

Chapter 1

ARISTOTLE: THE PARADOX OF GOOD SENSE

Beginning is an absolute. To begin is simple. One either begins or does not begin. "Well, begin!" I'm thinking about beginning, but, as I think about beginning, I think that beginning in itself is so simple that so long as I think about beginning I shall not begin. But, perhaps, thinking about beginning is beginning; in which event, without exactly beginning, I begin. Or, I began before thinking about beginning, so that what I'm thinking about now, at this moment, is not simply beginning, but the beginning of thought, that is, the beginning insofar as it is thought about. But a beginning thought about is not simple; it presupposes thought; it is a principle for thought. It is certainly not the simple beginning with which I began before thinking about beginning. To begin absolutely presupposes nothing; it is not a principle; it is not intelligible source or regulative original.

Beginning is a principle for a thought itself absolute, that is, simply present, together with nothing, but a thought that, as a matter of principle, thinks of itself not as absolutely present but as possessing a beginning together with other things. But this common principle is the principle of absolute thought. Nothing stands in the way of thought's being an absolute principle. No principle is absolute for thought except thought itself. Thought that as a matter of principle thinks of other things, for example, in science, thought that thinks of itself as a principle of order, or, in ethics, thought that thinks of itself as a principle of decision, thought, so conceived, is not itself, concerned as it is with

other things. Thought in this instrumental mode concerned with other things as a *logos* or reason, as a principle or principles deployed in order, or in order to, this thought is only potentially itself. Although at times capable of thinking itself, it does not know itself. But pure thought thinks itself absolutely, not as a matter of principle; it is thought as light, constant, so intimately present, so intensively clear as to be invisible to reason save in its effects, that is, in its illuminating the forms of reason.

Pure thought is the *aither*, that divine fire of the upper region that makes my thinking shine, that makes this universe of reason 'to move, to breathe, to be.' This pure thought absolutely in upon itself is Life Itself to reason, which reason 'bodies' forth; it is, as it were, reason's Soul, its true Self. To analogize reason to this pure thought as body to soul points, in the context of an examination of Aristotle, to the unity of an actuality to a potentiality whose it is: a nexus of thought with reason within the identity of thought. It points to the paradoxical structure of self-consciousness. Since we come upon pure thought within our own horizon of self-consciousness, it is necessary to note, then, at the outset, that, although this pure thought is not at all unlike God's essence in its own essence, it is, nevertheless, directly or immediately reason's or human nature's principle. God for Aristotle is pure thought, but in God this essence is directly or immediately the principle, so to speak, of the *divine* nature. There is no direct communion between God and man through the principle of 'likeness' as, for instance, is to be found in Thomas Aquinas. In Aristotle, 'likeness' is a mirror that reflects each mind back upon its own essence. While, therefore, this absolute thought, which is reason's Life, is often taken as a god, it might be wise to take it also, especially in distinction from God himself, as reason's own 'invisible man.' In this way, attention is focused to *self-consciousness* as the object under consideration in general, but first, specifically in Aristotle, to reason's *raison d'etre*, that is, to the essential purity of thought which is, for Aristotle, the Intellect, reason's true Self, but a Self-not-evident to reason. By examining the peculiar, particular structure of Aristotelian self-consciousness, without regard either to interests of *faith* or interests of *reason*, it will be possible

to delineate a space from which it is possible to measure to what extent there has taken place a dispersion in Western man's consciousness so that not only is perception of God or God's reality radically altered, even altered into nonbeing, but such that self-consciousness itself is altered in its very being, such that the question of the alteration of being itself is at last intelligible.

Hegel tells us that ". . . if we would be serious with Philosophy, nothing would be more desirable than to lecture upon Aristotle, for he is of all the ancients the most deserving of study."¹ But, says Hegel, although Aristotle "presses further into the speculative nature of the object," he does so in such a way "that the latter remains in its concrete determination, and Aristotle seldom leads it back to abstract thought-determinations. The study of Aristotle is hence inexhaustible, but to give an account of him is difficult, because his teaching must be reduced to universal principles. Thus in order to set forth the Aristotelian philosophy, the particular content of each thing would have to be specified."² But it is precisely this difficulty for us and for Hegel, namely, that in Aristotle the universal appears constantly in the particular, it is this that makes Aristotle that unique touchstone that he is when we set out to examine the question of a subsequent radical alteration in humanity, that is, in self-consciousness. In fact, this difficulty in dealing with Aristotle may be infinitely extended beyond what Hegel's conception takes it to be.

