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The Problem of Being in Platonism from the Perspective of Thomas Aquinas. A Meta-Systematic Essay

Abstract

In spite of the apparent opposition to Plato, Aristotle accepted a lot from the thought of his master. The intuition, which plays the key role in the system of Plato, was understood by Aristotle in terms of how we grasp the middle term of syllogism. It is not, therefore, the intuition of being, but the reasoning, departing from the experience (nature's "intention"), which is the way of the cognition of the ultimate. The teleology of being, which Plato was so keen on finding, was found by Aristotle in the physical world as a counterpart of motion. Alas, Aristotle lost sight of what is most valuable in Plato: the sense of being that transgresses the categories. According to Thomas, being is what is the most perfect in things; so, consequently, what is the proper effect of the Ultimate Cause, and what is Its primary aim. It is better to be, i.e. to exist. Each thing craves for being. Being, however, is, in the Dionysius' sense, a problem; it might guide us to God, but veil Him before us as well. It is a perfection, but not the Perfection itself, Plato was right at this point.

Keywords: being, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas.