On the basis of my findings, I can relate to this discussion by arguing that, whereas the resolution in *Itinerarium* III dealt with concrete being (*ens*), we pass beyond the level of the concrete in *Itinerarium* V. Here, it is argued that divine being *in abstracto* (*esse divinum*) is both absolutely certain and first known. Not confined to a specific, limited being, and therefore pure actuality, divine being falls into the intellect first, and is presupposed in the understanding of every concrete being (*ens*). As such, it is the *medium* through which concrete things (*entia*), either particular or universal, are known.

Whereas the resolution of *Itinerarium* III resolved *within* the domain of being (*ens*) to a concrete absolute being (*ens absolutum*), the resolution of *Itinerarium* V transgresses the domain of being (*ens*) by resolving beyond entities to divine existence (*esse divinum*). In this sense, the resolution of *Itinerarium* V could indeed be regarded as a *critique* of that of *Itinerarium* III, as it resolves into an *even more foundational* first. In so far as the second resolution is a clarification of the first, the second

67 S.P. Marrone, *The Light of Thy Countenance. Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, p. 215.

68 W. Goris, *Absolute Beginners, Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*, p. 14.

resolution shows on what our conceptualization of being depends: on the reception of pure actuality itself.

#### 4.1.6 *Conclusions from the analysis of the Itinerarium*

In the *Itinerarium*, two resolutions to God as first known are presented. In the third chapter, on the level of the knowledge of God which the soul can attain by means of natural reason, a resolution to God as ‘a most pure, most complete, most actual, and absolute being (*ens*)’ occurs *within* the consideration of being (*ens*). This resolution consists of two parts. The first concludes that knowledge of the category of substance (*ens per se*) together with its conditions one, true and good is presupposed to a complete definition. In the second part, by means of a binary distribution of properties over being as it is thought, and the reduction of imperfect to perfect being, the understanding of created being is argued to be only understood completely if aided by the understanding of a being that, by its properties, can be identified as *divine* being.

Whereas the resolution in *Itinerarium* III dealt with concrete being (*ens*), in *Itinerarium* V it passes beyond the level of the concrete. Here, it is argued that divine being (*esse divinum*), not as entity put as pure existence, is both absolutely certain and first known. As pure actuality, divine being falls into the intellect first, and is presupposed in the understanding of every concrete being (*ens*). As such, it is the medium through which concrete things (*entia*), either particular or universal, are known.

Thus, whereas the resolution of *Itinerarium* III resolved *within* the domain of being (*ens*) to a concrete absolute being (*ens absolutum*), the resolution of *Itinerarium* V *transgresses* the domain of being (*ens*), i.e. entities, by resolving to divine being *in abstracto* (*esse divinum*). Indicative of how the second resolution exceeds the first is also the fact that in *Itinerarium* V.8, ‘the most simple unity, the most serene truth, (and) the most sincere goodness’ are attributed to divine being as first known; corresponding to the transition from concrete being (*ens*) to being (*esse*), these properties are no longer presented as adjectives to a being, as this was the case in the resolution of *Itinerarium* III, as ‘one’, ‘true’ and ‘good’, but are mentioned in their abstracted form.

Furthermore, this surpassing of the first resolution by the second is *prefigured* by a parallel pattern *within* the first resolution. The first part of the first resolution is presented as a complete resolution at

first, as completely knowing (*plene scire*) the definition of something is stated to presuppose the comprehension of that thing, whereas the second part of the resolution replaces this first '*plene*' with another; i.e. an understanding completely resolving (*plene resolvens*) aided by an understanding of an absolute being. Thus, the first part of the resolution is reevaluated by the second, by which it becomes '*semi-plena*' rather than complete. This transition corresponds with a shift in perspective within this first resolution from the consideration immanent to categorial being to the consideration of being with regard to the way knowledge of created being is related to an understanding of divine being.

However, what seemed to be an understanding completely resolved in *Itinerarium III* is yet surpassed by the resolution of *Itinerarium V*, as was shown; from the perspective of the fifth stage of the mind, the complete resolution of *Itinerarium III* is, in its turn, still incomplete. The analysis of *Itinerarium IV* has pointed out that it is only after the mind is reformed by grace that it is able to attain the point of view taken in the fifth chapter, and to contemplate divine being (*esse divinum*).

## 4.2 Two accounts of God as first known in the *Collationes in Hexaameron*

### 4.2.1 Introduction

In terms of 'visions' (*visiones*) on each of the six days of creation (the last two visions are missing, as the work remains unfinished), the *Collationes in Hexaameron* deals with the transformation of the soul and, along with it, the subsequent perspectives from which the mind acquires knowledge of God. The first account of God as first known found in the *Hexaameron*, in chapter V, is part of the first vision, on the soul's intelligence given by nature (chapters IV–VII). This vision considers the knowledge of God that the soul is capable of attaining by its *natural means*. Chapter X presents the second account of God as first known, which is part of the second vision, which deals with how human intelligence is lifted up by *faith* (chapters VIII–XII). Here, revealed knowledge of God, accessible once the soul is reformed by faith, is considered.

After discussing both accounts of God as first known, as well as the way in which the context of the first account relates to that of the

second, I will consider the way in which these accounts relate to one another and come to conclusions as regards the doctrine of God as first known as it is expressed in the *Hexaameron*. In addition, from the perspective of my analysis of his accounts of God as first known, I will come to conclude that Bonaventure's discourse in the *Hexaameron* is all but 'anti-philosophic' or 'anti-intellectual', as some maintain, although the *Hexaameron* testifies to Bonaventure's profound rejection of the Aristotelianism of his time.

#### 4.2.2 *Resume of the Collationes in Hexaameron*

The *Collationes in Hexaameron*<sup>69</sup> was written at the height of Bonaventure's career as minister general of the Franciscan Order. It represents his mature thought, heavily influenced by and itself influencing contemporary controversies and tendencies, such as Etienne Tempier's condemnations of 1272 and 1277 and the Joachite movement. It deals at least with three sets of problems of Bonaventure's time: the secular's attack on the mendicant ideal of poverty, the rise of radical Aristotelianism or Latin Averroism, and the problem of Joachimism, especially within the Franciscan Order itself.<sup>70</sup> I will, however, neither go into the *Hexaameron*'s historical importance here, nor present an interpretation of it in the light of political, religious and academic developments of its time.<sup>71</sup> Rather, I will deal with it in the same way I treated the *Itinerarium*: as a text in which the soul's development, a process that is accompanied by ever increasing insights, is thematized. This is not to deny other interpretations of this work; the *Hexaameron* is a much too complex, multi-faceted work to reduce it to one specific interpretation.

69 There are at least two distinct reports of these lectures or sermons, usually termed the A and B reports. Ferdinand Delorme edited Reportatio A and it was published as *Collationes in Hexaameron* (Collegium S. Bonaventurae: Quarrachi 1934). Reportatio B was edited and published earlier in the Opera Omnia of the Quaracchi brothers (Collegium S. Bonaventurae: Quarrachi 1891). This study is based on the latter reportatio. It is said to be edited at least partly by Bonaventure himself, whereas F. Delorme's version is argued to be corrected and completed by an anonymous editor.

70 Cf. J.R. White, "St. Bonaventure and the Problem of Doctrinal Development," in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (1) (2011), pp. 177–202.

71 Hereto, cf. C.C. Anderson, *A Call to Piety: Saint Bonaventure's Collationes on the Six Days*, Franciscan Press: Quincy (IL) 2002; K.L. Hughes, "St. Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaameron*: Fractured Sermons and Protreptic Discourse," in: *Franciscan Studies* 63 (2005), 107–130; R. Imbach, "Bonaventura: Collationes in Hexaameron," pp. 170–197; J. Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*.

Moreover, not only the *Hexaameron's* unfinished state, but also its intricate symbolic structure poses serious challenges to those seeking to present a coherent interpretation of it, and the literature devoted to the *Hexaameron* presents a diversity of approaches to this work.<sup>72</sup>

The *Hexaameron* consists of 23 chapters and reports of an unfinished series of sermons – each chapter presents a sermon – held between Easter and Pentecost in 1273. They are unfinished as Bonaventure was called away from his work as minister general of the Franciscans in order to become cardinal of Albano. In this collection of sermons, or more specifically, *collationes*, a series of sermons around one theme, Bonaventure gives an *anagogical*, i.e. spiritual, interpretation of the biblical account of creation as found in Genesis: the six days of creation are presented as a trope for the different illuminations that the faithful soul may receive during life on earth. In four ‘visions’ (*visiones*) on the first four days of creation, four subsequent ‘illuminations’ or perspectives from which the mind acquires knowledge of God are dealt with (the last two visions or days remain unaccounted for). By relating creation to the accumulation of insights of the human mind, these visions establish, in a way similar to the *Itinerarium*, a relation between the world as macrocosm (*maior mundus*) and the human soul as microcosm (*minor mundus*).

72 For instance, whereas John White holds that the *Hexaameron* first and foremost presents a theory of doctrinal development, showing how the crises of Bonaventure’s time are deviating from the historical pilgrimage of the Church as a journey toward greater wisdom, and meant to illuminate the way in which the Franciscan Order and its way of life are meant to overcome that situation (Cf. J.R. White, “St. Bonaventure and the Problem of Doctrinal Development,” 183–187). This broadly corresponds to Ratzinger’s position. But although Ratzinger holds that developing a theology of history includes a specific way of understanding historical events in the light of an interpretation of revelation, which he argues to be the ambition of the *Hexaameron*, White argues that ‘these sermons were rhetorical rather than theoretical works, using theological concepts to illuminate the spiritual crises of the day.’ Anderson interprets the *Hexaameron* as a series of polemics against Joachitism, seeking to move his audience ‘from error to truth’ (Cf. C.C. Anderson, *A Call to Piety: Saint Bonaventure’s Collationes on the Six Days*, p. 195). Hendrikus van der Laan, however, pays more attention to the *Hexaameron's* discourse on Christian spirituality itself, rather than regarding it as a polemical text. He holds that the *Hexaameron* presents a theoretical discourse that deals with the division of sciences and how the illuminations of the church lead man to extacy. Van der Laan also regards the six illuminations in the *Hexaameron* to be the six illuminations of the *soul*, which are compared to the six days in which the world was created.

Whereas the first three chapters of the *Hexaameron* are introductory (chapters I–III), the chapters thereafter consecutively deal with the four visions that God grants people throughout their earthly pilgrimage. The first vision is on the soul’s capacities and insights given by nature, which is compared to the creation of light (chapters IV–VII). The second deals with how ‘human intelligence is lifted up by faith’, which is related to the creation of the firmament and the distinction of waters (chapters VIII–XII). The third vision describes how the scriptures teach the mind, which is related to the distinction of land and seas, and the creation of plants (chapters XII–XIV). The fourth vision treats the mind lifted up by contemplation (chapters XX–XXIII). The fifth and the sixth vision should have dealt with the insights attained by prophecies and with an all-encompassing *raptus* in God. Moreover, a seventh vision of the glorified soul was anticipated, comparable to the seventh day of creation, a day of rest and completion. Bonaventure remarks that the first two visions are possessed by many souls, whereas the third and fourth are attained by only a few, and that the last two visions are very seldomly acquired. A seventh vision is only attained by Saint Paul.<sup>73</sup>

In the following, I will pay closer attention to the first two visions. I restrict myself to these two because, as I will show in the next chapter, in both of them, Bonaventure presents an account of God as first known.

In the first vision, on the soul’s capacities and insights given by nature, one comes to understand the extent to which our natural understanding reaches. This understanding is argued to be conditioned by an ‘inserted light’ (*lumen inditum*), which is the light of natural reason. It is argued to consist of three rays, representing the truth of things, words, and conduct.<sup>74</sup> This light is not only presented as a condition for all natural knowledge; it is also a first condition for the entire ascent: ‘without this inserted light, man would lack everything: faith, grace, and the light of wisdom,’ Bonaventure argues.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, although

73 *Hexameron* III.24 (V 347): ‘Praeter has est visio sextuplex, quae respondet operibus sex dierum; quibus minor mundus fit perfectus, sicut maior mundus sex diebus. Est visio intelligentiae per naturam inditae, et visio intelligentiae per fidem sublevatae, per Scripturam eruditae, per contemplationem suspensae, per prophetiam illustratae, per raptum in Deum absorptae. Ad has sequitur visio septima animae glorificatae, quas omnes habuit Paulus. – Primae duae sunt multorum, duae aliae paucorum, hae ultimae duae paucissimorum.’

74 Cf. *Hexaameron* IV.I (V 349).

75 *Hexameron* III.25 (V 347): ‘Per primam intelligitur, ad quid potest extendi nostra

the reception of the light of natural reason is necessary for scientific knowledge, it is not sufficient. This becomes clear when Bonaventure distinguishes between those who realize they are indebted to this light and those who deny or ignore this 'gift of illumination'. The latter are scientists who inevitably go the wrong way as they are misguided by their 'arrogance' and 'curiosity'.<sup>76</sup> Those who turn to the light inside their souls and who live virtuously, on the other hand, find truth. This conversion to this inner light found in the soul, in which the exemplars of all things are found, is described in terms of the distinction that God made between light and darkness on the first day of creation.<sup>77</sup>

Already in this first vision, Bonaventure maintains that all science should culminate in wisdom. This means that the enlightenment through natural reason *in itself* and the conversion to it is not enough;<sup>78</sup> the light of faith is necessary as well. In order to be illuminated by wisdom, the soul has to become deiform and a dwelling place for God.<sup>79</sup>

Subsequently, the second vision treats faith as the origin of wisdom and knowledge of both the eternal and the temporal. This vision describes the soul's discovery of the limitations of natural intelligence and of knowledge inaccessible through natural reason, i.e. knowledge that is revealed through faith. Whereas in the first vision, the image is that of the creation of light and, correspondingly, the light naturally given to the soul, in the second vision, it is the descent of the uncreated,

intelligentia de se. Haec intelligitur per primam diem, in qua facta est lux; unde in Psalmo: Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine. Sine isto lumine indito nihil habet homo, nec fidem nec gratiam nec lumen sapientiae; et ideo divisa est etiam lux a tenebris.'

76 *Hexaameron* I.7 (V 330): 'Item, contra consonantiam divinae laudis spiritus praesumptionis et curiositatis, ita quod praesumptuosus Deum non magnificat, sed esse laudat; curiosus autem devotionem non habet. Unde multi sunt tales, qui vacui sunt laude et devotione, etsi habeant splendores scientiarum. Faciunt enim casas vesparum, quae non habent favum mellis, sicut apes, quae mellificant.'

77 *Hexaameron* V.23 (V 357): '(philosophi) venerunt ad hoc, in quo lux separata est a tenebris; sperando enim se a tenebris, converterunt se ad lucem. Sed hoc ita fit, ut anima convertat se primo super se: secundo, super intelligentias spirituales; tertio, super rationes aeternas.'

78 *Hexaameron* II.1 (V 336): 'Ostensum est supra, quibus debet doctor sermonem depromere, et unde debet incipere. Modo ostendendum est, ubi debet terminare: quia in plenitudine sapientiae et intellectus.'

79 *Ibid.*: 'sapientia est lux descendens a Patre luminum in animam et radians in eam facit animam deiformem et domum Dei. Ista lux descendens facit intellectivam speciosam, affectivam amoenam, operativam robustam.'



incarnated word that obscures the light of natural reason. The image used to elucidate knowledge of faith is that of the firmament, as it is high (*sublimis*), stable (*stabilis*) and visible (*spectabiles*), which indicates the superiority, certainty and clarity of the truths known through faith.

#### 4.2.3 *The resolution to God as first known in Hexaemeron V*

In *Hexaemeron* chapter V, one of the four chapters dealing with the insight given to the mind by nature, Bonaventure argues that the mind is naturally enlightened by an *inner light of truth*,<sup>80</sup> through which God as first being (*primum esse*) is known. A resolution to God as first known leads to the discovery of this light as well as to first being known through it. More generally, *collatio V* deals with the soul's conversion to an exemplary cause, which is to be found through a light inside the soul, in order to acquire wisdom through contemplation. Bonaventure describes this conversion of the soul as consisting of three stages: a first stage in which the soul reflects upon itself, a second stage in which angels or 'spiritual intelligences' are considered, and a third stage in which the conditions of being (*conditiones entis*) are considered with regard to their final cause, 'by which the soul moves itself from the effects to their causes and moves along to the eternal reasons'.<sup>81</sup>

Of this reflexive, transcending and reductive moment Rüdi Imbach argues rightly that they are the three conditions, together constituting a 'passage from darkness to light', that Bonaventure presents for reaching the goals of philosophy: wisdom and beatitude. These goals are attained when the human mind reaches knowledge of the eternal foundation of being: the *rationes aeternae*.<sup>82</sup>

In this third, reductive moment, Bonaventure's version of the Augustinian-Platonic doctrine of the ideas is elaborated. He shows here that the eternal ideas, residing in God, are not only prerequisite to and bring forth creation; they are also the measures by means of which certain and reliable knowledge is generated, as, through these ideas,

80 *Hexaemeron* IV.1 (V 349): 'Prima visio animae est intelligentiae per naturam inditae. Unde dicit Psalmus: "Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine".'

81 *Hexaemeron* V.23 (V 357): '(philosophi) venerunt ad hoc, in quo lux separata est a tenebris; seperando enim se a tenebris, converterunt se ad lucem. Sed hoc ita fit, ut anima convertat se primo super se: secundo, super intelligentias spirituales; tertio, super rationes aeternas.'; *Hexaemeron* V.28 (V 358): 'Tertius gradus est, quod ipse intellectus, considerans conditiones entis secundum relationem causae ad causatum, transfert se ab effectu ad causas et transit ad rationes aeternas.'

82 R. Imbach, "Bonaventura: Collationes in *Hexaemeron*," pp. 276–77.

we judge anything that we come to know.<sup>83</sup> These ideas are also argued to be normative for human conduct, and exemplary for the cardinal virtues.<sup>84</sup> Thus, in this reduction, the human mind reaches knowledge of the eternal foundation of being, knowledge and action.

Furthermore, this reductive moment reflects Bonaventure's exemplaristic metaphysics, and relates directly to an earlier statement in the *Hexaemeron* that the metaphysician rises from the consideration of the principles of created and particular substances to universal and uncreated being, which is first principle, medium and final end. Here, the true metaphysician is enlightened by a spiritual light and reduced to what is highest. He is thus concerned with emanation, exemplarity and consummation. In this way, the doctrine of the ideas is lucidly connected to both an ontological and an epistemological movement of ascent and return, progression and regression, illumination and reduction.<sup>85</sup> In the following, I will take a closer look at this reduction.

This third and last stage of the soul's conversion to first being can itself also be divided into three steps, which resemble the triadic structure of the soul's search for truth as described by Augustine: the soul subsequently considers (1) the external world, (2) the world inside the mind, and (3) what is above the mind.<sup>86</sup> These three steps involve three correspondent ways of knowing: reasoning (*ratiocinando*), experience

83 *Ibid.*, p. 276; Cf. *Hexaemeron* II.10 (V 338).

84 Cf. *Hexaemeron* VI.11 (V 362).

85 *Hexaemeron* I.17 (V 321): 'Hoc est medium metaphysicum reduces, et haec est tota nostra metaphysica: de emanatione, de exemplaritate, de consummatione, scilicet illuminari per radios spirituales et reduci ad summum. Et sic eris verus metaphysicus.'