If it were possible to draw near to Aristotle's universe by coming upon it as an outsider (this possibility does not exist), it would be possible to occupy God's place. But this is twice impossible, first, because human nature presupposes this universe, and second, because God, who occupies his place outside this world absolutely, cannot draw near to, cannot conceive of this universe. Aristotle knows that God exists as *first* cause of this universe's ordered motions. But, in order that God be *sufficient*

¹ *Hegel's Lectures On The History of Philosophy* II (trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, London, 1894), 134.

² *Ibid.*

cause, God must be *final* cause; that is, he himself must be an *unmoved* mover. Paradoxically, God's causality is an *indirection*; God's thought is, strictly, *unintentional*, that is, in itself. God exists simply as what he is; he lacks potentiality. In himself, or thought of by another in his relation to this world, he cannot be or think himself other than he is: that absolutely simple being that stands as other to this world's complex existence, the latter bound up with one degree or another of potentiality, with one kind or another of matter. The dynamic process of this universe, operating within itself through a multiplicity of causes, is for Aristotle, in its totality, an *eros*, a love, a passionate but self-circumscribed thrust reaching toward God, its Beloved Object. But it is a love perpetually revolving within its own potentiality, self-attaining, but unrequited by a God eternally his own object, a perfect, necessary being. God's Absolute Life, then, reflects consciousness back upon itself, points to this universe's existing differently, that is, outside forever of God's Life, enjoying a life of its own, proper to it. *A fortiori*, man, who is in this universe, who, as Aristotle says, is "in fact not the best thing in the universe," is possessed of his own proper nature, namely, his reason. Man is a living animal who has reason; or, man is a rational animal. It seems to us we understand this until we begin to think about it: wherein, in this complex, living-animal-possessing-reason, is man's essence? but this question immediately tows us into the undercurrent: 'wherein is essence?'

Aristotle's complex word for essence is three words $\tau\acute{\iota} \eta\tilde{\nu} \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$, *what it was to be*. The primary being of anything is *what* reason thinks *it was to be* that thing: Reason's understanding is retrospective. The primary being of anything is *what it was* for reason *to be* that thing: Reason's understanding is retrospectively identity. Further, the *to be*, or, the existence of anything, consists in its essentiality, that is, in its thinkability. The essence of a thing is to be found in that thing, or that thing does not exist, that is, its identity in being is its potential intelligibility. Essence bears kangaroo-like existence in its pouch; existence is borne from potentiality to actuality within the limits of essence. Reality is, if I may say it, a kangaroo court with no negative implications (except that there is no Adam, no Virgin Birth, etc.), its radical

intelligibility being a foregone conclusion. This universe perpetually revolves through its varied motions; existence suffers its privations; rationality exercises its freedom to choose between contrary possibilities. But, finally, there is no doubt about either the possibility of knowledge or, what comes to the same thing, the actuality of existence. There is no universal or methodical doubt à la Descartes possible in this concrete universe. Such a doubt would be nonsense, not merely because it would deny experience (for there is a sense in which Aristotle's thought denies experience in reaching beyond it), but essentially because it would deny the ultimate particularity of reality. It would appear to Aristotle that one would have to be God, but, indeed, quite a different God than Aristotle knows, to entertain such a doubt; it would be not nonsense merely, but absolute nonsense.

If, in thinking about God, self-consciousness is reflected back upon itself, then it is instructive to note that Aristotle does not demonstrate that God exists without qualification, but that to be God is to be pure thought: God is, in himself, necessarily what he is. But God's necessity is not only in God. His necessity is in reason's demonstration. Aristotle, speaking of God as the unmoved mover in *Metaphysics* XII.7, says, "Since this is a possible account, and if it were not so the world would have proceeded out of night and 'all things together' and nonbeing, these questions must be taken as solved."³ The necessity in reason for God's existence is, as indicated by Aristotle, that the contrary proposition contradicts the intelligibility of the universe whose ordered existence is not in doubt. This, combined with the fact that nothing in the account is self-contradictory, is, for Aristotle, the solution to the question of God's existence. Note that this is a two-legged proof. First leg: I can conceive without contradiction of God's existence. Second leg: God's existence is the sufficient reason of this universe. This two-legged proof belongs to a two-legged prover; science is reason's enterprise, but reason is the form of a psychosomatic being. The synthetic ordering of physics to metaphysics for example, that parti-

³ Aristotle: *Metaphysics* (trans. R. Hope, U. Michigan, 1960), 258.

cularization of science so foreign to Hegel's ultramodern spirit, reflects the synthetic constitution of the human knower, which, in turn, is reflected in the two-legged proof ultimately because of the synthetic structure of all reality outside of God. If God's existence were merely possible (necessary in itself, or, if we could import into Aristotle's thinker such an abstract thought, necessary to thought), Aristotle would not know of it. But knowledge of God's existence is certain not because it is a necessity of rational thought nor because it is in itself necessary. It is certain because God's existence is *sufficient for thought*; that is, God's existence accounts for our intelligent experience, or, it is clear to our thoughtful experience of the intelligibility of things. There is no doubt that reason itself is a sufficient instrument, that is, that it experiences reality. On this condition, God's existence is a matter of intelligible fact. So that God's existence, on the one hand, is neither simply a necessity of my thought as will be the case with St. Anselm (where logical intuition determines existence), nor, on the other hand, is it simply a transcendental ideal of 'pure reason' as with Kant (where sensuous intuition determines appearances). At both of these later points in Western thought there emerges a radical subjectivity of reason foreign to Aristotle: For whether I claim to know existence directly (Anselm), or to know, but not to know existence (Kant), I assert that my reason is self-sufficient for religious purposes (Anselm), or for practical-moral purposes (Kant). But in Aristotle not only is reason not self-sufficient, but, consequently, the religio-practical, moral dimension, while necessary to human nature, is, in itself, finally insufficient. But Aristotle's scientific reason is sufficient for knowing God to exist on fundamentally the same ground on which it knows whatever it knows, namely, that the objective reality of the world informs subjectivity. 'Objectivity' is first receptivity. Aristotle compares his understanding to that of Protagoras: ". . . we say that science and sense measure things, because by them we get to know things; whereas they really do not measure, but are measured. We feel as though someone were taking our measure, and we get to know our size because the measuring tape is repeatedly applied to us. But Protagoras says, 'man is the measure of all

things,' as if he had meant to say 'the man of science' or 'the man of sense'; for such men are measures because they possess science, or sense, which we know to be measures of whatever is submitted to them. Therefore, this saying, though it seems to say something, really says nothing."⁴ As Aristotle makes clear, actual science is science of a concrete man who measures his subject matter only to the extent that he himself has been shaped by that section of reality. For Aristotle, 'man is the measure of all things' must, if it is to be interpreted into intelligibility, actually contradict the radical subjectivity it seems to announce. That man should be the arbiter of reality is perverse nonsense to Aristotle, so much so that he pretends to understand Protagoras' statement as a misleading superfluity. Such is Aristotle's contempt for this great Sophist.

Actually Protagoras belongs among those who seek a reason for everything; that is, there is more than one dimension in which reason is ultimate in sophism. Sophism, or the exaltation of reason, in which man places man at the center (apart from what it is morally: an ungoverned, or self-governing will) is scientifically, for Aristotle, the refusal to recognize the law of contradiction (that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time in the same respect) as the *indemonstrable* basis of all scientific demonstration. If reason is to be reason, then there is something it can *not* seek a reason for; reason stands on a limit: the law of contradiction. Reason abides by this law. In abiding by this law, it entertains no doubt about itself. It acknowledges its own essentiality, that is, that it actually exists transparently for pure thought, that it is in itself potentially intelligible. It is therefore in no position to establish its own existence (there is no 'I doubt, therefore I am' with St. Augustine, nor with Descartes, 'I think, therefore I am'). Its existence depends upon its essence, pure thought or intellect, together with which it is bound in the latter's identity. Reason in itself is not absolute or pure thought, but it knows the latter, that is, intellect, to be its own principle. It knows itself to possess, as an original possession, the cause of its own existence. The essential priority of

⁴ *Ibid.*, 203–204.

intellect to reason precludes doubt. At the same time, it guarantees independence in existence to every rational mind, *qua* intellectual. That is to say, *every rational animal possesses, above and beyond the sensible and rational conditions of its knowing, in the innermost essence of its being, that intellectual power which makes it to be itself, to be a rational animal, and which, in itself, is identically real.* This is the true speculative essence of Aristotle. No reason is to be sought for this.

