

CHAPTER 13

THOMAS' WAYS, THREE TO FIVE

The argument from contingency

Scriptum super libros Sententiarum, I, d.3, q.1, a.1:

Thomas' commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard already has the three ways of knowing God in this life later propounded in his *Summa theologiae* (I, q. 12, a. 12): by causality, by removal, and by eminence. With regard to these he says:

1. The first reason is taken by way of causality, and takes this form: Everything that has being from nothing [i.e. from non-being, preceding generation] must exist by means of something from whom its being flowed. But all creatures have being from nothing, which is manifested from their imperfection and potentiality. Therefore they must exist by some first being, and this is God.
2. The second way is taken by way of removal, and is like this: Beyond every imperfect thing there must be something perfect which is not mixed with any imperfection. But a body is something imperfect, because it is limited and defined by its dimensions and is mobile. Therefore, beyond bodies, there must be something which is not a body. Likewise, every non-bodily thing which is changeable is imperfect by its very nature. Therefore, beyond all changeable species, such as souls and angels, there must be a being that is non-bodily, immobile and completely perfect, and that is God.

Summa contra gentiles, I, ch. 16 [7]

We see something in the world that emerges from potency to act. Now, it does not educe itself from potency to act, since that which is in potency, being still in potency, can therefore not act. Some prior being is therefore needed by which it may be brought forth from potency to act. This cannot go on to infinity. We must, therefore, arrive at some being that is only in act and in no wise in potency. This being we call God.

Summa contra gentiles, II, ch. 15 [4]

Then, too, the order of causes necessarily corresponds to the order of effects, since effects are commensurate with their causes. Hence, just as effects are referred to their appropriate causes, so that which is common in such effects must be reduced to a common cause. Thus, transcending the particular causes of the generation of this or that thing is the universal cause of generation—the sun; and above the particular governors of the kingdom, as, indeed, of each city in it, stands the king, the universal cause of government in his whole realm. Now, being is common to everything that is. Above all causes, then, there must be a cause whose proper action is to give being. But we have already shown in Book I that God is the first cause. Everything that is must, therefore, be from God.

Summa contra gentiles, II, ch. 15

(1) Now, because it has been proved that God is the source of being to some things, it must be demonstrated further that everything besides God derives its being from Him.

(2) For whatever does not belong to a thing as such appertains to it through some cause, as *white* to man; that which has no cause is primary and immediate, so that it must needs be through itself and as such. But no single entity can as such belong to two things and to both of them; for what is said of a thing as such is limited to that very thing; the possession of three angles equal to two right angles is proper to the triangle exclusively. So, if something belongs to two things, it will not belong to both as such. Therefore, no single thing can possibly be predicated of two things so as to be said of neither of them by

reason of a cause. On the contrary, either the one must be the cause of the other—as fire is the cause of heat in a mixed body, and yet each is called *hot*—or some third thing must be the cause of both, as fire is the cause of two candles giving light. But being is predicated of everything that is. Hence, there cannot possibly be two things neither of which has a cause of its being, but either both of them must exist through a cause, or the one must be the cause of the other's being. Everything which is in any way at all must then derive its being from that whose being has no cause. But we have already shown that God is this being whose existence has no cause. Everything which is in any mode whatever, therefore, is from Him. Now, to say that *being* is not a univocal predicate argues nothing against this conclusion. For *being* is not predicated of beings equivocally, but analogically, and thus a reduction to one must be made.

(3) Furthermore, whatever a thing possesses by its own nature, and not from some other cause, cannot be diminished and deficient in it. For, if something essential be subtracted from or added to a nature, another nature will at once arise, as in the case of numbers, where the addition or the subtraction of the unit changes the species of the number. If, however, the nature or quiddity of a thing remains integral, and yet something in it is found to be diminished, it is at once clear that this diminution does not derive simply from that nature, but from something else, by whose removal the nature is diminished. Therefore, whatever belongs to one thing less than to others belongs to it not by virtue of its own nature alone, but through some other cause. Thus, that thing of which a genus is chiefly predicated will be the cause of everything in that genus. So we see that what is most hot is the cause of heat in all hot things; and what is most light, the cause of all illuminated things. But as proved in Book I, God is being in the highest mode. Therefore, He is the cause of all things of which *being* is predicated.

