

FR. FAUSTINUS UGWUANYI

AQUINAS' COMMENTARIES ON BOETHIUS' TREATISES: A MODIFICATION OR INTERPRETATION?

INTRODUCTION

Nearly seven hundred years after the death of Boethius, Saint Thomas Aquinas appears to comment on the two works of Boethius: *De Trinitate* and *De Hebdomadibus*. In the last years of the twentieth century, Aquinas' comments aroused many discussions and questions among scholars. The question was asked why Aquinas was commenting on the texts of Boethius in the middle of the thirteenth century. As Ralph McInerny observes, the cultural and intellectual background of these two scholars bears no resemblance.¹ Some scholars, such as Marian Kurdzialek, a Polish philosopher, argued that Aquinas intended to get rid of the old method of argumentation that dominated both philosophy and theology. Other scholars, such as Etienne Gilson, Pierre Duhem and Cornelio Fabro, criticized Aquinas, arguing that he used the texts of Boethius as a platform to create a metaphysics that was utterly different from Aristotle's.² The last group of scholars, such as Ralph McInerny, rejects these allegations and claims. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing debate as to why Aquinas had to comment upon the works of Boethius and to address further the problem of whether these commentaries were a proper interpretation of Boethius or modification. Finally, I will evaluate the various claims to define my stand in the context of the ongoing debate.

Fr. Faustinus Ugwuanyi—Faculty of Philosophy, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, e-mail: fadaike@yahoo.com; ORCID: 0000-0003-4755-2825.

¹ Cf. Ralph McINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas* (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America, 2012), 1.

² Cf. Étienne GILSON, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2 ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), 156.

1. BOETHIUS AND AQUINAS—THE GREAT MEDIEVAL SCHOLARS

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, a renowned philosopher and theologian of the sixth century was born around AD 480 in Rome, Byzantine Empire (now Italy) in the famous family of the Anicii who had been Christians for over hundred years. In AD 510 he became a consul under Theodoric the Ostrogoth and was later charged with treason. He died in AD 524 after he had written *De Consolatione* in prison.³ Agnieszka Kijewska compares Boethius' accusation and last days in prison to those of Socrates: "Boethius, like Socrates, facing death, undertakes a philosophical journey into the depths of himself, one more journey in search of the highest values."⁴ For Kijewska, the political nature of Boethius' case was camouflaged giving the process appearance of a case concerning impiety. H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand describe Boethius as "the last of the Roman philosophers, and the first of the scholastic theologians."⁵ Boethius, whose wide-range intellectual influence in the Middle Ages could be compared to Plato and Aristotle wrote commentaries, textbooks, theological treatises, and the famous *Consolation of Philosophy* which formed the major thoughts of the twelfth century-thinkers.

Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, was a beckon of intellectualism in the tradition of scholasticism and the ecclesiastical cycle. John F. Winkler describes him as the most influential thinker of the medieval time.⁶ For McInerny, Aquinas was "a man of massive intellectual and holiness in whom a multifaceted centuries-long cultural tradition achieved an impressive unity and from whom that perennial philosophy has been passed on."⁷ In the words of Frederick Copleston, "his [Aquinas] life was a life devoted to the pursuit and defense of truth, a life also permeated and motivated by a deep spirituality."⁸ Aquinas, who was the seventh child and the youngest son of Landolfo and Teodora Caracciolo was born at Aquino castle in Roccasecca, Italy, in 1225. He lived in a period when the opposition and antagonism

³ Cf. Hugh F. STEWART, Edward K. RAND, trans., "Introduction," in BOETHIUS, *The Theological Tractates, The Consolation of Philosophy* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1968), ix.

⁴ Agnieszka KIJEWSKA, "Boethius—Divine Man or Christian Philosophy?," *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* no 7 (2013): 76.

⁵ STEWART, RAND, "Introduction," x.

⁶ Cf. John F. WINKLER, "Aquinas," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31.

⁷ MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, ix.

⁸ Frederick COPLESTON, *A History of Philosophy, Medieval Philosophy*, vol. II (London: Continuum, 2003), 304.

among believers towards secular knowledge were high, and McInerny relates to this tension as a cause of the condemnations of 1272 and 1277.⁹ The Fathers of the English Dominican Province claim that between 1256 and 1259 Aquinas wrote two hundred and fifty-three scholastic disputations which formed his treatise *De Veritate*, including his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, which he was encouraged to write by the famous missionary, Raymond of Penafort.¹⁰ Copleston believes that Aquinas' redirection of philosophical attention and his placement of *esse* at the forefront of philosophy instead of *essence*, which was also one of his major discussions in his commentary on Boethius' *De hebdomadibus*, have placed him ahead of Plato and all the philosophies that were inspired by this thought.¹¹ He died on March 7, 1274, on his way to the Council of Lyon.

2. WHY AQUINAS COMMENTED ON BOETHIUS' TREATISES

The question of why Aquinas had to comment upon these Boethian texts has provoked many concerns among scholars. Marian Kurdzialek claims that Aquinas concern was mainly on the change of method; that is, getting rid of the old methodological structure of argument which was deductive and axiomatic.¹² The task was possible because Aquinas knew the whole of Aristotelian logic—not only *Logica Vetus* but also *Logica Nova* and had his point of view about the separation of philosophy from theology. Boethius's *De Trinitate* and *De Hebdomadibus*, along with other treatises of Boethius were the essential classical texts commented upon by many masters of School of Chartres in the twelfth century because they created a method for science. This methodological approach was theoretical and follows the Neo-Platonic method of transcendence.¹³ Thierry of Chartres, a great scholar of the school, who later became the Chancellor of the school after Gilbert of Poitiers, has three different commentaries on *De Trinitate* of Boethius, including his *Hep-tateuchon*—a work on the seven liberal arts. There was also the influence of

⁹ Cf. MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, x.