Aristotle describes the nature of human reason in the *De Anima* III.4: "Concerning that part of the soul (whether it is separable in extended space, or only in thought) with which the soul knows and thinks, we have to consider what is its distinguishing characteristic, and how thinking comes about. . . . This part, then, must (although impassive) be receptive of the form of an object, *i.e.*, must be potentially the same as its object, although not identical with it: as the sensitive is to the sensible, so must mind be to the thinkable. It is necessary then that mind, since it thinks all things, should be uncontaminated, as Anaxagoras says, in order that it may be in control, that is, that it may know; for the intrusion of anything foreign hinders and obstructs it. Hence the mind, too, can have no characteristic except its capacity to receive. That part of the soul, then, which we call mind (by mind I mean that part by which the soul thinks and forms judgements) has no actual existence until it thinks."⁵ First, it should be noted that mind is here treated *qua* reason, it thinks, reflects, intends, it judges, assumes, understands [ψ γινώσκει . . . φρονεῖ . . . ψ διανοεῖται καὶ ὑπολαμβάνει].⁶ This reason is for Aristotle the human mind *qua* human. It is specified as being what it is insofar as its existence is merely potential. Human reason is specifically differentiated from other possible minds by being *capable* of knowing an object. To grasp this distinction vividly, consider that God's mind knows an object (itself) without potentiality. It is clear, then, that for Aristotle mind includes reason, but that reason is specifically

⁵ Aristotle: *On the Soul; Parva Naturalia; On Breath* (trans. W. S. Hett, Cambridge, Mass., 1957), 163, 165.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 162, 164.

the potentiality for knowing, which in and of itself does not include mind. The latter, for instance in God, exists in itself without reason, indeed, exists as perfectly actual knowledge. Reason is that difference by which man is distinguished from other animal species. But soul apart from reason is not human, nor, apart from an object, does reason actually exist. With this result (which I better appreciate as I keep in mind Aristotle's insight into the concrete particularity of the real), namely, that where I find a capacity for thought, that is, reason as such, I do not find a man, but I find a species. While he would be a man, he actually is not because he is not yet actually a thinker. I note that not only does reason in general not make a thinker, but that there is a conjunction of actual thought with humanity's concrete individual man. I am forced to conclude that it takes more than reason not only to make a thinker, but to make a man. (Of course, by more than reason I do not mean a body; the body comes together with reason in the species.) Since, *qua* rational, this man possesses the intelligible forms of thinking only potentially, it is evident that there must be a power in the intellect, as the essential identity in which reason is circumscribed, whereby thought can take place. As a matter of fact, Aristotle tells us something about this in a famous passage in Book III of the *De Anima*; but it is the locus of philosophic trials, where Aristotle has tied a tight knot of insight to 'tease us out of thought/As doth eternity.'

But before dealing directly with the question of the Active Intellect of the *De Anima*, let us first turn our attention to certain remarks of Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* X: ". . . now activity in accordance with wisdom is admittedly the most pleasant of the activities in accordance with virtue: at all events it is held that philosophy or the pursuit of wisdom contains pleasures of marvellous purity and permanence, and it is reasonable to suppose that the enjoyment of knowledge is a still pleasanter occupation than the pursuit of it. Also the activity of contemplation will be found to possess in the highest degree the quality that is termed self-sufficiency. . . . the wise man . . . can also contemplate by himself, and the more so the wiser he is; no doubt he will study better with the aid of fellow-workers, but

still he is the most self-sufficient of men. Also the activity of contemplation may be held to be the only activity that is loved for its own sake: it produces no result beyond the actual act of contemplation, whereas from practical pursuits we look to secure some advantage, greater or smaller, beyond the action itself.”⁷ Since we have just discovered ourselves that Aristotle’s thought is that science resides actually in a concrete individual man, so intimately that it is the same thing ‘to know and to be’ a man, we, then, find ourselves in a position truly to appreciate Aristotle’s words on scientific contemplation, located as they are at the conclusion of his treatise on *Ethics*. The actual man, *qua* actual, transcends humanity. Corresponding to this so thoroughly unmodern insight, Aristotle sharply distinguishes intellectual life from practical life. Moral virtues (practical wisdom, fortitude, justice and so on) need, as context for their proper exercise, an organized human community, what ancient Greece understood comprehensively as *political* life. And moral virtues need that species-life of the *polis* not only for their *acquisition* but also for their *exercise*. However, intellectual life, that life by which the individual transcends the limiting conditions of his own humanity, does not need other men for its exercise, although, incidentally, in acquisition of the materials of science, a man’s *potential* knowledge is increased by the presence of fellow-workers. Within scientific life itself, therefore, we discern the same distinction between potential and actual as we see to exist between species and individual, or between reason and pure thought. That absolute intensity of intellect convergent with actual individuality manifests itself in Aristotle’s understanding that contemplative activity is its own end, but that practical-moral activity due to its specific conditionality is extensively ordered beyond itself. Man, *qua* man, is *zoon politikon*, a living political animal. Therefore, the individual is not virtuous for his own sake, except incidentally, but for the good of the *polis*. With this distinction in mind we can better appreciate what Aristotle says in *Ethics* I: “For even though it be the case

⁷ *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. H. Rackham, Cambridge, Mass., 1934), 613, 615.

that the good is the same for the individual and for the state, nevertheless, the good of the state is manifestly a greater and more perfect good, both to attain and to preserve. To secure the good of one person only is better than nothing; but to secure the good of a nation or a state is a nobler and more divine achievement.”⁸ At first glance it seems that the individual is submerged in the common good so thoroughly that, by analogy to modern times, he would need the Christian faith of a Kierkegaard to preserve himself from the totalitarian claims of the *spirit of man*. But what makes Kierkegaard intelligible is an event that is so primary in being that it could not occur in Aristotle’s universe without destroying it totally. Therefore, the analogy is inappropriate. But, that it is inappropriate is instructive in understanding not only Aristotle but ourselves, for our worlds are not at all the same. Here is a structural tension so characteristic of Aristotle’s thought, touching on human being, by extension on epistemological questions—here it is at a fairly tractable point. Aristotle understands intellectual activity to excel moral activity by reason of its self-sufficiency. Within intellectual life itself research is to contemplation as acquisition is to exercise, as politics is to knowledge, as insufficient reason is to self-sufficient intellect. But reason knows its ‘invisible man,’ insofar as it is self-sufficient, to occupy a state like God’s. In fact, for Aristotle, the individual, *qua* individual, is like God. He is especially Godlike, especially the individual, in contemplation. But Aristotle in his words just cited, exalting the common good over the good of one man, states that to “secure the good of one person only is better than nothing; but to secure the good of a nation or a state is a nobler and more divine achievement.” There’s the rub! Godlike individual against Godlike *polis*. How is it both ways? But it is only one way: Aristotle’s thought is relentlessly synthetic. The common good excels the good of one man insofar as only one leg of two-legged reality is being considered, namely, an order of sufficient causality, that is, this universe. Here a man taken in isolation is by definition insufficient. For this perspective only God is a sufficient individual, precisely

⁸ Ibid., 7.

because he is outside this universe. But within this universe God's sufficient causality is approximated to varying degrees by eternal movements of heavenly magnitudes. On this earth sufficient cause has its locus in a species; that is, it takes a man *qua* man to make a man. Consequently, it is perfectly true that in an order of sufficient causality common good is more divine. But the order of sufficient causality does not affect God's thought. The latter is absolutely self-identical. Therefore, on the other leg, God's existence tells Aristotle not only that self-sufficiency is individuality, but that individuality is prior, in reality, to the conditioned existence of the universe. As a result, an order of sufficient causality not only does not submerge individuality, but is, as a matter of fact, ordered to it. *The individual, qua individual, engaged in what he alone can do, active contemplation, is most divine.*

Now it must also be clear that although we speak of two legs, they are not related to one another indifferently. Rather, there is an *order* relating species to individual, what is more divine to what is most divine, as matter to form. Order denotes at the same time subordination, but real unity. So, for example, the life of an organism is this particular organism's life. The life of an individual man is that he is not either an individual or a man, but, organically, one is an individual man. This psychosomatic synthesis, this living man, exists because soul is united to body not indifferently but in an intelligible order. This is to say that the man himself, so considered, is a universe of sufficient causality. But the further implication is that this man's *individuality* must itself be the sufficient cause of this *order*. Note well: not of his existence in the sense that he has come into existence; the sufficient cause of this man's existence, insofar as he is one-among-men in this universe, is the species. If we say of a man that he is a synthesis of body and soul, of form and matter, of sensation and reason, still we do not account for his being *this individual man*. If his individuality is attributed to his matter, then it is understood in and of itself to be nonexistent; if to his form, then his existence is some other man's existence, or he is simply a species. But for Aristotle this man must possess within himself his own principle of individuality or ordered existence;