Summa contra gentiles, II, ch. 43 [8]

Also, just as the act of being is first among effects, so, correspondingly, is it the proper effect of the first cause. But it is by virtue of form and not of matter that this act exists. Therefore, the first causation of forms is to be attributed above all to the first cause.

De potentia

q.3, a.3: Creation is not a motion leading up to a term, but a fact that is; thus creation is not a progress towards existence or a change by the Creator, but merely a beginning of existence and a relationship to the Creator from which the thing holds existence; thus creation is really nothing else than a relationship to God with a temporal beginning.

q.3, a.5: First, if in a number of things we find something that is common to all, we must conclude that this something was the effect of some one cause: for it is not possible that this common something belong to each one by reason of itself, since each one by itself is different from the others: and diversity of causes produces a diversity of effects. Seeing then that being is found to be common to all things, which are by themselves distinct from one another, it follows of necessity that they must come into being not by themselves, but by the action of some cause. Seemingly this is Plato's argument, since he required every multitude to be preceded by unity not only as regards number but also in reality.

q.3, a.14, ad 10: The action by which God brings things into being should not be understood to be like that of a workman who makes a box and then abandons it, but God continually sustains existence... Thus there is no need to suppose an instant when he made things, before which they were not made, apart for the reason that Faith tells us this is so.

q.6, a.6: Some of the philosophers of old contended that there was no such thing as an incorporeal substance and that all substances are bodies: and Augustine (*Confess.*) confesses that at one time he fell into this error. This opinion, however, was refuted by the philosophers. Aristotle rejected it (*Phys.* viii) for this reason that there must be some infinite moving power, since otherwise it would not produce a perpetual movement. Again he proves that every power of a magnitude must be finite whence it follows that there must be a power that is wholly incorporeal, in order to produce a continual movement.

Again he proves the same conclusion in another way (*Metaph.* xii). Act precedes potentiality both by nature and in time, absolutely speaking: although in this or that individual that passes from potentiality to act, potentiality precedes act in point of time. But seeing that it must be brought into actuality by something that is already actual, it follows that absolutely speaking act precedes potentiality even in time. Wherefore since every body is in potentiality, as its mutability shows, there must needs be an everlasting unchangeable substance that precedes all bodies.

A third argument in support of the same conclusion may be taken from the principles of the Platonists. Finite and, individual being must needs be preceded by a being that is infinite: thus if we find fire having a finite and so to speak participated nature in iron, we must expect to find the nature of fire in something that is fire essentially. Hence seeing that being and all other perfections and forms are found to have a finite nature in that they are received into matter, we infer that there must pre-exist an incorporeal substance wherein there is the perfection of being not in a finite manner but with a certain universal fullness. The reason why they were led into the error of maintaining that all substance is corporeal was that their intelligence being unable to rise above their imagination whose object is wholly corporeal they were unable to reach the knowledge of incorporeal substances which the intelligence alone can grasp.

Read also q. 5, a. 1 (& ad 2 & 18).

Summa theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 3 [3]

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus: We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated and to corrupt, and consequently they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence—which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.

The way that Thomas formulated his argument from motion in the *Summa theologiae* constitutes a bridge to the argument from contingency. That is because this argument also starts from motion and substantial change, but then, instead of looking for a series of proper causes, it takes this motion or change as a sign of a radical instability of all changeable things, such that they do not have existence from themselves but depend constantly on a necessary being to keep them in existence and operation. The commentary on the *Sentences* (1) expresses this as regards coming into being; the same commentary (2) expresses this as regards the continued duration of things. Both these arguments are summarized as one argument, stressing that existence as the most generic effect must come from the most general Cause, in the *Summa contra gentiles*, I, ch. 16 (the same thing looked at from God downwards in II, chs. 15 & 43) and *De potentia* (3, as coming from Ibn-Sînâ), and are succinctly presented in *Summa theologiae* (3).