86 Augustine, *De vera religione* 39 n. 72, ed. K.D. Daur, Brepols: Turnhout 1962, p. 234): 'Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat veritas, et si tuam naturam mutabilem inveneris, transcede et te ipsum. Sed memento, cum te transcendis, ratiocinantem animam te transcendere. Illuc ergo tende, unde ipsum lumen rationis accenditur. Quo enim pervenit omnis bonus ratiocinator nisi ad veritatem? Cum ad se ipsa veritas non utique ratiocinando perveniat, sed quod ratiocinantes appetunt ipsa sit.' It should be remarked, however, that although the itinerary of the soul's conversion described by Augustine is comparable to that of Bonaventure, Bonaventure is far less depreciative of the external world than Augustine; as a 'vestige' (*vestigium*), it provides us with valuable knowledge of God, be it of a lesser quality than the knowledge obtained after turning away from the sensible. Also, these specific *modi cognoscendi*, i.e. *ratiocinando*, *experiendo* and *intelligendo* are not to be traced back to Augustine.

(*experiendo*) and understanding (*intelligendo*).<sup>87</sup> The first account of God as first known of the *Hexaameron* is found in the description of the second way of knowing, by experience. This way of knowing is described as follows:

(Insight is) brought by experience in the following way: what is produced is defect with respect to the first; similarly, what is composed with respect to the simple; similarly, the mixed with respect to the pure, and similarly for the others; therefore they are called privations. But privations are not known unless by their positions. After all, the straight is the judge both of the crooked and of itself. And if all knowledge comes from pre-existing knowledge: intelligence therefore experiences in itself, that it has a certain light, by which it knows first being (*primum esse*).<sup>88</sup>

Considering the point of departure of this argument (what are the designated conditions of created being) as well as the result of this endeavor (the experience of an inner light by which divine being (*primum esse*) is known prior to created being), it becomes clear that a resolution to God as first known is presented here; Bonaventure resolves from what the mind is initially aware of to what is presupposed by it and what is known all along: *a priori* knowledge of God as first being provided by an inner light of truth.

Having settled that an account of God as first known is indeed present in *Hexaameron* V, let us take a closer look at this resolution. What exactly is experienced? How exactly is God proven to be first known? What is the epistemic status of this *primum cognitum*?

The resolution starts with relating to six disjunctions introduced earlier on in the text, which demonstrate that the effects, i.e. created beings, differ from their first cause, i.e. the first being (*ens primum*), by

87 *Hexaameron* V.29 (V 359): ‘Intelligentia autem fertur in hanc lucem tripliciter: ratiocinando, experiendo, intelligendo; rationabiliter, experimentaliter, intelligentialiter.’

88 *Hexaameron* V.30 (V 359): ‘Fertur similiter experiendo sic: productum respectu primi defectivum est; similiter compositum respectu simplicis; similiter permixtum respectu puri, et sic de aliis; ergo dicunt privationes. Sed privationes non cognoscuntur nisi per habitus suos. Iudex enim est rectum sui et obliqui. Et si omnis cognitio fit ex praexistenti cognitione: ergo necessario intelligentia experitur in se, quod habeat aliquod lumen, per quod cognoscat primum esse.’

means of opposing the conditions of the first being to the conditions of created being:<sup>89</sup>

<i>first cause</i>	<i>effect</i>
first being ( <i>ens</i> )	produced being
simple being	composed being
pure being	mixed being
fixed being	changing being
absolute being	dependent being
perfect being	diminished being

In several steps, the soul is led from knowledge of the conditions of created being, which are initially given, to the discovery of knowledge of what is presupposed to it, i.e. the conditions of the first being (*ens primum*). What is eventually argued to be first known, however, is not *the* first being (*ens primum*), described by the six disjunctions, but rather, first being (*esse primum*).

To begin with, Bonaventure argues that the conditions of created being are *defects* with regard to the conditions of first being. These defects are therefore called ‘privations’, Bonaventure states, implying that created being is deprived of that of which first being (*ens primum*) is in possession. From this perspective, ‘composed’, for instance, comes down to a deprivation of simplicity. What this means for the order of knowledge becomes clear by a first argument, i.e. that ‘privations are only known when their positions (*habitus suos*) are known’: a thing that is deprived of something can only be known through knowledge of the positive state of which the thing is deprived. Knowledge of a composed being therefore presupposes the cognition of something simple. Since in the above, created being is designated to be privative compared to first being (*ens primum*), this argument implies that first being (*ens primum*) must be known in order to know created being.

Bonaventure finds this argument on a second, i.e. the Aristotelian thesis that ‘something straight is the measure (*iudex*) both of itself and

89 *Hexaemeron* V.28 (V 358): ‘Differt causa a causatis: quia prima causa est ens primum, causatum ens productum; causa prima est ens simplex, causatum compositum; causa prima est ens purum, et causatum permixtum; causa prima est ens fixum, et causatum variatum; causa prima est ens absolutum, et causatum alligatum; causa prima est ens perfectum, causatum diminutum. Haec ergo sunt certissima.’

something crooked'<sup>90</sup>: by means of a straight line, Aristotle argues, we know both this line itself and an oblique one, because the straight line is the judge and rule of each, whereas the oblique line is the judge and rule neither of itself, nor of the straight line. Again, this argument applies to the six disjunctions given: the 'crooked' represents privative, created being, whereas the 'straight' stands for the perfect, first being (*ens primum*).<sup>91</sup> Hence, we cannot judge the first being through created being. The first being is both its own measure as well as that of created being.

A third contention added to the argument by quoting Aristotle's first sentence of the *Posterior Analytics*: 'all knowledge is derived from pre-existing knowledge'.<sup>92</sup> Here, Bonaventure (1) makes a general claim by proposing an order in which all cognition depends on certain fundamental knowledge, and (2) creates a distinction between derived knowledge and pre-existing knowledge, thus distinguishing between the epistemic status of these two kinds of knowledge. In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle argues that scientific knowledge is dependent upon prior cognition of principles that are themselves not known by demonstration. These principles are understood intuitively or 'grasped' rather than acquired through discursive thought. Bonaventure allows himself a certain liberty in adopting this Aristotelian scheme, since he identifies derived knowledge with knowledge of created being and the pre-existing knowledge it is derived from with knowledge of divine being.

The conclusion Bonaventure draws from these three arguments is that 'intelligence experiences in itself that it has a certain light, through which it knows first being (*primum esse*).'<sup>93</sup> The phrasing of the conclu-

90 Cf. Aristotle, *De anima*, I c. 1, 411a 4–8.

91 In the *Sentences*, Bonaventure deals with this Aristotelian postulate similarly, considering whether evil things are in God. Here, he argues that evil things are cognized by God, yet they do not exist in God; they are known because, just as 'the straight (line) is the judge of itself and of the oblique', so the highest truth, light and act is the reason for knowing not only itself, but also obliquity, shadow and privation. Therefore, light by itself knows darkness. Cf. I *Sent.* d.36 a.3 q.1 (I 627): 'mala a Deo cognoscuntur, non tamen in Deo existunt secundum quod mala, quia sic loquimur in proposito. – Ideo, inquam, cognoscuntur, quia sicut 'rectum est iudex sui et obliqui' sic summa veritas et lux et actus est ratio cognoscendi non tantum veritatem et lucem et actum, sed etiam obliquitatem, tenebram et privationem. Unde lux se ipsa tenebram cognoscit.'

92 Cf. Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, I c. 1, 71a 1.

93 *Hexaameron* V.30 (V 359): 'Et si omnis cognitio fit ex praexistenti cognitione: ergo

sion deserves attention: not first being itself, rather the light through which it is known is experienced. Now there is something peculiar about this cognitive state labeled 'experience' here: as experience, it suggests a certain immediacy, but as a state induced by the resolution of knowledge, it is *mediated*. One could say that the *awareness* of this light and, consequently, of its knowledge of first being is not pre-existing nor presupposed, but only established after resolving. This suggests the following structure: the knowledge a posteriori of created beings gives access to the awareness of the knowledge of first being as its a priori precondition.

Another element in the phrasing of the conclusion is to be noted: the transition it makes from *ens* to *esse*. From the first two arguments, as they referred to the six disjunctions distinguishing between a first being (*ens primum*) and created being, it was concluded that this first being (*ens primum*) is presupposed to all knowledge of created being. Now, in the final conclusion of this resolution, following upon the third argument, all cognition is instead argued to presuppose knowledge of first being (*esse primum*). Thus, either a meaningful transition from *ens* to *esse* occurred within this resolution, *esse primum* being even prior to *ens primum* in the foundation of knowledge, or these terms are used synonymously in this passage.

Thus, it has not only become clear *that* an account of God as first known is present in *Hexaemeron* V, but also what it amounts to. The next question is how the other two *modi cognoscendi* of the soul's conversion, i.e. reasoning and understanding, relate to the resolution to God as first known.

With the use of discursive reason (*ratiocinando*), i.e. the proceeding from premisses to conclusions by way of argument, the mind infers knowledge of the existence of the first being (*ens primum*) from knowledge of created being. This process is applied to each of the six disjunctions mentioned before: the conditions of created being provide the ground for the conditions of first being; one premiss of the argument is the 'si-ergo' or conditional claim that a created being implies the first being. A reason for this implication is given in each case. For instance, if there is produced being (*ens productum*), there

necessario intelligentia experitur in se, quod habeat aliquod lumen, per quod cognoscat primum esse.'

must be a first being (*ens primum*), because the effect postulates its cause.<sup>94</sup>

A second premiss is left implicit by Bonaventure, i.e. that created being, the antecedent of the conditional claim, does indeed exist, in order to logically conclude that the consequent of the conditional claim, first being, is true as well. In this way, by reasoning, the soul is described to generate propositional, *a posteriori* knowledge concerning the existence of God as the first being (*ens primum*), departing from its effects, created beings. It is thus a proof for the existence of God, as opposed to the resolution following upon it, which is not so much concerned with proving the existence of God, but rather with the *disclosure* of pre-existent knowledge of first being (*primum esse*) based on three epistemological propositions. In the order of the soul's conversion, reasoning leads to the inquiry after knowledge of created being, which leads up to the discovery of knowledge of first being that is presupposed to it. In this way, the converting soul finds out that proving that God as the first being (*ens primum*) exists presupposes pre-existent knowledge of first being (*primum esse*). Knowing by understanding (*intelligendo*), finally, follows upon and presupposes both experience and reasoning:

So therefore, this being presupposed, the intellect understands and says, first being (*primum esse*) is, and nothing truly is being more than the first being, and from this all things have being, because the predicate 'being' only belongs to first being. Similarly, simple being is perfect being as such (*simpliciter*): therefore, nothing can be understood (to be) better. Whence God cannot be thought not to be, as Anselm has proved.<sup>95</sup>

These conclusive insights now deal with first being directly, whereas both reasoning and experience departed from created being. The understanding intellect discriminates between 'being' (*esse*) as it applies

94 *Hexaameron* V.29 (V 359): 'Per viam rationis sic. Si est ens productum: ergo est ens primum, quia effectus ponit causam. (...) Item, si est ens compositum, necesse est, esse simplex, a quo habet esse, quia esse, quod recedit a simplicitate, cadit in compositionem.'

95 *Hexaameron* V.31 (V 359): 'Sic igitur, his praesuppositis, intellectus intelligit et dicit, primum esse est, et nulli vere esse convenit nisi primo esse, et ab ipso omnia habent esse, quia nulli inest hoc praedicatum nisi primo esse. Similiter simplex esse est simpliciter perfectum esse: ergo est quo nihil intelligitur melius. Unde Deus non potest cogitari non esse, ut probat Anselmus.'

to created being and as it applies to first being; in the true and proper sense, being only belongs to first being, whereas created beings have their being from first being, i.e. they participate in it. Since 'being' in the proper sense includes all perfection, it can be identified with God. Taking this into account, the transition from *ens primum* to *esse primum* in the resolution can be considered to be meaningful: analogous to the order of creation, all *concepts* of being (*ens*) 'participate' in primary knowledge of first being or existence (*esse*), implicitly known in all other things known, as knowing 'first existence' enables us to understand that something *is*, which is necessary to think anything at all.<sup>96</sup>

A further indication that the transition is meaningful is the fact that in the quietude of contemplation, first being is considered as unity, truth and goodness (*unitas, veritas, bonitas*) – i.e. *in abstracto*, rather than that unity, truth and goodness are considered as conditions of the divine entity (*ens*).<sup>97</sup>

Finally, after having considered the account of God as first known present in the second way of knowing in *Hexaemeron* V, by experience, as well as its relation with the other two ways of knowing, we call attention to the distinction that Bonaventure makes between what I will label 'Aristotelian' philosophers on the one hand and 'Platonic' philosophers (throughout several chapters, Socrates, Plato, Plotinus and Cicero are mentioned), on the other.

Contemplating first being, the soul is described 'to rise up to divine contuition (*divinum contuitum*), and it states to have an acquired intellect (*intellectum adeptum*), which the philosophers promised and towards which the truth draws it.'<sup>98</sup> The point in this passage is not that the 'promise of philosophy' can only be fulfilled by transcending natural reason. Rather, the promise can be fulfilled by philosophers themselves. Not all of them, but only those who acknowledge first

96 Cf. A. Engemann, "Erleuchtungslehre als Resolutio und Reductio nach Bonaventura," p. 225.

97 *Hexaemeron* V.32 (V 359): 'Quando anima videt hoc familiarius, primo ratiocinando, secundo experiendo, tertio intelligendo; ibi potest quiescere (...) Item, considerat illud esse (...); ut est in eo unitas, veritas, bonitas.'

98 *Ibid.*: '(anima) consurgit ad divinum contuitum, dicit, se habere intellectum adeptum, quem promiserunt philosophi; et ad hoc veritas trahit.' For the term 'contuition', see K. Fedoryka, "Certitude and the Contuition. St. Bonaventure's Contribution to the Theory of Knowledge," in: *Aletheia* 6 (1993/1994), pp. 163–197; B.A. Gendreau, "The Quest for Certainty in St. Bonaventure," pp. 104–227.



being to be an exemplary cause and accomplish the required purgation of the soul by practicing virtue: the ‘Platonic’ philosophers.

With regard to the ‘Platonic’ philosophers, Bonaventure argues in *Hexaemeron* V that they understood that contemplation requires a conversion of the soul to an inner light of truth, through which it finds an exemplary cause, and that this conversion requires a purified intellect, which is why they lived by and taught on virtues. In particular, Socrates is mentioned to have argued that an intellect capable of contemplation is only attainable when the soul is purified (*purgata*).<sup>99</sup> Subsequently, in chapter VI, it is affirmed that philosophers of the Platonic tradition indeed succeeded to attain wisdom through contemplation by means of an elevation of their minds through the conversion described in chapter V: here, it is argued that the soul of ‘the most noble and ancient philosophers’, *by reasoning, experiencing and understanding*, rose to contemplation of wisdom in an eternal light, as they recognized a being which is not only first principle and final end, but also exemplary cause.<sup>100</sup> Bonaventure explicitly states ‘that this eternal light is the exemplary cause of everything, and (...) an elevated mind, like that of the other (i.e. Platonic), most noble and ancient philosophers, is capable to arrive at (the contemplation of) it.’<sup>101</sup>

Bonaventure distinguishes these ‘Platonic’ philosophers from other

99 *Hexaemeron* V.33 (V 359): ‘Dum haec igitur percipit et consurgit ad divinum contuitum (...) Sed tamen per virtutes oportet devenire, sicut fecerunt philosophi; quando viderunt, quod tam alte non posset perveniri nisi per virtutes, converterunt se ad docendum illas, ut fecit Socrates; unde reputatur minus bene dixisse, eo quod tantum de illis dixit sed hoc fecit, quia videbat, quod ad illum intellectum non potest perveniri, nisi anima sit purgata.’ Bonaventure draws on Augustine, who argues in *De civitate Dei* VIII.3 (ed. B. Dombart, A. Kalb, Brepols: Turnhout 2003, pp. 218–9) ‘Socrates ergo, primus universam philosophiam ad corrigendos componendosque mores flexisse memoratur, cum ante illum omnes magis physicis, id est naturalibus, rebus perscrutandis operam maximam impenderent. (...) Quando quidem ab eis causas rerum videbat inquiri, quas primas atque summas non nisi in unius ac summi Dei voluntate esse credebatur; unde non eas putabat nisi mundata mente posse comprehendere; et ideo purgandae bonis moribus vitae censebat instandum, ut (...) animus naturali vigore in aeterna se adtolleret naturamque incorporei et incommutabilis luminis, ubi causae omnium factarum naturarum stabiliter vivunt, intelligentiae puritate conspiceret.’

100 *Hexaemeron* VI.1 (V 360): ‘(Deus) videre fecit per contemplationem sapientialem (...) consurgit anima in illam lucem ratiocinando, experiendo, intelligendo, ut dictum est. Et ad hoc venerunt philosophi et nobiles eorum et antiqui, quod esset principium et finis et ratio exemplaris.’

101 *Hexaemeron* VI.6 (V 361): ‘Dico ergo, quod illa lux aeterna est exemplar omnium,

philosophers, with Aristotle as their leader (*princeps*), who are argued not to be enlightened as they did not acknowledge an exemplary cause.<sup>102</sup> Their *hybris* caused them to make many scientific errors, such as the positing of the eternity of the world,<sup>103</sup> although they were under the impression they were wise, and they promised their disciples wisdom and beatitude, to be attained by an ‘acquired intellect’ (*intellectus adeptus*)<sup>104</sup> – a term which links this Aristotelianism to Arabic philosophy and its influence on the Latin West.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, resolving to first being (*primum esse*) as first known is what the ‘Platonic’ philosophers succeed in, whereas the ‘Aristotelian’ philosophers do not acknowledge the inner light of the soul nor first being as exemplary cause, and therefore do not succeed at tracing natural knowledge all the way back to pre-existent and a priori knowledge of first being, by which all created things are known and judged. As I will argue, this surpassing of the ‘Aristotelian’ by the ‘Platonic’ position in the context of the first resolution to God as first known in *Hexaameron* V prefigures the subsequent surpassing of this first resolution by the second resolution in chapter X – which presupposes the transition from the first to the second vision in the *Hexaameron*.

et quod mens elevata, ut mens aliorum nobilium philosophorum antiquorum, ad hoc pervenit.’

102 *Hexaameron* VI.2 (V 360): ‘Divisit tamen Deus lucem a tenebris (...) Sed unde aliqui tenebras secuti sunt? Ex hoc, quod licet omnes viderint primam causam omnium principium, omnium finem, in medio tamen diversificati sunt. Nam aliqui negaverunt, in ipsa esse exemplaria rerum; quorum princeps videtur fuisse Aristoteles, qui et in principio Metaphysicae et in fine et in multis aliis locis exsecratur ideas Platonis.’

103 *Hexaameron* IV.1 (V 349): ‘Unde dicit Psalmus: Signatum est super nos lumen vullus tui, Domine. Et hic possent explicari es difficultates philosophiae. Philosophi dederunt novem scientias et polliciti sunt dare decimam, scilicet contemplationem. Sed inulli philosophi, dum se voluerunt dividere a tenebris erroris, magnis erroribus se immiscuerunt; dicentes enim, se esse sapientes, stulti facti sunt; superbientes de sua scientia, luciferiani facti.’; *Hexaameron* V.21 (V357): ‘Sed in his omnibus luxuriata est ratio; luxuriata est metaphysica: quia quidam posuerunt mundum aeternum, quia, si causa aeterna, et effectus aeternus; et isti male senserunt de causa prima.’

104 *Hexaameron* V.22 (V 357): ‘(philosophi) voluerunt ad sapientiam pervenire, et veritas trahebat eos; et promiserunt dare sapientiam, hoc est beatitudinem, hoc est intellectum adeptum; promiserunt, inquam, discipulis suis.’

105 Cf. D.N. Hasse, “Das Lehrstück von den vier Intellekten in der Scholastik: von den arabischen Quellen bis zu Albertus Magnus,” pp. 21–77.

#### 4.2.4 *The transition from intelligence given by nature to that lifted up by faith in the Hexaemeron*

In the preceding, I argued that, in *Hexaemeron* V and VI, a distinction is made between two positions: that of the philosophers who acknowledge first being to be an exemplary cause and accomplish the required purgation of the soul by practicing virtues, and that of philosophers who do not recognize this exemplary cause and do not relate virtuousness to the purification of the soul, in order to be able to contemplate this exemplary being.