if not, no knowledge is possible, because reason, in itself, is an insufficiency. In Book II of the *De Anima*, Aristotle defines form as that “in virtue of which [καθ’ ἧν] individuality [τόδε τι] is directly attributed [ἡδὲ λέγεται].”⁹ Within the horizon of form it is said, here and now, there is an individual present. But what is known to reason, what is able to be spoken about, here and now, namely, individuality, does not by virtue of that fact or form of reason *exist*. That would be to attribute to reason, in its sheer transparency, a creative power it simply does not possess (actually a creative power that exists nowhere in Aristotle’s universe). Reason is insufficiently ordered to existence (that is, to individuality). The rational soul or form of man communicates existence not actually but potentially; individuality is in itself incommunicable existence. Forms existing for reason exist potentially. It is sufficient for scientific reason that this man exist by virtue of his form, that is, sufficient for science as potential knowledge, as reason, research, as *logos*, or that cooperative gathering of materials for what finally is to be an individual knower’s actuality. Such an understanding is sufficient when science is taken to be directed to another man. But it is radically insufficient to reality *per se*, and therefore to science undertaken for its own sake, for the sake of the knower. Science is not yet truly itself so long as existence is known bounded by an horizon of forms: so long as self-existence is merely science’s *implication*. This is the heart of Aristotle’s criticism of Plato. What the dialectical formalism of Platonism gains in scope, in universality, it loses in intensity, in power; as Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* IV: “. . . philosophy differs from dialectic in degree of power. . . . For dialectic puts questions about matters which philosophy knows. . . .”¹⁰

And, of course, science is only pure in isolated moments, in isolated men; this is a function of man’s imperfect nature, that is, his rationality. Aristotle says in *De Anima* III: “. . . when the mind has become the several groups of its objects, as the learned man when active is said to do (and this happens, when

⁹ *On The Soul*, op. cit., 67.

¹⁰ *Metaphysics*, op. cit., 65.

he can exercise his function by himself), even then the mind is in a sense potential, though not quite in the same way as before it learned and discovered; moreover the mind is then capable of thinking itself.”¹¹ In a pure act of scientific contemplation, all preparations having been made, the army having been marshalled in order, intellect transcends formal judgments, committed to act it knows through identity the incommunicable existence which is an object’s essence: Pure intellectual knowledge is identical in existence with its object. This is the absolutely uncommon life of contemplative science. It is a sabbath between two evenings; not union but identity. It is Aristotle himself who compares the intellectual act to battle in *Metaphysics* XII: “We must also inquire in which way the nature of the whole enjoys its good or highest good: whether as something separate and by itself, or as its own order, or in both ways, as does an army. For an army’s good lies both in its order and in its commander, more especially the latter; for he is not the result of the order, but it results from him.”¹² The Unmoved Mover, the Divine Intellect, by analogy, the human intellect in relation to the universe this man is, is a still point for the turning world, but in itself, like a general’s being, it is *to act*. After all, a general is not a general if he is merely a model for demonstration purposes; the maneuvers of reason exist for knowing. Intellect is not a toy soldier. But knowing is knowing a particular essence; so that there is no danger of human intellect in its identity with its object becoming God: that would be to forget that being in Aristotle is everywhere particular being. But knowing is knowing what it is to be this thing; *afterwards* reason *remembers* this thing’s incommunicable essence as *τί ἦν εἶναι*, what it *was* to be this thing.

Essence, then, is, in reality, individual existence. Reason names it according to its own formal principles. In so doing it betrays its passivity. It is then the intellect, as essential individuality, that shapes this human soul (common in kind) to its particular difference in matter. Proximate matter is the principle of

¹¹ *On The Soul*, op. cit., 167.