The argument from degrees of perfection

Scriptum super libros Sententiarum, I, d.3, q.1, a.1:

(3) Two other reasons are taken by way of eminence. But eminence can be taken in two ways: as to being or as to knowing. Therefore the third reason is taken by way of eminence in being, and is like this: The good and the better are spoken of in reference to the best. But in substances we find that a body is

good and a created spirit is better, although it does not have goodness from itself. Therefore there must be something best from which exists the goodness in the first two.

(4) The fourth reason is taken by way of eminence in knowledge, and is like this: In whatever things can be found a greater and lesser degree of beauty, there is to be found a principle of beauty, by approximation to which one thing is said to be more beautiful than another. But we find that bodies are beautiful with a sensible form, while spirits are more beautiful with an intelligible form. Therefore there must be something from which each of them are beautiful, which created spirits more approximate.

Summa contra gentiles, I, ch. 13 [4]

In *Metaphysics* II [1, 993b 30] he shows that what is most true is also most a being. But in *Metaphysics* IV [4, 1008b, 31] he shows the existence of something supremely true from the observed fact that of two false things one is more false than the other, which means that one is more true than the other.

Summa contra gentiles, II, ch. 43 [9]

Furthermore, since every agent produces its like, the effect obtains its form from that reality to which it is made like through the form acquired by it; the material house acquires its form from the art which is the likeness of the house present in the mind. But all things are like God, who is pure act, so far as they have forms, through which they become actual; and so far as they desire forms, they are said to desire the divine likeness. It is therefore absurd to say that the formation of things is the work of anything other than God the Creator of all.

De potentia, III, a. 5

Later philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle and their disciples, attained to the study of universal being: and hence they alone posited a universal cause of things, from which all others came into being, as Augustine states (*The city of God*, 8, 4). This is in agreement with the Catholic Faith, and may be proved by the three arguments that follow:

1. First, if in a number of things we find something that is common to all, we must conclude that this something was the effect of some one cause: for it is not possible that this common something belong to each one by reason of itself, since each one by itself is different from the others: and diversity of causes produces a diversity of effects. Seeing then that being is found to be common to all things, which are by themselves distinct from one another, it follows of necessity that they must come into being not by themselves, but by the action of some cause. Seemingly this is Plato's argument, since he required every multitude to be preceded by unity not only as regards number but also in reality.
2. The second argument is that whenever something is found to be in several things by participation in various degrees, it must be derived by those in which it exists imperfectly from that one in which it exists most perfectly: because where there are positive degrees of a thing so that we ascribe it to this one more and to that one less, this is in reference to one thing to which they approach, one nearer than another: for if each one were of itself competent to have it, there would be no reason why one should have it more than another. Thus fire, which is the extreme of heat, is the cause of heat in all things hot. Now there is one being most perfect and most true: which follows from the fact that there is a mover altogether immovable and absolutely perfect, as philosophers have proved. Consequently all other less perfect beings must derive being from him. This is the argument of the Philosopher.
3. The third argument is based on the principle that whatsoever is through another is to be reduced to that which is of itself. Wherefore if there were a *per se* heat, it would be the cause of all hot things, that have heat by way of participation. Now there is a being that is its own being: and this follows from the fact that there must be a being that is pure act, in which there is no composition. Hence from that one being all other beings that are not their own being, but have being by participation, must proceed. This is the argument of Ibn-Sînâ (*Comm. on Metaphysics*, 8, 6; 9, 8).

Thus reason proves and faith holds that all things are created by God.

Summa theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 3 [4]

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. but “more” and “less” are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and consequently something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaphysics* II. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness and every other perfection; and this we call God.

All these ways look at what is imperfect, potential, finite and mobile as pointing to what is perfect, actual, infinite and immobile. They indicate a here-and-now dependence of the sensible and even the spiritual world upon what is Being itself, and do not refer to or depend on the cosmological assumptions of Aristotle (which Thomas nevertheless accepted).

