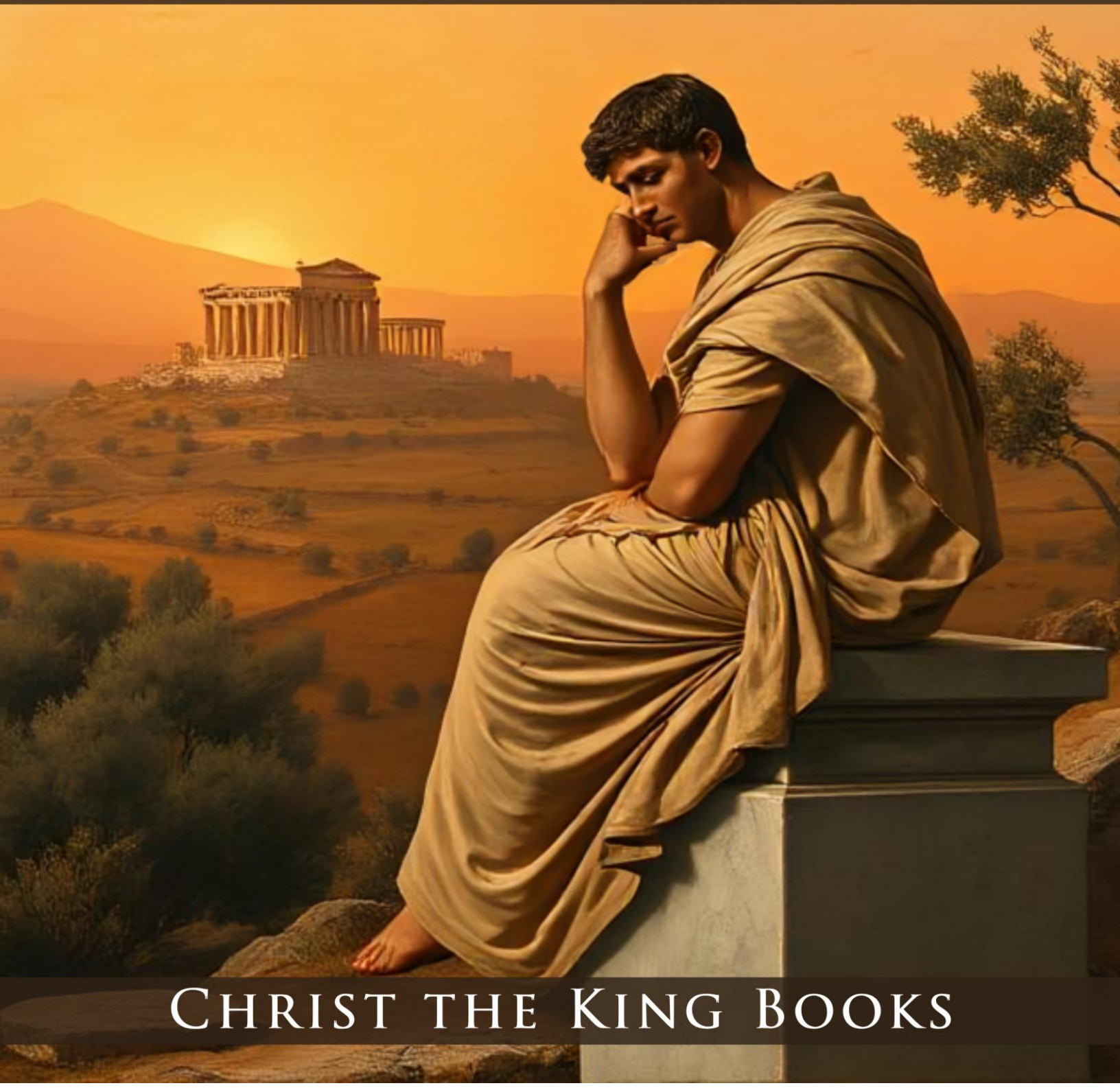
First Edition

AN INTRODUCTION TO CLASSICAL LOGIC

Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories*



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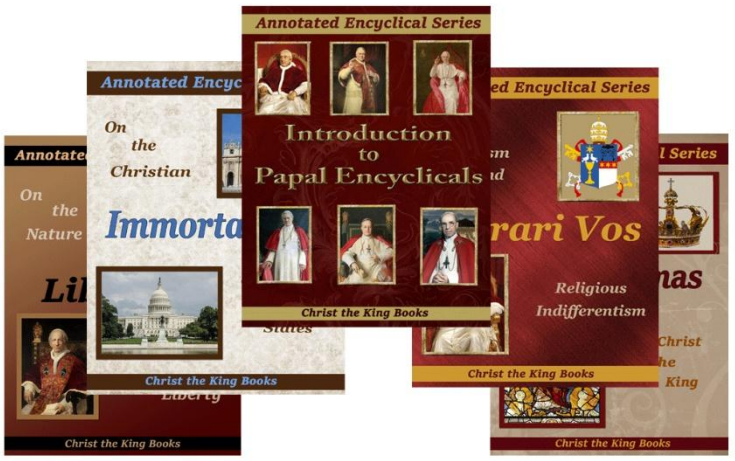