¹² *Metaphysics*, op. cit., 267.

sensible individuality, but this is derivative. Rational form is the principle of a *remembered* (conscious) individuality, but it too is derivative. But pure intellect is the principle—no, the *very individuality*, the ‘invisible man.’ If we think with Aristotle it is impossible to take either matter or form as a principle of individuality. Listen to Aristotle in *Metaphysics* XII: “And even the explanatory factors of things in the same kind are different, not in kind, but because those of different individuals are different [οὐκ εἶδει ἀλλ’ ὅτι τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστον ἄλλο]: your matter and form and mover differ from mine [ἢ τε σὴ ὕλη καὶ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ κινήσαν καὶ ἡ ἐμῆ]; but they are the same insofar as they have a common formula [τῷ καθόλου δὲ λόγῳ ταῦτά].”¹³ It is only *logos* or reason which does not reach to that difference in existence which descends from intellect (mover) to form, to matter. This is the Aristotelian essence. Whatever passages might be cited to show that matter or form are principles of individuality must be understood as significant for logical or methodological purposes, but not for the act of knowing. Aristotle’s understanding of intellect, or this man’s true self, is meant to be a perfect contradiction of Plato’s *idea* of man, indeed, to all ideas of reality. This man’s essence is his own consummate difference in existence; he belongs to himself. He is a person. To put it contextually: This man, essentially a mover or intellect, is self-moved in existence; as such, neither God nor man is his end; nor need this man be moved by God or man except by virtue of the potentiality of his own being.

Now let us turn our attention to *De Anima* III.5, where Aristotle discusses the so-called Active Intellect: “Since in every class of objects, just as in the whole of nature, there is something which is their matter, *i.e.*, which is potentially all the individuals, and something else that is their cause or agent in that it makes them all—the two being related as an art to its material—[ἕτερον δὲ τὸ αἰτίον καὶ ποιητικόν, τῷ ποιεῖν πάντα, οἷον ἡ τέχνη πρὸς τὴν ὕλην πέπονθεν] these distinct elements must be pres-

¹³ *Metaphysics*, op. cit., 255. I have rearranged the translator’s ‘and mover and form’ to correspond with Ross’ text: *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Oxford 1924), 1071a, 27–29.

ent in the soul also. Mind in the passive sense is such because it becomes all things, but mind has another aspect in that it makes all things; this is a kind of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential into actual colors. Mind in this sense is separable, impassive, and unmixed, since it is essentially an activity; for the agent is always superior to the patient, and the originating cause to the matter. Actual knowledge is identical with its object. Potential is prior in time to actual knowledge in the individual, but in general it is not prior in time. Mind does not think intermittently. When isolated it is its true self and nothing more, and this alone is immortal and everlasting (we do not remember because, while mind in this sense cannot be acted upon, mind in the passive sense is perishable), and without this nothing thinks.”¹⁴ The first thing to be noted here is that intellect (active mind) is related to reason (passive mind) not as form is to matter, but, precisely, as skill or *technē* is to matter. Intellect is not a static form, but a creative energy. It is the skill which brings reason’s forms into being. Therefore, it is not itself a form of reason; it is not matter acted upon. Also, it is not a form, because it would then be a form of forms: a redundant magnification of reason; or, what is the same thing, an efficient cause. But intellect is not compared to a sculptor’s face, as if reason were a studio filled with likenesses of their maker. But, by way of contradiction, intellect is compared to a sculptor’s skill or *technē*: It is that energetic trick so much more itself as it does not, itself, appear in the forms it brings into being. Pure intellect is a disappearance of the true cause of reason’s forms; it contrives its effects to appear that much more real. So that, when reason speaks formally of the essence of anything as *τί ἦν εἶναι*, *what it was to be*, it, strictly, knows not whereof it speaks. Intellect is neither same as nor different than reason; these terms are reason’s. Intellect, in itself, is finally discontinuous with reason. Reason is *potentially its object*, but, *intellect is actually, self-identically, its object’s existent individuality, or essence*. In itself, it is immortal as this universe’s very being, everywhere individual existence, is immortal. Now, since Aristotle says in *Metaphysics*

¹⁴ *On The Soul*, op. cit., 171.

XII: “. . . wherever things are immaterial the mind and its object are not different, so that they are the same; and knowing is united with what is known,”¹⁵ it might be objected that intellect is not one with its object if that object exists in this universe. But matter apart from form does not exist; form apart from individualizing essence does not exist; in other words, that division that matter introduces into knowing is relevant to reason, not to intellect; it is relevant to science so long as science is logical or methodological arrangement. Reason is formally proportioned to natures, but only potentially to essences.