While the argument of contingency focuses on the limited, labile and dependent existence of things, the argument from degrees of perfection focuses on limitation found in the essences of things, manifesting this by comparing things which vary in perfection. The commentary on the *Sentences* (3) shows that things which are imperfect with regard to being or (4) [= *Contra gentiles*, I, ch. 13 (4)] beauty and truth (because of potentiality) depend on something which has these perfections perfectly and independently of all else. *Summa contra gentiles*, II, ch. 43 presents briefly Thomas’ teaching that God is the creator of all species (whereas individuals are simply the proper causes of multiplication of individuals within the species).

The very fact of diversity of being in the world, as argued in *De potentia* (2, repeated because it applies to both ways 3 & 4), following Plato, implies limitation and imperfection; all these scattered perfections, then, must be found united in one perfect being. The fact that in every category there are degrees of perfection, as argued in *De potentia* (2), following Aristotle, points to the same limitation and dependence on a perfect being. The same arguments are presented in *De potentia* (3) looking from God downwards. All these lines of thought are summarized in *Summa theologiae* (4).

The argument from purpose or design

De veritate, q. 5, a. 2

Providence is concerned with the direction of things to an end. Therefore, as the Commentator [Ibn-Rushd] says, whoever denies final causality should also deny providence... In that case all the harmony and usefulness found in things would be the result of chance. This was actually what Empedocles held. He asserted that it was by accident that the parts of animals came together in this way through friendship—and this was his explanation of an animal and of a frequent occurrence! This explanation, of course, is absurd, for those things that happen by chance, happen only rarely; we know from experience, however, that harmony and usefulness are found in nature either at all times or at least for the most part. This cannot be the result of mere chance; it must be because an end is intended. What lacks intellect or knowledge, however, cannot tend directly toward an end. It can do this only if someone else’s knowledge has established an end for it, and directs it to that end. Consequently, since natural things have no knowledge, there must be some previously existing intelligence directing them to an end, like an archer who gives a definite motion to an arrow so that it will wing its way to a determined end. Now, the hit made by the arrow is said to be the work not of the arrow alone but also of the person who shot it. similarly, philosophers call every work of nature the work of intelligence.

Consequently, the world is ruled by the providence of that intellect which gave this order to nature; and we may compare the providence by which God rules the world to the domestic foresight by which a man rules his family, or to the political foresight by which a ruler governs a city or a kingdom, and directs the acts of others to a definite end. There is no providence, however, in God with respect to himself, since whatever is in him is an end, not a means to it.

Summa contra gentiles, I, ch. 13 [5]

Damascene proposes another argument for the same conclusion taken from the government of the world. Ibn-Rushd likewise hints at it. The argument runs thus: Contrary and discordant things cannot, always or for the most part, be parts of one order except under someone's government, which enables all and each to tend to a definite end. but in the world we find that things of diverse natures come together under one order, and this not rarely or by chance, but always or for the most part. There must therefore be some being by whose providence the world is governed. This we call God.

Summa theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 3 [5]

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

The fact that things that have no intelligence act for intelligible purposes defined in their natures points to an intelligence that designed their natures and keeps them operating according to the intelligent purpose he has set for them. This argument is set out in *De veritate, Contra gentiles* (5) and *Summa theologiae* (5).

The argument from design is based on three quite distinct phenomena: One is the design found in composition and form of things, particularly complex things, like the design of an eye or of the human body. Secondly there is the design found in the operation of natural things for their own survival, whether we look at something so basic as gravity or the behaviour of plants and animals to ensure the survival of their species. Thirdly there is the design found in the interaction of diverse things in the world to form a harmonious ecological system; for instance, it is natural for a banana plant to produce bananas (the second type of design), but that bananas should be food for animals and men is an extrinsic purpose accidental to the banana plant, but part of a cosmic design, which we call God's providence.

13.4 Critique of these other arguments

All of these arguments, just like that from motion, are based on the potentiality and, hence, limitation and dependency of things. The different "ways" are not different arguments, but simply ways of looking at the various manifestations of potentiality. That of contingency points at the potentiality of essence to existence. Those of degrees of perfection and design point at limitations within the essences of things. These arguments do seem valid, and make up for the weakness of the argument from motion, based as it is on a Ptolemaic universe with no notion of impetus in the movement of heavenly bodies.