¹⁰ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *The Summa Theologica*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago, 1952), v.

¹¹ Cf. COPLESTON, *A History of Philosophy*, 309.

¹² Cf. Agnieszka KLIJEWSKA, "Father Professor Marian Kurdzialek—Promoter of the Notion of Boethian Neoplatonism," *Annals of Philosophy* 3 (2012): 35–51.

¹³ Cf. Joseph W. KOTERSKI, "Foreword," in *Participation and the Good: A Study in Boethian Metaphysics*, edited by Siobhan Nash-Marshall (New York: Crossroad Pub, 2000), x.

other works like Plato's *Timaeus*, but none of these works created a fundamental methodology like the five treatises of Boethius.

It was the model provided in these treatises, along with other influential works like the writings of Peter Lombard that formed the structure of the twelfth century's thinking and the sciences. Boethius' *De Trinitate* was inscribed strongly into the Neo-Platonic tradition which Boethius himself made clear towards the end of the introduction to this work. The *De Hebdomadibus* followed the same pattern of doing the science of nature after the model of deductive science. In this treatise, Boethius followed the example of the mathematical and cognate sciences and laid down bounds and rules according to which he developed this work. In this way, every science starts from the most general concept from which the rest of the realities were deduced.

Around 1120, Aristotle's *Logica Vetus and Logica Nova*¹⁴ were already read in the school of Chartres. Scholars like Peter Abelard and Thierry of Chartres were educated with these texts. And in these texts, especially *Logica Nova* (Analytic) were contained the exposition of the scientific method but thinkers of that time were not used to this style of thinking. They had only one way of doing science which was deductive science—that is, *Introduction to Arithmetic* by Boethius and Boethius' *Hebdomadibus*. They, therefore, tried to do the science about nature, including theology after the model of deductive science. Kijewska believes that the theory of inductive knowledge as delineated by Aristotle in his *Posterior Analytics*, that is the knowledge starting from premises known through sense evidence found no adherents at that time.¹⁵ Although James of Venice provided a translation of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, the comprehension of the theory contained in this text according to John of Salisbury was difficult. In the alternative, scholars of this period made use of the available mathematical texts which provided them with excellent examples of the demonstrative method. This model of the school of Chartres could be found in Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica*. This treatise was not known at that time, but in the twelfth

¹⁴ *Logica Vetus* (Latin, old logic): The old logic includes Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, including Boethius's commentaries on them. These works were called old logic because they were the logic texts available until the middle of the twelfth century. Aristotle's other logical texts in the *Organon*, namely *Topics*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, and *Sophistici Elenchi*, later on, came to be introduced into the Latin world and were called *Logica nova* (new logic).

¹⁵ Cf. Agnieszka KIJEWSKA, "Eriugena and the Twelfth Century: The Concept of *Ratio*," in *Eriugena and Creation*, edited by Willemien Otten, Michael I. Allen (Turnhour: Brepols, 2014), 413.

century, they had *Liber de Causis* which was modelled after *Elementatio Theologica*. Scholars of this school, by holding tenaciously to the teachings of Boethius which inscribed itself into the Neo-Platonic tradition got trapped in this current of thought while at the same time thought they were the proper interpreters of Aristotle's logic. In doing this, they tried to create a type of natural theology after the model of axiomatic science.¹⁶ The most compelling evidence of this axiomatic application is found in Thierry's opening sentence of the Book of Genesis. In this work, God is presented as an efficient cause and material cause. The words "God said" is understood as referring to God as formal cause and the passage that tells us that God found what he had made good points to God as final cause.¹⁷ Thierry managed to get a great deal of originality because he gave relative autonomy to forces of nature. In other words, God the creator endows the nature's activities and follows them through the rules of natural laws within its inner roles.

The implication of the old method of argument initiated by Neo-Platonism is that philosophy and theology are one. Theology at the top is the climax of philosophical studies. And this is the ascending structure of the sciences. This doctrine also holds that we have a special theological faculty only through which we can apprehend the vision of the divine. Thus, the sciences not only educate us but also help to purify the eyes of our inner intellect, i.e. our theological faculty. In this way, the vision of God can only be possible through philosophy, along with the sciences and theology. This teaching which reflected in Boethius' *Introduction to arithmetic* stressed the role of the different sciences of *quadrivium* (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy) in purifying the theological faculty.¹⁸

In the thirteenth century, while commenting on the works of Boethius Aquinas adopts a method that separates philosophy from theology and sorts to define the subject matter of these two disciplines. McInerny raises a doubt as to whether such a theology that rises from natural science and the study of mathematics, which is a philosophical study mostly engaged by pagans,

¹⁶ Axiom is a logico-deductive method whereby conclusions (new knowledge) follow from premises (old knowledge) or self-evident truth through the application of sound arguments (syllogisms, rules of inference). This was developed by the ancient Greeks and has become the core principle of modern logic and mathematics.

¹⁷ Cf. Ralph MCINERNY, *A History of Western Philosophy*, vol. II (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), <https://www3.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/hwp212.htm> (accessed: 6.11.2016).