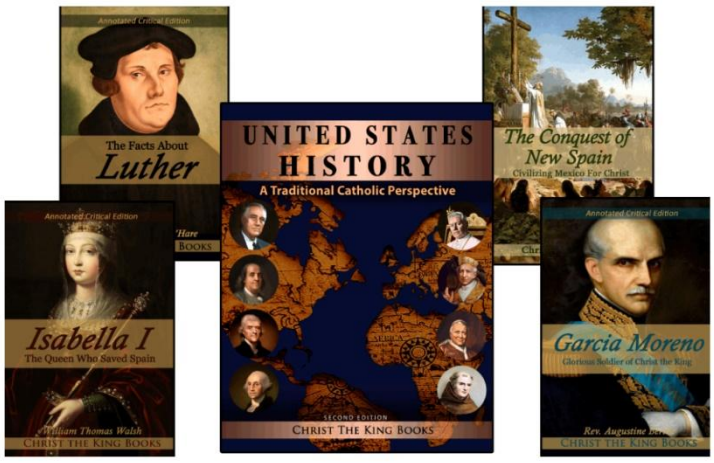

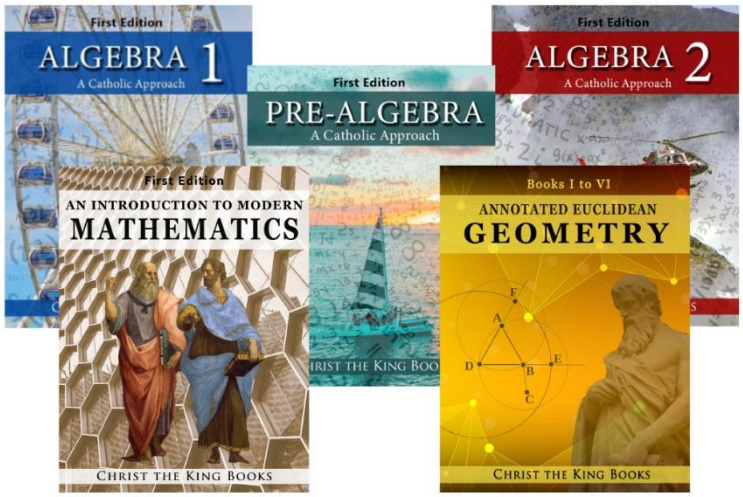

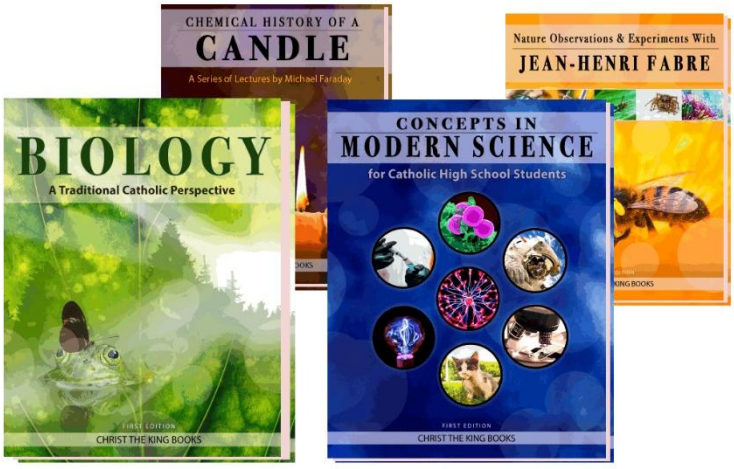

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LESSON I INTRODUCTION

What are the "liberal arts"?