Thomas says at the conclusion of his commentary on the *Metaphysics* that "Aristotle's conclusion is that there is one ruler of the whole universe, the first mover, and one first intelligible object, and one first good, whom he called God, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen." We have seen that Aristotle may not have been so successful as Thomas would like to believe, but where Aristotle failed, Thomas succeeded.

A unique approach: *Lectura super Ioannem, Prooemium* (four ways)

I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the whole house was full of his majesty, and the things that were under him filled the temple. (Is 6:1)

Quidam enim per auctoritatem Dei in ipsius cognitionem pervenerunt; et haec est via efficacissima. Videmus enim ea quae sunt in rebus naturalibus, propter finem agere, et consequi utiles et certos fines; et cum intellectu careant, se ipsa dirigere non possunt, nisi ab aliquo dirigente per intellectum dirigantur et

3 Some attained to a knowledge of God through his authority, and this is the most efficacious way. For we see the things in nature acting for an end, and attaining to ends which are both useful and certain. And since they lack intelligence, they are unable to direct themselves, but must be directed and moved by one directing them, and who possesses an

moveantur. Et hinc est quod ipse motus rerum naturalium in finem certum, indicat esse aliquid altius, quo naturales res diriguntur in finem et gubernantur. Et ideo cum totus cursus naturae ordinate in finem procedat et dirigatur, de necessitate oportet nos ponere aliquid altius, quod dirigat ista et sicut dominus gubernet: et hic est Deus. Et haec gubernandi auctoritas in verbo Dei demonstratur, cum dicit dominum; unde in Ps. LXXXVIII, 10 dicitur: tu dominaris potestati maris; motum autem fluctuum eius tu mitigas; quasi dicat: tu es dominus et universa gubernas. Hanc cognitionem manifestat Ioannes se habere de verbo, cum dicit: in propria venit, scilicet in mundum; quia totus mundus est suus proprius.

Alii vero venerunt in cognitionem Dei ex eius aeternitate. Viderunt enim quod quicquid est in rebus, est mutabile; et quanto aliquid est nobilius in gradibus rerum, tanto minus habet de mutabilitate: puta, inferiora corpora sunt secundum substantiam et secundum locum mutabilia; corpora vero caelestia, quae nobiliora sunt, secundum substantiam immutabilia sunt; secundum autem locum tantum moventur. Secundum hoc ergo evidenter colligi potest, quod primum principium omnium rerum, et supremum et nobilius, sit immobile et aeternum. Et hanc aeternitatem verbi propheta insinuat, cum dicit sedentem, idest absque omni mutabilitate et aeternitate praesidentem; Ps. c. XLIV, 7: sedes tua, Deus, in saeculum saeculi; Hebr. ult., 8: Iesus Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in saecula. Hanc aeternitatem Ioannes ostendit dicens: in principio erat verbum.

Quidam autem venerunt in cognitionem Dei ex dignitate ipsius Dei: et isti fuerunt Platonici. Consideraverunt enim quod omne illud quod est secundum participationem, reducitur ad aliquid quod sit illud per suam essentiam, sicut ad primum et ad summum; sicut omnia ignita per participationem reducuntur ad ignem, qui est per essentiam suam talis. Cum ergo omnia quae sunt, participant esse, et sint per participationem entia, necesse est esse aliquid in cacumine omnium rerum, quod sit ipsum esse per suam essentiam, idest quod sua essentia sit suum esse: et hoc est Deus, qui est sufficientissima, et dignissima, et perfectissima causa totius esse, a quo omnia quae sunt, participant esse. Et huius dignitas ostenditur, cum dicitur super solium excelsum, quod, secundum Dionysium, ad

intellect. Thus it is that the movement of the things of nature toward a certain end indicates the existence of something higher by which the things of nature are directed to an end and governed. And so, since the whole course of nature advances to an end in an orderly way and is directed, we have to posit something higher which directs and governs them as Lord; and this is God. This authority in governing is shown to be in the Word of God when he says, **Lord**. Thus the Psalm (88:10) says: "You rule the power of the sea, and you still the swelling of its waves," as though saying: You are the Lord and govern all things. John shows that he knows this about the Word when he says below (1:11), "He came unto his own," i.e., to the world, since the whole universe is his own.