¹⁸ Cf. BOETHIUS, *De Institutione Arithmetica*, translated by Michael Masi (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983), 43.

could lead in any way to the knowledge of God. In other words, whether theology in this sense could embrace such discussions as the Trinity, the union of the human and the divine nature in Christ?¹⁹ Certainly for Aquinas, as he stressed in his introduction to Boethius' *De Trinitate*, such a theology is not capable of achieving this end. For him, God as the first truth cannot be known directly by the human mind except through his creatures. The human mind is incapable of grasping the first truth directly because it dwells in a corruptible body. And this limitation creates a distance that limits our knowledge of God. In this way, the human mind falls short of the true knowledge of God and also falls into errors when it fails to realize its limitation.²⁰ This is to say that the knowledge of God by the human mind can only be possible through abstraction.

Aquinas believes that the only way the human intellect can perceive God is when it is united to God through grace.²¹ He further teaches that another way the human race can know God is by faith. This is a special mystical vision of God granted to few individuals as a gift, irrespective of whom or how learned they are; and this is what theology should be interested in. On the contrary, rigorous logical arguments and the study of the sciences should form the basis of philosophical studies which do not lead to a full vision of God nor provide a clear account of the divine nature. Philosophy only helps the human mind to advance from creatures to God. Therefore, Logic is not a necessary tool for religion but faith.²²

Aquinas further redefined the meaning of theology. Boethius teaches in *De Trinitate* that Theology or the divine science makes use of the intellect in its scrutiny of the Form or existence itself. Thus, our knowledge of God or the First truth proceeds in three steps or through three branches of speculative science. The first is through physical or natural sciences which consider things that change and are un-abstracted from matter. The second is through mathematics which is changeless and investigates bodily forms that exist in matter and as such cannot be separated from bodies, and finally through theology which is changeless and abstract; that is, the divine exists, abstracted

¹⁹ Cf. MCINERNEY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, 10.

²⁰ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, translated by Rose E. Brennan (St. Louis 1946), E-text at www.dhspriority.org/thomas/BoethiusDeTr.htm (accessed: 8.11. 2016); THOMAS AQUINAS, *The Summa Theologica*, vol. I, q. 12, a. 4,12,13, p. 50–62.

²¹ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *The Treatise on the Divine Nature: Summa Theologiae I 1-13*, translated by Brian Shanley (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2006), 108.

²² Cf. *Ibidem*.

from matter and change.²³ Aquinas disagrees with Boethius on this teaching. He believes that we do not have theological faculty, that is, faculty of making the vision of God theoretically; instead, we have a revelation and the Bible. Theology is not contemplation. Theology is only a university subject matter that concerns itself with the divine truth that has been revealed by God, which must be accepted by faith. The science of theology is the sacred teaching. He, therefore, distinguishes two kinds of science: Liberal science and the science of the sacred teaching. Liberal science comes from those principles that are known by the light of the intellect such as arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. On the other hand, the science of the sacred teaching comes from those principles that are revealed to it by God.²⁴

Another reason why Aquinas had to comment on Boethius was to develop arguments against the heretics of his time upon the background of authority like Boethius whose writings were very significant in defense of the Catholic faith. This is one of the characteristic styles of scholars of the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries (the principle of authority or *auctoritas*) as Timothy Noone remarked.²⁵ Two major antecedents to this claim come from the work of Michael Novak²⁶ and Aquinas's document *Secunda Secundae*. It must be recalled that Aquinas was an Italian Dominican friar, a Catholic Priest, and a great scholar of this period. As a Dominican learned friar, he had the primary task of preaching sound doctrines while at the same time, adopting simpler and poorer lifestyles to lend credence to his preaching as a way of fighting heresies. Michael Novak observes that the most cited work of Aquinas in America by some great scholars who are hostile to the Catholic Church is found in Article three, question eleven of Aquinas's *Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologica*.²⁷ In the entire treatise, Aquinas considers four themes: "whether heresy is a species of unbelief," "Of the matter about which it is," "whether heretics should be tolerated," and "whether those who return from heresy should be received."²⁸ In the third question, "Are heretics to be tolerated?" Aquinas was very blunt in his answer. For

²³ Cf. BOETHIUS, *The Theological Tractates*, 9.

²⁴ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *The Treatise on the Divine Nature*, 5.

²⁵ Cf. Timothy B. NOONE, "Scholasticism," in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, edited by Jorge J.E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 55.

²⁶ M. Novak holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute.

²⁷ Cf. Michael NOVAK, "Aquinas and the Heretics," in *First Things*, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/1995/12/003-aquinas-and-the-heretics> (accessed: 16.11.2016).

²⁸ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *The Summa Theologica*, vol. II, qu. 11, a. 1, p. 438.

him, they should not be allowed and tolerated. Novak, however, remarks that Aquinas' answer was not a surprise to his contemporaries following Aquinas's ugly experiences as a young man with heretics like Frederick II.²⁹

It was solely to fight heresies that Dominic de Guzman formed this group in 1206. Lynn H. Nelson, a Professor Emeritus of the University of Kansas attributes among the causes of these heresies to the growth of education within the eleventh and twelfth centuries brought about by the rise of the cathedral schools and abbeys, including the universities, which led to a rigorous examination of the church's teachings. Another factor was the Church's participation in political affairs, especially in the struggles over the lay investitures, which weakened the Church's authority.³⁰ For Novak, it was perhaps because of the scandals created by the wealth and powers of the medieval papacy which got the people disenchanted with the teachings of the Church.