However, in chapter VII, on the verge of the transition from the vision by means of what is given to the soul by nature to the vision of the soul lifted up by faith, this opposition is replaced by a new opposition. Here, Bonaventure argues that *all* philosophers have failed to attain wisdom. He no longer distinguishes between two kinds of pagan philosophers now, but rather, he distinguishes between those who lack Christian faith on the one hand, and those who are enlightened by this faith on the other. The latter realize, thus he argues here, that philosophy and reason are merely supplementary and subordinate to theology and faith.

Thus, whereas the Platonic philosophers, because of their acknowledgement of and conversion to an inner light through which the exemplary cause is known, were claimed to be enlightened in *Hexaemeron* V, they are argued to remain in darkness from *Hexaemeron* VII onwards, because of the fact they lacked Christian faith. Only *seemingly*, Bonaventure states now, these philosophers were illuminated and happy.<sup>106</sup> However, they were wrong in assuming that their souls were elevated through a modification, purification and reformation by their virtues, because only virtues ‘clothed with faith’ truly heal, rectify and direct the soul.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *Hexaemeron* VII.3 (V 365): ‘alii philosophi illuminati posuerunt ideas; qui fuerunt cultores unus Dei, et virtutes erunt virtutes exemplares, a quibus fluunt virtutes cardinales, primo in vim *cognitivam* et per illam in *affectivam*, deinde in *operativam*, secundum illud ‘scire, velle et impermutabiliter operari’, sicut posuit nobilissimus Plotinus de secta Platonis et Tullius sectae academicae. Et ita isti videbantur illuminati et per se posse habere felicitatem.’

<sup>107</sup> *Hexaemeron* VII.4–5 (V 366): ‘Illi autem praecipui philosophi posuerunt, sic etiam illuminati, tamen sine fide, per defluxum in nostrum cognitionem virtutes cardinales. Quae primo dicuntur politicae, in quantum docent conversationem in mundo; secundo purgatoriae quantum ad solitariam contemplationem, tertio, purgati animi, ut animam quietari faciant in exemplari. Dixerunt ergo, per has

Hence, not only the Aristotelians, but also these ‘noble’ (*praecipui*) philosophers are now denied to have attained an elevated or ‘acquired’ intellect. Rather, both are compared to ostriches, birds that are unable to fly.<sup>108</sup> The true conversion and elevation of the soul are only established if both virtuousness and the soul’s natural intellectual capacities are aided by faith.<sup>109</sup>

Besides the light the soul is naturally given, Bonaventure moreover introduces a ‘light of faith’ (*lumen fidei*), without which one will remain ‘in the dark’.<sup>110</sup> Compared to this light of faith, the inner light that is naturally given to the soul is only faint and obscure. In chapter VIII, the first chapter of the second vision on intelligence lifted up by faith, Bonaventure elaborates upon the qualities of faith as compared to what is naturally given to the soul, arguing that only faith ‘gives height to the soul, transcending all insights by means of natural reason,’ while eradicating all doubt and wandering and providing us with clarity.<sup>111</sup> If the truths of faith (*credibilia*) are understood, Bonaventure explains

virtutes animam modificari, purgari et reformari. Sed adhuc in tenebris sunt, quia necesse est, ut hae virtutes prius habeant tres operationes, scilicet animam ordinare in finem; secundo, rectificare affectum animae; tertio, quod sanentur mormidi. Has autem operationes non habuerunt in ipsis.’

108 *Hexaemeron* VII.12 (V 367): ‘Isti philosophi habuerunt pennas struthionum, quia affectus non erant sanati nec ordinati nec rectificati; quod non fit nisi per fidem.’

109 Rüdi Imbach, in his article “Bonaventura: Collationes in Hexaemeron,” presents Bonaventure’s metaphysics as both *exemplaristic* and *christocentric*. Whereas he relates this exemplaristic feature to reduction, as it was carried out in the first vision by means of the soul’s natural capacities, he relates this christocentric feature to the idea expressed in the second vision: without the support of faith the mind cannot be enlightened. Thus Bonaventure shows, he argues, that the true metaphysician needs to be a Christian (Cf. R. Imbach, “Bonaventura: Collationes in Hexaemeron,” p. 281), and that, with this treatise, Bonaventure warns for a wrong perception of philosophy with regard to theology and the independence of philosophy: ‘In seinen Augen hat die Philosophie nur als Etappe auf dem Weg zur Weisheit und zur Wahrheit eine Berechtigung. Man darf in keinem Falle bei ihr stehenbleiben oder in ihr verweilen.’ (pp. 285–88). Cf. I. Delio, “Theology, Metaphysics, and the Centrality of Christ,” in: *Theological Studies* 68 (2007), pp. 254–73.

110 *Hexaemeron* VII.3 (V 366): ‘Sed adhuc isti in tenebris fuerunt, quia non habuerunt lumen fidei.’

111 *Hexaemeron* VIII.2 (V 309): ‘Fides enim reddit sublimem animam vel intelligentiam, quia transcendit omnem rationem et investigationem rationis; reddit stabilem, quia excludit dubitationem et vacillationem; reddit etiam spectabilem, quia multiformem ostendit claritatem.’

in chapter IX, they have solid grounds (*rationes solidas*),<sup>112</sup> as the truths the scriptures reveal to the faithful are indubitable.<sup>113</sup>

Along these lines, Bonaventure does not so much deny the enlightenment of the ‘Platonic’ philosophers he argued for in *Hexaemeron* V: they were wise and enlightened compared to their ‘Aristotelian’ counterparts. Rather, he stresses that, as they did not enhance their natural enlightenment with this light of faith, they remained in the dark when compared to the faithful, as faith provides the soul with true certainty, clarity and indubitability. Therefore, only those who regard natural enlightenment and philosophy as propaedeutic to the enlightenment of faith and theology are truly enlightened.<sup>114</sup>

Thus, still within the first *visio* on intelligence given by nature, anticipating the second vision on the soul lifted up by faith, *fides ergo sola divisit lucem a tenebris* has become the criterium of the soul’s enlightenment, rather than the mere conversion to an exemplary cause, thus dividing the true believers from those who only had philosophy.<sup>115</sup> Whereas the first account of God as first known in *Hexaemeron* V was part of the soul’s conversion by means of what is naturally given to it, a second account presented in *Hexaemeron* X is based on credible truths, i.e. what is revealed through the scriptures to the soul converted by faith.

112 *Hexaemeron* X.4 (V 377–378): ‘Nota etiam (...) quaedam autem credibilia sunt intelligibilia; et quando intelliguntur, rationes solidas habent.’

113 Cf. *Hexaemeron* IX.20 (V 375): ‘Hi veri testes sunt Scripturae, Prophetiae et Apostoli. (...) Veritas ergo ista est infallibilis (...) impossibile est, quod videatur alicubi nisi in veritate certa. – Vetus ergo testamentum et novum in magna consonantia et harmonia conveniunt (...) ut nulla sit dubitatio.’

114 Or, as Bonaventure puts it in one of his other *collationes*, written around the same time: ‘the soul has a multiform brightness and from one light, it transcends to another.’ However, only the faithful are ‘transformed from brightness into brightness’ (*transformamur a claritate in claritatem*), whereas those adhering to philosophy alone ‘fall into into darkness’, notwithstanding their recognition of a light given by nature. Cf. *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti* IV.2–3 (V 474) and IV.12 (V 476).

115 *Hexaemeron* VII.13 (V 367): ‘Fides ergo sola divisit lucem a tenebris (...) Fides enim (...) sanat animam et ipsam sanatam purificat, elevat et deiformat. Modo sumus in vera luce; non sic illi qui somniant, qui accipiunt falsa pro veris, ut idolum pro Deo.’

#### 4.2.5 God as first known in Chapter X of the *Hexaameron*

The tenth chapter of the *Hexaameron* is the third *collatio* on the second vision, in which the mind is ‘lifted up by faith’. It introduces twelve revealed truths (*speculationes*), by means of which the faithful soul is argued to acquire access to (*ingrediuntur*) contemplation.<sup>116</sup> The preceding vision described contemplation as accessible *without* these revealed truths, but, as I made clear, this position is abandoned towards the end of the consideration of intelligence given by nature. In particular, this chapter investigates the first of these revealed truths, i.e. that God is first (*credere Deum primum*). An account of God as first known belongs to this investigation. It contains two steps, corresponding to Bonaventure’s thesis that the primacy of divine being is one of the *credibilia* that is also intelligible:<sup>117</sup> first, it is argued to be revealed that ‘divine being comes into the mind first’ (*esse enim divinum primum est, quod venit in mente*). Second, Bonaventure concludes from an analysis of the order of creation, departing from conditions of created being, that ‘the first of all intellectual things is first being (*primum esse*).’

First of all, that divine being is ‘the first thing that comes into the mind’ is presented as a ‘pre-existing truth’ (*veritas praeexistens*) regarding God’s essence. This truth is revealed to us through the scriptures.<sup>118</sup> But what does it mean that God comes into the mind first? In what way is this truth ‘pre-existent’? On three different levels, the purport of this revelation is explained. First, Bonaventure argues that ‘being’ (*esse*) is the first and most proper divine name.<sup>119</sup> Second, divine being is claimed to be first as the principle underlying all *propositional* knowledge.<sup>120</sup>

116 *Hexaameron* X.3 (V 377): ‘Secundum (duodecim speculationes) igitur ingrediuntur ad contemplationem, nec potest ad visiones Apocalypsis homo mundanus accedere, nisi intelligat ista.’

117 *Hexaameron* X.9 (V 378): ‘Oportet, Deum esse primum; ergo est credibile et intelligibile.’

118 *Hexaameron* X.6 (V 378): ‘Ut veritatis praeexistentis tripliciter: vel quantum ad essentiam, vel quantum ad excellentiam, vel quantum ad refulgentiam. Esse enim divinum primum est, quod venit in mente. Unde Moysi quaerenti, quod esset nomen Dei; respondit Deus: Ego sum qui sum.’

119 *Hexaameron* X.10 (V 378): ‘Primum nomen Dei est esse, quod est manifestissimum et perfectissimum, ideo primum.’

120 This is the case, Bonaventure argues, because from every proposition, it follows that God is. Bonaventure’s argument is based on the idea that every proposition, either affirmative or negative, uses, or can be formulated to use, the copula ‘is’. In this sense, a proposition always presupposes God’s first name ‘being’ (*esse*),

Third, that God as first being (*primum esse*) is the first of all intellectual things is declared following upon an analysis of creation. Bonaventure first infers the existence of God as first being (*esse primum*) from the conditions of created being. Subsequently, he quotes the author of the *Liber de causis*, who states that ‘being’ (*esse*) is the first of created things, and advances in opposition to this statement his own thesis that first being is first of all *intellectual* things.

Bonaventure argues all creatures constitute a mirror-like reflection of the truth that God is first in three different ways; from the perspective of (1) the order, (2) the origin and (3) the completion of creation.<sup>121</sup> The way creation is *ordered* shows that from the posterior a prior, and eventually, a first is deduced; the things with inferior dignity refer to the superior, and these eventually refer to the highest thing; temporal things are reduced to endless things, and eventually to the eternal.<sup>122</sup> From the perspective of *origin*, every created being postulates its cause, and everything that is caused postulates the first cause of all things. Therefore, if there is created being, there must be uncreated being (*ens increatum*); if there is participating being, there must be essential being; if there is composed being, there must be simple being; if there is multiform being, there must be uniform being.<sup>123</sup> The third perspective concerns the order of *completion*; if there is potential being, there is actual being (*esse actuale*), if there is mutable being, there is immutable being; if there is being according to something else, there is simple being; if there is dependent being, there is absolute being; if there is categorial being, there is being (*esse*) outside every *genus*. Whence,

or ‘that God is.’; *Hexaemeron* X.11 (V 378): ‘Deum esse primum, manifestissimum est, quia ex omni propositione, tam affirmativa quam negativa, sequitur, Deum esse, etiam si dicas: Deus non est, sequitur: si Deus non est, Deus est; quia omnis propositio infert se affirmativam et negativam, ut si Socrates non currit, verum est, Socratem non currere.’

121 *Hexaemeron* X.12 (V 378): ‘Consideratur etiam haec veritas quasi in quodam speculo, quod confortat et dat visum. Omnis enim creatura concurrat ad hoc speculum faciendum et iungitur in hoc speculo secundum viam ordinis, originis, completionis.’

122 *Ibid.*: ‘Primo tripliciter: secundum rationem posterioris ad prius, inferioris ad superius, temporis ad aevum et aevi ad aeternitatem.’

123 *Hexaemeron* X.15 (V 379): ‘Alio modo omnis creatura dicit, Deum esse secundum rationem originis: ut si est ens creatum, est ens increatum et si est ens per participationem, est ens per essentiam; si est ens per compositionem, est ens per simplicitatem; si est ens per multiformitatem, est ens per uniformitatem vel identitatem.’

God is a being (*ens*) outside and above every genus, Bonaventure concludes.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, from created being, the primacy of (the existence of) divine being (*ens* or *esse*) is inferred by means of three series of disjunctions, each linking a condition of created being to a condition of first being. From these inferences, Bonaventure concludes the following:

Therefore, these reflections on the order, origin and completion lead to that first being (*illud esse primum*) which is represented by all creatures. This name is indeed inscribed in all things (...) Whence he (the author of *Liber de causis*) said: the first of all created things is being (*esse*); but I say: the first of all intellectual things is first being (*esse primum*).<sup>125</sup>

The first statement refers to the knowledge of first being that is derived from the conditions of created being in the deductions presented. Represented by all creatures, its name is inscribed in all of them. Obviously, the claim is not just that there *is* first being – a proof of God's existence –, but that within created being, information about the first being is already contained; full knowledge of created being therefore presupposes knowledge of first being. Finally, in a conclusive statement Bonaventure strikingly opposes this version of God as first known to the fourth proposition of *De causis*: *prima rerum creatarum est esse*.

By means of this transition from the consideration of the structure of creation to what is prior in the order of knowledge, Bonaventure aimed at positing an analogy between the order of being and the order of knowledge: in the mind and in the world outside, things are similarly ordered. This does however not explain why Bonaventure refers to the author of *Liber de causis* at this precise point. Moreover, why does he oppose the author's statement to his own thesis that first being is the first of all intellectual things, although the former statement designates

124 *Hexaemeron* X.17 (V 379): 'Tertio modo ratione completionis. Si est esse potentiale, est esse actuale; si est esse mutabile, est esse immutabile; si est esse secundum quid, est esse simpliciter; si est esse dependens, est esse absolutum; si est esse in genere, est esse extra genus (...) Unde Deus est ens extra genus est supra genus.'

125 *Hexaemeron* X.18 (V 379): 'Hae igitur speculationes ordinis, originis et completionis ducunt ad illud esse primum, quod representant omnes creaturae. Hoc enim nomen scriptum est in omnibus rebus; et sunt hae conditiones entis, super quas fundantur certissimae illationes. Unde dixit ille: prima rerum creatarum omnium est esse; sed ego dico: prima rerum intellectualium est esse primum.'



the order of creation, whereas the latter applies to the domain of the intellect? There appears to be no contradiction between these two theses.

Some of Bonaventure's contemporaries, however, connect this statement found in *Liber de causis* to the idea that being is fundamental in the consideration of creation, rather than first being (*primum esse*). For instance, in his *Summa de creaturis*, Albert the Great interprets 'being is the first of all created things' in such a way that being (*esse* or *ens*) pertains to the order of cognition in the sense that it is the concept beyond which the resolution of other concepts cannot go; in the intellect, being itself has nothing prior to it, whereas whatever comes after it presupposes (the simple concept of) being.<sup>126</sup>

In the *Hexaameron*, Bonaventure objects to this interpretation. He does not infer from the statement of the *Liber de causis* that being (*esse*) is first known, but stresses that what it means for something to be created and to be understood by us is not so much determined by its participation in created being (*esse creatum*), but instead, created being is characterized by its relation or reference to *first* being, as the conditions of created being indubitably point to this first cause. He shows this by means of his analysis of the structure of creation, and that understanding of created being necessarily presupposes an understanding of what it refers to. Hence, first being (*primum esse*) is inscribed in all things, and, correspondingly, it is 'the first of all intellectual things'.

Thus, a second account of God as first known is given in *Hexaameron* X, this time starting with God's primacy as a credible truth; that divine being (*esse divinum*) 'comes into the mind first' is, first of all, a truth revealed. Bonaventure combines this theological truth with the insight that God is first known, acquired through an analysis of creation, which is to show that created being is essentially characterized by its reference to first being and that, therefore, understanding created being necessarily presupposes an understanding of God as first being (*primum esse*). Appropriately, Jan Aertsen calls this movement from created being as first known to God as first known a *theologizing transformation*.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Cf. n. 114 and 115 of Chapter 2.

<sup>127</sup> Jan Aertsen, who approaches Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known primarily from the perspective of his treatment of the transcendentals, argues that: 'For Bonaventure, that which is transcendental and that which is transcendent

#### 4.2.6 *Conclusions from the analysis of the Hexaameron*

Two accounts of God as first known are presented in the *Hexaameron*. In the fifth chapter, dealing with what can be known by natural means, a resolution to God as first known is part of an account of the mind's experience of an inner light of truth, through which first being (*primum esse*) is known. This resolution is embarked upon by the reasoning mind, departing from created being, and conducted by means of the analysis of six disjunctions, opposing and resolving knowledge of the conditions of created being to that of the conditions of first being, until the soul finally experiences an inner light, by which it knows first being first. Thus, by means of a discovery of pre-existent and a priori knowledge of first being (implicitly present in all natural knowledge, by which all created things are known and judged), the *awareness* of first being as first known is established reflexively.

The second account of God as first known, in *Hexaameron X*, explicitly identifies what is first known as divine being that comes into the mind first (*primum divinum esse est quod primum venit in mente*). As such, first being is argued to be the first of all intellectual things. The argument involves an analysis of the conditions of created being, showing that creation is essentially characterized by its reference to first being. Because of this referential character, Bonaventure argues, understanding created being presupposes an understanding of that which it refers to, which is first being.

Both accounts of God as first known correspond to different levels of the soul's transformation as it is thematized in the *Hexaameron*, and are related to different cognitive dispositions (described by the subsequent '*visiones*'). The account of *Hexaameron V* is accomplished by means of the soul's natural capacities, the account of *Hexaameron X* is established on the basis of revealed knowledge, by the soul reformed through faith.

Three conclusions can be drawn with regard to the way in which these two accounts relate. The first conclusion concerns their *epistemic difference*. Revealed knowledge, to be received only by a mind transformed through faith, is argued to exceed philosophical knowledge in

are connected in such a way that what is first in the cognitive order is at the same time the ontological first. God is the first known; the principles of knowledge and of being are identical. The doctrine of the transcendentals experiences in Bonaventure a theologizing transformation (...). Cf. J.A. Aertsen, "What is first and most fundamental?," p. 191.

certainty, clarity and scope. From this perspective, knowledge of God as first known acquired solely by the soul's natural capacities is less certain, whereas in the second account of God as first known, in *Hexaameron X*, both faith and revealed truth give solidity to the grounds provided by reason and rational investigation. Moreover, whereas the immediacy of revealed truth allows being as first known to be identified automatically with divine being in *Hexaameron X*, the experience resulting from the resolution of *Hexaameron V* has the inner light as its object – the awareness that God is known first is acquired only reflexively.

The second conclusion concerns the *development* of the discourse on the soul set out in the *Hexaameron*: the resolution of *Hexaameron V* is part of a conversion that some, i.e. 'Platonic', philosophers strove after in order to find wisdom through contemplation. These philosophers are distinguished from the 'Aristotelian' philosophers, who neither acknowledged first being to be an exemplary cause nor accomplished the required purgation of the soul. This position has been abandoned in *Hexaameron X*. Now, contemplation is regarded only as possible for the soul transformed by faith, able to receive revealed cq. theological truths.

The third conclusion concerns, similarly to the *Itinerarium*, a case of *prefiguration*: if the distinction between the accounts of God as first known in *Hexaameron V* and *X* is explained from the perspective of the transition from the first to the second vision in the *Hexaameron*, the surpassing of the first resolution by the second resolution is prefigured by the surpassing of the 'Aristotelian' by the 'Platonic' position in the context of the first resolution to God as first known in *Hexaameron V*.

A final conclusion from my analysis of both accounts of God as first known in the *Hexaameron* concerns the role and status of philosophy in this work. Since Gilson's study of Bonaventure's thought, in which he addressed it as 'the most medieval' of all medieval philosophies because Bonaventure rejected pure reason as its ultimate foundation,<sup>128</sup> there has been a major discussion on Bonaventure's approach to philosophy.<sup>129</sup> Even more, the philosophical purport of Bonaventure's thought *as such* is questioned: is his thought to be designated as 'anti-

128 E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, p. 437.

129 Next to the authors discussed here, cf. G. Wieland, "Plato oder Aristoteles? Überlegungen zur Aristoteles-Rezeption des lateinischen Mittelalters," in: *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 47 (4) (1985), pp. 605–630; P. Robert, (1950) "Le problème de la philosophie bonaventurienne," in: *Laval theologique et philosophique* 6 (1950), pp. 145–163; R.J. Roch, "The philosophy of St. Bonaventure. A Controversy," in:

philosophical', even 'anti-intellectual', or is it merely 'anti-Aristotelian'? Ferdinand van Steenberghen, for instance, has called it: 'an eclectic Aristotelianism with neo-Platonic tendencies, put at the service of an Augustinian theology.'<sup>130</sup>

As the *Hexaameron* prominently deals with philosophy and philosophers, this work is often cited in this discussion. Rüdi Imbach, for instance, holds that the *Hexaameron* has a profound philosophical purport, because Bonaventure unfolds a precise and elaborate conception of philosophy in this work. Therefore, he regards the *Hexaameron* to be of philosophical importance as it is an *historical document* that reports on the disputed place of philosophy in the 13th century.<sup>131</sup> However, Imbach still chooses to designate the work as an *antiphilosophical manifesto*: not only as it criticizes philosophers and identifies several philosophical aporias, but also because it determines the place and content of philosophy strictly from the perspective of Christian faith and theology. Bonaventure introduces the heteronomy of philosophy, Imbach argues; rather than bound to its own autonomous rules, it is subjected to the regime of Christianity, an *intellektuelle Fremdbestimmtheit*.<sup>132</sup>

In *The theology of history in St. Bonaventure*, Joseph Ratzinger presents a comparable interpretation of the *Hexaameron*: he argues that it not only deals with 'a battle against a self-sufficient philosophy standing over against faith,' but represents a *general* anti-philosophical, even anti-intellectual attitude.<sup>133</sup> Andreas Speer, however, strongly objects to the idea that the *Hexaameron* is an anti-Aristotelian, anti-philosophical, or anti-scholastic manifest, and calls this a 'mislabeling'. In no other work, he argues, does Bonaventure give such a systematic and concise

*Franciscan Studies* 19 (1959), pp. 209–226; F. Van Steenberghen, *La philosophie au XIIIe. siècle*, Chapter V: 'Saint Bonaventure et la philosophie,' Publications universitaires: Louvain – Béatrice-Nauwelaerts: Paris 1966, 190–271; J.-G. Bougerol, "Dossier pour l'étude des rapports entre saint Bonaventure et Aristote," in: *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 40 (1973), pp. 135–222; Chr. Wénin, "La connaissance philosophique d'après saint Bonaventure," in: Idem (ed.), *L'homme et son destin d'Après les Penseurs du Moyen Age. Actes du Premier Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale, Louvain – Bruxelles, 28 Août – 4 Septembre 1958*, Béatrice-Nauwelaerts: Louvain 1960, pp. 485–494.

130 F. van Steenberghen, *Aristotle in the West: The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, E. Nauwelaerts: Louvain 1955, p. 162.

131 R. Imbach, "Bonaventura: *Collationes* in *Hexaameron*," p. 286.

132 *Ibid.*, 288.

133 J. Ratzinger, *Die Geschichtstheologie des Heiligen Bonaventura*, esp. chapter 4.1: 'Die These Gilsons und seiner Anhänger: Bonaventura der Augustinist', pp. 121–127.

presentation of his general approach to philosophy, something that becomes clear immediately in the first *collatio*. Furthermore, Speer argues, philosophical knowledge is integrally part of the series of insights that soul acquires in the *Hexaameron*. Therefore, philosophy is everything but discarded as a worthwhile discipline in the *Hexaameron*.<sup>134</sup>

Etienne Gilson, like Imbach, holds that the *Hexaameron* makes clear that reason is only competent in its own field if it keeps its gaze fixed upon truths beyond its competence.<sup>135</sup> However, at the same time, it defends that natural reason *itself* is a light of divine origin. Consequently, there is nothing wrong in following it. Philosophy even confers infallible certitude upon our thought.<sup>136</sup> Like Speer, Gilson regards the heteronomy of philosophy to be inherent to a discourse that describes the ascending steps and, accompanying, the progressive insights of the soul, rather than something which discards philosophy as such:

(philosophy is) a doctrine essentially intermediate, a way leading to something beyond. Lying between mere faith and theological knowledge, it is doomed to the gravest errors if it regards itself as an absolute, and it must remain incomplete if it will not accept the aid of a discipline higher than itself. But this situation between two modes of knowledge is not peculiar to philosophy: it is of the very essence of each order of knowledge to be simply one stage between two others. (Also) theological knowledge is but a passage between philosophy (and) the light of Glory. No stage of knowledge save the last can attain the fullness of its development save in so far as it sees itself precisely as a stage, and directs the whole of its activity with a view to reaching the point at which the stage above it begins.<sup>137</sup>

Thus, Gilson puts Bonaventure's criticism of philosophy in perspective: *all* stages before the goal of the soul's journey, which is beatitude, are not sufficient in itself, even theology.<sup>138</sup>

134 A. Speer (1997), "Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy," p 28; cf. also A. Speer, "Von der Wissenschaft zur Weisheit. Philosophie im Übergang bei Bonaventura," pp. 115–127.

135 E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, p. 103.

136 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

137 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

138 John White agrees with Gilson: "Theology and philosophy exist (...) not for the sake of knowledge itself but as spiritual exercises conducive to preparing the

From the perspective of my analysis of Bonaventure's treatment of God as first known in the *Hexaameron*, I primarily agree with both Gilson's and Speer's analysis: it has become clear that, whereas philosophy at one stage of the soul's ascent enlightens man, it proves to be insufficient at yet another, higher stage of the soul's development. Nevertheless, philosophy and natural reason, and the insights that they accomplish, are still necessary steps in the soul's ascent towards a state of glory. *Both* accounts of God as first known are part of the 'true', of the pathway that leads the soul towards its completion. Thus, within its own domain, philosophy is a valid discipline, although it serves a higher, external purpose.

Furthermore, Bonaventure's treatment of God as first known in the *Hexaameron* shows that theology and philosophy are two different ways of considering reality and that many things that they consider are the same. But whereas philosophy examines them under the light of reason, theology examines things under the light of faith. The fundamental conviction expressed in this work is however that faith and reason cannot ultimately contradict each other, for the God who has revealed himself through the faith is the same God who created the world and human reason. Hence, even though the metaphysician may not have recourse to the insights of the faithful, under certain conditions, his work is not in vain. In line with the defence of the unity of Christian wisdom against the dispersion of worldly knowledge,<sup>139</sup> in the *Hexaameron*, true metaphysics is described as the discipline that, through spiritual illumination, reduces all of reality to God as its highest principle.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, the task of the metaphysician is to think the relation between the necessary and the contingent rather than to further explore contingent nature.<sup>141</sup> As I have shown, this is precisely

soul for the reception of wisdom.' This does however not mean that philosophy is not highly valued by Bonaventure, he argues, it is to be seen preparatory to wisdom. Rather, it is seeking scientia at the expense of wisdom that is rejected,' Cf. J.R. White, "St. Bonaventure and the Problem of Doctrinal Development," p. 190.

<sup>139</sup> *De reductione artium* 4 (V 321): 'Metaphysica (consideratio est) circa cognitionem omnium entium, quae reducit ad unum primum principium, ex quo exierunt secundum rationes ideales, sive ad Deum in quantum principium, finis et exemplar; licet inter metaphysicos de huiusmodi rationibus nonnulla controversia'.

<sup>140</sup> *Hexaameron* I 17 (V 332): 'Hoc est medium metaphysicum, et haec est tota nostra metaphysica: de emanatione, de exemplaritate, de consumatione, scilicet illuminari per radios spirituales et reducit ad summum. Et sic eris verus metaphysicus'

<sup>141</sup> *Hexaameron* I 12 (V 331): 'Primum ergo medium est essentia aeternali generatione

what is done in the metaphysician's discovery of God as first known in *Hexaameron* V.

### 4.3 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have provided an analysis of the accounts of God as first known that Bonaventure presents in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaameron*. This analysis reveals, notwithstanding the various differences between both accounts, a *structural similarity* between these two works with regard to the treatment of God as first known. The following similarities can be identified:

First of all, in both works, a *double account* of God as first known is given, each account indicating a different stage of the soul's knowledge of God.

Second, in both texts, these accounts of God as first known have different *outcomes*. In the third chapter of the *Itinerarium*, on the knowledge of God that the soul can attain by means of natural reason, a resolution to God as 'a most pure, most complete, most actual, and absolute being (*ens*)' is given *within* the consideration of being (*ens*). Whereas the resolution in *Itinerarium* III dealt with concrete being (*ens*), the resolution of *Itinerarium* V passes beyond the level of the concrete. Here, it is argued that divine being as such (*esse divinum*) is first known. As pure actuality, divine being falls into the intellect first, and is presupposed in the understanding of every concrete being (*ens*). Whereas the immediacy of revealed truth allows being as first known to be identified as *divine* being in *Hexaameron* X, the experience resulting from the resolution of *Hexaameron* V has the inner light of truth as its object – the awareness that God is first known is acquired only reflexively.

Third, in both works, the *transition* from the first account of God as first known to the second is *prefigured* by a distinction within the first account. Whereas the resolution of *Itinerarium* III resolves *within*

primarium. Esse enim non est nisi dupliciter: vel esse, quod est ex se et secundum se et propter se, vel esse, quod est ex alio et secundum aliud et propter aliud. Necesse etiam est, ut esse, quod est ex se, sit secundum se et propter se. Esse ex se est in ratione originantis; esse secundum se in ratione exemplantis, et esse propter se in ratione finientis vel terminantis; id est in ratione principii, medii et finis seu termini'.

the domain of being (*ens*) to a concrete absolute being (*ens absolutum*), the resolution of *Itinerarium V* transgresses the domain of entities by resolving to divine existence as such (*esse divinum*). This surpassing of the first resolution by the second is prefigured by a parallel pattern *within* the first resolution. The first part of the first resolution is presented as a complete resolution at first, as the comprehension of a thing is identified with completely knowing (*plene scire*) the definition of something, whereas the second part of the resolution replaces this first ‘*plene*’ with another; i.e. an understanding completely resolving (*plene resolvens*) into an understanding of an perfect and absolute being.

Similar to the *Itinerarium*, we find a case of prefiguration in the *Hexaemeron*: the resolution of *Hexaemeron V* is part of a description of a conversion of the soul in order to find wisdom through contemplation. Here, ‘Platonic’, philosophers are argued to have succeeded and to have become enlightened, whereas the ‘Aristotelian’ philosophers, who neither acknowledged first being to be an exemplary cause nor accomplished the required purgation of the soul, failed and remained in the dark. This position has been abandoned in *Hexaemeron X*. Now, only the soul transformed by faith is able to find wisdom through contemplation. Correspondingly, the knowledge that God is the first of all intellectual things is now posited as a truth that is only revealed to the faithful soul, which excludes *all* pagan philosophers.

The question remains what can be concluded with regard to Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known on the basis of these similarities. Can it be argued that both works present two accounts of God as first known, the first of which turns out to be false, whereas the second presents the true foundation of all knowledge? In the next chapter, I will argue the contrary: both accounts of God as first known are true, although the second qualifies the first. What accounts for this is a *fourth similarity* between these texts: both works deal with the soul’s transformation in its ‘meditative ascent’ to God in a special way. In these discourses, the quality, scope and nature of knowledge that the subject attains, differ in its subsequent stages of development. It is therefore not only at the *end* of its journey that true knowledge or insight is attained. Rather, *throughout* it, insights and truths are established, which are legitimate under the circumstances of a specific stage, but qualified, replaced, or made more profound in a next stage, in accordance with another, higher state of being. This epistemology provides the doctrine of God as first known with a *dynamic* character, which will be explored in Chapter 5.





## *The dynamic doctrine of God as first known in the Itinerarium mentis in Deum and the Collationes in Hexaemeron*

IN BOTH THE *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, two accounts of God as first known are found. In the former chapter, an analysis of these accounts has shed light on the way in which these accounts relate to one another, and what this means for Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known in general. From this analysis, it was concluded that these works exhibit a *structural similarity* with regard to their treatment of God as first known. Furthermore, it was argued that that the doctrine acquires a *dynamic* character in both works. The final section of Chapter 4 shortly described what accounts for this dynamic character: the epistemology that belongs to the specific discursive character of the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, two texts that deal with the soul's transformation in its ascent to God.

The present chapter takes a closer look into the literary-philosophical character of both texts, and the specific epistemology that goes along with it, in order to account for the claim that in these works, the doctrine of God as first known becomes dynamic. It will be argued that, in the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, true knowledge cannot be isolated from its existential dimension, i.e. the being of the transforming soul. Only when regarded in the context of the synthesis that they are part of, concepts and arguments obtain meaning. This also goes for Bonaventure's arguments for God as first known.

First, texts on the medieval meditative ascent as a literary-philosophical genre will be discussed (5.1). In doing so, I will draw extensively on Robert MacMahon's study *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent*, in which he identifies and discusses a genre of medieval texts concerned with the soul's ascent to God.<sup>1</sup> Second, it will be argued that, at least to a large extent, the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* can

1 R. MacMahon, *Understanding the medieval meditative ascent: Augustine, Boethius, Anselm & Dante*, Catholic University of America Press: Washington D.C 2006.

be counted among the texts belonging to this genre on the meditative ascent (5.2 and 5.3). Subsequently, it will be argued that their literary-philosophical form has consequences for the status of theoretical claims that are made in both treatises. Finally, the way in which the specific epistemology of the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* as ‘transformation texts’ gives the doctrine of God as first known a dynamic character will be discussed (5.4 and 5.5).

### 5.1 Texts on the medieval meditative ascent: a literary-philosophical genre

The *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* share the same subject matter: they both deal with the transformation of the soul in its ascent to God. As such, they are part of a vast tradition of Christian discourses on the soul, in which the word ‘transformation’ is part of a rich vocabulary.<sup>2</sup>

This vocabulary, also found in the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, can be argued to express the ‘inner logic’ of the soul’s spiritual development. Theologically, this is characterized as a circular process in which man is formed after God’s image, deformed by sin, reformed by grace by becoming conformed to Christ, recovering its original form as *imago Dei*, and finally, transformed in glory. Philosophically, this development is described as the interior journey that is the return of the soul to God in this life, primarily governed by principles of ascent and return, and based on the *exitus–reditus* scheme of Christian-Platonist thought: just as all things come forth from God, so do all things, including the human soul, return to him.<sup>3</sup>

However, it is not merely a *subject matter* these works have in

2 Kees Waaijman mentions a range of affiliated concepts: to form, deform, reform, to be conformed, transformed and to become deiform. Cf. K. Waaijman, “Conformity in Christ,” in: *Acta Theologica* 27 (4) suppl. 8 (2006), pp. 19–38. Theo Kobusch presents an elaborate study of these discourses on the soul’s transformation in its ascent to God, especially in relation to self-knowledge and metaphysics. For instance, Th. Kobusch, “Lesemeistermetaphysik – Lebemeistermetaphysik. Zur Einheit der Philosophie Meister Eckharts,” in: A. Speer, L. Wegener (eds.), *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, De Gruyter: Berlin – New York 2005, pp. 239–258; Th. Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie: die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 2006.

3 R. MacMahon, *Understanding the medieval meditative ascent: Augustine, Boethius, Anselm & Dante*, p. 1.

common: the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* also share a *form* that reconstructs the soul's transformation. The chapters of both works do not only present but also *represent* the subsequent stages of the soul's transformation. From changing points of view, they describe the soul's changing state of being, and the gradual development of knowledge that goes along with it. Hence, by means of their make-up, both works stage the soul's itinerary, so as to encourage the reader to enter the same spiritual journey.

In doing so, neither work is unique. In his study *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent*,<sup>4</sup> Robert MacMahon defends the thesis that, because of the long-standing practice of *lectio divina* in the Middle Ages, which involved a meditation on the several layers of meaning in the Scriptures, medieval readers expected a philosophical or theological text to have a transformative effect. Medieval writers consciously crafted their work to provide this effect.<sup>5</sup> This resulted in a genre of texts concerned with the soul's meditative ascent, MacMahon argues, in which he counts works such as, Augustine's *Confessiones*, Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae* and Anselm's *Proslogion*.

Furthermore, MacMahon relates the form of the works belonging to this genre to their content. A meditative ascent, he argues, 'unfolds in stages, and each stage represents a level of discourse. (...) Hence, to understand (it) as a whole, we must first grasp the distinguishing features of each level. These are necessarily explicit in its central themes and key words.'<sup>6</sup> Understanding this ascent does not solely require reading, but asks for meditation. Furthermore, he states, we must comprehend the journey as a whole. Because the way in which the levels are related is never fully made explicit in these treatises, but rather, left for the reader to discover, they encourage us even more to ponder upon it.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, understanding the literary-philosophical form is part of understanding the content of these works, MacMahon argues, which requires much more effort than merely understanding the individual claims that are made. In this sense, these texts are pedagogic; rather than addressing the reader as a detached subject, they seek to engage the

4 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

7 *Ibid.*

reader and to involve him *existentially*.<sup>8</sup> In the forthcoming sections, I will demonstrate that this literary-philosophical form, at least to a significant extent, also applies to the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, the epistemological aspects of this form will be addressed, in particular with regard to the doctrine of God as first known.

Finally, it needs to be noted that, strictly speaking, MacMahon does *not* count the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* to the texts belonging to this genre, because he argues that these texts should be ‘autobiographical’, i.e. written from the first person’s perspective. This would incite ‘emphatic identification’ by means of a one-on-one relation with the narrator. The fact that we cannot foresee where the meditative journey is going until we arrive at its goal engages the reader *personally*. On this ground, The *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, which are written as *guides* for the soul rather than as autobiographies, are excluded from this genre. However, I still consider his analysis – which applies to the *Itinerarium* and *Hexaemeron* to a large extent – very useful for my purposes, all the more because they are crafted to take the reader along the path they so evocatively lay out.

## 5.2 The *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* as ‘transformation text’

As elaborated in the former chapter, the *Itinerarium* deals with the soul’s ascent to God in seven subsequent steps, which correspond with its seven chapters. Each chapter is written from the perspective of the soul at a specific stage of its journey into God; the knowledge of God that it presents corresponds to this spiritual stage.

The first chapter of the *Interarium* deals with seeing God through signs in the physical world. The second deals with signs found in sensory experiences. The third and fourth chapters deal with a study the structure of the mind itself, as it is an *imago Dei*. The third chapter focuses

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 1–3, p. 8.

9 It needs to be noted that, strictly speaking, MacMahon does *not* count the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* to the texts belonging to this genre, because he argues that these texts should be ‘autobiographical’, i.e. written from the first person’s perspective. The *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* are written as guides for the soul rather than autobiographical accounts. MacMahon holds that they therefore lack the possibility of an ‘emphatic identification’ by means of a one-on-one relation with the narrator. However, although Bonaventure’s texts fall outside MacMahon’s demarcation of this genre, I still consider his analysis very useful for my purposes.

on natural reason and intellectual activities, the fourth chapter focuses on practical exercises, by which the soul might become 'reformed by grace'. The fifth and sixth chapters focus on contemplative knowledge of God 'above the mind' by the soul that is by then reformed in God's likeness. First, God's revealed name 'being' is contemplated. In the sixth chapter, the 'good' is contemplated. The seventh and final stage of the soul's journey consists of a mystical experience. The mind proceeds 'most orderly' (*ordinatissime*) through these stages:<sup>10</sup> the steps towards God truly presuppose each other and together form a coherent whole.

The prologue clearly shows that Bonaventure constructed his text to have a pedagogic effect on the reader, as he calls out to the reader to focus on the intention of the writer, the meaning of the words, its truth (rather than its beauty), and the exercise of the affections rather than the erudition of the intellect.<sup>11</sup> For this purpose, Bonaventure ends his prologue with a direction to his readers: rather than rushing to the end of the treatise, it is important to 'digest' it very slowly (*morosissime ruminandus*).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the spiritual journey described by the *Itinerarium* is not freely entered. Bonaventure first specifies his audience: his speculations are meant for those who are prepared, humble and pious, conscientious and devout,<sup>13</sup> and he warns those 'thieves and mercenaries' who do not enter the itinerary 'through the gate'.<sup>14</sup> To receive divine enlightenment, the first and main condition and principle of the ascent, the pilgrim has to commit to several practices. Most of

10 *Itinerarium* I.5 (V 297): 'sicut Deus sex diebus perfecit universum mundum et in septimo requievit; sic minor mundus sex gradibus illuminationum sibi succedentium ad quietem contemplationis ordinatissime perducatur.'

11 For a study on 'affect' and spirituality in Bonaventure, cf. E. Dreyer, "Bonaventure the Franciscan: An Affective Spirituality," in: A. Callahan (ed.), *Spiritualities of the Heart*, Paulist Press: Mahwah 1990, pp. 33–44.

12 *Itinerarium* prol. 5 (V 296): 'Rogo igitur, quod magis pensetur intentio scribentis, quam opus, magis dictorum sensus quam sermo incultus, magis veritas quam venustas, magis exercitatio affectus quam eruditio intellectus. Quod ut fiat, non est harum speculationum progressus perfunctorie transcurrendus, sed morosissime ruminandus.'

13 Cf. prol. 4 (V 296).

14 *Itinerarium* prol. 3 (V 295): 'Effigies igitur sex alarum seraphicarum insinuat sex illuminationes scalares, quae a creaturis incipiunt et perducunt usque ad Deum, ad quem nemo intrat recte nisi per Crucifixum. Nam qui non intrat per ostium, sed ascendit aliunde, ille fur est et latro. Si quis vero per ostium introierit, ingredietur et egredietur et pascua inveniet.'

all, he has to commit to prayer, as this purifies the soul,<sup>15</sup> and because through prayer, we discover that the universe itself is a ladder to ascend to God (*scala ad ascendendum in Deum*).<sup>16</sup>

Not only at the start, but also during the soul's journey, the proper use of the soul's capacities is not unconditional. Certain practices, virtues, aspirations and the right state of mind, are considered necessary to undertake this spiritual journey successfully. Speculation, for instance, is argued only to succeed through devotion, whereas theoretical investigations, such as philosophy, require admiration. Knowledge (*scientia*) requires love (*caritas*), understanding needs humility, study needs divine grace, and wisdom needs divine inspiration.<sup>17</sup> Divine grace is a necessity in particular because the relationship between the created and the divine is damaged through original sin, Bonaventure explains.<sup>18</sup> This has affected both the intellectual capacities and the virtuousness of man. Divine grace is therefore necessary for his reformation, as 'we are not able to be raised above ourselves unless a superior force raises us.'<sup>19</sup>

15 *Itinerarium* I.1 (V 297): 'Divinum autem auxilium comitatur eos qui petunt ex corde humiliter et devote; et hoc est ad ipsum suspirare in hac lacrymarum valle, quod fit per ferventem orationem. Oratio igitur est mater et origo sursum-actionis.'

16 *Itinerarium* I.2 (V 297): 'Cum enim secundum statum conditionis nostrae ipsa rerum universitas sit scala ad ascendendum in Deum; et in rebus quaedam sint vestigium, quaedam imago, quaedam corporalia, quaedam spiritualia, quaedam temporalia, quaedam aeviterna, ac per hoc quaedam extra nos, quaedam intra nos: ad hoc, quod perveniamus ad primum principium considerandum, quod est spiritualissimum et aeternum et supra nos.'

17 *Itinerarium*, prol. 4 (V 296): 'Igitur ad gemitum orationis per Christum crucifixum, per cuius sanguinem purgamur a sordibus vitiorum, primum quidem lectorem invito, ne forte credat quod sibi sufficiat lectio sine unctione, speculatio sine devotione, investigatio sine admiratione, circumspectio sine exultatione, industria sine pietate, scientia sine caritate, intelligentia sine humilitate, studium absque divina gratia, speculum absque sapientia divinitus inspirata.'

18 *Itinerarium* I.7 (V 297–8): 'Secundum enim primam naturae institutionem creatus fuit homo habilis ad contemplationis quietem, et ideo posuit eum Deus in paradiso deliciarum. Sed avertens se a vero lumine ad commutabile bonum, incurvatus est ipse per culpam propriam, et totum genus suum per originale peccatum, quod dupliciter infecit humanam naturam, scilicet ignorantia mentem et concupiscentia carnem; ita quod excaecatus homo et incurvatus in tenebris sedet et caeli lumen non videt nisi succurrat gratia cum iustitia contra concupiscentiam, et scientia cum sapientia contra ignorantiam.'

19 *Itinerarium*, prol. 1 (V 296–7): 'nullus potest effici beatus, nisi supra semetipsum ascendat, non ascensu corporali, sed cordiali. Sed supra nos levati non possumus nisi

Thus, as this short overview points out, the *Itinerarium* is a treatise on the transformation of the soul in its meditative ascent to God, which describes this ascent from a constantly changing point of view. At each level, the soul acquires new or deepened insights that correspond to its altered, reformed state of being. In this sense, Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* has a *climactic* structure. This Greek word for 'ladder' (*climax*) resonates in Bonaventure's description of the world as it should be approached by his readers: as a *scala ad ascendendum in Deum*. This transformation and the accompanying acquisition of knowledge are conditioned by practices, attitudes, virtues, and the reception of divine grace.

### 5.3 The *Collationes in Hexaemeron* as 'transformation text'

As discussed in the former chapter, the *Hexaemeron* consists of four 'visions' (*visiones*) on four 'illuminations' or perspectives from which the mind acquires knowledge of God (two last visions or days remain unaccounted for, as this work remains unfinished). These visions are dealt with in 23 chapters or 'collations'. By relating creation to the accumulation of insights of the human mind, these visions establish, in a way that is similar to the *Itinerarium*, a relation between the world as macrocosm (*maior mundus*) and the human soul as microcosm (*minor mundus*).

Whereas the first three chapters of the *Hexaemeron* are introductory (chapters I–III), the chapters thereafter deal with the four visions that can be granted to people throughout their 'earthly pilgrimage'. The first vision is on the soul's capacities and insights given by nature (chapters IV–VII). The second deals with how 'human intelligence is lifted up by faith' (VIII–XII). The third vision describes the way in which the mind is taught by the scriptures (chapters XII–XIV). The fourth vision treats the mind lifted up by contemplation (chapters XX–XXIII). The fifth and the sixth vision should have dealt with the insights attained by prophecies and with an all-encompassing *raptus* in God. Finally, a seventh vision of the glorified soul was anticipated.

Similar to the *Itinerarium*, the spiritual ascent described by the *Hexaemeron* is not without obligations, conditions and limitations. Throughout this work, virtues and practices are related to the undoing

per virtutem superiorem nos elevantem. Quantumcumque enim gradus interiores disponantur, nihil fit, nisi divinum auxilium comitetur.<sup>7</sup>



of vices, the rectification and the illumination of the soul. For instance, the first chapter makes clear that man, because of his deplorable and sinful condition, cannot be addressed straightaway. Thus, only the observers of the divine are encouraged to enter the ascent. This relates to the need to start from Christ as center or medium between God and man.<sup>20</sup> Who ignores this necessary condition will accomplish nothing, Bonaventure maintains.<sup>21</sup>

In the first vision, on the soul's capacities and insights given by nature, it is discussed how our natural capacity for understanding is conditioned by an 'inserted light' (*lumen inditum*), which is the light of natural reason. This light alone, however, is not sufficient for scientific knowledge. Only those who actually *turn* to the light inside their souls and who live virtuously find truth through this light, Bonaventure holds here. Those who ignore this 'gift of illumination', however, inevitably remain in the dark, as they are misguided by their 'arrogance' and 'curiosity'.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the acquisition of truth is conditioned not only by an inserted capacity, but also by attitude, focus and virtuousness.

Curiosity and arrogance are vices that obstruct us in attaining true knowledge: they may have the 'shine' of science, but really lead into darkness.<sup>23</sup> Virtuousness, on the other hand, conditions true knowledge as it rectifies the soul.<sup>24</sup> Bonaventure deals with many specific virtues in

20 *Hexaemeron* I.10 (V 330): 'Circa secundum nota, quod incipiendum est a medio, quod est Christus. Ipse enim mediator Dei et hominum.'

21 *Hexaemeron* I.1 (V 329): 'Secundo docet, ubi debet incipere: quia a medio, quod est Christus; quod medium si negligatur, nihil habetur.'

22 *Hexaemeron* I.7 (V 330): 'Item, contra consonantiam divinae laudis spiritus praesumptionis et curiositatis, ita quod praesumptuosus Deum non magnificat, sed esse laudat; curiosus autem devotionem non habet. Unde multi sunt tales, qui vacui sunt laude et devotione, etsi habeant splendores scientiarum. Faciunt enim casas vesparum, quae non habent favum mellis, sicut apes, quae mellificant.'

23 *Hexaemeron* I.7 (V 330): 'Item, contra consonantiam divinae laudis spiritus praesumptionis et curiositatis, ita quod praesumptuosus Deum non magnificat, sed esse laudat; curiosus autem devotionem non habet. Unde multi sunt tales, qui vacui sunt laude et devotione, etsi habeant splendores scientiarum. Faciunt enim casas vesparum, quae non habent favum mellis, sicut apes, quae mellificant.'

24 *Hexaemeron* V.33 (V 359): 'Dum haec igitur percipit et consurgit ad divinum contuitum (...) Sed tamen per virtutes oportet devenire, sicut fecerunt philosophi; quando viderunt, quod tam alte non posset perveniri nisi per virtutes, converterunt se ad docendum illas, ut fecit Socrates; unde reputatur minus bene dixisse, eo quod tantum de illis dixit sed hoc fecit, quia videbat, quod ad illum intellectum non potest perveniri, nisi anima sit purgata.'

the *Hexaemeron*. Whereas certain basic virtues are sufficient to become enlightened by natural reason in the first vision, the so-called infused or cardinal virtues, faith, hope and charity, are necessary to become enlightened in the second vision.<sup>25</sup> This second vision deals with how human intelligence is lifted up by faith, by means of which revealed knowledge of God becomes accessible. Thus, in this state of the soul's ascent, faith is a necessary condition for knowledge (or rather: wisdom).

Similar to the *Itinerarium*, the discourse of the *Hexaemeron* reconstructs the soul's ascent to God and describes it from a constantly changing point of view. Gradually, the soul transforms, and at each stage, new, deepened and trustworthier insights are attained. Maybe even with more vigor than the *Itinerarium*, the *Hexaemeron* points out that the un-doing of a deplorable state of ignorance and a rectification of the will through virtue are necessary for the soul's ascent. More explicitly than in the *Itinerarium*, science is subordinated to wisdom, and philosophy to theology. Furthermore, whereas the *Itinerarium* only marginally deals with errors, the *Hexaemeron* pays much more attention to what goes wrong when scientists do not focus on virtuousness and exemplarity, and are not led by faith – a difference that is certainly also affected by the political and academic controversies of its time.<sup>26</sup>

#### 5.4 The epistemology of the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*

In the preceding sections, the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* were described as treatises that, by both form and content, deal with the soul's transformation in its gradual ascent to God. The acquisition of knowledge corresponds to this transformation. This section will go closer into the *epistemological aspects* of this literary-philosophical form, in order to account for the dynamic status of the doctrine of God as first known in both treatises.

From the short overview given of both treatises, it became clear that the development of knowledge is never presented detached from (religious) practices, (cardinal) virtues, and a concern with the soul's state of being. In the following, it will be argued that this is related

25 Cf. K. Emery, Jr., "Reading the World Rightly and Squarely: Bonaventure's Doctrine of the Cardinal Virtues," *Traditio* 39 (1983): 183–218, esp. 214–18.

26 Cf. C.C.Anderson, *A Call to Piety: Saint Bonaventure's Collations on the Six Days*; J. Ratzinger, *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura*.

to the fact that, in these works, theoretical truths and insights are not regarded as goals in themselves. Rather, in both texts, *the good life* of the Franciscan pilgrim is at stake.

This is acknowledged by Etienne Gilson in *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*. He describes this synthesis as an ‘ordered system,’ comprising faith, reason, philosophy, theology, practices and virtues.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, he relates the architectonic of the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron* directly to Bonaventure’s biography: it is thoroughly influenced by Bonaventure’s experience of Franciscan spirituality, living the life of a pilgrim and a mendicant.<sup>28</sup> As Gilson argues,

St. Bonaventure’s thought appears as if bent with all its powers towards the creation of a new synthesis, a synthesis wherein he should find a place for all the philosophical and religious values of which he had had living experience – from the humblest form of faith, rising through philosophy, then through theology, from grade to grade – with no unjust depreciation of any, yet never permitting any to usurp a place not its own – to the very highest peaks of the mystical life. (Works) in which the human virtues, and the supernatural aids they receive, are ranged in order according to an architecture ever more comprehensive and more perfectly balanced, up to the perfection of the *Hexaameron*.<sup>29</sup>

On the basis of their ‘architecture’, both works can be qualified as monastic texts dealing with spirituality, being practical in nature, rather than scholastic discourses dealing with theoretical knowledge. In this sense, philosophy and theology as sciences are practices that are part of a way of life. In both the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron*, theoretical reflection is therefore *among* the practices by means of which the soul becomes less deformed and more deiform, and finally attains beatitude in mystical experience. Thus, philosophy is embedded in and determined by a spiritual trajectory. Accordingly, the philosophical elements in both works are to be seen as integral parts of a synthesis, one that deals with a way of life rather than with purely theoretical insights.

This corresponds to the paradigm put forward by Pierre Hadot in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Hadot argues that there was a time in which philosophy was both an expression of a way of life and an application

<sup>27</sup> E. Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, p. 70.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

of a certain ideal of living, among other practices belonging to that way of life, all of which were meant to establish a transformation, an inner change in the subject.<sup>30</sup> However, Hadot locates this form of philosophy primarily in Antiquity. He argues that philosophy became a theoretical discourse that has lost its existential dimension through the rise of Christianity.<sup>31</sup> Especially in the thirteenth century, Hadot maintains, due to the rediscovery of the work of Aristotle and its Greek and Arabic commentaries, philosophy merely provided simple basic material, building blocks that could be used in theological debates.<sup>32</sup>

Hadot's critique applies to the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* as well: they are syntheses that are determined by Christian spirituality, rather than philosophy. However, both texts also present a counterexample to Hadot's critique: in the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, philosophy is not a mere theoretical discipline, but one of a series of practices that concern 'the good life'. Bonaventure's work is not the only counterexample. As Theo Kobusch argues in *Christliche Philosophie, die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*, in the Middle Ages, philosophy is often approached as *Lebenskunst*.<sup>33</sup> Kobusch provides a framework in which Christianity and metaphysics are on speaking terms in his article 'Metaphysik als Lebensform,' although he does not treat Bonaventure here. Kobusch identifies a type of metaphysics, founded by Origenes, on 'true philosophy', i.e. Christian philosophy, which is practiced and adjusted up until the Late Middle Ages.<sup>34</sup> This philosophy is not an abstract science of being, but rather a science that is practical and existential. It

30 P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (trans. M. Chase, ed. A. Davidson), Blackwell: Oxford 1995.

31 *Ibid.*, 250.

32 Thanks to the works of J. Dománsky, Hadot slightly corrected this position later on, realizing that the reinvention of philosophy as a way of life did not occur only after the Middle Ages and also came about at medieval universities. Petrarca, Dante and Eckhart are mentioned as late medieval thinkers who did present philosophy as a way of life. However, he does not let go of the claim that the appropriation of philosophy by Christianity is the primary cause of the detachment of philosophical discourse and a way of life. Cf. J. Dománsky, *La philosophie, théorie ou manière de vivre. Les controverses du Moyen Age et du début de la Renaissance*, Saint Paul: Fribourg – Paris 1996.

33 Cf. Th. Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie: die Entdeckung der Subjektivität*.

34 Th. Kobusch, "Metaphysik als Lebensform. Zur Idee einer praktischen Metaphysik," in: W. Goris (ed.), *Die Metaphysik und das Gute: Aufsätze zu ihrem Verhältnis in Antike und Mittelalter, Jan A. Aertsen zu Ehren*, Peeters: Louvain, pp. 29–56, esp. pp. 45–46.

is determined by its characteristic focus on self-knowledge: ‘Christian Socratism’.<sup>35</sup> This means, Kobusch argues, bringing the ‘dispersions of the heart’ (*dispersio cordis*) back to one focus and goal, which is not inside or outside, but above oneself. This comprises and changes the human being as a whole, who becomes in a certain sense more divine, whereas he stays essentially human at the same time. This process is described as *epektasis* – constant progress. In this type of ‘practical metaphysics’, the self is approached as a constantly transforming subject.<sup>36</sup>

The *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron*, as two texts in which Christian philosophy is in line with and even part of a certain way of life, and which are meant to establish a transformation of the self, could be identified as two treatises dealing with ‘practical metaphysics’ in the way Kobusch defines this.

Yet, another aspect of the texts under consideration needs to be elucidated in order to understand the epistemology of both works: the relation between philosophy, spirituality and truth. For this purpose, Michel Foucault’s approach to philosophy and spirituality is helpful.

In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault examines the epistemological consequences of the intricate connection between both *praxis* and *theoria* and knowing and being. Since Descartes, he argues, the subject is intrinsically, *a priori* capable of truth. Being the subject of ethical action is not required: one can be right without being good. Correspondingly, philosophy is a mere theoretical endeavor. In Antiquity, however, a subject’s access to the truth is dependent on a movement of *conversion*, which requires a drastical transformation of one’s being. This, in turn, requires labour: practices, exercises, training, enduring work on the self (*askesis*). This labour thus *conditions* the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, rather than being intrinsically able to know, being the subject of ethical action is presupposed to being a knowing subject. Foucault relates this action to both philosophy and spirituality, as found in many Ancient but also in early Christian texts.

He describes ‘philosophy’ as

the form of thought that asks, not of course what is true and what is

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54: ‘Das ist der entscheidende Grundgedanke der praktische Metaphysik, dass das Selbst als ein sich Umgestaltendes gedacht wird.’ As examples, Kobusch discusses Gregory of Nyssa, who described the ideal of human perfection as constant progress in terms of three stages of spiritual growth (initial darkness of ignorance, then spiritual illumination, and finally a darkness of the mind), but also Bernard of Clairvaux and Hugh of St. Victor.

false, but what determines that there is and can be truth and falsehood and whether or not we can separate the true and the false. We will call philosophy the form of thought that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject's access to the truth.<sup>37</sup>

Related to this notion of philosophy, Foucault describes 'spirituality' as

the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations (...) in order to have access to the truth (...) these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth.<sup>38</sup>

On this basis, Foucault argues that, in Antiquity, philosophy is not a theoretical system that is *opposed* to spirituality, but rather, it is an occupation that is coupled to it. Whereas philosophy inquires after the conditions and limits that determine the subject's access to the truth, spirituality concerns the actual practices, exercises, etc., that establish subject's transformation, by means of which it acquires access to the truth.<sup>39</sup> In order to demonstrate this, Foucault investigates texts

37 M. Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–82* (transl. G. Burchell) Palgrave Macmillan: New York 2005, p. 15.

38 Ibid.

39 Foucault distinguishes several characteristics of this process of transformation, which he finds primarily in Ancient and early Christian texts on ascetism, but which are relevant to the analysis of the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron* as well. For instance, the subject's transformation involves an ongoing struggle or conquest, which has a healing or therapeutic function. In both texts, we encountered this as the soul's struggle for rectification and the un-doing of its deformity. In this struggle, the reliance on a relationship with a master or guide is necessary, Foucault adds. In the *Itinerarium*, this guide was primarily Christ, but also Saint Francis, and Bonaventure himself, whereas in the *Hexaameron*, Christ as *medium* has a central position. Furthermore, transformation involves unformation, Foucault argues, which he describes as 'un-learning' (*dediscere*), that is, getting rid of bad habits and false opinions. This we encountered most clearly in the un-doing of vices in the *Hexaameron*. Finally, transformation requires a kind of *work*, Foucault holds, consisting of training and control, in order 'to link truth to the subject'. This call for work or training becomes evident in Bonaventure's calls for prayers, meditations,

from classical and late Antiquity, as well as early Christian texts, that are all concerned with *cura sui* (Gr. *epimeleia heautou*): *care for the self*. This concerns ‘a body of work defining a way of being, a standpoint, forms of reflection and practices’ that are not invented by philosophical thought. Rather, philosophy follows from or is part of this care for the self.<sup>40</sup>

Whereas Foucault primarily focuses on Ancient texts, I would like to argue that his analysis also applies to the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron*. Here, a subject’s access to the truth is also dependent on a transformation of one’s being, which in turn requires practices, exercises, and training, as the preceding sections pointed out. Therefore, rather than being intrinsically able to know, being the subject of ethical action is presupposed to being a knowing subject. This means that the subject is capable to attain true knowledge at one stage, whereas it might not be at another stage, as it requires yet another transformation. Correspondingly, it means that the quality, scope and nature of knowledge that the subject attains, differ in its subsequent stages of development: what is true at one point, is possibly replaced by more profound insights in accordance with another, higher state of being.

Therefore, in the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron*, it is not only at the *end* of its journey that true knowledge or insight is attained. Rather, *throughout* it, insights and truths are established, which are legitimate under the circumstances of a specific stage, but qualified, replaced, extended, or made even more profound, in a next stage. One could say that ‘truth’ is not a series of results gained at the end of the soul’s journey, but rather, the ascent *in its entirety* is true, and this truth comes to its *completion* throughout the soul’s gradual development.

In fact, Foucault argues that there can still be found a close link between a philosophy of knowledge and a spirituality of the subject’s transformation *after* Descartes. In particular Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, he argues, “has no other meaning” than trying to link the activity of knowing and knowledge and the requirements of spirituality to a transformation of the subject.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, Hegel’s description of a scientific system in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* can also be argued to be useful in elucidating the epistemology of both the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron*.<sup>42</sup> From

and the life as a mendicant pilgrim as a whole to which Bonaventure invites his readers. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

40 Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, p. 11.

41 Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, p. 28.

42 In fact, according to Wouter Goris, we find a clear account of God as first known

this perspective, one could argue that the *Itinerarium* and *Hexaemeron* describe the ‘history of the soul’s development’: both works present an articulation of the entirety of the itinerary of the soul, including all its distinctions with regard to both states of being and states of knowledge.<sup>43</sup> This Hegelian perspective means that the road, the practices, the procedures necessary in order to arrive at a final truth, but also all insights that are replaced or qualified at another moment, are part of ‘the true’ as well. Hence, the whole system, which is in constant actualization, like the transforming soul itself, is true. However, every position taken is only a *momentary* stance within the event of the soul’s transformation. This means that there is no stable opposition between truth or falsity. Correspondingly, the subject is never a stable point of reference, as it constantly ventures into new grounds, accomplishing new insights, transcending oneself, establishing yet a new position, until its completion.

The important question remains: what does this epistemology mean for the doctrine of God as first known? It means that it is possible to argue in the *Itinerarium* that *ens absolutum* is first known at one point, and that *esse divinum* is first known at another, without causing a contradiction or even an inconsistency. In the *Hexaemeron*, this concerns the statement that being (*esse*) is known through a natural light of the soul, which is later replaced, or rather, *surpassed*, by the statement that *primum esse cadit in mente* as revealed truth. Thus, in each work, the *double account* of God as first known that is given accounts for the different stages of knowledge of God the transforming subject goes through in its ascent to God, and testifies of the fact that knowledge

in Hegel, who is argued to maintain that God is absolutely first, but that this insight can only be acquired on the basis of a development of natural reason, by which it transcends its initial orientation, but still remains *within* the realm of philosophy. As Goris argues: ‘Hegel sagt (...) “und das unbestrittenste Recht hätte Gott, dass mit ihm der Anfang gemacht werde.” (...) Bestimmend für die Denkfigur eines Ausgangs vom Unbedingten ist die Erhebung der Vernunft, eine Übersteigerung ihrer natürlichen Gegenstandsorientierung, die innerhalb der Philosophie vollzogen wird. Diese Möglichkeit als philosophische Möglichkeit entwickelt zu haben, gehört zu der Grösse des Deutschen Idealismus und macht seine bleibende Faszination aus.’ In: W. Goris, ‘Heinrich von Gent und der mittelalterliche Vorstoß zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten,’ in: G. Guldentops, C. Steel (eds.), *Henry of Ghent and the Transformation of Scholastic Thought: Studies in Memory of Jos Decorte*, Louvain: 2003 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Series 1), pp. 61–74, p. 61.

43 Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, ‘Vorrede’ in: *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (ed. E. Moldauer, K.M. Michel, in: *Werke*, vol. 3, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a. M. 1986, pp. 11–67.



is conditioned by being, and theoretical insights are conditioned by virtues, practices and grace.

## 5.5 Conclusions

In this final chapter, the literary-philosophical character of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* was analyzed in order to account for the claim made in Chapter 4 that the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* not only exhibit a structural similarity with regard to their treatment of God as first known, but also provide this doctrine with a *dynamic* character. Hereto, the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* were explored as two treatises on Franciscan spirituality, which thematize the transformation of the soul in its ascent to God.

In both works, philosophy is embedded in a synthesis that is determined by Christian spirituality in which the good life is at stake, rather than the truth as such. Rather than a purely theoretical discourse, philosophy is intrinsically connected to practices, virtues, and a concern for the soul's state of being, and, as such, seeks to assess what enables the subject to have access to the truth and what the conditions and limits are of this access.

Furthermore, these works do not only share their subject matter, but also their literary-philosophical form; they *reconstruct* the soul's transformation by presenting, one after another, the necessary stages of the soul's transformation and, accordingly, the subsequent perspectives from which the soul attains knowledge of God. As such, both by form and content, both works thematize the 'history of the soul's development': a system that articulates the soul's ascent, which needs to be seen as a whole, including all its distinctions with regard to both states of being and states of knowledge. This means that both treatises represent a fluid position on truth and knowledge.

From the perspective of this epistemology, Bonaventure's accounts of what is first within the order of knowledge should be approached. This means that the fact that a first *primum – ens absolutum* in the *Itinerarium*; *esse* in the *Hexaemeron* – is presented at an earlier stage of the soul's development, whereas a second *primum* – in both works, *esse divinum* – is presented in a later stage, does not present an inconsistency, but rather provides the doctrine of God as first known with a dynamic character.

With regard to Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known, Jan

Aertsen has stated that ‘the originality of Bonaventure’s position consists in his method of the resolution of knowledge,’ in which ‘the intellect can resolve incompletely and half-way (*semiplene*) or perfectly and completely (*plene*).’<sup>44</sup> This is indeed one of the characteristics of Bonaventure’s account of a *primum cognitum* that makes it truly original. Additionally, as this chapter sought to prove, this originality consists in the fact that Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known – as it is dealt with in both the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* – exhibits a *dynamic* character.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, one of the characteristic aspects of Bonaventure’s adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals was mentioned to be the concrete role it plays in the ascent of the soul towards God.<sup>45</sup> The doctrine of God as first known was discussed as an integral part of this elaboration on the transcendentals. In this chapter, this concrete role of the doctrine of God as first known was elucidated: it has become clear that it is intrinsically part of a philosophy and spirituality (in the Foucauldian sense, i.e. as a body of work, process and development) in search for an ever more intimate and profound relation of the subject to God.

Hence, in both these works, two conceptions of philosophy are integrated: one that is concerned with self-reflection, conversion, and transformation, i.e. practices in order to come closer to God, and another that, as a science of the transcendental, deals with first principles of knowledge and being.

44 J.A. Aertsen, “Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?,” p. 191.

45 J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, p. 150.



## *Conclusions*

THE PRESENT STUDY HAS INVESTIGATED Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known, focusing on the place of this doctrine in his thought. In particular, it was investigated whether meaningful differentiations could be made within this doctrine on the basis of the different accounts of God as first known that are found at different places in his work. I have sought to point out that on several levels, the doctrine of God as first known can indeed be differentiated. This provides Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known with a more complex character than is often assumed in the scholarship on Bonaventure. In this concluding chapter, a résumé of the results of the investigations in the preceding chapters will be given first. Subsequently, the question is answered how these outcomes together elucidate Bonaventure's contribution to the Platonic tradition in philosophy that is characterized by 'the beginning with the absolute'.

### Results

Let me first discuss the most important results of my investigation. In the first chapter, 'God as first known in Bonaventure's *metaphysica reducens*. The tension between two models of science in the foundation of natural knowledge,' the place of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known in two central elements of his metaphysics was explored: his exemplarism and his doctrine of the transcendentals. It was concluded that the combination of these two accounts of the foundation of natural knowledge in Bonaventure suggests a *redundancy*: in exemplarism, natural reason relies on the transcendent ideas as the foundations of empirical knowledge, whereas in the doctrine of the transcendentals, natural reason is founded on the self-evidency of the transcendental notions as first principles. On the basis of the conclusions of Chapter 3, it was argued that the foundation of natural knowledge found in Bonaventure's exemplarism primarily – but not only – corresponds with an act of judgment in confuse knowing, i.e. the process of making

the sensible intelligible, whereas the account of divine being as first known within the doctrine of the transcendentals corresponds with the act of judgment that is involved in the establishment of distinct knowledge. Hence, the co-existence of these two models of foundation in Bonaventure's thought does not truly create a redundancy.

The doctrine of God as first known was also found to be related to *two competing models of science* in Bonaventure's thought: it is central to a Platonic approach to science that seeks to *unify all sciences* by putting them at the service of obtaining a common goal, i.e. knowledge of God, which is ultimately established in theology, the 'perfect science'. It is however also part of an Aristotelian approach to science, which allows for a plurality of independent sciences, in which every science has its own basis of evidence. In this approach, God as first known is part of a *Begründungsleistung* that seeks to establish the *disciplinary autonomy* of metaphysics.

In Bonaventure's reductive exemplarism, by reducing all knowledge of created being to a preliminary understanding of divine being, which is ultimately studied in theology, the doctrine of God as first known contributes to the unification of all sciences. Yet, it also contributes to the argument that metaphysics has its own foundation and source through a light that is naturally given into the soul (*lumen inditum*), through which it has preliminary knowledge of divine being.

In his adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals, the doctrine of God as first known is part of an organization of metaphysics as a science with its own principles, priority relations, and foundation. However, Bonaventure's account of the transcendentals focuses on the *vestigiality* of the most noble conditions of being, as they – both in the *ratio essendi* and the *ratio cognoscendi* – lead the soul to divine being as absolutely first. By doing so, Bonaventure distantiates himself from an Aristotelian interpretation of metaphysics as a science of being qua being, and aligns it with his reductive exemplarism, in which all knowledge is founded on knowledge of divine being.

After discussing the role and place of the doctrine of God as first known within Bonaventure's metaphysics, I focused on its methodology. Chapter 2 differentiated between *different types of resolution that are criticized* by Bonaventure as he considers them to be inadequate (*semi-plena*) to establish full knowledge of something, in contrast to a *resolutio plena*, which succeeds in discovering the ultimate foundation of all knowledge. First, resolution as *divisio* is criticized, which is based on the idea that what is composite is ultimately understood through an understanding

of its elements. First of all, Bonaventure argues that created parts are never truly simple as the created is inherently composite. As a resolution has to end in what is *absolutely* simple, it has to end in divine being. Second, next to the created elements of a thing, of which it is composed, another essential element is its relation to first being, which has to be assessed as well. This presupposes preliminary knowledge of this first being.

Second, a resolution that ends in the most *general* created principles is criticized, such as transcendental being (*ens*) and its conditions one, true and good. All created being is deficient, and the deficient can only be understood through what is perfect, Bonaventure argues with Averroes. Therefore, in order to understand anything created completely, we have to appeal to a perfect being, which can only be divine being.

Third, a resolution is identified that ends in *esse*. *Esse* designates the perfection and the actuality of being. Rather than common being (*esse commune*), Bonaventure argues that only *esse divinum* can be this pure actuality, because all other being is somehow mixed with potentiality.

Bonaventure's critique on these three incomplete resolutions is marked by three important characteristics:

- 1 A distinction is made between resolving merely halfway (*semi-plene*) and fully (*plene*).
- 2 A complete resolution in the order of knowledge, in contrast to an incomplete resolution, does never proceed by mere *iteration*, i.e. by repeating rounds of analysis, for instance in ever smaller parts. Rather, it is characterized by a 'twist' in technique. The point at which this change of technique takes place, coincides with that at which a *semiplena* resolution is complemented in order to make it complete (*plena*). This change of technique goes along with the transgression of the domain of the created into the uncreated. Hence, Bonaventure's accounts of God as first known can be interpreted as challenging a conception of resolution as purely iterative analysis.
- 3 All complete resolutions establish a unifying ascent towards one special being. As such, they reflect Bonaventure's ambition to introduce a Platonic approach to the foundations of knowledge in a reflection on the first principles of metaphysics that is dominated by an Aristotelian approach to science and to what is first known.

Thus, through a resolution, the intellect becomes reflexively aware of the fact that an understanding of divine being is involved in knowledge of creatures. However, questions remain: How does this *work*? To what *extent* is preliminary knowledge of the divine involved in knowing creatures? The answer to these questions I sought to provide in Chapter 3, which elucidates the role of preliminary knowledge of the divine in Bonaventure's theory of cognition. This chapter focused on the first act of cognition, i.e. the incomplex grasp of the essence of things. The following conclusions were drawn.

It became clear that in the process of making intelligible the essence of a created being, *an act of judgment* is included in which the divine ideas are involved. Bonaventure sometimes refers to this process as 'abstraction'. This means that the priority of knowledge of God is also located at the level of *intelligibility itself*, rather than only on the level of certifying the truth of what has become known by the intellect. Thus, Bonaventure does not simply maintain an 'Aristotelian account of abstraction,' as some interpreters argue. Hence, also on the level of his theory of cognition, the integration – and tension – between the Platonic and the Aristotelian is found.

The way in which sensible data of created things become intelligible through *abstraction* corresponds to Bonaventure's accounts of *resolution*: both activities involve an act of judgment in terms of a comparison of created being to first being. In abstraction, the intellect appeals to the divine ideas in order to *identify* the created essence of a thing. In resolution, it *assesses* the essential relation of a created being to its first cause – and discovers its principles. In the former case, the result is 'confused' knowledge of a thing. In the latter case the result is 'distinct' knowledge: the parts and principles of a thing become separately known.

Hence, the priority of the divine in the first act of cognition is *twofold*: both on the level of abstracting the intelligible from the sensible and on the level of a complete analysis of what has become known, preliminary knowledge of the divine is necessary.

The third chapter thus elucidated the purport of God as first known within the realm of natural reason, focusing on the mechanism of cognition in relation to the analysis of what has become known. However, accounts of God as first known are also found within the context of a discussion of revealed knowledge, in particular in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Therefore, Chapter 4 inquired into the way in which 'God as first known' within the realm

of *metaphysics* and *natural* knowledge relates to 'God as first known' in the realm of *theology* and *revealed* knowledge in the two aforementioned texts. I concluded that there is a structural similarity between the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* in their treatment of God as first known. Three common characteristics were identified.

First of all, in each work, a *double account* of God as first known is given, each account indicating a different stage of the soul's knowledge of God. Second, these accounts of God as first known have different *outcomes*. In the third chapter of the *Itinerarium*, a resolution to God as 'a most pure, most complete, most actual, and absolute being (*ens*)' is given. The resolution of *Itinerarium* V surpasses the level of the concrete (i.e. that of entities). Here, it is argued that divine being (or: existence) as such (*esse divinum*) is first known. As pure actuality, divine being falls into the intellect first, and is *presupposed to* the understanding of every concrete being (*ens*). Whereas the immediacy of revealed truth allows divine being to be identified as first known in *Hexaemeron* X, the resolution of *Hexaemeron* V only reflexively establishes awareness that God (*esse*) is first known.

Third, in both works, the transition from the first account of God as first known to the second is *prefigured* by a distinction *within* the first account. The surpassing of the first resolution by the second is prefigured by a parallel pattern *within* the first resolution. The first part of the first resolution is presented as a complete resolution at first, as the comprehension of a thing is identified with completely knowing (*plene scire*) the definition of something, whereas the second part of the resolution replaces this first '*plene*' with another; i.e. an understanding completely resolving (*plene resolvens*) into an understanding of an perfect and absolute being.

The resolution of *Hexaemeron* V is part of a description of a conversion of the soul in order to find wisdom through contemplation. Here, 'Platonic', philosophers are argued to have become enlightened, whereas the 'Aristotelian' philosophers failed and remained in the dark. This further specifies the differentiation between the *plena* and *semi-plena* resolution made in Chapter 2. However, this position is abandoned in *Hexaemeron* X. Here, only the soul transformed by Christian faith is enlightened.

Finally, a fourth characteristic was mentioned: the doctrine of God as first known acquires a *dynamic character* in both works. On the basis of an analysis of the literary-philosophical form of the *Itinerarium*



and the *Hexaemeron*, I sought to account for this dynamic character in Chapter 5. Both works were characterized as medieval discourses dealing with the soul's transformation in its meditative ascent, and the specific epistemology belonging to these discourses was identified.

In these treatises, knowledge is presented as embedded in a way of life, which is oriented at moral progress. The acquisition of theoretical insights is conditioned by virtues, practices, and the reception of divine grace, and cannot be isolated from the state of being of the transforming soul. This means that the subject is capable to attain true knowledge at one stage, whereas it might not at another stage, as it requires yet another transformation. Correspondingly, the quality, scope and nature of knowledge that the subject attains differ in the subsequent stages of its development: what established a complete understanding in *Itinerarium* III, i.e. a resolution in *ens absolutum*, is surpassed by the resolution of *Itinerarium* V, which ends in *esse divinum*. Likewise, in the *Hexaemeron*, the conclusion that God is first known on the basis of a rational investigation after the reception of revealed knowledge (that God is first), to be received only by a mind transformed through faith, exceeds the knowledge of God as first known that is acquired solely by the soul's natural capacities in *Hexaemeron* V in certainty, clarity and scope.