4 Others came to a knowledge of God from his eternity. They saw that whatever was in things was changeable, and that the more noble something is in the grades of being, so much the less it has of mutability. For example, the lower bodies are mutable both as to their substance and to place, while the heavenly bodies, which are more noble, are immutable in substance and change only with respect to place. We can clearly conclude from this that the first principle of all things, which is supreme and more noble, is changeless and eternal. The prophet suggests this eternity of the Word when he says, **seated**, i.e., presiding without any change and eternally. "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Ps 44:7); "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). John points to this eternity when he says below (1:1), "In the beginning was the Word."

5 Still others came to a knowledge of God from the dignity of God; and these were the Platonists. They noted that everything which is something by participation is reduced to what is the same thing by essence, as to the first and highest. Thus, all things which are fiery by participation are reduced to fire, which is such by its essence. And so since all things which exist participate in existence (*esse*) and are beings by participation, there must necessarily be at the summit of all things something which is existence (*esse*) by its essence, i.e., whose essence is its existence. And this is God, who is the most sufficient, the most eminent, and the most perfect cause of the whole of existence, from whom all things that are participate existence (*esse*). This dignity is shown in the words, **on a**

divinam naturam refertur; Ps. CXII, 4: excelsus super omnes gentes dominus. Hanc dignitatem ostendit nobis Ioannes, cum dicit: et Deus erat verbum, quasi: verbum erat Deus, ut ly verbum ponatur ex parte suppositi, et Deus ex parte appositi.

Quidam autem venerunt in cognitionem Dei ex incomprehensibilitate veritatis. Omnis enim veritas quam intellectus noster capere potest, finita est; quia secundum Augustinum, omne quod scitur, scientis comprehensione finitur, et si finitur, est determinatum et particularizatum; et ideo necesse est primam et summam veritatem, quae superat omnem intellectum, incomprehensibilem et infinitam esse: et hoc est Deus. Unde in Ps. VIII, 2 dicitur: elevata est magnificentia tua super caelos, idest super omnem intellectum creatum, angelicum et humanum. Et hoc ideo, quia, ut dicit apostolus, lucem habitat inaccessibilem, I Tim. ult. 16. Huius autem incomprehensibilitas veritatis ostenditur nobis, cum dicit et elevatum, scilicet super omnem cognitionem intellectus creati. Et hanc incomprehensibilitatem insinuat nobis Ioannes, cum dicit: Deum nemo vidit unquam.

Of these, the first (“most efficacious”) way, “authority”, corresponds with the 5th of the *Summa*’s five ways. The second way (“eternity”) echos the contingency, or third way. The third way, “dignity”, comes close to the *Summa*’s 4th way. The fourth way “incomprehensibility of truth” is new, but also approaches the 4th way of participation. Motion (*Summa*’s “most manifest” way) is not mentioned here.

high throne, which, according to Denis, refer to the divine nature. “The Lord is high above all nations” (Ps 112:4). John shows us this dignity when he says below (1:1), “the Word was God,” with “Word” as subject and “God” as the predicate.

6 Yet others arrived at a knowledge of God from the incomprehensibility of truth. All the truth which our intellect is able to grasp is finite, since according to Augustine, “everything that is known is bounded by the comprehension of the one knowing”; and if it is bounded, it is determined and particularized. Therefore, the first and supreme Truth, which surpasses every intellect, must necessarily be incomprehensible and infinite; and this is God. [Hence the Psalm (8:2) says, “Your greatness is above the heavens,” i.e., above every created intellect, angelic and human. The Apostle says this in the words, “He dwells in unapproachable light” (1 Tim 6:16). This incomprehensibility of Truth is shown to us in the word, **lofty**, that is, above all the knowledge of the created intellect. John implies this incomprehensibility to us when he says below (1:18), “No one has ever seen God.”