By the second half of the twelfth century through the thirteenth century, the heresy, *Catharism* in its new form of *Albigensian* was already strong in Southern France, particular in Toulouse. This heresy later spread to northern Italy. This group, the Cathars, followed a long-established line of belief based on the concept of dualism. Among their teachings include that the human body which houses the soul is intrinsically evil and must undergo severe ascetical practices to free the soul from the carnal prison, that marriage and the getting of children is evil, including that all material things are the work of the devil; thus, the incarnation of Christ is, therefore, a contradiction in terms.³¹ It was against this type of heretical teachings that Boethius in the sixth century also wrote his *De Hebdomadibus* where he explained how substances could be good by virtue of their existence without being absolute Goods. The argument of Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus* was coherent against the heresy of Catharism while his *De Trinitate* stood against other heresies that denied the Catholic doctrine of the three Persons in One God.

Aquinas on his part adopted the insight of Boethius in his commentaries, especially on Boethius' *De hebdomadibus* to explain the concept of participation³² which Boethius saw as being important for the resolution of the

²⁹ Cf. NOVAK, "Aquinas and the Heretics."

³⁰ Cf. Lynn H. NELSON, *Medieval History Lectures*, <http://www.vlib.us/medieval/lectures>, accessed: 7.11.2016).

³¹ Cf. Joseph F. KELLY "Heresy/ Heretics." In *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, edited by Michael Glazier, Monika K. Hellwig (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 356.

³² Cf. Jan A. AERTSEN, "Aquinas's Philosophy in its Historical Setting," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, edited by Norman Kretzmann, Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23.

problem of “how things can be good by virtue of their essences without thereby being substantially goodness.” Although this concept implies participation, neither Boethius nor Aquinas used the term, participation to speak of the goodness of creatures.³³ However, most of Aquinas’ discussions on divine and created goodness feature the argument of *De hebdomadibus*. Aquinas, therefore, seized upon his commentaries on Boethius as a means of clarifying and shedding light on those aspects of the Christian doctrine which have been threatened by the heresies of Catharism. McInerny affirms this point by saying that whenever Aquinas discusses a question on which Boethius wrote, he invariably gives his fellow Italian’s views pride of place.³⁴ There is no doubt that Aquinas’ interest was more on metaphysical and theological affairs than on social and political matters, but neglect on the later would be a historical mistake.

3. CRITICISMS OF AQUINAS’ COMMENTARIES

Moses Angeles, in his article “Metaphysics after Aquinas” observes that most criticisms of Aquinas result from the different interpretations given to Aquinas’ teaching by the various Thomistic schools that emerged after the revival of Aquinas’ works by Leo XIII’s *Aeterni Patris*.³⁵ Among these schools were the Aristotelian Thomism and the Existential Thomism. The former understand Aquinas’ metaphysics as a form of medieval Aristotelians. Thus, this group explains its principles in the light of Act and Potency while the latter group, seen as Existential Thomism places more emphasis on existence or *esse*. For them, something becomes a being when it possesses its *esse* or *actus essendi*.

Etienne Gilson, an Existential Thomist, reacting to Aquinas’ metaphysics argues that the subject matter of Aristotle’s metaphysics is being *qua* being and to know being as such could mean three different things. It could either mean the abstract notion of being conceived both in itself and with its inherent properties, or knowledge that deals with those beings which can genuinely be said to be because their being answers to the true definition of being or even knowledge through its first cause.³⁶ And neither did Aristotle order

³³ Cf. MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, 227.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. xi.

³⁵ Cf. Moses Aaron T. ANGELES, “Metaphysics after Aquinas,” *Kritike*, vol. 1, no 2 (2007): 117.

³⁶ Cf. GILSON, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 154–155.

the knowledge of metaphysics to the first cause of being nor reduced metaphysics to a unity because this notion did not appear in any of his doctrines. Thus, he rejects Aquinas's claim of the possibility of this unity. For him, it is not possible to reduce matter, along with the other three causes named by Aristotle to a unity, even if they were to be joined together.³⁷ Matter itself in this way becomes the first cause in Aristotle's metaphysics because "it enters the structure of material substances as one of their irreducible constituent elements."³⁸ To support this claim, he quotes one of the texts of Aristotle which Aquinas made reference to in his argument. The text thus, reads: "It is therefore manifest that the science here to be gained [namely metaphysics] is that of the first causes since we say of each thing that we know it only when we think that we know its first cause."³⁹ He, however, states that Aristotle immediately proceeded in the passage to say, "Now, causes are said to be in a fourfold way."⁴⁰ Thus, for Gilson, the above passage by Aristotle does not imply a cause but rather causes, precisely, the four causes.⁴¹ Gilson was convinced that the doctrine of creation which Aquinas introduced into metaphysics, by which God is the cause of everything and to which everything is subjected to, including matter, led to the modification of the understanding of metaphysics.

Another criticism of Aquinas' metaphysics comes from Pierre Duhem whose major criticism appeared in the fifth volume of his *Le système du monde* (The system of the world), under the theme, "Digression about an axiom of Boethius: the esse, the quod is, the quo is." In the section, *Diversum est esse et id quod est*, Duhem claims that Boethius's distinction of *esse* and *id quod est* is the same with Themistius' who made a distinction between a particular instance and its essential nature. In other words, it is a distinction between a concrete thing and its essence as against the difference Aquinas made between *esse* and *essence*.⁴² Duhem quoted a section of Boethius' *De Trinitate* which he claims, defines the distinction that Boethius made between *esse* and *id quod est*. According to this text, "the Divine Substance is

³⁷ Cf. *Ibidem*, 156.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ ARISTOTLE, "Metaphysics," A, 3, 983 a 24–27, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes [Bollingen Series] (Princeton, New Jersey, 1984), 1555.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ Cf. GILSON, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 156.