With regard to immortality, it follows that, while I can have no experience of God's existence apart from that likeness to it that is my own essence, my reason is able to demonstrate that the Divine Nature exists. Further, since reason is disproportionate to my essential identity, I can know it only in moments, insofar as reason is still. Then I think I see this Light (it disappears), but I do not see it; I am it identically. This absolute incommunicable certitude in existence is ground to nature, to science. Individual immortality is for Aristotle a substantial fact. This is not to say that it is in itself what reason takes it to be. There is not a reason for reason's being more real after death than it is in this life. But then, reason's idea of its ultimate reality is inadequate. But the naturalistic-logical interpretation of Aristotle, for example, that of Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525), whose understanding fundamentally anticipates the modern reception of Aristotle, whereby intellect is taken insubstantially, that is, merely functionally, or logically, as descriptive of an operation of human reason, is also reason's idea. It is, perhaps, noteworthy that Pomponazzi's arguments for intellect's actual mortality were directed against Thomas Aquinas' understanding of the immortality of the soul. Here it can be noted that in sacred doctrine reason must already have moved to the center, if Pomponazzi's procedure is to be intelligible.¹⁶ It will be left to subsequent analysis to examine that logical con-

¹⁵ *Metaphysics*, op. cit., 266.

¹⁶ P. Pomponazzi, *On The Immortality of The Soul* (trans. W. H. Hay II in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Cassirer, et al., Chicago, 1948), 280–381.

tinuity whereby modern science takes its point of departure from the Queen of Sciences.

In the meantime, it is clear to us that Aristotle stands in perfect discontinuity with all possible ideas of reason insofar as they are mere ideas, directed practically to human interests as if to man's highest good, with all understandings of man which take man to be finally a religious, a moral, or a technical being. On the contrary, Aristotle speaks of man's intellectual life in *Nicomachean Ethics* X in this way: "Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level [κρείττων ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον]: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine; and by as much as this something is superior to his composite nature [διαφέρει τοῦτο τοῦ συνθέτου], by so much is its activity superior to the exercise of the other forms of virtue. If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life. Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him; for though this be small in bulk, in power and value it far surpasses all the rest. It may even be held that this is the true self of each, inasmuch as it is the dominant and better part; and therefore it would be a strange thing if a man should choose to live not his own life but the life of some other than himself."¹⁷ Actually, what Aristotle states here is *nothing other than a true metaphysics' indispensable condition: that reason possess within itself as its absolute priority essential being*. Only on this condition is it possible for a knower to be *identical* with a reality other than itself. Only under intellect's light will reason submit to this condition beyond its understanding. Only on this condition is science disinterested: when it possesses in itself all that it might desire: when it is essentially itself. Then it is not at all an instrument. To depart from this condition is to take up reason's perspective on metaphysics,

¹⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit., 617, 619.

namely, that it is naturally an instrument with these possible epistemological consequences: either, that a knower is not identical but *like* what is known; or, that a knower is identical with what is known, but it is none other than himself, or, finally, what is known is other than knowledge, but knowledge *determines it to exist*.

But what is incomprehensible to ungoverned reason is to reason under intellect's guidance understood as good sense (*γνώμη*). It is nothing other than good judgment on the part of a truly metaphysically conditioned reason to direct its attention to particulars. Scientific reason is metaphysical insofar as it judges every object considerately (*εὐγνώμων*), that is, takes into consideration that particular object's own essential identity, its individuality in existence. Indeed, this science goes so far as to take this object's side in the judgment. That is, it recognizes the object's own essential identity; it identifies itself with it, forgives it (*συγγνώμη*), that is, absolves it of being as it appears to it. Reason recognizes its limits, acknowledges that what it knows is an independent substance. This conciliatory spirit of metaphysical science is rooted in the soil of experience, but, essentially, flourishes in the light of intellect. Since reason judges nature by intellect, not by its own universalizing tendency, it judges well (*εὐγνώμων*) of nature. That is, it judges that in nature there exist substantial differences in being; consequently, it is in little danger of taking itself for God (since it and God are proportioned to different natures), nor is it in danger of a phenomenological solipsism (since it is essentially a mediator, not an agent).¹⁸

While intellect shines, reason restricts its scientific enterprise to making whatever preparations might be necessary for the act of knowing what something is. To do otherwise would simply be willful.

¹⁸ For Aristotle's original use of the Greek terms in this paragraph, see *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit., 358, 360, 362.