From a Hegelian perspective, the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaemeron* describe the 'history of the soul's development': both works present an articulation of the entirety of the itinerary of the soul. This means that insights and truths that are legitimate under the circumstances of a specific stage, but are qualified or replaced at a next stage, still are all part of 'the true'. Therefore, it is possible to posit a certain first known at one point and yet another at a second, without causing a contradiction or inconsistency. This epistemology, which expresses the inner logic of the soul's transformation, provides the doctrine of God as first known with a dynamic character. Furthermore, in both works, two concepts of philosophy are integrated: a concept of philosophy as a transcendental science and a concept of philosophy that is concerned with self-reflection and conversion.

Having presented the results of a series of analyses of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known from different perspectives, the question remains what these analyses tell us about this doctrine as a whole. In the following, I will first summarize what the accounts of God as first known found throughout Bonaventure's work have in common, after which the differentiations that I have identified will be discussed.

As a whole, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known is determined by three central aspects:

- (1)
  - a It *criticizes* any created, i.e. imperfect, finite, principle that is accepted as the final foundation on which knowledge of everything else rests.
  - b It *defends* that all knowledge rests on an understanding of divine, i.e. perfect, infinite, being.
    - In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, it is argued that the relation of created being to first being is an essential element of this created being, and therefore needs to be taken along in understanding it.
    - In the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, the central argument is rather that imperfect being is only understood on the basis of a perfect being, as defects are only understood through that what is lacking.

(2)  
It demonstrates the *dependence* of knowledge of the created on knowledge of the divine. Not only in theology, but already in the realm of metaphysics and natural reason, the intellect depends on preliminary knowledge of divine being, both in making the sensible intelligible, and in fully understanding what has become known.

(3)  
Its method, *resolutio*, seeks to make *explicit* what is implicitly known in the course of knowing everything else – an analytic movement opposed to demonstration or synthesis. Thus, the intellect becomes *aware* of its foundation through a complete resolution.

Notwithstanding these common elements, the different accounts of *Deus primum cognitum* are everything but repetitions of one and the same claim or argument. As I have shown, the doctrine of God as first known has a much more complex structure. In Bonaventure's later works, it even acquired a dynamic structure. The following differentiations can be identified:

- 1 One differentiation of the doctrine of God as first known pertains to its method, *resolutio*. Whereas they all criticize any *resolutio* that ends in created first principles, the resolutions found in Bonaventure's works are differentiated by that what they criticize: *divisio*, a resolution into *generalissima* (such as *ens*), or a resolution into the actuality of created being (*esse*).
- 2 Preliminary knowledge of divine being is involved *both* on the level of *abstraction*, by which the sensible is made intelligible, and on the level of *resolution*, in which what has become known is further investigated in order to be completely understood. Whereas in abstraction, divine being is *confusedly* known, in resolution, the intellect becomes aware that this understanding of divine being is part of understanding any created being.
- 3 'God as first known' is encountered *both* on the level of *philosophy* and natural knowledge, and on the level of *theology*, and revealed knowledge. What is first in the latter realm *surpasses* that which is first in the former in both primordially and quality.
- 4 In two of Bonaventure's later works, the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, a more *static* approach to divine being as first known is replaced by a *dynamic* approach. This is related to the fact that in these later works, the doctrine of God as first known becomes part of a synthesis that thematizes the soul's concrete ascent to God.

What do these similarities and differentiations convey about Bonaventure's 'beginning with the absolute'?

First of all, the differentiations described under (3) and (4) testify of the fact that the beginning with the absolute, i.e. God as first known, is only fully realized when the domain of natural reason is surpassed, and the soul is transformed by faith and grace. The doctrine of God as first known comes to completion in theology, rather than within philosophy. This is characteristic of the medieval doctrine of God as first known. In later versions of this doctrine, for instance in German Idealism, the 'hermeneutics of the subject' that is necessary for the doctrine of God

as first known to come to completion *is* realized *within* the domain of natural reason.<sup>46</sup>

Second, it has become clear that Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known is part of a *Vernunftkritik*. By arguing that divine being is first known, Bonaventure stresses the limitations of philosophy and natural reason. He criticizes any metaphysics in which its foundations are (at) the limits, but still immanent to the system itself. Rather, knowledge rests on an irrevocable ground that is never fully comprehended itself, even if it is the indubitable foundation of both intelligibility and certitude. In so far natural reason is able to reflect on its foundation, this reflection is surpassed by the insights that the mind lifted up by grace can attain on the basis of revealed knowledge. Theology, the *scientia perfecta* in which all scientific knowledge culminates, starts off where metaphysics ends.

By placing a reflection of God as first known within the context of a synthesis that deals with spirituality, metaphysics is not so much autonomous, but conditioned by a way of life, central to which is the conversion of the soul – a project that is thoroughly Platonic. As such, the doctrine of God as first known is part of Bonaventure's critique of the rise of the natural sciences, of Aquinas's perspective on the autonomy of human cognition, and of the fragmentation of the sciences into a plurality, in which each discipline is autonomous with regard to the others.

Yet, at the same time, by transcendentalizing God's cognitive priority by placing it within the context of a systematic investigation of being and knowledge of being, starting from first principles, Bonaventure incorporates it into the very system that he criticizes. In *Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre*, Jan Aertsen and Andreas Speer rightly argue that by integrating the doctrine of God as first known within an account of the doctrine of the transcendentals, Bonaventure sought to provide philosophy with a proper foundation, through which it acquired (relative) autonomy.<sup>47</sup> From this ambition, a system was created, in which an understanding of absolute being is

46 Cf. W. Goris, "Heinrich von Gent und der mittelalterliche Vorstoß zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten," in: G. Guldentops, C. Steel (eds.), *Henry of Ghent and the Transformation of Scholastic Thought: Studies in Memory of Jos Decorte*, Louvain: 2003 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Series 1), pp. 61–74.

47 J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, "Die Philosophie Bonaventuras und die Transzendentalienlehre," pp. 32–66. In fact, central to the work of Andreas Speer on Bonaventure

*ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi* at the same time, which could compete with Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics.

Third, both against and in favor of both aspects of Bonaventure's 'beginning with the absolute,' it could be argued that the figure of 'God as first known' provides the foundation on the basis of which *both* theology *and* metaphysics are possible, and by which their distinction is understood: whereas what is first by nature is identical to what is actually first known to us, metaphysics *q.* natural reason acquires insight into this *primum* reflexively, mediated by empirical knowledge. Theology, however, grasps this foundation of all knowledge in a more immediate and profound way through the revelation of *esse primum* as *prima rerum intellectualium*.<sup>48</sup>

On this basis, philosophy gains its own domain distinct from theology. Hence, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known not only relates to a distinction between philosophy and theology, but it creates a *common epistemological ground* between both disciplines at the same time. This differentiation creates a 'watershed' between the domain of metaphysics and theology, by which metaphysics gains autonomy, although it remains aware of its own limitations, and by which the qualitative difference between both disciplines and their foundations remains intact.

Thus, an approach to Bonaventure's thought from the perspective of his condemnation of the Parisian Aristotelians as they sought the autonomy of philosophy would be one-sided. Rather, a case could also be made that Bonaventure is, to a certain extent, emancipatory with regard to metaphysics. By assigning to 'God as first known' the common epistemological ground of metaphysics and theology, the tension between the two approaches to metaphysics is largely resolved.

### The legacy of Bonaventure's 'transcendental turn'

'The beginning with the absolute' after Bonaventure is different than it was before him: with Bonaventure, it has become an explicit theme of transcendental philosophy. The transfigurations of this idea, *i.e.* the

is exactly this determination of the philosophy of Bonaventure. To name only one of many relevant publications: A. Speer, "Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy," pp. 25–46.

<sup>48</sup> *Hexaameron* X.18 (V 379).

start with the absolute, can be found in many places in the history of Western philosophy *after* the thirteenth century. Without claiming to pinpoint a direct influence of Bonaventure on those 'Platonists' that came after him, but rather from the perspective of *Ideengeschichte*, that risky business that presupposes some kind of continuity alongside the singularity and diversity of ideas, themes and discourses in our intellectual history, I think one could reconstruct how a Platonic-Bonaventurian idea is reiterated from the thirteenth century onwards. I will not, however, provide such a reconstruction here, but merely touch upon two thinkers who would belong to such a history: Descartes and Levinas. I could have chosen several other philosophers as well, such as Spinoza, Hegel, Heidegger, and – notwithstanding *Violence et Métaphysique* – Derrida.<sup>49</sup>

As the next sections will point out, although removed far from one another in time and paradigm, the philosophies of Descartes and Levinas have in common that consciousness is transcended by a radical alterity that ruptures it, even if this takes place *within* philosophy.<sup>50</sup> This absolute is argued to be first known.

### Descartes

In his *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, Descartes (1596 – 1650) argues that God is first known. Although he wanted to break with the Scholastic thought that dominated his time in favor of a more mechanistic approach to the sciences, in relating the idea of infinity to both God and the idea of the Good,<sup>51</sup> Descartes is heavily influenced by the Scholasticism of the thirteenth century.<sup>52</sup> In particular, the priority of an understanding of God over all other knowledge, and the fact

49 Cf. W. Goris, "Transzendente Gewalt," pp. 619–642.

50 Cf. W. Goris, "Heinrich von Gent und der mittelalterliche Vorstoß zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten," in: G. Guldentops, C. Steel (eds.), *Henry of Ghent and the Transformation of Scholastic Thought: Studies in Memory of Jos Decorte*, Louvain: 2003, pp. 61–74.

51 Cf. R. Ariew, *Descartes and the Last Scholastics*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca (NY) 1999; A. Schechtman, "Descartes's Argument for the Existence of the Idea of an Infinite Being," in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52 (3) (2014), pp. 487–517; E. Gilson, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système Cartésien*, Vrin: Paris 1930.

52 A.Th. Peperzak, *Platonic Transformations with and after Hegel, Heidegger, and Levinas.*, pp. 97–98; *idem*, *The Quest for Meaning. Friends of Wisdom from Plato to Levinas*, Fordham University Press: New York 2003, p. 147.

that this foundational idea cannot be fully grasped itself, strikingly resembles the doctrine of *Deus primum cognitum* in Bonaventure, as will be briefly explained

In the First Meditation, Descartes uses radical doubt to methodologically refute any idea that is even slightly doubtful. This includes all his beliefs about the physical world. Any idea that is so clear and distinct that it survives this – pseudo-monastic, pseudo-meditative – exercise of radical doubt, could provide him with a foundation for the acquisition of true, certain knowledge. In the Second Meditation, Descartes finds such an idea: the idea of himself as a thinking thing. Later on, he describes this as *ego cogito, ergo sum*.

Still, Descartes admits at the beginning of the Third Meditation, this does not provide sufficient grounds for certainty. Problems remain: a powerful God might have created him with ‘a nature such that I was deceived even in matters which seemed most evident’.<sup>53</sup> Descartes therefore has to investigate ‘whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether he can be a deceiver’.<sup>54</sup> He concludes the Third Meditation with an intricate argument for the existence of God that starts from the fact that he has an idea of an infinite being. It rests on the – for both Descartes and Bonaventure – self-evident principle that there must be at least as much reality in the cause as there is in its effect.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, an idea of infinity requires an infinite being as its cause. Hence, an infinite being, identified as God, must exist. As Descartes identifies infinity with perfection, he concludes that God cannot be a deceiver, as deception depends on some defect. Descartes emphasizes, however, that whereas we cannot fully ‘grasp’ or ‘comprehend’ (*comprehendere*) the infinite, we can somehow ‘understand’ (*intelligere*) it.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, in the Third Meditation, an idea of God turns out to be foundational to all knowledge, after the *ego cogito* is designated as first known in the Second Meditation. One could even argue that God as *implicit* first known in the Third Meditation trumps the cogito as the

53 Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* III (eds. C. Adam, P. Tannery, in: *Oeuvres de Descartes*, vol. 7, Cerf: Paris, p. 36).

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*, p. 40. For a recent discussion on the causal likeness principle in Descartes, also in relation to theories of causation in Scholastic thought, cf. T. Schmaltz, *Descartes On Causation*, Oxford University Press: Oxford – New York 2008.

56 Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* III (eds. C. Adam, P. Tannery, vol. 7, p. 46).

*explicit* first known in the second Meditation, as becomes clear from Descartes' answer to the question of how the Second and Third Meditation can be reconciled with respect to the first known they present, a question raised by Burman in his *Responsiones ad quasdam difficultates ex meditationibus*. In this answer, Descartes claims that knowledge of God and his perfection implicitly always precedes knowledge of anything else, including knowledge of ourselves.<sup>57</sup>

On many levels, Descartes' argument for God as first known was criticized by his contemporaries, as the Objections that are added to the Meditations demonstrate.<sup>58</sup> Gassendi, for instance, argued that our idea of the infinite is constructed from ideas of finite things, and thus not prior to all other knowledge. Descartes's reply concludes with the following:

For how could I understand that I doubted or desired – that is, lacked something – and that I was not wholly perfect, unless there were in me an idea of a more perfect being which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison?<sup>59</sup>

Strikingly, the question with which Descartes ends his reply, strongly

57 This is also argued by Wouter Goris in his essay "Transzendente Gewalt." (cf. W. Goris, "Transzendente Gewalt," p. 630). He refers to Descartes, *Responsiones ad quasdam difficultates ex meditationibus* (eds. C. Adam, P. Tannery, in: *Oeuvres de Descartes*, vol. 5: *Correspondance, mai 1647 à février 1650 (477 à 586)*, Cerf: Paris 1903, p. 153): 'Ibi in Methodo continetur epitome harum Meditationum, quae per eas exponi debet; ibi ergo cognovit suam imperfectionem per Dei perfectionem. Et quamvis hoc non fecerit explicite, fecit tamen implicite. Nam explicite possumus prius cognoscere nostram imperfectionem quam Dei perfectionem, quia possumus prius ad nos attendere quam ad Deum, et prius concludere nostram finitatem quam illius infinitatem; sed tamen implicite semper praecedere debet cognitio Dei et ejus perfectionum quam nostri et nostrarum imperfectionum. Nam in re ipsa prior est Dei infinita perfectio quam nostra imperfectio, quoniam nostra imperfectio est defectus et negatio perfectionis Dei; omnis autem defectus et negatio praesupponit eam rem a qua deficit et quam negat.' Cf. J.-L. Marion, *On Descartes' metaphysical prism: the constitution and the limits of onto-theology in Cartesian thought*, University of Chicago Press :Chicago 1999, pp. 63–66.

58 In writing this section, I am heavily indebted to the clear analysis of Anat Schechtman in her article "Descartes's Argument for the Existence of the Idea of an Infinite Being," pp. 487–517.

59 I took this quotation from Schechtman, who refers to Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* III (eds. C. Adam, P. Tannery, vol. 7, pp. 45–46).



resembles the rhetorical question Bonaventure poses after having given a similar argument in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*:

our intellect does not come to completely resolve (*plene resolvens*) the understanding of whatsoever created being, unless it is aided by (*iuvetur ab*) the understanding of a most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute being (...) How else would the intellect know this defected and incomplete being, if it would not have any knowledge of a being without any defect?<sup>60</sup>

Hence, notwithstanding the many differences between Descartes and Bonaventure, and without suggesting direct influence of the latter on the former, there is a clear resemblance in argumentation between Bonaventure and Descartes with regard to the foundational priority of knowledge of a perfect being in first philosophy. Like Bonaventure, Descartes holds that the priority of the idea of divine being has a transcendental character in the sense that it is part of a systematical reflection on the question of which principles – implicit or explicit – make possible knowledge of reality and a first philosophy.

### *Levinas*

Taking a major leap fast-forward into the twentieth century, we locate a similar figure of thought in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995). Levinas criticizes a specific conception of ontology, which, he claims, originates in Parmenides and evolves through Aristotle's doctrine of *being as being*, through Spinoza and Hegel, and culminates into the ontology of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.<sup>61</sup> Most directly criticizing Heidegger and Husserl, Levinas maintains that this ontology is violent in its 'totalizing' search for unity and autonomy, and that it seeks to annihilate all that is other to the self or same (*le Même*). It does so by making its principles immanent to its system. Although Bonaventure's ontology is different in many ways, this last aspect is similar.

60 *Itinerarium* III.3: (V 304): 'non venit intellectus noster ut plene resolvens intellectum alicuius entium creatorum, nisi iuvetur ab intellectu entis purissimi, actualissimi, completissimi et absoluti; quod est ens simpliciter et aeternum, in quo sunt rationes omnium in sua puritate. Quomodo autem sciret intellectus, hoc esse ens defectivum et incompletum, si nullam haberet cognitionem entis absque omni defectu?'

61 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (trans. A. Lingis), Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague 1979, p. 102.

Also, like Bonaventure, Levinas has an ambiguous approach to ontology. In his metaphysics – the term he chooses as an opposite to ontology – Levinas puts forward the reception of the *transcendent other* as the first condition of being and of being human, of subjectivity itself.<sup>62</sup> The reception of this transcendence not only transgresses objectifying thought, but it also founds all knowledge as well: the transcendent other is first known. In that sense, it could be argued that Levinas founds yet another system of transcendental thought.<sup>63</sup> Yet, as Levinas argues at the same time, metaphysics is a philosophy proceeding from the ethical relation with the other as the ultimate relation in being, whereas ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of freedom, power, and violence. This metaphysics precedes ontology and replaces it as first philosophy.<sup>64</sup> According to Maurice Blanchot, Levinas even initiates 'a new departure in philosophy' by placing metaphysicsmetaphysics before ontology.<sup>65</sup> Levinas himself, however, considers his work to be a *return to Platonism*, rather than a novel approach. He explicitly states this in the conclusion of the summary of his dissertation *Totalité et Infini* in the *Annales de l'Université de Paris* (1961). Strikingly, in the same passage, he designates the 'Other' as *le premier intelligible*:

Dire qu'Autrui, se révélant par le visage, est le premier intelligible, avant les cultures, leurs alluvions et de leurs allusions, c'est aussi affirmer l'indépendance de l'éthique par rapport à l'histoire. Montrer que la première signification surgit dans la moralité [...] c'est tracer une limite à la compréhension du réel par l'histoire et retrouver le platonisme.<sup>66</sup>

Accordingly, he elsewhere maintains that the Platonic formula of the Good beyond being (*epekeina tes ousias*) is the precept of his thought, although the Good now takes the shape of the transcendent other:

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

63 This is the central point to Th. de Boer, "De wijsbegeerte van Levinas als ethische transcendentiaal filosofie," in: *Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* 64 (1972), pp. 39–64.

64 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 47–88.

65 Quotation taken from J. Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (trans. P.-A. Brault, M. Naas), Stanford University Press: Stanford (CA) 1999, p. 8.

66 E. Levinas, "Résumé de 'Totalité et Infini,'" in: *Annales de l'Université de Paris* 31(3) (1961), pp. 385–386, esp. p. 386 (quoted in French here because this text is not translated, to my knowledge).

To think the infinite, the transcendent, the Stranger, is hence not to think an object. But to think what does not have the lineaments of an object is in reality to do more or better than think. (...) The “intentionality” of transcendence is unique in its kind (...) We find that this presence in thought of an idea whose ideate overflows the capacity of thought is given expression (...) very often, in Plato.<sup>67</sup>

However, Levinas’s way of presenting the other as first intelligible refers to Scholastic thought rather than to Platonic thought. The concept of a *primum cognitum* was coined in Scholasticism, and it reminds us of the way in which Bonaventure transformed Plato’s idea of the Good into God as first known. On this basis, Levinas should be called a Bonaventurian rather than a Platonist.

Levinas not only describes the other as first known, he also relates this *premier intelligible* to Descartes’ idea of infinity: he describes ethics as the reception of the idea of the Infinite. This reception constitutes the beginning of consciousness and thought. In his essay *De Dieu qui vient à l’idée*, he describes this reception as a ‘rupture of immanence’, the ‘irruption’ of the idea of God into the neutrality of existence.<sup>68</sup> In particular, Levinas appreciates the Cartesian approach to the idea of infinity because it constitutes a relation to a being that remains completely exterior to the one that thinks it. In his own philosophy, he mainly describes this principal exteriority that has priority over the concept of being as the other, who is first intelligible but not a concept. This appreciation even leads Levinas to state that the idea of infinity in Descartes’ Third Meditation is such an important turning point in philosophy, that it could have been the beginning of a radically new first philosophy.<sup>69</sup>

In doing so, Levinas profoundly criticizes Husserl’s philosophy of consciousness, central to which is the objectifying intentionality of the autonomous mind. Consciousness is more than intentionality, Levinas claims, and the idea of the infinite is not an object (*Gegenstand*). It is welcomed rather than grasped:

67 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 49.

68 Cf. E. Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l’idée*, Vrin: Paris 1986<sup>2</sup>.

69 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 48–52. Cf. J.-F. Lavigne, “L’idée de l’infini: Descartes dans la pensée d’Emmanuel Levinas,” in: *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 92 (1) (1987), pp. 54–66, p. 56: ‘Lévinas prétend trouver chez Descartes non le partisan d’un impérialisme ontologique qu’il condamne mais le précurseur de ce qu’on considère souvent comme l’originalité même de son œuvre.’

Subjectivity realises these impossible exigencies – the astonishing feat of containing more than it is possible to contain. This book will present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality; in it the idea of infinity is consummated. Hence, intentionality, where thought remains an adequation with the object, does not define consciousness at its fundamental level. All knowing qua intentionality already presupposes the idea of infinity, which is preeminently non-adequation.<sup>70</sup>

Husserl also took recourse to Descartes. However, unlike Levinas, in his *Cartesianische Meditationen*, he argues that Descartes should have concentrated on the Second Meditation investigating the *cogito*, rather than continuing his investigations outside the realm of the human mind. With this statement, he introduces his phenomenology, in which the transcendental ego and the realm of consciousness fully define what can be known.<sup>71</sup> Levinas criticizes the 'ontological imperialism' of – among others – Husserl's 'egologic' phenomenology,<sup>72</sup> and focuses on Descartes' elaboration of the idea of infinity in his Third Meditation, in order to refute that knowledge and thought start from and are confined to the immanent sphere of our own consciousness. Paradoxically, in doing so, Levinas uses the transcendental method of phenomenology as founded by Husserl as well, although he did not look for an ultimate foundation in reason.

This paradox reminds us of Bonaventure, who articulates a similar criticism of the self-indulgence – *luxuriata est ratio; luxuriata est metaphysica*<sup>73</sup> – of the transcendental thought of his time. Bonaventure, like Levinas, bases his criticism on an ontological interpretation of metaphysics, but still uses its novel methods to found all knowledge in an infinite, incomprehensible foundation. Hence, neither Levinas nor Bonaventure make their *primum intelligibile* immanent to natural reason; rather, they draw the limits of philosophy within its own domain by describing 'le plus dans le moins'; the infinite surplus of an idea that cannot be conceptualized.<sup>74</sup>

To conclude, although they are very different, we find in both

70 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 27.

71 Cf. A.D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*, Routledge: London – New York 2003.

72 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 44.

73 Cf. *Hexaemeron* V.21 (V 357).

74 E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 22–23

Descartes and Levinas a criticism of the complacency of the philosophy of their time that is similar to that of Bonaventure, and a similar desire to base all knowledge on an understanding of something that is itself infinite and incomprehensible. This leads to a ‘self-conscious’ first philosophy; a philosophy that is aware not only of its foundations, but also of its limitations. In both Levinas and Descartes, the study of reality is founded on something beyond nature, beyond (the) being (of the self) as its *a priori*, whether this concerns the radical Other or a Christian or Judean God. This transcendental position of the absolute’s cognitive priority is first found in Bonaventure.

In order to do justice to the similarities and differences between the philosophers discussed here, and to deal with others as well, one would need much more time and attention. A closer investigation of the way in which the Platonic-Bonaventurian idea of the Absolute as the foundation of knowledge is reiterated from the thirteenth century onwards, and what this meant for transcendental philosophy would certainly be worthwhile. Nevertheless, reconstructing a figure of thought and its journey through history means translating concepts from one historical context to another, and looking for transfigurations that are never merely an alteration of form, but always an irretrievable change of content. Such a project is therefore, at least to a certain extent, bound to fail: *traduire c’est trahir*. As Gadamer argued, history opens up the possibility to understand, but it also produces a horizon of understanding that is always reclining. This prevents complete comprehension, but keeps confronting us with an alterity that transforms *us*. This makes understanding ‘the continuity of the Platonic tradition’ a project that presents us with infinite task (*unendliche Aufgabe*) to keep trying.

## *Summary*

THE IDEA THAT THE GOOD, or divine being, is not only ontologically, but also epistemologically first is a philosophical idea with a long tradition, finding its roots in Plato. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (ca. 1217 to 15 July 1274) is part of this tradition, but also changed this 'beginning with the absolute'. He is the first to conceive of divine being as *first known* in the context of a transcendental, first philosophy. I argue that this 'transcendentalization of the absolute' could only take place within the thirteenth-century project to rethink the disciplinary autonomy and systematicity of philosophy as a science next to theology, which led to the transformation of metaphysics into transcendental thought.

Most interpreters of Bonaventure presuppose that his doctrine of God as first known is a coherent, stable doctrine, with one singular message. The purport of this message, it is held, is that a created principle cannot be the final foundation on which knowledge of everything else rests, in favor of a first philosophy in which all knowledge rests on an understanding of divine being. Interpretations that start from this premise however insufficiently recognize that there are different accounts of God as first known to be found at different places in Bonaventure's work. I argue that only after close scrutiny of these different accounts and of the way in which they relate to each other, is it methodologically acceptable to decide upon the purport, coherence, and claim(s) of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known. The leading question of this study therefore is: *What is the meaning of the fact that there are different accounts of God as first known, found at different places in his work, for Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known?*

I answer this main question by dealing with a series of subquestions that approach this subject from several perspectives. I conclude that on several levels, the doctrine of God as first known can indeed be differentiated. This provides Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first

known with a more complex character than is often assumed in the scholarship on Bonaventure.

A first question concerns the role and place of *Deus primum cognitum* in two important 'system-building' elements of Bonaventure's *metaphysica reducens*: his adaptation of the doctrine of the transcendentals and his reductive exemplarism. The question is whether these two elements are successfully integrated in Bonaventure's thought, or whether a redundancy remains: if Bonaventure has found himself a foundation for all knowledge in exemplarism, why would he need an account of God as first known within the framework of the doctrine of the transcendentals? It is concluded that the combination of these two accounts of the foundation of natural knowledge in Bonaventure indeed suggests a redundancy: in exemplarism, natural reason relies on the transcendent ideas as the foundations of empirical knowledge, whereas in the doctrine of the transcendentals, natural reason is founded on the self-evidency of the transcendental notions as first principles. In Chapter 3, however, it is argued that the foundation of natural knowledge found in Bonaventure's exemplarism primarily – but not only – corresponds with an act of judgment in confuse knowing, i.e. the process of making the sensible intelligible, whereas the account of divine being as first known within the doctrine of the transcendentals corresponds with the act of judgment that is involved in the establishment of distinct knowledge.

This question regarding the relation of reductive exemplarism and the doctrine of the transcendentals in Bonaventure's metaphysics is linked to an investigation of Bonaventure's integration of two models of science into one system: an Aristotelian and a Platonic model of science. Whereas an Aristotelian approach to science allows for a plurality of sciences, each with their own foundation and subject, a Platonic model of science seeks to unify the sciences into a system in which all sciences are preliminary to one ultimate science, in which the foundation of all knowledge is studied.

I argue that the role of the doctrine of God as first known in Bonaventure's metaphysics is *ambiguous*: on the one hand, it can be argued to function within a 'Platonic' approach to science, in which metaphysics has no proper foundation but is relative or 'reduced' to theology, in which all sciences should culminate. On the other hand, it can be seen as part of an Aristotelian approach to science, in which it provides natural knowledge and metaphysics with a proper foundation. However, Bonaventure distantiates himself from an Aristotelian inter-

pretation of metaphysics as a science of being qua being, and aligns it with his reductive exemplarism, in which all knowledge is founded on knowledge of divine being.

The second chapter concerns the methodology of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known: *resolution*. The scholarly literature focuses on the fact that Bonaventure, in his accounts of God as first known, holds that a resolution into created principles is insufficient to establish full knowledge of anything; in order to obtain full knowledge, the resolution should proceed until it arrives at an understanding of God. Therefore, Bonaventure distinguishes between a *semiplena* and a *plena resolution*, which is seen as the most original feature of Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known. However, it is left unclear *which limit* is transgressed by a full resolution. Are these the same created principles in every resolution? Does every resolution in Bonaventure's work present the same kind of critique of created principles? If not, what is the meaning of these differences? I show that there are three different *types* of resolution that Bonaventure considers to be inadequate to establish full knowledge of something. I show that they correspond to three types of resolution found in Thomas Aquinas.

First, resolution as *division* is criticized, which is based on the idea that what is composite is ultimately understood through an understanding of its elements. Bonaventure argues that created parts are never truly simple as the created is inherently composite. As a resolution has to end in what is *absolutely* simple, it has to end in divine being. Furthermore, next to the created elements of a thing, of which it is composed, Bonaventure argues that another essential element of any given thing is its relation to first being as its exemplary cause, which has to be assessed as well in order to know something completely. This assessment presupposes preliminary knowledge of this first being.

Second, a resolution that ends in the most *general* created principles is criticized, such as transcendental being (*ens*) and its conditions one, true and good. All created being is deficient, and the deficient can only be understood through what is perfect, Bonaventure argues. Therefore, in order to understand anything created completely, we have to appeal to knowledge of a perfect being, which can only be divine being.

Third, a resolution is identified that ends in *esse*. *Esse* designates the perfection and the actuality of being. Rather than common being (*esse commune*), Bonaventure argues that only *esse divinum* can be this pure actuality, because all created being is mixed with potentiality.

Against these three types of *resolution* that Bonaventure criticizes, he



puts forward the *resolutio plena*, an analytic procedure that resolves into God as first known. His accounts of *resolutio plena* have the following three characteristics in common:

- 1 A distinction is made between resolving merely halfway (*semi-plene*) and fully (*plene*).
- 2 A complete resolution in the order of knowledge, in contrast to an incomplete resolution, does never proceed by mere *iteration*, i.e. by repeating rounds of analysis, for instance in ever smaller parts. Rather, it is characterized by a ‘twist’ in technique. The point at which this change of technique takes place, coincides with that at which a *semiplena* resolution is complemented in order to make it complete (*plena*).
- 3 All complete resolutions establish a unifying ascent towards one special being. As such, they reflect Bonaventure’s ambition to introduce a Platonic approach to the foundations of knowledge within a reflection on the first principles of metaphysics that is dominated by an Aristotelian approach to science and to what is first known.

In the third chapter, the way in which knowledge of the divine is involved in the mechanism of human cognition is investigated. Interpreters of Bonaventure fail to agree on this issue. Roughly, they defend two different models of the ‘collaboration’ between the created truth and the divine truth in the act of cognition. Whereas the first model sees a role for the priority of knowledge of God *only* in the certification of knowledge, the second model grants this priority a more prominent place, as it argues that knowledge of God is involved in the act of abstraction itself as well.

On the basis of a discussion of Bonaventure’s pivotal texts on this subject, I argue that knowledge of the divine is involved in the noetic process of making the created intelligible: by means of an act of judgment, in which we take recourse to the divine ideas, an intelligible species can be abstracted from a sensible representation. This means that Bonaventure does not maintain an ‘Aristotelian account of abstraction,’ as some scholars defend. Rather than only on the level of certifying the truth of what has become known by the intellect, the priority of knowledge of God is also located at the level of *intelligibility itself*.

Thus, the way in which sensible data of created things become

intelligible through *abstraction* corresponds to Bonaventure's accounts of *resolution*: both activities involve an act of judgment in terms of a comparison of created being to first being. In abstraction, the intellect appeals to the divine ideas in order to *identify* the created essence of a thing. In resolution, it *assesses* the essential relation of a created being to its first cause – and discovers its principles. In the former case, the result is 'confused' knowledge of a thing. In the latter case the result is 'distinct' knowledge: the parts and principles of a thing become separately known.

The priority of the divine is therefore *twofold*: both on the level of abstracting the intelligible from the sensible and on the level of a complete analysis of what has become known, preliminary knowledge of the divine is necessary.

The fourth chapter deals with the remarkable fact that in both the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, we find *two* accounts of God as first known. Although this has been acknowledged in the scholarly literature, not much attention has been paid to the *meaning* of the fact that there are different accounts of God as first known found at different places in one and the same work, let alone to a comparison of both works with regard to this fact. Why does Bonaventure present two arguments for God as first known in one text? How do these accounts relate to one another? Do they articulate one and the same thesis? What is the significance of possible differences? How do these two works relate to each other in this respect?

In order to answer these questions, a close analysis is provided of the resolutions to God as first known in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. I conclude that there is a structural similarity between the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* in their treatment of God as first known. Four common characteristics are identified.

First of all, in each work, a *double account* of God as first known is given, each account indicating a different stage of the soul's knowledge of God.

Second, these accounts of God as first known have different *outcomes*. In the third chapter of the *Itinerarium*, a resolution to God as 'a most pure, most complete, most actual, and absolute being (*ens*)' is given. The resolution of *Itinerarium V* surpasses the level of the concrete (i.e. that of entities). Here, it is argued that divine existence (*esse divinum*) is first known. As pure actuality, divine being falls into the intellect first, and is *presupposed* to the understanding of every concrete being

(*ens*). Whereas the immediacy of revealed truth allows divine being to be identified as first known in *Hexaameron* X, the resolution of *Hexaameron* V only reflexively establishes awareness that God (*esse*) is first known. Third, in both works, the transition from the first account of God as first known to the second is *prefigured* by a distinction *within* the first account. The surpassing of the first resolution by the second is prefigured by a parallel pattern *within* the first resolution. The first part of the first resolution of the *Itinerarium* is presented as a complete resolution at first, as the comprehension of a thing is identified with completely knowing (*plene scire*) the definition of something, whereas the second part of the resolution replaces this first '*plene*' with another; i.e. an understanding completely resolving (*plene resolvens*) into an understanding of an perfect and absolute being.

The resolution of *Hexaameron* V is part of a description of a conversion of the soul in order to find wisdom through contemplation. Here, 'Platonic', philosophers are argued to be enlightened, whereas the 'Aristotelian' philosophers remained in the dark. However, this position is abandoned later. Only the soul transformed by Christian faith is now argued to be enlightened.

Finally, a fourth characteristic was mentioned: the doctrine of God as first known acquires a *dynamic character* in both works.

In the fifth chapter, on the basis of an analysis of the literary-philosophical form of the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron*, this dynamic character is accounted for. Both works are characterized as medieval discourses dealing with the soul's transformation in its meditative ascent. In these treatises, knowledge is presented as embedded in a way of life, which is oriented at moral progress. The acquisition of theoretical insights is conditioned by virtues, practices, and the reception of divine grace, and cannot be isolated from the state of being of the transforming soul. This means that the subject is capable to attain true knowledge at one stage, whereas it might not at another stage, as it requires yet another transformation. Correspondingly, the quality, scope and nature of knowledge that the subject attains differ in the subsequent stages of its development: what established a complete understanding first is surpassed by an insight acquired at a higher stage.

From a Hegelian perspective, the *Itinerarium* and the *Hexaameron* describe the 'history of the soul's development': both works present an articulation of the entirety of the itinerary of the soul. This means that insights and truths that are legitimate under the circumstances of a specific stage, but are qualified or replaced at a next stage, still

are all part of ‘the true’. Therefore, it is possible to posit a certain first known at one point and yet another at a second, without causing a contradiction or inconsistency. This epistemology, which expresses the inner logic of the soul’s transformation, provides the doctrine of God as first known with a dynamic character. Furthermore, in both works, two concepts of philosophy are integrated: a concept of philosophy as a transcendental science and a concept of philosophy that is concerned with self-reflection and conversion.

Having presented the results of a series of analyses of Bonaventure’s doctrine of God as first known from different perspectives, I come to conclude that, notwithstanding their similarities, the different accounts of *Deus primum cognitum* are everything but repetitions of one and the same claim or argument. As I have shown, the doctrine of God as first known has a much more complex structure. The following differentiations can be identified:

- 1 One differentiation of the doctrine of God as first known pertains to its method. The accounts of *resolutio plena* found in Bonaventure’s works are differentiated by that what they criticize: *division*, a resolution into *generalissima*, or a resolution into the actuality of created being (*esse commune*).
- 2 Preliminary knowledge of divine being is involved *both* on the level of *abstraction*, by which the sensible is made intelligible, and on the level of *resolution*, in which what has become known is further investigated in order to be completely understood.
- 3 ‘God as first known’ is encountered *both* on the level of *philosophy* and natural knowledge, and on the level of *theology*, and revealed knowledge. What is first in the latter realm *surpasses* that which is first in the former in both primordality and quality.
- 4 In two of Bonaventure’s later works, the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, a more *static* approach to divine being as first known is replaced by a *dynamic* approach.

What do these differentiations convey about Bonaventure’s ‘beginning with the absolute’?

First of all, the differentiations testify of the fact that ‘the beginning with the absolute’ is only fully realized when the domain of natural reason is surpassed, and the soul is transformed by faith and grace. The

doctrine of God as first known comes to completion in theology, rather than within philosophy. Hence, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known can be seen as a *Vernunftkritik*. By arguing that divine being is first known, Bonaventure stresses the limitations of philosophy and natural reason: knowledge rests on an irrevocable ground that is never fully comprehended itself, even if it is the indubitable foundation of both intelligibility and certitude. In so far natural reason is able to reflect on its foundation, this reflection is surpassed by the insights that the mind lifted up by grace can attain on the basis of revealed knowledge. Theology, the *scientia perfecta* in which all scientific knowledge culminates, starts off where metaphysics ends.

By placing a reflection of God as first known within the context of a synthesis that deals with spirituality, metaphysics is not to be seen as an autonomous discipline, but rather conditioned by a way of life, central to which is the conversion of the soul – a project that is thoroughly Platonic. As such, the doctrine of God as first known is part of Bonaventure's critique of the rise of the natural sciences, of Aquinas's perspective on the autonomy of human cognition, and of the fragmentation of the sciences into a plurality, in which each discipline is autonomous with regard to the others.

Yet, at the same time, by transcendentalizing God's cognitive priority by placing it within the context of a systematic investigation of being and knowledge of being, starting from first principles, Bonaventure incorporates it into the very system that he criticizes. In this sense, Bonaventure provides philosophy with a proper foundation, through which it acquired (relative) autonomy, which could compete with Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics.

Hence, the figure of 'God as first known' provides the foundation on the basis of which *both* theology *and* metaphysics are possible, and by which their distinction is understood: metaphysics acquires insight into this *primum* reflexively, mediated by empirical knowledge. Theology, however, grasps this foundation of all knowledge in a more immediate and profound way through the revelation of *esse primum* as *prima rerum intellectualium*. On this basis, philosophy not only gains its own domain distinct from theology, Bonaventure's doctrine of God as first known also creates a *common epistemological ground* between both disciplines.

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The book and its cover were designed by Zink Typografie, and the text was set using pdfL<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X. It was printed by Wöhrmann Print Service, Zutphen.