⁴² Cf. Pierre DUHEM, *Le Système du Monde; Histoire des doctrines Cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, vol. 5 (Paris: Librairie Scientifique A. Hermann et Fils, 1917), 481–501.

Form without matter, and is, therefore, One, and is its own essence. But other things are not simply their own essences, for each thing has its being from the things of which it is composed, that is, from its parts."⁴³ Duhem interprets this text to mean that it is only in God can there be the identity of the concrete being and its essence but differs in all other things. He made further references to Boethius's *De Hebdomadibus* as a clear understanding of what Boethius meant.⁴⁴

A similar explanation was given to the second chapter of Boethius's *De Trinitate*. Here, Duhem argues that by *esse* and *id quod est*, Boethius means a type of distinction between a substance and any of its accidents or a distinction between a coloured thing from its colour. But in the case of God, he is not subject to accidents; thus, in him, there is an identity of *esse* and *id quod est*.⁴⁵ He further explains that the *id quod est* is "the concrete and really existing thing which the union of matter and form produces and *esse* is its essence, the form common to individual things of the same species."⁴⁶ Therefore, *esse* is the essence and the form of things, as well as the principle of individuation. McInerny, on the contrary, disagrees with Duhem and argues that Duhem aims to establish an agreement between Boethius and Themistius by identifying *esse* with essence (specific nature) and *id quod est* with a concrete thing.⁴⁷

But even before the influence of the contemporary Thomists like Gilson and Duhem were the works of Geiger and J.D. Robert that first drew attention to the distinction Aquinas made in question five, article three of his *De Trinitate* between *abstractio* and *separatio*. Geiger, basing his argument on the holograph claims that Aquinas made several false starts in the final version of this article before he finally decided on the approach to use.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Robert following the writings of Van Steenberghen who tried to separate Philosophy from Science, ends up by identifying other philosophical disciplines as forms of metaphysics. Thus, the word *separatio* comes to define the uniqueness of metaphysics as a science that is separated from all motion and matter.⁴⁹ The holograph which, however, influenced the writings

⁴³ BOETHIUS, "De Trinitate," 2, II. 29–31, *The Theological Tractates*, 11.

⁴⁴ Cf. BOETHIUS, "De Hebdomadibus," II. 45–48, *The Theological Tractates*, 43.

⁴⁵ Cf. DUHEM, *Le Système du Monde*, 481–501.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ Cf. MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, 165.

⁴⁸ Cf. Louis-Bertrand GEIGER, "Abstractio et separation d'après S. Thomas: in de trinitate, q. 5, a. 3," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques* 31 (1947): 3–40.

⁴⁹ Cf. Jean-Dominique ROBERT, "La métaphysique, science distincte de toute autre discipline Philosophique Selon Saint Thomas d' Aquin," *Divus Thomas* 50 (1947): 206–223.

of Geiger preserved the earlier versions of question five, article three of the commentary. Scholars like Paul Wyser, who commented on the fifth and sixth questions of Aquinas's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate* also toed the line of the holograph.⁵⁰

Reacting to the above criticism, McInerny explains that although the final version of the holograph makes the earlier version look a bit disordered, that it was only a style of building up arguments which Aquinas finally consolidates in the final version of the article.⁵¹ He explains that "The discussion in Article 3 is taken to exhibit the distinctiveness of Thomistic metaphysics, the way in which it differs from other understandings of this science. The passage to which interpreters are drawn moth-like is this: *secunda vero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei*: the second operation looks to the very existence of the things. Separation is linked to the second operation of the mind and metaphysics is characterized by separation."⁵²

Concerning Gilson's claims, McInerny argues that Aristotle's conception of science governed Aquinas' *De Trinitate* and that Aquinas made an effort to define the subject of the different theoretical sciences, as well as finding connected proofs that relate the three theoretical sciences which characterize a scientific study.⁵³ This is because of the role that definition plays in scientific proofs. McInerny further argues that although "being" in metaphysics could be said in many ways that it primarily refers to substance. Thus, metaphysics which is the science of "being" as "being" came to be associated with the science of substance, which is the first primary being.⁵⁴ And that Aristotle only introduced metaphysics as a means of understanding immaterial substances which are incorruptible and in their activities like God and the soul, the unmoved mover and the human substantial form, having discovered the inadequacy of natural philosophy to explain these realities.⁵⁵ However, this introduction neither implies a change in the subject matter of metaphysics nor a division of metaphysics into ontology and theology. It properly follows that this cannot be the case since the human mind cannot assess studies whose subject matter is immaterial or divine as it would be required by the four questions of the *Posterior Analytics*.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Cf. Paul WYSER, *Thomas Von Aquin In Librum Boethii De trinitate Auaestiones Quinta et Sexta* (Fribourg: Société Philosophique, 1948).

⁵¹ Cf. McINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, 150.

⁵² *Ibidem*, 151.

⁵³ Cf. *Ibidem*, 151–152.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibidem*, 153.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Ibidem*, 154.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*.