Long ago, in the golden ages of Greece, men realized that there were seven branches of human learning that were especially valuable in training the mind to think clearly. These arts eventually came to be known as the seven **liberal arts**. Before we talk about those arts themselves, let us briefly investigate the use of the words *liberal* and *art* here.

The meaning of the word 'liberal' in this sense

The word 'liberal' has come to take on several meanings today. It can simply mean "generous," as in, "Doctor Johnson is very *liberal* with his money, helping everyone in need that he comes across."

But another and common meaning is one which has a very nasty connation for careful Catholics – and rightly so! We need to first understand that liberalism is a fundamental error of our times. It is an error which we modern men live and breathe, like it or not. Yes, even good Catholics who are aware of the dangers of liberalism and wish to avoid it (or remove it from their bloodstream once they recognize it), have a difficult time of it. True human liberty is a gift from God that allows man to choose for himself the right means to the right end. In other words, our liberty is the way God gave man to do the right things to live reasonably and in the end, to save his soul.[1] Our power of liberty of will is sharply opposed to, say, *instinct* for animals. Although instinct helps irrational animals do the useful thing which lets them reach their natural ends, yet animals have no freedom or even consciousness of what they do. But liberalism is a modern error which claims man is free to "do what he wants" without the restraints of government and especially those of God. Thus, a *liberal* is one who subscribes to the error of liberalism, and thus misuses the gift of freedom. It is this bad sense of the word *liberal* that, by association, wrongly makes certain Catholics shrink back when they hear the terms "liberal education" or "liberal arts". But let us now find out what they should think when they hear those phrases.

There is yet another meaning of the word, a good sense of the word ***liberal*** as it pertains to the liberal arts. The word is derived from the Latin word "liberalis," meaning "free" or "befitting to a free person." Thus, historically, the liberal arts were seen as the education suitable for free citizens, as opposed to vocational training for slaves or laborers. In fact, all through the ages, it was usually the upper classes of society – the nobles and so on – who ensured that their children received the finest liberal education money could buy. Such an education almost without fail included a thorough grounding in the seven liberal arts (as at least a starting point). Eventually, even middle class families began to be able to get such an education, as well.[2]

The meaning of the word 'art' in this sense

Now we understand the 'liberal' part of "liberal arts". But why are they called "arts", anyway? After all, when we talk about geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy, those sound more like sciences, no? It seems they should instead be called the "liberal sciences". To understand this, we must keep in mind that just as the word "liberal" has today taken on a certain narrow and negative meaning for Catholics fighting the Revolution we are living through, so has the word "art" taken on a narrower meaning than it once had. Today, when most of us hear that word, we normally think of

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[1] For an excellent resource to learn about true human liberty and its proper use, one should consider reading Pope Leo XIII's 1888 encyclical *Libertas*. Christ the King Books offers a helpful annotated version: *Annotated Libertas – On the Nature of Human Liberty*. www.ckbooks.org

[2] Today, thanks be to God, even students from the poorest families can apply to Catholic colleges which provide a liberal education. One of the best, in our opinion, *when considered strictly from the standpoint of the classroom and curriculum*, is Thomas Aquinas College. www.thomasaquinas.edu It is certainly *not* Traditional Catholic, but it still provides perhaps the very best undergraduate education available today.

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hopefully under the tutelage of a well-formed and wise Catholic.[5] Thus, a **Catholic liberal education** is one in which the Church's teachings guide the student through the thorniest philosophical and theological questions. The beautiful saying of St. Anselm of Canterbury, the great scholastic teacher of the Middle Ages, applies here: "Faith seeking understanding".[6] In other words, the Catholic student's virtue of Faith provides the answers, but the student does not necessarily *understand* WHY those answers are true, and it is that understanding is the very thing he seeks.

We must perfect the intellect, the highest faculty of the soul

The intellect is the highest faculty (power) of the human soul. This highest faculty (which is the one most God-like) is that one according to which God made us to live. In other words, in every aspect of our lives, God made us to **live according to reason**. Although God wants us to perfect all of the faculties and talents that He gave to us, He most especially wants us to perfect what is highest in ourselves. For example, is not a good thing if our bodies are weak and lazy; we should do what we reasonably can to stay fit and healthy. It is yet worse if our will is weak since the will is spiritual, and a greater good than the body. But it is yet a greater loss if the intellect is weak due to one's own negligence.

