

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

From all that has been set forth in the lessons that have gone before, we see that it must be accepted that there exists—

- A First Mover, itself unmoved
- A First Efficient Cause, itself uncaused
- A First Necessary Being which exists from itself
- A First Absolutely Perfect Being
- A First Orderer Who Is Understand its very self

The question for our consideration is this : are each of these realities to be given the same name, God, or do they designate five different natures not specifically the same, so that 'God' befits them only *equivocally*, that is, signifying oneness only in name but not in reality ?

First it must be said that the conclusions of each of the five ways show causes of the beings throughout the universe. Now a cause always produces an effect similar to itself. Hence, since the five are causes of beings that occur universally, they must be similar to their effects. So the name 'God' they merit is at least *analogically* the same (somewise same ; somewise unsame ; more unsame than same—as the name 'good' is said of the air, of the woods, of cattle, and of men). But, that they all merit the name 'God' *univocally*—each signifying exactly the same reality—appears from what follows.

The **first mover** is its very *do* (or move), but if were its *do* without being also its *be*, then it would do (or move) before it is, which is impossible for *do* follows *be*.

And the **first efficient cause** depends in regard to its *do* on no cause, and therefore as regards *be* must depend on no cause. But a being which is not pure act (but composed of potency and act) has not *be* by essence ; therefore has its *be* from another and is, therefore, dependent in regard to *be* and hence also in regard to *do*.

And the **first necessary being** must have its necessity from itself. For a being whose *essence* is really distinct from its *be* no more has its necessity from itself than its *be*, and accordingly has not its *be* from itself either.

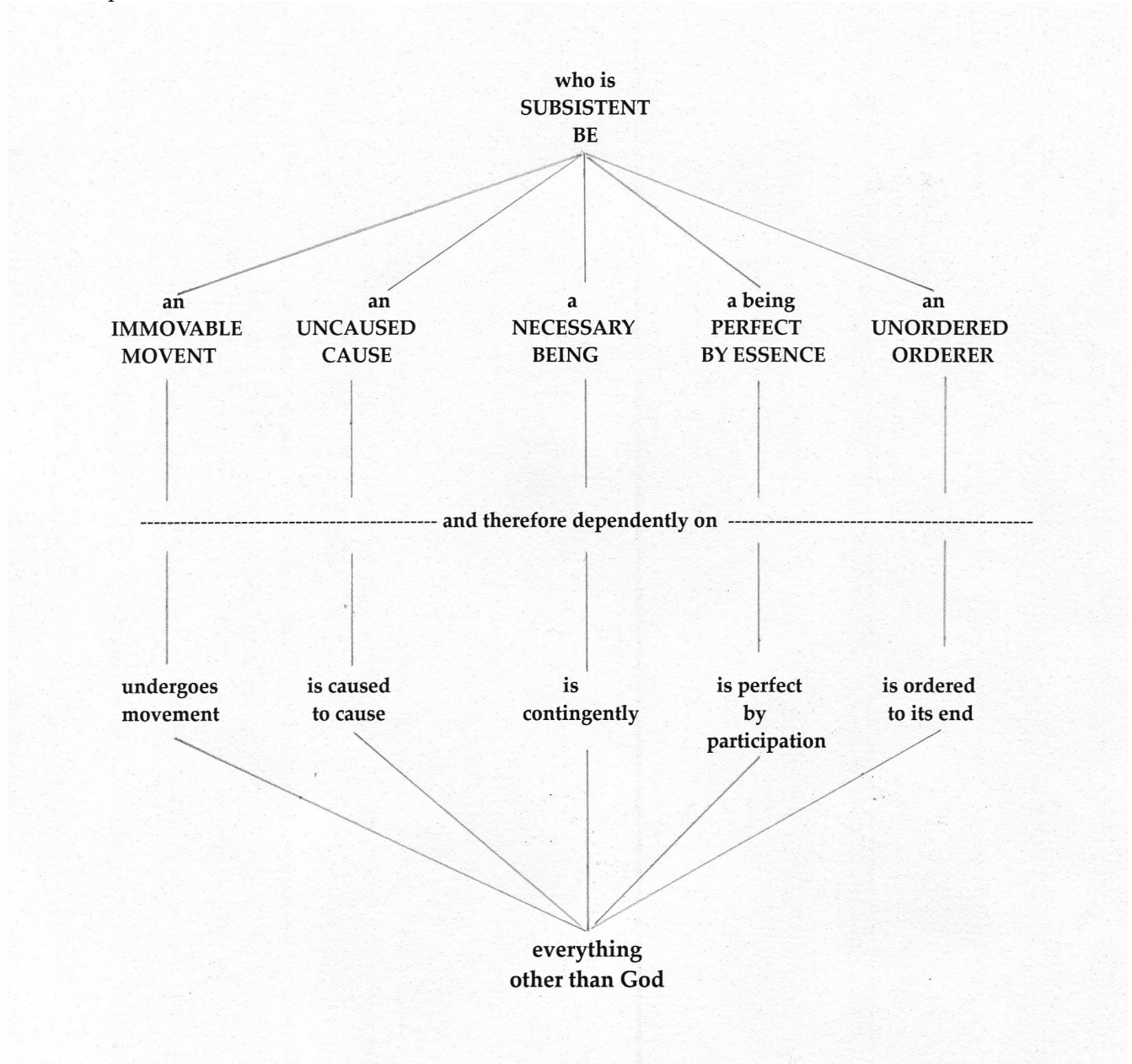
And the **first absolutely perfect being** must have its *be* by essence—for something is called a being from *be*—otherwise it would not be absolutely perfect, for perfection = fulness of being. Therefore such a being has *be* identified in its essence.