McInerny recounts that Aquinas, to this effect, proposed the study of substance that could apply to both material and immaterial substances. He began with the study of physical substance with the intention to arrive at the knowledge of the divine substance. And having argued that physical substance composed of matter and form is substance only by derivation, Aristotle was able to speak of “separate substances as forms” from his conclusion that “form is more substance than matter.”⁵⁷ McInerny believes that most scholars who criticize Aquinas’ metaphysics base their arguments on the claim that diversity of sciences implies a diversity of subject matters. But that this was not the case in the threefold division of theoretical sciences. The formulation of the theoretical sciences was instead based on “the mode of defining or their degree of separation or abstraction from motion and matter.”⁵⁸ And in this way, Aquinas did not introduce any new theology different from the already existing theology proposed by Aristotle. McInerny claimed that “the mode of defining in the two theologies is the same: both define the objects of their concern without matter and motion. They both employ *separatio*.”⁵⁹ Thus, what this implies is that there are two senses in which metaphysics could demonstrate and define the knowledge of immaterial and divine things that are not necessarily found in matter and motion. Nor could be found in them sometimes like being, substance, and act and those things which are entirely separated from matter and motion like God and the angels.⁶⁰ Unlike Gilson and Duhem, Bourke maintains that Aquinas’ interpretation is reliable and that the modifications came as a result of the different scholarly cultures in which both Boethius and Aquinas lived.⁶¹

4. EVALUATION OF THE CLAIMS

My assessment of Aquinas’ commentaries will be based on two factors: the literary genre and the nature of Aquinas interpretation; that is, whether these texts were modified. In considering the literary genre of the works of the two scholars, there is no doubt that they differ in their genres. The two commentaries of Aquinas also differ in their literary forms. The *De Hebdo-*

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 155.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, 156.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ibidem.

⁶¹ Cf. Vernon J. BOURKE, Review of *Boethius and Aquinas*, by Ralph McInerny. *Speculum* 67, no 2 (April 1992): 452–454, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2864427>, accessed 16 February 2016.

madibus took the form of a line by line, word to word exposition which was not the case in *De Trinitate*.⁶² The *De Trinitate* was not only an *expositio*, but also includes a *disputatio*, *quaestiones* proved by the text, and finally the commentator's independent approach to the questions, which according to Aertsen, was based on the University's practice and the form of genre eminent at Aquinas's time.⁶³ McInerny and Marrone also confirmed Aertsen's claim in their works.⁶⁴ From the viewpoint of their literary genre, there is no doubt that there are some modifications in the literary styles of Aquinas's commentaries.

Again, Aquinas' novelties in these commentaries precipitated many questions regarding the originality of these Boethian texts. My text analysis will be based on Aquinas's new views. The first novelty discovered in Aquinas's reading of Boethius's *De Trinitate* is the introduction of Christian theology.⁶⁵ As discussed in the paper, this theology differs from philosophical theology or metaphysics both in method and subject. The subject of this theology is God while it relies on revelation as its source of knowledge. It is obvious that Aquinas wanted to make this distinction clear in the Boethian commentary.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, he was faithful in this *expositio*, irrespective of his disapproval of Boethius argument, to remind his audience that Boethius enlisted the three-fold division of the theoretical sciences following Aristotle's claim that every inquiry should follow the appropriate method that suits its subject.⁶⁷ In this treatise, Boethius aims to defend the doctrine of the Trinity from the critical inquiries of philosophy.⁶⁸ This very claim is what Aquinas challenges at the very beginning of his commentary that "the truth that God is three and one is altogether a matter of faith; and in no way can it be demonstratively proved" philosophically. Instead, it is an article of faith which is based on revelation.⁶⁹ It, therefore, follows that in the mind of

⁶² Cf. Steven Marrone, "The Rise of the Universities," *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Robert Pasnau, Christina van Dyke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 60.

⁶³ Cf. Jan A. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals, The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 115.

⁶⁴ Cf. MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, xii.

⁶⁵ Cf. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy*, 121.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, 122.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ Cf. BOETHIUS, *De Trinitate*, proem., 15–20.

⁶⁹ AQUINAS, *De Trinitate*, q. 1, a. 4, Rep.

Aquinas, as Aertsen observes, “this three-fold division does not open up the mode of knowing suited to the theme of Boethius’s inquiry.”⁷⁰

The second novelty is the introduction of a theology based on a revelation that shows a difference with the theological conception of metaphysics.⁷¹ The theoretical sciences Boethius transmitted to the Middle Ages consider theology as the highest theoretical science that studies the divine substance; that is, the first being. Theology for Boethius and the Neo-Platonists is the science of God. But unlike Boethius, Aquinas in his *disputatio* has proposed as a subject of metaphysics, not God but being in general (*ens commune*) which is common to all things.⁷² It follows that there was a shift from the former idea of the theological conception of metaphysics which focuses on the first being that is God to an ontological conception of being in general (*ens commune*). By dint of this shift, Aquinas separated theology from metaphysics which was unusual for the Boethian tradition. The whole of question five, article four of Aquinas’s *De Trinitate* focuses on this discussion.

Another significant novelty arising from Aquinas’s commentary to *De Hebdomadibus* is the introduction of *esse* (existence) and the distinction Aquinas made between *esse* and *essence* as against the traditional Boethian *esse* and *id quod est*. As mentioned in the paper, Duhem explains that the *id quod est* is “the concrete and really existing thing which the union of matter and form produces and *esse* is its essence, the form common to individual things of the same species.”⁷³ Admittedly, this distinction does not fit into Aquinas’s explanation that without the possession of *esse* (existence) or *actus essendi* (act of being), something cannot become a being.⁷⁴ Aertsen observes that philosophising in the Middle Ages is more or less commenting on an *auctoritas* in which the commentator first gives an exposition of the text and then proceeds to develop ideas “which transform the tradition, and so manifest a new and personal appropriation of it.”⁷⁵ Therefore, there is no doubt that new thoughts were developed from Aquinas’s *disputatio*.

But all the same, I consider McInerny’s argument relevant at this point. He strongly believes that in as much as Aquinas’s commentary on *De trinitate* differs from the style used in his other commentaries like on Scripture or Aristotle or Pseudo-Dionysius, it still does not deny the fact that the

⁷⁰ AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy*, 122.

⁷¹ Cf. *Ibidem*, 123.

⁷² Cf. *Ibidem*.

⁷³ MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, 164.

⁷⁴ Cf. ANGELES, “Metaphysics after Aquinas,” 118.

⁷⁵ AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 115.

disputatio and *quaestiones* are not *expositiones* as found in his *Sentences*.⁷⁶ Aertsen affirms McInerny's claim by arguing that "Thomas pointedly distinguishes the exposition from the *disputatio*."⁷⁷ Therefore, it would be a mistake to muddle Aquinas's *disputatio*, that is, his independent answers with the main *expositio* of these texts and also claim on this ground that he misunderstood Boethius and wrongly interpreted him.

Again, I consider these novelties as giving more profound insights into the teachings of Boethius which define Aquinas's scholarship. After all, these explanations and distinctions were always traced back either to Plato, or Aristotle, or even Boethius. The most compelling evidence is found in Aquinas' distinction between *esse* and *essence* which has its root on Boethius' statement in his *De Hebdomadibus*, "diversum est esse et id quod est" (Being and a concrete thing are different),⁷⁸ and in Aristotle's phrase, "vivere est esse viventibus" (for living things to be is to live).⁷⁹ Besides, I share McInerny's opinion that Aquinas' task was "to make explicit what is implicit" in Boethius' works and to seek "the truth of the matters under consideration... rather than simply using the text of Boethius as an occasion to develop his own independent doctrine."⁸⁰ In the final analysis, Aquinas' exposition of the Boethian texts is reliable and perhaps the best commentaries on Boethius but not without acknowledging the modifications resulting from the different scholarly cultures that prevailed in the time of the two great scholars.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AERTSEN, Jan A. *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals, The Case of Thomas Aquinas*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- AERTSEN, Jan A. "Aquinas's Philosophy in its Historical Setting." In *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, edited by Norman Kretzmann, Eleonore Stump. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- ANGELES, Moses Aaron T. "Metaphysics after Aquinas." *Kritike* 1, no 2 (2007): 117.
- ARISTOTLE. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

⁷⁶ Cf. MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, 120.

⁷⁷ AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 115.

⁷⁸ BOETHIUS, *De Hebdomadibus*, c. 28, Reg. 11.

⁷⁹ ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* VII, 1028b4.

⁸⁰ MCINERNY, *Boethius and Aquinas*, 120.

- AUDI, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Documents of the Christian Church*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.
- BOETHIUS. *De Institutione Arithmetica*, translated by Michael Masi. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983.
- BOETHIUS. *The Theological Tractates, The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh F. Stewart, Edward K. Rand. London: Loeb Classical Library, 1968.
- BOURKE, Vernon J. Review of *Boethius and Aquinas*, by Ralph McInerny. *Speculum* 67, no 2 (April 1992): 452–454, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2864427> (accessed: 16.02.2016).
- COPELSTON, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy, Medieval Philosophy*, vol. II. London: Continuum, 2003.
- CROSS, Frank L., Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- DUHEM, Pierre. *Le Système du Monde; histoire des doctrines Cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, vol. V, 481–501. Paris: Librairie Scientifique A. Hermann et Fils, 1917, <https://archive.org/details/lesystmedumond05duhe> (accessed 18.05.2017).
- GEIGER, Louis-Bertrand. “Abstraction et séparation d’après S. Thomas In De Trinitate, q. 5, a. 3.” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques* 31 (1947): 3–40.
- GILSON, Étienne. *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2 ed. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952.
- KELLY Joseph F. “Heresy/ Heretics.” In *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, edited by Michael Glazier, Monika K. Hellwig. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- KIJEWSKA, Agnieszka. “Boethius—Divine Man or Christian Philosophy?” *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia* no 7 (2013): 76.
- KIJEWSKA, Agnieszka. “Father Professor Marian Kurdzialek—Promoter of the Notion of Boethian Neoplatonism.” *Annals of Philosophy* 3 (2012): 35–51.
- KIJEWSKA, Agnieszka. “Eriugena and the Twelfth Century: The Concept of *Ratio*.” In *Eriugena and Creation*, edited by Willemien Otten, Michael I. Allen, 393–425. Turnhour: Brepols, 2014.
- KOTERSKI, Joseph W. “Foreword.” In *Participation and the Good: A Study in Boethian Metaphysics*, edited by Siobhan Nash-Marshall, IX–XII. New York: Crossroad Pub, 2000.
- MARENBNON, John. *Boethius*. Oxford: Oxford University, 2003.
- MARRONE, Steven. “The Rise of the Universities.” In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Robert Pasnau, Christina van Dyke, 50–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- MCINERNY, Ralph. *Boethius and Aquinas*. Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America, 2012.
- MCINERNY, Ralph. *A History of Western Philosophy*, vol. II. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963, <https://www3.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/hwp212.htm> (accessed: 6.11.2016).
- MCINERNY, Ralph, John O’CALLAGHAN. “Saint Thomas Aquinas.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (winter 2016 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aquinas> (accessed: 30.10.2016).
- NASH-MARSHALL, Siobhan. *Participation and the Good: A Study in Boethian Metaphysics*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000.

- NELSON, Lynn H. *Medieval History Lectures*, <http://www.vlib.us/medieval/lectures>, accessed: 7.11.2016).
- NOONE, Timothy B. "Scholasticism." *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, edited by Jorge J.E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, 55–64. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.
- NOVAK, Michael. "Aquinas and the Heretics." *First Things*, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/1995/12/003-aquinas-and-the-heretics> (accessed: 16.11. 2016).
- ROBERT, Jean-Dominique. "La métaphysique, science distinct de toute autre discipline Philosophique Selon Saint Thomas d' Aquin." *Divus Thomas* 50 (1947): 206–223.
- THOMAS AQUINAS. *The Summa Theologica*, vol. I–II, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Chicago 1952.
- THOMAS AQUINAS. *The Treatise on the Divine Nature: Summa Theologiae 1 1–13*, translated by Brian Shanley. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2006.
- THOMAS AQUINAS. *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, translated by Rose E. Brennan. St. Louis, 1946. E-text at www.dhspriority.org/thomas/BoethiusDeTr.htm (accessed: 8.11. 2016).
- WINKLER, John F. "Aquinas." In *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Robert Audi, 31–34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

TOMASZA Z AKWINU KOMENTARZE DZIEŁ BOECJUSZA:
MODYFIKACJA CZY INTERPRETACJA?

Streszczenie

Po upływie prawie siedmuset lat od śmierci Boecjusza św. Tomasz z Akwinu pojawia się, aby skomentować dwa dzieła Boecjusza: *De Trinitate* i *De Hebdomadibus*. W ostatnich latach XX wieku komentarze Akwinaty wzbudziły wiele dyskusji i pytań wśród uczonych. Stawiano pytanie: dlaczego Akwinata podjął komentowanie tych tekstów Boecjusza. Niektórzy uczeni, tacy jak Marian Kurdziałek, polski filozof, argumentowali, że intencją Akwinaty było pozbycie się starej metody argumentacji, która dominowała zarówno w filozofii, jak i teologii. Inni uczeni, tacy jak Etienne Gilson, Pierre Duhem i Cornelio Fabro, krytykowali Akwinatę, argumentując, że wykorzystał teksty Boecjusza jako platformę do stworzenia metafizyki, która była zupełnie inną. Ostatnia grupa uczonych, takich jak Ralph McInerney, odrzuca powyższe zarzuty i twierdzenia. Autor artykułu włącza się do toczącej się debaty, argumentując, że komentarze Akwinaty do Boecjusza miały na celu rozwinięcie dalszych argumentów przeciwko heretykom, którzy żyli w jego czasach na tle autorytetu jakim był Boecjusz, który według Timothy'ego Noone reprezentował charakterystyczny styl uczonego od dwunastego do siedemnastego wieku. W dalszej części artykułu poruszono kwestię, czy komentarze Akwinaty były poprawnymi interpretacjami tekstów Boecjusza. W swojej ocenie Autor artykułu twierdzi, że interpretacje tekstów Boecjusza dokonane przez św. Tomasza z Akwinu jest wiarygodna i może być najlepszym komentarzem do Boecjusza. Należy jednak uwzględnić modyfikacje wynikające z różnych kultur naukowych, które panowały w czasach dwóch wielkich uczonych.

Słowa Kluczowe: Tomasz z Akwinu; Komentarze; Boethius; *De Trinitate*; *De Hebdomadibus*.

AQUINAS' COMMENTARIES ON BOETHIUS' TREATISES:
A MODIFICATION OR INTERPRETATION?

Summary

Nearly seven hundred years after the death of Boethius, Saint Thomas Aquinas appears to comment on the two works of Boethius: *De Trinitate* and *De Hebdomadibus*. In the last years of the 20th century, Aquinas' comments aroused many discussions and questions among scholars. The question was asked why Aquinas was commenting on the texts of Boethius. Some scholars, such as Marian Kurdzialek, a Polish philosopher, argued that Aquinas intended to get rid of the old method of argumentation that dominated both philosophy and theology. Other scholars, such as Etienne Gilson, Pierre Duhem and Cornelio Fabro, criticized Aquinas, arguing that he used the texts of Boethius as a platform to create a metaphysics that was completely different. The last group of scholars, such as Ralph McInerny, rejects these allegations and claims. The article author joins the ongoing debate, arguing that Aquinas's comments to Boethius aimed to develop further arguments against the heretics who lived in his time upon the authority of Boethius, who according to Timothy Noone represented the characteristic style of the scholars from the twelfth to the seventeenth century. The other part of the article discusses the question of whether Aquinas' comments were correct interpretations of Boethius' texts. In his opinion, the author of the article claims that the interpretations of the texts of Boethius made by Saint Thomas Aquinas is credible and may be the best commentary on Boethius. But, it is necessary to keep in mind the modifications resulting from various scientific cultures that prevailed in the time of the two great scholars.

Key words: Thomas Aquinas; Commentaries; Boethius; De Trinitate; De Hebdomadibus.