Universal Truth is the Perfection of the Intellect

But how can we perfect our intellect?. We do this by acquiring universal, unchangeable truth. For as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, quoting Aristotle:

> "The true is the good of the intellect, and the false is its evil", as stated in [Aristotle's] *Ethics*, bk.6, ch.2.[7]

In other words, it is truth which makes our intellect good and which makes a man good to the extent that he has perfected his highest faculty. But not all types of truth perfect the intellect. Particular and changeable truths do not help, such as, "Mrs. Smith loves reading." Such a truth is *particular* because it is about one particular being (not all). It is *changeable* because Mrs. Smith may change or the circumstances about her. Such truths cannot help to perfect one's mind for several reasons. First, the reality which the mind knows may well change, for Mrs. Smith may die, or she may change her likes and dislikes. Second, Mrs. Smith – although a human being made in the image and likeness of God,

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[5] There are good philosophers and there are really, REALLY dangerous philosophers. The bad ones – such as Descartes, Locke, Hume, Hegel, and many others - can lead one into error about the most basic and fundamental questions in life. This is why the Catholic Church put many of the writings of such men "on the Index" – that is, on Her *Index of Forbidden Books* ("Index Librorum Prohibitorum") which was an extremely important list (begun in the 1600s) of works which contained ideas that could be very destructive to one's Faith or morals. The list had was carefully compiled and enforced by the good popes through the centuries until Pope Paul VI simply abolished it in 1966. During those preceding centuries, Church saw that the average Catholic, *without careful qualifications and guidance*, could easily be corrupted by such works. This does not mean nobody should ever read the words of the poisoned authors. On the contrary, these authors not only sometimes say beautiful and important things, but they also raise fundamental questions and important objections to the teachings of Aristotle or even the Church, and do so in the clearest and most precise way. The Church would allow Catholics to read such works if She was convinced there was no danger to the student and that good could come out of it. By reading such bad works while consulting the Church (and especially St. Thomas and other great Catholic minds, as well as the wisdom of Aristotle), the student sees in a way that he otherwise could not that even the greatest mouthpieces of error and the most solid objections fall flat when "taken apart" by Aristotle, St. Thomas, the Fathers, Doctors, saints, and good popes. Truly, the Church has the answer, but errors and heresies can be extremely useful opportunities to make the truth on the subject yet clearer.

[6] "I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand," The idea is that the natural wisdom acquired through the unaided human mind cannot *cause* me to believe supernatural truths (for it is God Himself Who must give supernatural gifts and provide the "power" behind our Faith), but rather, human learning can help "fill in the gaps" by helping us to combine natural wisdom with Revelation to see, that the Catholic Faith is reasonable and that errors against it are unreasonable.

[7] *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2.

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LESSON 2 PORPHYRY'S ISAGOGE – GENUS AND SPECIES

Porphyry's Isagoge (or "Introduction")

It is called "Introduction" since its author intended to be an introduction to and preparation for reading Aristotle's logic works.

Translated by Octavius Freire Owen, M. A. of Christ Church, Oxford. Rector of Burstow, Surrey; and Domestic Chaplain to the Duke of Portland

Chapter I. Object of the writer, in the present Introduction.

It is necessary, Chrusaorios, both for Aristotle's teaching about the predicaments and for the giving of definitions, to know what genus, species, and difference, and what property and accident are. And since speculative knowledge of them is on the whole useful in connection with division and demonstration, I shall make you a concise summary and try to show you briefly by way of an introduction what the ancients said. I shall keep away from the deeper questions but shall aim rightly at the simpler, i.e., I shall refuse to say whether genus and species are subsistent or are located only in naked concepts, and if subsistent, whether they are corporeal or incorporeal, and whether separate from sensibles or subsisting in them and around them. That business is very deep and requires a greater examination. Nevertheless, I shall now try to show you how the ancients and especially the Peripatetics[15] discussed this and the other proposed questions rationally.

Chapter II. *Of the Nature of Genus and Species* [6]

GENUS

It seems that neither genus nor species is said simply. For a collection of some who are in a certain condition in relation to one something and to another is called a gnus or family. In this meaning of genus, the genus of the Heraklidae is so named from their relation to one man, i.e., Herakles, and from the multitude of those who are mutually related through him, for this multitude is named according to its separation from other genera or families.

In another way again, the principle or beginning of any one's generation is called the genus or stock – whether the person who generated him or the place in which he was born. So we say that Orestes is of the genus Tantalos, Hullos of Herakles, and again, that Pindar is Theban in genus and Plato [is of] Athenian [genus]. For the native land is a kind of principle of generation, like a father. This latter seems to be the familiar meaning: for the name Heraklidae is given to those who are descended from Herakles and to the near relatives. However, first the principle of generation is called genus, and second, the multitude of those who spring from [that] one principle, as from Herakles. We define and separate this from the other genera and call the whole collection the genus of the Heraklidae. In still another way, that under which the species are arranged is called the genus, - perhaps in likeness to the preceding. For such a genus is a kind of principle for the things under it, and it apparently embraces the whole multitude which is under it.

[15] **Peripatetics:** the followers of Aristotle who would often walk around with Aristotle while discussing philosophical topics.

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Lesson 3 Porphyry's Isagoge – Difference, Property, and Accident

Chapter III. *Of Difference.*

Difference may be predicated commonly, properly, and most properly. For something is said to differ commonly from something else when it differs from itself or from another by some otherness. For Socrates differs from Plato by otherness; and as an adult he differs from himself as a boy, and in doing some act or stopping: and he always differs when there is some otherness in the condition in which he is.

But something is said to differ properly from something else when it differs from the other by an inseparable accident. An inseparable accident is something like blueness or aquilinity[16] of the nose or a scar become scirrhous from a wound.

Furthermore, something is said to differ most properly from something else when it differs by a specific difference, - as man differs from horse by the specific difference of rationality. Universally then, every difference accruing to something make it *other*; but the common and proper differences make it other in quality while the most proper make *another*. For some differences make something other in quality, while others make it be another; hence those differences which make another are called specific differences; and those which make something other in quality are called differences simply. For the attachment to animal of the difference rational makes another; but being in motion only changes the quality something had when it was at rest; so that the first makes another, while the second makes something other in quality only. Therefore the divisions of genus and species and the giving of definitions, which spring from genus and such differences, arise from differences which make another; but from the differences which make something other in quality come only kinds of otherness and changes in condition.

Then beginning again from the beginning, we must say that some differences are separable and others inseparable. For motion or rest, health or sickness, and as many accidents as are similar to them, are separable; but having an aquiline or a flat nose, and rationality or irrationality, are inseparable. Some of the inseparables inhere *per se* and others *per accidens*. For rationality inheres in man *per se*, and also mortality and ability to learn; while having an aquiline or a flat nose inheres *per accidens* and not *per se*. Hence those differences which are present *per se* are taken up in the reason of substance and make *another*; but those differences present *per accidens* are not taken up in the reason of substance, nor do they make another but only make something other in quality. Moreover, the *per se* differences do not admit of more and less; while the *per accidens* differences, even if inseparable, receive increase and decrease. For genus is not predicated more or less of that whose genus it is, nor are the differences of genus by which it is divided predicated more or less: for the latter complete the reason [definition] of everything. But nature [essence] is one and the same in everything and does not admit of increase or decrease; but having an aquiline or a flat nose, or having a certain color admits increase or decrease.

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[16] **aquilinity**: the quality of being aquiline (resembling an eagle). So an aquiline nose is a hooked nose, like an eagle's beak, characterized by a prominent, curved bridge. This shape can be a striking and distinctive facial feature. Historically, it has been associated with strength, leadership, and nobility in various culture.

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Section Two: Aristotle's "Categories"

Helpful preliminary notes

We remind you of what we learned in the introductory lesson of this book: St. Thomas pointed out that there are three basic acts of the mind:

1. Recognizing and giving names to simple universal concepts (e.g., "man", "tree", "love", "triangle", etc.). By 'simple' we do not mean each idea is necessarily 'easy to understand' or 'easy to come to', but rather, we mean 'simple as opposed to complex' – that is, the idea is not joined with other ideas or is not involved in a predication such as, "Man is a greater creature than a tree."
2. Predicating (making sentences; and this begins to involve true and false);
3. Syllogizing (putting two truths together to form a new truth that was unknown to that mind).

St. Thomas told us in that quote that the *Categories* of Aristotle concerns that first act of the mind. It is a very important starting point for one's becoming a clear thinker.

Predication and predicates

To "predicate" about a thing simply means to "say something about" that thing. For example, we can predicate of God that He is All-Good. We can predicate of a certain horse that it is strong, its neighs, it is five feet tall, it is an animal, etc. Each of these kinds of things we can predicate of horses falls under a unique category of being in our mind. Each of these things we can say, such as *strong, neighs, five feet tall, weighs 900 pounds,* and *animal* can all be called *predicables* or *predicates,* since these things are *able to be predicated* about this horse.

You just completed a study of Porphyry's *Isagoge* in which you learned about the five key terms of genus, species, difference, property, and accident. These five terms are themselves predicables.

His *"Categories"* is the first logical treatise in Aristotle's "*Organon*" . In the *Categories,* he investigates and explains 10 different groups of predicables. He had already "thought this all through" and determined that anything we can say (or think) about things all fall into one of these 10 different categories of being.

Boethius, the great Catholic thinker of the Middle Ages whose treatises were so valued by St. Thomas Aquinas, has this to say about the *Categories:*

> Aristotle's discovery of the ten genera [Categories] of things which the mind grasps when understanding or expresses when arguing with others (for whatever we grasp by our understanding we communicate to others in speech), it emerged that an understanding of these ten categories required treatment of the following five things: genus, species, specific difference, exclusive property, and accident…

In the above quote, Boethius is telling us:

- what Aristotle's Categories are about – viz. the 10 groups of genera (plural of genus) which the mind grasps whenever expressing ideas to others in speech or writing;
- why those Categories are important (so that we *can* communicate and think effectively), and

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Lesson 5 Aristotle's Categories: Chapter I

Translated by E. M. Edghill

Chapter 1: equivocal, univocal, and derivative

Things are said to be named 'equivocally' when, though they have a common name, the definition corresponding with the name differs for each. Thus, a real man and a figure in a picture can both lay claim to the name 'animal'; yet these are equivocally so named, for, though they have a common name, the definition corresponding with the name differs for each. For should any one define in what sense each is an animal, his definition in the one case will be appropriate to that case only.

On the other hand, things are said to be named 'univocally' which have both the name and the definition answering to the name in common. A man and an ox are both 'animal', and these are univocally so named, inasmuch as not only the name, but also the definition, is the same in both cases: for if a man should state in what sense each is an animal, the statement in the one case would be identical with that in the other.

Things are said to be named 'derivatively', which derive their name from some other name, but differ from it in termination. Thus the grammarian derives his name from the word 'grammar', and the courageous man from the word 'courage'.

Notes:

This business of derivation can be tricky. There are two senses of "derivatively": *Justice* might be said to be derived from *just*, but is it really? The grammarian would say yes, but what would the logician say? He would say the derivation is actually the other way around: we call someone just because they have justice, thus *just* is derived from *justice*. So we cannot allow ourselves to mix up logic and grammar. For example, a grammarian (*speaking strictly as a grammarian, and not also as a logician*) would say this statement is fine: "All men are dogs." After all, the sentence has valid form (a subject and a predicate); the subject is plural (all men) and the verb is also plural (are), so that is good. The predicate (dogs) is present and valid. But the logician, would, of course say it is a bad sentence, since it is not true. All men are animals, but it is false that all men are dogs.

Here is another example: 'Virtuous' said of a man is *accidental* (since it is an accident in man that he might be virtuous; his virtue could change to vice, but he would still be a man). But 'virtuous' said of courage, humility, or other virtues is said in an accidental sense, but rather, it is said *essentially*, for it belongs to the very essence of courage and humility that these virtuous are virtuous.

Analagous names

Aristotle in this chapter only mentions three types of names: equivocal, univocal and derivative names. **But there is another very important type of name - analogous names**. An analogous name is a term that signifies something real but in a way that is neither univocal (having exactly the same meaning) nor equivocal (having an entirely different meaning) as that same term used in another way. An analogous name signifies a concept that applies to different things in a way that is partly the same but partly different in those things. For example, to say that a "Socrates is" (that is, "he exists", "he has being") is very different from saying Socrates is smart ("his intelligence has being"). Just as Socrates himself truly exists, so do his weight, his height, his level of intelligence, and countless other accidents about him truly exist. But the two types of existences / beings (Socrates' very existence) and his mere accidents (for example, 150 pounds, intelligence, 5 foot 8 feet tall) are not the same kind of being. You can see this by simply considering that all those accidents would not exist if Socrates (the man) did not first exist; the accidents depend upon the substance for their being. Thus, *being* is first and foremost said of *substance* but only secondarily

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