And an **orderer which is subsistent understand** must first *be* in order to *do* (as said above in relation to motion). Further, since immateriality is the root of knowledge subsistent understand is the summit of immateriality. But a being wherein there is no potency is a being in which there is no real distinction between *essence* and *be*—*what-it-is* is identical with *that-it-is*. Therefore, a being which is subsistent understand is a being in which *essence* is identified with *be*.

But since in all the things of the world and of the universe *essence* is really distinct from *be*, yet in their

prime cause (of their movement, of their activity, of their being, of their perfection and of their order) *essence* is identified with *be*, it follows that this cause is essentially different from the things of this world and only analogously same with them.

The universality of these five ways may be exhibited schematically in this fashion—reading from the bottom up.



Propositions self evident, and non self evident

Logic is the science which directs the operations of the mind in the attainment of truth. The mind's first operation is called *simple apprehension* the act whereby, using information provided by the senses, the mind grasps some element of reality. In this act the intellect understands the *quiddity* of a thing (*what* it is) without affirming or denying anything about it. You will recall our insistence on the difference in apprehension of the driver of the utility and that of his dog in the back when each

observes some lump on the road ahead. For the dog there is only the sensed impression : he sees 'that'. The driver, possessed of intellect, not only sees 'that' but 'what', and if he does not know immediately what constitutes the lump, he will continue to observe it until he does so.

In *simple apprehension* the mind abstracts from what the eyes observe either *formally* or *totally*. So, for instance, when it abstracts from snow its whiteness, or from steel its hardness, or from some material thing its quantity, it is abstracting *formally*—abstracting some accidental form from the reality it is considering. However, when it abstracts *animal* from cow, sheep, dog and cat, or *vegetable* from grass, shrub and tree, it is abstracting some quiddity from its subjects. Here it is abstracting *totally*.

From *apprehensions* the mind proceeds to *propositions*. This involves comparing one *apprehension* with another and forming a judgement. So the driver of the utility may resolve the apprehension provided by the evidence of his eyes to conclude that the lump on the road is not just a cat, but a dead cat.

There are things which are true in themselves and *known to us* to be so, and those which are true in themselves but *not known to us*. That is, there are *propositions* which are true in themselves and known to us to be so, and those which are true in themselves but not known to us. St Thomas quotes the great Roman commentator, Boëthius (St Severinus), to the point where he says :

“There are certain things which are self-evident to the wise which are not so to all, as that incorporeal substances are not in place.” (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 1)

If a man does not understand what is meant by the expression 'incorporeal substance'—something real but immaterial—he will not see the truth of the statement that such a being does not require a place in which to exist.

The wise, those who consider things through their ultimate causes, can see the need to admit the existence of God. These reasons will not move one who has not understood and accepted each of the steps of reason upon which the arguments rely.

In the final lesson in this series we will consider the phenomenon of atheism, both theoretical and practical, and its immense effect on the lives of ordinary people in the present century, the spirit of the world which affects everyone caught up in the business of living who has not the force of character, or the application, to weigh the evidence for God's existence.
